

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Marble House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Vanderbilt (William K.) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Bellevue Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Newport

STATE: Rhode Island, 02840

CODE 111	COUNTY: Newport	CODE 005
-------------	--------------------	-------------

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: The Preservation Society of Newport County

STREET AND NUMBER: 37 Touro Street

CITY OR TOWN: Newport

STATE: Rhode Island, 02840

CODE: 111

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER: Broadway

CITY OR TOWN: Newport

STATE: Rhode Island, 02840

CODE: 111

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Marble House was commissioned by Mr. and Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt in 1888, the architect being the already-famous Richard Morris Hunt; the building was completed in 1892. It is of two principal storeys upon an inconspicuous basement, and a third or penthouse storey is concealed behind a roof balustrade. The house is of U-shape: its entrance façade faces west on Bellevue Avenue, and its other, indented, principal elevation overlooks the sea to the east. It is faced and decorated with white Tuckahoe marble over, probably, an iron or steel frame with brick reinforcement and casing. While the house itself is not of great size and does not contain a large number of rooms, its architectural scale is large and--very intentionally--imposing.

The entrance pavilion in the centre of the west front has a tetra-style unpedimented portico, using the full Roman Corinthian vocabulary, before it. (A horseshoe-shaped drive, with marble balustrade, wrought iron railing, large torchères, leads to this portico from the elaborate Bellevue Avenue gates.) The front elevation has three wide bays on each side of this portico; the house is five bays deep; the rear wings or projections have each two bays and there are four in the rear centre of the house. The Corinthian order is carried fully around the house, all bays being separated by colossal fluted pilasters; above the ornate entablature, a balustrade rims the house. Two close-together flat belt-courses separate the simply-enframed round-headed windows of the first floor from the simply-enframed, flat-capped ones of the second floor. A paved and balustraded terrace is at the rear (east) of the house, partially contained by its two seaward projections.

A very wide screen of wrought iron and glass within the portico allows entrance to the first-floor hall, which runs straight through to the rear terrace--the main stair climbing on one side and having a landing or mezzanine level across the hall's rear. This hall is panelled and paved with yellow Siena marble, and there is rich plaster ceiling treatment. At front left, the dining-room opens from the hall; it is pilastered (Corinthian) and panelled in pink Numidian marble and has large bronze wall sconces for lighting; its ceiling of stucco relief contains an allegorical painting. Opposite, at right front, is the ballroom, which employs full Louis XIV-Versailles decorative treatment in an explosion of gilt and carved wood, moulded plaster, plaster relief sculptures, marble fireplace, bronze statues, mirrored surfaces, huge gilt-bronze chandeliers--nothing is omitted. Behind (east of) the ballroom is a reception-room or gallery trimmed throughout in high Gothic style, with carved oak, plaster ceiling with pendants, stained glass in the window embrasures (the stained glass has been removed). At the left rear corner of the first floor is a not-large library or sitting-room panelled in walnut in Louis XV style.

(See Continuation Sheet.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description.

At the level where the wide stair-landing forms a mezzanine there are small flanking family sitting-rooms. The second floor originally accommodated not more than eight or nine bedrooms (some rearrangement of the lesser of these chambers has been made), of which the most lavish were that of Mrs. Vanderbilt and the main guest-room. \*

Marble House's site is not a large one, and it is narrow as it extends from Bellevue Avenue to a steep drop above the shoreline. Bordering trees, a plain eastern lawn comprise the only landscaping. However, as an added luxury and a terminal visual attraction there was built in 1913 a Chinese tea-house in the form of a one-storey pagoda on bastions above the water. Panelled, coloured and gilded, it has a green-tiled roof with concave outline, swooping projecting ribs and much symbolic adornment in the way of Chinese dynastic structures. This was designed by the sons of Richard Hunt.

From 1897 to 1909 and from 1917 to 1933 Marble House was not occupied, but it was cared for. In 1933 it was put back in use by a new owner who resided there regularly. He made no changes, except for alterations of convenience in the bedroom and terrace areas and at the penthouse level. Many of the original furnishings, made for the house, stayed there through the second ownership and are still there.

