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Meadow Brook

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time**



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Friends, Guilders, Cornerstone Society members, foundations, and corporate and Adopt-an-Artifact donors build a strong case of support for the Meadow Brook Estate.

On the Cover:

Renaissance Revival gilt and patinated bronze and ivory table clock in Matilda Wilson's Morning Room, made by Edward F. Caldwell & Co., New York, c.1890s. Caldwell was a premier designer and manufacturer of lighting fixtures, decorative objects and metalwork in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. *Photo by John Sobczak.*

Meadow Brook

MAGAZINE

Editor & Publisher
Geoffrey C. Upward

Associate Editor
Kimberly Zelinski

Art Direction
Lynn Metzker
Graphic Design

Photography
Rick Smith
John Sobczak

Contributing Writers
Shannon O'Berski
Madelyn Rzadkowolski

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

are located at Meadow Brook Hall
350 Estate Drive
Rochester, MI 48309-4401

HOW TO REACH US

Email: zelinski@oakland.edu
Phone: 248-364-6204
Fax: 248-364-6201

ADDRESS CHANGES

Email: stobersk@oakland.edu
Mail: Shannon O'Berski
Meadow Brook Hall
350 Estate Drive
Rochester, MI 48309-4401

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 university serves as an internationally renowned historic house museum and cultural center.

Editor's Column

Riding on the Edge

Spirit. She was born into it and with it. Frances Matilda Dodge, the first child of John and Matilda Dodge, was destined for greatness.

Two weeks before she was born, her father and uncle launched their automobile company, Dodge Brothers Motor Car Company, which would become a major manufacturing and financial success . . . and an iconic American brand. And her mother would become one of America's leading women in business and civic affairs . . . and the founder, with her second husband, Alfred Wilson, of an estate that would become a National Historic Landmark and a university that would impact tens of thousands of young lives.



1936 was one of many good years for Frances Dodge and Dodge Stables.

Big shoes to fill, hard acts to follow. But Frances Dodge emerged from a life of privilege and pain and forged her own path to greatness, in riding boots no less, and became an iconic international figure in her own right.

As noted in *The Detroit News* in the 1960s, "Harness racing and show experts alike say that money alone could never have made her the horsewoman she is."

The story of her journey through the country's equine show rings and racetracks, which included establishing arguably the finest training and breeding facility in the country, Dodge Stables, has been carefully woven into a new publication from the Meadow Brook Press. Scheduled for release in June 2017, the tragic, yet triumphant story of a brave and compassionate woman is artfully told in *Riding on the Edge: Frances Dodge and Dodge Stables*, by longtime MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE contributor Karel Bond Lucander.

The book will be sold through Meadow Brook's Museum Store and online, for a limited-time offer of a 10% discount for the public and a 20% discount for Meadow Brook members (see back cover for details).

Riding on the Edge was made possible by a generous contribution from Frances Dodge Van Lennep's son, John Van Lennep, who inherited his mother's love of horses, his grandfather's mechanical talents and his grandmother's philanthropic spirit.

Spirit. Talent. Accomplishment. Philanthropy. Fortunately, the pursuit of Meadow Brook's mission is greatly enhanced by these attributes, shared historically by Dodge and Wilson family members and now by our extended family of supporters whose names you will find beginning on page 28 of this issue.

Save the date! 9 | 28 | 2017

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



MEADOW BROOK'S
gourmet
WILD GAME
DINNER



An unexpected gift

Last November, Meadow Brook Hall received an exciting gift from an anonymous donor. Though smaller than a quarter, the artifact tells the story of the relationship between John Dodge and Henry Ford.

Once mass production of the automobile began (in Detroit in 1901), factories became exponentially larger, with more employees and more need to restrict access to only those who had been approved. Each employee was given a factory badge which allowed them to be easily identified.

John Dodge – who with his brother supplied parts to Ford Motor Company from 1903 to 1914 – used the pictured brass badge, which was identical to the one Henry Ford used. The style of the Ford logo on the back dates this badge to 1912 or 1913; it shows that as vice president, John Dodge had unrestricted access to the whole of the Highland Park Plant. In the summer of 1913, the Dodge brothers informed Ford they would not renew their parts contract. The existence of this badge is indicative of the role the Dodges played in the success of Ford Motor Company.



Free Fridays



Curatorial intern Samantha Lawrence explains book conservation to visitors.

A key part of Meadow Brook Hall's mission is education, and the Adopt-an-Artifact program has provided a perfect opportunity to teach guests about how to preserve objects that have been negatively impacted by time, sun damage or touching. "Free Fridays" (a free public touring program sponsored by the Oakland University Credit Union in 2017)

provided an outlet for

Meadow Brook Hall's curator and area conservators to discuss preservation in the library. Two drop-in sessions for visitors on March 31 and April 28 addressed the work, research and decision making on the textile and book conservation in the room.

Free Fridays tours take place the last Friday of each month, January through October (November's tour will take place on November 17). The special tour offering is different every month; a list can be found in the calendar on the next page. The September 29 tour is already sold out.

A new Knole

Dubbed "the world's finest doll house" by the nation's press when it was built in 1926, Frances Dodge's 3/4-scale Knole Cottage playhouse has seen better days. But that is changing, thanks to a

generous private gift from long-time supporters of the Meadow Brook Estate. Work commenced in April and includes, on the exterior, restoration of timbers, painting



windows, and restoring doors and walkways. Interior work includes refinishing and restoring floors, walls and door and window frames; repairing light fixtures and door hardware; and conserving furnishings. Watch for the complete story in the fall issue of MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE.

You Won't Want to Miss...

NEW SUMMER TOUR SCHEDULE MAY 30-SEPTEMBER 3

Reservations are not required for any of the summer tours.

House Tour

Tour the family's living quarters on the first three floors of The Hall. **Tours are offered 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 on this special tour, which includes staff wings, bathrooms, closets and playrooms. **Tours are offered daily at 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.**

Estate Walking Tour

Walk the grounds and learn the history of the estate, from the farm to the landscape and construction of Meadow Brook Hall. Entrance into the playhouses and the Dodge Brothers exhibit is included. **Tours are offered daily at 2 p.m.**

NEW! FREE FRIDAYS

Join us for Free Fridays, sponsored by Oakland University Credit Union. The tours will take place the last Friday of each month through October (November's tour will take place on November 17).

All Free Fridays tours are from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. (last tour admittance is at 2:30 p.m.) with the exception of September 29. Reservations are not required unless indicated next to the tour date.

May 26: Self-guided House tour.

June 30: Self-guided tour of Knole Cottage and Danny's Cabin with outdoor family games.

July 28: Self-guided tour of the Dodge Brothers exhibit with vintage car rides on a first-come, first-served basis.

August 25: Self-guided garden scavenger hunt tour with ice cream treats.

September 29: Behind-the-Scene tours at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. (Reservations required; SOLD OUT)

October 27: Self-guided House tour with live organ music and Q&A with guest organists following the tour.

