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THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF VERSAILLES Tour the Marche Region of Italy

JANUARY 10, 2020



Group photo at Villa Imperiale near Pesaro.

TRAVEL • BY: SHARON HOGE

Recognizing the vast heritage of architectural and garden design that contributed to Louis XIV's grand palace, supporters of the American Friends of Versailles travel annually to visit sites of international influence. With itineraries arranged and escorted by **Princesse Beatrice de Bourbon des Deux Siciles**, a direct descendant of the **Sun King**, they tour historic regions where those artistic influences are pronounced.

This year joined by acclaimed garden expert **Didier Wirth** we traveled in the Marche region of Italy. Its name derived from "borderland," the area lies along the Adriatic coast, bordering Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria. As the Western seat of the early Christian Byzantium empire, later invaded by Gothic and Celtic tribes, it was also the home of many important princely families who established palazzos, villas, and gardens to enhance

their reputations and prestige. Less frequently visited than the later Renaissance centers of Rome and Tuscany, it offers an important introduction to early and subsequent grand design.

Friday September 27

Welcomed by AFV Founder and President **Catharine Hamilton**, our group assembled in Bologna in late September at the Grand Hotel Majestic. After greeting old and new friends at a cocktail reception, we proceeded to the hotel's restaurant where pumpkin *ravioloni* and beef Rossini style was served in a dining room decorated with paintings by the renowned Carracci brothers.



Arriving in Bologna, guests assembled in the Grand Hotel Majestic lobby. Greeting the group were guide Leif-Eric Hannikainen, XO Travel Events Project Manager Anna Caparro, AFV Board Member Michele Fieschi-Fouan, Princess Beatrice, AFV Founder Catharine Hamilton, and and garden expert Didier Wirth.



Catharine Hamilton and Didier Wirth.



Guests proceeded to the hotel I Carracci Restaurant for dinner.



L. to r.: Retired corporate lawyer and New Orleans philanthropist Phyllis Taylor; Psychologist and historic preservationist Dr. Susan Kendall and art historian Gregory Hedberg.



AFV Board Member nuclear scientist Jerome Fouan and Princess Beatrice.



Patsy and Brinkley Dickerson. An attorney, Brinkley is the AFV Treasurer.



Floral and interior designer James Hanson and Patsy Dickerson.



Interior designer Marjorie Vickers and Washington DC philanthropist Gale Arnold.



International Debutante Ball Chairman Margaret Hedberg and child health advocate and historic preservationist Claire Dwoskin.



Gift bags with macaroon boxes and etchings of Versailles were ready for each guest.

Saturday September 28

Capital city of the *province*, Ravenna was a strategic seaport, capital of the Western Roman Empire from 402 until its collapse in 476, then reconquered in 540 by the Byzantine Empire. Over the centuries river sediment filled in the city's shoreline and Ravenna became a literal "backwater" with historic buildings left undisturbed. Now its well-preserved late Roman and Byzantine architecture is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site with unparalleled art that still expresses the Eastern Christian philosophy of Christ as a divine god who ascends from earth in contrast to works later altered to picture the Western Christian philosophy of a more human Christ who comes to earth and suffers. Starting in Ravenna, we visited 5th and 6th century basilicas and baptistries admiring splendid glass and gold mosaics and frescoes which blend Graeco-Roman tradition, Christian iconography, western, and oriental styles. We passed a monument to Dante who came here and wrote the Divine Comedy when exiled from Florence.

After lunch at the picturesque El Gallo restaurant, we returned to tour Bologna's arcades, palazzos, and fountains before an evening stroll through town for dinner at Polazzo Isolani hosted by its owners **Gualtiero and Giuliana Cavazza Isolani**.



Perfect weather for the visit to Ravenna.



Ravenna's austere exteriors with vivid inner artworks express the concept of human inner

beauty.



The Empress Theodora makes an offering in the Basilica of San Vitale.



Admiring the interior of Sant'Apollinare in Classe.



A Memorial to Dante who sought refuge in Ravenna when banished from Florence.



