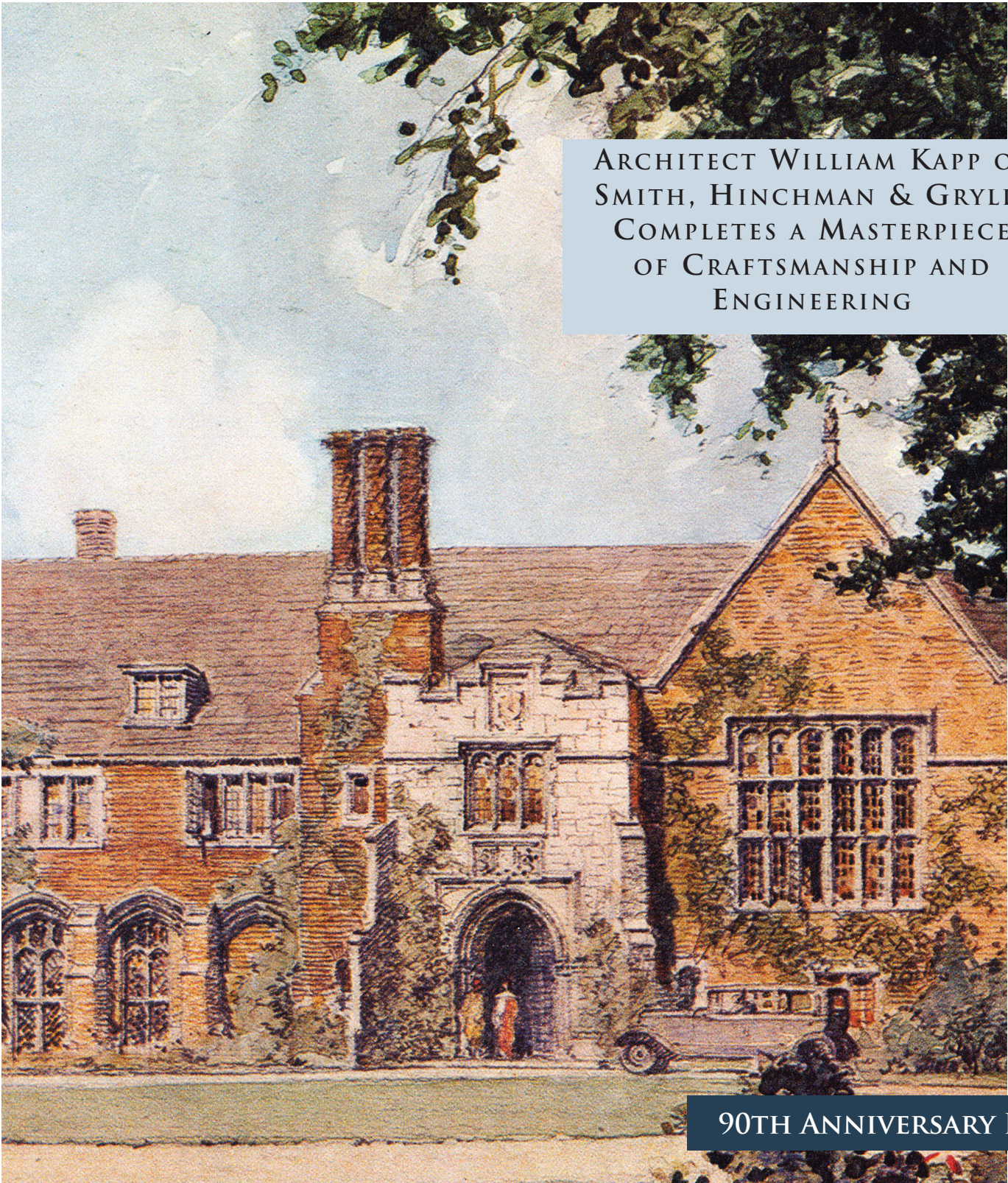


November 1929

MEADOW BROOK



ARCHITECT WILLIAM KAPP OF
SMITH, HINCHMAN & GRYLLS
COMPLETES A MASTERPIECE
OF CRAFTSMANSHIP AND
ENGINEERING

90TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

ALFRED AND MATILDA WILSON'S
SECRET MANSION PROJECT IS COMPLETE

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Whether you're buying groceries, gas, or tickets to the next performance at Meadow Brook Theatre, you'll receive **1% cash back** on all of your purchases.

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Built for toddlers Richard and Barbara Wilson in 1934, the Wilson Playhouse was relocated in March to its rightful place near the playhouses of siblings Frances and Dan Dodge. . . opening the doors to more educational family programming.

14 | 1929: The Year of The Hall

Meadow Brook Hall opened in 1929, a year of incredible change. A look at the numbers paints a picture of a different world and country. . . from the cost of an average home to the number of trains rumbling through the Rochester train depot. Hang on for a trip back in time.

18 | The Place to See and Be Seen

The Wilsons' huge housewarming party was staged just three weeks after the infamous Black Tuesday – and the guest list swelled even as a winter storm raged.

20 | A Legacy Like No Other

The Great Depression was only the first of many eras The Hall would experience during its next 90 years – eras that saw sweeping changes in American society. . . and the impact of events far and wide on the family and staff within its walls of brick, steel and concrete are still being felt.

28 | Pipe Dreams

One of the world's finest pipe organs, and the second largest residential organ in America, Meadow Brook's *Aeolian* #1444, turns 100 this year, and has many friends and supporters to thank for both its longevity and its inspirational playing condition.



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On the Cover:

1929 was a monumental year. The Jazz Age roared to an end. The stock market crashed. Tensions that would eventually break out into the Second World War began to simmer. And as this issue's cover – designed by art director Lynn Metzker in a style reminiscent of 1929 magazines – suggests, the newly completed Meadow Brook Hall would have been big news to a curious public. We hope you enjoy this commemorative issue, celebrating 90 years of arguably one of the world's greatest buildings.

Meadow Brook

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MEADOW BROOK

ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST
ESTATE HOMES, AN ICON OF THE
AUTOMOTIVE ARISTOCRACY, AND
A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

*The former home of Alfred and
Matilda Dodge Wilson, founders of
Oakland University, Meadow Brook Hall
is located on Oakland's 1,400-acre campus.
The self-supporting auxiliary of the univer-
sity serves as an internationally renowned
historic house museum and cultural center.*

Editor's Column

Women and men on a mission

The Meadow Brook Hall leadership staff has been engaging in strategic planning and master planning efforts as we look to position the property for both financial stability and programmatic growth over the next 10+ years.

As part of these efforts, we decided to redraft our mission statement to be more effective and forward-looking – to make sure it reflected our new direction and was simple, memorable and something we thought the great majority of our

friends and supporters could buy into.

We adopted a two-hour mission statement development process that was efficient and fun . . . and, as it turned out, effective as well. It was important that we had participation from a variety of constituent groups, so internal staff were not just speaking to themselves. To that end, in addition to all full- and part-time staff, we invited volunteers, student workers and friends and donors to join us.

And, we chose a gifted facilitator,

Beth Talbert, a longtime Oakland University staff member and currently a special instructor in OU's department of Communication and Journalism, to lead the exercise. Participants broke into groups of six and answered questions ranging from "What does it look like when we're doing our best work?" to "How can Meadow Brook help change things for the better?"

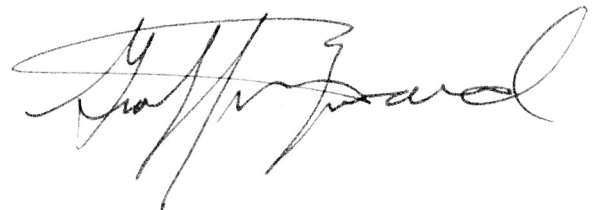
The process and results exceeded our expectations. The caring and inspired input we received from our ad hoc group was invaluable – as they to a person expressed insights into what they thought Meadow Brook's role is, what it does and what it can offer constituencies near and far.

After the session, with able assistance from our strategic planning consultant, Leslie Jones, we molded the raw material from the group session into a polished statement. We hope you agree that it hits the proverbial nail on the head:

"To preserve the estate and share the pioneering legacy of the Dodge and Wilson families by engaging and inspiring diverse audiences."

Next we embarked on articulating an aspirational statement and shared values, which we rolled out in May to the study group, staff, student workers, our volunteer corps and donors.

Our mission statement is now proudly displayed in The Hall's entry gallery for all to see, as well as in the former laundry (now the staff and volunteer break room), along with the vision statement and values. When next you visit Meadow Brook, we hope you will take the time to read and reflect on our guideposts and let us know your thoughts.



**"By itself, your mission
statement doesn't mean much.
It's just words on a page.**

**But if it's supported by a group
of people who care about making
a difference in the world,
that's something else.**

**Few things are as powerful
as a shared mission."**

– Nonprofit Hub

Save the date! 9 | 19 | 2019

It's Wild!