\* Although within Richard Hunt's design and supervision, the main exterior and interior adornments of the house were created by the following: Batterson, See & Eisele, exterior and interior marble work; Karl Bitter, sculpted bas-reliefs of R.M. Hunt and Jules Hardouin Mansart on the landing; John Williams Bronze Foundry (New York), entrance grille; J. Allard et Fils (Paris), Bronze sculptures, railings, fixtures and other trim and furnishings in bronze.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 15th Century

- 16th Century
- 17th Century

- 18th Century
- 19th Century

- 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1888-1892

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal

- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Conservation

- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music

- Political
- Religion/Philosophy
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Theater
- Transportation

- Urban Planning
- Other (Specify)

Social history

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Any surviving works by Richard M. Hunt are to-day rare treasures in our national architectural inheritance. His houses for the Vanderbilts and others in Newport, New York City, North Carolina and elsewhere were creations within the high point of his brilliant career.

Insofar as the Vanderbilt family is concerned, Marble House represents its first great "splash" in the social waters of summer Newport. As the ambitious and strong-minded Alva Smith Vanderbilt planned it, it placed her on top of a tidal wave of social importance and it gave to the Newport locale a new standard of luxury, pretension and formality. This house is a showy but handsome monument to our biggest display of the power of money and of "conspicuous consumption."

Within this house and grounds took place many private and public events controlled by Mrs. Vanderbilt (Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont following her divorce); among them were early gatherings of the suffragettes. Because of its châteline, perhaps, and surely because of its impressive appearance, Marble House has always been one of the sights of Newport.

Through the generosity of the builder's son and that of the trustees of the last resident, Frederick H. Prince, the house and a good part of its original furnishings in 1963 came into possession of The Preservation Society of Newport County, which now opens it to the public. The Chinese tea-house, however, cannot be shown, as time and hurricanes have left it in a very poor state, in need of immediate repair.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Andrews, Wayne: Architecture, Ambition and Americans (New York, 1955), p. 183.  
 Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J., Jr.: The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), p. 160.  
 Schuyler, Montgomery: American Architecture and Other Writings (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961), pp. 547-549.  
 The Preservation Society of Newport County: Marble House ... (Newport, Rhode Island, 1965), 17 pp.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41 ° 27 ' 43 -N	71 ° 18 ' 19 -W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 4.3 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission      DATE: April 30, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 State House, 90 Smith Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island, 02903      CODE: 44

