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## **Living History Tours at the Vanderbilt Mansion: Time-Machine Trip to the Fabled Gold Coast of the 1930s**

***Every Saturday and Sunday throughout the Summer***

CENTERPORT, NY (May14, 2012) – The calendar might read 2012, but on one hilltop in Centerport, it will be 1938 all summer long. For more than a decade, Living History tours of the Vanderbilt Mansion have given summer visitors a kind of time-machine trip to the 1930s. In costume and in character as household staff members and famous family guests, staff member-actors take visitors through the sprawling 24-room, Spanish-Revival waterfront mansion and regale them with stories about the family, its guests and its adventures.

Living History tours are given every Saturday and Sunday, beginning on Memorial Day weekend and running through Labor Day. Saturday tours begin at 11:00 a.m., Sunday tours at 1:00. The last tour on each of those days leaves at 4:00 p.m.

All visitors pay the general museum admission: \$7 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors (62 and older), \$3 for children 12 and under. Visitors who wish to tour the mansion pay general admission plus \$5 per person.

Stephanie Gress, the Vanderbilt Museum’s director of curatorial affairs, said this summer’s Living History tours, titled “Backstairs at the Vanderbilt,” focus on the staff.



*Vanderbilt Museum photo*

**The Living History cast, from left, standing: Peter Reganato as the chef, Mary McKell as cook Delia O’Rourke, Susan Bowe as secretary Miss McKone and Vincent Ilardi as the valet. From left, seated: Carmen Collins as the Duchess of Windsor and Rick Outcault as the Duke of Windsor.**

“The stories told on these tours are based upon the experiences of local people who worked on the Vanderbilt household staff,” she said. “Some who began working in the mansion when they were

teenagers are now in their 80s. Some still live nearby and have given us their true stories of the privileged Gold Coast life at Eagle's Nest.”

Gress said the stories are also taken from materials in the Vanderbilt Museum archives, including Mr. Vanderbilt's extensive personal journals and letters, the privately-published books of his world travels and circumnavigations of the globe, and the visual record produced by his photographer and cinematographer.

Visitors can experience a day at the Vanderbilts' summer home with these behind-the-scenes looks at their lives. On a typical summer afternoon at Eagles' Nest in the late 1930s, the mansion staff is abuzz with the arrival of special guests, including the newly married Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

Guests are greeted by the Duchess herself, or by a Vanderbilt staff member, to begin a tour of the mansion's living quarters. Visitors can expect to meet Mr. Vanderbilt's secretary, Miss McKone, his valet, Herbert Stringer, or Captain Reddington Robbins. Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt have already left for Manhattan – the Duke and Duchess will meet up with them later at their favorite night spot, El Morocco.

In addition to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, played by Richard Outcault (and Jim Ryan) and Carmen Collins, visitors will meet Mr. Vanderbilt's pilot, played by Tom Franklin; the secretary, played by Susan Bowe and Beverly Pokorny; cook Delia O'Rourke, played by Mary McKell; the valet, played by Vincent Ilardi; and Mr. Vanderbilt's first mate on the *Alva*, Reddington Robbins, played by Tom Franklin. Other characters are Fred Astaire's wife, Phyllis, and Rosemary Warburton, daughter of Rosamund Lancaster Warburton, who was Mr. Vanderbilt's second wife.