TICKETS & TABLE SPONSORSHIPS NOW ON SALE!

Your evening will include tours of The Hall, live and silent auctions, cocktail & hors d'oeuvre reception, a four-course gourmet wild or mild game dinner and more.

All proceeds support the preservation of this National Historic Landmark

CALL (248) 364-6263 OR VISIT MEADOWBROOKHALL.ORG

Presenting Sponsor



**NORTHERN
TRUST**

MEADOW BROOK'S
gourmet
WILD GAME
DINNER





Rochester Hills' new truck on the reinforced entry bridge.

Safe crossing

More than a year ago, the Rochester Hills fire department notified Meadow Brook that it would soon be adding a 46-foot-long tower ladder truck to its fleet. The new truck has an aerial reach that will allow firefighters to cover the width and height of The Hall from the front circle, at the same time improving safety conditions for the crews. However, the department also pointed out that the truck's weight, some 85,000 pounds, would far exceed The Hall's entrance bridge load capacity.

A team from Meadow Brook and the university's Facilities Management department convened and hired SME, a civil engineering firm, to assess the bridge's structural composition. While considering several options to increase the load capacity, preserving the visual integrity of the 1928 bridge was a critical factor.

After months of planning, designing, testing and bidding, masonry and concrete restoration contractor DRV was hired to tackle the job. The Entrance Bridge Reinforcement Project, costing nearly \$400,000, had shovels in the ground by late January of 2019 and was completed a short two months later, working in sometimes brutally cold conditions.

The scope of work first involved removing the bridge's asphalt surface, exposing its substructure. Then, channels between the existing concrete beams were chiseled open, allowing installation of six new steel support beams. Finally, a new deck of concrete reinforced with rebar was poured.

The new entrance bridge will now provide the quick access the fire department would need for an emergency response...safeguarding occupants, artifacts and the National Historic Landmark itself.

A TRULY UNIQUE EXPERIENCE: The 1929 Tour

The keys to the house can be "yours" on this exclusive tour of the private and restricted areas of Meadow Brook Estate. This three-hour tour will be personalized to your group so you can see any room, cupboard or vault of your choosing, an opportunity only a handful of people have had since Meadow Brook Hall was finished in 1929.

Led by the Director of Curatorial Services, Madelyn Rzakowolski, the all-access tour includes the four floors of the 110-room mansion, two garages, three playhouses and sixteen estate gardens. Sharing little-known stories about treasures in the main rooms as well as back rooms and service areas, she will satisfy your curiosity about the magnificent history and craftsmanship of this National Historic Landmark. While tour stops can be of your choosing, Madelyn will suggest her favorite locked areas, such as the two-story cedar storage room, the marble electrical panel and the rooftop deck with its commanding views of the estate.

Cost: \$1,929 for six guests. Light refreshments can be added. All proceeds benefit the preservation of Meadow Brook and its artifacts. Please contact Madelyn at rzakowo@oakland.edu or (248) 364-6253 to book this exclusive opportunity.



Managing upland birds

Meadow Brook presented its sixth annual Dodge Sportsman Award to Al Stewart at the 11th annual Wild Game Dinner & Auction last September.

The Dodge Sportsman Award honors a man, woman or organization who, in the spirit of entrepreneurial American sportsmen John, Horace and Danny Dodge, has demonstrated outstanding contributions to Michigan's outdoor heritage, wildlife and habitat conservation and the promotion of hunting and fishing activities, ethics and education.

As the Upland Game Bird Specialist and Program Leader for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Stewart is responsible for statewide conservation and management programs for ruffed grouse, American woodcock, sharp-tailed grouse, quail, pheasants and wild turkeys. He oversees the largest American woodcock chick-banding program in the world and holds the world's record for being the only person to have live-captured all the species and sub-species of wild turkeys.

Al has had a lifetime of mentoring people at both a professional and hunting activities level. He has helped develop and promote many "Learn to Hunt" programs involving waterfowl hunting, wild turkey hunting and pheasant hunting. In 2015, the DNR Wildlife Division recognized Al for his consistent long-range dedication to wildlife management. The National Wild Turkey Federation gave him their Henry S. Mosby Lifetime Achievement

Award and President George H. Bush presented him with the Teddy Roosevelt National Conservation Award for working with partners to create the nation's first barrier-free waterfowl hunting blind for people with disabilities.

Al grew up on Van Hoosen Farm in the Rochester area's Stoney Creek

village and his father worked for Sarah Van Hoosen Jones. As a young boy, Al traveled to Meadow Brook Farms with the farm manager when Sarah Van Hoosen Jones visited with Matilda Wilson. Al was always in awe of the high-stepping Hackney ponies and buggies that were housed at Meadow Brook.



Left to right: Meadow Brook Executive Director, Geoff Upward; Dodge Sportsman Award winner, Al Stewart; and Wild Game Dinner presenting sponsor Northern Trust's President, Dan Pienta.

Behind the Wild Game Dinner

Proceeds from the Wild Game Dinner & Auction assist daily efforts to preserve, interpret and operate Meadow Brook Hall as a major museum and community cultural center.

Special thanks to the volunteer committee for both the financial and awareness-raising success of the event. The following contributed countless hours in planning and execution, under the able leadership of Shannon O'Berski, The Hall's director of external relations: Patrick Brown, Gasper Buffa, Ted Cunningham, George Frisch, Nick Frisch, Walt Frisch, Derek Gentile, Millie Gervais, Scott Kunselman, Charlie Mann, Mike Murri, Dan Pienta, Frank Rewold, Bill Shea, Randy Walker, Honorary Member: Al Stewart. Ex-officio: Geoff Upward.

A warm welcome

Gone are the unadorned stone walls, gone is the empty and cold entrance to Meadow Brook Hall: The entry hall has been restored to its former glory. The restoration included conserving and hanging two artifacts and was dedicated to the loving memory of the late longtime volunteer Mary Kathryn Cichowski from the Cichowski family.

The conservation project included cleaning and re-framing the Matilda Dodge Wilson portrait by Percy Ives with archival-grade materials and ultra-violet blocking, non-glare museum glass. The entry hall wall hanging, which was installed by the Wilsons in 1929 but had been in storage since the 1980s because of its deteriorated condition, was also conserved. Both artifacts were properly hung in Meadow Brook's low entry hall.

Though the red velvet and gold

thread tapestry did originally hang in the entry, the portrait of Matilda has been hanging in the Upper Great Hall since Meadow Brook became a museum. Before that time, it hung out of sight on the fourth floor, outside of the beauty parlor. Conserving and moving the portrait of Matilda allows her image to be in a more appropriate place of honor – welcoming guests to her home – and opens up the space it occupied for the painting of Frances and Dan Dodge. Re-hanging the children's portrait in the original location – on the wall between their bedroom wings – will help with the interpretation of that space also.

The Hall appreciates the support of volunteer Bill Cichowski and his family for the Lost Painting project, which seeks to restore Meadow Brook's original 1929 appearance by



creating high-quality replicas of the fine paintings that once hung on the walls and conserving the original art collection that must be moved to different locations to make way.



And the award goes to...

Meadow Brook's renowned Holiday Walk placed third in *USA Today's* "Best Holiday Historic Home Tour" national contest in 2018, thanks

to hundreds if not thousands of votes from friends and family members from all over the country. A late push from Oakland University alumni helped move The Hall up from fourth to third place, behind Graceland (Memphis, Tennessee) and Glensheen (Duluth, Minnesota).

The 2018 Walk's visitation increased 65% over 2017, logging a record 15,000 visitors.

Meadow Brook Hall was also named to Trip Advisor's Hall of Fame in 2018 for receiving a certificate of excellence for the past four years. The Hall is ranked #1 in the "things to do" Trip Advisor's Rochester, Michigan list.

And Meadow Brook received *The Knot's* (the industry standard of wedding publications and electronic communications) "Best of Weddings" award in 2018, and was a winner of Wedding Wire's annual "Couple's Choice Awards" for 2019.

These accolades can be attributed to the hard work of Meadow Brook's talented marketing, sales and event management staff.





The right-hand drive 1919 Screenside Business car.

Transport(s) back in time

The story of Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company and their feats of automotive engineering cannot be told solely with one or three or even ten cars...and so the museum welcomes two more vehicles to the collection, ones with incredibly rich histories not yet represented by the “fleet.” Al Hackett, member of the Dodge Brothers Car Club and good friend to Meadow Brook, recently donated his 1919 Dodge Brothers Model G Wrecker Truck and 1919 Dodge Brothers Screenside Business Car to our on-site Dodge Brothers interpretation.

