Curriculum Vitae

John R. Tschirch

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An award-winning Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Specialist, Writer, and Honorary Member of the Garden Club of America with a lifelong commitment to studying, documenting, and

preserving our built and natural environments for long-term enjoyment and sustainability.

**Education:**

2008 Royal Collection Studies, Windsor Castle

The Attingham Trust

Great Britain

1990 Attingham Program for the Study of the British Country House

The Attingham Trust

Great Britain

1986 M.A. Architectural History

School of Architecture

University of Virginia

Charlottesville, VA

1983 B.A. History

Providence College

Providence, RI

1982 Renaissance Art Studies-Great Britain-France-Italy

Providence College Summer Program

**Professional Experience:**

2013 to present: Historic Preservation and Research Consultant

Serve as an advisor and project director for several preservation and

cultural organizations, private property owners, and legal counsel, including the

following:

2021-present Historical Advisor to restoration of Miramar landscape and interiors.

Aug. 2020- Historic Landscape plan for the SVF Foundation, Newport, RI

Oct. 2021 Develop a report including the historic evolution and future development of

the buildings and landscapes comprising the Swiss Village (1916), a collection

of picturesque farm structures on the former estate of Arthur Curtiss James.

2020-present Historic Preservation specialist offering advice and expert testimony on

architectural projects in the Point, Bellevue Avenue and Ochre Point Historic

Districts presented to the Newport Historic District Commission, and the

Howland Farm in Middletown and the Shingle Style house, “The Barnacle” in

Jamestown.

April 2017-

present: Author and Project Director, America’s Eden

The Newport Tree Conservancy

Publication: *America’s Eden: Newport Landscapes Through the Ages* (Giles

Ltd., 2022)

Nov. 2016-2020: Visiting Curator of Urban History

Newport Historical Society.

Author of *Newport: The Artful City* (The Newport Historical Society and Giles

Ltd., 2020), which received the 2021 Victorian Society in America Book

Award.

July-Nov. 2016 Historic Mapping Project

Independent research grant awarded by the Rhode Island Council for the

Humanities to assess Newport’s historic districts

2013 Creative Director for the cultural sites map “East Side Walks” for the

Providence/Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau. The map was cited

as one of the top activities to do in Providence in the October 2014 issue of

*Travel and Leisure*.

2007-2010 Architectural Historian and Preservation Consultant to Miramar (1914), a

historic estate on Bellevue Avenue, Newport, RI.

Developed a research plan, preservation methodology for the project,

participated in architect and craftsmen interviews and selection, advised on

interior paint analysis and landscape treatment plans.

**Teaching Positions:**

2006-present Rhode Island School of Design

Instructor in Design History Courses:

The History and Theory of Art and Design

Building: A History of the American House

2017-present Adjunct Faculty

School of Art, Architecture and Historic Preservation

Roger Williams University

Bristol, RI

Instructor for Historic Preservation Courses:

Preservation Studies, Historic Documentation, History and Philosophy of

Preservation

2013-present Adjunct Faculty

Art Department

Bristol Community College

Fall River, Ma

Responsibilities:

Teach History of Art from Ancient Times to Rococo, History of Art from

Rococo to Modernism, Topics in Contemporary Art, and Introduction to

Digital Photography.

Awarded a Learning Service Teaching Fellowship in Spring 2014

Honors Program Project Instructor for ART 106 Fall Semester 2015 and Fall

Semester 2016

2010-May 2013 Director of Museum Affairs and Architectural Historian

The Preservation Society of Newport County

Newport, RI

Responsibilities:

Directed the Museum Affairs Department comprising curatorial, conservation, educational, interpretive, and research programs for The Preservation Society’s 11 historic properties, including:

Nichols-Wanton-Hunter House (1748), Kingscote (1841), Chateau-sur-Mer (1852), Green Animals (1860), Chepstow (1862), Isaac Bell House (1883), Marble House (1892), The Breakers (1895), The Breakers Stable and Carriage House (1896),The Elms (1901) and Rosecliff (1902).

