1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: THE BREAKERS

Other Name/Site Number: Cornelius Vanderbilt II House

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Ochre Point Avenue Not for publication:___

City/Town: Newport Vicinity:___

State: RI County: Newport Code: 005 Zip Code: 02840

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
Private: X	Building(s):___
Public-Local:___	District: X
Public-State:___	Site:___
Public-Federal:___	Structure:___
	Object:___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
2	1 buildings
3	_____ sites
3	_____ structures
28	_____ objects
36	1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 36

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ Entered in the National Register
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	Domestic	Sub:	Single Dwelling
Current:	Recreation & Culture Landscape	Sub:	Museum Garden

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Beaux-Arts, Italian Renaissance

MATERIALS:
Foundation: Brick, Concrete and Limestone
Walls: Limestone
Roof: Terra Cotta Red Tile
Other: Marble (plaques), Wrought Iron (gates & fences)

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Breakers, built between 1893 and 1895, is located on Ochre Point in Newport, and is sited on a 13-acre estate bordering cliffs that overlook the Atlantic Ocean to the east. The house occupies a commanding position on the outermost projection of Ochre Point and is the greatest representative of the collection of 19th-century summer houses located here. Inspired by the 16th-century palaces of the merchant princes of Genoa, The Breakers is in the style of an Italian Renaissance villa faced in Indiana limestone. The 250 foot by 150 foot dimensions of the mansion are aligned symmetrically around a central Great Hall. In its Italian equivalent, the Great Hall at The Breakers would have been an open air courtyard, but because of the difference in climate, this space was covered in its Newport interpretation. The house contains five levels: three floors of main rooms, a basement, and an attic. The elaborately decorated facades and interiors appear now as they did upon completion in 1895, as documented by the photographs of its construction in 1895 and those of its interior in 1904. The original furniture and fixtures, interior plasterwork, gilding and decorative painting remain untouched from when Cornelius Vanderbilt II occupied The Breakers.

Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1843-1899) insisted that The Breakers be made as fireproof as possible. Thus the structure of the building contains no wooden parts; steel trusses support the masonry and exterior Indiana limestone blocks. The finished floors are of marble, tile, terrazzo, and mosaic. The heating plant is beneath the caretaker's cottage, approximately 120 yards from the main house, and is joined to the basement of the house by a wide tunnel. Several hundred tons of coal could be stored at once in the underground boiler room. There are approximately 70 rooms in the house, 33 of which are devoted to the domestic staff that was required to maintain the house. These staff quarters are located primarily over the north wing of the building on the third floor.

The facades of The Breakers display an elaborate sculptural program and clearly articulate the interior distribution of primary and secondary spaces. The **entrance** (northwest) is marked by the centrally placed porte-cochere bearing limestone masks of Apollo and Mercury with acorns and oak leaves used for the cornices that divide each of the three principal stories. Composite Doric columns divide the window bays on the first floor while composite Ionic columns divide the window bays of the second floor. Round and rectangular plaques of rare marbles framed in oak and laurel leaves appear over secondary windows. The **southwest facade** faces the grand parterre garden. The central feature is a projecting hemicycle with a pergola. Garlands of starfish and sea shells as well as images of the "River Gods" adorn the overdoors of the first floor. The **southeast facade**, facing the Atlantic Ocean, is marked by a two-story double loggia. The spandrels of the loggia arches are decorated with figures of the four seasons of the year. The Doric first floor cornice bears the Vanderbilt "V" clustered in oak leaves and images of Apollo and Mercury that represent the Vanderbilts' patronage of the arts and achievements in commerce. Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895) used occasional panels of Italian marble to add a touch of color to contrast with the buff of the limestone, and lion heads are carved in full relief along the roof line of The Breakers. The vaults of the arcaded side porches are of tile laid according to the method introduced by Raphael Guastavino, an Italian architect and engineer who later worked for the Vanderbilts at Grand Central Station in New York.

The Breakers **Main Entrance** is approached through wrought iron gateways crafted by the William Jackson Company of New York which are topped with elaborate scrollwork, including the acorn and oak leaf family symbol surrounding the initials of Cornelius Vanderbilt. Single gates providing access to the sidewalks flank the main drive gates, which weigh over seven tons to the pair. The 30-foot high gateways are part of a twelve-foot-high Genoese-style limestone and iron fence that borders the property on all but the ocean side.

> The wrought iron fence enclosing three sides of the property is one of the most beautiful examples of ornamental iron work to be found anywhere. Each of the fifty six iron work panels measures thirty one feet long by eight feet high. These panels are carried between large limestone piers that punctuate the four-foot-high, beautifully tooled limestone wall. That this twelve-foot fence effectively excludes trespassers from the public highways cannot be denied; however, its main purpose is to enhance the beauty of the estate and to create a sense of the ultimate in exclusiveness.[1]

A gravel drive leads to the large porte-cochére of the **northwest facade**. Flanking the entrance drive are four bronze lamp posts decorated with molded figures executed by Henri Bonnard of New York and designed after Italian Renaissance candelabra. They are mounted on three-foot limestone pedestals with bronze standards 13 feet high. There are four globes on each standard.

FIRST FLOOR

The **Entrance Foyer** is reached by two sets of doors: the first of carved oak, the second of wrought iron (weighing approximately two tons).

The **Gentlemen's Reception Room** is immediately to one's right upon entering the foyer of The Breakers' main entrance. The walls are of quartered oak and the fireplace is of yellow Numidian marble from Africa. Photographs of The Breakers in several stages of construction as well as several Vanderbilt family photographs are on display in the room.

The **Ladies' Reception Room**, located to one's left upon entering the foyer, is in the Louis XVI style. It contains carved cream and gilt paneling commissioned in the 18th century by Monsieur Megret de Serilly, the Paymaster of the Royal French Army, and was acquired by the Vanderbilts from his house in Paris. Each panel in the room represents a different theme. To the left of the window is Astronomy, to the right is Music, followed by Time to the left of the fireplace, Weather, Fine Arts, and, finally, Architecture (indicated by a compass and a protractor). The paneling has never been repainted or regilded. The furniture is French, in the Louis XVI style, covered in Beauvais tapestry. The carpet is a subtly-shaded hand-woven 19th-century Savonnerie.