The 1919 Dodge Brothers Wrecker is a great example of how the public converted vehicles to better suit their needs in the early days of automobile manufacturing. For about 100 years, car manufacturers have been doing this type of conversion on customers’ behalf, producing a variety of vans, trucks and station wagons that meet their needs. But back when the

majority of vehicles were touring cars, they were modified by individuals or secondary companies. This 1919 truck had its back cut off and replaced with an aftermarket Truxton unit, a strong auxiliary frame with an internal, gear-driven axle, “artillery” truck wheels and fortified solid rubber tires in order to take the heavy load. The truck bed was rebuilt and graced in the center by a massive towing mechanism. This car is in good running condition and could be used to great effect and entertainment by utilizing its towing capabilities with other historic vehicles.

The right-hand drive Screenside was exported to England after being manufactured in Hamtramck, Michigan, and used at a variety of businesses in Oxford, Eng-

land – most notably Morris Garages, which later became a car brand of its own, the well-known “MG.” A brass stamp on the floorboard is from Morris Garages and a photograph of the factory in the 1920s shows a vehicle identical to this one.

The 1919 Dodge Brothers Wrecker and 1919 Dodge Brothers Business Car are excellent, rare and early representations of the Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company’s dependable and versatile vehicles. In particular, the right-hand Screenside Business Car not only tells the story of export and how internationally significant Dodge Brothers was, but it also makes an irrefutable connection between the ambulances the Dodge Brothers made during World War I and how that style of vehicle was then re-branded after 1918, as “business cars,” forerunners of today’s small trucks and vans.



Donor Al Hackett delivers the 1919 wrecker, April 2019.

Gift of light

Oakland University alumnus Marc Dutton, owner and president of Marc Dutton Irrigation, gives back to his alma mater in important ways. In 2018, his visionary contribution of new and enhanced lighting, valued at \$25,000, will help make Meadow Brook Hall a more memorable experience for thousands of visitors during the holiday season.

In 2018, Dutton's company donated 720 feet (80 nine-foot lengths) of pre-lit greenery. And, over the next two years, Dutton will replace Meadow Brook's current inventory of artificial holiday trees, ranging in size from 6 to 15 feet, with new LED pre-lit trees.

The idea occurred to Dutton while touring the annual Holiday Walk in



2017. Noticing that some of the existing greenery looked a bit worn, he discreetly took measurements and made notes about the types and sizes of the artificial trees and roping.

He also noticed the greenery was primarily illuminated with incandescent bulbs, technology that is being phased out in favor of energy efficient LED lighting.

Dutton's support of Meadow Brook is nothing new. For years, his company has helped repair and sometimes replace sections of The Hall's aging irrigation system. And, his wife, Sandy, has been a longtime volunteer host and Garden Club member.

"The Hall holds a very special place in my heart," Dutton says.

Once the new materials are fully operational, Dutton calculates that converting to all LED lighting could save The Hall nearly \$2,000 annually, an important initiative supporting its energy-efficiency goals.

Hello Dollies!



Stoney Creek Questers #203 continued their support of The Hall by securing a grant to care for the doll collection. From left: Kathleen Dennis, Diane Gurzick, Jeannette Cooper, Jan Caloia, Marianne Raffin. Not pictured: Annie Williams, project chair.

Stoney Creek Questers #203 of Rochester was recently awarded its fifth Preservation & Restoration Grant at the Questers International Convention. This \$1,000 grant, along with \$565 raised from the Chapter, paid for the repair and restoration of 12 historic dolls in the collection of Meadow Brook Hall. The local history group has been supporting Meadow Brook's collection through gifts and volunteer projects for nine years, with each of the five grants going to The Hall. This year, the project included conservation of 12 antique dolls from the nursery and Knole Cottage, including re-stringing, cleaning and some small repairs.

Along with funding the conservation, Questers #203 volunteered 250 hours to reorganize the doll clothing and accessories. They documented and accessioned the hundreds of dresses, hats, socks and shoes of all sizes, dating from those owned by Frances Dodge in the late 1910s to those owned by her daughters in the 1950s.

No walk in the woods!



This past April on Arbor Day, a group of 40 community members, Meadow Brook volunteers, Oakland University employees and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles employees came together to help restore a section of The Hall's Woodland Entrance.

Onsite to help coordinate the effort was ReLeaf Michigan, a statewide volunteer nonprofit tree planting organization which educates the public on tree planting and care. They, along with Toyota, provided funds towards the purchase of 14 trees – matching donations from a crowdfunding appeal that raised \$1,740.

The Arbor Day ceremony was co-hosted by the City of Rochester Hill, a Tree City, U.S.A.

New staff joins the team at The Hall

As Meadow Brook Hall continues to pursue its mission, we have welcomed several new part-time staff to assist in our efforts.

Elizabeth “Libby” Molnar was hired to support the business office manager, Wendy Santo. Libby handles deposits and payments for vendors and helps track alcohol inventory. She says she really enjoys working with The Hall's great team.

The new curatorial assistant, Stephanie Vettese, assists curator Madelyn Rzakdowolski with administrative tasks, interacts with our dedicated volunteers, and coordinates setup and maintenance of Meadow Brook's new and ongoing exhibitions.

Lisa Drummond may not be exactly “new” to The Hall, but she is in a new role! Lisa worked at Meadow Brook for a number of years before moving to Asheville, N.C. and work

at the Biltmore Estate. But fortunately she has returned “home” to her roots. She is now the volunteer coordinator, assisting the visitor services manager, Nick Campbell, in recruiting, training and working with volunteers who are needed to help run the estate.



Managing social media, the website and other marketing and communication initiatives, Faith Brody is Meadow Brook's new external relations assistant, reporting to Shannon O'Berski, director of external relations. As a graduate of

Oakland University and a frequent visitor to The Hall in her college days, she is thrilled to get to tell the estate's story every day. **MB**

Left to right: Faith Brody, Lisa Drummond, Libby Molnar and Stephanie Vettese.



Summer & Fall Calendar Up Next

Summer Sizzles at the Great Estate!

Meadow Brook Hall offers a variety of community events and programs throughout the year. In the spirit of Matilda Wilson's gracious hospitality, we invite you to join us for summer concerts, educational teas and more!

Daily Summer Tours

*Now through September 2.
Reservations not required.*

House Tour: Tour the family's living quarters and entertainment spaces on the first three floors of The Hall.

- Daily at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 1 p.m., 2 p.m., and 3 p.m.

Behind-the-Scenes Tour: Explore rarely seen areas of the home, such as staff quarters and the children's playrooms.

- Daily at 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m.

Walking Estate Tour: Stroll the gardens and grounds as you learn how the modest Meadow Brook Farms transformed into the Great Estate. The tour also includes admission to the Dodge Brothers exhibit in the Family Garage, along with a chance to view restored Dodge vehicles.

- Daily at 2 p.m.

JUN
26

JUL
10

JUL
31

AUG
7



Enchanted Evenings at the Great Estate

7-9 p.m. | \$25 per person

Up your game for "date night" with a twilight-lit, self-guided tour of The Hall. Live musical entertainment will be on the Loggia Terrace, along with dessert and a cash bar.

Summer Concert Series

7-9:30 p.m. | \$35 per person

July 18, see and hear multi-instrument jazz, big band and rock phenomenon

Dave Bennett.

August 1, Jazz vocalist and Detroit native **Ben Sharkey** will perform his Sinatra-inspired routine.

August 15, **Kimmie Horne**, descendant of both Lena Horne and the Fantastic Four's Cleveland Horne, performs at the final Summer Concert Series.

All of the Summer Concert Series include self-guided touring of the first floor of The Hall. These acclaimed jazz artists will perform in the Garden Tent.

Cash bar and complimentary hors d'oeuvres.

JUL
18



AUG
15



AUG
1





meadowbrookhall.org @meadowbrookhall

Garden Tea

Sunday, June 23, 1-3 p.m.

\$50 per person

What better way to spend a glorious summer afternoon than in the lush gardens of Meadow Brook? This quintessential tea includes live entertainment by a harpist, self-guided touring of the gardens and The Hall, and a garden scavenger hunt for the little ones and the young at heart.



Yoga in the Garden

9-10 a.m. | \$15 per person

Sundays, August 4, 11 and 25

Channel your inner peace in the Rock Garden while flowing through restorative yoga poses. Experienced yoga instructor Shannon Kraegel welcomes all levels of yogis to this outdoor class. Bring a mat and a water.

Wild Game Dinner & Auction

Thursday, September 19, 6-10 p.m.

\$125 per person, table of 10, \$1,200

Meadow Brook's biggest fundraiser of the year, the Wild Game Dinner, promises a special, engaging evening for everyone – whether guys bonding or couples on a fantastic date night. From wild or mild hors d'oeuvres and dinner entrées to a gun raffle to exquisite silent auction items, all proceeds benefit the continued preservation and interpretation of The Hall.

