

# Petite Plaisance Conservation Fund Newsletter

December 2021

## *France Comes to Petite Plaisance*

It was a quiet summer at Petite Plaisance with the pandemic once again keeping us closed for tours. We were, however, able to accommodate an exceptional delegation from France. On Labor Day weekend in early September, we had the great pleasure of receiving His Excellency Philippe Étienne, Ambassador of France to the United States, and Madam Patricia Étienne, along with Mr. Arnaud Mentre, Consul General of France in Boston, and his assistant, William Brewster. This was the first time that we have had the honor of an official visit from the highest-ranking member of the French diplomatic corps. We thank everyone in the delegation for their enthusiastic and encouraging visit!



Left to right: Consul General Mentre, Joan Howard, Ambassador & Madam Étienne

## *Keeping in Touch*

In hopes of staying connected with friends of the house in the absence of in-person tours, the PPCF sponsored [French](#) and [English](#) online videos, created by Joan Howard, about Madame Yourcenar and Maine. Since it went live in June 2021, the presentation has been viewed in over sixty countries and is still available on the PPCF website.

## *Preserving Petite Plaisance Treasures*

A transformational gift from Françoise and Michel Roy of Montreuil-sur-Mer, France, has enabled us to initiate one of the most significant preservation projects that the Fund has undertaken: the digital preservation of Marguerite Yourcenar's personal photograph albums. The protection of these unique artifacts, often closely linked to the author's literary works, has long been a high priority for Petite Plaisance. Thanks to the Roy family, and to a generous grant from the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation, we have begun the process of preserving these remarkable documents, which we will make available online to Yourcenar scholars and admirers all over the world.

## *Projects*

With the support of our generous donors, the PPCF was able to fund needed tree work at Petite Plaisance and a number of projects in 2021. Antique clapboards were re-nailed with stainless steel, the street-facing wall of the ell received a fresh coat of paint, and a distinctive cedar bench, first designed by Madame Yourcenar herself, was remade and set in place. It sits, as it always has, overlooking the dogs' graves in the wood garden. Merci beaucoup!

### President's Message

The Covid-19 pandemic has jolted Maine's arts organizations of all kinds into an awareness of the importance of virtual technology. In addition to its 7,000-book library, Petite Plaisance houses a collection of unique photo albums that Madame Yourcenar herself compiled and hand-labeled over the years of her residence in Northeast Harbor. These binders are a record of the author's life and world travels, but the most meaningful ones contain the invaluable photographic documentation that she used when writing her great novels. They have titles such as *Portraits of Hadrian*, *Greek Art*, and *L'Œuvre au Noir (The Abyss)*.

Preserving the albums has always been part of our long-term conservation plan, but our closure and two timely gifts jumpstarted the project in 2021. With crucial funding in place, we got right to work this summer selecting and preparing the most important albums for professional scanning. They are now in the hands of a topnotch digital archivist.

We are truly moved by the extraordinary gift of Françoise and Michel Roy and the generosity of the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation. Thank you for helping us safeguard this treasured collection for generations to come!

~ Jayne Persson



A sampling of the albums to be digitized

### Full Circle

We are delighted to welcome Meryl Sweeney to the board of the PPCF! A well-regarded MDI educator and principal of Home Port Tutoring, Meryl holds a bachelor's degree in French and Francophone Studies from Vassar College and a master's in Elementary Education from Vanderbilt. As a senior at MDI High School, Meryl was also the 2001 recipient of the Marguerite Yourcenar scholarship.

### Thank You to All of Our 2021 Donors !

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Françoise & Michel Roy

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