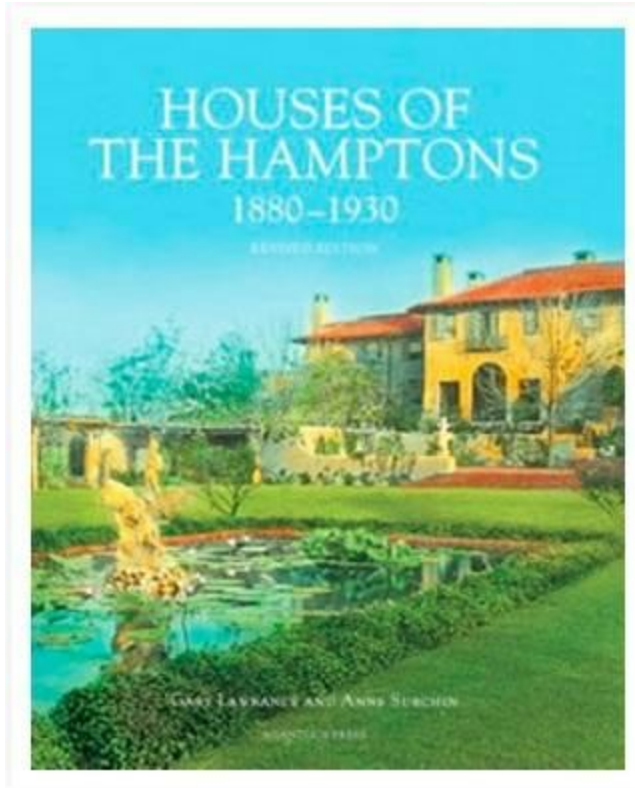


**GARY LAWRENCE ARCHITECTURAL PRESENTATIONS**

**PRESS PACKET**



## **HOUSES OF THE HAMPTONS, 1880-1930**

What began as a tiny cluster of settlements established by Puritans fleeing the more restrictive towns to the north had evolved by the late 19th century into one of American's premier resort communities. The Hamptons, valued for their bracing air, their exceptional views, and their fertile soil, drew dozens of the best families in New York and New England society, who made the area their summer playground. As one society matron remarked of Southampton, 'Southampton is a little backwater of God.' In this remarkable volume, filled with archival photographs, authors Gary Lawrance and Anne Surchin plunge the reader into this world of leisured, cultured existence. Their survey of more than 30 houses shows us treasures such as Ballyshear, Ocean Castle, The Bouwerie, and Port of Missing Men. They discuss the great architects of the period who designed these houses, including figures and firms such as Cross & Cross, John Russell Pope, and Leroy P. Ward. Among those for whom they designed houses in the Hamptons were Henry Francis du Pont, Col. Henry Huttleston Rogers, and Ellery James. Houses of the Hamptons offers a fascinating glimpse into the privileged society of the turn of the century, one that has all but vanished from the modern world.

In the revised edition, four chapters have been added as well as a number of new and archival color illustrations.

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## THE HISTORY OF RALPH LAUREN'S ESTATE IN BEDFORD, NEW YORK

Architectural Digest, by Gary Lawrance

Oatlands. That's what [Ralph Lauren's home](#) in Bedford, New York, featured as the cover story of *AD's* September issue, was originally called. The estate was so christened by its first owner, landscape designer Robert Ludlow Fowler, Jr., who in the early 1920s enlisted the help of preeminent New York architecture firm Delano & Aldrich in designing it. Bedford's lushly forested and rolling landscape, evocative of the English countryside, has long been a place of quiet wealth. Since the early 1900s, members of New York society seeking to avoid the social spotlight of places like Newport, Rhode Island; Southampton, New York; or Lenox, Massachusetts, have gathered there.

Robert Ludlow Fowler, Jr., was born in 1887 to an old New York family. In 1913 he married equally socially prominent Charlotte Cram. Although he began his career as a banker, he is best known for his later work as a landscape architect. Fowler designed the landscapes of other distinguished members of New York society, including the Westchester estate of Mr. and Mrs. David Rockefeller. He worked closely with many of the famous architects of the era, and when he decided to build his own country home in 1924, he hired William Adams Delano and Chester Holmes Aldrich. Delano & Aldrich designed a restrained French Norman-style residence, placed in a landscape designed by Fowler: a personal work that continued to evolve until his death in 1973. It wasn't until the late 1980s, when the estate was in disrepair, that Lauren purchased it and set about restoring and updating the great old period mansion. Oatlands today represents the best of the past, its patrician bones undergirding a contemporary ode to the splendor of a bygone era.

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## **GARY LAWRENCE BUILDS HAMPTONS HOMES THAT FIT IN YOUR HAND**

**Dans Papers, by John Laffey**

If you were ever a fan of the hit television show, *The Brady Bunch* then you've most likely seen an episode where Mr. Brady presents a miniature model of a development to a potential real estate investor.

Today, most of the time anyway, those miniature models of houses or commercial developments have largely been replaced with computer modeling. But here in the Hamptons, there is still a need for the old school way of presenting a potential real estate project, and the guy that many architectural firms hire to build those models is a man named Gary Lawrence who lives and works in Stony Brook and has been doing the trade for over 30 years.

Gary owns the firm Lawrence Architectural Presentations, which provides design presentations, architectural models and design development services to architects, landscape architects and their clients. The construction of real estate models is an art form in itself, and Mr. Lawrence has developed his business around it, and he's been doing it for over 30 years.

These miniature models allow clients to see a building as if they were viewing it from an airplane. The models are completely to scale, are colored perfectly, and are built before actual land is broken so that a real estate buyer can get a visual of their future home that they can feel and touch.

In many ways, his miniature models are artistic sales tools and they are highly valuable to prestigious Hamptons architects who have clients who would rather see a miniature model they can feel and touch over a computer screen. And while computers today can print out models using 3-D technology, Mr. Lawrance prefers to do all of his work by hand.

Nearly all of the major firms on the East End have utilized his talents, including Butt Otruba-O'Connor, Peter Cook, Di Sunno Architecture, Francis Fleetwood, Frank Greenwald, John Laffey... the list goes on and on. Mr. Lawrance produces the models at a rate of three every month. Each one with his masterful touch.

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## **WHEN IT COMES TO ARCHITECTURE, GARY LAWRANCE THINKS SMALL**

**Hamptons Cottages & Gardens, by Dawn Watson**

As a young boy, Gary Lawrance made elaborate houses from playing cards and "Little Golden" books, castles from sand, and towering pyramids from Dixie cups. Approximately 50 years later, not much has

changed. Now an authority on architectural model-making and the principal of Lawrance Architectural Presentations, he uses more sophisticated materials, but the goal is more or less the same.

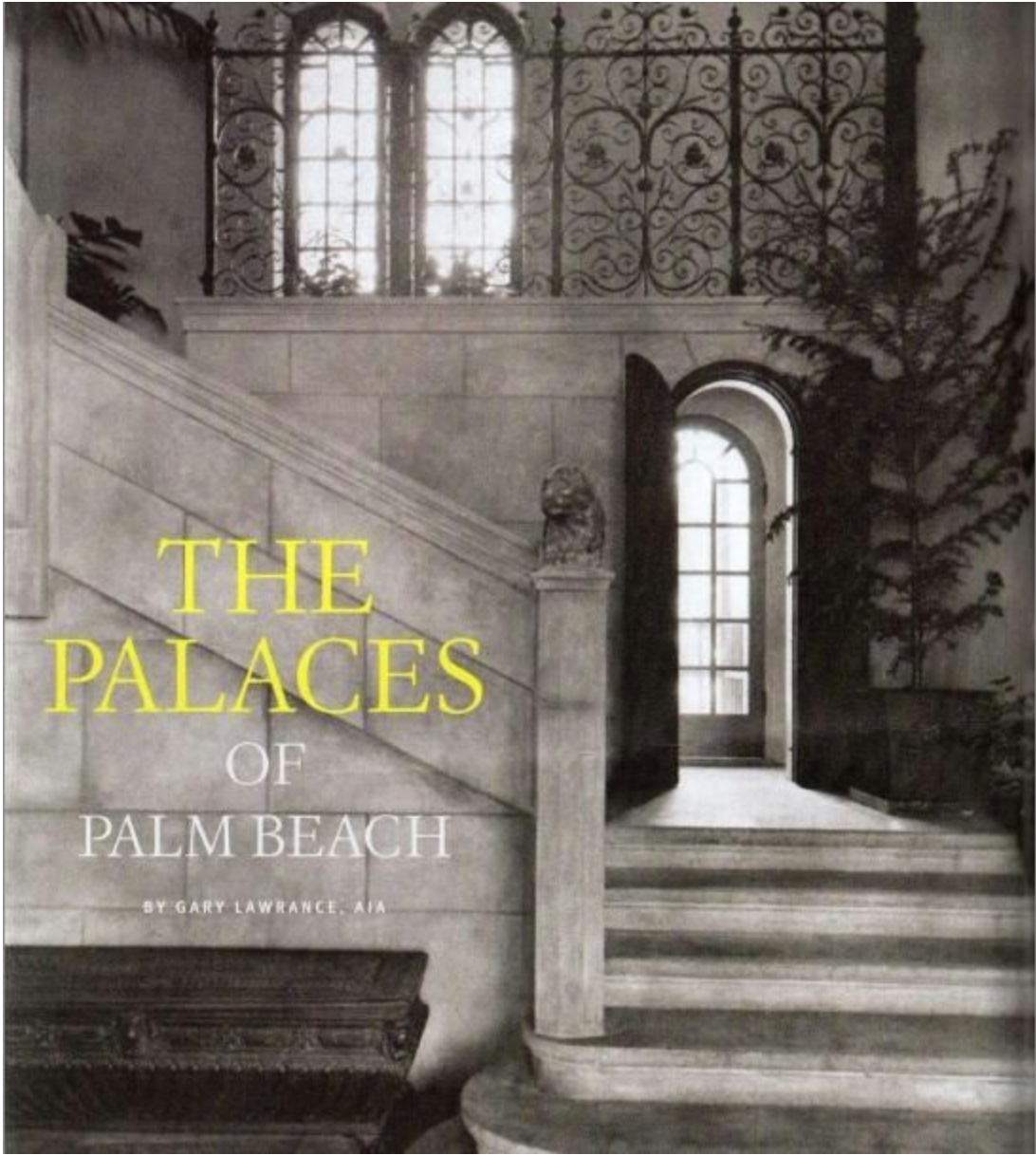
“I’ve been building things all my life,” says the Stony Brook–based Lawrance, an architectural historian (he co-wrote the 2007 book *Houses of the Hamptons 1880–1930*) who has a degree in architecture from the New York Institute of Technology. Lawrance’s models are frequently commissioned by other architects to use in presentations to architectural review boards and clients, or by proud homeowners who want a miniaturized version of their domiciles for posterity. His constructions have also been exhibited in galleries and arts institutions, including the Southampton Historical Museum.