Meadow Brook's Beats, Brats & Brews

Thursday, September 26,

5:30 -8 p.m. | \$30 per person

Back for a second year, the popular Beats, Brats and Brews is a great way

to spend a fall evening if

you're 21

and older. Admission

includes a brat from

the Mean

Weenie, a

delicious Michigan craft beer and music from the outstanding acoustic Americana duo Athens Creek. Vegetarian options, as well as hard cider and wine, will be available.

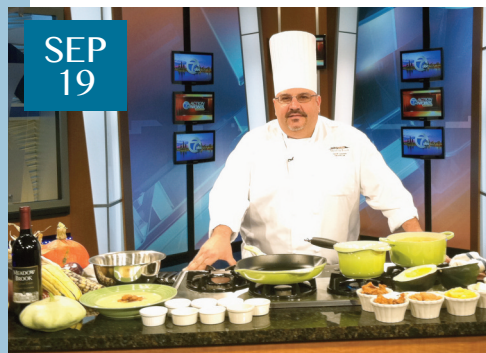


Meadow Brook Masquerade Ball

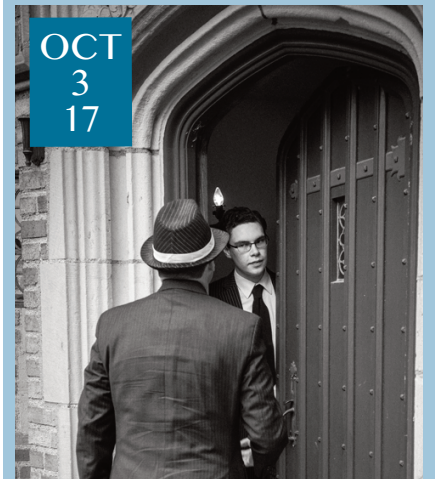
Friday, October 18 | 7-10 p.m.

\$100 per person

Put an elegant twist on Halloween with this spectacular new event! Elaborate gowns, tuxedos and Venetian masks are the dress code. A strolling dinner with chef-attended food stations, live music, dancing, an open bar and self-guided touring of this American castle will make the Masquerade Ball a night to remember.



OCT
3
17



Mystery Dinner

7-10 p.m. | \$90 per person

The wildly popular Mystery Dinner is back! This time, you're invited to Dunn Speakeasy for the mob wedding of the year – with a sinister twist. Dress up in 1920s garb and help your fellow guests solve the mystery. Includes open bar, hors d'oeuvres and three-course meal.

All community programs directly help with the operational and preservation costs of Meadow Brook Hall.

By enjoying a community program, you are helping preserve The Hall for the next generation. All community programs listed require reservations in advance (with the exception of Yoga in the Garden). To make reservations, please call Jill at (248) 364-6252 or visit meadowbrookhall.org/programs.

Want to receive a discount on all community events?

Become a Meadow Brook Member! Membership entitles you to a 10% discount on all community programs and museum store merchandise, plus exclusive perks. For more information, call Lauren at (248) 364-6264 or visit meadowbrookhall.org/support.

Three's company!

The Wilson Playhouse settles into a new home

BY KIM ZELINSKI

Meadow Brook Estate's third playhouse, built for toddlers Richard and Barbara Wilson in 1934, was relocated in March to its rightful place near the playhouses of siblings Frances and Dan Dodge. A team of Meadow Brook and OU Facilities department staff and a professional moving company moved it from the first tee on Oakland University's Katke-Cousins Golf Course to a site nestled between Knole Cottage and Dan's Cabin, allowing The Hall to preserve, interpret and more effectively utilize the building.

Originally located near the Dodge Farmhouse and the estate's other recreational facilities (the Dodge Clubhouse, outdoor pool, kennels and Dodge Stables), the one-room, 300-square-foot playhouse was shared by Richard and Barbara, each with their own distinct play space. The playhouse was designed by Jamesway, the same company that designed the Wilsons' farm group buildings.

From 1977 to 2011, the playhouse was used first as a pro shop, then as a starter shack for the Katke-Cousins Golf Course and, in 2011, when construction of the new Sharf Clubhouse began, it was relocated to a site near Katke's new first tee.

A two-man crew from S&W Structural Building Movers in Swartz Creek raised the playhouse onto a trailer and transported it across a frozen fairway behind Meadow Brook Hall,

eventually lowering it onto a new concrete pad near Knole Cottage and Dan's Cabin. It took more than a half day to maneuver the trailer in and around various obstacles before slipping the building into its final position.

The Wilson Playhouse will be officially dedicated in late June when Richard Wilson and Wilson and Dodge family members will be in town to celebrate his 90th Birthday. In the coming months and years, the playhouse will be showcased on The Hall's Estate Tour and will be utilized for children's activities and family programming. For now, it's wonderful to have the playhouse in a setting that takes advantage of its historical significance and educational value...and in great company with the estate's other two playhouses. **MB**



Richard and Barbara Wilson, c. 1936



Top: It was a cold day in March when the playhouse took its final journey. Right, left to right: Scott Penoyer of S&W Structural Movers and the university team of Maria Schoenherr, Grounds department; Tom Schall, golf course superintendent; and Mike Markarian, construction supervisor. Below: The playhouse on its new pad, placed between Knole Cottage (rear) and Dan's Cabin.



1929

THE YEAR OF THE HALL



BY FAITH BRODY

1929 was a monumental year. The Jazz Age roared to an end. The stock market crashed. Tensions that would eventually break out into the Second World War began to simmer. And as this issue's cover – designed in a style reminiscent of 1929 magazines – suggests, the newly completed Meadow Brook Hall would have been big news to a curious public.

And with Matilda and Alfred Wilson's huge housewarming party staged just three weeks after the infamous Black Tuesday, clearly a new era was dawning.

As the family settled into their country estate home, life in the city of Rochester, state of Michigan and the world would never be the same. Clearly, much has changed in the 90 years that have passed since that extraordinary year – for The Hall, the nation and for the world. Let's take a look.

The Scene

- The Fascist party and Benito Mussolini rise to power in Italy.
- Joseph Stalin consolidates power in the Soviet Union.
- Herbert Hoover is elected the 31st U.S. President.
- Jackie Kennedy and Anne Frank are born.
- The first car radio, the first phone booth and sunglasses are introduced.
- The Academy Awards are launched in Hollywood.

120,000,000

The United States population.



4,796,000

State of Michigan's population.

260%

Increase in population from 1910 to 1929 in Avon Township, Michigan – now Rochester and Rochester Hills. People leaving Detroit could find work on farms, such as Meadow Brook, or work in one of the mills near downtown Rochester.

25-30

The number of domestic staff employed at Meadow Brook Hall. When the Wilsons moved into The Hall in 1929 with their children, Frances and Danny Dodge, they were still a family of four, as Richard and Barbara weren't adopted until the 1930s. The Hall was designed to house 16 staff, but only 9 lived there in 1929; the rest lived elsewhere on the farm property or commuted daily from nearby Rochester or Pontiac.



Prohibition

9 Years

How long Prohibition had been in effect.

1918

The people of Michigan voted to ban alcohol in 1917. Michigan's own Prohibition went into effect the following year, after years of rising temperance movements across the state. Matilda's father, George Rausch, had operated a number of saloons in the Detroit area prior to Prohibition that had felt the wrath of the temperance movement. Once Rausch stopped running saloons, leftover liquor made its way to storage at Meadow Brook.



1920

When the 18th Amendment to prohibit the manufacture, transportation and sale of intoxicating liquors went into effect after it was ratified nationwide.

75%

The estimated amount of all alcohol smuggled into the country during Prohibition that came in through the Windsor-Detroit corridor. By 1929, the second-biggest industry in Detroit was "rum-running," as the activity was called. The first? Automobiles.

246

Bottles of Old Saratoga Whiskey that are in Meadow Brook Hall's collection. Since drinking alcohol in private was not banned during Prohibition (only the sale and consumption in public), we assume John Dodge had stocked up on his favorite drink. He had enough to supply his and Matilda's Detroit home on Boston Boulevard, the Meadow Brook farmhouse and clubhouse, his yachts and his lodge in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Many wealthy individuals and private clubs hid away their own stashes of intoxicating beverages in similar fashion.



to be fully electrified. To the astonishment of the nation's press, Knoke Cottage (Frances Dodge's playhouse, built in 1926) was also entirely electrified, including heat, lights, refrigerator and stove.

1926

The year that gas power came to the Village of Rochester.



Free

The price of an Edison lightbulb, if a burned-out bulb was exchanged. All lightbulbs on the estate were carefully saved and returned to the Edison building on Main Street in the Village of Rochester.

Entertainment

And the Oscar goes to... The first Academy Awards ceremony took place May 16 in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. The very first Best Picture Oscar went to *Wings*, a 1927 silent film.

