

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, is celebrated for its stunning seascapes, famous mansions, America's Cup events, Jazz Festival and annual Flower Show. From presidents to philanthropists, it is also known for the people who have summered and socialized here.

In this fabled town where privacy is a treasured asset, the reader is provided an insider's view of a rarely revealed way of life. How do these tastemakers entertain, decorate, party, garden, dress? Lush images, coupled with amusing and lively personal tales, are portrayed in elegant settings worthy of *Masterpiece Theater*, capturing the social pastimes, rituals and well-earned traditions of this distinctive lifestyle.

Newport's old-world architecture and contemporary charm are the centerpiece of these 17 exceptional properties, providing a much-anticipated sequel to *Private Newport: At Home and in the Garden*.



BETTIE BEARDEN PARDEE, the author of *Private Newport, At Home and in the Garden*, is key to *Living Newport's* unprecedented access. An accomplished hostess and active community leader, her home, "Parterre," and its gardens provide the ideal setting for carrying on Newport's tradition of gracious living. Chair of many events that are staples of the social season, including the Newport Flower Show, she is additionally the author of two books on entertaining. A former contributing editor to *Bon Appetit*, where she produced "Entertaining with Style," Pardee was also host and creative producer of the thirteen-part PBS series *The Presidential Palate: Entertaining at the White House*.

LIVING NEWPORT

HOUSES, PEOPLE, STYLE

BETTIE BEARDEN PARDEE
PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICK HALES

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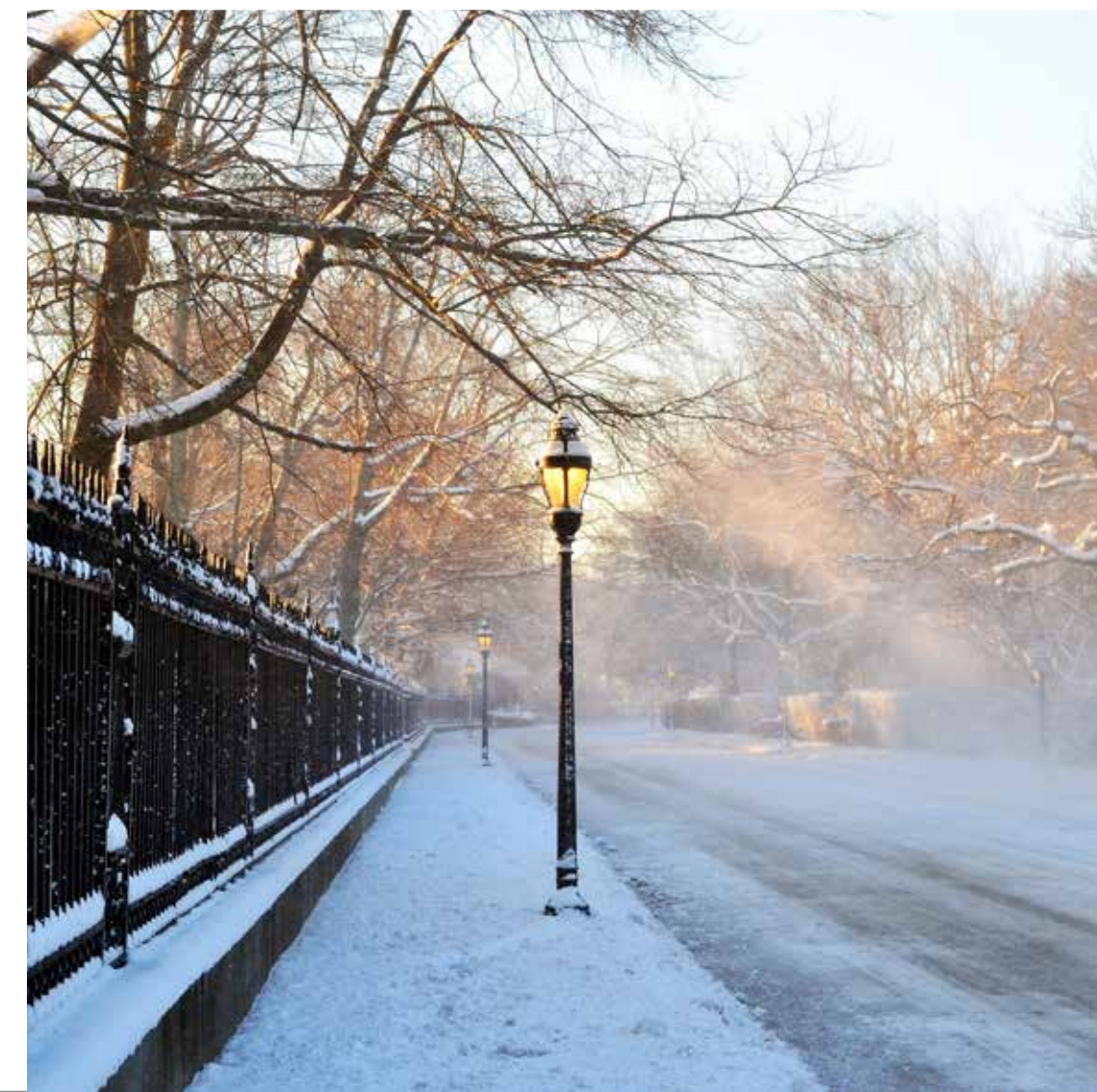
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OPPOSITE: Bayard and Wilkie Plumb getting their great-grandfather's 1968 600 Fiat ready for a spin.

