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## **Interior Designers, Garden Clubs Transform Vanderbilt Mansion with Holiday Magic**

*Special Twilight Tours of Mansion Planned for December 26-28*

CENTERPORT, NY (November 27, 2012) – Guest rooms with lighted trees, vintage ornaments, wreaths and garlands intertwined with gold and silver ribbons. A high-ceilinged, paneled library with a large tree and elegantly wrapped gifts. A grand marble fireplace lighted by glowing sconces.

Just before Thanksgiving each year, volunteer interior designers and garden clubs decorate William K. Vanderbilt II's Spanish-Revival mansion for the holidays. They use their design and decorating skills – plus greens, lights, ribbons, ornaments, trees and plants – to work some holiday magic in the grand, historic, 24-room house.



**Vanderbilt Library, decorated by  
Dix Hills Garden Club**



**Krishtia Lindgren and Mary  
Schlotter in Northport Porch**



**Michelle Boyer in Rosamund  
Vanderbilt's bedroom**

Taking part this year were the Dix Hills, Centerport, Honey Hills, Nathan Hale and Three Village garden clubs; Cornell Cooperative Master Gardeners; Michele Boyer; Harbor Homestead & Co. Design; Claudia Dowling Interiors; Joseph Del Percio Interior Design and Willow Garden Design.

Lance Reinheimer, executive director of the museum, said, “We’re grateful for their generosity and talent, which creates for visitors the charming holiday atmosphere of a bygone era of grandeur and sophisticated living.

“These dedicated volunteers study the mansion then create themes and historical color palettes. Their designs and the subtle placement of clothing, jewelry, gifts and other personal objects sometimes suggest that members of the family are in the house, but have momentarily left the room. This is in keeping with the preservation of the mansion as a living museum of the Vanderbilts’ life.”

**The spectacular results charm hundreds of visitors between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Eve. The Vanderbilt offers its very popular twilight mansion tours, scheduled this year on the evenings of Wednesday-Friday, December 26-28, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Admission: \$10 for adults, \$9 for students and seniors (62 and older), and \$5 for children 12 and under. Hot chocolate and cookies are included.**

**Holiday season hours: Open 12:00-4:00 on December 22-23 and 26-30. Closed: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.**

Virginia Sassano of Three Village Garden Club, which has taken part for more than 10 years, said, “This mansion is an important part of Gold Coast history. It’s a behind-the-scenes, ‘Upstairs Downstairs’ kind of experience – the small servants’ quarters contrast sharply with the opulence of the Vanderbilts’ lavish living quarters.”

Claudia Dowling, who has a “long history with the Vanderbilt and a deep affection for it,” decorated a mansion room this year for the first time. In 2011, she led the team of Long Island designers, artisans and landscape architects that restored the Vanderbilt Estate’s 1917 Normandy Manor into that year’s Restoration Design Show House. Dowling decorated the Portuguese sitting room with a tree and a large faux-antique angel. Her color palette and large ornaments, in teal, gold and creams, were inspired by the room’s antique Oriental rug.

Mary Schlotter and her daughter, Krishtia Lindgren, who operate the design firm Harbor Homestead & Co. in Centerport, have recreated a piece of the famous Manhattan nightclub El Morocco in the Northport Porch. The Vanderbilts socialized with their famous friends at El Morocco in the 1930s and 1940s.

Schlotter –one of the designers invited to decorate The White House in 2009 and 2010 – made Art Deco white-paper palm trees and decorated them with silver ornament balls. Using the nightclub’s navy, white and silver colors, she created an El Morocco banquette and reproduced the club’s sign and distinctive lettering. Seated at the banquette are William K. Vanderbilt II and his wife, Rosamund – in a life-size enlargement of a vintage newspaper photo of them, taken in El Morocco. Schlotter smiled and said, “When people attend the museum’s annual holiday dinner, they can dine with the Vanderbilts.” To complete the atmosphere, Schlotter’s selection of Christmas songs from the 1930s and ‘40s plays during tours.

In the room adjacent to the Northport Porch, designer Joseph Del Percio has installed a different kind of tree – a skeletal steel armature decorated with vintage gears and circular, farm-implement parts that appear to be huge ornaments. “It’s whimsical, goes well with the room’s ancient weapons, and looks like something from a Tim Burton movie.”

Ryan Vollmer of Willow Garden Design decorated the arcade between the nursery wing and the main house: “I used all live plants, including boxwood topiaries, wreaths, red poinsettias, moss and pine cones for a natural, winter-wonderland effect.”

Michelle Boyer, who has been part of the annual project for 15 years, decorated Rosamund Vanderbilt's paneled French bedroom. "I wanted the effect to be quiet elegance," she said. Her color scheme was copper, matte gold and pearl. "I wanted the room to look as if she was getting ready to go out for the evening. Next to her chaise, I placed a tea cup and saucer and some tiny, wrapped gifts. On the bed lies a fabulous dark-brown evening dress."

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