26.5 inches

As the flapper style of dress -- short skirts, dropped waists and bare arms -- increased in popularity in the 1920s, the "ideal" body type for women was a slim, almost androgynous figure. To help women achieve this figure -- including the ideal waistline measurement of 26.5 inches--advertisements suggested smoking to shed pounds. A popular fad diet at the time was eating only bananas and milk.



"Makin' Whoopee"

By Eddie Cantor, was the most popular pop song of the time. In the mid-1930s, Frances Dodge and her first husband, Jimmy Johnson, would become huge fans of swing music and become regulars at swing clubs.

Philadelphia Athletics

The winners of the World Series. The Detroit Tigers finished sixth that season, 36 games behind the Athletics. A good friend of the Tigers' all-star second baseman Charlie Gehringer, Dan Dodge played for the local Rochester baseball team at the time, although his true talent was in engineering and mechanics.

Clyde van Dusen

The three-year-old American Thoroughbred racehorse won the Kentucky Derby. John Dodge's daughter from his first marriage, Isabel Cleves Sloane, won the Derby in 1934 with a horse she owned, *Cavalcade*.

Transportation

25

Freight trains that passed through the Rochester Train depot daily. Eight passenger trains heading to Northern Michigan, Detroit and other destinations also swept through the station. By 1929, travelers' use of trains began to decline in favor of the automobile.

124,557

Number of new Dodge cars that were sold in 1929. Ford took the top spot with 1,507,132. 1929 was also the high point of new automobiles manufactured, with 5.3 million turned out on assembly lines. With the Great Depression looming around the corner, it would take years for the industry to reach that high point again.

7

Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company placed seventh in sales in 1929. Despite the dip from second throughout most of the 1920s, Dodge sales still fared well and the company would be a major military supplier during World War II.

\$995

How much a brand new Dodge Model Six cost. The new design featured head lamps mounted to the grille bar and bright metal molding attached to the hood.

187 miles

Did you need to get from Rochester to Detroit? Maybe Pontiac, or as far away as Flint? No problem, as the Detroit

United Railway operated the Interurban, a streetcar system that covered 187 miles across the Detroit area. This system also started to fall out of favor around 1929, and the Rochester Interurban tracks were torn out of Main Street in the 1930s.

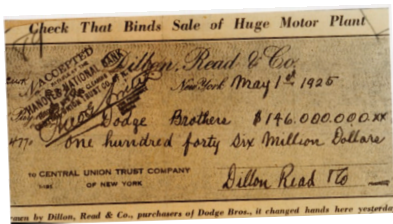
Faith Brody is the marketing assistant for Meadow Brook Hall and a freelance writer from Rochester, Michigan. **MB**



Money

\$146 Million

The amount of money netted from the sale of Dodge



Brother Motor Car Company; the two widows of the Dodge brothers thus became two of the wealthiest women in the world after the sale in 1925.

\$9,668

The average household income in 1929.

381.17

The Dow Jones Industrial average on September 3, the stock market's peak that year.

16,410,030

The number of stock transactions on Black Tuesday, October 29.



41.22

Dow Jones Industrial closing number on July 8, 1932, the worst close in its history and the height of the Great Depression.

Housing

1,233

National average square footage of a new single family home.

88,000

Square footage of Meadow Brook Hall.



2

Number of bedrooms in the average home (3 if you were lucky).

21

Bedrooms in The Hall, including the family's rooms, guest rooms and live-in domestic staff rooms, each with multiple sets of linens.

367%

The increase of sales of bathroom plumbing and heating products from 1929 to 1954. Less than one percent of U.S. homes had electricity and indoor plumbing as late as 1920. By 1929, homes that had the luxury of indoor plumbing in a rural area like Avon Township were rare. Most homes still had an outhouse or privy in the backyard; Meadow Brook Hall was built with 30 bathrooms.

\$1,298

How much a build-it-yourself house cost in 1929. This particular price is for a two-story Dutch colonial with three bedrooms, kitchen, living room and a bathroom. These kits were sold through companies like Sears and could be ordered through a home shopping catalog or newspaper advertisement.

\$4,000,000

How much Meadow Brook Hall cost to build and furnish between 1926 and 1929. This Tudor-Revival style mansion boasts a ballroom, library, sunroom, a servants' wing and 39 chimneys. Matilda and Alfred Wilson traveled through Great Britain on their honeymoon, gathering ideas for their lavish country estate. William Kapp of the Detroit architectural firm Smith, Hinchman and Grylls designed The Hall.

Food/Utilities

10 cents

The average cost of a loaf of bread in 1929. A pound of butter cost 56 cents, and eggs were 59 cents a dozen. Since Meadow Brook was a working farm in 1929, the Wilsons produced most of their eggs, dairy, meat and produce from the farm. Meadow Brook Farms started to sell these items to the public later, and Matilda used to give pounds of butter as Christmas gifts to friends and employees.



21 cents

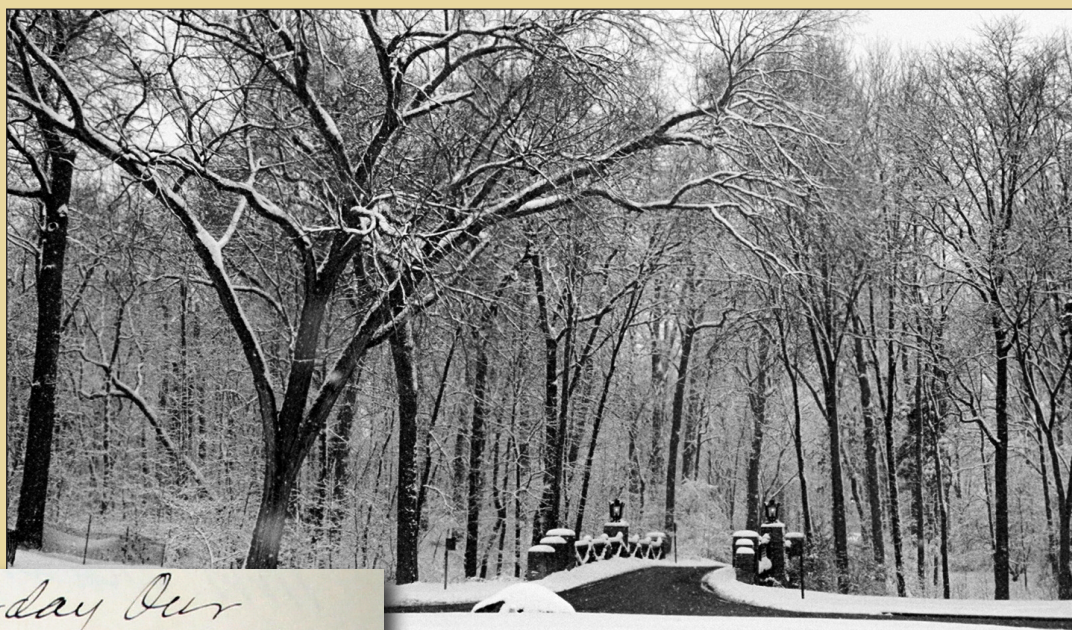
A gallon of gas was way under the dollar mark in 1929. Since the Wilsons had a number of chauffeured cars, farm trucks and other heavy equipment, gas was in constant demand. At press time, gas is \$2.99 per gallon in Michigan. Ouch!

68%

Of homes in the U.S. had electricity in 1929, although only roughly 9% in rural areas like Rochester. The Hall was built

THE PLACE TO SEE AND BE SEEN

BY MADELYN RZADKOWOLSKI



*To-day Our
House-warming
Party. about 850 here
A terrible slippery-
stormy day.*

*Matilda Wilson's
inscription in the guest
book, November 20,
1929. Right: The vaults
outside of The Hall's
ballroom had thousands
of crystal glasses, ready
to serve guests.*

As construction of Meadow Brook Hall wound down toward the end of 1929, the Wilsons, architect William Kapp and the architectural firm that employed him – Smith, Hinchman & Grylls – recognized they had built a masterpiece of craftsmanship and engineering. The three years of construction were done in almost total secrecy, with the Wilsons requesting that no photographs or information about the house be shared with the public or newspapers.

Though the Wilsons may have intended that their attempts at privacy would keep the house out of sight and out of mind, they instead served to build much hype, leaving family, friends and the Detroit community waiting in anticipation for the finished mansion. Interest was further intensified by the seclusion of the estate, as the farm property was fenced and the building itself was situated deep enough behind rolling hills, leaving gawkers along nearby public roads out of luck.



Now, nearing completion, as they worked to finalize the hanging of chandeliers, laying of Persian carpets and installation of kitchen cupboards, the Wilsons and Kapp also prepared to get out in front of the groundswell of interest. Kapp wrote a press release about the house and arranged for photo shoots to help assuage public curiosity, something he had purposely prevented during construction. The Wilsons, for their part, planned a housewarming party, inviting 400 friends, community members and companies involved in the construction of their new home. To ward off any unwanted guests, they made sure to inform the Society pages of the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* that entry to the open house would be by invitation only.

