# National Register of Historic Places

## Inventory - Nomination Form

**Type all entries - complete applicable sections**

### 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, 02810
- **Code:** 005

### 3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category (Check One)</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Accessible to the Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Public Acquisition:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>In Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td></td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Being Considered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Present Use (Check One or More as Appropriate):**
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Agricultural
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Transportation
- Other (Specify)

### 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, 02810
- **Code:** 005

### 5. Location of Legal Description
- **COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:**
- **City Hall**
- **Street and number:** Broadway
- **City or town:** Newport
- **State:** Rhode Island, 02810
- **Code:** 005

### 6. Representation in Existing Surveys
- **Title of Survey:**
- **Date of Survey:**
- **Depository for Survey Records:**
- **Street and number:**
- **City or town:**
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-framed round-headed windows of the first floor from the simply-framed, 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.)
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 those 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 pilasters above the water. Panelled, coloured and gilded, it has a green-tiled roof with concave outline, sweeping 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.
Any surviving works by Richard M. Hunt are today 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 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 châtelaine, 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.

### 8. SIGNIFICANCE

- **Period (Check One or More as Appropriate):**
  - [ ] Pre-Columbian
  - [ ] 16th Century
  - [ ] 18th Century
  - [ ] 20th Century
  - [ ] 15th Century
  - [ ] 17th Century
  - [ ] 19th Century

- **Specific Dates (If Applicable and Known):** 1868-1892

- **Areas of Significance (Check One or More as Appropriate):**
  - [ ] Aboriginal
  - [ ] Prehistoric
  - [ ] Historic
  - [ ] Agriculture
  - [ ] Architecture
  - [ ] Art
  - [ ] Commerce
  - [ ] Communications
  - [ ] Conservation
  - [ ] Education
  - [ ] Engineering
  - [ ] Engineering
  - [ ] Invention
  - [ ] Landscape Architecture
  - [ ] Literature
  - [ ] Military
  - [ ] Music
  - [ ] Political
  - [ ] Religion/Philosophy
  - [ ] Science
  - [ ] Sculpture
  - [ ] Social/Humanitarian
  - [ ] Theater
  - [ ] Transportation
  - [ ] Urban Planning
  - [ ] Other (Specify)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

...
### 9. Major Bibliographical References


### 10. Geographical Data

<table>
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<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
<td>Degrees Minutes Seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property:** 1.3 acres

**List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 11. Form Prepared By

**Name and Title:**
Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

**Organization:**
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**Street and Number:**
State House, 90 Smith Street

**City or Town:**
Providence

**State:**
Rhode Island, 02903

### 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:**

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:**
MEMO
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

(PAMELA A. KENNEDY)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TO: [Signature]

[Signature]

Meta 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)

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

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, 02810

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIPTION, 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)

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

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.
**Property Photograph Form**

**Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph**

| **NAME** | Common: Marble House  
AND/OR Historic: Vanderbilt (William K.) House |
|---|---|
| **LOCATION** | **STREET AND NUMBER:** Bellevue Avenue  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Newport  
**STATE:** Rhode Island |
| **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 |
| **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)  

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: 005  
COUNTY: Newport  

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.
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

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. 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.