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

MEMO

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

PAMELA A. KENNEDY

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

*Ann*

TO

*file*

*Photo removed  
5/13/02*



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

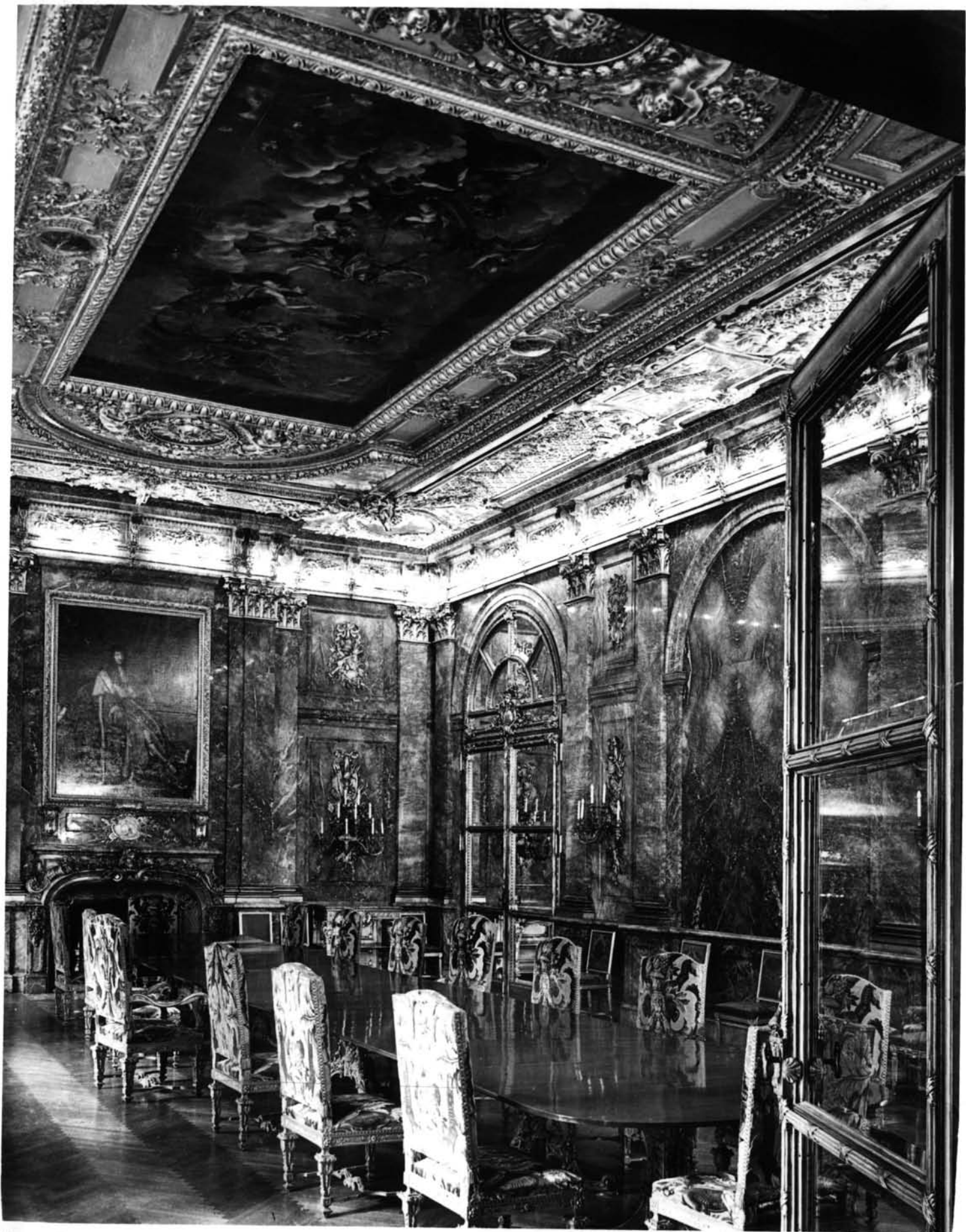
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Marble House			
AND/OR HISTORIC: Vanderbilt (William K.) House			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Bellevue Avenue			
CITY OR TOWN: Newport			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 114	COUNTY: Newport	CODE 005
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: The Preservation Society of Newport County			
DATE OF PHOTO: C. 1965			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 37 Touro Street, Newport, Rhode Island, 02840			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Ballroom.			





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Marble House			
AND/OR HISTORIC: Vanderbilt (William K.) House			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Bellevue Avenue			
CITY OR TOWN: Newport			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Newport	CODE 005
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: The Preservation Society of Newport County			
DATE OF PHOTO: C. 1965			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 37 Touro Street, Newport, Rhode Island, 02840			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Dining-room.			



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Marble House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Vanderbilt (William K.) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

Bellevue Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Newport

STATE:

Rhode Island

CODE

111

COUNTY:

Newport

CODE

005

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: The Preservation Society of Newport County