On November 20, 1929, Matilda Dodge Wilson wrote in her guest book “To-day our House-warming party... A terrible, slippery, stormy day.” But neither the weather nor the threat of non-entrance prevented a line of Dodges, Fords and Packards from lining up on the country lanes leading to Meadow Brook, their tires squealing against the icy dirt roads as their windshield wipers strained against the falling snow. Despite only inviting 400 guests, Matilda followed the weather report in the guest book with “about 850 here.” The large number testifies to the fact that, even in a region awash with mansions built by the automotive aristocracy, Meadow Brook stood out as one of the grandest and finest. The guest count is remarkable for another reason: The party took place just one month after many friends and acquaintances lost their wealth in the Wall Street Stock Market Crash of October 20, 1929.

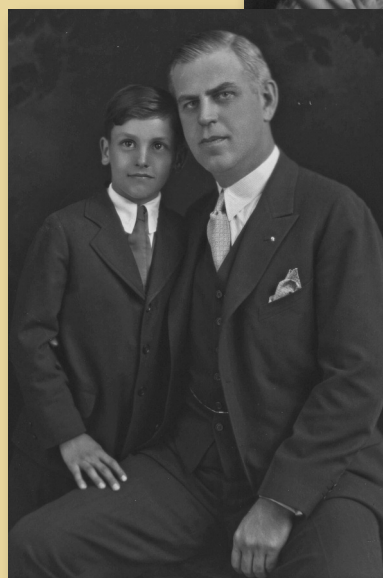
After the guests checked in at the gate lodge on Adams Road and followed the one-mile private drive past the deer park and farm buildings, Meadow Brook Hall offered a warm and welcoming beacon. Yellow and bronze chrysanthemums and Pernet roses from the estate greenhouse cov-

ered the tables and Frank Wrigley, organist of First Presbyterian Church in Detroit, played the massive Aeolian organ.

A diary entry from guest Mark C. Stevens, who attended with John Lord Booth, tells how the snow and the uninvited guests affected the party. After leaving their offices in the financial district of Detroit at 5 p.m., they briefly stopped at a soiree attended by Prince Alexander and finally arrived in Rochester at 7:40 p.m. “It was a tremendous big, theatrical house, and the guests represented many cliques of society... Although we had bona fide invitations, we had arrived so late that for gustatory purposes we were among the (uncatered) guests.”

They were among those who sought sustenance by dissecting the enormous decorative fruit centerpieces in the dining room. Henry S. Booth (whose parents founded Cranbrook) remembered that even the fruit displays matched the grandeur of the house: “Those grapes were bigger than quarters and must have cost five or ten times that but I figured the centerpiece wouldn’t be worth anything the next day so I started nibbling.”

It wasn’t just the guests who were imaginative in satisfying their hunger. Rochester butcher Hardy Korff saved the evening by heading to his store to gather all the food he could, allowing for a late-night feast of scrambled eggs, sausages and sandwiches. His wife, Ruth Korff, later recalled, “We had to clean out the whole store – bread and everything – to feed those people.”



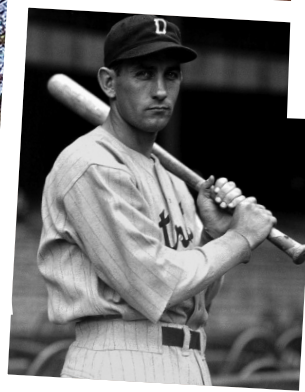
Society portraits of Dan Dodge with Alfred Wilson, and Frances Dodge with Matilda Wilson, taken in their Housewarming attire, 1929. Excerpt below: Newspaper mention of the party. Detroit News, November 17, 1929.

The attention Meadow Brook’s Housewarming party received was a fitting testament to the hard work of the hundreds of craftsmen who had built and decorated the new home,

and a symbol of the millions who would visit it for parties, tours and events over the next 90 years. The calmness with which Matilda and Al-

Invitations have been received by a large number of Detroit and Rochester friends to the housewarming on Wednesday next in the beautiful new home of the Alfred Gaston Wilsons, Meadowbrook Hall, on Dodge road. A reception will be given from 4 to 8 o'clock, and later dancing and cards will entertain the many house guests invited by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson for this occasion.

navigated the event, with its party crashers, empty food platters and icy roads, foretold their handling of the tragedies, triumphs and changes they would see during their lives on the estate – before launching Meadow Brook Hall on its next big adventure: serving as the centerpiece of the future Oakland University. **MB**



Alfred and Matilda Wilson; Charlie Gebringer; Frank Sinatra; Matilda and Richard Wilson and Frances Dodge;

1929

A Legacy Like No Other

Meadow Brook Hall has lived a full “life” over its 90 years

BY KIM ZELINSKI

If the walls at Meadow Brook

Hall could talk, they'd tell the stories of grand parties, debutante balls, weddings and holidays celebrated. They would recall the time they heard running footsteps and laughter coming from Matilda when son Dan chased her through the Great Hall with snowballs. They'd recount their excitement of hearing the Big Band sound of Tommy Dorsey and his new vocalist, Frank Sinatra, belt tunes from the Ballroom. They'd gossip about the secrets that every house holds. And, they'd tell how for 37 years the Wilsons graciously enter-

tained thousands of guests from all over the world, fulfilling their dream of having a life-filled home.

Today, the walls would tell different stories. Stories that have made Meadow Brook Hall what it is today; a holiday tradition for 48 years, a center for community and educational programming, a unique venue for social and business events and a National Historic Landmark.

The memories of those activities have been captured in interviews, photographs, newspaper clippings and on the pages of the Wilsons' guest books. They are the tangible

reminders that help connect us to the rich social life of Meadow Brook Hall and the hospitable traditions that have endured these past 90 years.

Within the walls of Meadow Brook Hall, old memories reside and new ones are in the making. In the coming decades, no doubt the bustle of activity will continue to flourish... for the breath of a home is the living that takes place within it.

The following is a glimpse into some of the activities and a few of the thousands of people who have visited Meadow Brook Hall these past 90 years.



The Osmonds; Jimmy Carter; Martha Stewart; James Earl Jones.

2019



1929 Matilda and Alfred Wilson officially hoist the American flag over Meadow Brook Hall.

1929 The first group of guests to bless Meadow Brook Hall were the proud and talented architects, engineers, foremen and administrators from Smith, Hinchman & Grylls – the firm that designed and oversaw construction of Meadow Brook Hall.

1929 New York City art dealer Howard Young (uncle of Elizabeth Taylor) examines The Hall’s collections of paintings, some of which he helped the Wilsons acquire. His inscription in the guest book reads, “A delightful home which I know will be a happy one.”

Official Blessings



Lead architect William Kapp from Smith, Hinchman & Grylls.



Alfred, Matilda, Frances and Danny welcome the arrival of 18-month-old Richard Wilson (left) in **1930** and 3-month-old Barbara Wilson (right) in **1931**. Newborn Judy Johnson, daughter of Frances Dodge Johnson, made her “first visit to grandmother’s” in **1941**.

The “very first dinner” at The Hall in **1929** was a small gathering of 12 family members and well-known organist, Frank Wrigley, who performed the first Aeolian pipe organ recital.

In **1929** Meadow Brook Hall’s Housewarming party, the much anticipated society event of the year, was attended by 850 guests – double the number invited.

Sub-debutante Frances Dodge hosts her first formal occasion, a Christmas Dance, for about 200 guests in **1930**. Danny Dodge, in **1938** at age 21, held his first dinner party, which included Detroit Tigers second baseman Charlie Gehringer.



WRITTEN IN HONOR OF THE FIRST MEAL IN THE DINING ROOM OF MEADOW BROOK HALL

Alfred at door, request has made,
That I at once resume my trade,
At grinding out poetic grist,
If I can give the mill a twist.

I fear the wheels are old and rusty,
They look to me, quite worn and dusty,
But, I'll lift up the water gate,
If power is there, then bless my fate.

Merchants, carpenters, and plumbers,
Proved themselves a set of bummers,
T'was vain to try to set a date,
The task so very vast and great.

"The day is here, we long have sought,
And mourned, because we found it not,"
When this and that, an hundred things,
Delay had burdened times swift wings.

But Ides September month the grand,
With day the ninth is well at hand,
And offers now to ope the gate,
In quiet way with little state.

For simply in the Dining Hall,
The family at the mistress call
Has gathered its first meal to take
Surrounded by this grandeur great.

Grandad and Mother, head of clan,
The governess, Frances and Dan,
Amelia, Mabel, Don and boys,
Alfred, Matilda, sum up our joys.

Our hearts are full of peace and joy,
Thanksgiving true without alloy
As with our dear ones now we meet,
In this their splendid Home retreat.

