

James Merrill

THE JAMES MERRILL HOUSE PROGRAM

James Merrill House Committee

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Bill Middleton

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Lisa Tepper Bates
Kevin Bowdler
Jack Fix
Charles Hartman
Jane Keener
Sibby Lynch
Cormac O'Malley
Deborah Norman
Christine Turrentine
Stuart Vyse
Sally Wood

Dear Friends of the Merrill Program,

It's good to come to you again with more good news about the James Merrill House Program. The best news, of course, is that we are celebrating our 15th anniversary. Since 1995, twenty-five poets, writers, and scholars have found their way to Stonington to live and work in Jimmy Merrill's apartment. In those early days just a handful of writers knew of the opportunity. Now we receive over fifty applications a year and the James Merrill House website is accessed by thousands of visitors. By any definition, those are tangible measures of progress and success. Another measure we can proudly point to is the solid support of the community. There have been numerous volunteer hours, generous financial support, and consistent attendance at readings and workshops. Your support coupled with the ongoing interest of the Merrill Family, the Hellen Plummer Foundation and new donors gives us reason to look forward with great anticipation to the next fifteen years and beyond. However, as we look at the concrete evidence to measure our progress, the committee knows full well that it is the intangibles that truly make our program special.

Sincerely,

Lynn Callahan and Bill Middleton

jamesmerrillhouse.org

Thanks and thanks again to our donors to our annual JMH appeal. The names listed below represent donors between April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010. Their gifts represent over 50% of our annual operating budget.

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Bruce Snider moved into the Merrill Apartment in mid-February after arriving in the area at the end of January to teach a class at Connecticut College. Snider is the author of *The Year We Studied Women*, selected by Kelly Cherry for the Felix Pollak Prize in poetry from the University of Wisconsin Press. His work has appeared in the *American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *PN Review*, *Ninth Letter* and *Prairie Schooner*. He has been a James A. Michener fellow in poetry and playwriting at the University of Texas Michener Center for Writers, as well as a Wallace Stegner fellow at Stanford University. He currently lives in San Francisco and is a Jones Lecturer in Poetry at Stanford University. During his time in

Stonington, he will be working on his second collection, currently called, "Paradise, Indiana." It contains meditations on subjects as varied as an abandoned small town gay bar, a taxidermy convention, the largest bat colony in the Midwest, as well as a series of personal narratives.

Writers in Residence are selected annually by the Merrill House Selection Committee. The Committee is made up of former fellows, members of the Advisory Committee, and current members of the James Merrill Committee. Except for the chairs of the Merrill Committee, all other Selection Committee members serve limited terms. Two writers are selected; one for the spring and one for the fall. Applications are submitted via the James Merrill House website and all applicants must submit resumes, writing samples and letters of recommendation. Applications are due by January 15th and selections are made and confirmed by March 1. A stipend of \$5000 is offered for each residency. Visit our website, jamesmerrillhouse.org, for more information and read about former fellows.

James Merrill House Advisory Committee

- TED DEPPE . SARAH GORHAM
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- PAUL MERRILL . LORRIE MOORE
- JEFF SKINNER . MICHAEL SNEDIKER
- SUE ELLEN THOMPSON
- MATTHEW ZAPRUDER

Christina Davis, was chosen to be the writer in residence for Fall 2008, but withdrew to accept a position as curator of the Woodbury Poetry Room at Harvard University. The Merrill House Committee worked with Davis and was able to arrange for her to stay in the Merrill apartment for 10-days last August. This brief residency allowed her to organize an existing group of poems into the core work that will become her second book of poems. The Committee was delighted to be able to accommodate a talented poet outside the framework of the WIR program.



**THE JAMES MERRILL HOUSE SELECTION COMMITTEE
AWARDS FELLOWSHIPS FOR 2010-2011 TO
CECILY PARKS AND JEDEDIAH BERRY**

Cecily Parks, a poet who lives in New York, will come to the James Merrill House in September of 2010. Her first collection of poetry, *Field Folly Snow* was published by the University of Georgia Press/VQR Poetry Series in 2008. She is a Ph.D candidate in English at the CUNY Graduate Center and teaches in the undergraduate creative writing program at Columbia University. While in residence she will complete a second collection of poetry.

Jedediah Berry is the author of the novel, *The Manual of Detection*, which was published in the spring 2009 by The Penguin Press in the United States and by William Heinemann in the UK. Berry's short stories have been published in numerous journals and anthologies. He works as an editor for Small Beer Press in Easthampton, Massachusetts, and is a regular book reviewer for *The Los Angeles Times*. Berry earned his MFA from the University of Massachusetts and his BA from Bard College.



