

# Mansion returning to former glory



Photos by Khoi Ton/Norwich Bulletin

Decorative paintings of flowers adorn the west loggia or breakfast room at the mansion at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford. The 42-room mansion, named Eolia, is undergoing a \$3.8 million renovation. Below is an exterior view.

## State nearly finished with restoration at Harkness Park

By FRANCESCA KEFALAS  
*Norwich Bulletin*

**WATERFORD** - Life is returning to Harkness mansion.

For more than two years the 42-room mansion has been closed to the public while \$3.8 million worth of work has been performed to lift the years of dust and grime from the walls. What has been revealed signals the start of new glory for the mansion named Eolia.

"There is detail work here we never expected to find," said Jim Sabith, project superintendent from Thomas J. Kronenberger and Sons

Inc., the restoration specialist hired to perform the work at the mansion. "There was so much dirt and grime you couldn't tell how intricate some of the woodwork is."

Eolia was built in 1906 and named after the Greek Island home of the god of winds. Edward and Mary Harkness bought the home and its 234 acres in 1907 as their summer home. Built in the Roman Renaissance Revival-style, Eolia underwent massive renovations from 1918 to 1929 to transform the mansion to the Classical Revival style.

Mary Harkness bequeathed the

**See HARKNESS, A2**



### GOOD MORNING

#### Good morning to your

III Clara D. Maleszyk. Happy 90th birthday.

■ Medos St. John of Jewett City. Happy. 83rd birthday.

■ John Przyborowski of Preston. Happy 78th birthday.

■ Charlie Sadosky of Sprague. Happy 77th birthday.

■ Chester Majcher of Norwich. Happy 77th birthday.

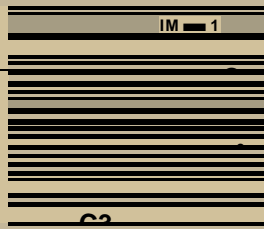
■ Amelia Young of Salem Village, Moosup. Happy 75th birthday.

■ Bill and Bernadette Pereira of Voluntown. Happy 60th anniversary.

III Don and Annette Lacombe of Norwich. Happy 25th anniversary.

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## Overtaken truck NI

By **MARK REYNOLDS**  
and **WENDY GIBBINS**  
*Norwich Bulletin*

**MONTVILLE** - A tractor-trailer truck loaded with tons of paper overturned on Route 163 Monday afternoon in an incident that gave emergency crews plenty to do even though no one was injured in the crash.

Police said a preliminary investigation revealed that the truck driven by Philippe Duchesne of Longueuil, Ontario, was traveling too fast for conditions after it left Rand-Whitney

Containerboard and headed east on Route 163.

Police said the rig hit a guardrail and its shifting load caused it to overturn shortly before 2:32 p.m.

"It sounded pretty much like thunder," said Dennis Bonnin, 17.

At the scene, crews found an overturned Freightliner tractor at Route 163 and Hidden Acres Road near the Interstate 395 ramp. Parts of the trailer and tractor appeared to be very close, if not overhanging an embankment.

# Harkness

FROM AI

estate to the state in 1950.

Architect Roger S. Clark of Hartford has overseen the renovation of Eolia.

"The contractor has been very sensitive to the historic value of the home," Clark said. "I think we have managed to bring the mansion up to code and retain its historic qualities."

Begun in November 1996, restoration of Harkness to its splendor of the 1930s has revealed cornices reminiscent of ancient Greek and Italian design, light fixtures with brass finishes detailed by floral accents painted onto the surface, and textures and patterns on vaulted ceilings not found in many structures still standing.

A sneak peak of the mansion was given Monday to a few of the state workers and local residents who have worked on the mansion's revitalization during the last several years. Restoration is still being done, but Sabith said the major work is complete. He expects to have all the final details complete in July.

An official opening ceremony for the mansion is scheduled for 10 a.m. June 19. Gov. John G. Rowland, state Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Arthur Rocque Jr. and state Department of Public Works Commissioner T.R.

## If you want to visit state parks

- State parks are open year-round.
- State park facilities, such as beaches and campgrounds are open until Labor Day weekend, except Hopeville Pond campgrounds, which is open until Sept. 30. Facilities are open every day from 8 a.m. to sunset.
- Parking fees are imposed at some parks and range from \$5 to \$12.
- Year-round passes are available for

\$35 to all state residents under the age of 65. A lifetime Charter Oak pass is available to residents ages 65 and older with proof of age, and allows free admittance to facilities. The passes do not include campground fees.

■ For more information call the state Department of Environmental Protection at 860-424-3200.

Anson will celebrate the reopening of the mansion.

P.J. Delahunty, deputy commissioner of public works, said the restoration of Eolia has been an unusual project for public works.

"We're not often part of a historic renovation," Delahunty said. "It's very exciting for us. This is probably the most interesting project since I've been involved with."

Carol Connor, chairwoman of the Friends of Harkness, looks forward to the day she and her organization can begin regular tours of the mansion. Teas and a gala have already been planned.

Connor said the change in Eolia from when she last gave a tour in the mansion is breathtaking.

"It's wonderful to see it back to its former splendor," Connor said. Tours of Eolia and its four gardens will resume this summer. But the mansion is also meant to be rented for occasions. Individual rooms

can be rented or the entire first floor for a wedding.

The first wedding in the mansion will take place July 17. Fifteen weddings have been booked for 1998 and nine for 1999.

"And we haven't even advertised yet," said Pam Adams of DEP.

Harkness mansion and the park is one of the jewels in the state park system, Adams said.

With the state's planned renovation of Fort Trumbull in New London into a state park and the continued availability of Groton's Fort Griswold State Park with its museum and tours, there will soon be three significant state park areas in southeastern Connecticut, Adams said.

"Visitors could spend the weekend touring the three parks," Adams said. "The historic value of these parks is incredible."