Served as Architectural Historian advising on all key preservation projects for

11 house museums and 88 acres of historic landscapes. Reviewed architectural

planning documents, grants and directed research to support the major

preservation initiatives.

Developed institutional priorities for all aspects of museum affairs, new staff positions and strategic plans for initiatives in collections management, preventive conservation, public programming, research, and enhancement of the educational and preservation content of the website.

Oversaw the 55,000 objects in the collections of the eleven historic houses, encompassing the fine and decorative arts, historic costume and textiles, photographs, books, letters, coaches, and carriages.

Represented the Preservation Society at major professional conferences, public lectures, and community roundtables.

Participated with major fundraising endeavors from donor cultivation, grant writing and advising on the comprehensive campaign

Management Initiatives and Reorganization:

Initiated an integrated and comprehensive plan for major curatorial,

conservation, collections management, research and education programs.

Created the new staff positions of Collections Manager, Research and

Interpretation Coordinator, and Museum Affairs Coordinator.

Research

Awarded $500,000 NEH grant in 2012 to endow a Research Fellowship

Program.

Developed focused areas of research on architectural history, social

history, historic preservation, landscape and the fine and decorative arts.

Organized the departmental working group of historians, curators

and conservators to establish primary goals for research projects on the fine

and decorative arts collection.

Established the Servant History Research project with scholars working on

Major community outreach to identify and interview over 50 individuals who

once served, or had family members who served, as servants in Newport’s

mansions.

Collections Management:

Awarded $147,000 Institute of Museum and Library Services grant in 2012 to

re-inventory and produce digital images of the 55 object collection.

Launched, with the Collections Manager, the Newport Cultural Consortium, a

group of five Newport historic and educational organizations who are

partnering to create a shared collections database, serving as one integrated

learning site for Newport’s artistic and cultural heritage. Awarded a $9,000

grant from the Newport County Fund in 2012 to conduct a feasibility study for

the integrated database for 2013.

Exhibitions:

Planned and implemented the Preservation Society’s loan of 60 objects to the

New York Winter Antiques Show exhibition for January 2013, *Newport: The*

*Glamour of Ornament*. Directed the selection, research and organization of

objects for the exhibit, the series of eight public lectures by Museum Affairs

staff in New York during the exhibit, and major donor events during the winter

antiques show.

Organized the Progressive Design exhibit of Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic

Movement glass, ceramics, furniture and painting at the Isaac Bell House

(1883), the Shingle Style landmark maintained by the Preservation Society.

Developed the Bellevue Avenue marker project, including eleven historic

markers lining the historic street and telling the stories of historic preservation

of the Bellevue Avenue National Historic Landmark District. The project

received a Doris Duke Foundation Preservation Award upon its completion in

2012.

Refocused the curatorial staff on two major objectives to reassess and organize

the presentation of all eleven Preservation Society properties:

1. Furnishings plans which establish a rationale for all room displays

2. Research projects on the highlights of the fine and decorative arts collections

and analysis of the major interiors to provide new data for a published

catalogue.

Fundraising:

Advisor to the comprehensive campaign, identifying the major

initiatives in collections, research, landscape, visitor services and endowment

for funding, developing cases for support for each initiative, working with the

Chairman of the Board, Trustees, volunteer committee members and staff to

review fundraising strategies, and meeting with major donors.

Educational Programs:

Director of The Newport Symposium since its inception in 1993. The

symposium is an international arts and preservation forum gathering scholars,

collectors, academics and historians from Great Britain, Europe, North and

South America on an annual basis in Newport. Speakers have included the

directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the Museum of

Fine Arts, Boston, curators from the Louvre, and preservation specialists from

the World Monuments Fund.

Awarded two $7,500 NEA Big Read grants, in 2010 and 2012, for community

wide literacy programs. Led the effort to create community collaborations on the

Big Read, including the Newport Public Library, the Boys and Girls Club, and

the Newport Senior Citizens Center.

Co-sponsored the 2012 and 2013 graduate level course “Historic Stewardship”

with the School of Art, Architecture and Historic Preservation at Roger Williams

University. Organized the team taught course with the Dean and Preservation

faculty at the school as part of their community outreach program.