The **Great Hall** is executed in the Italian Renaissance style and measures 50 feet in any direction. The architect, Richard Morris Hunt, modeled this room, and the house in general, after the 16th-century Renaissance palazzos of northern Italy (particularly those of Turin and Genoa). The walls are made of carved Caen limestone from the coast of France and adorned with plaques of rare marbles ranging from the pink marble of Africa to the greens of Italian origin. Elaborately carved pilasters decorated with acorns and oak leaves support a massive carved and gilt cornice which surrounds a ceiling painted to depict a windswept sky. On the ceiling are four blue-green medallions bearing the acorn and oak leaf, a Vanderbilt family symbol representing strength and longevity. This motif appears repeatedly throughout the house. The rug in the Great Hall is Kurdish from Turkey. There are four bronze chandeliers and eight free-standing cast bronze candelabra which are replicas of 16th-century Italian designs. Two exceptions to the largely Italian decorations of the Great Hall are a pair of red porphyry vases set on columns of the marble griotte brun; they are replicas of a pair in the Salon d'Apollo at the Louvre. Over each of the six doors which lead from the Great Hall are limestone figure groups celebrating humanity's progress in art, science, and industry:

Door Motifs:

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[1] Smales, Holbert T. *"The Breakers," Newport, Rhode Island.* Newport, Rhode Island: Remington Ward, 1951: p. 33.

1. Galileo, representing science
2. Dante, representing literature
3. Apollo, representing the arts
4. Mercury, representing speed and commerce
   The image of Mercury was used to represent the efficiency of the New York Central Railroad of which Cornelius Vanderbilt was President. There are two cherubs at either side of the image of Mercury: the cherub to the right holds a sledge hammer; the cherub to the left holds a spike. Together they are laying the railroad tracks of the New York Central, while behind them appear the images of a locomotive and a bearing press used on high speed trains.
5. Richard Morris Hunt, representing architecture
6. Karl Bitter (1868-1915), representing sculpture

The **Main Staircase** was designed in the Italian Renaissance style by Richard Morris Hunt and is decorated with a huge Flemish tapestry designed by Karl van Mander in 1619. The subject of the tapestry is Alexander the Great receiving homage and tribute. Hunt designed the area for just such a tapestry and included a 33-foot stained-glass skylight to enhance its subdued colors. The skylight was designed and executed by the American muralist Francis Lathrop (1849-1909). Below the tapestry is a portrait of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt in the year of her marriage, painted by the Spanish artist Raimundo de Madrazo y Garreta (1852-1917) in 1867. The railing of the staircase and of the second floor hall is a bronze and wrought iron decorative design. Beneath the Main Staircase is a large scallop-shell fountain designed and sculpted by Hunt's protege, the artist Karl Bitter. In front of the fountain are three rugs by the English arts and crafts designer William Morris. There is a Chinese gong at the base of the staircase which was sounded every evening to announce that dinner was served.

The **Arcade** is executed in an Italian Renaissance style and contains a sculpted fireplace designed by Karl Bitter. The vaulted ceiling is hand-painted with a blue mural of garlands and cherubs covered with a diaper pattern applied in gold leaf. The arcade contains two 17th-century Italian chairs bearing the coat of arms of the Borghese and Barberini families. They were acquired by the Vanderbilts from the collection of the Farnessi palace in Rome. The chair to the right bears the crest (two winged serpents) of the Borghese family, while the one to the left bears the crest (three bees) of the Barberini family.

The **Library**, the center of Vanderbilt life at The Breakers, is in a Renaissance style and is paneled with Circassian walnut stamped with gold. The ceiling is coffered and each square is covered with gold leaf and hand-painted with polychrome insets. Every other square bears the dolphin motif, a symbol of the sea and hospitality. Below the ceiling are panels of green Spanish leather embossed with gold. There is a stone fireplace in the Library which was acquired from a 16th-century French chateau, Chateau d'Arnay le Duc in Burgundy; its richly carved mantelpiece bears the Old French inscription "De gran bien me rie, et poinct ne default; Il n'est qu'adresse, quant tout prevault." (I laugh at great wealth, and never miss it; nothing but wisdom matters in the end.) Glass cases in the Library hold the books of the Vanderbilt family. There is a bronze bust in the archway of the Library which is of William Henry Vanderbilt, the eldest son of Cornelius and Alice who died of typhoid while attending his junior year at Yale University in 1892. Also in the Library is a marble bust of Cornelius II and a bronze bust of his son, William Henry II. Both father and son were sculpted by the American sculptor John Q.A. Ward (1830-1910). Opposite the bust of William Henry is a painting of Cornelius Vanderbilt II by B.C. Porter. The Louis XVI style chairs and settees, as well as the French Renaissance style tables, were designed for the room by J. Allard *et Fils* of Paris. There is a small alcove adjoining the Library which contains two portraits painted by Jared B. Flagg. One is of Commodore Vanderbilt, the man who first made the Vanderbilt's fortune through the steamship and railroad industries. The other is of Mrs. Gwynne, the mother of Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt II. The alcove has dark wainscoting of Circassian walnut decorated with low relief carving and gold leaf; the walls

above the woodwork are covered, as in the Library itself, with panels of gold-embossed green Spanish leather. In the corner of the alcove is a mid-18th-century Dutch-style long case clock with delicate marquetry (wood inlay) which is still in good working order and able to play any one of six melodies. The rug in this room is Kurdish from Turkey.

The **Music Room** is evocative of the opulent Parisian interiors of the Second Empire and is a free interpretation of the Renaissance style. This room was used for recitals and dances. Its woodwork and furnishings were designed by Richard Van der Boyen and built by J. Allard *et Fils* of Paris. The room's interior was constructed completely in France and then sent to America where it was installed at The Breakers by French craftsmen. The upholstery and the draperies are the original red Italian cut velvet. A deeply coffered ceiling is in gilt and silver-leaf and surrounds a central allegorical painting celebrating Music, Harmony, Song, and Melody, with the names of great composers engraved in plaques along the frame. The fireplace is of blue-gray Campan marble and the tables in the room are designed to match.

The **Morning Room** is executed in a late Renaissance style and faces east to catch the morning sun and the view of the Atlantic. It served as a family sitting room at all times of the day. The interior woodwork, furnishings, and fixtures of the Morning Room, like that of the Music Room, were designed by Richard Van der Boyen, constructed completely in France by J. Allard *et Fils*, and then reassembled in Newport. The ceiling contains a painted allegory of the four seasons with a mirror above a large fireplace that is angled slightly to catch the reflection of the flames. The predominant grey and gold colors of the Morning Room are echoed in its mantelpiece which is made of Campan marble with ormolu accents and a polished agate in the overmantel. There are eight wall paintings in the corners of the room that depict the Muses of classical mythology which are executed in oil paint on a base of silver leaf. Mahogany sliding doors are decorated with grisaille panels depicting the four elements. The 16th-century style chairs, settees, and tables are reproductions of pieces in Venice's Palazzo Correr. The rug is Tabriz from Persia.

The **Porch** located just outside the south window of the Morning Room contains a vaulted roof composed of ceramic tiles set in a herringbone pattern. These vaults were developed by Italian architect and engineer, Raphael Guastavino. Able to bear a great deal of weight for their light construction, they were preferred by architects who designed large public buildings throughout the late 19th century.