O'er all the scene, electric light
Flashes its beauty in the night,
May it but be, prophetic, gleam
Of happiness through all lifes dream.

To all who dwell within this Hall,
To all with them in friendships thrall,
May Meadow Brook through years untold
God's richest blessings yet unfold.

FATHER.

September 9th, 1929.

Firsts

Bows to Society

Alfred and Matilda introduced three family members to Detroit society: daughters Frances Dodge in **1933** and Barbara Wilson in **1953**, and granddaughter, Judy Johnson, in **1960**. The debutante balls were ceremonial celebrations replete with gorgeous gowns, luncheons and evening dinner dances.



Barbara Wilson.

Above: Frances Dodge; middle: Judy Johnson with half-sister and half-brother Rikki and John Van Lennep.



“The greatest day in all history of Meadowbrook [sic] Hall” was written in the Meadow Brook Hall guest book in reference to Dan’s engagement to Annie Laurine McDonald (*above left*) and Frances’ engagement to Jimmy Johnson (*far right*). Both would marry at Meadow Brook Hall in **1938**. Barbara Wilson (*above*) would follow in **1953**, marrying Thomas Eccles.

Three Weddings

Swinging into Action



In addition to Swing music, Jimmy Johnson also enjoyed golf. In **1941**, Jimmy and Frances entertained golfers Ben Hogan (*above left*), Byron Nelson (*above right*), Jimmy Demaret, Lawson Little and Ed Dudley at Meadow Brook Hall and hosted a picnic lunch at the Dodge Clubhouse on the Meadow Brook Farms property. The group was involved in a Ryder Cup tune-up challenge at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills.

On her 25th birthday, Frances Dodge celebrated her \$10 million trust fund inheritance from her father John’s estate with a surprise Swing dance party arranged by Matilda and Frances’ husband, Jimmy Johnson. The **1939** event featured Tommy Dorsey, his 22-piece band and a newcomer vocalist, Frank Sinatra.



Frank Sinatra



1958 Not all of the Wilsons' entertaining was of a social nature. In 1958, the Meadow Brook Seminars on Higher Learning were held at The Hall to set the academic direction of the new MSU-Oakland branch campus.



1960 Dinner dances for incoming freshmen, faculty dinners and alumni reunions were some of the affairs the Wilsons hosted for the Oakland University community. The oldest tradition, the Meadow Brook Ball, continues today to be one of the most popular student events on campus.

Planting New Roots



Matilda Wilson was active in a variety of civic and charitable organizations, hosting numerous events ranging from a "Musical and Afternoon Tea" for 63 guests to an International Tea for 1,000 members of the Women's National Farm and Garden Association in **1966**.

Last Times

In **1963**, Matilda Wilson celebrated her 80th Birthday with some 90 guests, including children Frances, Richard and Barbara, her grandchildren, and friends.





The first Holiday Walk event opened for just two days in December **1971** and experienced waiting lines that stretched down the length of the entry drive. In 2018, the 48-year-old tradition placed third nationally in *USA Today's* "Best Holiday Historic Home Tour" contest.



Named in honor of Detroit Tiger greats Charlie Gehringer and Al Kaline, the

Gehringer-Kaline Meadow Brook Golf Classic formed in **1977** as a fundraiser for the preservation of Meadow Brook Hall. Co-chair Charlie Gehringer was very fond of The Hall, having said, "I really think of it as my home away from home, and have for years. I love Meadow Brook. It's truly superb."

The classic automobile show – the Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance – was first presented on the grounds of The Hall in **1979** and was soon considered one of the largest and most prestigious collector car shows in the country. In 2011, the show moved to Inn at St. John's in Plymouth, Michigan.



The Classics are Born

All the World's a Stage



Since **1971**, Meadow Brook Hall and various Oakland University departments have hosted a myriad of celebrity guests, including actors, musicians, politicians, activists and fashion designers. The long list of names includes Kitty Carlisle Hart, The Osmond Brothers, Victor Borge, Lew Ayres, President Jimmy Carter, William F. Buckley, Leonard Nimoy (*left*), Phil Donahue, Bill Blass, Sidney Pollack, Barbara Mandrell, Mary Lou Retton, Fuzzy Zoeller, Martha Stewart,



Robert Kennedy Jr., James Earl Jones, Margaret Mead, Elie Wiesel, Lisa Ling and Henry Winkler (*right*).





Tiger Woods

During Ryder Cup week of **2004**, PGA legend Tiger Woods arrived by helicopter for a brief stop at Meadow Brook Hall before heading up to the Oakland University golf course driving range for a Buick-sponsored golf clinic.



Eminem

Since its first wedding in **1980**, The Hall has become metro Detroit's premier wedding venue, receiving *The Knot's* "Best of Weddings" award many times. One of the most high-profile weddings at Meadow Brook Hall drew paparazzi on the grounds (and in the air) when rapper Eminem (Marshawn Mathers) remarried his ex-wife, Kimberly Anne Scott, in **2006**.

A Tiger in the House

Wedding Dreams

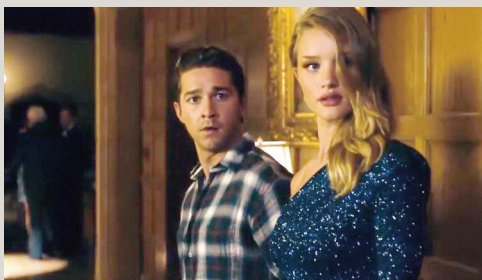
The Hall goes Hollywood

In **2008**, when Michigan offered a tax incentive to boost workforce and infrastructure development in the state, Meadow Brook Hall

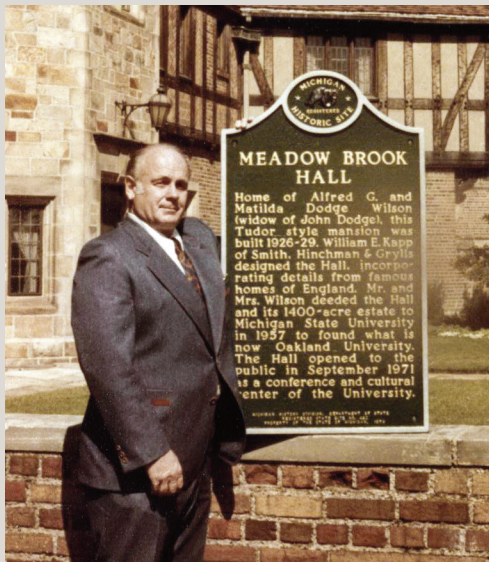


became a unique location for Hollywood films. The Hall was transformed into a French prep school for *Youth in Revolt* starring Michael Cera; an auto executive's home for the TV pilot *The Prince of Motor City* (left) starring Andie McDowell; a men's club for the movie *Highland Park* starring Danny Glover;

a music video backdrop for Miley Cyrus; and the home of Patrick Dempsey's character in the third *Transformers* sequel, also starring Shia LaBeouf (right).



The most recent production occurred in **2018** when PBS filmed three episodes of its popular *Antiques Roadshow* series at The Hall. The show was viewed by some 5 million people each of the three weeks the episodes aired in January 2019.



In **1979**, 123.5 acres and 15 structures on the original Meadow Brook Farms property were officially placed in the National Register of Historic Places. *Above:* Richard Wilson with the official plaque, now at the front door.



In June of **2014**, Meadow Brook Hall celebrated the 100-year anniversary of Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company during the Dodge Days community event. The event, which attracted nearly 2,000 visitors, including 30 Dodge family descendants. *Above:* John VanLennep and wife Julie; Elizabeth Caldwell and mother Rikki. John and Rikki are Frances Dodge’s children.

Meadow Brook Milestones



Meadow Brook Hall was named to Trip Advisor’s Hall of Fame in **2018** for receiving a certificate of excellence for the previous four years. The Hall is ranked #1 in Trip Advisor’s “things to do” in Rochester, Michigan list.



2012 Thousands of visitors participated in the “Hug the Hall” event in 2012 to celebrate Meadow Brook Hall’s designation as a National Historic Landmark – the highest recognition for historic properties in the United States.



Pipe Dreams

BY KIM ZELINSKI

The long awaited performance of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson's Opus debuted before an intimate gathering of 12 family members on September 9, 1929. The occasion was the "very first dinner" held at Meadow Brook Hall and the highlight of the evening was a symphonic recital performed by organist Frank Wrigley on one of the most treasured objects in the new home, the Aeolian Opus organ, number 1444.

Although its prominent placement in the alcove between the Drawing Room and Library was well thought out when Matilda and Alfred Wilson were planning Meadow Brook Hall in 1926-27, the fate of the pipe organ just a few years earlier was not as promising. Costing nearly \$60,000, the organ was originally purchased by John Dodge in 1919 for the home he and his wife, Matilda, were building in Grosse Pointe. However, because of John's untimely death in 1920, Matilda stopped construction on the unfinished home and consequently put the organ into storage.