To hand-craft his intricate 1/8-scale miniature models of houses and other structures, he uses an arsenal of model-making tools: foam core, mat board, double-sided tape, Elmer’s Glue-All, and X-Acto knives. Working from floor, elevation, and roof plans, he begins by creating a basic white structure. For more elaborate representations, he’ll work in color and even actual building materials, replicating interiors, landscaping, pools, accessory buildings, and smaller details, such as tiny luxury cars in the driveway and trees lining a walkway.

Two sets of drawings are required at the outset—one to cut up and one for reference. Lawrance first cuts away the exterior wall from the plan with an X-Acto knife, slicing off the chimneys, bay windows, and other design details, which are added back later. (“I tend to make the floor plan as simple and boxy as possible,” he says.) Using 1/8"-thick foam core cut to scale, he then tapes or glues a pair of walls together. From there, it’s time to build the bones of the building, facing the exteriors with 1/16" mat board, which is the perfect scale for a 6"-thick wall.

It takes Lawrance anywhere from a day to complete a model for a very simple Cape to more than a week for a more complex design (a small tower element for a Hamptons estate might take three hours alone), and prices for his work range from about \$2,000 to \$20,000. “I have to be meticulous, but I also have to be pretty fast,” he says. “They’re for a specific purpose, and in the Hamptons there are always deadlines.” So if time weren’t an issue and he could mock up his dream home? It would be “a pavilion-style structure, one that’s actually impossible to build.”

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THE  
PALACES  
OF  
PALM BEACH

BY GARY LAWRENCE, AIA

## Quest Magazine, by Gary Lawrance

**"IT ALL STARTED WITH A BUNCH** of coconuts." When the *Providencia*, a ship on its way from Havana to Barcelona with a cargo of coconuts, ran aground here in 1878, early residents planted its payload on the beach. Those coconuts grew into the majestic palm trees that Palm Beach is known and named for.

If the coconuts were the seeds of Palm Beach's natural beauty, Henry Morrison Flagler, a northern industrialist, was the father of the island's manmade landscape. With the southward expansion of his railroad lines and hotel development, he built the Atlantic coast of Florida into a winter resort destination. In 1901, as a wedding present for his third wife, Mary Lily Kenan, Flagler constructed Whitehall, the first of many Palm Beach palaces that would follow and turn the area into a playground for the rich.

Within only a few years, future Palm Beach legends appeared on the scene. In 1918, Paris Singer, the sewing machine heir, met Addison Mizner, a down-on-his-luck architect, and hired him to design the Everglades Club on Worth Avenue. Eva Stotesbury, Palm Beach's undisputed social leader, was so impressed with the outcome that she hired Mizner to design her new home. The Stotesbury commission made him Palm Beach society's architect of choice, and a legend. Many other notable architects and designers followed, including Marion Sims Wyeth, Maurice Fatio, Howard Major, John Volk, and Joseph Urban, whose collaboration with Wyeth produced the Mar-a-Lago for Marjorie Merriweather Post.

Here are five homes that have made history in Palm Beach:

**WHITEHALL** The first official "Palace" of Palm Beach was designed by the prominent New York architects Carrere & Hastings in 1902. Built on Lake Worth, this fifty-five-room, 60,000-square-foot, white stucco mansion with two-story pillared entrance, is a Southern plantation married to a Newport marble cottage—Scarlett meets the Vanderbilts. While the exterior is all white and cool, the opulent interiors are an eclectic mix of European styles. Whitehall's heyday, however, was shortly lived when, in 1913, Flagler slipped down its marble stairway and died shortly thereafter at age eighty-three. In 1917, Whitehall became a hotel and stayed that way until 1959 when it faced possible demolition. Flagler's granddaughter, Jean Flagler Matthews, rescued it by forming the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, which restored the home and opened it to the public.







**EL MIRASOL** "The Sunflower," home of Edward Townsend Stotesbury and Eva Roberts Cromwell Stotesbury, was the epicenter of Palm Beach society. Eva, known for being a gracious hostess, was the chatelaine of two other palaces. When someone once commented on her gold bathroom fixtures, she responded that they were actually economical, since gold does not need polishing. The 1919 Mizner design for El Mirasol started out as a forty-room Spanish mission-style villa, modeled after a convent outside of Burgos, Spain, but was always being remodeled. A local story goes that Eva would add on to the house whenever another house in town strove to eclipse hers. The forty-two-acre estate on North County Road included a forty-car garage, a zoo, outside dining loggias, a garden court, and a spectacular ocean view. Thirteen years after Eva's death, the house was demolished. All that's left is the entrance gate and a few outdoor fountains.

**CASA BENDITA** "Blessed House" was built in 1921 for John S. Phipps. The Phipps family, whose fortune was made in steel, was at one time one of the largest landowners in Palm Beach. With a four-story tower, long open colonnades, and two swimming pools, it was one of the showplaces in Palm Beach and locals often referred to it as "The Castle." The North County Road palace was demolished in 1961, and a new house designed by prominent local architect Jeffrey Smith occupies the site today.

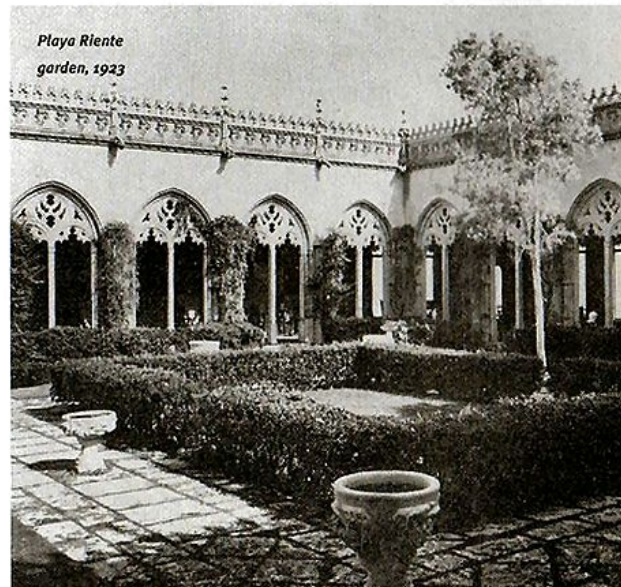
**PLAYA RIENTE** “Laughing Beach” was generally considered to be Mizner’s masterpiece. It was originally built in 1923 for Joshua S. Cosden, an Okalahoma oil millionaire, on twenty-seven ocean-front acres. In 1926, automobile titan Horace Dodge’s widow, Anna, bought the villa after marrying actor Hugh Dillman. They expanded the house and went on European spending sprees to fill the seventy rooms with rare treasures. The well-appointed house had an enormous gothic entrance hall, a music room with a dramatic set of Jose Sert murals. Anna was said to have claimed that Hugh taught her how to spend and enjoy her money.

By the mid-1950s, she decided to sell the estate, but could find no takers for it as a residence. After the city refused to allow her to sell it for nonresidential use, she auctioned the contents of the house and had the North Ocean Boulevard villa demolished, much to the disbelief of the community. New houses occupy the site and only the beach retaining wall remains today.

**CIELITO LINDO** (“A little bit of heaven”) Unlike Anna Dodge Dillman, who needed a little help spending her fortune, Jessie Woolworth Donahue was a natural at it. The daughter of F. W. Woolworth, Jessie inherited a mega fortune for her time. Jessie and her husband James P. Donahue owned a private railroad car, fleets of automobiles, jewels, furs, old masters on the walls. They also had a vast Fifth Avenue apartment, and a sixty-five-room Southampton mansion. Cielito Lindo, which they built on sixteen ocean-to-lake acres along South Ocean Boulevard, was a 45,000-square-foot Mediterranean Xanadu. Designed by Marion Sims Wyeth in 1927, it housed a sixty-foot living room and adjoining patio overlooking a palm-lined lawn. The house was elaborately decorated in various period styles.

But all of this magnificence was shattered in 1931 when James committed suicide. In 1948, Jessie sold the estate to developers, who partially demolished the house, splitting it in two, and subdivided what was left. Today, Kings Road goes directly through the former living room of Cielito Lindo.

The era of palace-building came to an end toward the late 1920s, but today a renewed interest in grand living means that many new palaces are being built by a new cast of architects and wealthy patrons, ensuring that Palm Beach is and might always be a “little bit of heaven.” ♦



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# AMERICA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL MANSIONS

Forbes by Bethany Lyttle

Mansions: They're opulent. They're enormous. And their histories are rife with social drama. No wonder they pique our curiosity.

The exact definition of the word "mansion" varies but in U.S. real estate terms, it's generally defined as a single family residence of more than 8,000 square feet. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary just calls it "a large and imposing residence." Either way, these sizeable dwellings are undoubtedly some of the most beautiful and celebrated examples of residential architecture.

To learn more about these American beauties, we turned to experts, including architects, realtors, authors and preservation and restoration specialists. Together, they provided examples that range from looming-and-eeerie to gracious. But if you think America's mansions are just replicas of their European counterparts, think again. According to Gary Lawrance, an architect and author who specializes in homes of the Gilded Age, "[These homes] were the culmination of European style and American technology."

The Lyndhurst mansion in Tarrytown, New York, is one-of-a-kind. "Lyndhurst is one of those buildings that if it didn't exist any longer [it] would be hard to find any others to compare it to," says Lawrance. Notable for its Rhineland castle-like details, the early Gothic Revival residence sits on a knoll overlooking the Hudson River. A four-story tower, sometimes used as an observatory, provides views of the entire estate and on clear days, of Manhattan. Stained glass, sharply arched windows, vaulted ceilings and ornate furnishings play to the mansion's grand-yet-mysterious appearance (the mansion has appeared in several scary movies).

Another East Coast masterpiece comes in the form of 39,000-square-feet in Newport, Rhode Island. Built for Frederick William Vanderbilt, the Rough Point mansion serves as a pristine example of Newport's famed Gilded Age. Not only is it architecturally significant, it is strategically situated on a rocky promontory overlooking the Atlantic Ocean; its gardens were designed by the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted.

"In my mind, no house in Newport has a better location," says Jeanine Kober of the Newport Restoration Foundation. "Pound for pound, its natural beauty is just more dramatic than others." Its other distinction: the great collections of its owner, Doris Duke who died 19 years ago, didn't leave the house. "Everything's still there from the Renoir to the life-size sterling Tiffany swan centerpiece, to the 1980's Merlin phone system," adds Kober.

