

In 2023, the Alumni Assoc donated \$24,000 for scholarships. **THANK YOU for your continued support. For info on how to sign-up or renew your membership, please visit the Alumni website at: [VSAAlumni](#)**

NOTE: There is a special membership rate of \$30 per year for those age 35 or younger.

It is now easier than ever to renew your Alumni membership. Visit the Victorian Society website at : [Home - Victorian Society](#) Move the cursor over the MEMBERSHIP dropdown menu at the top of the home page and click on JOIN the ALUMNI ASSOCIATION. Scroll down slightly and complete the form indicating the frequency of the donation, the amount/membership level desired, and other information as required to complete the donation.

Membership Secretary Sara Durkacs Resigns

Since 2019, Sara Durkacs (Newport 2016) has faithfully, competently, diligently, and professionally served the Alumni Association as Membership Secretary. In addition to managing our annual membership renewals including processing renewals online and by paper checks, and updating our membership software, Sara has served the Alumni Board lending her knowledge and experience with the management of not-for-profit organizations. As an all-volunteer organization, Sara worked many, many hours to keep our organization in business these past few years. And she always performed the many tasks requested of her with a pleasant, charming, and friendly personality. She regularly interacted with members of the Alumni Association to accurately complete her tasks. Her contributions to the Alumni Association cannot be overstated. Accordingly, it was with a heavy heart that I received and accepted Sara's resignation.

Sara wrote: "It is with mixed emotions that I resign my position as Membership Secretary. Over the course of my tenure, I have had the opportunity to work with wonderful colleagues and witness the positive impact our Association has had on its members, students, and enthusiasts. However, I find it increasingly challenging to fulfill the responsibilities associated with this role effectively. Earlier this year, I was promoted to Vice President of Lot Holder Relations and Secretary of Green-Wood—a challenging and exciting new chapter in my career. Therefore, I believe it is in the best interest of the

organization that I step down and allow someone who can dedicate the necessary time and attention to this role.”

Sara will continue to serve the Alumni Association as the Membership Secretary, *Emeritus*, helping us locate and train a new Membership Secretary. If you might be interested in serving the Alumni Association as Membership Secretary, please contact our president, David Lamdin, at dalamdin@gmail.com or call him at 703-243-2350.

The bylaws of the Alumni Association describe the Membership Secretary’s position in general terms as follows:

Section 5. The Membership Secretary shall process new members and arrange for the annual dues to be paid by each member. He/she shall maintain and update the membership database and furnish extracts of the mailing database to recipients as authorized by the Board, including to the VSA’s Summer Schools Committee for its mailings and to the VSA in compliance with its annual Chapter filing requirements. The Membership Secretary shall perform all other duties customarily incident to the office of Membership Secretary or prescribed by these bylaws or the Board.

Membership Secretary Position Description

- Managing the database; updating records w/new address, deceased members....
- Processing membership/scholarship gifts.
- Acknowledging membership/scholarship gifts.
- Generating donor lists for newsletters.
- Creating/querying email lists to communicate with the members.
- Preparing deposits and depositing checks at the Alumni bank
- Processing free memberships for new students.
- Processing gifts in Gnosis that are received and deposited by others.
- Crafting/Writing/sending renewal notices and appeals.
- Crafting/Writing/Sending Acknowledgement letters.
- Corresponding with members via email, phone.
- Corresponding with Sue at VSA national about those who have confused one alumni membership with VSA membership.
- Tech support.
- Process the PayPal payments.
- Update online renewal/enrollment forms.
- Communicate about website updates.

2024 Summer Schools

These are the dates for the 2024 programs, which include travel dates:

Newport—May 31 through June 9

Chicago—June 12 through June 19

London—June 29 through July 14

2023 Chicago Summer School Reception

On Saturday, June 17th, Richard Guy Wilson delivered his annual lecture hosted by the VSA Alumni Association and the Victorian Society for the Chicago Summer School students. This lecture is open to the public and attracted a number of summer school alumni this year. The lecture was held in the Lincoln Room at the Congress Hotel, overlooking the Auditorium Theatre.