November 17: Behind-the-Scenes Holiday Walk tour; learn what it takes to decorate an 88,000-square-foot mansion for the holidays.

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

\$30 PER PERSON

As the summer heats up, cool off with Metro Detroit's favorite musicians at the National Historic Landmark. Ticket price includes light hors d'oeuvres and main floor tour of The Hall.

July 13: George "Sax" Benson (Jazz)

July 27: Shahida Nurullah (Jazz)

August 10: Ben Sharkey (Jazz)

August 24: Dave Bennett (Swing)

MEADOW BROOK'S ANNUAL GOURMET WILD GAME DINNER & AUCTION

Presented by Northern Trust

SEPTEMBER 28, 6-10 P.M.

\$125 PER PERSON

OR \$1,000 PER TABLE OF 10

Featuring a live and silent auction, raffle, hors d'oeuvre reception and seated gourmet wild or mild meal – all to benefit the preservation of Meadow Brook Hall.

DINNER AND A MOVIE OCTOBER 5, 12 & 19

7-10 P.M.

\$45 PER PERSON, CASH BAR

Meadow Brook presents Dinner and a Movie. Guests will enjoy a casual three-course dinner while watching classics on the big screen in the ballroom. *Movies are to be determined.*

MYSTERY DINNER OCTOBER 27

7-10 P.M.

\$85 PER PERSON

Join us for an engaging evening of murder, mystery and mayhem at Meadow Brook. The fun event includes a three-course meal, cocktails and a chance to solve the mystery.

Reservations are required for all Meadow Brook Hall special events.

Please call (248) 364-6252 or visit meadowbrookhall.org for more information.

All special event proceeds support the preservation and interpretation of The Hall.



Growing Stronger

GARDEN CLUB CELEBRATES 25 BLOOMING YEARS

In 1992, Meadow Brook Hall's Garden Club officially formed with one primary objective: to preserve and enhance the landscape that Matilda Dodge Wilson loved so much. For the past 25 years, the Club has not only achieved that goal, but has also become a vital part of The Hall's family.

Holding strong at 170 members, the Garden Club is a diverse group of women and men. Some are master gardeners interested in beautifying the property's 16 gardens, others are "muscle men" who mow nearly four acres of lawn and trim what seems like a mile of boxwood hedges each year. Some join as couples or as mother-and-daughter teams, and many join simply to learn. No matter the reason, their efforts account for why The Hall's landscape is admired in the region and beyond.

Each January the Garden Club begins planning details, just as Matilda Wilson did in her day (*see related article, page 12*). The long list of plant material, soil amendments, tools and supplies are ordered and ready for use on the first gardening work day in April. Each Tuesday, continuing through October, 50 to 60 members gather in the morning with

tools in tow to perform their labor of love in their assigned gardens.

Throughout the year, the Club meets regularly and presents a horticultural lecture series. They host a plant sale each May, a community open house in June and private garden tours for community organizations throughout the summer. The season wraps up in November with a holiday lunch.

The Garden Club donates nearly 7,500 hours each year in volunteer service, the equivalent of nearly four full-time employees. Additionally, the Club has raised more than \$250,000 over the last 25 years in direct support of the maintenance of the landscape, including the purchase of plant material, tools, supplies, and even large equipment such as riding mowers, tractors and utility vehicles.

"The Garden Club not only helps our gardens grow...members play a vital role in presenting the property at a level of beauty reflective of the stature of this National Historic Landmark," Meadow Brook's executive director Geoff Upward said. "We are deeply grateful for all they do to assist us in our mission

of educating and inspiring our visitors and guests. They do themselves proud."



Garden Clubbers Betty Lovelady (left) and Ruthann Bajorek.



"Muscle Men" Butch Harding (left) and Dane Lovelady.

It's no surprise that this energetic group has reached this anniversary milestone. Their unflagging green-thumbed, dirt- (and sometimes grease) under-your finger-nails work ethic is definitely worthy of the Meadow Brook name. **MB**

If you want to join the ranks

Club membership is open to all skill levels, and on-site training is available. The yearly membership fee is \$30 per person, or \$45 per couple. For more information, including a membership form, go to meadowbrookhall.org and click on "support."

New! Meadow Brook in Bloom

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF THE
MEADOW BROOK GARDEN CLUB

JUNE 25 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2017

Join us for a week-long series of community events and a special tour that celebrates all-things-floral at The Great Estate.

MEADOW BROOK IN BLOOM HOUSE & GARDEN TOUR

June 25-June 30* | Daily 11 a.m.-5 p.m. (last admittance at 4 p.m.)

*closes at 4 p.m. on June 30 only. *Reservations are not required.*

Admission: \$20 for Adults & Seniors, \$7 for Youth (ages 3-17; children 2 and under are free). FREE ADMITTANCE FOR MEADOW BROOK HALL MEMBERS. SENIOR ADMISSION IS \$17 ON TUESDAY, JUNE 26.

Guests will get a glimpse of the fascinating life of the Dodge-Wilson family from Frances Dodge's ice blue wedding dress to her fashion-statement debut, complete with black orchids. The story unfolds through elaborate florals, fashions and elegant tablescapes during this special self-guided tour of The Hall and gardens. Fresh flower arrangements will be provided by Emerald City Designs.

CHILDREN'S GARDEN SCAVENGER HUNT

June 27 | 1:00-3:00 p.m. (last admittance at 2:30 p.m.)

\$10* per child (ages 3-12; children 2 and under are free)

Kids will have the run of the estate while trying to find objects and messages hidden throughout the gardens and grounds. The afternoon also includes a seed-planting project. *Reservations are required. Please call (248) 364-6252 or visit meadowbrookhall.org for more information.*

**Meadow Brook in Bloom House Tour admission is included for children 3-12. Adults and youths 13 and over with a child participating in the Scavenger Hunt can purchase tour tickets for 50% off.*

GARDENING WORKSHOP

FEATURING NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED GARDEN EXPERT, MELINDA MYERS



June 29 | 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. | \$75 per person, includes lunch & a "Proven Winners" plant

Cultivate your gardening skills with three experts! The morning includes presentations by Proven Winners professionals John Gaydos, who will provide a sneak-peak of the new plants for 2018, and Stacy Hirvela, who will teach you how to enjoy abundant beautiful blooms, year after year in her talk: "Hydrangeas Demystified." The event headliner is award-winning horticulturist Melinda Myers, who will share advice on making your landscape a welcome retreat in: "Easy and Affordable Landscape Makeovers." Lunch and "Meadow Brook in Bloom" House Tour are included. *Reservations are required.*

Please call (248) 364-6252 or visit meadowbrookhall.org for more information.

"THE ART OF THE BLOOM" GARDEN GALA FUNDRAISER



FEATURING AWARD-WINNING
FLORAL DESIGNER,
HITOMI GILLIAM

June 28 | 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
\$125 per person
\$1,000 tables of 8

Treat yourself to a fabulous garden soiree that will inspire and entertain...Meadow Brook style!

