



FRIENDS
of
VILLA FINALE

THE BEE LINE

Friends of Villa Finale Quarterly Newsletter

June 2022 www.VillaFinale.org

Vol. 1 Issue 2

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The Bee Line
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From the Desk of the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

Walter Mathis was not only a visionary and leader, but a true activist in the preservation of the cultural heritage of his hometown, San Antonio. His legacy is physically evidenced in his magnificent last home, Villa Finale, which he bequeathed to the National Trust for Historic Preservation for generations of visitors to appreciate.

However, another gift Mathis left was a wealth of influence and stories, shared by family, friends and acquaintances all over the country. A glimpse into his contributions can be viewed in a recently released video, “The Legacy of Walter Mathis,” which is available for viewing on our website.

In addition to the honor of stewarding Mathis’ beautiful home and incredible collections, a true pleasure is encountering the many people who surprise us with information on the many aspects of the creation of Villa Finale. In holding casual conversations with guests touring the museum, receiving out-of-the-blue phone calls, randomly running into strangers on the front sidewalk, and having neighbors offer personal insights, we are adding rich and valuable nuances to the interpretation and understanding of the depth of Villa Finale.

Patrons and previously unknown associates of Mathis have shared insight and details into the purchases of many of the fine and decorative objects in our collection – everything from “throne chairs” to Mary Bonner prints to Oriental rugs to transom windows. We have also amassed a deeper and clearer history on previous owners of the house from heirs who have donated personal records. These more “intangible” gifts add and enrich the legacy of Mathis in a meaningful way.

We hope you will visit Villa Finale over the summer – we will be closed in August for maintenance of the formal downstairs rooms – and share your stories with us. Our encounters with our guests and the stories they have to tell are a favorite part of our activities at Villa Finale.

Sincerely,
Jane Lewis
Executive Director

Operational Updates



July

1-4 - Closed for the Independence Day holiday.
23 - Opening at 12:15pm.
28-30 - First floor only tours.

August

Villa Finale closed to the public for maintenance project.

September

6 - Villa Finale reopens to public.
17 - Opening at 11:30am.

Upcoming Program Highlights

JULY



16th - Saturday

Game Night at Villa Finale!

6:30pm - 9:00pm

\$20 member / \$25 non-member
(21+ only)

Villa Finale opens its doors to fun-loving folks for our first game night! Enjoy board games and adult beverages while rotating through gaming stations set up throughout Villa Finale – including the basement!

Visit our website www.villafinale.org for additional programs and updates.



23rd - Saturday

Draw Me ... A Story!

10:00am - 11:30am

\$10.00 per child

(Ages 5 - 12)

Children and parents alike will enjoy this family activity that combines storytelling and art! This program will take place inside Villa Finale and includes snacks and a self-guided, first floor tour.

SEPTEMBER

17th - Saturday

Behind the Scenes at Villa Finale

10:00am - 12:00pm

\$15.00 member / \$20 non-member

Visit Villa Finale as an insider!

Explore the parts of the magical home that are not seen on the tour and hear stories from staff about what makes Villa Finale tick. This intimate tour includes morning refreshments and a tour of Villa Finale.

30th - Friday

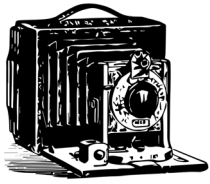
The Heart of Villa Finale: A Hospitality Tour

6:30pm - 8:00pm

\$20 member / \$25 non-member
(21+ only)

Guests on Villa Finale's first hospitality tour will enjoy an intimate evening experience, complete with music, culminating in cocktails on Villa Finale's gracious front balcony. Don't miss this one!





In Focus

Updates from Villa Finale's Managers

Collections Corner - by Sylvia Gonzalez-Pizaña

If you have visited Villa Finale over the last year and a half, you may have noticed we have been featuring what we call “mini exhibits” on the Dining Room table with an accompanying self-guide that features additional information about each display. Changed out seasonally, these mini exhibits have featured themes like animals, United States presidents, the circus, and more. It is an opportunity to highlight objects not typically seen on tour or to view them up-close.

Our current mini exhibit called “Toys, Games, & Diversions,” includes a 1920s Mah-Jong set, games carved out of bone and ivory by prisoners of war, pieces from the Rockport Doll House owned by Walter Mathis’ sister, and more. Most of the objects on display cannot be viewed during regular tours. If you haven’t seen it already, come on down before it comes down at the end of July. It will get you reminiscing about your favorite pastimes.