In New York City, there is another world-class mansion, this one built for Frank Woolworth of the Woolworth's retail chain. Designed by C.H.P. Gilbert, an architect famous for his mansions, the neo-French Renaissance residence was completed in 1916. It features all the gilding, plaster work, hand-carved millwork, and precious stone that you might expect to find in a mansion.

Each level of the seven-story mansion offers delightful details that speak to Woolworth's massive wealth. Its front drawing room alone spans 35 feet and features an ornate carved fireplace, a grand staircase and mosaic-tile floors. A skylight fashioned from stained glass, a solarium, and a formal dining room that seats

fifty guests are among its other opulent features. The mansion, on the market for \$90 million, is unusual because its renovation stayed true to traditional pre-war style, according to realtor Kathleen Coumou.

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Plum Hamptons, by Nick Leighton

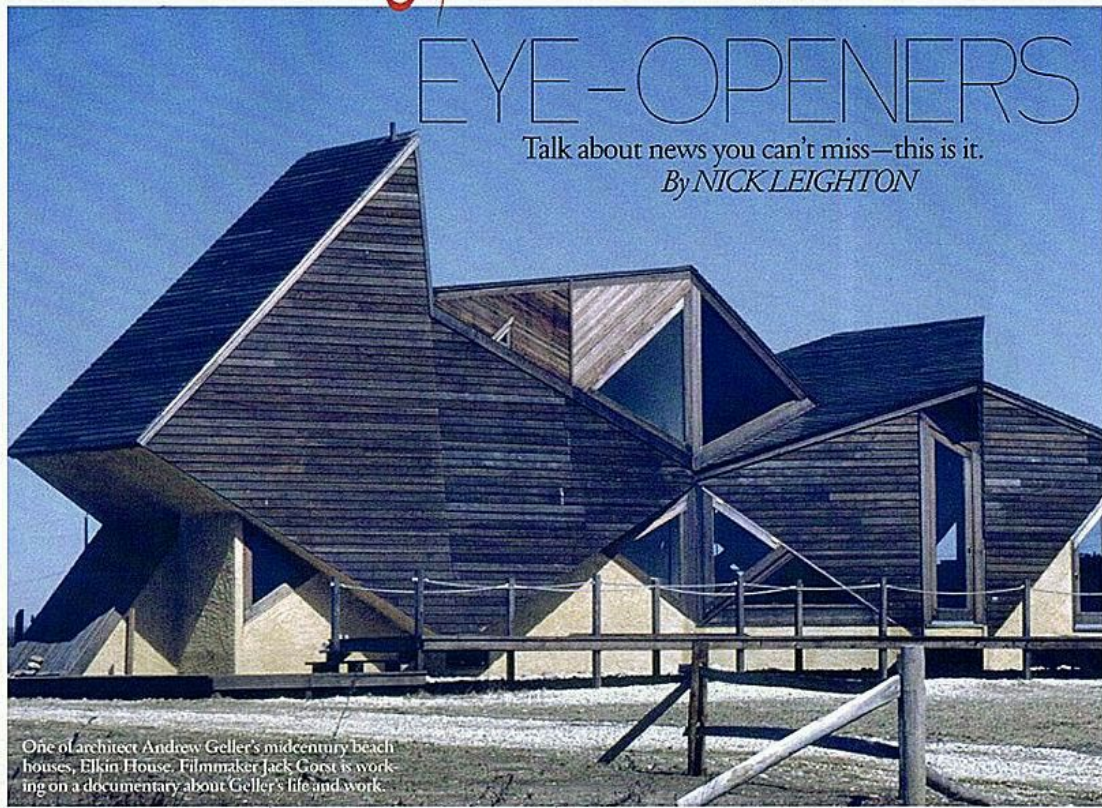
# RESORTIST

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## EYE-OPENERS

Talk about news you can't miss—this is it.

By NICK LEIGHTON



One of architect Andrew Geller's midcentury beach houses, Elkin House. Filmmaker Jack Coost is working on a documentary about Geller's life and work.

### *"Jake, Andrew. Andrew, Jake."*

Fans of architect Andrew Geller, best known for his midcentury beach houses of the 1950s and '60s, take note: Geller's vast archive of photos, drawings, models, 8mm films, and correspondence is still waiting to be catalogued, preserved, then studied. Fortunately, documentary filmmaker Jake Gorst has taken it upon himself to undertake the huge task, and has recently raised more than \$4,000 from midcentury modern enthusiasts (including singer/actress Patti LaPone, oddly enough) to kick-start the project. Gorst will also be filming the preservation process as part of a documentary he's making about Geller's life and work.

### *The Sixth Borough?*

Was Bermuda too far for him? Does he want to be closer to wealthy donors for an upcoming presidential bid? Whatever the reason, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is currently in contract to buy a house in Southampton. But not just any house, of course. For a rumored \$20 million, Bloomberg is picking up the storied Ballyshear estate, a



22,000-square-foot Georgian mansion built in 1910, with 11 bedrooms, eight bathrooms, and gardens designed by the Olmsted Brothers (a firm run by the son and stepson of Frederick Law Olmsted of Central Park fame). It was originally set on 200 acres—165 of which were sold off over the years (i.e., the property is now just 35 acres). Can't wait to run into him at Tate's Bake Shop.

### *Funny Money*

Jimmy Fallon is coming to the Hamptons: The *Late Night* host just bought a home on Parsonage Lane in Sagaponack for \$5.7 million. The 1850s farmhouse sits on 2.2 acres and includes six bedrooms and five and a half baths. There are also two bonus cottages, a pair of barns,

and an apple orchard. Now we wonder just how much Fallon-brand applesauce is going to sell for at Loaves & Fishes.

### *Welcome to the Doll House*

For those who love architectural models and are looking for something to do on a lazy Hamptons day, the sweet spot in the Venn diagram is the Southampton Historical Museum, which is hosting an exhibition called "Phenomenal Places" through September 3. The man behind the models, Gary Lawrence, has been building the miniatures—which start at \$3,000, making them almost as expensive per square foot as the real thing—for more than 20 years; this show features a selec-

## RESORTIST *36*



### *Duck!*

The inexplicably popular Big Duck (which, let's be honest, isn't actually *that* big) has just celebrated its 80th birthday. Located in Flinders on the road between Hampton Bays (aka the place where Southampton police now your car) and Riverhead (aka the place with the outlet mall), the "literalist advertisement" was built in 1931 to help its owner sell ducks and duck eggs. Today it's home to a "roadside collector's dream" gift shop that sells an exhaustive selection of duck-themed souvenirs. It's even created a legacy: The term "duck" is now often used by architects to describe any sort of mimetic building, be it in the shape of a basket, a hot dog, or a coffee pot.

### *Hot in Cleveland*

Turns out Randy Lerner, the owner of the Cleveland Browns, gets out of Cleveland every chance he can get. According to

tion of tiny Hamptons homes designed by such notable local architects as Francis Fleerwood, Frank Greenwald, Preston Phillips, Kitty McCoy, and Peter Cook.

### *You Win Scum, You Lose Scum*

People woke up on the Saturday of July Fourth weekend to discover that the pond on Main Street in East Hampton was a horrifying shade of fluorescent green. Although initial theories included aliens, algae, and antifreeze, tests by the State Department of Environmental Conservation seem to suggest it was just a nontoxic dye. While it's vaguely possible this was unintentional, all signs seemed to point toward a purposeful prank. (A police officer is rumored to have also seen the

pond dyed purple the week before.) But unlike previous episodes of Village vandalism (remember the dollar sign burned into the field of East Hampton High School?), the green dye dissipated on its own and everything was back to normal after a few days. The culprit, if caught, could face jail time and a fine of up to \$32,500.

### *Ale, Ale, the Gang's All Here*

The Borely Barn in Hampton Bays (we've never been, either) sells more beer on a summer afternoon than Yankee Stadium on a game day. For example, on the Sunday before Memorial Day, around 2,000 patrons showed up at the ultra-popular bar and guzzled 600 kegs of beer in about seven hours. At about 165 servings per keg,

that's the equivalent of almost 50 beers per person. The Barn knew this was an impressive statistic when they shocked even their own liquor distributor, who said: "The place is a phenomenon... I don't think there's anything like it in the country."

The *Wall Street Journal's* handy Jet Tracker database, which contains records of almost every private jet flight between 2007 and 2010, the football team was the most frequent visitor to the East Hampton Airport, presumably to shuttle Lerner to his home in Amagansett.