The garden gala begins in the formal garden with a signature cocktail, music and premium raffle packages. Following the reception, guests will dine with wine in the opulent garden tent and enjoy a special program by world renowned floral designer Hitomi Gilliam, AIFD, who will present: 'Nouveau Fleur,' **A New Direction in Floral Design.**

Guests can also enjoy the "Meadow Brook in Bloom" floral exhibit and house tour and explore The Hall's 16 gardens.

In recognition of the Meadow Brook Garden Club's 25th anniversary, proceeds from the event will provide essential support for the maintenance and beautification of the gardens.

Reservations are required.

Please call (248) 364-6252 or visit meadowbrookhall.org for more information.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

By KIM ZELINSKI



TWENTY-FIVE FEET above the granite drive, poor Seth Thomas – his face a bit weathered, his arms motionless and the old ticker in need of an overhaul – is nonetheless at 88 years old, an imposing figure. “Seth,” the iconic tower clock over the front-door to Meadow Brook Hall, represents one of the many clocks that were a centerpiece of the Wilsons’ home.

Meadow Brook’s diverse assortment of clocks includes both ornately crafted pieces as well as utilitarian types purchased as household necessities. They were scattered throughout the house, at bedsides, on desks and mantels, in display cases and on staircases, and adorning the walls. Some were rare antiques crafted centuries ago, others collected as souvenirs or received as gifts. A few were ordered from catalogs and some were commissioned for specific purposes from skilled artists.

No matter how they looked or how they told time, The Hall’s numerous timepieces helped govern the flow of the day and kept the family and staff on schedule. One can only imagine the wondrous ticking, chiming, bonging, whirring and humming sounds that resonated through the rooms. And, for those who may have wanted to escape from their methodical racket, a quick detour to the Loggia Terrace would have revealed a primitive device mounted high on the Organ Tower – a sundial that quietly yet accurately cast its shadows to track of the passage of time (*see page 11*).

THE GRANDS...FATHER AND MOTHER

Best known for their swinging pendulums and hourly chimes, the grandfather clock (also called a long-case or tall-case clock) got its name in 1876 from the song “Grandfather’s Clock,” a poignant story about the intertwined lives of a clock and a man.

Meadow Brook Hall’s eight-foot-tall, Edwardian-style grandfather clock is finely crafted of cherry wood with inlaid details. Although the clock maker is unknown, the dial is signed



Opposite page: Clock tower, Meadow Brook entrance, Corrado Parducci and Seth Thomas, 1929. Above left: grandfather clock, Grand Stairs, Marcus & Co., New York, c. 1905. Right: grandmother clock, Knole Cottage, Junghans, German, c. 1920.

“Marcus & Co, New York,” which was a jewelry and clock retailer that sold fine goods to an elite clientele. The clock’s position on the Grand Stairs was selected so its Westminster chimes could be heard throughout the master part of the house.

The grandmother clock, perfectly sized for Frances Dodge’s ¾-scale

playhouse, Knole Cottage, is a smaller version of the grandfather clock at five feet, six inches tall. It is made of oak and decorated with barley twist columns at the side of the case. In the center of the dial is a star symbol with the letter “J,” the trademark of the German clock-making company, Junghans.



THE SHELF, MANTEL AND SKELETON CLOCKS

Designed for both decoration and as a means of keeping time, the “mantel” clock is a collective term that captures a variety of types; basically anything that doesn’t hang on the wall or sit on the floor. While a mantel clock is often a focal point of a room, only three of the 23 fireplace mantels at Meadow Brook Hall had clocks: Matilda’s Morning Room, Alfred’s Study/Den and the Servants’ Sitting Room, a curiosity since all the fireplace mantels were equipped with electrical outlets.

With an abundance of design choices, Matilda chose for her Morning Room a Renaissance Revival-styled table clock sold by E.F. Caldwell & Co., New York; and for Alfred Wilson’s Study, a green onyx electric clock styled in the smooth, streamlined design of the Art Deco period.

Placed on a side table in Matilda Wilson’s bedroom suite is a stylish Mid-century, 16-jewel skeleton clock made by Swiss clockmaker LeCoultre. It was engraved and presented to Matilda Wilson in 1959 by The Central Business District Association in recognition of her outstanding “Volunteer of the Year” award.

Above, left to right: mantel clock, Alfred Wilson Study, Whitehall Hammond, c. 1930; table clock, Matilda Wilson Bedroom, LeCoultre, Swiss, c. 1959; mantel clock, Matilda Wilson Morning Room, E.F. Caldwell & Co., New York, c. 1890s.

ON THE WALL

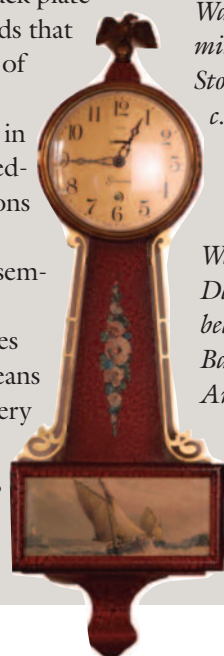
Valued for their visibility, wall clocks are among the oldest types of clocks designed for the home. Owning one, especially during the first few centuries of production, was indicative of social standing.

The oldest and most decorative clock at Meadow Brook Hall is the Dutch wall clock located at the mid-stairs – a highly visible location where it could be viewed daily. A Friesland Stoelklok, it was crafted sometime between 1725 and 1875 and is boldly decorated with gilded leaden ornaments which conceal the bell. The wooden back plate shows sawn-cut painted mermaids that during the period were symbols of time.

Located above the headboard in Daniel Dodge’s bedroom is a Federal-style, nautical themed Sessions eight-day banjo style wall clock. Named because its silhouette resembles the musical instrument, the highly popular clock style features eight-day movements, which means they only had to be rewound every eight days. Its casement features a craquelure black-on-red finish, a sailboat seafaring scene (Nantucket) and a brass eagle crown.



Wall clock, mid-stairs, Friesland Stoelkoks, Dutch, c. 1725-1875.



Wall clock, Daniel Dodge bedroom, Sessions Banjo Clock, American, c. 1930.

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE

Meadow Brook Hall boasted an electric clock system. Primarily installed in plants and large office buildings such as Detroit's Buhl Building, where Matilda Wilson's office was located, they were also common in large estate homes in service areas.

Matilda Wilson chose the Stromberg Electric Company (same as in the Buhl Building) to furnish the system's primary components. The network of clocks included a Switchboard Clock, installed on the house's main electrical panel, which provided electrical current to the Master Clock (the pendulum clock located on the wall of the mid-stairs landing). The Master then provided timing signals to the 24 secondary clocks, mounted above the doors in most of the rooms throughout the service wing. In case of a power failure, a series of backup batteries provided temporary service.



Master clock (mid-stairs) and secondary clock, Stromberg Electric Company, c. 1928.

NOVELTIES AND CONVERSATION PIECES

Tucked away in display cases are several small and unique clocks that the Dodges and Wilsons most likely collected while traveling or received as gifts.