The **Lower Loggia** was designed in the Italian Renaissance style and features a vaulted mosaic ceiling made up of thousands of pieces of marble set with a motif of dolphins and foliage. The lower loggia and the upper loggia were furnished and used as open air extensions of The Breakers' living quarters. The wall between the double loggias and the Great Hall is almost entirely of plate glass, affording an expansive view of the Atlantic from inside.

The **Upper Loggia** served as an informal living room. The ceiling is painted in an ancient Roman manner with a fresco and represents three canopies stretched across a cloudy sky. The surrounding frame is painted to resemble marble, an artistic device that was termed "faux marbre" and used frequently in the 18th and 19th centuries in American architecture. The glass doors of the loggia provided ventilation during the warm summer months and provide a view of the ocean waves crashing on the rocks of the Atlantic coastline beyond which consequently gave The Breakers its name.

The **Billiard Room** is in the Italian Renaissance style and was designed by Richard Morris Hunt, who was displaying his talent for creating opulent interiors with marble veneers and semi-precious stones. The walls are faced from floor to ceiling with matched slabs of Cippolino marble from Italy with alabaster used for their arches and frames. The mosaic floor is composed of hundreds of acorn motifs set in marble, onyx, and alabaster. The cast bronze wall sconces with opalescent glass inserts were designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany.

The furniture in the Billiard Room was custom made in the Renaissance style in San Domingo mahogany. The ceiling is framed by the same materials and contains a Roman-style mosaic of a woman and small children in a public bath. Alabaster-framed diamonds and roundels filled with precious marbles adorn the walls and symbolize different aspects of the billiards game. Above the billiards table is a massive lighting fixture of hand-wrought bronze supported by a twin armature fastened directly into the steel beams of the house due to its great weight. This type of wood matches that used in the doors which face the room, and is a dramatic contrast with the cool, subdued marble and mosaic surfaces. The Baumgarten Company of New York designed and built the pool table, score board, and cue rack which are arranged within the room. The Billiards Room also contains a 19th-century English weighing chair, designed to register one's weight in stones, as well as an 18th-century armchair covered in hand-tooled Spanish leather decorated with silver.

The **Dining Room** is in the Italian Renaissance style and has a two-story ceiling that contains a total area of over 2400 square feet. The ceiling is painted to display "The Goddess Aurora Heralding the Dawn." Twelve freestanding columns of alabaster surround the room each with Corinthian style capitals of gilded bronze. These columns support a massive carved and gilt cornice. The small masks on the ormolu Corinthian capitals echo larger ones on the cornice and the vaulted ceiling above it where life-size figures, urns, and garlands are set in high relief against murals of classical scenery. The two chandeliers are composed of thousands of crystal balls and beads and were executed by Cristalleries Baccarat, the French glassmakers founded in 1765. They were originally designed by Hunt in the imperial pattern with a crown on top. The candle sections of the sconces serve as gas jets, with chains that hang below used to regulate the flow of gas. The 16th-century style dining table is made of carved oak, inlaid with lemonwood, and may be extended to seat up to 34 persons. There are, appropriately, 34 Renaissance-style chairs around the edges of the room which served this purpose and which are upholstered in the original red damask. There is a large plate glass window in the south wall of the Dining Room which faces out to the shell-shaped fountain beneath the grand staircase. The fireplace of the Dining Room is of carved and gilt grey marble; its hood is of a deep grey Cippolino marble and is backed by a wall panel of stylized floral designs painted on a ground of silver leaf. The rug in this room is Kurdish from Turkey.

The **Marriage Chest** is in the hall adjoining the Dining Room. It is from Florence, Italy, and is adorned with three painted panels showing scenes of the engagement, wedding feast, and ceremony. Above the chest is a portrait of Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt which was originally in the Newport Y.M.C.A. The Y.M.C.A. was built in memory of Cornelius by his family.

The **Breakfast Room** is executed in the Louis XV style with 18th-century paneling taken from a French chateau and extended to fit the room. The mahogany furniture of the Breakfast Room was custom made by J. Allard *et Fils* in the Louis XV and Empire Revival styles. The subdued light green wainscoting with its gilt molding and cornice decoration contrasts with the prodigious ornamentation of the formal Dining Room. The delicate mantelpiece is of Paonazetto Italian marble and the mahogany table may be extended to seat up to 16 people. There are cabinets in the room next to the fireplace which contain a collection of 16th-century Venetian glass. The rug is Fereghan.

The **Pantry** is located on the first floor and is where the china, crystal, and silver were washed and stored. There is a gallery above the Pantry which provides storage space for additional ware and now holds china and glassware original to the house. Dishes were moved up and down between gallery and pantry by means of a dumbwaiter also used to give access to the wine cellar in the basement. In the cabinets of the Pantry are pieces of Meissen china from Germany denoted by crossed sword hallmarks on their bottoms. There is also a gas warming oven where food was kept warm between courses. In the cabinets are samples of blue and white plates bearing the Vanderbilt monogram.

The **Kitchen** of The Breakers is unique because it is located on the first floor, not in the basement as it was in other houses of the period. This was because the Vanderbilts desired The Breakers to be as fireproof as possible and so the kitchen was designed as a separate wing. The room was also well ventilated which was beneficial for the staff. The room retains all of its original features and serves as a well-planned example of a turn-of-the-century kitchen complex. In the kitchen there is a French style wood and coal burning stove below which are three ovens. At the far end of the Kitchen is the coal bin as well as two broilers with a rotisserie for turning meat on a spit. There is also a work table covered with zinc which served the same purpose as stainless steel today. On the table is a marble mortar used to crush herbs. In the far corner is an ice chest which originally contained ice cut from local ponds in the winter. Another dumbwaiter on the east wall brought the ice and supplies up to the kitchen from the basement where it was stored in large walk-in iceboxes. Although the original copper pots were donated by Countess Szechenyi to the scrap metal drive during World War II, they have since been replaced by other similar pots donated by other Newport families whose homes are of the same period. The door at the end of the kitchen was designed to be kept closed at all times and contains an arched panel in the center which was used to pass items through to be taken to the Dining Room.

SECOND FLOOR

Mr. Vanderbilt's Bedroom was designed in the Louis XIV style by the Boston architect Ogden Codman, an associate of Edith Wharton. This room, as well as all of those on the second floor, display his manner of design based on 18th-century French models. It is furnished with a carved walnut suite made for Mr. Vanderbilt. The coral damask bedspread, upholstery, and draperies are of a reproduction fabric nearly identical to the 1895 material. The original gold braid was painstakingly removed from the old draperies and reapplied to the new ones. The mantel is of grey and peach Numidian marble. In the room are many photographs of the Vanderbilt family. The four sons of Cornelius II are represented, as well as Reginald Claypoole Vanderbilt and his first wife, Mrs. Vanderbilt, the eldest daughter Alice, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and her daughter Flora. There is a mirror over the fireplace which was used as a strategic device by the architect to bring more light into the room.

