



PRESERVING THE ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY OF PALM BEACH

BY AVA ROOSEVELT

The Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach has dedicated 33 years to the conservation of the historic, architectural and cultural heritage of Palm Beach



In the early spring of 1999, John D. Mashek, Jr., the Chairman of the Preservation Foundation, invited Bill Roosevelt, my late husband, and me to a luncheon at the Sailfish Club. We were stunned to learn that original drawings of the most distinguished architects, such as Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, Marion Sims Wyeth, John Volk, Howard Major and Clarence Mack, were warehoused, endangering the legacy of those who have made Palm Beach one of the most architecturally notable towns in the nation.

The then-headquarters on Chilean Ave., a one-story-bungalow, which architecturally speaking missed the Palm Beach standards of excellence by the size of Texas, were bursting at the trusses with the Preservation Foundation's growing projects in restoration, education and beautification of the town many love to call home.

At the time of our luncheon, it had been nearly 20 years since the concept to preserve Palm Beach was conceived by Honorable Judge James R. Knott. A dedicated historian and author, Judge Knott forever changed the face of restoration and rehabilitation. Instead of 'razing' historical structures, he encouraged education about and appreciation for them.

A PERSONAL CONNECTION TO THE CAUSE

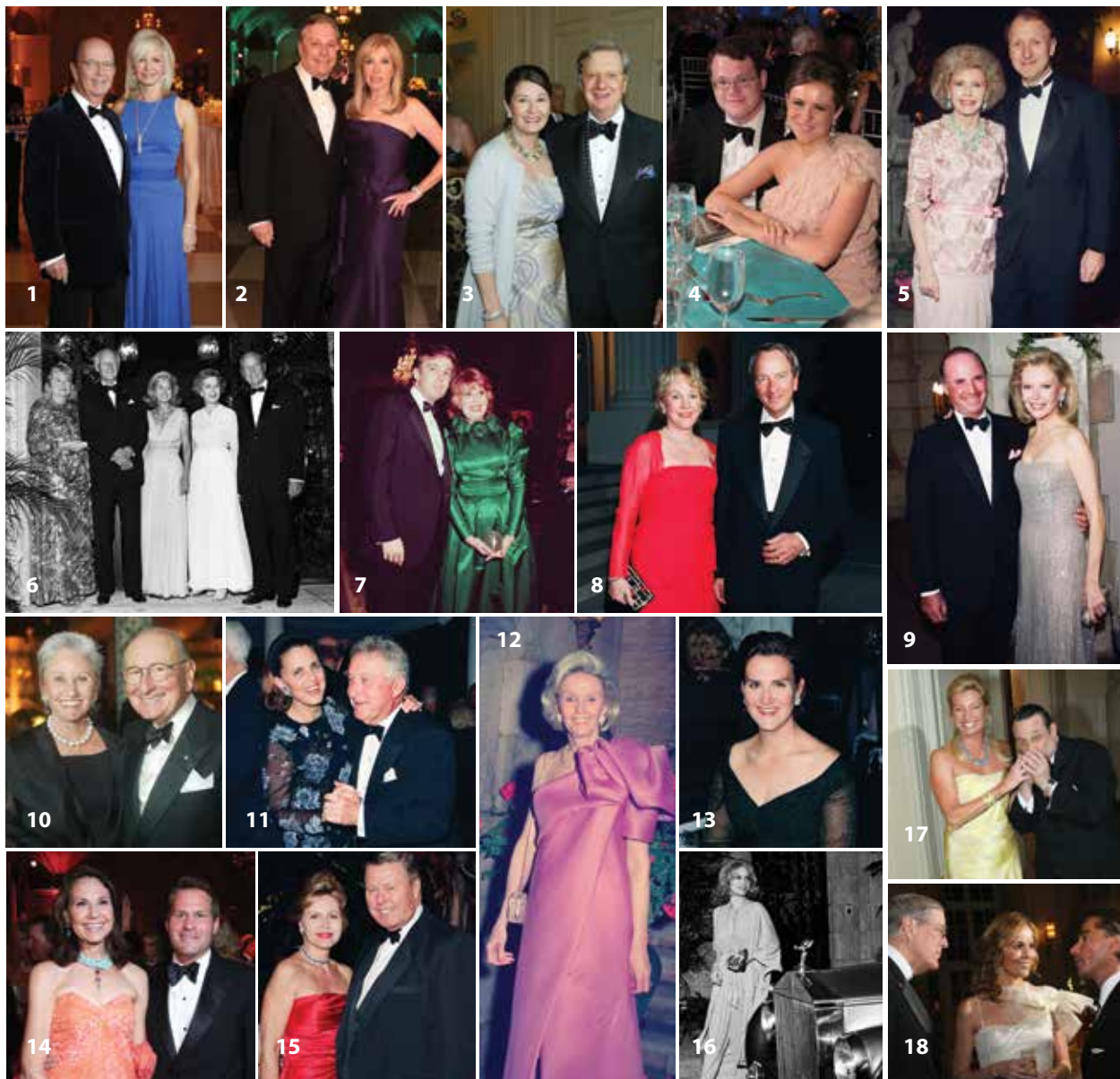
As the lunch went on, we discovered that the first schoolhouse in southeast Florida was founded in 1886 as a community project. Under the auspices of the Preservation Foundation, since 1990 The Little Red Schoolhouse has become the site of the 'Living History' Heritage Education program serving 6,000 students a year from all over Palm Beach County.