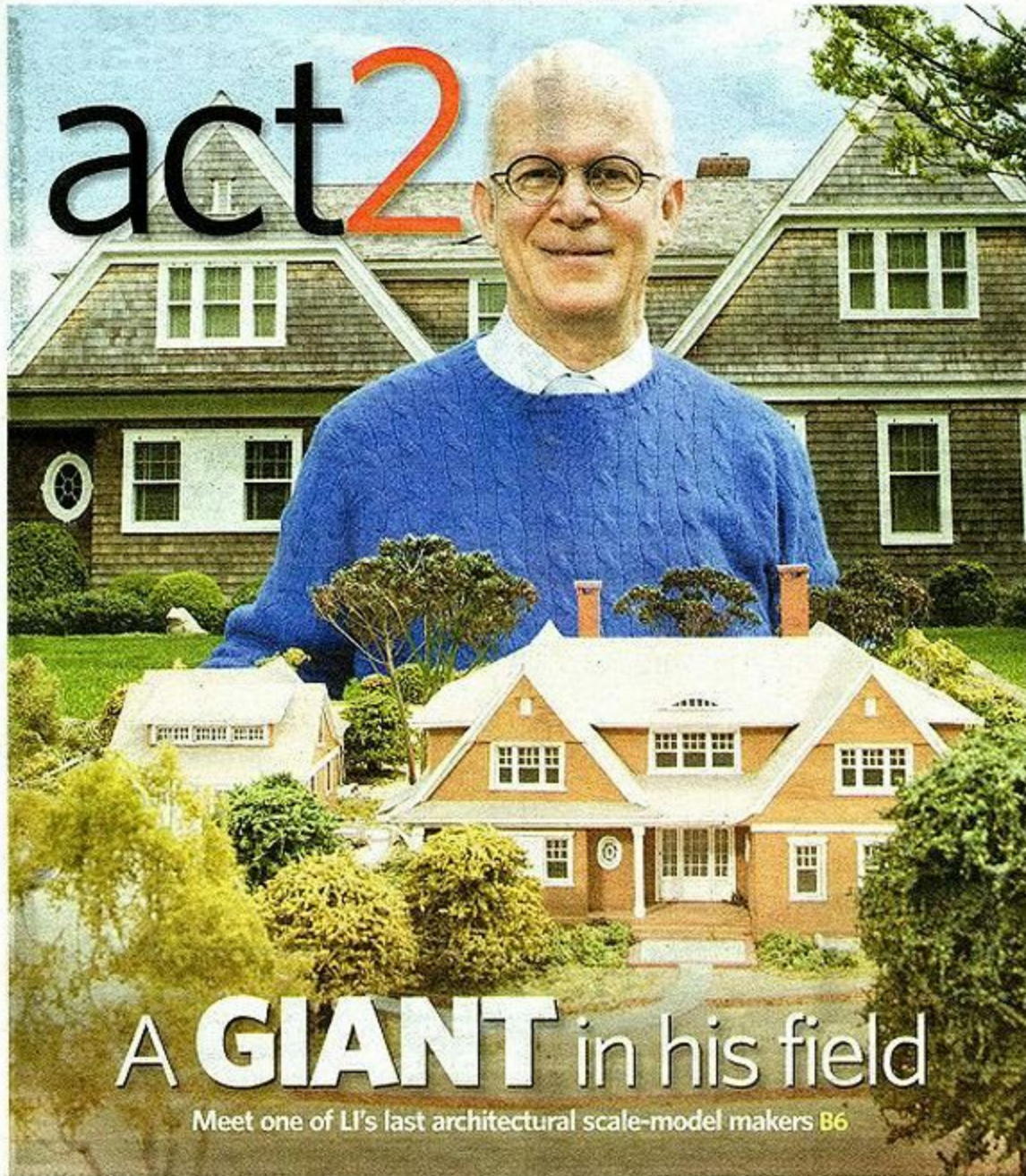
BOB BUCK AND MICHAEL



The pond on Main Street in East Hampton was an... unusual shade of green.

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Newsday | SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2011



## A GIANT IN HIS FIELD

Newsday by Jan Tyler

In a world so seduced by new age technology that laptops replace pencils in many schools and cellphones replace native drums in jungles, there are those among us who refuse to become "tech slaves."

Many are artisans -- holdouts who practice their specialties in the same way they learned them, perhaps decades ago, before the era of personal computers.

But not all free thinkers are nearing retirement; some are just now easing into the Act Two generation. At 54, architect Gary Lawrance, a builder of architectural models, is a prime example of a craftsman who earns his living with simple hand tools, a keen eye and a wealth of experience.

His creations are custom-made presentation models -- exact miniatures of structures designed by other architects. "The method I use to build detailed, realistic models is becoming a lost art," Lawrance says. "Most architects now use computers in the design process."

Computer-aided design software -- widely known as CAD -- has many applications for designers in the automotive, shipbuilding, plumbing and other industries. For architects, he explains, CAD can help design and construct no-frills work models with precision but little surface detail.

Lawrance's miniature structures, mostly of private homes, are in demand and prices start at \$3,000. He is acknowledged by architects to be one of the few, if not the only practitioner of the art form of comparable stature on Long Island.

During his 30-year career, he's turned out about a thousand projects.



An architectural model of a North Shore residence made by Gary Lawrance

"Long Island architects including Francis Fleetwood, Preston Phillips and Peter Cook, to name a few, all commission models for the high-end homes they design to give clients a preview of how the finished house will look," he says.



"They see the model while the plans are still on the drawing board; it's a kind of insurance against client misunderstandings. If there are any problems, they're easier to fix on paper than after construction is under way," he says. "The architect usually presents the model to the owner as a house gift. I've also done layouts for landscape architects, and some architectural review boards require them."

Bridgehampton architect Kathrine McCoy says, "Presentation models are fabulous tools for everyone involved in a project, from clients to contractors." And for homeowners who want replicas of their family home to display and pass along to their children, the miniatures are loaded with nostalgia.

"I make them as realistic as I can," Lawrance says as he shows a visitor his sky-lighted Stony Brook studio, where a project-in-progress is centered on a large work table. T-squares, metal rulers and containers of Elmer's glue are scattered within easy reach, but there's nary a computer in sight.

Working from blueprints, floor plans and elevation drawings scaled eighth-inch to the foot, he uses an X-ACTO knife to cut a sheet of mat board -- his basic "construction" material -- into facades, dormers and chimneys.

On a cork-topped plywood base he builds the components into a three-dimensional image of the original architect's drawing, a process that can take weeks to complete. Certain roofs can be removed, affording a birds-eye view of the interior, its rooms defined with walls that match the floor plan.

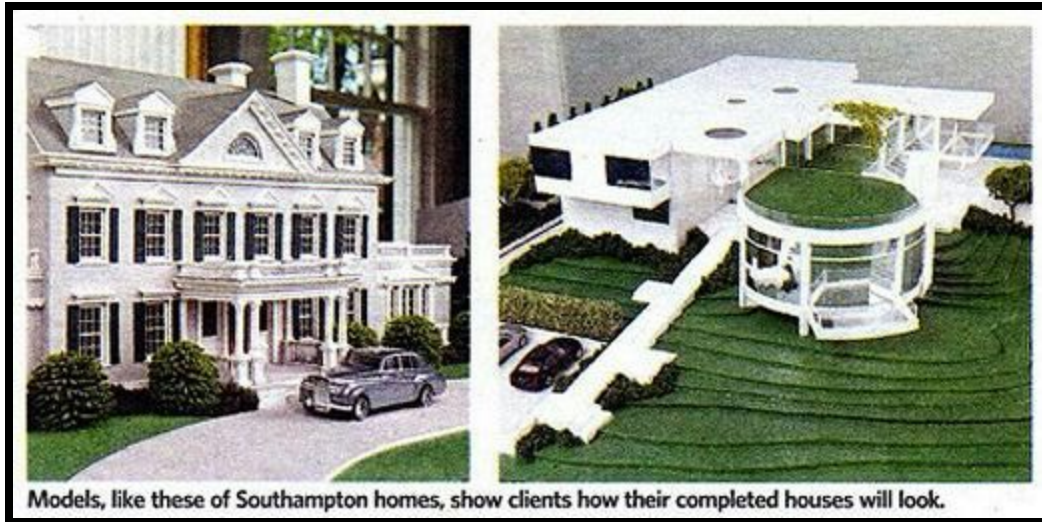
"Since I'm a licensed architect, I sometimes find flaws in a plan that were not easy to spot in the blueprint, like an awkwardly placed window or a missing door," he says.

The model is landscaped with shrubs and trees he creates with twigs and moss, The mailbox at the curb, the SUV in the driveway and the matching urns at the front door -- items purchased from model builder's catalogs -- bring the dwarf world into human scale.

The art of model making is rooted in history, according to Pennsylvania model maker Dennis Heinzeroth, spokesman for the 800-member Association of Professional Model Makers, a trade organization. "Evidence exists of scale models being used by builders thousands of years B.C.; even that models of a deceased person's house were buried with the owner to shelter the spirit in the hereafter."

Heinzeroth observes that while CAD technology, "is a necessity to meet tight deadlines imposed by clients, there are still a few of us old-fashioned, do-it-by-hand dinosaurs around."

Lawrance co-authored a tome about the gilded age: "Houses of the Hamptons, 1880-1930" and also lectures on Long Island architecture at libraries, historical societies and garden clubs.



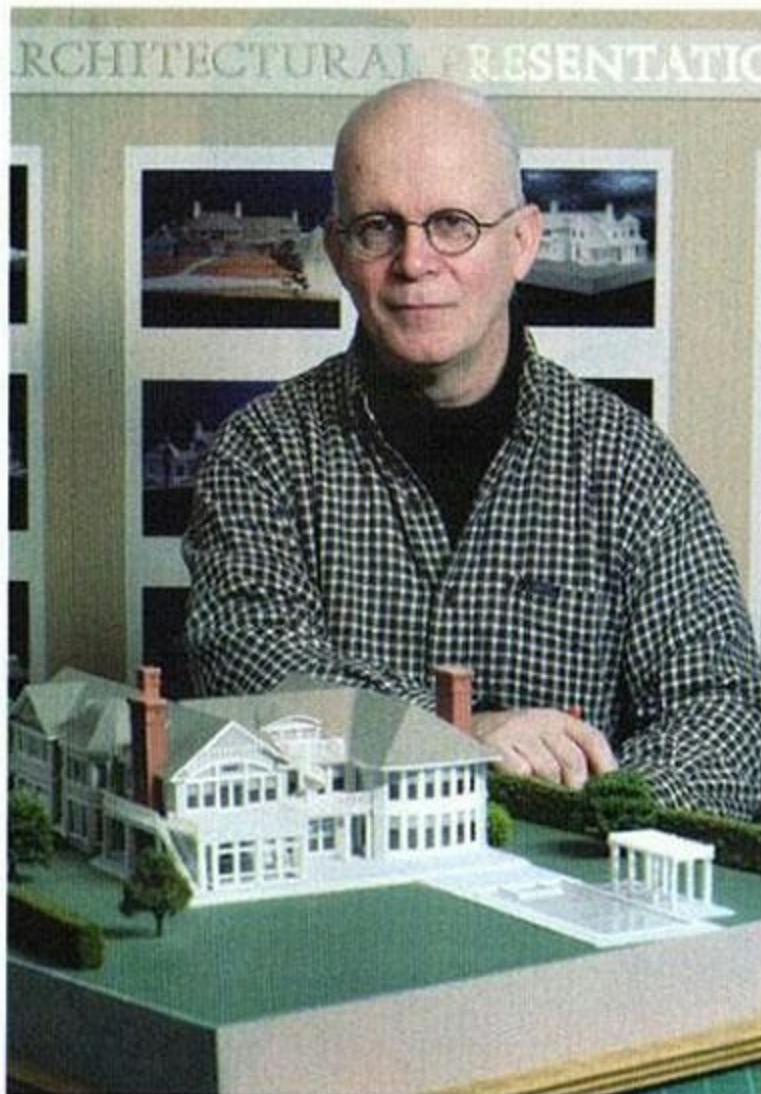
"Gary's models are like art pieces, but aside from their aesthetic value they're indispensable for illustrating to clients exactly how their new home will look," says Locust Valley architect Brian Shore. "The model provides a sense of intimacy with the house that a computer can't duplicate."

"Model making is an important part of the learning process all through the five-year architecture program," says Frank Mruk, associate dean of the School of Architecture and Design at New York Technical Institute in Old Westbury, where Lawrance took his architecture degree more than 30 years ago. Lawrance says, "I found I liked making models of houses more than I liked designing them." That preference has served him well.

"Although an architect who doesn't offer a 3-D model is doing his client a disservice, study models don't come close to Lawrance's realistic versions," Mruk observes. "Gary Lawrance found a niche for his skill and fine tuned it into a career."