Student and Youth Programs:

Conceived and implemented the History on Site partnership with the Art

Department of Newport Public Schools, a cooperative program featuring four

Teacher Resource Guides entitled “Classical Mythology and Architecture at

Marble House”, “The Gilded Age and The Breakers”, “Green Animals” and

“Math and The Elms.” Written to Rhode Island Learning Standards in English

Language Arts, the guides feature lesson plans and pre and post tour classroom

exercises.

Developed the Family Audio Tour of The Breakers for visiting children and

student tour groups focused on 19th century American culture, architecture and

social history.

1995-2010 Director of Academic Programs and Architectural Historian

The Preservation Society of Newport County

Newport, RI

Responsibilities:

Directed the educational, interpretive, and research programs for The

Preservation Society’s historic properties. Review all preservation project related documents.

Accomplishments:

Instituted the reinterpretation of The Elms, Rosecliff, Marble House and The Breakers, developing audio tours for these properties, which attract over 800,000 visitors a year. Awarded a $5,000 National Endowment for the

Humanities study grant in 2003 to develop a museum and historic site learning model for The Breakers, which served the interpretation of all Preservation

Society properties. The result was a balanced view of these historic sites,

combining architectural, social and cultural history in a free choice learning

environment, allowing visitors to access information to design their own

touring experience

Directed the Oral History Project, which assembled over 50 interviews of former occupants, servants and builders of the Preservation Society’s historic houses.

Served on the staff team for the accreditation of The Preservation Society with the American Alliance of Museums. Accreditation was achieved in 2004.

As Architectural Historian, supervised historic structures reports and landmark nominations. National Historic Landmark designations were successfully achieved for The Breakers, The Isaac Bell House, Kingscote, Chateau-sur-Mer and Marble House.

1986-1995 Director of Education

The Preservation Society of Newport County

Newport, RI

Responsibilities:

Directed educational programs and daily visitor operations, including supervision of a staff of 125 tour guides, guide education, tour programs, lecture

series, international visitor programs, at all eleven Preservation Society sites.

**Publications:**

*America’s Eden: Newport Landscapes Through the Ages* (Giles Ltd. London in association with the Newport Tree Conservancy, January 2022)

*Newport: The Artful City*. Giles Ltd. London in association with the Newport Historical Society, 2020. Winner of the Victorian Society in America 2021 Book Award.

*Gods and Girls: Tales of Art, Seduction and Obsession*. March 2019. Amazon.

“A Classic Revisited: The Redwood Library and Athenaeum in Newport, Rhode Island.”

*Antiques and Fine Arts.* Winter Issue 2017.

“Lend Me Your Ears: Rhetoric in Ancient and Modern Times.” *The Public Humanist*. Monthly

Blog of Mass Humanities. August 2016.

“Food and Cultural Identity in a Crisis.” *The Public Humanist*. Monthly Blog of Mass

Humanities. January 2016.

“The New Thing at Newport: The Tiffany Glass Wall at Kingscote Marks a Path Breaking Moment

in the History of Design and Ornament,” *The Magazine Antiques*, January 2013.

“Newport Cottages,” *The Encyclopedia of New England.*  New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

*Christie’s International Magazine*. Contributing author on historic houses and interiors, 1994 to 2001.

*Newport Landscapes: A Guide to the Historic Landscapes of The Preservation Society of Newport County*, Newport, RI: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 2000.

“The Breakers: The Evolution of a Beaux Arts Landscape,” *The Journal of the New England Garden History Society*, 1999.

“Newport in La Belle Époque,” *Les Palais Parisiens de La Belle Epoque*. Paris: Alenconaise, 1990. Contributed a chapter on Newport with a comparative study of the relationship between the

architecture and landscape of the great houses of Paris and Newport during the Belle Époque.

**Public Lectures and Conference Presentations:**

“The Architecture of Servitude” Annual Lecture for The Victorian Society of America, Newport Summer School, 1995 to present.

