

THE MOUNT

Estate & Gardens

Two Plunkett Street • Lenox, MA 01240
(413) 551-5104 • www.edithwharton.org

Fact Sheet – 2008

The Mount: The Historic Home of Edith Wharton and National Historic Landmark

The Mount has completed nearly \$15 million worth of restoration to the mansion and gardens to date, and is now one of the premier historic estates in the Berkshires and in New England. Each summer, nearly 30,000 visitors come to The Mount from across the country and abroad.

The Mount is a unique and fascinating destination that appeals to visitors interested in history, literature, women of achievement, historic homes, gardens and interior design. Our visitors come to see, experience, and learn about:

- **Edith Wharton:** Edith Wharton, one of America's greatest writers, wrote more than 40 books in 40 years, including authoritative works on architecture, interior design and gardens. She was the author of such bestselling novels as *The Age of Innocence*, *Ethan Frome* and *The House of Mirth*. She was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. The Mount is one of only 5% of national landmarks honoring women.
- **The Mount:** Wharton designed and built The Mount in 1902 as a writer's retreat and place for entertaining distinguished and interesting guests such as Henry James and the Vanderbilts. Nestled among woodlands and hidden from public view, the house and gardens overlook Laurel Lake with spectacular views to the Berkshire Hills beyond. Wharton created The Mount based on the design principles articulated in her groundbreaking book, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), co-authored with architect Ogden Codman. Still in print today, this book is credited with establishing interior design as a profession in this country. Like Jefferson's Monticello, The Mount is an "autobiographical house" that reflects the life and work of its remarkable creator.
- **The Gardens:** Designed, constructed and planted between 1901 and 1907, The Mount's gardens and grounds were Edith Wharton's own labor of love, and are the only surviving landscape elements she designed in the U.S. The gardens are of extraordinary significance to the estate and reflect Wharton's embrace of the classical design principles she praised in her 1904 book, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*. In 2005, the flower garden was planted with nearly 3,000 annuals and perennials, the crown jewel of a four-year \$3 million restoration. The three acres of formal gardens also include a "lime walk" of linden trees, a sunken Italian walled garden, and a rock garden with unique and historic grass steps.
- **Programs:** Seasonal programs include the Monday Lecture Series, in which notable authors speak about their recent books; the 2007 season included two Pulitzer Prize winners, Debby Applegate and Deborah Blum, and many other major scholars and writers. Other programs include the Amy Clampitt Poetry Reading, an annual event which has brought major poets such as Robert Pinsky and Rita Dove to The Mount; an

- continued -

**The Mount
Lenox, Mass.
Fact Sheet - p. 2**

annual weekend of *Selected Shorts*, the NPR syndicated literary program; and “Wharton on Wednesdays,” readings from books by Edith Wharton, hosted on The Mount’s terrace.

- **Edith Wharton’s Library:** In 2006, Wharton’s life-long collection of books was acquired for The Mount, as made possible by a private loan. This collection of nearly 2,700 volumes reflects Wharton’s passion for literature, science, theology, and the arts. Her personal markings make the collection a valuable scholarly archive, and visitors can now see the books on the shelves of The Mount’s library.

Awards:

Edith Wharton Restoration has received numerous honorary awards in recognition for its achievement in restoring The Mount, including:

- Preservation Mass’s 2003 Charles W. Eliot II Award for Exceptional Vision and Excellence in Planning
- The Victorian Society in America’s 2004 Preservation Award
- The 2005 *Preserve America* Presidential Award, the nation’s highest awards for historic preservation, presented in the Oval Office by President and Mrs. Bush
- 2007 Preservation Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Notable Visitors:

- **Hillary Clinton**, then First Lady, visited The Mount in 2008 to present a \$2.9 million challenge grant from Save America’s Treasures. This grant helped launch major restoration on the property, an effort that ultimately raised more than \$11 million.
- First Lady **Laura Bush** was at The Mount in 2006 to celebrate the return of Edith Wharton’s life-long collection of books.

Major Grants Received:

1998	\$2.9 million through the federal challenge grant program, Save America’s Treasures
1998	\$230,000 in grants from the Massachusetts Historical Commission
2001	\$1.5 million Massachusetts State Grant
2005	\$500,000 from an anonymous foundation to restore The Mount’s gardens
2006	\$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

For additional information, contact:

Susan Wissler
Vice President
The Mount
2 Plunkett Street, Box 974
Lenox, MA 01240
Phone: (413) 551-5103
Email: swissler@edithwharton.org

High-resolution images and b-roll footage is available upon request, or visit us at our web site at www.EdithWharton.org.