

## Historic Worcester houses open doors to public Sunday during Holiday Stroll



Holiday designer, Denise Hein, adjusts a wreath. [T&G staff photo/Christine Peterson]

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WORCESTER — Some of the city’s grandest homes will be showing off a healthy dose of holiday splendor this weekend as owners open their doors on Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. to participants of Preservation Worcester’s Holiday Stroll.

Not quite an annual event but certainly a popular one, the Holiday Stroll has been held almost each year for a quarter of a century and is, for many, the official start of their holiday season.

“We always keep the homes secret until the day of the event, in part to protect the homeowners but mostly to build the excitement that comes with the day,” said Preservation Worcester Executive Director Deborah Packard.

The theme for this year's nine featured homes, which span across the entire city and require "strollers" to do more driving than walking, is that all of the residences are currently occupied, or were once occupied, by prominent members of Worcester society.

Many of them were designed by distinguished area architects, and the much-anticipated booklet, available at the Preservation Worcester building, 10 Cedar St., to kick off the tour, offers a precise and fascinating history for each home.

Among the residences, a "magnificent" 20-room estate of a prominent Worcester industrialist will be open for guests, along with one of Worcester's few surviving 18th-century homes of grandeur. Other homes include the residences of a former state representative and a former Worcester County judge, and some of the houses are now home to various educational and historical institutions.

Architectural styles that strollers can be expected to be exposed to include Queen Anne, Georgian, Greek and Classical Revival, Colonial and Craftsman — and some of the homes are distinct and unusual combinations of more than one style. With broad porches, unique turrets and stunning interior features such as stained-glass windows and antique chandeliers, the experience is a feast for the senses, whether you are familiar with architecture or new to the art.

"As an organization, Preservation Worcester is concerned with preserving and celebrating the architectural heritage of this city," said Ms. Packard. "So while we enjoy this event as a fundraiser to support our mission, we also feel as though it is a perfect reflection of our mission."

In 2015, Preservation Worcester enjoyed its most well-attended stroll event in recent history, with more than 1,000 people participating — more than double the usual attendance.

In an effort to avoid trying to compete with that success, in 2016 organizers instead offered a popular event called "Denholms for the Holidays," where designers worked to restore the experience of visiting the once-bustling downtown department store with elaborate and breathtaking holiday decorations that were a throwback to one of Worcester's most glorious holiday shopping traditions.

This year's winter magic will be helped along with the addition of chorale groups and pianists who will be making appearances along the tour to lend a bit of audible joy to the exquisite decorations, which celebrate not only Christmas but also other themes of the season.

Advance tickets cost \$25 for Preservation Worcester members and \$30 for nonmembers, and may be reserved. Reservations are encouraged as tickets cost \$35 on the day of the event. For more information or to reserve, call (508) 754-8760 or visit [www.preservationworchester.org](http://www.preservationworchester.org).