Professor Wilson discussed the work of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924), an East coast architect who designed two notable buildings in Chicago visited by the Summer School students—St. Andrews Chapel (1913-1914) at St. James Cathe-

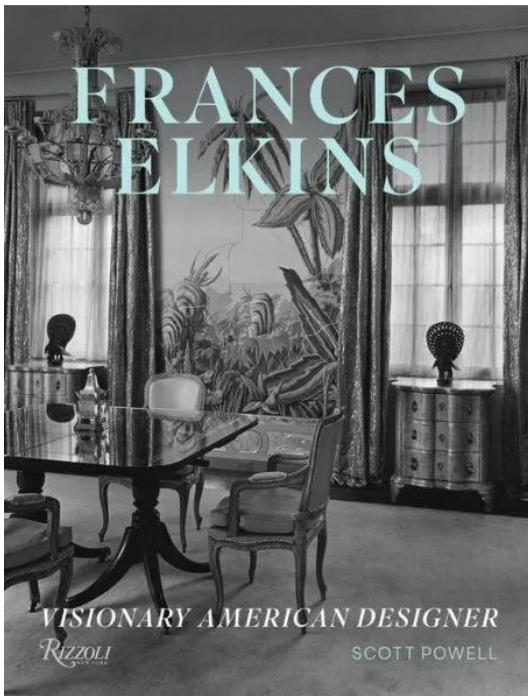
dral and Rockefeller Chapel (1925-1928) at the University of Chicago.





The crowning achievement of Goodhue’s work is the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln, designed in 1920, built in 1922-1932. The audience thoroughly enjoyed the lecture and learning about the remarkable work by Goodhue.

Frances Elkins: Visionary American Designer
by [Scott Powell](#)



A wide-ranging book on the timeless, elegant interiors of the versatile Frances Elkins, the *grande dame* of early twentieth-century design who influenced so many important designers of our time.

Called “the most creative designer we have ever had” by Billy Baldwin, Frances Elkins has been revered for her classic, erudite, and multidimensional decor. Ahead of her time, Elkins became a successful decorator who by the early 1930s had reached the top of her profession and was considered the only rival to Elsie de Wolfe.

Working throughout the United States, Elkins brought an international perspective and architectural sensibility to her work. Elkins traveled widely with her architect brother David Adler, educated at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and

he was a strong influence on her. Her social circle included interior designer Jean-Michel Frank, couturière Coco Chanel, aesthete Charles de Beistegui, arts patron Misia Sert and painter Salvador Dali, For her clients, she brought a modern European chic as well as a melding of the best of American, English, French,, Asian and Mexican traditions.

Scott Powell lectures on Frances Elkins this year:

- July 27 Ipswich, MA Castle Hill
- Aug 3 Los Angeles Institute for Classical Architecture
- Early Sept. - date TBA Lake Forest historical society/preservation group
- Early Sept. date TBA Chicago Women's Athletic Club
- Oct. 12-15 (date to be determined) San Francisco Fall Antiques Show
- Oct. 21 San Francisco American Decorative Arts Forum
- Nov. 4 San Francisco Treasure Island Museum



Alumni News

Rebecca Hagen (Chicago 2022) After seven years as the Registrar and Collections Manager at **Fallingwater** (and six years before that managing the collections at James Madison's **Montpelier**), VSA Chicago Summer School 2022 alumna Rebecca Hagen started as The Nord McClintock Family Director of Collections & Archives at the **Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation** in May 2023, where she oversees the care and documentation of the collections at **Taliesin** and **Taliesin West**, both of which are inscribed to the **UNESCO World Heritage List**



Taliesin West



John Cooper (Newport 2018), a noted Oscar Wilde scholar and expert, discusses Wilde's trip to America in 1883, his meeting with Walt Whitman, and just why and how this 27-year-old Irish poet began to develop his own unique brand of celebrity, and how Oscar would likely have defined and described his own much debated sexual identity.

[The Gilded Gentleman – A Podcast by Carl Raymond](#)

Click on EPISODES and Scroll down to Episode #50 (many other episodes are available).



