

Petite Plaisance Conservation Fund Newsletter

December 2023

« Une Maison, un(e) artiste »

A French documentary crew kicked off the visiting season in 2023, spending a week in Northeast Harbor to film an episode of *Une Maison, un(e) artiste*. Madame Yourcenar joins the likes of Victor Hugo, Isak Dinesen, Balzac, Van Gogh, and Ernest Hemingway, all of whom have been featured in this popular series on the homes of great writers and artists. The film was directed with skill and sensitivity by Nathalie Plicot in collaboration with cinematographer Antoine Vasseur. It contains stunning

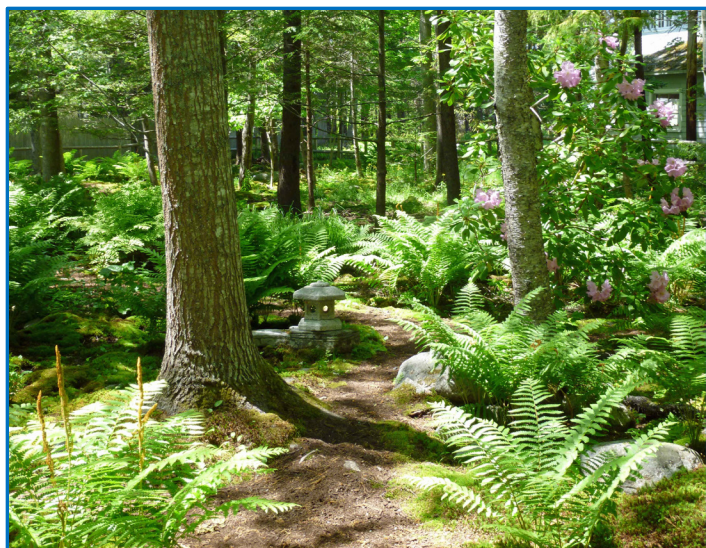


footage of Petite Plaisance, Northeast Harbor, and various sites around Mount Desert Island. The program aired, in French, in August and September but can still be viewed on France TV.

Projects

It has been a long haul, but thanks to the generosity of donors we were able to paint the west, north, and east sides of Petite Plaisance in 2023. There is nothing quite like a fresh coat of white paint

on a historic home. We were also able to fund restoration work in the wood garden, which included the removal of a number of compromised trees.



Dr. Anastasia Weigle, archivist and digital preservationist, began creating high-resolution scans of Marguerite Yourcenar's photograph albums in 2021. She is now embarking on the last phase of the project. We hope to make these unique artifacts available to scholars and admirers of Marguerite Yourcenar's work by the end of 2024. This kind of access to materials is an important part of our educational mission.

Colby College Comes to Petite Plaisance

Closing out the season was a lively class of French students from Colby College. All were enrolled in a new course created by Professor Flavien Falantin entitled “Marguerite Yourcenar: Maine, Ecology, and Gender” that included components on the author’s life, her literary work, and her commitment to protecting the environment. The relative proximity of Colby to Northeast Harbor made a trip directly to the source an absolute must. Petite Plaisance director Joan Howard led two in-depth, interactive tours of Madame Yourcenar’s world of books, artworks, and significant mementos that enriched the students’ understanding of the author. Also



accompanying the class were Professor Adrianna

Paliyenko and French language assistant Rosalie Ponnelle of Dijon. They were not the first group from Colby to visit Petite Plaisance, however. In October 1972, a delegation of nine, including the president of the college and two trustees, all dressed in full academic regalia, made the trip to Petite Plaisance to confer upon Madame Yourcenar her third honorary doctorate.



President’s Message

Petite Plaisance marked its thirty-fifth anniversary as a house museum this year. Interest in Marguerite Yourcenar’s life and work remains strong, and we welcomed literary pilgrims from around the globe, along with an enthusiastic class of college students from right here in Maine. We are different from other authors’ homes in a number of ways, but what really sets us apart is the authenticity of our tours. It was Madame Yourcenar herself who ensured that her home would be open to those interested in her writings and career and that it would remain as it was at the time of her death. Each tour provides a glimpse of the world in which she and her companion, Grace Frick, lived and worked. Guests often tell us what a moving experience it is to visit the house. As the French journalist Adrien Jaulmes wrote in *Le Figaro* on September 17, 2023, “one almost has the impression of meeting a still-living Marguerite Yourcenar at Petite Plaisance.”

As we look to our next thirty-five years of greeting literary visitors from all over the world, we thank everyone who has made it possible for us to preserve the house and continue the unique visits that are the crux of our mission.

~ Jayne Persson

Many thanks to all our generous donors!

Jane Gilkes Straßgütli Jayne Persson Meryl Sweeney Sue Lonoff de Cuevas