Rockport Doll House pieces on display in the Dining Room.

Buildings & Grounds - by Orlando Cortinas

Hello from the B&G department, we are staying busy this summer working on our next big maintenance project. During the month of August, we will be closed to the public, giving us the opportunity to do some much needed repainting on the first floor. This area has never been redone so it is time! Although this will be a delicate and tedious job for the staff here, since we will literally have to remove EVERY object from the areas being repainted, it will also be so gratifying to see fresh paint and clean, bright walls and ceilings again! We cannot wait to show off the results to our guests in September, hope you will come check it out!



Work being done in the Napoleon Parlors, 2019.

Programs & Events - by Farrah Varga

Programs at Villa Finale got off to a “roaring” start in April with our *Friends Retreat at the King William Fair!*

This annual tradition was broken during the pandemic but was reinstated with great fanfare in 2022. Our Friends of Villa Finale membership group enjoyed a perfect spring day at our site and indulged in some amazing food – prepared by our own Orlando Cortinas – and refreshing drinks dispensed by staffers Doug Daye and Sara Taylor. We really missed seeing our supporters and we think they missed us too!

Spring programs continued with our first “Behind the Scenes” tour (see the next section for more!) and will roll into the summer with a progressive game night and a program for children that combines art and storytelling inside beautiful Villa Finale.

See the “Upcoming Programs & Events” section of this newsletter for more information. We hope to see you there!



“Bee” An Insider Behind-the-Scenes at Villa Finale



What better way to become an insider at Villa Finale than to attend one of our “behind the scenes” tours? Guests at our first offering of this unique tour enjoyed peeks at all the nooks and crannies at Villa Finale that are not on view during the daily tours – from the top of the home to the bottom!

We’ll be presenting more of these intimate, casual tours in the fall, so check our “Upcoming Programs” section for more information.



‘Tis The Season: Summer



We almost can’t believe that summer came so quickly to Villa Finale! Despite the unseasonably warm weather, visitors continue to stream in to enjoy the air-conditioned respite of Villa Finale and, of course, the incredible collections that are on display.

Summer traditionally means a slower pace but more families, so we look forward to welcoming children to see our current rotating exhibition, “Toys, Games, & Diversions,” viewable through the summer. This latest exhibition showcases some items from our collection that are not typically on display and is perfect for all ages.

While the pace may slow for our guests, we’ll still be busy all summer with programs, projects, and updates. And while the days may be longer and hotter, our gardens are still green and shady and our stunning collection of art and antiques still beckons. Stop by this summer for a peek at the collections, for an educational program, or even just for a selfie in the garden!

A Day in the Life at Villa Finale

What a day it was! Our annual *Friends Retreat at the King William Fair* was a blast for all who attended and for our staff and volunteers. We can't wait to do it again next year. Will you be joining us?



From Our Tour Staff - “Museum Misconceptions”

Our front-of-house staff are the first people to greet our guests and they always get plenty of interesting questions - and a few misconceptions! We thought we would ask them to clear up a few common misconceptions about museums and museum work.



Misconception #1: To work in a museum you must have a degree in Museum Studies, History, Art History, or a similar field of study.

Not necessarily! While it is good to have a degree specializing in these subject areas, it does not mean that you have to get an MA in Western Civilization just to get into the museum field. It often depends on what job you want to do at a museum and what the requirements of the institution are.

I earned my B.A. in Sociology and went on to earn a certificate in film production. I really wanted to work in film/TV production, but I started volunteering at the Grace Museum in my hometown of Abilene, TX, which eventually led to a part-time job as Event Staff. Then, while studying film production in Detroit, MI, I got a job at the Detroit Historical Museum as an Assistant Building Specialist. I eventually moved here to San Antonio and became employed full time at Villa Finale where I now work as a museum interpreter!

Doug Daye, Museum Interpreter

Misconception #2: There are only a few careers one can pursue in museum work.

Director, Curator, and Tour Guide might be jobs that come to mind at first when thinking about museum work. However, there are other many career paths one can pursue! (*continued on next page*)



For example, in very large museums such as the Metropolitan or Guggenheim Museums in New York, the careers paths are vast. Archivist, Outreach Director, Costume Department, and Registrar are just some of the jobs one can hold. All require a broad range of skills you might not think of as requirements to work in a museum.

Sometimes degrees or professional experience in other areas become relevant in museum careers. This was my experience. After earning an undergraduate degree in art, I pursued graduate degrees in education and was able to bring what I learned to a career in Museum Education.