Reflections on the VSA Summer School London
Santiago Preciado Ovalle

“Contrasts” and Parallels

“That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.” *-Ecclesiastes 1:9*

As a lifelong Anglophile, the Victorian Society in America London Summer School program was a dream come true. I’m deeply grateful for the opportunity that was given to me by receiving a full scholarship to attend. From a young age, my mother instilled in me a love of history, an interest in culture, art, architecture, monarchies, and the elegant world of pre-First World War Europe. In the UK in particular, that was a time highlighted by the Victorian and Edwardian Ages’ fusing of the pomp and circumstance of the British Empire’s traditions and the modernity that the Industrial Revolution brought.

This interest in all things British continued through college at Vassar, where I wrote my history thesis on the Norman Conquest, and the way that architecture was used to very literally and symbolically subjugate the conquered people and impose a new regime throughout the land. Then in grad school at Penn, where I studied Historic Preservation, I was again inspired by Britain; I looked at the ideals of the Garden City movement and Ebenezer Howard’s ideas and implementations, and how a reconceptualization of several political and economic ideas dealing with communal ownership of property could be applied to our modern times to achieve what I called “private preservation.”

I think part of the reason that so many people throughout the world are such Anglophiles, why we admire the pomp, circumstance, art, architecture, elegance, refinement, and culture of Great Britain, is because of its great history as the place where modern day capitalism was if not invented, then perfected. We derive so many of our ideals from British history, architecture, and culture, and naturally when people around the world admire the United States and our culture, as a former colony of Britain, they are consequently in part admiring that older Western society.

The fact that throughout centuries of upheavals and revolutions, wars and pandemics, Britain has managed to conserve its monarchical and aristocratic glory and pomp, is almost an unbelievable thing to witness, especially first-hand. When I was in the UK, I felt very much that the past was still alive, that there was a continuous thread through history that was very real and present; a feeling not felt in other countries.

Another part of my perennial fascination with all things British, and in our case, all things Victorian, is because there are so many similarities between that era and our present-day times. Not only are we also living through the reign of the longest-reigning monarch in British history, but beyond that, it is similarly an era of unparalleled technological innovation and growth, when our world has shrunk even more than it already had.

It is also a point in history of extreme wealth and income inequality, a 'New Gilded Age,' as many nowadays call our time. A time of incredibly awesome and destructive growth, of similarly unfettered capitalism that does not care for peoples' humanity or for the Earth and its fragile ecosystems. We live in an age of incredible restlessness and social insecurity, and most of us have lived through at least two economic collapses, several global wars, revolutions, and countless social upheavals close to home.

As a result of all of these similarities between the Victorian Age and today, I especially connected during the course to the work and efforts of William Morris and John Ruskin, who sought to remove British society from the toxic inhumanity of the Industrial Age and the loss of craft, and bring back a revival of the power of craft in the arts and architecture which they hoped would in turn change society for the better.

I feel that in our present day we too live in a world where growth-for-growth's sake capitalists have not only progressively destroyed the environment, but where architecture has seen a conspicuous decline in any form of ornamentation or craft. Most architects today are limited by developers' insatiable profit margins, and trends in architecture mean that most of what we see are bland towers with flat facades replete with endless sheets of glass.

Not only does no one except the wealthiest oligarchs live in these towers (a few weeks a year at that), causing mass displacement of working- and middle-class people in cities all over the world and making cities less inhabitable, but these towers are also very real symbols of our age of empty consumerism, of flashy and shiny facades.

Call me a traditionalist (obviously), but ours is not the best of times, in so many ways. We must change for the better, and we could well be inspired by Morris and that group of Victorians in trying to bring about a revival of craftsmanship not only in architecture and the arts, but in so many other fields, that might hopefully bring about a revival in our humanity. It won't be easy for sure, with so many billions willingly coerced into following the voracious capitalist machine over the cliff, but there is a very palpable shift in younger people. There is a burgeoning back-to-the-earth movement, of homesteaders, of people working with their hands in many crafts, and politically, of socialists and social democrats all over the world.

Indeed, just like in the Victorian Age, ours is a time of growing socialist movements that try to solve our many existential crises. Therefore, I thought it was apt that one of the last places we visited in London during this year's summer school program was the grave of Karl Marx at the historic Highgate Cemetery. For many it seemed odd that this German revolutionary philosopher would be buried in London, but it somehow made sense that he would be buried in the place where capitalism was perfected, in the great imperial city.