WM. K. VANDERBILT'S FIREHOUSE

THEY MET IN 1989 AT St. George's School in Middletown, Rhode Island, with its hilltop view of the dramatic crescent that is Second Beach—arguably one of the most exceptional settings of any prep school in the Northeast.

No wonder they chose to stay in Newport through their St. George's years, and always found reasons to return in summers when pursuing their careers after college.

Cory and Matt Plumb (she hails from Connecticut and he from Virginia, with Wilmington, Delaware, roots) could have lived many places after they were married in 1998. But Newport exerted its pull. The catalyst must surely have been one of those lovely bits of serendipity. Unbeknownst to the other, each had separately admired an old firehouse behind Bellevue Avenue, its bell tower in view of Marble House. In fact, it is because of Marble House's

owner, William K. Vanderbilt, that the three-story brick structure was erected in 1890: he and his neighbors decided it was in their best interests to have fire-fighting services close at hand.

In a typical Newport weekend scenario, the Plumbs were lunching at the Black Pearl with their childhood friend Robert Matheson before heading back to New York one Sunday afternoon.

"Hey, there's this really neat house that just came on the market. Let's take a quick drive over before I take you to the train," Robert suggested.

After many turns and enough shortcuts to have them both disoriented, they stopped in front of . . . the old firehouse.

We all know those house-hunting stories, prefaced by "we had no intention of buying. . ." So, of course, they bought it, despite not having plans to move to Newport. Nor did they have children yet, which







CALLING ON
GOOD FRIENDS

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Seaweed's western-facing exposure provides a potpourri of sights, from The Ledges on the left to Bailey's Beach to High Tide on the right. OPPOSITE: Ocean views and living space were enhanced years ago by the addition of generous porches to all sides of the white clapboard house.*

SEAWEED PRESENTS A COMFORTING presence on its bluff overlooking the sweeping curve of Bailey's Beach. Poised just above the end of Cliff Walk, the house survived the devastating hurricane of 1938 with only a swale in the lawn to hint of this sad note in Newport's history. Philadelphian Thomas Dolan, founder of the Philadelphia Electric Company and the Philadelphia Gas Company, purchased the house in 1904; Seaweed was lived in by five generations of the Dolan family until his granddaughter Rita Seller's death at 103.