HEARING VOICES

September 27th
Poets Michael Domasick and Patricia Ferrell

October 18th
Poet Jeffrey McDannell

October 26th
Scottish Poet Roddy Lumsden

November 29th
Graphic Memoirist Laurie Sandell

SUNDAY EVENING READINGS
5 pm at The Velvet Mill Studios, 2nd Floor
Bayview Avenue, Stonington

Cate Marvin, The Fall 2009 Merrill House Fellow, and The Merrill House Committee invite you to join them for their evening of readings with refreshments to follow. Free & open to the public. For more information call 860-283-2122 or visit our website at www.jamesmerrillhouse.org

Cate Marvin joined the Stonington community in September 2009 with her 8-month old daughter, Lucia. Having a WIR with a baby was a major change for the Merrill residency, but being a new mother in a strange town was neither an impediment to her commitment to the Merrill program nor to her creativity. Before she arrived Marvin had arranged a series of readings, HEARING VOICES, by five varied and talented writers. The series took place on four Sundays last fall hosted by the Velvet Mill Studios. The readings provided an opportunity to experience new works by poets and writers from outside our area. In addition, Marvin hosted three Sunday salons in the Merrill Apartment and read to a full house at the Stonington Free Library in December. During her residency, she was able to work on poems for her next book of poetry.



Beginning next fall, the writers in residence will live in the Jackson Apartment on the third floor of the 107 Water Street building. The apartment, which is directly across the hall from the Merrill apartment, was the bedroom and study for James Merrill's partner, David Jackson. In 2007 the Merrill House Committee renovated the space and for several years the one bedroom apartment provided rental income that helped finance renovations to the second floor apartments.

The decision to move the fellows' living quarters to the Jackson Apartment arose from the desire to preserve the furnishings and ambience of the Merrill Apartment. James Merrill had never lived full time in the apartment, but since his death in 1995, the apartment has been occupied on a nearly full time basis. While not actually living in the Merrill apartment, the fellows will continue to have full access to the Merrill rooms for work and inspiration.

The Merrill House Committee, in conjunction with the LaGrua Center, had the opportunity to host Merrill scholars from across the U.S. for a weekend conference entitled, TEACHING JAMES MERRILL. The scholars gathered in Stonington from August 14-16, 2009, to present and discuss papers on the work of Merrill, and to experience the seaside village where Merrill lived and worked from 1954 until his death in 1995. The Merrill House Committee opened Merrill's apartment to the group, who gathered to read aloud favorite Merrill poems in the very setting where many were written.



SUMMER RENTAL

THE 3RD FLOOR ONE BEDROOM JACKSON APARTMENT IN THE MERRILL BUILDING AT 107 WATER STREET IS AVAILABLE FOR SUMMER RENTALS. FOR DETAILS AND AVAILABILITY, INTERESTED PARTIES SHOULD GO TO jamesmerrillhouse.org AND USE THE CONTACT US TAB FOR MORE INFORMATION.

In conjunction with the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut, the JMH Committee has established the James Merrill House Fund to meet the long term needs of the James Merrill House. With the creation of this endowment, interested parties can contribute gifts of cash or appreciated securities or make arrangements in their will to help build the endowment fund. For more information either contact the Community Foundation of Southeastern Connecticut or go to jamesmerrillhouse.org and use the CONTACT US tab.

For the final event of the conference, J. D. McLatchy, co-executor of Merrill's literary estate, President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and adjunct Professor of English at Yale University, interviewed Langdon Hammer, Yale University Professor of English and author of the forthcoming authorized biography of James Merrill. The discussion, entitled "James Merrill: Life of the Poet," provided a unique opportunity to hear from two people who know and understand the life and work of this renowned American poet.

JAMES MERRILL HOUSE
WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE

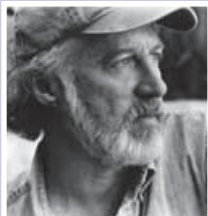
1995 – 2010

PETER HAWKINS . SCOTT WESTREM .
DANIEL HALL . TED & ANNIE DEPPE . AIDAN WASLEY
BRIGIT KELLY & MICHAEL MADONICK
MOLLY MCQUADE . SARAH GORHAM & JEFF SKINNER
PAUL MERRILL . MATTHEW ZAPRUDER . MICHAEL TYRELL
JEFF MARCUS . JASON ZUZGA . MICHAEL SNEDIKER . ANNA POTTER .
NANCY REISMAN & RICK HILLES . LANGDON HAMMER
PIOTR GWIAZDA . IVY POCHODA
CATE MARVIN . BRUCE SNIDER

DON'T MISS

June 13 Bruce Snider
Stonington Free Library
5:00 pm
June 27 Allan Gurganus
LaGrua Center
5:00 pm
Aug. 21 & 22
Open House
Merrill Apartment
107 Water Street
Aug. 21 Deck Party

James Merrill House
107 Water Street
Stonington, CT 06378



Allan Gurganus, a longtime friend of James Merrill, will give the 6th annual James Merrill Lecture on June 27 at the LaGrua Center in Stonington. Gurganus who was born in North Carolina in 1947, is the author of *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All*, *White People, Plays Well with Others*, *The Practical Heart* and other works. His books have received numerous awards and have been translated into sixteen languages. Film adaptations of Gurganus's fiction have won four Emmy awards. His political essays often appear in *The New York Times*. Gurganus is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He is presently at work on a collection of short fiction, *Assisted Living*, and the second novel in his *The Falls Trilogy* that commenced with *Widow*.

In his upcoming Stonington appearance, Gurganus will read from his next novel-in-progress, *The Erotic History of a Southern Baptist Church*.