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CHRISTOPHER APPOLDT



Gary Lawrance (B.Arch. '82) is pictured with a model that he made for a residential home designed by architect John Laffey (B.S. '89).

## A Model Career

NYIT Magazine 2013

Inside his studio, Gary Lawrance (B.Arch. '82) keeps an array of tools within arm's reach: paper, mat board, cork, foam, X-Acto knives, metal rulers and T-squares, Elmer's glue, and paint. He uses them to craft architectural models in much the same way he did more than 30 years ago at NYIT. "In those days, every design course required us to make paper models for presentations," says Lawrance,

whose latest creations depict stone facades, latticed pavilions, columned porches, and landscaped gardens. They can scale up to a couple of feet in width and height, selling anywhere from \$2,000 to \$20,000 depending on the level of detail.

Ninety-percent of the business of Lawrance Architectural Presentations in Stony Brook, N.Y., is designs of residential homes, but his first model to attract attention was a master plan for a City University of New York campus. Michael Spector, a prominent architect, happened to be giving a lecture at NYIT's Old Westbury campus in the late 1970s, when he glimpsed the precision and craftsmanship of Lawrance's model on display and offered him an internship. "Architecture requires you to be good in math and design," says Lawrance. "It's like two different sides of a person in one. You have to be both an artist and engineer." Lawrance has parlayed yet another interest nurtured at NYIT into a side career—architectural history. His bachelor's thesis was "Long Island's Gold Coast of the Gatsby Era." He writes two blogs: "Mansions of the Gilded Age" and "Houses of the Hamptons," and is the co-author of *Houses of the Hamptons, 1880-1930*. "To succeed in this field, architecture has got to be your passion," adds Lawrance. "It's a labor of love."

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One of the largest private residences ever built on the East End, Whitefield formerly known as The Orchard, was designed by the infamous Stanford White. (Photo: John Wegorzewski)

# WHITEFIELD REVISITED: BEHIND THE SCENES OF A HISTORIC HAMPTONS MANSION

Invitations to parties and galas at magnificent private homes in the Hamptons are always coveted but the hottest ducat this summer was the lecture by architect, historian **Gary Lawrance, co-author with Anne Surchin** of "Houses of the Hamptons: 1800-1930," held in one of the largest private residences ever built on the East End, Whitefield formerly known as The Orchard. Sponsored by the **Southampton Historical Museum**, the talk quickly sold out and several hundred guests filled the baronial music room at the sprawling Hamptons estate. With its soaring, carved mahogany wood walls, coffered ceilings with hand painted embellishments and a fireplace that one could stand inside, the Music Room was the ideal setting for a discussion about the Gilded Age.

Lawrance, the ultimate authority on the creation of the opulent homes of this era, launched into an engaging talk backed up with scores of rarely seen images of the interior and grounds as they were in their original state.

He explained how in 1897, Wall Street broker James L. Breese who had purchased a small cottage on 30 acres of prime real estate on Southampton's tony Hill Street, commissioned his good friend Stanford White, of the prominent architectural firm McKim, Mead & White, to design a summer residence for his family on the enormous property.

White worked on the project from 1897 until his untimely death in 1906 when he was murdered by millionaire Harry K. Thaw over White's affair with Thaw's wife, actress Evelyn Nesbit, the infamous 'Girl on the Red Velvet Swing'. The court case was dubbed the "Trial of the Century" by reporters.

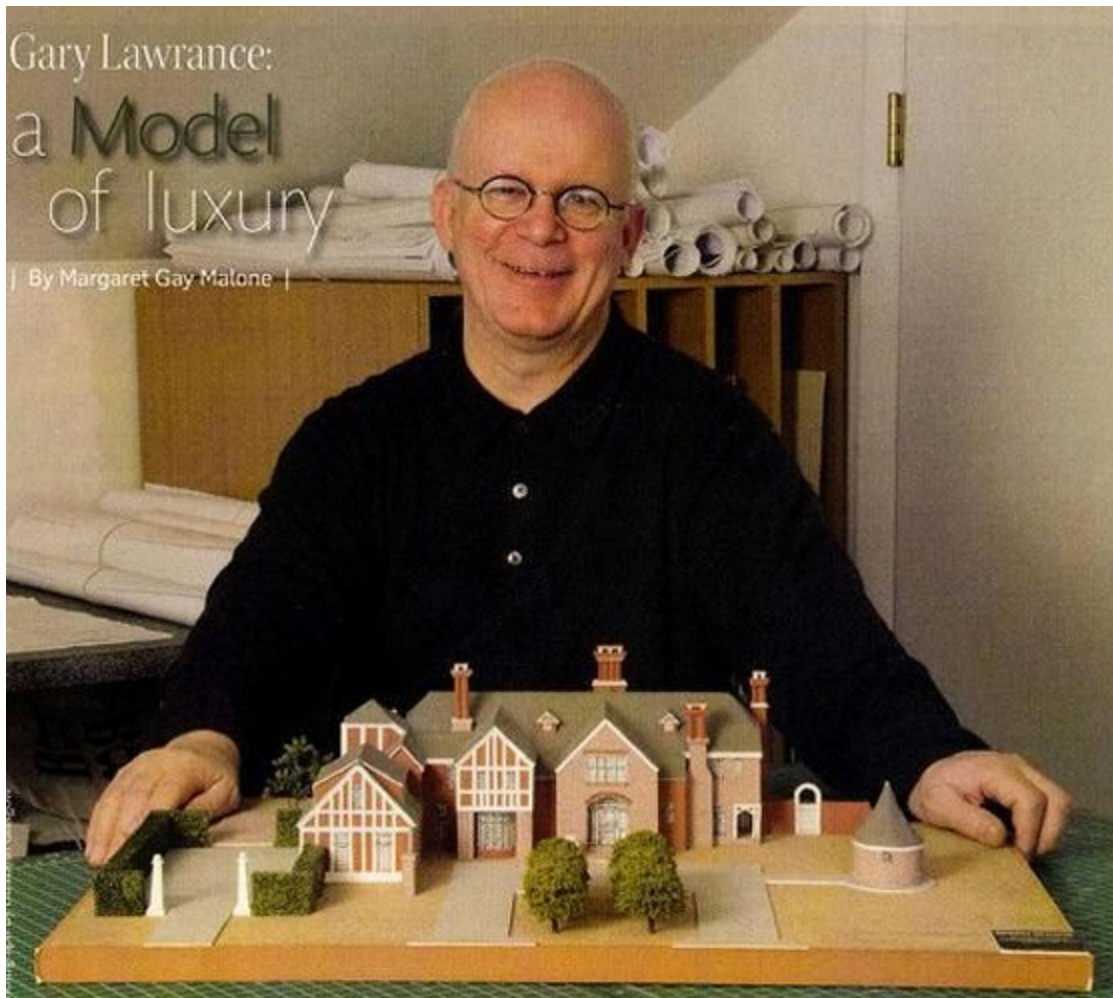
He designed a long series of houses for the rich, and numerous public, institutional, and religious buildings. His design principles embodied the "American Renaissance" and was considered the foremost Beaux Art designer of his time. Lawrance pointed out that The Orchard was a rare departure from the firm's formal grand constructions and was instead a light airy, Colonial - by the standards of the time - more reminiscent of Mount Vernon complete with a two story portico and lovely gardens designed by Louise Shelton. The home's spectacular 30 by 70-foot "music room" is believed to be White's last completed project.

Among the buildings that Messrs. McKim, Mead & White have designed are such well-known structures as the Rhode Island State Capitol, the Pennsylvania Station in **New York City**, **the Library of J. P. Morgan**, **Madison Square Garden in New York City**, **the Minneapolis Art Museum**, and many others of the largest monumental buildings in America. It was interesting, to learn they designed a country house of so informal and picturesque a character as the residence of Mr. Breese in Southampton. From 1926 to 1956, it was owned by Charles E. Merrill (1885-1956), who deeded it to Amherst College. Amherst College later sold it to the Nyack School for Boys, which closed in 1977.

The house sat vacant until a developer purchased it in the 1980s and turned it into what is now Whitefield, a condominium complex named to pay homage to Stanford White. In what was constructed as a single family home now comprises 24 townhouses along the perimeter of the property and 5 units in the mansion!

Among the history aficionados listening raptly were **Zita Davisson**, **Peter Hallock**, **Barbara Sloan**, **Anne Surchin**, **Maribeth Edmonds** and **Tom Edmonds**, **Jim Callanan** and **Maureen Callanan**, **Drew Watson** and **Margaret Watson**, and scores more.

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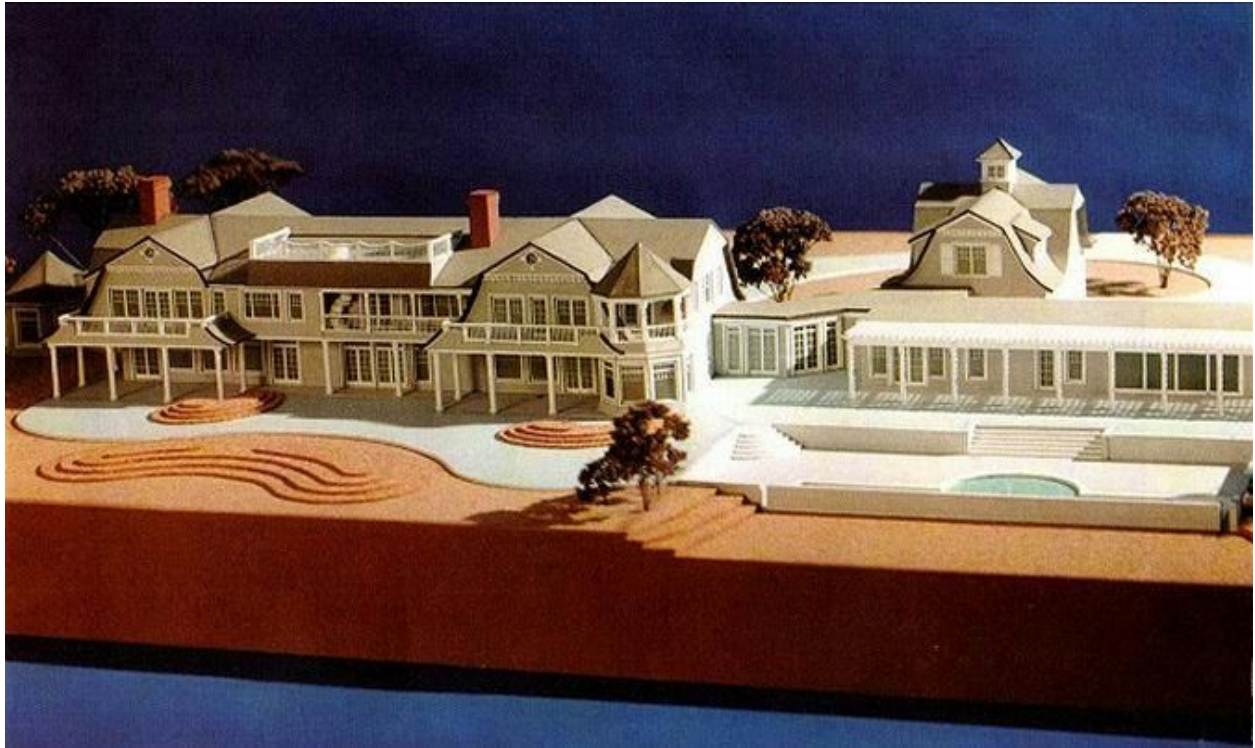


## **MODEL CITIZENS**

**Distinction Magazine by Margaret Gay Malone**

Scale models of Christmas Village panoramas and landscaped toy-train layouts are guaranteed showstoppers. One would have to be a Grinch not to think of those Lilliputian-size buildings as just plain cute..Accurately scaled models of real houses have a similar universal appeal, but the payoff of the mini mansions is measured in dollars as much as smiles. For architectural professionals whose career is model building, scale models serve as design tools that not only can nail down clients' perceptions of how their house will actually look but also can save thousands of dollars, not to mention wasted time. For the architect, they serve as a kind of insurance against client misunderstandings.