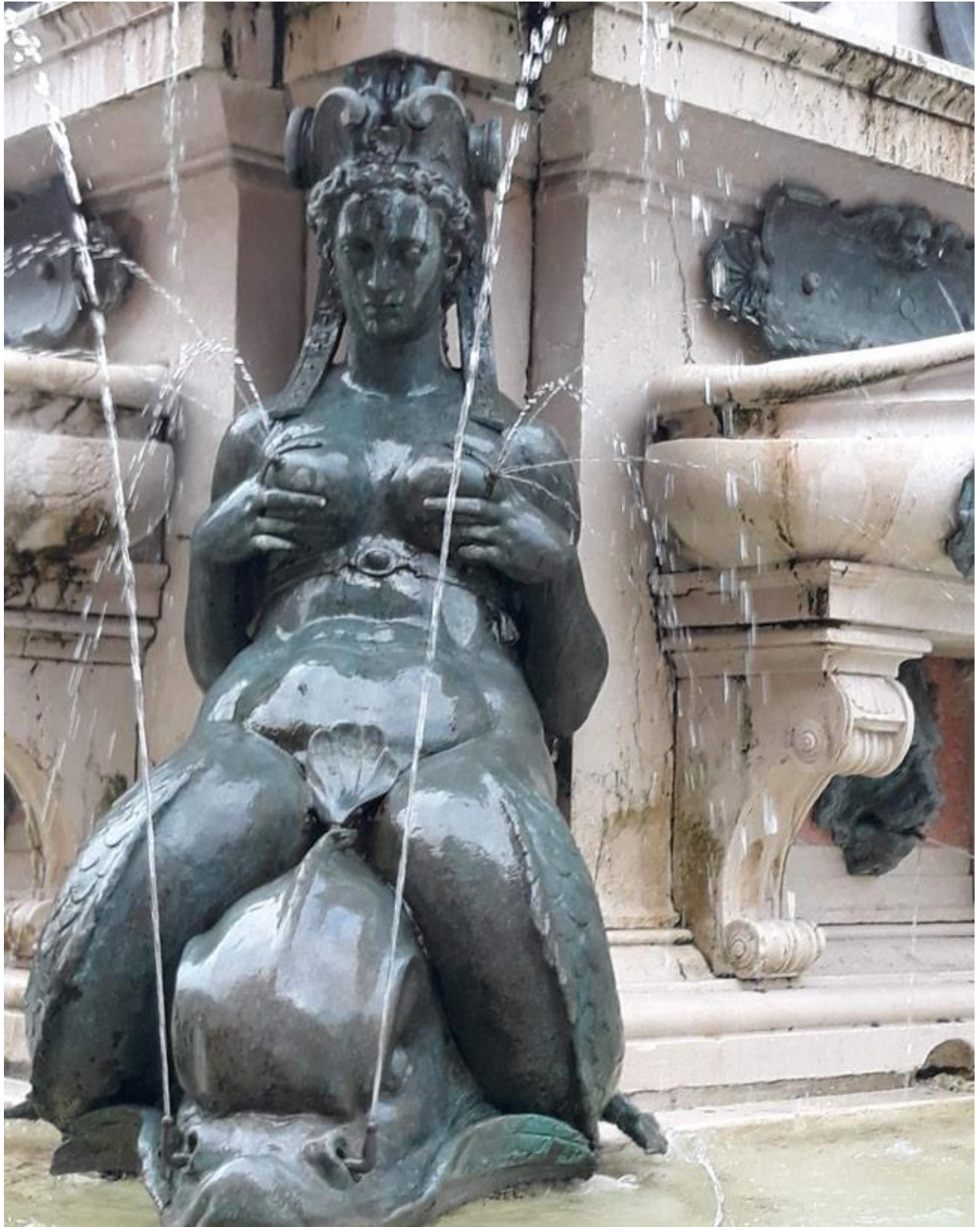
Jim Hanson strolled through the restaurant garden.



The arcades in Bologna's historic center add up to close to 25 miles.



La Grassa, one of Bologna's nicknames, celebrates its rich food legacy.



A scandalous figure on Bologna's celebrated Neptune Fountain in Piazza Maggiore which dates from the 16th century.



Dinner was served in the Palazzo Isolani.



L. to r.: Psychologist and preservationist Dr. Susan Kendall and journalist and philanthropist Faith Coolidge; Conti Guglielmo Castelbarco Albani welcomed us.



Our hostess Giuliana Cavazza Isolani greets Didier Wirth.

Sunday September 29

Sunday's highlight was a visit to Villa Imperiale, a 15th-century Sforza manor subsequently owned by **Della Rovere** dukes, the **Medici**, and finally the **Albani**. Comprising two different buildings linked by a suspended passageway, its walls are covered with major Mannerist frescoes depicting tales of Hercules and achievements of the Della Rovere family. Designed for ceremonies and entertaining, its loggias, gardens, and courtyards proceed through three levels in a sort of "promenade architecturale" that culminates on a top terrace.

After a delightful lunch *al fresco* we viewed notable ceramics in Pesaro's Civic Museum of Palazzo Mosca and walked through the birthplace of "William Tell" and "Barber of Saville" composer **Giacomo Rossini** whose legacy to the town is a Conservatory of Music and the annual Rossini Opera Festival.