They were great conversation pieces and triumphs of imagination and craftsmanship.

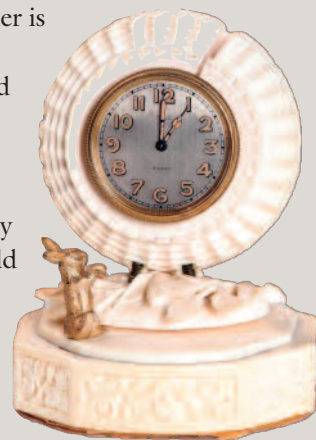
Travel clocks were often associated with luxury travel, offering convenience and prestige. Most were collapsible or came with their own leather case for storage. The tiniest of all the Meadow Brook Hall clocks is an enamel and silver,

miniature 2 1/4" travel clock that was marketed

by Tiffany & Company, New York. Another is believed to have been a gift from John Dodge, a sterling silver travel clock, hallmarked by Tiffany and Company that folds into its 14k gold case and is engraved with the initials "MRD."

In the category of conversation pieces, two such clocks in the collection fit the bill: a small elaborately carved ivory clock, embellished with a little gold rabbit made by a New York City retailer;

and the very rare annular dial clock whose tiny cherub positioned inside a boat rotates around a mirror face to tell the time.



Clockwise from upper left: travel clock, display case, Morning Room, Tiffany & Co., New York, c. 1920; rabbit novelty clock, Nicholas Haydon, New York, c. 1925; cherub novelty clock, Aldred Hof, Geneva, c. 1930.

TOWER CLOCK

Around since the Middle Ages, tower clocks were symbols of stability and generally placed in towers or turrets for maximum audibility and visibility. Meadow Brook Hall's tower clock located on the entrance tower pediment (see page 8), combined the workmanship of Corrado Parducci and the Seth Thomas Clock Company. Parducci was commissioned to carve the face section (as well as all of the other stone carvings on the tower) and the face of the sundial on the Organ Tower at the back side of the house (right). The tower clock's stone panel is a diamond shaped face surrounded by symbolic carvings of day and night. The top two corners are the sun and moon and the bottom two corners depict a rooster and owl.

The mechanical components of the tower clock, which was also tied into the Stromberg clock system, was manufactured by Seth Thomas, one of the largest clock manufacturers in America. **MB**



Sundial, south façade Organ Tower, Corrado Parducci, 1929.

The Queens of Meadow Brook

The royal partnership of Matilda Dodge Wilson and her beloved roses

By KIM ZELINSKI



Considered to be weak performers, Will Rogers, Bob Hope, Arlene Francis, Kate Smith, President Hoover and Madame Curie were names Matilda Wilson instructed to be removed from her elite list of otherwise high achievers. Denoted with a red check, the names were neither actors, musicians, politicians nor a Nobel Prize recipient, but rather an inventory of failing roses that the lady of Meadow Brook directed to be discarded from her beloved Rose Garden.

Although Spring was months away, Matilda forwarded the January 1960 memo to the estate's head gardener, Herman Siewert. It was only one of many details Matilda pored over as she prepared for the upcoming growing season. In addition to numerous catalog orders for bulbs and seeds, she sent an order for 1,200 hybrid roses, which included 80 different varieties, to Jackson and Perkins Co. to replenish her rose beds at Meadow Brook Hall, the Dodge Clubhouse and Sunset Terrace. At an average cost of \$2.50 per plant, the invoice for roses that year alone approached \$3,000.

Matilda Wilson's interest in gardening began some 50 years earlier during her first marriage when the responsibility of managing the newlyweds' Meadow Brook Farms household also included the oversight of the formal landscape and the operation of the Meadow Brook Farms Greenhouse. With this responsibility, Matilda needed to quickly learn the fundamentals of horticulture. For her, like a majority of the women in her day, horticultural education came from the world around them – from traveling, from books and magazines, from joining garden clubs and from visiting each other's gardens.

Although gardens of various shapes, sizes and styles were installed on the Meadow Brook



Matilda Wilson, c.1948. Catalog pages from the Meadow Brook collection can be seen below and on following pages.

Farms estate, what brought Matilda the most joy... and occasional frustration... were her roses, universally recognized as the queen of flowers.

The first ornamental garden Matilda installed on the property was located next to the Dodge Clubhouse just after its construction in 1915. The design evolved over the years, transitioning

from a modest flower garden of novice skill to a refined formality that only an experienced gardener could execute.

The traditional style of geometric beds expanding out from a center focal point was a nod to the gardens of the Victorian Age. It incorporated all the favored roses, perennials and annuals of the time. Bordering each bed were 1,000 boxberry shrubs Matilda had transplanted in 1923. The garden also included climbing roses that covered her arbors and a wild rose species that rambed along the wrought iron fence.

