

# The Gibson Society, Inc.



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Laura Gresh  
Museum Administrator

Wendy Swanton  
Curator

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## Dear Friends,

At the end of our fiscal year it is good to reflect on our accomplishments and at the same time look forward to opportunities and initiatives for the coming year.

On the financial side we are doing better than in past years. We withdrew less from our endowment and are focused on maintaining a balanced budget. Our most important source for operating expenses is from your contributions and they are gratefully appreciated. Please continue to donate.

Our programming and outreach volunteers have been exploring new topics and venues. In 2011, we had new and successful programs on opening day of baseball season, Halloween open house, walking tours, and other programs almost once a month. This year we plan to continue these seasonal programs and add a few more, as outlined later in this report. The founder of the museum was a poet and author. In that light, an ad hoc committee of younger volunteers is looking into a Victorian science fiction genre called Steampunk, with potential for lectures and films at a nearby venue.

Museum operations are now more streamlined with a new computer and software purchased through "Tech Soup", an organization that facilitates discounts for non-profit organizations. Our on-line presence in social media is also ramping up and has a respectable following.

Many thanks for your continued interest and support of the Gibson House Museum.

Sincerely yours,

Sam Duncan

President, Board of Directors

"With energy from new board members and volunteers, we are developing innovative programs and promotional publications."

## News and Notes by Laura Gresh, Museum Administrator

I began my tenure at the Gibson House Museum in July and, over the past several months, I have been working on projects with dedicated board members and learning about the history of this wonderful museum. Reaching out to peers and museum educators in the Boston area has helped me to learn best practices of other successful house museums.

In the spring of 2011, as part of the American Association of Museums' Museum Assessment Program (MAP), the board and staff participated in a peer review to assess and make recommendations for the site. The mandate was to actively reach out to the neighboring Back Bay community, increase visibility, and use public relations outlets to promote the museum. Our reviewer, Cara Seitchek, returned in September and met with committees to evaluate our progress and make further recommendations. The committees recognized the steps taken so far to accomplish our goals with new signage, new marketing collateral, outreach with both print and electronic media, and innovative programming. We plan to publish an on-line newsletter three times a year and email notifications of each upcoming event to our subscribers. With new museum guest passes, we hope to introduce and expand our audience.

It is an exciting time to be at the Gibson House Museum.

## Building and Museum Committees News

by Jacqueline Blombach, Chair, Building and Museum Committees

This fall, the Gibson House closed its doors for six weeks for the restoration of plaster ceilings in four areas. The ceilings were damaged in 2005 when a plumbing problem sent water pouring from the fourth floor, causing extensive damage.

Thanks to a grant from the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund, the museum engaged Andy Ladygo, a nationally recognized expert in restoring historic plaster, to prepare a study of the historic interior plaster surfaces of all the museum rooms. A survey was conducted room by room beginning with a visual assessment and followed by tactile evaluation. Particular attention was given to preventing further damage to existing finishes and wall coverings. This study was the foundation for the museum plaster conservation restoration plan.

While most of the plaster in the museum was found to be structurally sound, four areas were identified as needing immediate attention: the third floor bathroom, main stair hall, entry hall, and first floor bathroom. In other areas of the museum, the conservation efforts will involve cleaning and preserving the early finishes as funds become available.

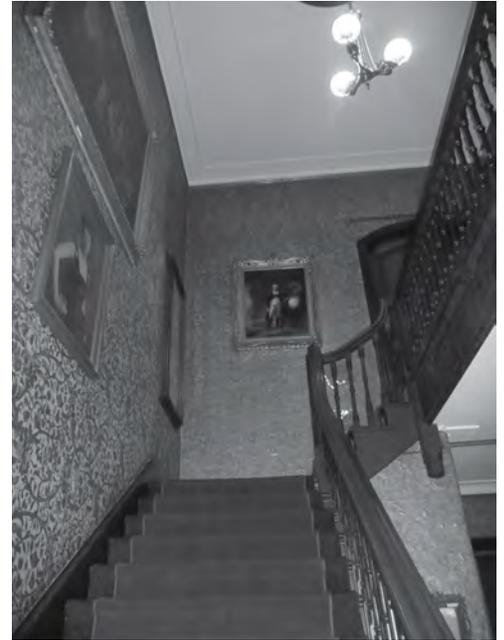
In September, an elaborate scaffolding system was erected to provide a stable platform beneath ceilings, and adequate protection was provided to wall coverings, wood trim, carpeting, and collections. Andy stabilized most of the remaining plaster using a system developed at SPNEA (now Historic New England). Portholes were drilled in the plaster surface and the sound plaster was reattached to the wood lath using an acrylic adhesive. This system has been in use for over thirty years and has been implemented in many prominent historic structures.

