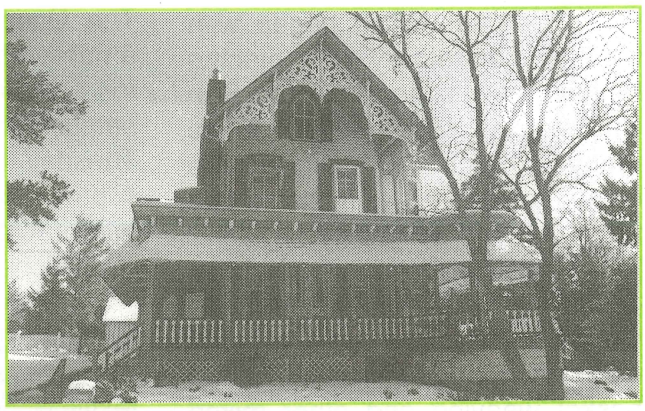
Artists' Guild Hosts Special Exhibition To Benefit Classroom Building Fund

An art exhibition and sale featuring the work of one beloved and talented woman may be all it takes to make one particular dream shared by many local artists a reality.

The charming, restored Victorian-style building that houses the Ocean County Artists' Guild dates back to 1888 and was donated by Edith Marie Grace, for whom its galleries are named. The Guild, approaching its golden anniversary, was founded in 1957 - long before the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 required public buildings to meet "accessible design standards."

As is, the building's elevated wrap-around porch and steep, narrow stairways pose a challenge to able-bodied individuals; navigating a passage from the street to the

second-floor art studio is nearly impossible for those with disabilities or difficulty walking.



The good news, Guild president Mary Jo Austin has announced, is that plans are moving ahead for a brand new add-on to the property, located at Ocean and Chestnut Avenues in Island Heights. A small-scale model of the proposed new building is on display at the Guild. It exemplifies an updated, contemporary style while retaining a certain degree of classic Victorian sophistication and grace. The addition, which will contain classrooms and studio space, includes handicapped-accessible restrooms, parking and ramped entryways.

Of the total estimated cost of the project - about $200,000, according to Austin - about $92,000 had been raised as of late January.

The Guild is hoping to raise the bulk of the remaining necessary funds through a very special exhibition, to take place in the month of April:" Theresa Pezzutti: Retrospective - Pastels and Oils" will feature the stunning and wide-ranging works of Pezzutti, a longtime Guild member and teacher who was widely known, loved and respected in the art community. In accordance with the wishes she expressed before her death in 2003, her family has donated her work so that proceeds from its sale might benefit the building fund. "She really wanted this addition, too," Austin said. "She'd be happy to know about the show," which will run from April 3rd through the 26th.

"She would find beauty in the humblest subject matter," Austin fondly recalled of her dear friend. Often, she explained, the two of them would take day trips into New York City to visit museums and galleries. "I'd be interested in the cafeteria, and she'd sit out on the front steps, sketching people!"

Described by those who remember her as "a warm, lovely person" who was just "amazingly talented," Pezzutti made a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her approach to her art could be summed up in the motto she would impart to other artists: "Paint what you love."

Victoria Ford



Photographs in these two articles by Victoria Ford.