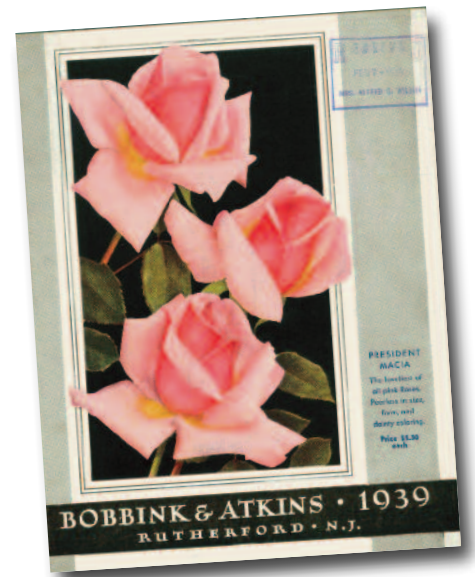
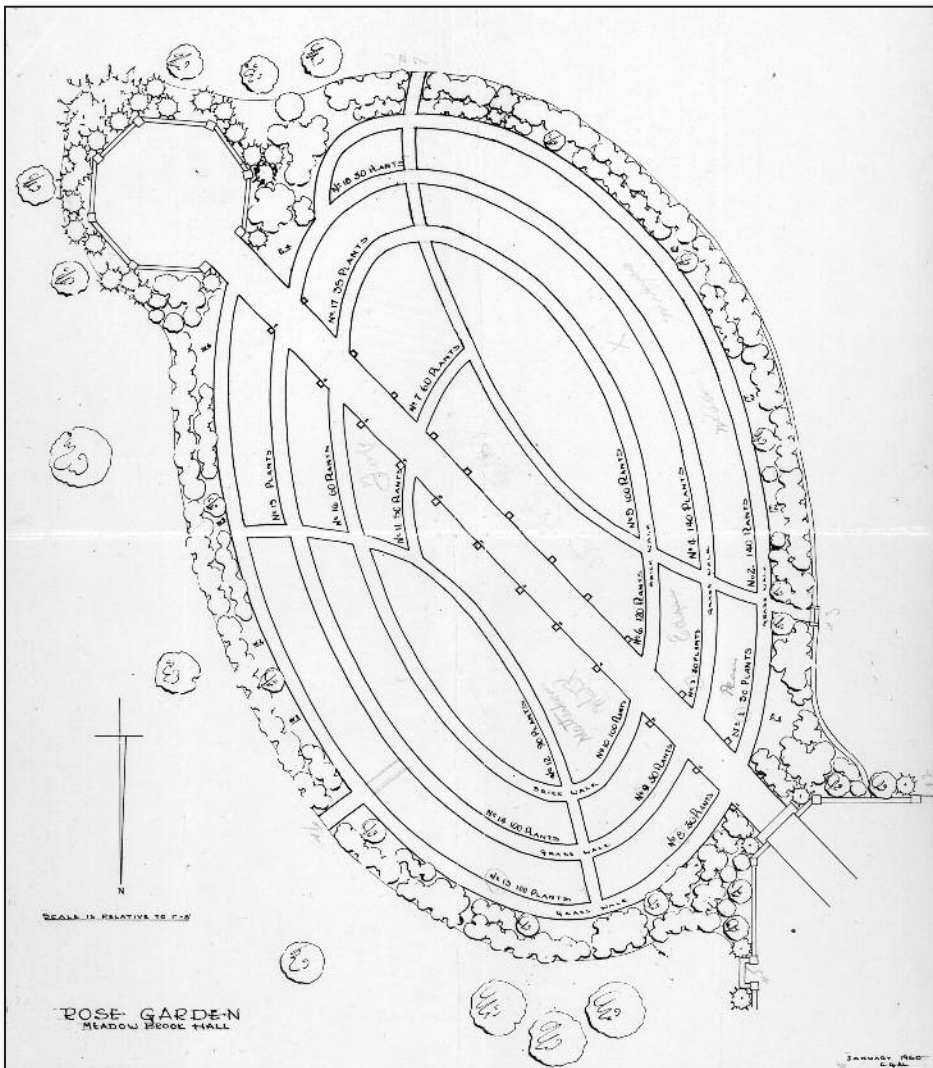
With a decade of gardening experience under her belt and a great belief in her own abilities, Matilda was prepared to pursue a grand landscape scheme for the new residence she was building with her second husband, Alfred Wilson. In 1928, as construction on Meadow Brook Hall was nearing completion, she charged Arthur Davidson, an English landscape designer, with the development of a master plan. She shared with him a short list of components to incorporate and at the top of the list was "Rose Garden."

Davidson's elaborate garden plan stretched in all directions and included





Frances Dodge in Dodge Clubhouse garden, c.1932. Below: Rose Garden plan.



typical features of a country estate landscape. The site chosen for the oval-shaped rose garden was in the south-east quadrant of the plan. Here, the roses could thrive with an abundance of sunshine and its stunning explosion of blooms would welcome guests as they motored down the lane towards Meadow Brook Hall.

Although all necessary grading for the gardens had been completed, Davidson was unable to direct their full implementation due to his failing health. That, along with the stock market crash in 1929, which raised both financial and moral concerns, influenced the Wilsons to delay further development of the landscape, including the Rose Garden.

Matilda did, however, hire Herman Siewert, an experienced gardener with whom she had been acquainted when she lived in Grosse Pointe and he was working on an estate owned by one of Detroit's elite couples, Truman and Helen Newberry. Helen was often one of Matilda's biggest (albeit friendly) rivals when they competed in the Detroit flower shows. When Matilda interviewed Herman in the early 1930s, she was surprised of his interest in the position, saying: "Oh no, you are not leaving the Newberrys." In his usual somber tone, Herman replied "I am and if you don't take me, someone else will." She concurred, and thus began his 38 years of employment at Meadow Brook Farms.



Pegasus Evergreen Garden (front left) and Rose Garden construction (right), c. 1948.

In the late 1930s, as the economy slowly began to improve, Matilda's interest in the landscape development resumed. Herman, who was in charge of as many as 50 men at the peak of the estate's operation, provided oversight to the greenhouse, the landscapes at Meadow Brook Hall, Dodge Clubhouse and Farmhouse, as well as the newly installed gardens at the outdoor pool, stables and kennels. Matilda greatly valued his service; so much so that she built him a home adjacent to the tenant houses on Dodge (now Adams) Road. Herman and Matilda shared a love for flowers, relished the beauty they provided and established a warm working relationship. It was her faith in his abilities that helped make the dream of a grand Rose Garden a reality.

Matilda hired landscape architect Doan Ogden in 1945 to design the Rose Garden based on Davidson's earlier concept. Ogden refined the design by adding a connecting garden, the Pegasus Evergreen Garden. The layout offered a succession of interesting design styles: the symmetry of the Breakfast Garden; the soothing hues of green and blue in the Pegasus Evergreen Garden; and lastly, a step down into the Rose Garden, which offered a surprising burst of colorful blooms at varying heights.

With the Pegasus Garden completed in 1947, the construction of the



Rose Garden could finally begin. The perimeter of the oval-shaped sunken garden enclosed the entire area with flowering shrubs, providing season-long color. Its center axis, a wide brick walk laid in a herringbone pattern, terminated at the octagonal Rose Tea Terrace, a private space used for entertaining. Lining both the center walk and terrace were a series of columns with a trellis framework that supported climbing roses. When in full bloom, the entire arbor was a pillar of beauty, alternating colors of red, pink, white

and yellow.

Designed slightly off-center, the number of beds totaled 18 and required some 1,800 roses to fill, including 40 different types of hybrid teas, grandifloras and floribundas. Because rose gardens are intended to be user-friendly for both display and cutting, most of the beds were designed to be no wider than three feet so one could easily reach each bloom.

Matilda had a specific color scheme: whites and pinks on the east side, reds and yellows on the west and although she was not particularly fond of them, a few bi-colors were intermixed. Her favorites were Tropicana, Sterling Silver and Peace; the latter

named as a tribute to the end of World War II. A small bed at the end of the walk, was named Friendship. Here, Matilda planted roses that were given to her as gifts by family and friends. The many varieties she chose because of their name associations included "Detroiter" and "Sparta."

From the start of the blooming season to its end, June through October, Matilda was known to walk through the garden almost daily. She left notes to Herman directing which roses she had selected to fill her vases. The cut

Matilda also enjoyed showing off the Rose Garden to family, friends and her guests. She hosted numerous formal teas for her charity organizations, particularly the Salvation Army and Women's National Farm and Garden Association, and always included a tour of her Rose Garden, a highlight of their day.

Matilda also enlisted the expertise of several professors in the horticulture department at Michigan State University. Grateful for the Wilsons' support

Despite all of the efforts and money invested in creating the ideal growing conditions, and despite the most regimented maintenance program, growing roses on a large scale had its challenges – as seen in Matilda’s letter to Jackson and Perkins in 1966, the year before she died. In the letter, Matilda writes that she was “very much discouraged” with the Rose Garden that year and was “most likely going to replace the entire garden with new roses.”