Small samples of the plaster were removed for evaluation in the lab. Samples were examined under magnification and subjected to acid digestion to determine features and composition.

Students from the North Bennet Street School's Preservation Carpentry program toured the Gibson House and observed the ongoing project. Andy explained that the original plaster was primarily composed of lime, sand, and cow hair. Losses were in-filled with new plaster matching the original in composition and surface treatment.

The result is a more beautiful and elegant Gibson House.

More about the care and preservation of historic plaster can be found at the National Park Service website — *Preservation Brief #21* at <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief21.htm>. Preservation Briefs are published by the National Park Service to provide guidance on preserving, rehabilitating, and restoring historic buildings.



Ceiling at staircase after restoration

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## New Faces at the Gibson House — Our Volunteers by Jacqueline Blombach



Meet Jonathan,

The Gibson House Museum welcomes our newest volunteer, Jonathan Vantassel. Jonathan comes to us from Suffolk University where he is majoring in business at Sawyer Business School. He spent last summer working at the Mission House in Stockbridge, MA as a guide and house manager. Jonathan has a keen interest in decorative arts and Victoriana — a perfect fit for the Gibson House Museum.

Jonathan is helping the museum with its social media tasks. Besides updating our Facebook page on a weekly basis, he has created a GHM Pinterest page... and very soon...we will be on Twitter. Jonathan has also been trained as a Gibson House tour guide.

We are very grateful to have Jonathan as part of the Gibson House family. Please join us in welcoming him.

## Program Committee Reports

### Upcoming Events by Edward Gordon, Chair, Program Committee

#### **Holiday Open House at the Gibson House Museum Sunday, December 16, 2012 at 1:00 — 4:00 p.m.**

The Gibson House Museum welcomes neighbors and friends for our annual holiday open house celebration.

#### **Good Manners at GHM with Etiquetteer Robert Dimmick Tuesday, January 22, 2013, reception at 6:00 p.m., program follows at GHM**

**Etiquetteer** Robert Dimmick will talk on Victorian and early-twentieth-century etiquette using the Gibson family home as a backdrop. Admission: members free GHM/VSA/NE; \$10 non members

#### **Lecture: Late-nineteenth Century Architect Theodore Minot Clark: Boston's Forgotten "Best-Known Architect" and Supervising Architect of Trinity Church, Copley Square, Sunday, February 17, 2013 at 3:00 p.m., reception to follow at GHM**

Speaker John R. Burrows, Architectural Historian, principal at John R. Burrows & Co., and Past President of the Gibson Society, Inc., is an architect, educator, author, and editor. John will talk about late-nineteenth century architect T. M. Clark — a gentle yet driving force in local architectural circles. Clark's role in works as significant as Trinity Church and the journal *American Architect and Building News* was deeply felt in his native city and merits rediscovery. Admission: \$5 members GHM/VSA/NE; \$10 non members.

#### **Victorian Era Clocks — Select Clocks from the GHM Collection Monday, March 4, 2013, reception at 5:30 p.m., lecture at 6:15 at GHM**

Speaker Bob Frishman of Bell-Time Clocks has repaired, restored and sold antique clocks for more than thirty years. In 1992, he founded Bell-Time Clocks, named after a *Harper's Weekly* engraving by Winslow Homer depicting New England mill buildings and workers. Clocks are a fascinating aspect of GHM's collection ranging from the Aaron Willard tallcase clock of the 1790s in the entry hall, to the ornate clock in the dining room that belonged to Gibson relative Benjamin Crowninshield, to the French clock in the library.

#### **Boston Baseball: Early Games and Legendary Players Monday, April 29, 2012, reception at 5:30 p.m., lecture at 6:15 at GHM Etiquetteer (tentative) at 5:30 p.m., reception; 6:15 lecture; 7:20 book signing at GHM**

#### **Walking Tour with Ed Gordon, Architectural Historian Monday, June 3, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. — meet at GHM**

The walking tour will focus on Back Bay — Boylston Street from the Arlington Street Meeting House to the Massachusetts Historical Society. Admission: \$5 members GHM/VSA/NE; \$10 non members.