Mrs. Vanderbilt's Bedroom is designed in a Louis XVI style by Ogden Codman. Her bedroom was designed as a perfect oval, with the doors to the adjoining hall curved to complete the effect. The other doors to the room are cut into the paneling so that what is seen by the viewer are the undisturbed lines of the pilasters, another conscious intent of Codman's design. Dado, moldings, and cornice are painted in the original near-white colors: several slightly varying shades of green-tinged cream. Over the bed is a picture of Mr. Vanderbilt. In the bathroom adjoining Mrs. Vanderbilt's bedroom is a large white marble tub carved in neo-Roman fashion. There is also a small room adjoining Mrs. Vanderbilt's bedroom which she used as a dressing room.

Miss Gertrude Vanderbilt's Bedroom is designed in the Louis XVI style. Above the bed is a portrait of Miss Gertrude at the age of 5 (1880) by the Spanish artist Madrazzo and to the left of the fireplace is an etching of Gertrude as a young woman by the French artist, Paul César Helleu (1859-1927). In front of the large center window is a model of Gertrude's monument at St. Nazaire, France, commemorating the American Expeditionary Force of World War I. To the left of this is a photograph of her statue of Buffalo Bill (which still stands in Cody, Wyoming). At the foot of the bed is a sculpture of "The Engineer," inspired by her brother, Brig. Gen. Cornelius Vanderbilt III who served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and had over thirty inventions to his credit for the Army and the New York Central Railroad.

The **Guest Bedroom** is another example of Ogden Codman's work in the Louis XVI style which emphasized French models for the furniture, woodwork, and light fixtures. The green

wall panels are in the Neo-Classical style typical of late 18th-century French interiors and are framed by off-white dado and moldings. They have never been retouched, although the remainder of the room has been carefully restored by the Preservation Society. There is a bathroom adjoining the Guest Bedroom containing built-in closets and a small square tub commonly known as a "sitz bath." The four faucets on the tub were designed to produce both hot and cold, salt and fresh water. Above each door is a "CV" monogram surrounded by a laurel.

Countess Szechenyi's Bedroom is designed with Louis XVI style woodwork and Louis XV style furniture. It has wall panels covered in delicate silk lisére.

The **Gallery** that surrounds the Great Hall on the second floor level contains ornate plaster work covered with gold leaf that has been left untouched since the house was built and is in near-perfect condition. Each column of the gallery was cut from a solid piece of Italian marble and each has an alabaster capital. The capitals facing the Great Hall are Corinthian while those on the opposite side are Doric. The railings that line the Gallery are wrought iron and bronze. There are four velvet portieres along the gallery embroidered in gold appliques and designed by the artist John La Farge.

There are also two other small bedrooms located on the second floor.

THIRD FLOOR

The third floor contains eight bedrooms and a sitting room decorated in Louis XVI style walnut paneling by Ogden Codman. This floor is currently the residence of Countess Anthony Szapary.

ATTIC FLOOR

The Attic floor contained more staff quarters, general storage areas, and the innovative cisterns.

The "Cottage," used as a children's playhouse, is located between the side gate and the main house. Built by Peabody and Stearns for Cornelius Vanderbilt, it is a good example of Victorian architecture on a small scale. The Queen Anne Revival style elements, i.e., half timbering and shingles, were in keeping with the style of the original Breakers built by the same architects for Pierre Lorillard in 1877.

> An open porch facing the ocean has four wooden posts, carved in the shape of figures from Dutch folklore, supporting the roof. The house contains a living room and kitchen separated by a huge red brick chimney. A large open fireplace occupies the greater part of one side of the living room and is of such size that seats have been built within the opening. The kitchen is quite complete, having a built-in stove, a sink, and a china cupboard. This is a most attractive cottage and reflects the gaiety of the care-free children who have played here.[2]

The Cottage remains as it was originally constructed, and serves as a popular site for the visitors who pass through the grounds of The Breakers by the thousands each year.

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[2] Smales, Holbert T. *"The Breakers", Newport, Rhode Island.* Newport, Rhode Island: Remington Ward, 1951: p. 32.

Just inside the main gate on Ochre Point Avenue is the Gate Keeper's Cottage (1895), which is a plain square, two-story limestone structure. This building is considered non-contributing to this nomination.

THE GROUNDS

The Renaissance-style well-head is three and a half feet high and three feet in diameter. It is located on the main path circling the grounds to the south of the main gates and was a part of the original 1895 plan. The column (also c. 1895) is located to the north of the main gate also on the main garden walk. It is eight feet high and is decorated with a spiral flute design.

The two fountains are located on each of the parterres. The one on the south parterre is three and a half feet high and four feet in diameter, while the north parterre fountain is six feet high and four and a half feet in diameter. Both fountains are also original to the 1895 plan.

The **Grounds** of The Breakers, covering approximately a dozen acres, were originally designed by Boston engineer and landscape architect Ernest Bowditch, a student of Central Park designer Frederick Law Olmsted. Pin oaks and red maples line the drive. The formally landscaped terrace is surrounded by Japanese yew, Chinese juniper, and dwarf hemlock. The trees of The Breakers' grounds act as screens that increase the sense of distance between The Breakers and its Newport neighbors. Among the more unusual imported trees are two examples of the Blue Atlas Cedar, a native of North Africa, and closely related to the Cedars of Lebanon mentioned in the Bible. Clipped hedges of Japanese yew and Pfitzer juniper line the tree shaded foot paths that meander about the grounds. Informal plantings of arbor vitae, taxus, Chinese juniper, and dwarf hemlock provide attractive foregrounds for the walls that enclose the formally landscaped terrace. The grounds also contain several varieties of other rare trees, particularly copper and weeping beeches. These were hand-selected by James Bowditch, a forester also based in the Boston area. Bowditch's original pattern for the south parterre garden was determined from old photographs and laid out in pink and white alyssum and blue ageratum. The wide borders paralleling the wrought iron fence are planted with rhododendrum, laurel, dogwoods, and many other flowering shrubs that effectively screen the grounds from street traffic and give the visitor a feeling of complete seclusion.

General Engineering Facts

In terms of technology and engineering, Hunt designed The Breakers in an approach that was "typically American in that it took full advantage of the latest inventions."[3] The Breakers was one of the first private houses to make use of the latest in emerging technologies such as electric lighting and an elevator. Previously, such modern devices were in use only in *public* buildings.

The method of construction used by Hunt was revolutionary to contemporary architectural and engineering practice. Hunt employed an approach to building construction which he termed the "Critical Path Method," whereby all elements that could be produced independent of each other were constructed simultaneously. In this way, such items as the plate glass windows and doors, hardware, and terra cotta roof tiles of The Breakers were produced in the most efficient manner. This required an incredible degree of foresight and precise planning on the part of the architect and only Hunt's virtuosity in his field allowed him to execute such an approach without flaw. By using the "Critical Path Method," Hunt was able to construct The Breakers in 27 months, an accomplishment that astonished his peers and awed the public.