I'd always known that the Victorian Age was a revolutionary time in history, but truly this trip made it seem so much temporally and spatially closer to us today, and my appreciation for the past and the lessons we can learn from it has only increased.

Thank you to all who made our summer school program a resounding success, and who continue to believe in the importance of preserving and more importantly, learning from the past.

A Point of View: Vignettes from the 2022 London Summer School **Jennifer Robinson**

Nearly three years ago, I was speaking with a colleague in Providence, Rhode Island about our shared interest in British architecture and history. Rachel Robinson is a 2012 Victorian Summer School Alumna, and could not speak highly enough about her experience. 'You MUST apply!', she told me. 'It will be absolutely life-changing!' And so, being a particular enthusiast of the 19th century, I immediately ran to my computer to submit an application. Little did I know, due to a global pandemic, it would be another two years until I could finally attend this highly regarded and beloved program.

Perhaps because of this prolonged wait, the experience of embarking on a two-week, whistle-stop tour of 19th-century architecture and design was made all-the-more meaningful. No fears of chaotic queues, delays, or airport baggage 'mountains' would stop me from arriving! I was thrilled just to set foot on the bustling pavement of London again, and to meet people from varied and allied fields of interest: design, decorative arts, architecture, and education.

Coming from a background in architectural preservation, I tend to approach historic sites with an eye for *viewpoint* – not only of space and visual perspective, but of people and the way they might have perceived, envisioned, and thought about places in the past. Ian Dungavell added some excellent advice in his opening lecture: to try not to look at the buildings we would visit only through the lens of a camera (as tempting as

this may be!), but to also experience spaces by letting one's eye wander and absorb detail – which is particularly crucial to the Victorian experience.

This idea of 'viewpoint' was a theme of our two-week journey, as all of our lecturers and tour leaders led us adeptly through a range of topics that both informed and enriched our understanding of the Victorian ethos. Our visit to the V&A was a prime example; there, we were encouraged by Jo Banham to take on the perspective of 'True' and 'False' design principles, as promoted by Henry Cole and Richard Redgrave in their so-called 'Chamber of Horrors' of 1852.

In debating the merits of an encaustic bread plate by Pugin with my classmates, I was engaged with household objects in a different and challenging way. Later, I found myself enjoying the Great Exhibition gallery anew, as if it were 1852 – thinking of the objects both as a fastidious design critic, and a middle-class Victorian consumer. Personally, I liked a diminutive paper '3D' souvenir of the Crystal Palace as much as the bread plate, and I would have bought either in the V&A's famed gift shop. However, I felt the symbolic reproach of Pugin the next day, as Rosemary Hill led us through a fascinating lecture; while telling us about the merits of the Gothic, a loud clap of thunder ominously roared outside the Art Workers' Guild!

As I continued to find, our viewpoints were endlessly shifting throughout the trip – sometimes in a literal sense. At Manchester Town Hall, we had the unique perspective of climbing in a construction hoist nearly 280 feet, as part of a tour of the building's restoration. Within a complicated maze of scaffolding and rigging, we saw elements of the structure – within reach – that are usually only meant to be viewed from ground level. The sheer scale of the construction site (itself a miniature 'city'), and the complexity of the restoration



operation, revealed intricacies of 1870s-era construction practice in a new light. To me, it was a testament to artisans and craftspeople; the revival and re-learning of 19th-century trades, such as masonry and mosaic work, is an essential part of the current restoration scheme, and a new generation of workers are learning heritage trades that can hopefully propel new projects forward.

Despite the impressive scale of a structure like Manchester Town Hall, it was not only the grand buildings that had the power to capture our attention. The paradoxical Victorian world was also brought to life by guides like Elain Harwood, who provided a tour of London's East End. We could only catch small glimpses of the crowded, dark, narrow

streets associated with Victorian London's squalid working-class housing, many of which are now buried under the massive glass-and-steel office blocks of Whitechapel.



