

# THE MOUNT

Edith Wharton's Home



## MISSION

***The Mount is a National Historic Landmark and cultural center that celebrates the intellectual, artistic, and humanitarian legacy of Edith Wharton.***

We engage a diverse audience through our educational and public programs, through the conservation and preservation of the historic estate and gardens, and by providing context to Wharton's life and achievements.



## EDITH WHARTON

Edith Wharton (1862-1937) was born into the tightly controlled society of Old New York at a time when women were discouraged from achieving anything beyond a proper marriage. Wharton broke through these strictures to become one of America's greatest writers. Author of *The Age of Innocence*, *Ethan Frome*, and *The House of Mirth*, she wrote over 40 books in 40 years, including authoritative works on architecture, gardens, interior design, and travel. She was the first woman awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, an honorary Doctorate of Letters from Yale University, and full membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

At The Mount, Wharton created a world of unparalleled beauty. Here, she found the solace and inspiration she craved and was tremendously productive. While at The Mount, Wharton wrote both *Ethan Frome* and *The House of Mirth* and conceived *The Custom of the Country*.



## THE MOUNT, EDITH WHARTON'S HOME

Edith Wharton designed and built The Mount in 1902, based on the principles outlined in her influential book, *The Decoration of Houses* (1897), co-authored with architect Ogden Codman, Jr. This classical revival house represents the full expression of Wharton's architectural vision. An architectural gem, The Mount earned National Historic Landmark ranking in 1971. In 1998, Save America's Treasures founder and then-First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton visited The Mount and helped raise the visibility of the restoration project which resulted in a \$2.8 million Save America's Treasures federal challenge grant, one of the largest awards given.

The Mount is the only U.S. testament to Edith Wharton and numbers among the 5 percent of National Historic Landmarks dedicated to women.

Today, The Mount is a vibrant cultural center in addition to a historic house museum, welcoming close to 40,000 visitors each year. The house is open daily from May through October. Additional special events are hosted throughout the year.

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### ABOUT THE GARDENS

Edith Wharton was a passionate gardener and an authority on European landscape design. She envisioned her gardens at The Mount as an elegant series of outdoor rooms and created unique architectural compositions planned in concert with the house and the surrounding natural landscape.

Three acres of formal gardens surround the house. To date, more than \$3 million has been invested in the preservation and restoration of The Mount's gardens and grounds, including restoring the hardscape and replanting approximately 5,000 trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. In June 2005, nearly 3,000 annuals were planted in the flower gardens, and an additional 1,500 perennials are planted each spring.

The Italianate walled garden and its rustic rockpile fountain have been completely restored. The Mount's landscape is beautiful at all times of the year, reflecting Wharton's belief that the garden should possess "a charm independent of the seasons."

Completing Wharton's design is a rock garden with grass steps, a landscape feature rarely seen in America. The garden has been replanted with flowering shrubs and the many varieties of native ferns that Wharton personally collected around the Berkshires.



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## PROGRAMS

Yearly programming at The Mount includes:

### **Berkshire WordFest**

A literary festival that brings acclaimed and emerging writers and poets together with passionate readers to celebrate and promote the written word.

### **Community Day**

A free celebration of The Mount and all it has to offer for guests of all ages.

### **Edith Wharton Writing Competition**

In 1998, The Mount and The Berkshire Eagle established a writing competition for regional high school students in honor of Edith Wharton and in support and recognition of emerging young writers in her beloved Berkshire Hills.

### **Monday Lecture Series**

A Berkshire tradition, the Monday Lecture Series is an exciting mix of historians and biographers discussing their recent works in our historic Stable lecture hall.

### **Music After Hours**

These after-hour sessions, featuring a blend of traditional and modern music performed by some of the region's best musicians, offer guests an opportunity to enjoy the property in a whole new manner.

### **Outdoor Sculpture Exhibits**

Large-scale contemporary sculptures are on display through the grounds, offering a delightful juxtaposition of historic and modern, nature and man-made.

### **Theater at The Mount**

Each year, The Mount partners with regional and nationally renowned theater companies to host productions of Wharton's work, Shakespeare's, and others.

### **Wharton on Wednesdays**

Presented on the Terrace, this series celebrates Wharton's short stories with readings and interpretations performed by local actors.