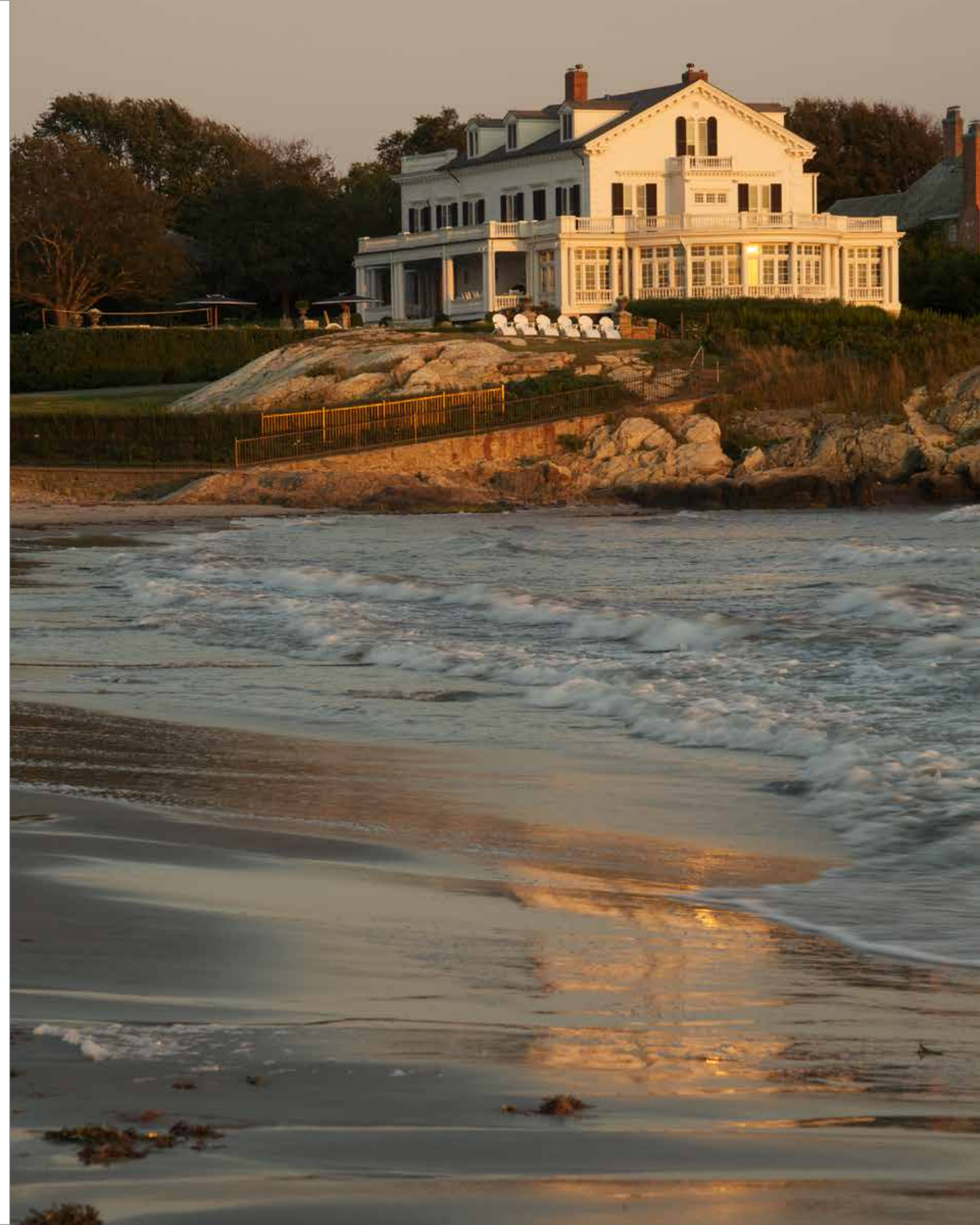
Few homes in Newport have been owned and occupied by the same family for generations, and even fewer ever come on the market, so Seaweed's pending sale occasioned much conversation—this grand home, playground to a large, extended family (including a U.S. Senator) with deep roots in our town. . . Into whose hands would it pass?