However, the 19th-century examples of social housing we visited were thought-provoking and illuminating, all models that approached the crises of their day in different ways. With this idea of the challenges of urban growth in mind, nothing could have prepared me for what was in store later at Crossness Pumping Station. What I found there was a masterful tour-de-force of Victorian engineering, where even the seemingly mundane was uplifted to cathedral-esque status. Coupled with an applaudable presentation that gave new meaning to the sheer miracle of Victorian plumbing, I left just as astounded as Prince Albert apparently was after his visit on opening day in 1865.

In a similar vein, even amidst the expected grandeur of places like St George's Hall in Liverpool or the Natural History Museum in Oxford, there are views that can catch one entirely by surprise. One of the most dramatic, yet unexpected, was on the stair landing on the second floor of the (former) Grand Midland Hotel, where we took a moment to examine the concourse and giant, iron canopy of St Pancras Station below. From this quiet vantage, it was like looking at a jewel box through a keyhole; the sheer scale of the trainshed, combined with the fact that its functionality and design intent remain intact after more than 150 years, was simply spectacular.



Thus far, I realize I have only touched upon the urban sites of our tour, but I would be remiss not to emphasize the complementary themes we encountered in the countryside. As dense cityscapes gave way to wide, open fields throughout our journey in the heart of the Midlands and Cotswold, I was reminded of the 'pleasant pastures' and 'clouded hills' that William Blake was talking about in the early 1800s –far away from those 'dark, Satanic mills' of bleak industry and commerce. A particularly breathtaking vantage point was at All Saints Selsley, where Bodley's church was perched above a quiet valley beside a farmyard. It looked as though the church had always been there, despite being completed in 1862; to me, it exemplified the 'lost Eden' that the Victorians seemed so intent on recapturing.

Of course, being a preservation enthusiast, there is nothing more foundational than the ethos of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings – that of material conservation, combined with a particular respect for traditional trades. It is very relevant to the decisions I have to make about repair vs. replacement of historic materials on a daily basis at Historic New England, and so to arrive at the very heart of the Anti-Scrape and Arts & Crafts movements – at Red House, Kelmscott, Wightwick, and Standen – was a true ‘homecoming’ of sorts. I also must add, I immediately felt compelled to cover the walls of my apartment in carefully-folded tapestries (perhaps to the horror of my landlord!). But I digress.



Throughout the trip, I also considered aspects of the ‘intangible’: elements that infuse spaces with vitality and connection to the past, often without consciously being noticed. I thought about the rush of wind from ap-

proaching trains on the Tube, and how otherworldly that must have felt for 19th-century passengers; the lingering scent of incense and the soaring sound of the choir at Evensong at Lichfield Cathedral, and what that meant to the parishioners of an Anglican church in the midst of the 19th century’s religious chasms and revivals; and the clanging docks and squawking of seagulls around the Mersey (and their persistence on stealing food!), a reminder of our proximity to the sea and Liverpool’s role as major port during the Victorian period.

Throughout Westminster, the most striking was the absence of the reassuring chime of Big Ben, currently under restoration. It was a reminder that the absence of even the most obvious can have a profound effect on space and sense of place.



In all, I could not help but think of what the British built environment would look like now, had it not been for the Victorian Society in the 1960s.

When I walk around a place like London, I find myself vacillating between two worlds: that of the present, and that of the past. I may be walking towards the M&S at Euston Station to pick up a packet of Bourbon Biscuits – but for a moment – I can envision the giant Euston Arch soaring overhead. When I see a crane or an empty lot, I'm always wondering: "What happened here? What was here before? Is what is coming...better?"

As I know many of the friends I met at Priory Grove can attest (and I would agree), the answer in many cases is decidedly 'no.' It is a constant reminder that the job is not yet finished. There are always battles for the material beauty and craftsmanship of Victorian architecture alone, and this is often a worthy cause in itself. However, there are also renewed battles for the continuity of community, of a genuine sense of place – and now, for climate. If there is one thing that the Victorian Society Summer School left with me, it was the reaffirmation of why historic buildings matter – and why the 19th century in particular is such a vital part of both the English and American story.