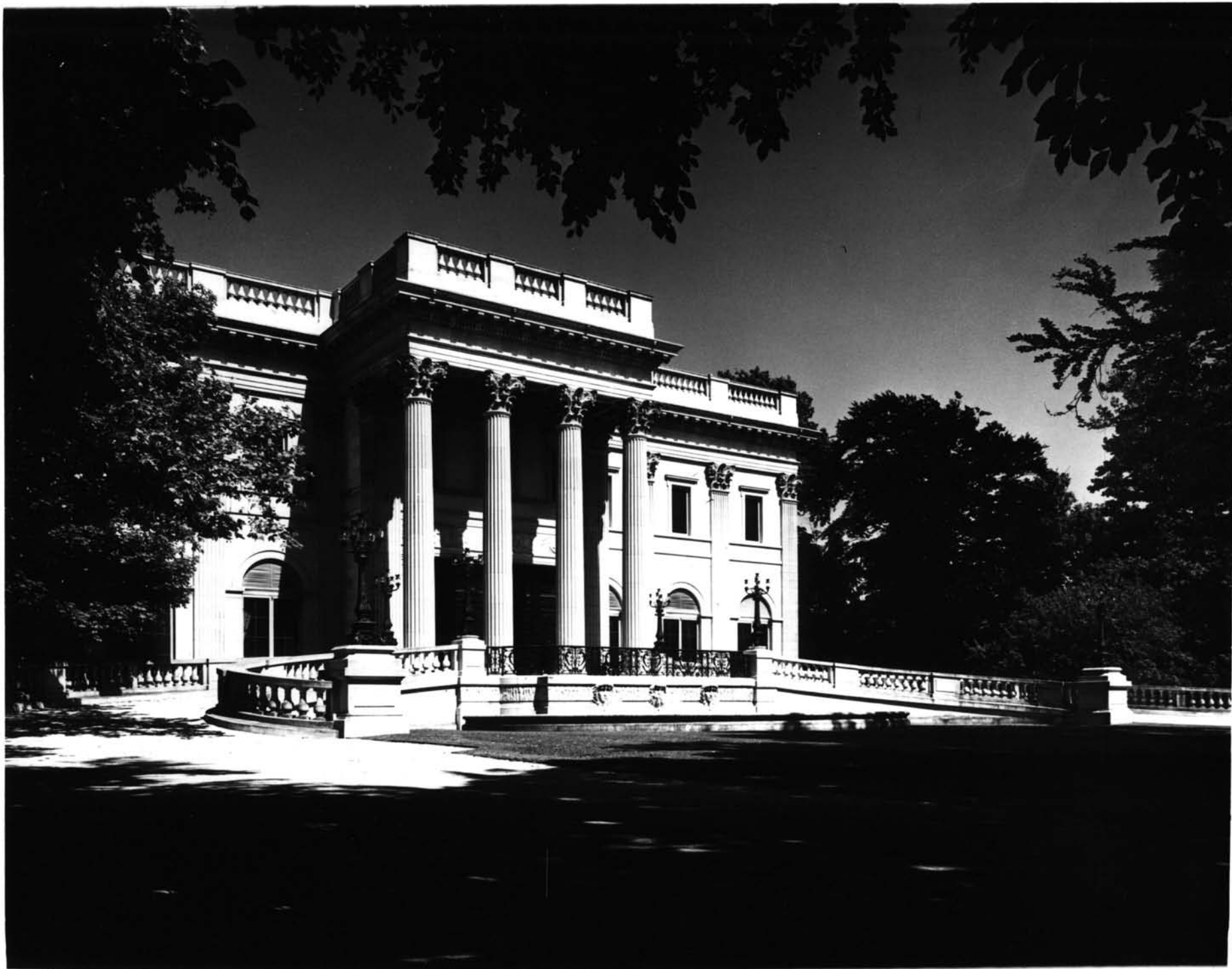
DATE OF PHOTO: C. 1965 or before

NEGATIVE FILED AT: The Preservation Society of Newport County,  
37 Touro Street, Newport, Rhode Island, 02840

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Chinese tea-house seen from the south.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME			
COMMON: Marble House			
AND/OR HISTORIC: Vanderbilt (William K.) House			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: Bellevue Avenue			
CITY OR TOWN: Newport			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 111	COUNTY: Newport	CODE 005
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: The Preservation Society of Newport County			
DATE OF PHOTO: C, 1965			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: The Preservation Society of Newport County, 37 Touro Street, Newport, Rhode Island, 02840			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Entrance (west) front.			



**GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES**  
 Latitude: 41 27' 43" N  
 Longitude: 71 18' 19" W

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Marble House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Vanderbilt (William K.) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Pellevue Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:  
Newport

STATE:  
Rhode Island

CODE  
111

COUNTY:  
Newport

CODE  
005

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:  
U. S. Geological Survey

SCALE: 1: 24,000

DATE: 1957

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.