We stayed two nights in luxury suites at the Castello di Monterado. Restored and refurbished by **Orlando and Kiro Rodano**, it retains original frescoes and each guest room has a different theme – I was booked into the Music Room decorated with instruments and manuscript tributes to Rossini and other local musicians.



Walls of Villa Imperiale are covered with frescoes.



Villa Imperiale upper gardens.



Group admiring views from the walkway.



Bonnie Deutsch and Philip Hartung. They were married on an earlier AFV trip to Sicily.



Monsieur et Madame Jerome Fouan of Paris, members of AFV's French Board.



Luncheon was served on a Villa Imperiale terrace.



The essential pasta course, here filled with asparagus and crunchy bacon.



Shelby Davlin seated at the home of Rossini who composed *The Barber of Seville*.



Evening arrival at Castelo di Monterado.



L. to r.: Orlando Rodano and his family are the host proprietors of Castello di Monterado; Castello Di Monterado set up one long table for our dinner.



L. to r.: Newcomer Anne Coladarci received a welcome gift; Newcomer Jim Stone's gift was a photo of Versailles.

Monday September 30

Monday we visited Urbino. Nicknamed “miniature Florence” the UNESCO Heritage walled city, high on a hill, was a 15th-century cultural center at the court of the Della Rovere princes, in particular **Duke Federico III di Montefeltro**, an able leader who combined a military career with political prowess and culture. Approached up a long ramp enabling horses to access the high inner courtyard, the double-towered and turreted Palazzo houses treasures including **Piero della Francesca’s** “Flagellation” and the “La Muta” portrait of a gentlewoman by **Raphael** who was born in Urbino. Raphael’s father was also a noted painter and that afternoon we visited the family homestead.

After lunch in the Library Scriptorium where fresh, local white truffles were featured in the cuisine, there was quick and special stop at the Oratory Bonne Morte which was destabilized by the 2016 earthquake, so only limited visiting is allowed.

That evening we drove to the home in Belvedere of internationally renowned celebrity florist **Ercole Moroni** (Queen Elizabeth and the “Oscars” are among his clients). The bon vivant had hired a band and singing tenor, we all joined in on “O Solo Mio.” In the kitchen his mother and sister prepared a home-cooked meal, each dish garnished with a “personal flower touch.” After devouring dishes of pork, capon, and veal we all wound up on the dance floor.



Urbino’s twin-towered Palazzo Ducale dominates the town.



Princess Beatrice leads the way up the ducal palazzo ramp which was designed to allow horses to enter.



Jim Stone and Sharon Hoge.



Duke

Federico III Montefeltro is shown in profile to avoid the disfigured side of his face. Teenage wife Battista Sforza bore him seven children.



Piero della Francesca's enigmatic Flagellation of Christ painting is an early example of perspective.



Didier Wirth and Princess Beatrice with Director of the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche in the Palazzo Ducale Peter Aufreiter.



Group photo at the Palazzo Ducale.



The home of Raphael shows the family's simple lifestyle and early work.



Dr. Susan Kendall seated on a characteristic window bench, found in Raphael's home as well as the Ducal Palazzo.



Ercole's table setting revealed why celebrities and nobles are among his clients.



The band, home cooking, the singing and dancing made for quite a party.



Ebullient Ercole led Princesse Beatrice to the dance floor.

Tuesday October 1

The classically designed four-tower fort protecting the oft-disputed port of Senigallia was our first stop. Proceeding to the countryside, we were welcomed to lunch by **Margherita Balbo** and her husband **Venceslao** who oversee the charming Villa Spada and gardens which have been carefully restored by her family. Luncheon was served in a charming dining room with views out to the extraordinary gardens originally designed in 1818 by Giulia de Medici Spada. During a post-meal tour we saw a portrait of Giulia whose scorned lover retreated to America where he traced the source of the Mississippi River up in Minnesota and named it for her (now Anglicized) Lake Julia.

Proceeding to the medieval walled town of Recanati, **Countess Annamaria Dalla Casapiccola** invited us to a wine tasting in the cellars of Palazzo Dalla Casapiccola Pizzale.

Onward to the outskirts of Fermo, where we checked into Hotel Villa Lattanzi, a former ducal palace with rooms looking out to the Adriatic in the distance. An elaborate seven course meal in the contemporary dining room featured local seafood and concluded with foggy servings of lime ice cream prepared with liquid nitrogen right at the table.



Senigallia's 13th century Rocca Roversca resisted threats from Turkish pirates.