As Doug Newhouse confesses, "We had no intention of buying a large, elaborate historic home; a turn-key beach cottage was all we had in mind." Ah, but Seaweed boasts a complement of superlatives that aren't easily matched, starting with its views of the

sea from nearly every room. As a successful private-equity professional would, Doug can enumerate the logical reasons why he and his wife, Holly Bannister (a pediatric emergency-medicine physician) took on much more than they ever intended: a magnificent site encompassing some of the finest views in Newport; both Cliff Walk and Bailey's Beach a short stroll across the front lawn; the house's architectural significance established by the contributions of two distinguished twentieth-century architects, George Champlin Mason and Horace Trumbauer; and its west-facing orientation, unusual for a house on the East Coast.

In the end, however, it was more emotion than logic that led to the purchase. There is something about Newport that speaks to the spirit of preservation in many of us—some of whom were perhaps never aware of this alter ego. After months of contemplation and family discussions, the Bannister/Newhouses made the big decision, and the contractors were called in.

Holly and Doug have embraced Newport, endearing themselves to the Dolan family and new friends by putting the time, thought and resources into the respectful





refreshing of this second home. (A Newport friend has described it, colorfully “as though an old dowager had taken a new lover.”) Perhaps their decision was made easier by the knowledge that Seaweed had been lived in by the same family for over 100 years, assuring a level of architectural preservation. Aside from a few infrastructure details, like re-wiring, Doug and Holly were looking at mostly cosmetic issues—exposing wood floors under linoleum tiles, replicating broken molding, restoring the handsome original marble bathroom sinks, removing years of paint and rust from elegant wall sconces, refitting fireplaces and chimneys. They cherished the house as it was—the layout, which accommodated the ease of moving between rooms, and the ability to adapt rooms to suit their needs without having to change doorways or

PREVIOUS SPREAD: *The front porch is a favorite spot to sit and await guests, watch the surfers and fishermen and admire the swans alighting on distant Almy Pond.*
 ABOVE: *Holly’s seahorse andirons repeat the marine theme centered on the lobster clock above the fireplace.* OPPOSITE: *Along the southern-facing enclosed porch, an enfilade of lattice walls culminates in a telescope-worthy view of ledge and ocean.*





AN ENTICING DAY
ON THE BAY



MR. FLEMING'S FOLLIES

Original to the Bellevue House property, the twenty-by-twenty-foot Teahouse, copied from the late eighteenth-century "Derby summer house," designed by Samuel McIntire, is significant for representing American Federal architecture at its finest.

RONALD LEE FLEMING'S exceptional Ogden Codman-designed home, Bellevue House, at the beginning of the residential mile of Bellevue Avenue, was a centerpiece in my earlier book, *Private Newport, at Home and in the Garden*. As the dedicated preservationist that he is, Ron took his stewardship of this Newport architectural jewel very seriously when he purchased it in 1999, including interior furnishings, paintings and garden accessories. It is now, with the follies and gardens, that Ron has moved beyond stewardship and personalized the property, leaving his imprimatur. It was a graceful transition, taking inspiration from the one existing garden building, or folly, the two-story Teahouse copied from the late eighteenth-century original by Samuel McIntire.

The sentiments prompting Ron, president of the Townscape Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, give us an insight into a man who is passionate enough about



dinners and guest suppers.” (Five-year-old Cynthia adds “I like the porch; it’s more fancy. My pearls look better.”)

The porch lets onto the parkland setting, where a very large cedar “castle” hints at Guy’s residential construction experience. With octagonal towers that echo the taller ones on Elm Court, the structure also includes a sky bridge, troll bridge, ladders, slides, jungle gym and a fire pole (Cynthia’s favorite piece, along with the telescope so that she “can see the volcano”). With all its varying heights, this impressive castle provides contrast to the

LEFT AND OPPOSITE: *The open gallery’s much-used sitting area creates one more spot for a cozy living space for the twins. Guy’s childhood memories of Elm Court include peering over the balustrade during parties, watching “the grownups” dancing in the main hall below, after the rug was rolled up.*

old greenhouse with its fanciful cupola at the north end of the lawn. The greenhouse itself looks every bit like a vestige of the Crystal Palace from the 1851 London World’s Fair. Beyond the greenhouse are the requisite stables (with ten stalls) and carriage house.