Another innovative engineering device used in The Breakers is the use of huge cisterns in the upper-most floor of the mansion to supply both fresh and salt water to the household. The value of salt water was believed to lie in its healing ability and contribution to the general health of the skin and pores. In addition, the fresh water supplied to the mansion

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[3] Patterson, Jerry E. *The Vanderbilts*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989: p. 155.

sprang from two separate sources–the city water was piped in to supply the toilets, sinks, and other secondary applications, while rain water was collected beneath the terraces to supply fresh water for bathing and drinking.[4]

All fixtures in the house were designed to accommodate both gas and electric power with a generator being located in the basement level. This was due to the desire by the Vanderbilts to be on the cutting edge of technology at a time when electric lighting systems had just made their emergence, while still retaining the traditional reliability of gas power as a backup.

The fireplaces in The Breakers were sometimes used on cool evenings but were a supplement to a central heating system in the home that was supplied by a heating plant beneath the caretaker's cottage. The heat was forced into the house through a large underground tunnel.

List of Resources

Buildings:
Main House
Children's Cottage
Gate Keepers Lodge (non-contributing)

Sites:
North Parterre
South Parterre
Forecourt

Structures:
Main Gates (2)
Reflecting Pool

Objects:
Column on Garden Walk
Well Head
Urns (20)
Fountains (2)
Bronze Lamp Posts (4)

[4] Lints, Eric P. "The Breakers: A Construction and Technologies Report." Newport, RI: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 1992.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:___ Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A___ B___ C___ D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 2 and 4

NHL Theme(s):
XVI. Architecture
M. Period Revivals
6. Beaux-Arts
7. Renaissance

XXX. American Ways of Life
F. Industrial Wealth of the Last Half of 19th Century

Areas of Significance:
Architecture
Social History
Transportation

Period(s) of Significance: 1893-1899

Significant Dates: 1893-1895 (construction)

Significant Person(s):
Cornelius Vanderbilt II
Richard Morris Hunt

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder:
Richard Morris Hunt
Ogden Codman
Ernest W. Bowditch
James Bowditch
Richard Bouwens Van der Boyen
Karl Bitter

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

"The Breakers" is the architectural and social archetype of the "Gilded Age," a period when members of the Vanderbilt family were the "merchant princes" of American life through their prominence in the world of finance, as patrons of the arts, and as vanguards of international society. Indeed, "if the Gilded Age were to be summed up by a single house, that house would have to be The Breakers."[1] In the year of its completion in 1895, The Breakers was the largest, most opulent house in a summer resort considered the social capital of America. The house was the product of two great men, Cornelius Vanderbilt II (1843-1899) and Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895). These men served pivotal roles in determining the course of American industry and architecture during the years of tremendous growth in the last half of the 19th century. Cornelius Vanderbilt was a key figure in American railroads, philanthropy, and fashionable society. The Breakers is a visual symbol of the Vanderbilts' preeminence in American life.

The Breakers is also the fullest expression of Beaux-Arts architecture in American domestic design by one of the founding fathers of architecture in America, Richard Morris Hunt. The Breakers is one of the few surviving works of Hunt that has not been demolished in the last century and is therefore valuable for its rarity as well as its architectural excellence. The Breakers was Hunt's final work, and is the singular house that has withstood the vagaries of time to be remembered as the monument that was the architect's greatest achievement. Richard Morris Hunt created a work of architecture that is the ideal of Beaux-Arts design and the aesthetic standards that were propagated by the artistic and cultural milieu that constituted the American Renaissance Movement. The Breakers made Hunt the "dean of American architecture" as well as defines the era in American life which Hunt helped to shape. The Breakers encapsulates the social and architectural forces that defined American society in the Gilded Age.

Cornelius Vanderbilt II conceived of the house as a visual symbol of his family's status in American society. He purchased the 13-acre plot of land from Pierre Lorillard in 1885, including the wooden house built in 1877 by the firm of Peabody and Stearns, which was devastated by a fire in 1892. In 1893, Cornelius commissioned Richard Morris Hunt to build the grandest house in New England, The Breakers. After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt, The Breakers was occupied by their youngest daughter, Gladys, who had become Countess László Széchényi through her marriage to the Hungarian Count in 1908. The Countess maintained the mansion as her summer house for many years, opening it to the public in 1948 and leasing it to The Preservation Society of Newport County for a token sum of one dollar a year. After the Countess' death (1965), The Breakers was sold by her heirs to the Preservation Society in 1972. Countess Anthony Szapary, daughter of Gladys Vanderbilt Széchényi, retains the third floor apartments of The Breakers as her residence during the summer months.

The design and construction of The Breakers is a reflection of the technology and vast wealth created by the American Industrial Revolution. The social hierarchy that supported the leisured "grand manner" of life in Newport's summer colony was supported by the great fortunes of American finance, commerce, and industrial expansion. A contemporary view of Newport was as follows:

> A community of wealth and pleasure, Newport is the chief city in the United States in which these characteristics are thoroughly dominant. The social aspects of this summer capital–for its in-gatherings of pleasure-loving people

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[1] Gannon, Thomas. *Newport Mansions: the Gilded Age*. Fort Church Publishers, Inc., 1982: p. 8.

> are truly national–are known of all men; but the highly important fact that this great social activity needs and necessitates an architectural background, a habitat, a scene and setting commensurate with its splendid pleasures, is less generally recognized, or certainly very much less heard of...Splendid building, therefore, is a fundamental principle of Newport building...The resources of our most resourceful architects are taxed to their utmost; the skill and ingenuity of our decorators and furnishers are all but exhausted that the spacious mansion be fitly decorated and amply furnished; the taste of our best landscape architects is brought into play that the grounds and gardens be in keeping with the lavish scale in which each great house is maintained. If the social life is maintained at a high key, the architectural life, so to speak, is raised to a corresponding degree.
>
> The architectural thought which lay behind the creation of Versailles is identical with the ideas that have brought the great houses of Newport into existence. It is true that Versailles was a single palace, while Newport is an aggregation of palaces... but the palace of Versailles was a vast architectural background for court fetes and festivities of all sorts. Just so the palaces of Newport are architectural backgrounds for the pleasures and sports of its inhabitants. The scale is different, the place and the manners, but the architectural meaning of both is identical...
>
> Newport, at all events, illustrates splendid living in the most splendid fashion it has yet attained in America, so far as a group of houses and a group of people are concerned. It is only from this point of view that its houses can be appreciated....
>
> Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt's mansion, "The Breakers," at the time it was built, and that but a few years since, established a new standard in Newport building.[2]

Today the legacies of Mr. Vanderbilt and Hunt remain as they were when first rendered in 1895, carefully preserved in their original potency and for the public's edification. The house, intended originally to impress the elite social circles of Newport, now serves as a conduit to the general public in its ability to transport the nation as a whole into the world of the American Renaissance, and to envelop that person in the ideas that shaped our country in that era.