The former house of Pope Pius IX is now owned by the Diocese of New York.



Relaxing in Senigallia's central square the Piazza Garaibaldi, recently reconverted from a parking lot.



Arriving at Villa Spada.



Gathering for lunch at Villa Spada.



Hostess Margherita Balbo di Vinadio led us through the villa rooms.



Remarkable perspectives in the Villa Spada gardens.



A

wine tasting offered samples of Villa Dalla Caspiccola wines.



Hotel Villa Lattanzi is a former ducal palazzo.



Villa Lattanzi set a long table for our seven-course meal.



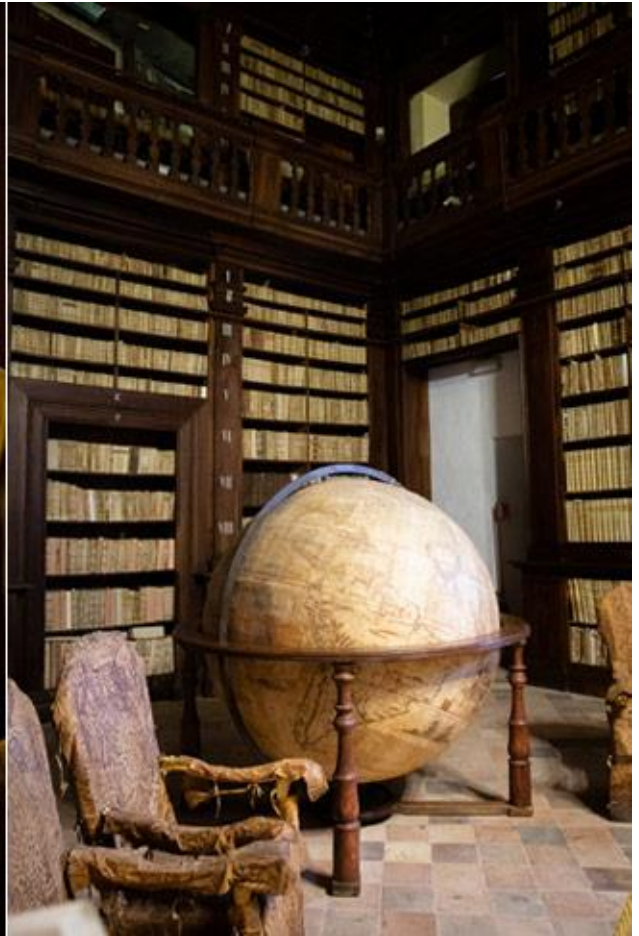
Grand finale to a seven course seafood dinner was lime ice cream prepared at the table with liquid nitrogen.

Wednesday October 2

Driving into Fermo Wednesday morning, we were taken on a private tour through the Pinacoteca Fermana where we were shown the Spezioli Library's priceless volumes, mostly 16th century books, 16,000 donated by a doctor of Sweden's **Queen Christina**. Its Sala del Mappamondo (Globe Room) features a two-meter globe completed in 1713 which designates what was then "America." After a festive lunch we were taken to see the restored Teatro dell-Aquila opera house and the splendid Cathedral, seat of the local archdiocese.



We were led on a private tour through the Pinacoteca Civica in Fermo.



L. to r.: The library possesses around 16,000 precious volumes; A giant 18th-century globe dominates the Map Room.



L'enoteca bar a vino was a jolly place for lunch of legume soup and traditional cannelloni.



Group photo on the restaurant steps.



The picturesque Teatro dell'Aquila dates from 1790.



Gothic and Romanesque elements are evident in the facade of Fermo Cathedral.

Contessa Cecilia Romani Adami and her family hosted dinner in their family quarters at Palazzo Romani Adami. An enthusiastic preservationist, the Contessa organizes educational sessions and events held at the Palazzo.



L.

to r.: Hostess Contessa Cecilia Romani Adami is an old friend of XO Travel founder Anna Caparro; Conte Giacomo Romani Adami is Contessa Cecilia's brother.



Art Nouveau ceiling in Palazzo Adami.



Dinner tables were scattered among cozy corners of the Palazzo.

Thursday October 3

The exquisite 16th-century architecture of Macerata and structures built by the **Buonaccorsi** were Thursday destinations. Palazzo Buonaccorsi has been transformed into the town's civic museum where pieces from the historic collections were imaginatively interspersed with items from a contemporary Bauhaus exhibit. A lower floor houses an extensive collection of horse-drawn vehicles plus an imaginative exhibit which invites guests to sit inside a "carriage" on seats that bounce along while a video of scenery is projected through the windows.