The mention of stables raises an in





ROMANTIC OAKWOOD



PREVIOUS SPREAD: *Berkeley House's* spaciouly grand oak-paneled and ceilinged living hall lets onto the dining room, library, sitting room and back brick terrace, accessed by a sturdy Dutch door. LEFT: *Majolica* oyster plates around a hand-carved giltwood mirror recall the circular medallions in the ceiling wall paper, a reminder that nineteenth-century design always incorporated ceilings in the overall consideration of a room. OPPOSITE: *Alice Ross's* friend, the late *Keith Irvine*, challenged her to have "more courage" in her selections, which prompted her to choose a tiger-striped Wilton carpet banded in red for the stairwell (very *Diana Vreeland*).

The amusing story of getting it through Italian customs, and onto the plane with me, is another reason I have such an affection for it." Alice Ross's response to my interest in chairs prompts a great takeaway.

It is difficult to overstate the fame and influence of McKim, Mead & White—their Newport treasures include Rosecliff as well as Berkeley House, the Ross family home. Alice has perfected the art of living in an 1885 masterpiece by this esteemed architectural firm. Take today for instance. . . she has set up a trunk show for an on-the-rise young fashion designer in the spacious living hall, where Alice's wonderful dahlia bouquets offset the colors in the clothes as well as her interiors. Olive, the new Havanese puppy, is running circles throughout the house; eldest daughter Harling is photographing outfits for her blog; the small, elegant silver tray with its accompanying period teapot and porcelain cups and saucers awaits guests.

Alice loves to say that "Berkeley House spoke to me," even though the first

"EACH CHAIR POSSESSES ITS own personality, just like the people who sit in them. And one size doesn't fit all. I think it's gracious to have a selection so each guest can be comfortable, and mixing the scale of furniture in a room adds balance. My favorite is the small wooden folding chair in the library, which I can pull up to the fireplace, facing my guests, but still feel the warmth from the fire through its openwork back.



OPPOSITE: *With a cupola, Venetian window and wide, gracious columns, the Gilbane's home recalls architectural details from the Shingle Style period so popular in Newport of the late nineteenth century.*

CHRISTMAS BY DESIGN

“SO MUCH OF LIFE IS ephemeral and fleeting. That’s why I love crafts,” Mary Gilbane says. “I truly enjoy creating things that last. It’s centering to be focused. And another big point? You can’t multitask when you’re working on a project. It’s all about singly immersing yourself in something.” Thought-provoking, these chats with my neighbor Mary. She notes, “I leave my projects around to look at, to remind me that creating makes me happy and it should always be a part of my days.”

Mary’s talents for creative endeavors and output are as envy-inspiring as the list is long—decorative painting, shellwork, decoupage, Nantucket basket weaving, to name a few. The locus of these deserves mention, as it reflects the continuing interest in handiwork and crafts today. The Handicraft Club, founded in 1904, only 30 years after the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design (a neighbor of Brown University on College Hill in Providence) was driven by an ethos as relevant now as it was then: “the desire to create beautiful

objects by hand for domestic use.” “The Club provides a venue for coming together with friends in joyful participation,” she adds. And in this small state, it’s not unusual that both Mary’s mother and mother-in-law were members.

Once you realize that the fascinating decorative furnishings and accessories that you’re admiring were handmade by her, her home’s interior takes on a significance beyond tasteful. I daresay few have made four baby cradles on a stand in the style of those famous Nantucket baskets. Actually, hers are a personal take on these collectibles.

Why does she enjoy these, and other endeavors, so much? Among many reasons, they are a treasure for recipients, truly one-of-a-kind gifts that she enjoys sharing with family and dear friends.

While Mary observes that “we kept our lives but changed locale,” referring to their move from Providence to Newport a dozen years ago, in many ways they were returning to a town that was a pivotal point in the 140-year history of the family company,





“I have just finished reading —and dreaming
through —a wonderful book about
Newport called *Private Newport: At Home and in the
Garden*, by Bettie Bearden Pardee.
Newport is a private place, like all the places I love,
but this book lets us steal a glance into its world.”
—Dominique Browning

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