The prestige of the Vanderbilts had been increasing rapidly for two generations when The Breakers was commissioned, having begun with "Commodore" Vanderbilt's ventures in the steamship industry, where he made incredible profits by commanding the coastal trade by sailing his ships on the Atlantic seaboard to the west coast via Nicaragua. The Commodore was endowed with an extremely imaginative and willful business acumen and he realized that the way of the future in transportation lay in the hands of the railroad, which he referred to as "those things that go on land."[3] Having reached this conclusion, he quickly sold off all of his interests in the steamship industry and invested it in the railroads. The railroads at that time were made up of a great number of small lines that competed with each other, producing an inefficient and overly complex network. The Commodore, a man of resolute and unyielding character when it came to business dealings, moved to change the situation

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2 Ferree, Barr. *American Estates and Gardens*. New York: Munn and Company, 1904: pp. 63-67.

3 Patterson, Jerry E. *The Vanderbilts*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989: p. 35.

by buying the Harlem, Hudson, and Central New York Railroad Lines and consolidating these many pieces into a more efficient, more profitable whole, which came to be known as the New York Central Railroad. As one of the Commodore's critics remarked at the time, the Commodore's ambition "seems to be nothing less than to make himself master in his own right of the great channels of communications which connect the city of New York with the continent and to control them as his private property."[4] The father of the Vanderbilt clan had set in motion forces that would make the Vanderbilts one of the most influential families in America, a family of almost mythical social status and limitless wealth. Indeed, the story of the Commodore's life was of an "honest, sturdy, fearless man against the world, and in the end the man won."[5] As America's richest man, he would pass on this legacy to his son, William H. Vanderbilt. It was an inheritance that stood at approximately 90 million dollars and was the single largest estate ever bequeathed in U.S. history. In the years ahead, that sum would be doubled by William Henry Vanderbilt.

William H. Vanderbilt vastly increased the value of his father's railroad enterprise. His diligence and unflagging stamina in his work produced incredible profits for the New York Central, and consequently for the Vanderbilt family. In addition, William H. "set a pattern for the patronage of architecture" in America and would leave it ultimately to his children to display the grandeur of the Vanderbilts in the form of material works of art and luxurious homes on the ocean shores of Newport. Indeed, when the Commodore's eldest son passed away, his children came in possession of a family fortune of 200 million dollars. One quarter of that would go to the eldest son, Cornelius II, with which he would later build The Breakers in Newport.

Cornelius began his life as the eldest of William Henry and Maria Louisa Vanderbilt's nine children and, as he grew to maturity, he quickly became the favorite of his grandfather, the Commodore. At 16, Cornelius began work as a messenger for the New York Shoe and Leather Bank; at 19 he moved on to join the Kissam Bros. banking firm; and at the young age of 24 he became assistant treasurer at the Vanderbilt-owned New York and Harlem Railroad. In these years, the Vanderbilt family was at the peak of its influence in the financial and social world and Cornelius II was the man who carried the title of Head of the House of Vanderbilt. He had received the gold medal from his father that had originally been awarded the Commodore during the Civil War for donating his steamer S.S. *Vanderbilt* to the Union forces. When this medal was given to Cornelius, it symbolized his position as the head of the family. As such, Cornelius continued the legacy of his grandfather, increasing the power of the New York Central and the 49 railroads under its consolidated umbrella. He presided as chairman of the board of the New York Central and the Michigan Central railroads, following quickly in the footsteps of his bold and financially savvy father. In addition, he acquired the Boston and Albany Railroad, which gave his railroad a direct connection from New York to Boston and increased its scope by 400 miles of track. He became an officer of the New York Young Men's Christian Association, trustee of the General Theological (Episcopal) Seminary, treasurer of the Episcopal Board of Foreign Missions, and trustee of St. Luke's Hospital and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. In addition, he held the position of chairman of the executive committee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and was president of the St. Nicholas Society of New York, an elite society whose members were of the oldest families in the region.

Cornelius II pushed beyond the scope of his father and grandfather in the realm of public responsibility and charity, contributing great sums of money for the public good–in the words of one biographer, "Cornelius II was the first Vanderbilt to assume the role of civic leader in New York and to engage in good works," and as the head of the family, he had the

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4 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

financial means to do so.[6] Although he was considered almost "totally without humor" by some of his associates, his charitable work for the American public is the most extensive of any of the Vanderbilt clan. Cornelius Vanderbilt, like his brother and father, resided in a lavish house on 5th Avenue in New York known popularly as "Vanderbilt Row." Yet, The Breakers would exceed all of the 5th Avenue houses as the ultimate expression of the Vanderbilt's status in American society, status that is reflected in the acorn and oak leaf motif throughout the mansion and which symbolizes the Vanderbilt's strength, longevity, prowess in industry, and patronage of the arts.[7] The Breakers, as the full realization of the Beaux-Arts building, was hierarchical in plan and decorated as befitted its function as a setting for the reception of New York's powerful families, as well as the European aristocrats who came to Newport in the summer season. Newport was the most exclusive resort in America. Its primary function in the period of 1865 to 1917 was as a stage for the rituals of American high society.

Cornelius suffered a sudden, paralytic stroke at the age of 53 and spent his remaining summers of life at The Breakers. Cornelius Vanderbilt II occupies a defining position in U.S. history as a man who had all the means of living a gregarious life of limitless luxury and personal material gains, yet who ultimately chose to devote much of that wealth to the welfare of the public and the community. In a newspaper clipping from July 31, 1894, a tribute to Cornelius expressed the noble aspect of his character:

> In this time, when there is unrest and much of complaint that men who are blessed with riches are also saturated with selfishness and have little care for those less fortunate than they, it is certainly a high example which Mr. Vanderbilt, by his life, sets to others who, like himself, are possessed of riches. The beneficial effect upon the community of such a life as his-one which shows that it is possible that a man may live a Christian life in act as well as in profession, even though he be one who is selected as a type of man of great wealth is something that no man can measure.[8]

Richard Morris Hunt was already established as "the most celebrated American architect of his day"[9] when he was commissioned by Cornelius II to design and build The Breakers. He was regarded among his peers as brash and unyielding, but at the same time consistently precise and knowledgeable of architectural style and technique. Born in Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1827, a member of a prestigious old New England family marked through its generations by legislators, judges, and civic leaders, Hunt was from the very start the "social equal" of the Vanderbilts for whom he would later work.[10] His brother William Hunt was widely regarded as an exceptional painter on both sides of the Atlantic. Richard Morris Hunt followed his own artistic path to Switzerland, where he studied painting at the age of sixteen. From there, Hunt shortly became the first American to attend the prestigious *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, beginning his architectural studies there in 1845. The architectural

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6 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

8 Smales, Holbert T. *"The Breakers" Newport, Rhode Island*. Newport, RI: Remington Ward, 1951: p. 39.

9 Jordy, William H., and Christopher P. Monkhouse. *Buildings on Paper*: Brown University, Rhode Island Historical Society and Rhode Island School of Design, 1982.