“The History of Conservatories: Glass House and Gardens” Northern California Decorative Arts Trust. Museum of the Legion of Honor San Francisco, November 2021

“Georgian Architecture and Design in Newport,” Northern California Decorative Arts Trust. Museum of the Legion of Honor San Francisco, October 2020.

“Historic Newport”

The Attingham 60th Anniversary Conference: Looking Ahead: The Future of the Country House, London, England, October 2012

“Palladio in Newport”

Institute of Classical Architecture, Newport, RI, June 2012

“The Architect's Dream: Newport Cottages”

Decorative Arts Trust Symposium: Furniture, Rooms and Houses: American Elegance in Newport, April 2012

“The Isaac Bell House: A Masterpiece of the Shingle Style”

The Richard H. Driehaus Museum, Chicago, IL, October 2011

“The Architect’s Dream: The Great Houses of Newport Rhode Island”

The John Hubbard Sturgis Eaton Annual Lecture, Boston Athenaeum, Boston, MA, March 2011

“The Great Houses of Newport: The Picturesque to the Gilded Age”

Archaeological Institute of America, St. Louis MO, November 2010

“Artistic Houses: The Book Beautiful as Architectural Showcase”   
The 34th Annual American Printing History Association Conference: Book Beautiful  
Newport, RI, October 2009

“Marble House and the Revival of the Arts of Louis XIV in Gilded Age America”

Wellesley College, April 2006

“The Architecture of Gilded Age Servitude: Servant Life at The Elms, Newport, RI”

American Studies Association Annual Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2004

“The Elms: A Great House Preserved” Castle Hill Architectural Lecture Series

Trustees of Reservations, Ipswich, MA, November 2004.

“The Isaac Bell House: The Shingle Style in Newport, RI”

Decorative Arts Forum, Berkeley, CA, May 2003.

“Luxurious Consumption: Tea Drinking and the Decorative Arts”

Houston Antique Dealers Association Annual Lecture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, February 1997.

“New England and the Shingle Style”

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston MA, January 1997.

“The World of Edwardian Collectors”

In conjunction with the Faberge exhibition at the Museums of Fine Arts of San Francisco, June 1996.

“The Vanderbilts and the Ancien Régime” Conference: THE DIX-HUITIEME: The Enduring Popularity of the Ancien Régime Interior in Europe and America 1850-1920  
The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Waddesdon Manor, England, May 2000

“A Beaux Arts Transformation: A Case Study of the History and Evolution of the Ochre Point

District in Newport, Rhode Island”

International Conference on Architectural Culture by 1900, City of Buenos Aires, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, ICOMOS Argentina, UNESCO, Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 1999

“The Eden of America: The Artistic Vision of Aquidneck Island, 1720-1920”

Preservation Institute, Nantucket Conference on Historic Landscapes. May 1994

“Redefining the Historic Landscape: Chateau-sur-Mer and The Elms”

The New England Museum Association Conference, November 1993

“Gardens of La Belle Epoque”

Friends of Vielles Maisons Francaise, French Consulate, New York City, October 1992.

**Memberships and Committees:**

Trustee, Blithewold Mansion and Arboretum, Bristol, RI. 2020-present. Overseer of the Cultural Landscapes Report.

Member, Education Committee. The Newport Restoration Foundation. 2016.

Member, Board of Directors. Institute of Classical Art and Architecture, New England Chapter, 2015-2021.

Honorary Member, Garden Club of America. Inducted in 2012.

Member, Governor’s Commission for the Restoration of the Rhode Island State House.

Providence, RI. 1996-2002.

Member, Society of Architectural Historians, 1987 to present

Member, New England Garden History Society, 1995 to present

Member. Newport Tree Commission, 1993

**Awards:**

2021 Victorian Society Book Award for *Newport: The Artful City* (2020)

2013 Frederick C. Williamson Professional Leadership Award in Historic Preservation from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission

2012 Doris Duke Preservation Award for Bellevue Avenue History Marker Project from the Newport Restoration Foundation

2012 Inducted as Honorary Member of the Garden Club of America

2010 Rhode Island School of Design CE Excellence in Teaching Award

2002 Newport Historical Society Award and RI State Preservation Award for Restoration of The Elms Sunken Garden