We proceeded to the unrestored villa which had been a Buonaccorsi summer retreat and were served luncheon in a dining room which retained evidence of its bygone elegance. Didier Wirth had particularly wanted us to see the marvelous terraced garden where a central leaf-covered chapel stands above rows and rows of unique statues portraying nobles, emperors, and picturesque 18th-century neighbors.



Guides led us through exhibits in Macarata's Civic Museum situated in the Palazzo Buonaccorsi.



In Potenza Picena near Macarata, Villa Buonaccorsi was the family summer residence.



Lunch at Villa Buonaccorsi.



The top garden terrace features a chapel covered in leaves.



L. to r.: Many of the fanciful statues are said to represent local figures; The palazzo's condition raised hopes it will find restoration.

That evening we were surprised to find Villa Clarice. Turning off the busy commercial downtown main street we drove half-a-kilometer through a “secret” park to the stately triple-arched entrance where the noble family of **Giuseppe Amici** welcomed us to the wonderful villa they have defied developers to preserve. After admiring the villa’s fanciful imaginative frescos, we enjoyed a meal which featured the dowager mother’s special recipes for tagliolini di Campofilone pie and chicken galatina with jelly. Family members have moved away and we shared Amici’s concerns for the future of the property, a unique outpost in the city center.



Villa Clarice is the childhood home of Signor Giuseppe Amici.



Donnatella Amici and her daughter Clarice.



Walls of Villa Clarice are painted with fanciful frescoes.



Delicious tagliolini di Campofilone pie, chicken galatina with jelly, rice with parsley and prawns were special family recipes.



Dining tables were set up among family momentos and photos.



L. to r.: Kristin Noelle Smith AFV Executive Director at Villa Clarice; Donnatella Amici accepted our gift, an engraving of Versailles.



Gathered with the three Amici family members and friends.

Friday October 4

Friday we turned west and crossed snow-topped Apennine mountains toward Rome. Stopping en route to be greeted by **Princess Giulia Panichi Pignatelli** who led us through the romantic 19th-century landscape of her family's bio-energy historic park. After admiring the plantings and the 13th-century Villa Seghitti Panichi, which has been transformed into a grand residence situated beside 16th-century chapel, we proceeded to updated stables down the hill where the Princess, her daughter **Princess Stefania Pignatelli Gladstone**, and several family members served us fish risotto, small boned Adriatic cod, and peaches with pistachio and hazelnut ice cream. Proceeding to Rome we had minutes to visit our rooms at the Westin Excelsior Hotel before proceeding to the closing night dinner.



Princess Giulia Pignatelli guided us through the Villa Seghitti Panichi bio-energy park



Originally designed by Ludwvig Winter, the park is counted among Italy's Grandi Giardini.



We posed for a group photo in front of the 16th-century chapel.



Members of the Pignatelli family hosted us at lunch.



Princess Giulia Panichi Pignatelli thanked us for gifts of a Versailles print and a porcelain

dish.



The Pignatellis gave us lavender sachets to take home.

Marquis Guiseppe Ferrajoli hosted us at Palazzo Ferrajoli located on the Piazza Colonna, named for the marble 128 foot high Column of Marcus Aurelius which was erected there in AD 193. The column can be glimpsed through the palazzo windows, and further across the square is Palazzo Chigi, the seat of Italian government's Council of Ministers, so the Marquis pointed out that we were spending the evening in the political center of the country.

After a welcome from **Cavaliere Giampaolo Grazia**, Secretary General of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George, who thanked **Princesse Beatrice** for her leadership of the Ordine Costantiniano Onlus, we proceeded to a candle lit dinner. Princesse Beatrice presented each of us a silver coaster engraved with her royal crest. AFV Founder **Catharine Hamilton** thanked the group for supporting the projects we sponsor to help restore the palace, helping ensure that millions of visitors can to continue to enjoy and be inspired by Versailles.



Marquis Guiseppe Ferrajoli greeted our group.



L. to r.: Cavaliere Giampaolo Grazian, Secretary General of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of St. George, welcomed us; The column of Marcus Aurelius in the Square can be seen through the Palazzo window.



Shelby Davlin and Phyllis Taylor beneath a painting of the square outside.



L. to r.: Gathering at the table for our farewell dinner; Silver wine coasters were gifts from Princess Beatrice.



L. to r.: Photographer Francis Hammond had been recording our activities all week; AFV Founder Catharine Hamilton thanked the group for supporting Versailles restoration projects.

Photographs by Francis Hammond, Sharon King Hoge, Michele Fiesci-Fouan, Kristin Smith, Faith Coolidge