Regardless of the challenges and

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occasional discouragement, Matilda's devotion to the Rose Garden was the mark of a true gardener. Her Rose Garden possessed a captivating quality that she did not experience to the same degree with other gardens or flowers. Surrounded by their lush blooms and waves of fragrance, the garden, with its butterflies, singing birds and pollinat-



Clockwise: Rose Garden looking north, c. 1954; Herman Siewert, 1972; Meadow Brook Hall Flower Room.



ing bees, was her pride and joy. And what countered each year's moments of chaos was always the optimism of a new season. Perhaps Matilda lived by actress Audrey Hepburn's inspiring gardening quote that "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." **MB**





PHOTO BY BRUCE CANTOR, COURTESY OF MUSIC HALL

High Performance

The majestic past of the Wilson Theatre

BY MADELYN RZADKOWOLSKI



COURTESY MUSIC HALL



Though Wilson Theatre has changed its name to Music Hall, patrons Matilda and Alfred Wilson are recognized in the “WT” hidden in the wrought iron railing of the box seats.

The princess Rosalie and her cast took their final bows as an audience bedecked in jewels, furs and the heady scents of perfume and cigar smoke roared with a standing ovation. So ended the first

performance at the brand new Wilson Theatre, completed in 1928 at a cost of nearly \$3 million by benefactors and live stage aficionados Matilda and Alfred Wilson. *Rosalie*, a Florenz Ziegfeld production, had premiered on New York’s Broadway at the New Amsterdam Theatre at the start of the year. The musical, featuring songs by the Gershwins, played in New York for 335 performances before Ziegfeld and the cast and crew came to Detroit on December 10, 1928 for two weeks of shows.

The troupe was treated to the glamour and verve that only a city flush with the benefits of the automotive industry could provide. *The Detroit Times* wrote, “New theaters are not built in cities that stand still” and that this was the second of two theatres opened in a matter of weeks in Detroit which were “the result of financial success in the automobile world.” Unlike the uptown 3,500-seat Fisher Theatre,

which was built for live shows as well as popular movies, the 1,701-seat Wilson Theatre was dedicated to only the “legitimate stage.”

Matilda and Alfred Wilson were devoted to the culture and educational opportunities that live theatre brought to the city. When the newfangled movie palaces first came to Detroit in 1905, they quickly overtook live theatre houses because they provided an exciting and premiere performance for lower ticket prices and, for the owners, often lower overhead costs. By the time the Wilson Theatre was built, there were more than twenty movie palaces and only six legitimate stages in Detroit.

B.C. Whitney, local theatre manager, asked the Wilsons to sponsor him as he created a new, state-of-the-art theatre that would renew interest in live stage. They agreed and hired architect William Kapp from the firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, who was currently designing their estate home, Meadow Brook Hall. Ironically, B.C. Whitney was part of the group that brought the first motion picture to Detroit in 1896.

Ground broke for the downtown location at 350 Madison Street on June 21, 1928 and it was finished just six months later, for the December 10 premiere. It was a modern theatre decorated in the Art Deco style, but inspired by Spanish art and architecture.

\$22,245 was spent on upholstering the rows of patterned “Spanish red” chairs and \$42,633 on the silk drapes that flanked the 80-by-40 foot stage (the second largest in Detroit). Lighting fixtures from the legendary New York metalsmiths, Edward F. Caldwell & Company, were purchased for \$23,191. Hidden in the decorative plaster ceilings and the wrought iron work of the balconied box seats were the intertwining letters “WT,” representing the patrons of the theatre.

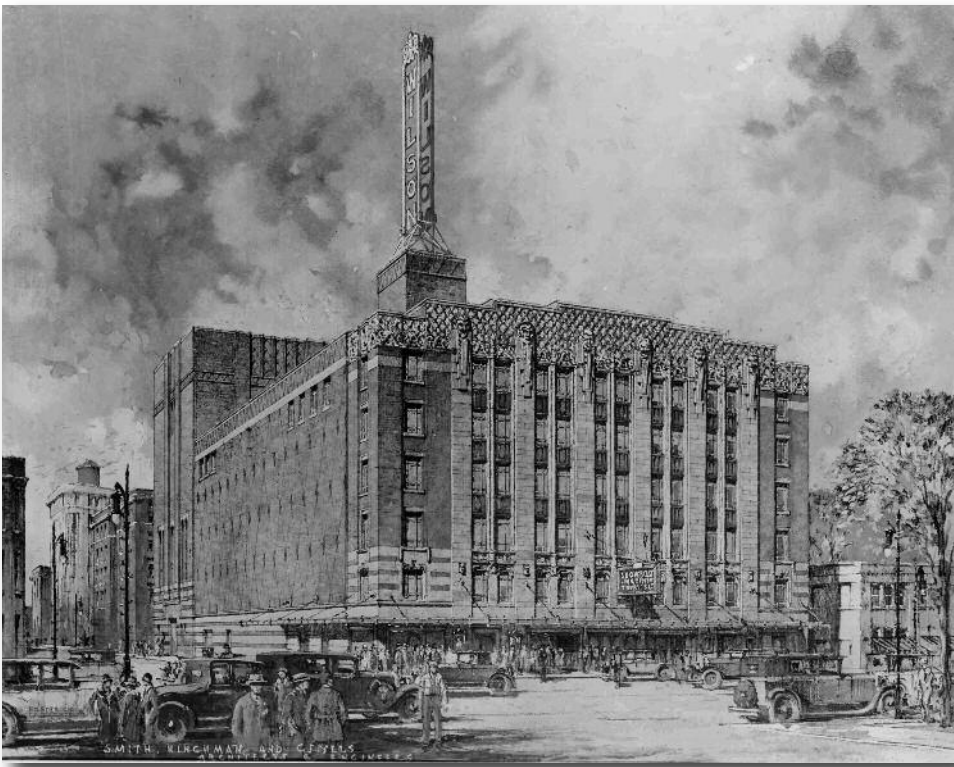
The Wilson Theatre was the only one in Detroit that showed A. L. Erlanger Attractions, which included shows from famous producers such as Charles Dillingham, Florenz Ziegfeld and the Theatre Guild. Performances in 1929 included *Dracula*, *Rio Rita* and Shakespearean plays headlined by American classic actor Fritz Leiber.

But as many theatre managers had already realized, there were a myriad of difficulties in juggling the crowds and shows to keep a 1,701-seat theatre open. The aging and busy B.C. Whitney was removed from his position in July 1929, and the bank Fidelity Trust Co. was made the acting agent of Mr. and Mrs. Wilson,* under the management of Whitney’s former assistant, Alton R. Warner. The lease Whitney

**Matilda Wilson joined the board of Fidelity Trust in 1924 and was its first female chair of the board in 1931.*

“That money made in the development of the automobile should build temples of beauty is quite in keeping with the spirit of Detroit.”