## Program Recap — 2011—2012 by Frances Duffly

#### **Children's Workshop: Building Victorian Dioramas Saturday, September 24, 2011**

#### **Charles Gibson, Denman Ross, and Collecting at the Turn-of-the-Century in Boston, Tuesday, October 4, 2011**

Lecture by Marie Frank, Associate Professor in Cultural Studies at the University of MA, Lowell

#### **The Gibson House Museum sponsors Tea at the College Club Sunday, November 13, 2011**

#### **Holiday Open House at the Gibson House Museum Sunday, December 11, 2011**

#### **Good Manners at GHM with Etiquetteer Robert Dimmick Wednesday, February 1, 2012**

Robert Dimmick made a presentation on Victorian and early-twentieth-century manners using the Gibson family's belongings and home as a backdrop.

#### **Good Manners at the Gibson House with Etiquetteer Robert Dimmick — Back by Popular Demand Thursday, March 1, 2012**

#### **16th Annual Benefit, The Algonquin Club, Wednesday, March 21, 2012**

2012 Honoree, Ken Tutunjian, Senior Vice President, Coldwell Banker Real Estate

#### **Victorian Baseball in Boston Thursday, April 5, 2012**

Presented by Gibson House Museum and The Society for American Baseball Research (SABR)



Tea at The College Club, Robert Dimmick

## Curator's Report by Wendy Swanton, Curator

The past year at the Gibson House has been interesting as we have worked to expand the educational use of the collection and improve its care. This ongoing work involves the archives, photographs, and room surveys.

Using the house and collection as an educational tool has always been one of our primary goals. In the last year, we have expanded our reach beyond our usual tours and events. In the spring, Nancy Holcomb, a professor in the museum studies program at Suffolk University, used the Gibson House as a subject for student research for her course "Boston Historic Houses". Four of Professor Holcomb's students did primary and secondary research at the house using our archives, and their research provided us with interesting new material for GHM tours. Some of the subjects they covered included — visiting and dining etiquette in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Boston and the periodical *Harper's Bazaar* and its advertising influence, and role in late nineteenth and early-twentieth-century households such as the Gibson House. In late January and early February, the GHM staff was consumed with the filming of the documentary *The Mystery of Matter: Search for the Elements*, a project funded by the National Science Foundation. The film is about the story of the Periodic Table of Elements and the museum was used as the setting for Dmitri Mendeleev's part in that story. We reconfigured the music room and the library for the filming. The ground floor was rearranged to accommodate dressing and makeup areas and also was the designated place where food and drink was served. The crew filmed for two days and then the house was put back together. This film is scheduled to be released in 2013.

Caring for our collection is an ongoing concern at the Gibson House. At the beginning of the summer, I wrote *Week to Week Cleaning Guide*, a narrative that provides direction for personnel for care and handling of museum objects as well as dusting and vacuuming procedures. These directions will help our cleaning staff with upkeep of the museum spaces. Proper upkeep will enhance the visitors' experience and will protect our collection.

At the end of August, one of our most important paintings, *Cleopatra, Dissolving the Pearl* was restored. This painting hangs over the glass cabinet in the music room and had significant issues with its paint surface. The restoration work was done by Trefler & Sons in Newton and was funded by Robert Severy, one of the Gibson House Museum's most important benefactors. Mr. Severy requested that the painting be restored in memory of Pauline Chase Harrell. The result of the restoration is outstanding. On your next visit, be sure to take a look at this painting.




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## Treasurer's Report by Robert Goodof, Treasurer

I am pleased to report that the Gibson House Museum operated within its budget during the fiscal year 2012, generating a small surplus. Overall receipts from the GHM Annual Benefit and the various levels of other donations (public contributions, GHM Annual Appeal, and board support) met budget, while admissions, tours, programs, and use fees generated approximately \$4000 above budget.

Expenses were only \$1000 above our \$86,000 budget, as lower payroll costs nearly offset higher utility costs, and final costs for the Annual Benefit were below budget. The GHM renegotiated insurance terms and should realize up to \$5000 in incremental benefits in 2012 to 2013. Our reorganization of house management, along with insurance savings, should provide some offset to higher expense levels.

The long awaited plaster project kept within budget with \$30,000 estimated and \$27,000 actual. The GHM faces a challenging upcoming fiscal year 2013 due to a one-time outlay for unemployment expenses of \$11,500. The endowment balance, at FY end, was \$290,000, including \$44,000 in restricted funds.