It didn't happen overnight! I enjoyed volunteering, working in museum gift shops, and assisting educators before finding my way to a museum education career and, ultimately, to Villa Finale.

Lisa Stewart, Visitor Services Coordinator



Misconception #3: A house museum is not a “real” museum.

When we have visitors to Villa Finale, we are sometimes not quite what they expect. When most people think of a museum, they think of a big classical building or maybe something very modern and sleek - lots of metal and big windows. Sometimes a house museum kind of throws them for a loop, but museums can come in all shapes and sizes. Besides house museums, there are also mobile museums, pop-up museums, and open-air museums, just to name a few.

A historic house museum may exist because the owner of the home is important or because the building itself is of historical significance and is well-preserved, but a house museum doesn't just have to be about “Ye Olden Times.” If we only focus on one part of the history of the home, we lose some of the story that makes it special! Just think, in a hundred years visitors may be coming to modern homes and learning about how we used to live!

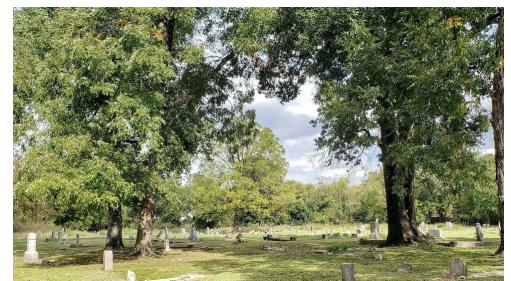
Sara Taylor, Museum Interpreter

“Trust” In the News

Updates from the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The Places That Need Our Help Most

The National Trust for Historic Preservation released this year's list of the 11 most endangered sites in America on May 4th. 2022's most at-risk historic sites represent places of struggle, emancipation, beauty, memory, and hundreds of years of American history. The Osage Nation's Picture Cave, Houston's historically Black Olivewood Cemetery, and the site of the Jamestown settlement are just a few of the noteworthy locations included in the list.



Olivewood Cemetery, photo courtesy of Descendants of Olivewood.

Calling All Dog Lovers!

The National Trust's Lyndhurst, a Gothic Revival mansion in Tarrytown, New York, hosted the 146th Annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show June 18th through June 22nd. This was only the second time in the organization's history that this iconic dog show had been held outside of New York City (Lyndhurst also hosted in 2021). For more information, check <https://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/>



Princess Aurora, a kesaan, in front of Lyndhurst, photo courtesy Associated Press.



Delightful Diversions

DID YOU KNOW?

Villa Finale's basement is now available for parties! Treat your friends to a truly unique evening in a place where bootleggers distilled their heady blends and enjoy a few delicious drinks of your own – without that pesky Prohibition causing problems. Villa Finale's basement offers a uniquely decorated space in which to host a few guests for a private game of cards, Monopoly, checkers, or whatever suits your fancy.

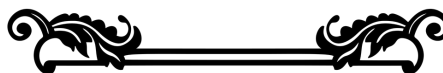
Give us a call to book your private game night at Villa Finale and hear all the details!



A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

“Vanilla Finale” 2017

Betty Russell chats with Anne Alexander as they excitedly wait for their refreshing ice cream beverage during our “Vanilla Finale” party for our Friends of Villa Finale. What a way to beat the heat!



Ask Villa Finale's Staff

Have you got a burning question about Villa Finale that you've been dying to ask our staff? Do you have special interest in an item from our collection? Or maybe you just need to know more about what makes Villa Finale special?

Ask us!

Send us an email at villafinale@villafinale.org or give us a call at (210) 223-9800 and hit us with your questions. We can't wait to hear from you!





VILLA FINALE: MUSEUM & GARDENS
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San Antonio, TX 78204

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Friends of Villa Finale Membership



Become a “Friend of Villa Finale”
and help support our educational
programming throughout the year!

Friend of Villa Finale -- \$100

Friend of Villa Finale – Plus One! -- \$150

Contributing Friend of Villa Finale -- \$250

Supporting Friend of Villa Finale -- \$500

Sustaining Friend of Villa Finale -- \$1000

Visit www.villafinale.org to discover full membership benefits
or call us at (210) 223-9800 to become a “Friend of Villa
Finale” today!

The Bee

Napoleon Bonaparte chose
the bee to represent his
status as emperor due to
the creature’s industrious
habits. The bee symbolizes
hard work, diligence,
industriousness, and
orderliness.



A Site of the
**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**