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The renovations to the Harkness Mansion in Waterford will be featured on a series on Home and Garden Television titled "Restore America," hosted by Bob Vila. The show looks at hundreds of renovation projects from 50 states. A crew from the show filmed Monday at the mansion. From left are: Director of Photography Chris Meagher, Harkness project architect Roger Clarke and producer Aimee Kramer.

Eolia to be guest star on television show

By **PATRICIA DADDONA**
Day Staff Writer

Waterford — A cable network will feature the \$3.8 million restoration of Eolia, the mansion saved from neglect at Harkness Memorial State Park, as part of a series scheduled to air in June.

Researchers considered the community effort to save the mansion built in Roman Revival Renaissance style worth telling, said Aimee Kramer, a producer for Home & Garden Television.

The series, "Restore America" with Bob Vila, has been touring all 50 states since last year, exploring the people and stories behind historic restoration projects.

Kramer spent Monday filming interviews with Gov. John G. Rowland and Hartford architect Roger Clarke. Rowland and Jeanne Shelburne, past president of Friends of Harkness, pushed to make funding available for the work after then-Gov Lowell P. Weicker refused to release the money. Kramer will interview Shelburne today.

Clarke directed the renovation work, which began in 1996 and was completed about two years later.

As gray fog blanketed Eolia Monday, Clarke walked along one of two loggias — porches graced with columns and decorative overhangs — with Kramer and her crew. The contractor, Thomas J. Kronenberger and Sons of Middletown, used some ingenious and delicate techniques to preserve as much of the original features of the building as possible, Clarke said.

The contractor managed to keep the original white 1907 wall tile in place on a wafer-thin backing while taking off an outer concrete wall, he said. Large, arching windows nearby were carefully kept in place from above while supporting columns were removed and restored.

Kronenberger restored the mansion's exterior the way it was when the Harknesses purchased it in 1907. The contractor also restored 42 rooms inside to their state after renovations in the early 1930s. The gardens, designed by famous landscaper Beatrix Jones Farrand, were redone

based on her sketches.

"It's one of Connecticut's best kept secrets," Clarke said of the mansion. "A lot of people around here know about it, but people in the northwest part of the state don't."

Over the next eight days, Kramer will film Connecticut restoration projects in Guilford, Thompson and Scotland for a half-hour segment set to air at 10 p.m. June 11.

Kramer has previously filmed segments in Tennessee, Nebraska and Wyoming.


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