Six year later, the organ was moved into a new storage facility on the Meadow Brook Farms property. Integrating the organ into the design of Meadow Brook Hall was the responsibility of Hall architect William Kapp of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls and Frank Taft, general manager of the Aeolian Pipe-Organ Company. Installing its multifaceted system of linked parts cost the Wilsons just over \$7,000 – a princely sum in the late '20s.

From the start, the Aeolian company catered to an exclusive clientele and became known as the preeminent residential organ builder between 1894 and 1930. Their pipe organs were considered one the great status symbols of the American country house, highly expensive and excessively complex to install. Their patrons formed an impressive subset of Who's Who in America, including names such as Rockefeller, Vander-



bilt, Carnegie, DuPont, Schwab and Woolworth. Local patrons included Ford, Scripps, Olds and Dodge. John's brother Horace and wife, Anna, installed Aeolians in both their Rose Terrace homes and a third, the largest of its type, in their yacht, the *Delphine*.

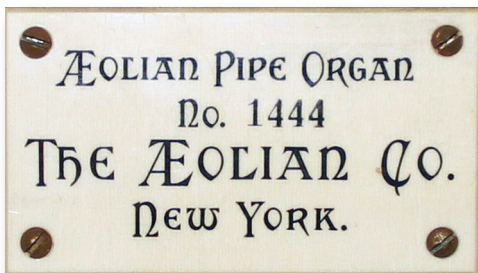
Meadow Brook's organ, Opus, number 1444, was one of the finest produced by Aeolian and today ranks as the country's second largest organ installed in a residential setting. It also has an exclusive feature, the Solo Flute stop, which no other organ in the world can boast.

The organ's console, encased in an ornate wood cabinet, has three manuals (keyboards) that are surrounded by a semicircle arrangement of 77 stop tabs and at the base of the organ, a pedal board (a keyboard played with the feet). The organ's inner-workings, including some 4,500 pipes, bellows, electrical switches,



Did you know?

The expression "to pull out all the stops" was born in organ terminology, and is believed to have been first associated with Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach was famous in his time not just as a great organist, but also as a great assessor of organs. Whenever he tried out a new organ, he started by playing with all the stops pulled out, meaning every rank of pipes on-line at once. In this way, he could hear what kind of "lungs" an instrument had.



Top: Aeolian player roll, featuring the Zampa Overture, composer Ferdinand Herold, c. 1930 arrangement. Above right: classic sheet music.

Above: the organ's nameplate. Opposite page: a small sample of Meadow Brook Hall's Aeolian player roll collection.

thousands of feet of wiring and a blower motor, are concealed in a large room on The Hall's lower level. The room houses the organ Swell, Solo and Great/Choir chambers, each resembling a skyline of pipes crafted from wood and alloys of zinc, tin and lead ranging in height from one-half inch to 18 feet. A fourth chamber, the Antiphonal, and a second blower motor are located on the fourth floor.

With the push of a button, the blower motor supplies the air that enables the pipes to sound. At the console, the organist selects from a variation of stops and pulls to match the chosen musical arrangement. Whether a flute or oboe in solo, the celestial sound of harps and chimes, the snappy tone of trumpets or chorus of human voices, the effects can remind listeners of the grand tone of

an English cathedral or a spectacular crescendo in a Beethoven sonata.

The organ's console is also equipped with a built-in Aeolian roll player; and a second, a Duo-Art roll player, was stored in a nearby cabinet. The combination of the two permitted several rolls to be played automatically in succession. This technology led to the popularity of the Aeolian organ in general, promoting the fanciful concept that one could hear the full orchestral sounds of a great live performance whenever one wanted it.

Throughout the years, the Wilsons engaged Frank Wrigley, a highly talented organist associated with the First Presbyterian Church in Detroit, to play on special occasions. Judy Johnson, Matilda and John's granddaughter, has fond memories of playing "Chopsticks" on the organ. And,

though she didn't know many songs, Matilda herself enjoyed simply hearing it played. More often, the family would select from the vast collection of some 700 player rolls to hear a range of music, including classical renditions of Bach, Mozart or Chopin or contemporary tunes such as "Happy Days are Here Again" or "Doodle Doo Doo."

Today, at 100 years old, the Aeolian continues to entertain thousands of visitors each year including daily performances from local organists during The Hall's annual Holiday Walk and during public touring hours in June, July and August (check our website, meadowbrookhall.org, for dates and times).

The Aeolian organ is a remarkable example of the artistic and mechanical ingenuity that is so prevalent throughout Meadow Brook Hall. No other musical instrument quite compares to its majesty or the ability to carry listeners out of everyday life into dream-like moments... a trait recognized by none other than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who famously stated, "In my eyes and ears... the king of instruments."



Adopt a Pipe!

At 100 years old, Meadow Brook Hall's Aeolian organ is in good condition, however, the effects of time have deteriorated many of its components, lessening its full potential. To recapture its original voice, a full restoration including cleaning pipes and contacts, repairing wiring and replacing worn out leather, is needed.

For the past 10 years, Rick Helderop (*above*), owner of Covenant Organs, LLC, has cared for The Hall's organ, performing minor repairs and getting it in tune for the holiday season. "The challenge is getting to its inner-workings to perform the work" Helderop says. "Maneuvering down steep stairs and squeezing through a maze of pipe chambers is part of the charm, or hazards of the trade. Fortunately, I have a real passion for what I do, and working on one of the finest organs in the country is a remarkable privilege."

Assisting Helderop is Meadow Brook Hall volunteer Pete Townsend, an amateur organist and member of the America Guild of Organists, Detroit Chapter. Townsend not only performs throughout the year, he also donates annually to the Meadow Brook Hall organ maintenance fund.

If you would like to learn more about supporting the care of The Hall's Aeolian organ by adopting a pipe or pipes, please contact Madelyn Rzakowski at 248-364-6253. **MB**

The Right to Vote

This year, the nation celebrates 100 years since American women received the right to vote. The National Suffrage Amendment, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, was passed by Congress on June 5, 1919. Michigan was the second state to ratify the amendment on June 10, 1919.



Delphine Ashbaugh led Michigan's first women's delegation of voters in 1919, Detroit Free Press, Feb. 13, 1919.

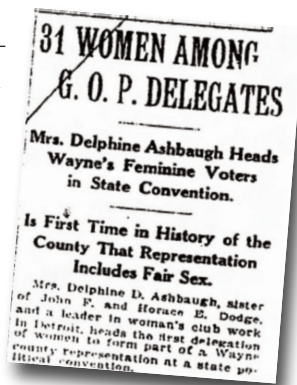
The battle for women's suffrage in Michigan had ended a year before the rest of the country, with the help of strong supporters like Delphine D. Ashbaugh, elder sister of John and Horace Dodge. Delphine was a life member of the Michigan Equal Suffrage Association and, in 1915, spoke to a group of senators in Washington, D.C. at a hearing of the Congressional Union, an organization begun by women in 1913 to pursue equal suffrage. In 1918, Michigan's voters approved a state constitutional amendment extending suffrage to Michigan women.

In February 1919, 31 Michigan women joined the Republican State Convention to represent female voters for the first time ever, with Delphine as the leader of this delegation.

Though there are no records of Matilda Dodge joining the fight for suffrage, she was no doubt

watching, if not contributing to, her sister-in-law's fight while they lived in the same house, and was certainly deeply influenced by Delphine's interests in charity and politics. In 1925, Matilda became chairman of the finance committee of the Wayne County League of Women Voters and in 1928, she was one of few female delegates to the national Republican convention. Matilda's daughter, Barbara Wilson, recalled her mother as a proponent of the public taking part in politics, someone who fondly remembered how she first voted at 36 years of age.

Ten years after the 19th Amendment was passed, construction of Meadow Brook Hall was completed and a full staff was hired to run the 110-room home. On election days, Matilda and Alfred Wilson guaranteed every staff member – male and female – time off and a chauffeured ride to the voting booth. **MB**



Matilda Dodge Wilson was one of few female delegates to the national Republican convention in 1928.

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Brace(let) Yourself!

We are excited to announce the newest product NOW available in the Meadow Brook Hall Museum Store! Our new Cabochon bracelets are made in the USA and are expandable, tarnish resistant and feature a custom glass convex charm. These highly polished glass bracelets are in the style of the popular “Alex and Ani” brand and make a fashionable addition to any jewelry collection. Wear it alone or stacked

with other bracelets.

We have two charms available – show off your Meadow Brook pride with our stylish “MB” logo, or choose the bright and beautiful tulip charm featuring a detail from the Louis C. Tiffany stained glass floor lamp from our collection...or both!

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Floor lamp with favrile glass shade in yellow tulip design, Tiffany Studios, c. 1915.



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