10 Patterson, Jerry E. *The Vanderbilts*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989: p. 122.

education of the *Ecole* emphasized the rational development of a building plan and the orderly design of its elevations to reflect the internal compositions of primary and secondary spaces. The eclectic approach to historic models and the incorporation of sculpture and painting into the design of a building were also integral to an *Ecole* training. These aspects of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* manner of design were reinforced by contemporary developments in French architecture and urban planning in the 1850s, the period of Napoleon III and Baron Haussman's monumental rebuilding of Paris. Beaux-Arts design found its fullest expression in American domestic architecture at The Breakers, which displays the rational plan, sculptural richness, and monumental practices Hunt learned at the drawing boards of the *Ecole* and its attendant ateliers.

Hunt was directly influenced by the monumental building projects in Paris during the 1850s. In 1854, Hunt left the *Ecole* and worked for the architect Hector Lefuel on the East Wing of the Louvre. The distribution of ornament in the Louvre project and the interiors of the Paris Opera, built by Charles Garnier at the same time, provided many of the prototypes for Hunt's external and internal ornamental compositions at The Breakers. Almost fifty years later, in 1893, the Academie des Beaux-Arts of the Institut de France awarded him the title of foreign associate in fine arts, the first American-born architect to receive such an honor. The only other Americans ever to receive such recognition were Thomas Jefferson, Edward Livingstone, Louis Agassiz, John L. Motley, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.[11]

Hunt returned to America in 1855 and commenced to establish the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* method in the field of architecture. His commitment was evident in a variety of ambitious ventures foremost of which was his position as founder and president of the American Institute of Architects during the late 1850s. At this time, Hunt was considered the "most beloved by the greatest number of people in his profession."[12] Hunt also became the first vice-president of the newly founded National Sculpture Society, which aimed to beautify buildings, squares, and parks with sculpture and to increase a national appreciation for its artistic value. It is to Hunt's credit, as an inspired teacher and superb intellect, that before his death he was to come to be the acclaimed "dean of American architecture" whom many would emulate, including William R. Ware, who apprenticed in Hunt's studio and went on to become "the virtual creator of the American system of architectural education."[13] Hunt immediately set to work through his commissions from individuals or government officials to render his ideals of beauty and art in architectural, physical form. It was ultimately in Newport where Hunt's work would establish his later conventional reputation and which would culminate in his final creation, The Breakers.[14]

Richard Morris Hunt actively pursued the concepts of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts* in each of his commissions. These commissions included the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1894-1895) (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986), the base for the Statue of Liberty (1881-1885), and the Chicago Columbian Exposition Administration building (1891-1893). Hunt had designed what is one of the first "sky-scrapers" in the United States, the New York Tribune building that was erected in 1876, and one of the first apartment buildings, the Stuyvesant apartments (1870-1871) which have survived to this day. His civic work, such as the Administration Building at the Chicago Columbian Exposition (1893), would set the tone

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[11] Baker, Paul R. *Richard Morris Hunt*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980: p. 435.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 329.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

for civic building and urban planning in America for the next several decades.[15] However, The Breakers commission gave Hunt free reign to express his most monumental architectural ideals in domestic design. Through Hunt's extensive travels across Europe, during which he produced countless sketches and studies of classical architecture, he became a master of architectural forms, rendering historic ornament in precise detail in his own work in the United States. Part of his fame as a leader in his field is this refined mastery in working with classical forms. In the case of The Breakers, Hunt worked in the manner of a Renaissance artist, collaborating with an international team of artists and craftsmen to integrate painting, sculpture, mosaic, plasterwork, and elaborate gilding into a harmonious whole. Hunt also worked with J. Allard *et Fils* of Paris, a highly regarded French firm specializing in furniture-making and the decoration of houses of grand scale.[16] This collaboration was in complete agreement with Hunt's educational background at the *Ecole* and the spirit of the American Renaissance Movement which promoted the requisitioning of the classical past and applying its forms to building for modern society.

During the Chicago Exposition, Karl Bitter witnessed Hunt's passionate ambition for the art of architecture:

> I heard Mr. Hunt exclaim, just as we reached the Court of Honor..."Look around you... here we stand in the midst of what we have done, and have a cause to be proud of doing so much in so short a time! Why don't you hold up your heads in appreciation of the honor you have just received, like men, instead of crawling along in this dejected manner.... Artists you are, and like artists you should live, full of life and merriness." ...He spoke about the work, of art, and many other things. He also spoke about his country and what it had done, with a fire that warmed the heart of each listener. If we felt tired before, we felt tired no longer.[17]

Hunt hoped that his mansions and other works would elevate American culture and aesthetic standards by injecting some of Europe's wealth of tradition into American public consciousness. Hunt's conviction was resolute: "By the Great Caesar, if this country doesn't take up art, we'll make it, we'll educate it, we'll show it what a great and glorious thing it is."[18] Through such distinguished pupils as Choate and Lenox, this dream would be carried on in American architecture long after Hunt's death.

Hunt's greatest contribution to American architecture was in his role as "the father of the profession in this country,"[19] an opinion voiced by one of Hunt's apprentices, Frank Wallis. Indeed, it is a mark of the respect and admiration for Hunt held by the entire international community that while being awarded the Queen's Gold Medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects, their highest honor given to an individual, that the President of the Institute remarked that he hoped "our American brethren" would recognize in the gift "to their most eminent representative, the embodiment of the hearty good-will, the sincere

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15 Downing, Antoinette F. and Vincent J. Scully, Jr. *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, RI.* 2nd edition, New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1967: p. 173.

16 *American Renaissance 1876-1917.* New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1979: p. 146.