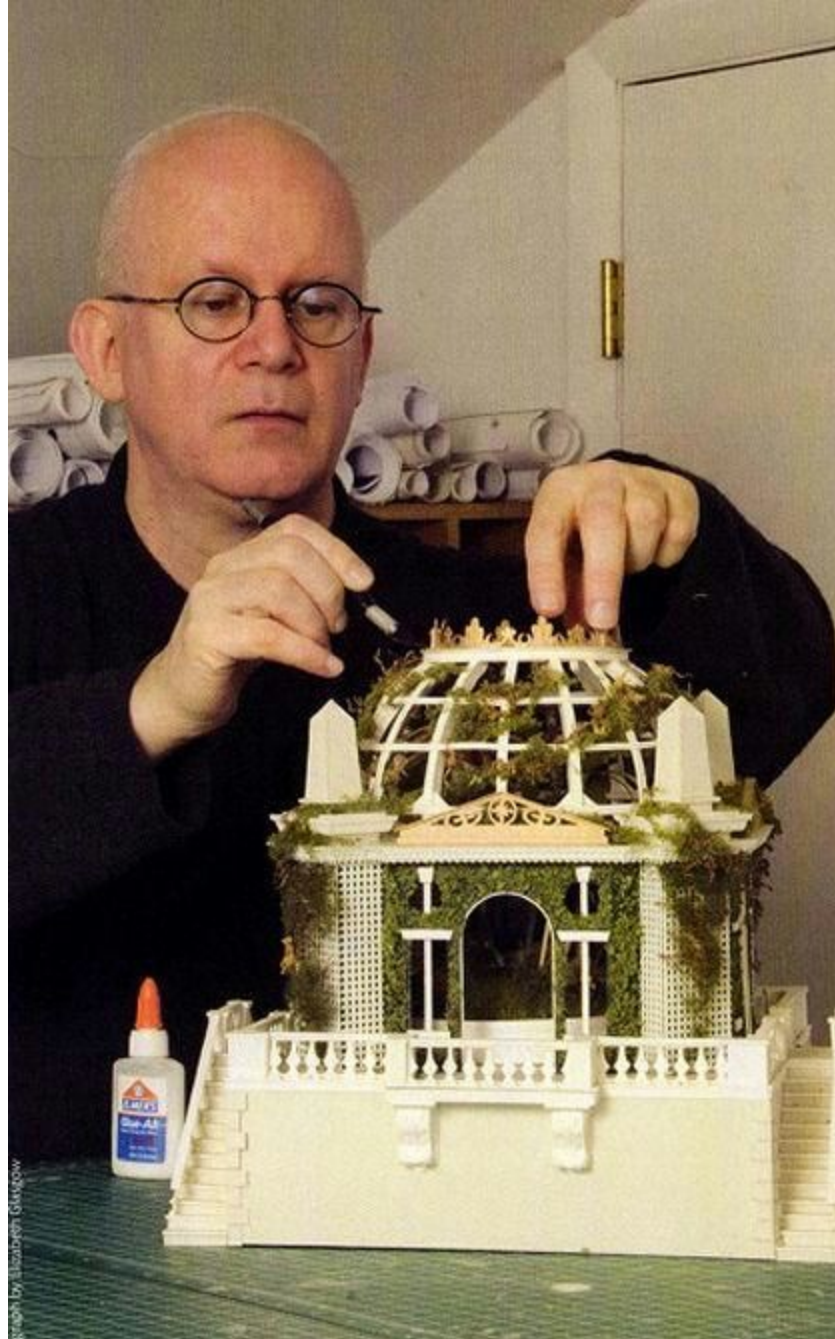
"It's a lot easier to reshape a facade made of matboard than a built wall of bricks and mortar," said Gary Lawrance, 46, a master maker of draft models built to a scale of one-eighth- inch to one-quarter-inch per foot. His works are used by many [Long Island](#) architectural firms as presentation pieces for client approval and are required by certain architectural review boards.



### Visualizing in 3-D

Architects know that when it comes to visualizing how a blueprint or line drawing of a floor plan mentally translates into a three-dimensional structure, there are two kinds of clients: those who can and those who can't. Even for clients who can envision how the lines on paper will become solid structures, many architects say that the floor plan is never enough. "I had one client who said she was completely happy with her plans; we'd even had a model made," says Locust Valley architect Greg Andrea. "But when the house was under construction she insisted that an overhang was too wide and we had to rebuild it."

Backing the floor plan with draftsman's elevation drawings may help but, "the emotion just ain't there," Andrea says. And so, architects are prompted to assign staff members to build cardboard models, a time-consuming task that takes them away from more technical work. Many prefer to outsource the job to specialists like Lawrance.



### Enjoying the craft

A full-time, freelance model maker, Lawrance set up his [Stony Brook](#) studio soon after he earned his bachelor's degree in architecture at [New York](#) Institute of Technology in Old Westbury 25 years ago. He turns out 40 to 50 projects a year. "I found I enjoyed the process of the craft more than the process of designing buildings," he says, "and because I'm a licensed architect, I sometimes can pick up on flaws in colleagues' designs that show up in the model but aren't so easy to spot on the blueprint."

Lawrance works from architects' blueprints using simple tools like X-Acto knives, T-squares, straight edges and Elmer's glue. He sets up his models on plywood bases that he landscapes with appropriately scaled



trees and shrubs made of twigs and moss or purchased from an architect's supply catalog. He often dresses up the presentation with figures of people and dogs as well as cars, fences, fire hydrants and mailboxes.

"It's like building a whole little world," he says. A model can take from a few weeks to several months to complete depending on the complexity of the design. Models are often treated as works of art that are kept in the home under glass cases. Lawrence's minimum fee is \$2,500, but models with intricate detailing can cost many thousands more. "I try to make them as realistic as possible," he says.

"The model was unreal, exquisite," says Michael Lamoretti of Kings Point, who adds that he was skeptical when his architect, Brian Shore of Locust Valley, first proposed commissioning a model of Lamoretti's new home, then on the drawing board. "I didn't see why I would need one." A commercial real estate investor, Lamoretti says he is used to blueprints, "but the model was so detailed, it was easy to see things like the size of the rooms, how the windows would look, how the rooms would relate to each other; it was the next best thing to being right there." And, he adds, there were some modifications, such as a change in the roof pitch, that were minor at that design stage but would have cost "a fortune to change" or been ignored after construction was under way.

Andrea has his own take on model making. He handcrafts them of kiln-fired, glazed clay creating a permanent alternative to the somewhat flimsier matboard examples. "It's a hobby that I enjoy," says the architect, whose collection fills floor to ceiling shelves in his office despite the considerable number he's presented to clients.

Conventional model making is included in four-year architectural degree programs. "Students start with stick structures which look like dowels stuck into Styrofoam bases but are intended to teach relationships to space and volume," says Amit Handyopadhyay, professor and chairman of the architecture department at Farmingdale State University of New York. "They are taught how to create increasingly complex cardboard structures as they work through the program." But he adds, "While the models are very useful, they're being overshadowed more and more by computer assisted design, both fixed and animated."

Computer displays of floor plans and elevations are easily adjusted for anything from ceiling heights to window placement to room sizes, tasks that used to require endless and costly redrafting of blueprints. Creating a virtual house Animated design is a fascinating example of computer technology. It takes the viewer into a movie-like walk through a structure both inside and out. And this is a house that's little more than a gleam in the architect's eye. The software, which can cost \$4,000, required input of dimensions and materials, which the computer assembles into a virtual house. But, says Tim Maldonado, professor and chairman of the architecture and technical department at the New York City College of Technology in Brooklyn, "I never do a house, or any architectural project, without a model." In fact, he adds, he makes progressively detailed study models that help to refine his final concept of houses as designs for his private practice. Maldonado credits his students with creating models of complex cityscapes such as the Metrotech District in Downtown Brooklyn and the Tudor City restoration on Manhattan's east side, both of which, he says, were instrumental in raising community awareness - in easily understandable three-dimensional terms - of the architecture's impact on their respective areas.

Great Neck architect-artist Richard Baehr practices another method of getting a structure's image across to the client. In his 45-year career, his startlingly realistic acrylic paintings called renderings that some observers describe as "photos" of buildings that aren't there have caught the eyes of such real estate moguls as Donald Trump and Levitt & Sons. Like models, renderings are mandatory presentations for some

architectural review boards. Baehr's fees are \$3,000 to \$5,000. "I get a lot of pleasure out of taking the most rudimentary of architect's

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## **The History of the Hamptons Mansion Villa Maria**

### **Architectural Digest by Gary Lawrance**

For many New Yorkers who make the weekend exodus out of Manhattan to locations east of Southampton, they pass a pair of Gilded Age wrought-iron gates as they enter the hamlet of Water Mill. Behind these gates is Villa Maria, which was the cover story of *AD*'s July issue. Designed by architect George Skidmore in 1887 for merchant industrialists Josiah Lombard and Marshall Ayres, it was originally a Queen Anne Shingle-style home with a four-story tower and numerous gables. In 1919, third owner Edward Phinley Morse commissioned architect Frank Freeman to update and enlarge the house. The shingles and outmoded Queen Anne details were stripped and, inspired by Italian and even Egyptian architecture, Freeman transformed it into a modern palatial mansion—and one of the Hampton's most prominent landmarks.

