



CELEBRATING
55 YEARS

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Fans of HBO's "The Gilded Age" should visit The Clouds Hill Museum in Warwick- by Frank Picozzi

March 08, 2024 - Rhode Island



Frank Picozzi

Warwick has a wide variety of development opportunities, quality municipal services, beautiful parks, and great community events that people know about, but many are not aware of a special property that's a hidden cultural and historical gem of a place.

The Clouds Hill Museum is truly a portal to the past, offering an opportunity to see firsthand how life was in the late 19th century. The home on the property, built as a wedding gift for Elizabeth Ives Slater on her marriage to Alfred Reed, Jr., has remained in the family ever since, passing through four generations, always into the hands of the eldest female. Anne Holst is the museum president and present owner and happily welcomes visitors into the home where she grew up – she tells stories of sliding down the majestic stairway bannister as a child – and where she still lives. Her ancestors include Roger Williams, Zachariah Allen, Samuel Slater, and her mother, Anne “Nancy” Allen Holst, the world's first female fire chief.

Clouds Hill is on the National Register of Historic Places, and fans of HBO's “The Gilded Age” who visit there will recognize portions of the home that have been used in the popular period drama. The home has been carefully preserved and is said to be one of the best examples of Victoriana, with original architecture, textiles, furnishings, artwork and the like carefully preserved through the decades. The family also thought to save the contractor's account register and receipts, now allowing visitors to see the nearly 50 businesses and individuals involved in the construction, reflecting the hundreds of workers who brought the vision for the home to life. Anne herself is a wealth of knowledge regarding Warwick's and Rhode Island's rich history.

Although the property is located off busy Rte. 1, once you travel up the long driveway to the house, it truly feels like you've been transported back in time as you take in the sight of the majestic home and the beauty of the nearly 28 acres the property comprises. The arboretum trail, home to more than 70 species of trees and shrubs, provides a remarkable sense of tranquility. The carriage museum houses more than 12 carriages, while the Center for the Outdoors invites guests to learn about fishing, hunting, different species, and more.

The museum, which is a 501(c)3 organization, also offers seasonal exhibits as well as plant and yard sales throughout the year and hosts community concerts. It's also available for other special events. Cloud Hill's annual “Who Dunit” evening in November drew nearly 50 people who tried to solve each scene and figure out which was the murder. Six people were successful in guessing the solution to the Prohibition-themed mystery.

You're invited to come see this special place for yourself! There are some pre-scheduled openings of the museum, but a tour at a modest entry fee can be arranged by mutual convenience any time, seven days a week, by calling (401) 884-9490. For additional information about Clouds Hill, visit www.cloudshill.org.

Frank Picozzi is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.