I will be forever grateful for the opportunities, behind-the-scenes perspectives, and keen insights that the Victorian Society Summer School provided!

Reflections on Victorian Summer School in London **Chelsea Spencer**

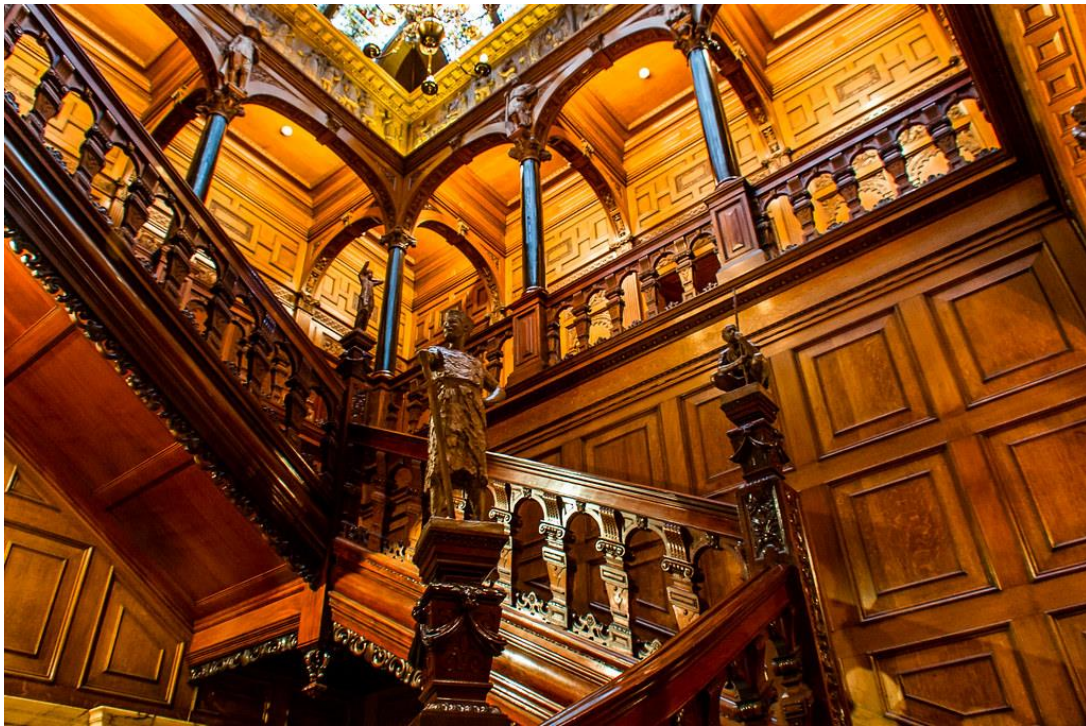
The nineteenth century is hard to see. Not because it is so foreign and inscrutable (although in many ways it is). Nor because of the violence wrought by imperialism and industrialization in the name of wealth, power, and "progress" (although that too we struggle to reckon with). Rather, the nineteenth century is hard to see because we live today in the house that the Victorians built. That is, many of the categories we use to make sense of both our own time and times past acquired their modern meanings and aesthetic associations over the course of the long nineteenth century: style, world history, national patrimony, and culture, to name just a few of the "keywords" of Anglophone modernity catalogued by Raymond Williams in the 1970s.

From my earliest training as a historian of modern architecture, I was taught to see the nineteenth century as but a transitional period. But in recent years I have been trying to unlearn the teleological frameworks (a notably nineteenth-century mode of thought) that I absorbed from the work of those like Sigfried Giedion who saw Victorian architecture as significant insofar as it pointed forward, those who studied the period's inventive uses of new materials and technologies in order to discern the inchoate "seeds of the architecture of our day" beneath their historicist trappings.

Fortunately for me, the Victorian Society in America's London Summer School offered unparalleled opportunities to see the Victorian age anew, in all its strange and manifold complexity. As with any worthwhile journey, however, I returned home from London with

more questions than answers about the Victorian age and its architectural and cultural legacies.

Above all, it was the strange modernity evident in the historicism itself—self-aware and often playful—that intrigued me wherever we went, all the more so when I didn't know how to make sense of it. One curiosity was the palatial estate office built in the mid-1890s for the American real estate scion William Waldorf Astor at Two Temple Place.