By 1931, the house was sold to the Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic of Amityville, who eventually renamed it Villa Maria and used the property for religious teachings and other related purposes. In 2005 the sisters, no longer able to maintain the now aging house, sold it to Vincent and Louise Camuto, who engaged architect Andre Tchelistcheff to update and restore the estate to its original grandeur.

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## **MEET HAMPTONS 'MODEL' ARCHITECT GARY LAWRENCE**

## Dan's Papers by Sharon Feiereisen

Regularly featured in publications from *Architectural Digest* to *Forbes*, renowned for his and coauthor Anne Surchin's exquisite *Houses of the Hamptons 1880–1930*, architect Gary Lawrance is perhaps best known not for massive mansions but rather for his stunning small-scale models of East End properties, which are used for both planning new builds and as works of art in their own right.

"I was always making buildings," Lawrance recalls. "My parents bought me every building toy that existed, but I often would make buildings out of playing cards, Dixie cups, and dig in my mother's garden, making cities. Lego was a big part of my life, and I started making Lego houses of historic mansions early on. I had a natural love of old houses and buildings, which led me to pursue a career in architecture."

As he continues researching his next book, *Houses of Palm Beach, 1900–1950*, Lawrance takes a break to speak about some favorite projects, creating a special Christmas gift and the enduring appeal of the Hamptons.

### **How did you get into designing models specifically?**

While attending The New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury I worked summers for a local architecture firm called the Spector Group in Great Neck. As is the case with many architectural interns, they are often given study models to build. I started working for them full-time and eventually became the director of the model department. In the early 1990s, I received my architecture license and formed my own model-making firm, Lawrance Architectural Presentations in Stony Brook.

### **What kind of client is looking for a home model?**

Many times clients would like to have a completed model either fixed up after being used as a design tool when the house was under design or construction to be displayed in the finished home. I also have been asked to build models of existing, new or historic homes just as artworks. Even in this current day of computer modeling, the need for a tangible model is still helpful, and often many clients say it answers questions they didn't understand from the computer images.

### **Tell us about some of the favorite features/amenities in models you've created.**

I once made a model of a home that was to be a Christmas gift for the client's wife. One feature that was requested was that the roof of the garage be removable and fitted out in green velvet with an opening for a ring. After the model was completed, a large cardboard cover was made and covered in wrapping paper with a large bow on top. Other architectural features that are fun to build have been bell-shaped topped towers, spiral staircases, dunes along the ocean, infinity pools, painting hydrangeas—and the best thing I love to do is glue the car in front of the house.

### **How long does the model building process usually take?**

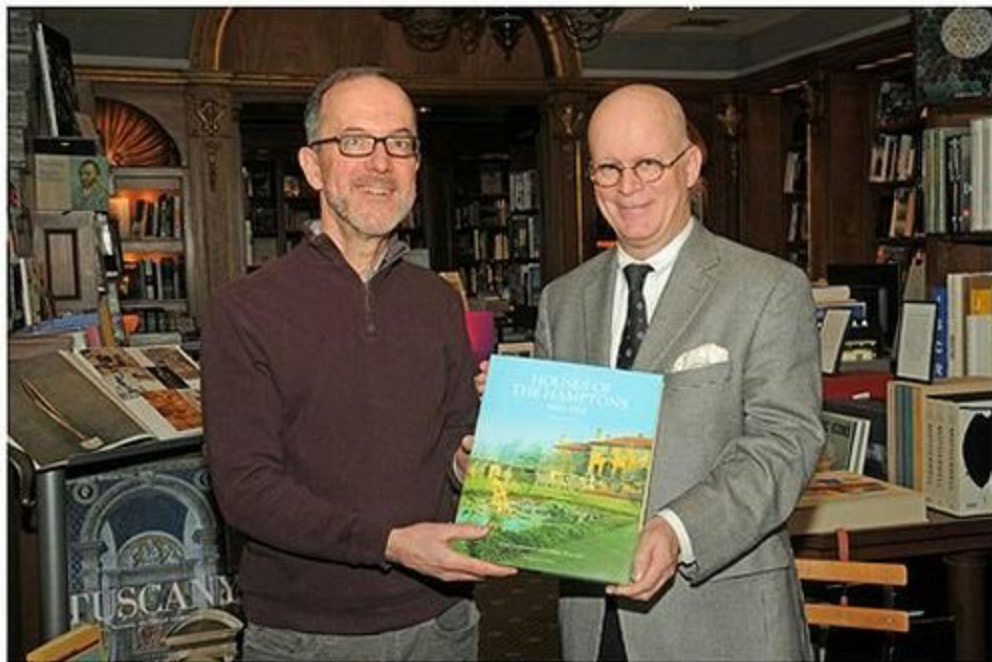
I have done simple massing models in about one to two weeks, and the more detailed models can take up to two months. I can do a simple massing model, which is sometimes all that is needed to see a design in the early stages, for around \$1,500 to \$2,500, and the more detailed models start at about \$3,500 and have gone up to \$20,000—which is the ultimate and often a very large house in the 15,000 to 20,000 square-foot range.

**What are some of your most memorable Hamptons models?**

If I have to choose just one model, it might be a house in Southampton called Keewaydin. It's one of the Hamptons' most historic summer homes from the Gilded Age. The house was built in 1892, and about 20 years ago it was renovated and updated. I did a model of it on a small site which is only about 18"x 24" and have often borrowed it for displays of my work.

**What attracted you to the Hamptons area?**

While there are many beautiful areas on Long Island, I like the Hamptons because it represents our history from many eras and, of course, the Gilded Age which is my first love. I also love the ocean, sandy beaches and being able to drive down country lanes and see all the homes and buildings from the past.



RIZZOLI BOOK STORE GENERAL MANAGER GARY MCELROY WITH "HOUSES OF THE HAMPTONS" CO-AUTHOR GARY LAWRENCE

## Gary Lawrance Signs 'Houses of the Hamptons'

Dans Papers, by Richard Lewin

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F Scott Fitzgerald moved to Long Island in 1922 with his wife Zelda



Private ownership of the Long Island mansions was mostly killed off by the 1929 crash

## HOW REAL IS THE GREAT GATSBY'S PLAYBOY ISLAND?

BBC, by Vincent Dowd

Reviews for Baz Luhrmann's new version of *The Great Gatsby* have been mixed. But his adaptation is faithful to the plot of Scott Fitzgerald's novel published in 1925. The story takes place mainly on Long Island, a playground for America's super-rich 90 years ago. Everything the Hamptons are now, northern Long Island was then.

It's been a cold spring in Port Washington and there have been fewer tourists than usual. It's only in the past couple of weeks that Matt Meyran has begun the annual *Great Gatsby* boat tours. He's hoping the new movie will bring in the custom.

Port Washington is an attractive town on Long Island's north shore - 45 minutes from New York on the Long Island Railroad. Before World War II it was where flying boats arrived after crossing the Atlantic. These days the most dramatic form of transport is Meyran's water taxi service, taking commuters and tourists out onto the sparkling waters of Manhasset Bay and Long Island Sound. Visitors learn about the astounding past

wealth of Long Island's Gold Coast, taking in areas such as Sands Point and Glen Cove. The area's wealth exploded in the late 19th Century because of its proximity to New York and the availability of land.

By the time Scott Fitzgerald came to write his book the area contained almost 2,000 mansions, many with large and well-tended estates. Life on those estates was opulent. The names that dominated the Gold Coast constituted the upper reaches of America's rich list: Guggenheim, Whitney, Vanderbilt. The families already had magnificent homes in Manhattan. They came to Long Island for the season, or for a summer weekend away from the disease and clamour. They arrived by yacht from lower Manhattan or by chauffeur-driven limousine - or even by private train.

Matt Meyran says there was a small industry in the Port Washington area building and maintaining yachts for the wealthy. "Long Island Sound and its pleasures were why the Buchanans in the book would have had a home in East Egg (as Fitzgerald calls Sands Point). Gatsby wasn't quite their class."

### **Artistic licence**

Much brain-power has been expended trying to match up real-life Long Island locations with those in Fitzgerald's book. A couple of years ago there was an outcry when a Colonial Revival house by the shore was demolished to make way for five smaller homes. Land's End had once belonged to New York journalist (and keen 1920s party-giver) Herbert Bayard Swope. Some claim it inspired Tom and Daisy Buchanan's home in *The Great Gatsby*. In fact there is insufficient evidence to make connections with certainty, according to historian and architect Gary Lawrance.

"It's fun to speculate which was the model for Daisy Buchanan's house or Gatsby's place. But Fitzgerald wasn't writing a travel guide: you have to allow him his creativity. "In real estate terms, to say a house has a big Gatsby connection is going to be worth something - but a certain amount of hype tends to emerge."

Lawrance has documented most of the great houses of the Gold Coast for his website *Mansions of the Gilded Age*. "There are a few hundred left but few still in private hands. If they survived at all, mainly they were bought by colleges or became country clubs. "Partly what killed them off was the introduction of federal income taxes in 1913 and the sheer difficulty of maintaining staffs. It became too much for all but the richest. "So even when Fitzgerald wrote *Gatsby* that world was already on the way out. The '29 crash did for the rest of it."

### **'Aspiration and failure'**

Fitzgerald moved to Long Island in 1922 with his wife Zelda. They lived at 6 Gateway Drive in Great Neck, where he began the book (though mainly it was written in France). In *The Great Gatsby* he calls the area West Egg.

The house they rented still stands. It's a large two-storey private home but no one would call it a mansion. The author Judith Goldstein has chronicled the development of Great Neck. "When Fitzgerald went there it was new and convenient to get to from the city. "It attracted theatre people, journalists and those in what we'd now call the creative industries. It was also an easier place to live if you were Jewish. "But Fitzgerald was always insecure socially and economically. I'm sure he enjoyed being so near the Gold Coast, a place he could never afford to live.

"The '20s was the great era of party-giving and Fitzgerald could get to the parties in the great houses he relished. So just as Gatsby stares over the water to the green light at the end of the Buchanan dock, pining

for Daisy, Fitzgerald must have stared over at 'East Egg' and aspired to its social standing. "He wanted the ease and privilege of people who lived at, say, Sands Point. But he never acquired it."

The Great Gatsby is based in a very specific geography. But Judith Goldstein says Fitzgerald was really writing about America in its entirety. "He was concerned with the pain of aspiration and the pain of failure. He envied the life of Gatsby... but in the book Gatsby is longing for Daisy. "And in real life Daisy Buchanan would probably have aspired to join the really old money of Long Island, who lived further out in the Oyster Bay area. Fitzgerald was writing about a very complex society."