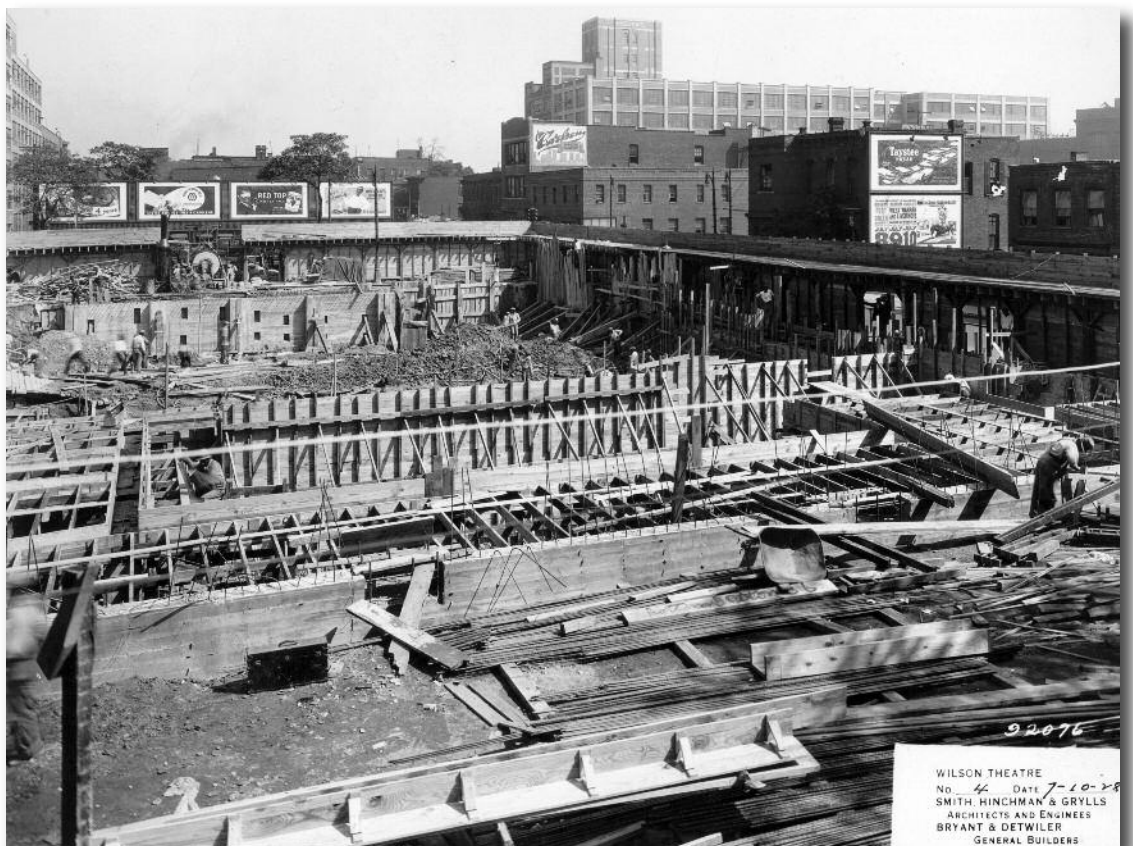
Detroit Times, December 11, 1928



Top: Architectural drawing of Wilson Theatre by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, 1928. Right: The 1928 construction of Wilson Theatre took just six months.

and his corporation, Detroit Opera House, Inc., held was relinquished. Unfortunately, B.C. Whitney passed away in a tragic accident only months later while in Toronto working at his other theatre only three days before the Stock Market Crash. The Wilsons were dealt another blow when A.L. Erlanger – who held a 25-year franchise on their theatre and the productions they could show – died on March 7, 1930.

The Depression saw the demise of many stage theatres, both on and off Broadway. The Wilsons decided to change with the times rather than succumb stubbornly to failure. Alfred Wilson took the helm, balancing both large stage performances, operas from the San Carlo Opera Co., and cinematic productions as a more low-cost and crowd-friendly option. The



Theatre also joined with the Detroit Athletic Club to offer a lecture series with “international leaders in literature, art, drama, music, science, philosophy and world affairs.” For an additional \$1, guests could have lunch with the guest speaker at the Club, just across Madison Avenue. Despite financial troubles, the Wilsons remained devoted to the community, hosting fundraisers for the Salvation Army and allowing University of Detroit Jesuit High School students to perform their plays on the grand stage.

The Wilsons tended to choose the more culturally important films, and two remain renowned examples of cinematic excellence today. In 1940, legend has it that Matilda Wilson personally called Louis B. Mayer, head of production at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (or his son-in-law and the producer, David O. Selznick), and asked that the January premiere of *Gone with the Wind* be held at her theatre. The film was already slotted for a local movie palace, the United Artists Theatre, but Matilda convinced MGM that Detroit could handle two venues. She was right, as the Wilson Theatre ended up showing the film for 12 weeks. Tickets at the Wilson were by advanced reservation only and cost more than those at the less-prestigious United. Even when playing movies, the Wilson was a magnificent theatre that harkened back to the formal days of live performance.

On February 18, 1941, the Wilson was one of only 14 theatres across the United States to host the premiere of the Disney classic, *Fantasia*. The theatre had to first be fit for stereophonic



COURTESY MUSIC HALL

In 2009, a portrait of Matilda Wilson was hung in the lobby of Music Hall.

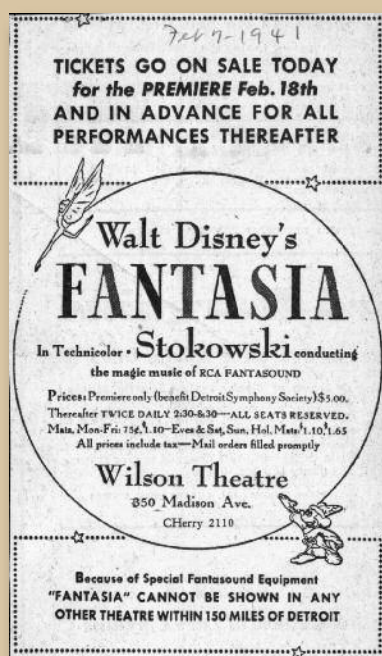


COURTESY MUSIC HALL

Ceiling detail today.



Music Hall was converted to a Cinerama theatre, c. 1955.



Advertisement for Fantasia, Detroit Times, February 7, 1941.

Music Hall is located in downtown Detroit at 350 Madison Street. For information on tickets, educational programs and donating to the nonprofit, please visit www.musichall.org.

sound, a prerequisite to the film's showing. "Fantasound" was developed by Disney engineers for this film but due to costs (and the need for theatres to shut down while the rather large equipment was being installed), it never caught on. It was so revolutionary, though, that 60 members of the Detroit chapter of the Institute of Radio Engineers, a physics class from Bowling Green State University and a group from the University of Minnesota came to inspect the latest in sound development.