## The Gibson Society, Inc. Board Members and Staff — FY 2011 — 2012

Standing Committees		Operating Committees	Staff
<p><b>Nominating</b> Co-chairs: Susan Ashbrook and Lecia Harbison</p> <p><b>Development</b> Chair: Lecia Harbison</p> <p><b>1859 Club</b> Chair: Lecia Harbison</p> <p><b>Museum</b> Chair: Jacqueline Blombach</p> <p><b>Building</b> Chair: Jacqueline Blombach</p>	<p><b>Finance</b> Chair: Robert Goodof Samuel Duncan Stuart Freeland Lecia Harbison Christopher Leich William Pear</p>	<p><b>Programs</b> Chair: Frances Duffly</p> <p><b>Annual Benefit</b> Chair: Frances Duffly</p>	<p><b>Executive Director</b> Charles Swift</p> <p><b>Museum Administrator</b> Laura Gresh (from July 2012)</p> <p><b>Curator</b> Wendy Swanton</p> <p><b>Museum Guides</b> Elizabeth Dowd Chris Freda April Grant Emily Kovatch Kyla Mackay-Smith</p>

Save the Date! 17th Annual Benefit — Thursday, March 21, 2013, 6 — 8 p.m. at the Algonquin Club

## Annual Benefit Gala Contributors for 2012

Sustainer — \$2,500	Supporter — up to \$300	Raffle & Auction Donors
Susan Ashbrook & Fritz Casselman Jeryl and Stephen Oristaglio	Richard Cheek Katherine Howe Mary Kane	Bacco's Wine and Cheese Blackstone's of Beacon Hill Jacqueline Blombach
<b>Benefactor — \$1,500</b>	Miles A. Fish III Ghislaine Grenier	Boston Athenaeum Susan & Lewis Cabot
Jacqueline E. Blombach & Michael A. Duca Frances & Thomas Duffly	Mimi & Paul LaCamera Mary Leen	Childs Gallery Ellie Choi
<b>Patron — \$1,000</b>	Mr. & Mrs. Newton P. S. Merrill Phoebe Milliken	Elliot Bostwick Davis Devonia Antiques for Dining
Cindy & Robert Goodof Ruth Ann Kupfer Judith & Christopher Leich	Elizabeth & Keith Morgan Carl Nold Faith & Daniel Perkins	Sheila Donahue Michael Duca
<b>Sponsor — \$500</b>	Antonia Pollak Jean Stanton Jolinda Taylor John Wolfarth	The Frick Collection, New York Rick Gordon, Gordon's Wines & Liquors Mary Ethel Grady — Willow & Urn Antiques Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Rosamond W. Allen & Paul E. Landry Ellie Choi & Kendrick Chow Francine & William Crawford Sheila & Charles Donahue Nancy & Samuel Hammond Duncan Barbara & Stuart Freeland Elizabeth Harbison David R. Hocker Maureen Meister & David Feigenbaum Elizabeth M. Mellett Katherine B. Winter		Robert Goodof Salon Mario Russo Robert B. Severy Society for American Baseball Research Winston Flowers

## Grants and Designated Donations

### Matching Gifts:

Archie D. & Bertha Walker Foundation for Herbert J. Motley, Jr.  
NVIDIA Corporation Employee Giving Program (Samuel Duncan)