17 Baker, Paul R. *Richard Morris Hunt.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980: p. 404.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 449.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

respect, and the ardent admiration with which they are regarded by the architects of the Old World."[20]

Adding to the architectural genius of Hunt's design at The Breakers is the innovative work of Ogden Codman. Codman was instructed by Cornelius II to design and furnish the second and third floors of The Breakers and he proceeded to do so in a style that was a complete departure from the opulent aesthetics of Hunt's first floor rooms. Hunt's work is distinctive for its fine stone and marble work and carved designs. Codman's fame is grounded in restrained architectural proportion and a monochromatic scheme. His approach was an academic revival of classical 18th-century forms. His restrained designs for the living quarters of the Vanderbilt family in The Breakers established his reputation in the fashionable circles of Newport and New York. The monochromatic and historically accurate architecture and furnishings of The Breakers reflect the formula of Codman's approach to design that would be articulated in *The Decoration of Houses* published with Edith Wharton in 1897. The book was a critical text for promoting an academic revival of classical European interiors in America. It remains to this day as "the classic primer for traditional interior decoration."[21] It stated as one of its premises that "the instinct for symmetry... is the most strongly developed in those races which have reached the highest artistic civilization"[22] and that "the most important message is that the essence of style lies not in its use of ornament, but in its handling of proportion. Structure conditions ornament, not ornament structure."[23] The Codman-Wharton-Vanderbilt relationship combined design theory with fashionable patronage, ensuring the success of the book and propagating Codman's ideas in the American mainstream.

What Codman and Wharton expounded upon in their text, Codman applied to The Breakers, furnishing most of its second and third floor rooms in an 18th-century French and Italian classical style. "Suitability, simplicity and proportion" were the three virtues that Codman served to display in all of his architectural work. He was considered "among a handful of able interpreters on both sides of the Atlantic that advocated authenticity of ornament and furniture, the uncluttering of spaces, and a simple, lightened effect–achieved most frequently under the guise of the Georgian/colonial or Louis XV and XVI styles."[24] Ogden Codman completed designs for over 21 houses in his life, his style and architectural philosophy serving to influence the then blossoming minds of such figures as Elsie de Wolfe and Edith Wharton. He served as major a force in the American architectural trend toward elegant simplicity just as Hunt was the major proponent in a powerful drive toward European Renaissance and Gothic forms. Both are given expression in their original pristine quality at The Breakers.

The landscape of The Breakers has withstood time and presents the viewer today with an example of a period of great transition and advancement in its field. The grounds were the result of a collaboration between Hunt, Ernest W. Bowditch, landscape engineer, and James Bowditch, forester, as well as the Vanderbilt's head gardener, Robert Laurie. Ernest Bowditch was an established landscape engineer from Boston and a student of the famous designer of Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted. The Breakers is significant in American

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 434.

[21] Metcalf, Pauline C., ed. *Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses*. Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1988: p. ix.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[24] *Ibid*, p. ix.

landscape design because it reflects the combination of formal traditional elements used in public parks with the more naturalistic elements that were primarily used in private gardens. The mixing of the formal style with the naturalistic at The Breakers produced what is known as the "Beaux-Arts garden."[25] The style mirrored the tone of the building itself, an eclectic mix of many classical European forms. Hunt designed the north and south parterres and the enclosed forecourt with its carved strapwork designs in limestone. Hunt's plans for the paths and pergola in the east terrace and south parterre represent one of the earliest indications of the use of traditional classical garden elements–pergola, parterre, urns, and fountains–in such an historically accurate manner. The classical formula of parterre, terrace, and statuary was the appropriate adjunct to period houses such as The Breakers, and was a precursor for the basic elements used in American gardens throughout the 1920s.

Newport was the social pinnacle of American society at the turn of the century. The luxurious "cottages" of Newport provided the images of that elite society. To provide the final cap to the summit of this era, the leading man of the architectural world, Richard Morris Hunt, was united with the leading man of the business world, Cornelius Vanderbilt II. Thus, The Breakers in essence is the epitome of American social and financial achievement at the turn of the century. As recorded in *American Renaissance 1876-1917*, "beyond all doubt [The Breakers] is the acme of the American palatial mansion" that epitomized the 19th-century architectural period.[26] Paul Bourget, a French journalist and critic of the time, remarked upon The Breakers' completion that the house exemplified "the American people's energy and vigor,"[27] a vigor which had brought about our phenomenal economic growth unequalled by any foreign nation.

The Breakers is not merely "the greatest house in Newport,"[28] as many historical texts propound. It plays a more significant role as the symbol of the Industrial Revolution and the American Renaissance. As Montgomery Schuyler, an esteemed architectural critic of the day, observed in an essay on Hunt following his death, "the expansion of the Newport cottage of 1855 into the Newport palace of 1895...furnishes matter for the discourse of the social philosopher as well as the architectural critic."[29] This observation from a contemporary critic of Hunt's reveals The Breakers as a symbol of the ideas and philosophy of 19th-century America. Amidst a sea of single-minded interests in industry, financial growth, and productivity, Hunt labored to make heard the aesthetic voice of art and ideals,[30] ideals which he found entrenched in the classic architecture of Europe and which he reproduced so precisely in his work on The Breakers.

The Breakers is the textbook example of a house built according to the accepted ideals of the Gilded Age-individual enterprise and monumental architecture. The mansion reflects the

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[25] Perschler, Martin. "Historic Landscapes Project: The Breakers." Newport, RI: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 1993.

[26] *American Renaissance 1876-1917*. New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1979: p. 172.

[27] Baker, Paul R. *Richard Morris Hunt*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980: p. 372.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 366.

[29] Schuyler, Montgomery. "The Works of the Late Richard M. Hunt," *The Architectural Record*, Vol. V., October-December, 1895: p. 180.

[30] Baker, Paul R. *Richard Morris Hunt*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980: p. 411.

personality of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, a man who has become a part of American history and the national heritage as well as the artistic virtuosity of one of American architecture's founding fathers, Richard Morris Hunt. What Hunt contributed to the history of Architecture in this Newport cottage was a revival of "classical American" built on a colossal scale. The Breakers, with its vaguely Italian exterior and its collonades and piazzas, was a revival of the earlier mid-century Italian villas that were spread across America. Ralph Adams Cram dubbed this new style "American Renaissance," orderly and traditional, socially acceptable and archeologically correct. It was worth noting that the two great estates by Hunt, The Breakers and Biltmore in North Carolina, were both commissioned by the Vanderbilt family.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): American Institute of Architects, Hunt Collection, The Octagon, Washington, DC; Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; Ogden Codman, Jr. Architectural Collection, Boston, Massachusetts; Newport Historical Society, Library and Archives, Miscellaneous Papers of J. Allard *et Fils* at The Breakers, Newport, Rhode Island;Preservation Society of Newport County, Library, and Archives, Miscellaneous Papers and Bills of The Breakers, Newport, Rhode Island

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 13 acres

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19	4593380	307910
B	19	4593370	308080
C	19	4593220	308190
D	19	4593140	308130
E	19	4593130	307930

Verbal Boundary Description:

All that certain lot or parcel of land, with the buildings and improvements thereon, situated in the city and county of Newport, state of Rhode Island (Plat No. 36, Lot No. 59) known as The Breakers and bounded and described as follows: Northerly on Shepard Avenue; easterly by the Atlantic Ocean; southerly on Ruggles Avenue; westerly on Ochre Point Avenue.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the mansion, cottage, and grounds that have historically been part of The Breakers estate and that maintain their historic integrity.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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