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## **BLOOMBERG'S GRAND NEW HOUSE**

New York Social Diary, by David Patrick Columbia

***Perfect News for the end of the week*** (in other words, nothing earth-shattering, dangerous, threatening or bizarre): **Mayor Bloomberg** is reported to have bought himself an estate in Southampton called Ballyshear for a reported price of \$20 million – a drop in the bucket for him maybe – but something palatial in the traditional sense.

While the media has broadcast the news with the statistics and details of the quite grand house (22,000 square feet, swimming pool, formal gardens, stables), there's another element that may have been what really attracted our mayor to this property. It's almost as if the builder's legacy has been awaiting him.





Charles B. Macdonald.

Ballyshear was completed in 1913, designed by architect **Burrell Hoffman** for a Wall Street tycoon named **Charles B. Macdonald**. The son of a Scottish immigrant and a Canadian who was part Indian and brought up in Chicago, Mr. Macdonald took the name of the place from an estate owned by an ancestor in Scotland.

Mr. Macdonald was famous in his world at the time he built Ballyshear. He had also founded the National Golf Links which the property overlooks. Macdonald was a championship amateur golfer, widely written about and widely known in the sport as a champion golfer as well as the designer of major courses.

He was intensely involved in the design and development of other golf courses including Piping Rock, the Greenbrier, and the Mid Ocean Club in Bermuda which Mr. Bloomberg has played at. Legend has it that Mid Ocean was built because of Prohibition in the United States.

Macdonald was one of the forces behind the founding of the Chicago Golf Club, another course he had a hand in designing, and the first course (9 holes) west of the Alleghenies. At that course (the second one, an 18 hole course) he had a plus 4 handicap. He also was one of the founders of The Links, buying the land on East 63rd Street on which the clubhouse sits today.



The front elevation of Ballyshear built in 1913 for Charles Blair Macdonald and Frances Porter Macdonald in Southampton, New York.



The rear elevation of the recently completed house.

Born in 1856, Mr. Macdonald's relationship to golf started when he went away to school in St. Andrews, Scotland as a young man. While there he learned golf and became quite good. When he returned home to Chicago, he got a job in the commodity market.

By that time in his life, he had a well known reputation in the stock market as "one of the most active operators on the floor of the (NY) Stock Exchange." This was in the late 1890s and early 1900s. *The New York Times* reported that he "got his speculative training, like a lot of other Western traders, in the wheat pit at Chicago. He was perhaps the most rapid trader the wheat pit ever produced. In an active market he could turn a million bushels without letting the crowd know his position .... Traders who watch him are never sure which side of the market he is on. He swings a big line of stocks."

When he left Chicago to come to Wall Street, Macdonald joined C. Barney & Company (later Smith-Barney). His first 17 years working as a trader in commodities and then the stock market, he never played golf. When he began again, he pursued it intensely and regained his championship skills. From then on, he was a mover in American Golf, as well as one of the founders of the USGA. Today, the National Golf Links are considered the "ultimate living example of CB Macdonald's architecture."

Macdonald was an energetic man who after making his fortune, continued to pursue his other interests with passion. He built Ballyshear, his castle on a golf course by the sea, when he was in his late 50s and died in his early 80s in 1939. Although he made his fortune on Wall Street, like Mayor Bloomberg, he made his name in an entirely different profession, in his case as a major designer of American golf courses. And as we know, Mr. Bloomberg is an avid golfer. Someone who knew Macdonald well remarked that "if he hadn't been such a distinguished looking, financially solid citizen, he might have been referred to as bull-headed. As it was, he was respectfully termed opinionated."



The central hall at the entrance.

When Charles Macdonald built Ballyshear he had a strong hand in the design of the property. There were 200 acres (the property Mayor Bloomberg bought covers 35 acres) overlooking the Peconic Bay and the National. **Gary Lawrance** and **Anne Surchin** write in their beautiful book *Houses of the Hamptons, 1880 – 1930*, (Acanthus publishers):

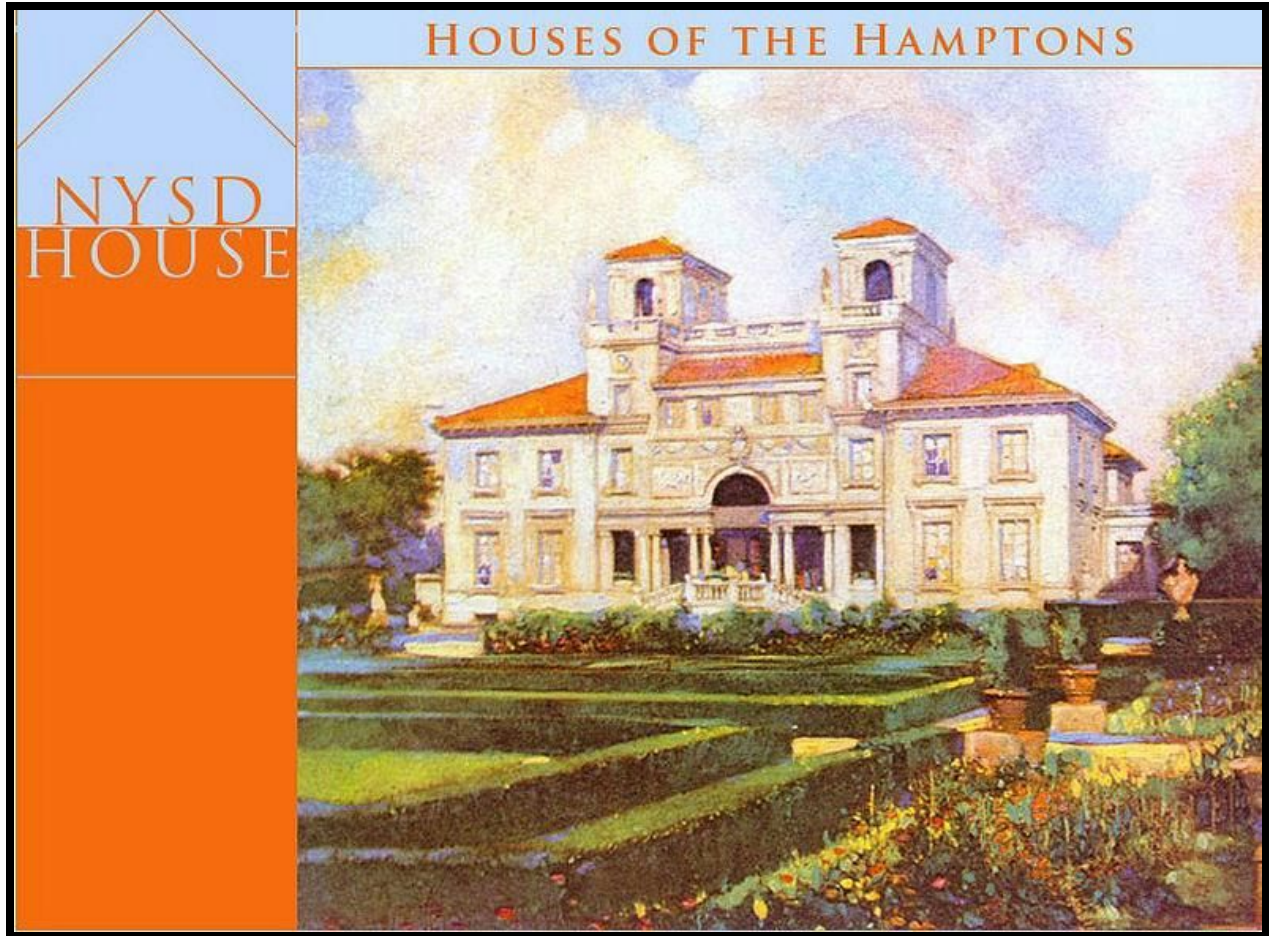


The library.

“In this beautiful setting Macdonald placed Ballyshear against a backdrop of protected woods and farmland. The gentle, winding, half-mile-long approach (to the house), laid out by **Seth Raynor** (Macdonald’s partner in design and building courses), recalls the English countryside in its tree plantings, rolling lawns, grazing horses and glimpses of a pond and the grand Georgian Colonial mansion in the distance.”

According to Lawrance and Surchin, the most recent owners of Ballyshear for the past two decades, had maintained the property in the tradition established by Charles Macdonald. It sounds like Macdonald’s vibes are still present, awaiting the house’s new owner and his family.

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## HOUSES OF THE HAMPTONS

**Architects Gary Lawrance and Anne Surchin, both residents of Suffolk County, Long Island,** have put together a deliciously intriguing book called *The Architecture of Leisure HOUSES OF THE HAMPTONS 1880 – 1930* published by Acanthus Press. It is one of those books that creative boys and girls start peering at starting at age ten and which both fascinated and creative adults never lose a curiosity for – the style of high life, and in this case summer high life.

In the early days of the resorts now called the Hamptons the seasonal residents built big houses that could accommodate large families, guests and adequate staff. Food supplies were not as readily available — there were few food stores – and so many of the properties were attached for farm and dairy land, growing their own fruits and vegetables, producing their own dairy products and being generally self-sustaining estates which were occupied each year for (at most) three months, after which they were closed and boarded up until the next season.

It was a far different way of life, and one which in retrospect, looks ideal (assuming you were rich). This book's photographs illustrate that point on many aesthetic levels. Also, looking through the book, you will notice a far different looking Hamptons from the one we know today. There were hardly any

trees, for example. It was mainly just open flat land. Farmland, potato and cornfields. The rich started bringing in the trees to decorate their lavish summer estates.

It was also a slower life with far less expectations because they were not available. The telephone, for example, had just begun to be put into use. Your phone didn't ring off the hook, especially if you were out of town because that was "long distance" and "long distance" was not only an amazing technological novelty, it was expensive, even to the rich. Furthermore, when you did get a call, you took it in a little phone closet (often by the front door) so that no one could hear you or had to hear you.

Life in these great houses, under their optimal circumstances, precluding the slings and arrows that invades the lives of most of us at what time or another, was bucolic. There were often houseguests – who stayed for two or three weeks. There were parties. There was swimming in the surf (or the pool), tennis, horseback riding, sunbathing, reading, writing and eating. Living well is the best revenge.

The authors Lawrance and Surchin take you back into this world of not-so-long-ago, a world which many of us know so well today, far far away from yesteryear. There are almost three dozen houses and estates illustrated and written about, including several properties that are long gone. It is also interesting to see all the space that existed, where great tracts of land often separate these gilded dwellings, empty (and cheap) land out there in what was then the middle of nowhere, at the end of the Long Island Railroad line.

The authors not only give you the architectural history of the properties, but brief biographies of their builders, owners and families, and what happened to the houses, most of which have gone through the zeniths and nadirs of interest and monetary value. Many others were simply demolished.