Who could not be charmed by the four putti lounging about the electric light standards at the building's entrance, their attentions directed to neither heaven nor earth but rather absorbed in the notably manual work of telecommunication (speaking into the transmitter, cranking the magneto, listening to the receiver)? But what to make of the interior decorations, exquisitely crafted to be sure, but so seemingly frivolous, if not lowbrow, in the selection of figures depicted? Or rather, what would Astor's guests have made of their whimsical surroundings—populated by the carved likenesses of *The Three Musketeers*, Pocahontas, Robin Hood, and other characters later to be subsumed by Disneyfication—as they arrived to conduct presumably serious business?

Or how might Queen Victoria herself have regarded the colorful sewage-pumping steam engine that engineers at the Crossness Pumping Station named in her honor (not to mention the laxative-themed ornamentation on the capitals in the grand engine room?)

Likewise, what was on the mind of William Burges in 1863—three years after the so-called evolution debates roiled Oxford University—as he sketched the fanciful menagerie of beasts, from the mythical (unicorn) to the farmed (chicken) to the extinct (dodo), that now perch atop the ends of the choir stalls of Worcester Chapel?



It was these small moments of levity and oddity that generated, perhaps paradoxically, some of my most profound revelations of the trip: uncanny encounters with the alterity of the past that I will not soon forget.



The Heritage Society of the Alumni Association

The Heritage Society of the Alumni Association supports our efforts to provide scholarships to the Summer Schools in the future. Join this special group of Alumni by making a planned gift such as a bequest in your will or beneficiary designations of IRAs or retirement plans.

Hank Dunlop has joined the Society with an RMD designation from his IRA. **John C. Freed**, a longtime VSA and Alumni Association supporter made provisions for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association in memory of his partner, **Paul Duchscherer**. **Paul Duchscherer** very thoughtfully made provisions in his trust for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association as well as designating the Alumni Association as the beneficiary of all future royalties from his many books and other publications.

The **Bob and Carole Chapman Fund** very generously awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the Alumni Association Chapter in memory of **Carole Chapman**. **Darrell Lemke & Maryellen Trautman** made provisions for a bequest to the Alumni Association. These gifts and designations help ensure that current and future generations of students will be able to attend the educational opportunities presented by the VSA Summer Schools.

You can join these members of the Heritage Society of the Alumni Association and support the mission of the Alumni Association while maximizing the benefits of a deferred gift. Your gift becomes part of your estate planning to protect valuable assets from income, capital gains and/ or estate taxes. Here are some popular estate planning techniques:

REQUESTS BY WILL OR LIVING TRUST

You can leave a bequest in your will or trust. You retain control of your assets during your lifetime and avoid estate taxes. GIFTS OF LIFE INSURANCE, CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES, CHARITABLE LEAD TRUSTS, CHARITABLE REMAINDER ANNUITY TRUSTS, CHARITABLE REMAINDER UNITRUSTS, and a POOLED INCOME FUND are all some of the other estate planning techniques you can discuss with your financial advisor to provide funds to the Alumni Association to provide scholarships to future Summer School students.

Sample Bequest Language

To include the Alumni Association in your will or trust, the following is suggested wording to take to your attorney: "After fulfilling other provisions, I give, devise and bequeath _____% of the residue and remainder of my estate (or \$_____ if a specific amount) to the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools, a 501 c (3) organization to benefit the Alumni Association (tax ID # 23-1710978), located at 24 Wilkins Ave Fl 1, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

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If you are interested in serving on the VSA Alumni Association board or getting involved with a committee, or to send news and articles, please contact: David Lamdin at: president@vsaalumni.org

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The Officers and board members of the Alumni Association are extremely grateful to all alumni who help support our mission. We offer our special thanks to those listed below who made additional contributions—above and beyond their membership dues—to the Alumni Association Scholarship Funds.

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Scholarship Contributor list as of June 1, 2023.

The Officers and board members of the Alumni Association also give special thanks to those members at the Household level and above. Your generosity is appreciated.

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