As it happened, Bill Roosevelt went to school there before it was moved from Hobe Sound in the early 1950s to its present location at Phipps Ocean Park. Suddenly, John Mashek's concept became intensely personal. "I recall the mornings spent there as a child to be the happiest of my life," Bill confessed to me that day.

PLANNING NEW HEADQUARTERS

John Mashek's vision and his iron will to build the new Preservation Foundation's headquarters took shape when Bill enlisted the help of his family — The William H. Donner Foundation. What followed was to become the most awe-inspiring initiative — Campaign for Heritage 2001. It united friends and same-minded Palm Beachers who stepped up to raise \$5 million needed to build the center.

As the list of donors and members is simply too numerous to mention, I strongly encourage you to visit the Preservation



1. Wilbur & Hilary Geary Ross
2. John Mashek & Michele Kessler
3. Diana & Llwyd Ecclestone
4. Alexander Ives & Carolina Portago
5. Jean Tailer & John Loring
6. (Left to right) Sue Whitmore,
Earl E.T. Smith, Lesly Smith,
Alice Willard, Le Baron Willard
7. Donald Trump & Beverly Sills

“WHEN I THINK OF THE
FOUNDATION’S ANNUAL
DINNER DANCE, I THINK OF
OLD WORLD PALM BEACH, I
THINK OF EVERYTHING THAT
IS GORGEOUS, EVERYTHING
THAT IS RIGHT WITH THE
WORLD.” -TALBOTT MAXEY

8. Jessie & Rand Araskog
9. Martin & Audrey Gruss
10. Susie & Ambassador Ed Elson
11. Kit & Bill Pannill
12. Liz Schuler
13. Talbott Maxey
14. Beth Dowdle & Scott Moses
15. Ava & Bill Roosevelt
16. Jane Dudley
17. Pauline Pitt & Steven Stolman
18. David & Julia Koch & Scott Snyder



Foundation headquarters, designed by a notable local architect Jeff Smith. Please take time to honor those who gave freely and created a lasting monument to perfection and above all, to friendship. A sea lover, had he lived to see the completion of the Preservation Foundation in 2004, Bill would have noticed John's most grateful acknowledgment to him on a bronze plaque placed in the Foundation's serene lobby, facing a small fountain.

The rest is an ever-evolving history of one of the most successful drives to preserve the beauty and architectural integrity that has saved Palm Beach from becoming a gateway to mediocrity. In addition, by creating many educational programs allowing both children and grown-ups to benefit from over 20,000 archival records representing the best of Palm Beach architectural legacy, the Preservation Foundation is making history: The annual Ballinger Award commemorates the best restoration of an original Palm Beach property; The Gruss Master Architect Lecture brings world-renowned architects to speak; The Elizabeth L. and John H. Schuler Award recognizes new architecture in keeping with the traditional styles; The Polly Earl Award has inspired many to achieve architectural brilliance and preservation and to learn how to go about doing it 'properly.'

"Historic preservation and landmarking are now well accepted in the town and we now have over 280 landmarked properties," said Mashek.

Under the watchful eye of Alexander C. Ives, Foundation Executive Director with Palm Beach family ties dating back 80 years, the Preservation Foundation has leaped communication-wise well into the 21 century and offers an array of films and lectures available to Foundation members and their guests.

"We now see a large part of our work being dedicated to inspiring the best in new design across the board, from architecture to landscape and

interior design. It is all about being the Janus face, the Roman god whose head looks both to the past and the future at the same time," said Ives.

30+ YEARS OF EXQUISITE DINNER DANCES

In addition to being the destination 'to study, learn and be inspired,' the Preservation Foundation Dinner Dances that date to 1980 are the most coveted invitations of The Season. Mar-a-Lago, the former estate of Marjorie Merriweather Post, commissioned by her husband Edward F. Hutton and designed by John Urban, became most appropriately the site of the first ball when Donald Trump purchased the National Historic Landmark in 1985. In 1990, the event was relocated to the Flagler Museum. In 2003, due to its growing popularity, Dinner Dances were moved to The Breakers. The Dinner Dances have raised millions of dollars to support the Foundation's mission.

Today, there are no more 'naming opportunities' available in the Preservation Foundation's present location. It seems the quest for excellence is again outgrowing its 'home.' Always a visionary, John Mashek's next dream is to acquire a parcel of land to build an annex, preferably in walking distance to the Foundation's headquarters. When the time comes, an abundance of 'naming opportunities' will become available for those who would like to partake in the vision that is easy on the eye, light on the heart and uplifting to the soul. For more information, go to www.Palmbeachpreservation.org. ●



Ava Roosevelt

Editor's Note: Ava Roosevelt is the author of *The Racing Heart*, a romantic thriller set at the famed 24 Hours of Le Mans Endurance Race (www.theracingheart.com). She is also a Palm Beach philanthropist and wife of the late William Donner Roosevelt, grandson of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.