

State legislators Ennis and Carson visit Belmont Hall in Smyrna to celebrate accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums

(DOVER, Del.—March 6, 2018)—State [Sen. Bruce Ennis](#) and state [Rep. William Carson](#) recently visited [Belmont Hall](#), located at 217 Smyrna–Leipsic Road in Smyrna, Del., to celebrate the [accreditation](#) of the museum system of the State of Delaware by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest recognition afforded to museums in the United States. Administered by the [Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs](#), the system includes five [state museums](#), over 40 [historic properties](#) and the state’s archaeological and historic-objects [collections](#).



State Sen. Bruce Ennis and state Rep. William Carson visit Belmont Hall in Smyrna in celebration of the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs’ accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. From left: division Director Tim Slavin, Ennis, Missy Vaughan of the Friends of Belmont Hall and Carson

Developed and sustained by museum professionals for over 45 years, the alliance’s [accreditation program](#) is the field’s primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation and public accountability. It strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely and remain financially and ethically accountable in order to provide the best possible service to the public.



In 1684, William Penn granted the 600-acre parcel of land on which Belmont Hall is located to Henry Pearman. After six changes of ownership, 91½ acres of the property were sold in 1771 to Thomas Collins who would go on to serve as a member of the Delaware General Assembly, brigadier-general in the American Revolution and eighth president of Delaware. In 1773, Collins completed construction of the grand Georgian structure which he named Belmont Hall. From that time until the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, the home was the scene of many meetings attended by noted patriots Caesar Rodney, Allen McLane, Col. John Haslett, Lt. Col. Charles Pope, John Dickinson, Thomas McKean and Judge Richard Bassett.



Belmont Hall

In 1867, Belmont Hall was inherited by Caroline Cloak Peterson. After the death of Howard Peterson in 1875, she married Gideon Speakman in 1876. Caroline made a number of changes to the property including the addition of a Gothic-Revival porch and the development of 20 acres of gardens including two boxwood formations at the front and rear of the house. After a devastating fire in 1922, her son Cummins Speakman and his wife Marjorie restored the home to its original condition and floor plan, and members of the Speakman family continued to live there until 1987 when the property was acquired by the State of Delaware as part of the Route 1 construction project. Administration of Belmont Hall was transferred to the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs later that year and it was opened for use as a state conference center in 1993.

In 2010, the division entered into a partnership with the non-profit Friends of Belmont Hall which sponsors several community events at the site throughout the year in addition

to renting the house and grounds for meetings, weddings and parties.

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