### Donors for Collection and Special Project Funds:

Robert Bayard Severy — painting restoration

### In-Kind Services:

Fisher College snow removal and lawn maintenance

### Donors in Recognition:

Kay Bernon in honor of Ken Tutunjian

Roberta Crowley Gottlieb in honor of Ken Tutunjian

The Esplanade Association in honor of Ken Tutunjian

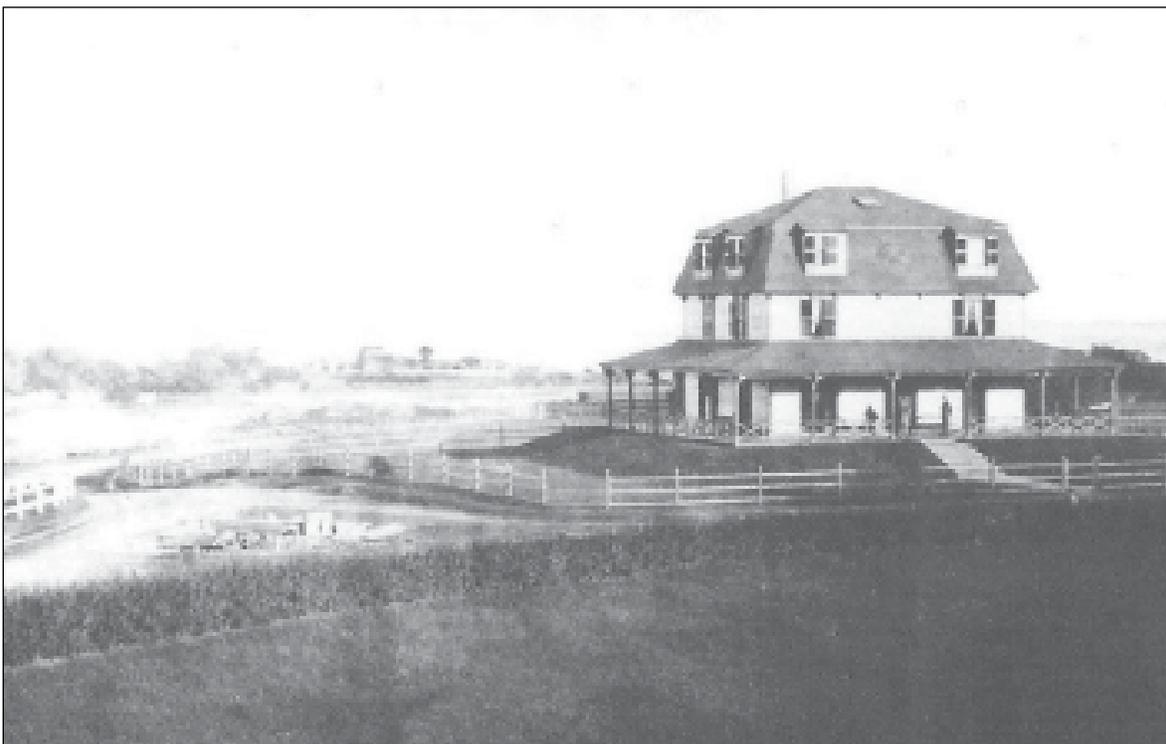
## Your Continued Support and Assistance...

Your support and assistance helps us to continue with our mission to preserve and exhibit the house and collections for the education and enjoyment of neighbors of the Back Bay and visitors from afar.

When donating to the Gibson House Museum's preservation efforts, you can give to our general preservation fund.

The Gibson Society, Inc. is a tax-exempt charitable and educational institution in accordance with Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Consequently, gifts and contributions are deductible from federal income taxes in accordance with current provisions of the code.

Please make checks out to The Gibson Society, Inc. and send to Gibson House Museum, 137 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02116. For information: 617.267.6338; [info@thegibsonhouse.org](mailto:info@thegibsonhouse.org)



Since 1859, *Forty Steps* has stood at the corner of Nahant Road and Cliff Street, in Nahant.

Photo circa 1865, from archives of the Gibson House Museum



Lecia Harbison



Kitty Winter and Nancy Devereaux



Rosamond Warren Allen



Susan Ashbrook, Chris Leich, Judith Leich



Robert B. Severy



Mary Ann Marusich Smith and Sheila Donahue



Charles Swift and Jeryl Oristaglio

# Snapshots from GHM



Barry Solar, Tracey Ann Smith, Jerry Finegold



Halloween — Volunteers from Fisher College



Samantha Connelly and daughter Isabella



Ladies at College Club Tea



PRESERVING  
the SPIRIT of  
HISTORIC  
BACK BAY

137 BEACON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

NON PROFIT  
ORG.  
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56568

## Membership

Your membership helps us to continue our mission to preserve and exhibit the house and its collections for the education, enjoyment, and inspiration of the neighbors of Back Bay and visitors from afar.

Membership levels:

- ❖ **Individual — \$50**  
One museum guest pass, free or reduced admission to most programs sponsored by the Gibson House Museum, newsletter, and emails of upcoming events
- ❖ **Family/Dual — \$75**  
Same as above with two guest passes
- ❖ **Friend — \$250**  
Same as above with four guest passes and a private tour for four
- ❖ **Sustainer — \$500**  
Same as above with six guest passes and an invitation to a reception with the museum curator
- ❖ **1859 Club — \$1,000**  
Same as above and an invitation to a private outing created for this level of membership
- ❖ **Student (18–25) \$25**  
Free or reduced admission to most programs sponsored by the Gibson House Museum

### Gibson House Museum Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership category: \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

*send this form with your check payable to:*

The Gibson Society, Inc.,  
Gibson House Museum  
137 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02116

For information, call 617.267.6338  
email: [info@thegibsonhouse.org](mailto:info@thegibsonhouse.org)

The museum is a non profit organization;  
contributions are tax-deductible.