The 1940s saw more than movies at the Wilson. On October 10, 1941, the 30th anniversary of China's independence was celebrated with a presentation by legendary author Pearl S. Buck. The ticket sales benefited the China Relief Corporation, of which Matilda was the chairman of the women's division. On November 8, 1941, the famous Russian ballet troupe performed the *Coq d'Or* to a sold-out audience.

During this time Matilda and Alfred Wilson's son, Richard, often visited the Wilson Theatre while his father conducted business there. Alfred was still trying to make the theatre solvent, between live stage and film, but finding the process demanding. Richard re-

called that while waiting for his father to meet clients or check on shows in 1940, he watched *Gone with the Wind* more than eight times, but never all the way through. It was a pleasant place for the 10-year-old boy to explore, even if he had to also learn patience with the disjointed viewings. Going to the movies wasn't always "work," however, as in 1941, Richard and his younger sister Barbara were taken by their governess to see *Fantasia*.

In 1944, the Wilsons began a lengthy process to transfer management and ownership of the Wilson Theatre to Henry Reichhold. A chemist and philanthropist, Reichhold was determined to find a new, beautiful and sustainable home for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, which could no longer keep up operations in its old building. By 1946, the theatre's name was permanently changed to Music Hall. In 1953, it was purchased by steel company executive Mervyn Gaskin, who converted it to the world's second "Cinerama" stage, with a massive curved screen, three synchronized projectors and stereophonic sound. The opera boxes were temporarily removed and some of the decorative painting covered up in order to house the Cinerama equipment.

Over the next several decades, Music Hall staged a variety of film, live presentations and opera under different managers. From 1971 to 1985, it was the home of the Michigan Opera Theatre. Despite its history and noble purpose, the building was slated for demolition in 1974, but was saved by Detroit Renaissance, Kresge Foundation and a new board that reinvented it as a nonprofit performing arts center. In 1994, Music Hall underwent a massive \$6.5 million restoration to bring it back to the majestic grandeur that Matilda and Alfred Wilson had created for its opening in 1928.

Today, Music Hall continues to be a place where Detroiters can learn from, engage with, and be entertained by the arts. **MB**

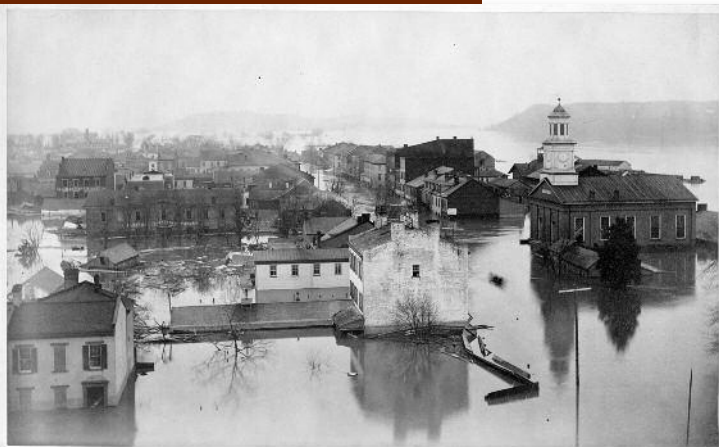


FRIEZE FRAME

BY MADELYN RZADKOWOLSKI

Of the 110 rooms at Meadow Brook Hall, the one that may be the most indicative of the personality and lifestyle of its primary user is Alfred Wilson's study. A lumber broker, Alfred chose one of the most beautiful woods in the world (and the only non-American wood in The Hall) for the wall paneling, English burled oak. The carved frieze at the top of the Tudor-Revival wall paneling boasts bas-relief artistry that tells the story of Alfred Wilson's life, in caricature. The depictions not only show the events, organizations and places that made up his life but also the character of a man who could look back at these stories – some enjoyable, some difficult – with good humor. Here is a sampling of the panels and what they reveal. For the full story, be sure to plan a trip to The Hall for a guided tour. 📖

The frieze panel above depicts Alfred Wilson's membership in the Masons (see related story next page).



THE GREAT FLOOD OF 1884, AT LAWRENCEBURG, IND.

ROMBACH & GROENE, Photos.

401 W. THIRD STREET, CINCINNATI, O.

THE FLOOD

Alfred Gaston Wilson was born on March 31, 1883 in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Lawrenceburg's location in the Ohio River Valley made it susceptible to flooding in the early spring, but the worst incident came before Alfred was even a year old. In February, 1884, an unusually deep snow cover, days of warm rains, and a broken levee combined to create a catastrophic flooding of the region. Alfred's parents sat with their four small children on the roof of their home until a rowboat saved them. The devastation and fear of the future was such that the family did not remain in Lawrenceburg too long after that.



The bas-reliefs in Alfred's study were designed and carved by Irving & Casson of Boston, which first created clay models. Alfred approved black-and-white photos of the models, then photos of the nearly finished wood carvings (*right*).



FREEMASON SYMBOLS

Alfred Wilson was initiated as a Mason on October 2, 1907 at Forest Lodge #130 in Wisconsin. Upon moving to Michigan, he completed the cryptic rites to become both a Master Mason as well as a Royal Arch Mason, the highest degrees possible. He was a member of the Michigan Sovereign Consistory, S.P.R.S. 32° and Palestine Lodge #357 in Detroit, both of which met at the Detroit Masonic Temple. The panels depict the Masonic Craft

Lodge Square and Compass, The Scimitar, Crescent, Star of the Mystic Shrine and other classic symbols of the different lodges of this secretive men's society.





NORTH WOODS STUDENT

Alfred was enormously proud of his alma mater, Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin, from which he graduated in 1906 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. In the majestic beauty of the “North Woods,” Alfred’s good humor, business mind, and civic engagement made him both a student leader and an excellent student... although his comical depiction of his college professors hints more at his propensity for jokes than for tests. He followed in his father’s footsteps and joined the Beta Theta Pi fraternity, where he made lifelong friends. Brother Don and son Richard Wilson were also members of Beta Theta Pi, with Richard starting a chapter at Michigan State University. Alfred was a trustee and benefactor of Beloit for more than 30 years.



FAMILY TIME

Alfred Wilson was a family man, and when he was home at Meadow Brook (he had an office in Detroit), he treated his study as a family room, which the family referred to as the “den.” While playing cards or sitting by the fire, the carved panels became an oral storybook for Alfred as he relayed his life’s adventures to the children – Frances, Dan, Richard and Barbara. His childhood pursuits included playing tennis, riding bikes, and even skinny dipping! Alfred and his brother Don didn’t have the money to buy tennis racquets, so they made their own paddles out of old shingles.



MARRIAGE BOWS

The most talked-about panel in the study depicts one of the happiest moments of Alfred's life: his marriage to Matilda Rausch Dodge on June 26, 1925. Matilda, a scant 5 feet tall, and Alfred, who towered over 6 feet, poked fun at the height difference by showing Alfred bending over in order to marry Matilda. Also pictured are Matilda's children, Frances and Danny, her mother and sister, and Alfred's father, brother and the presiding reverend, Dr. Joseph Vance.



ALFRED'S NEWSPAPER ROUTE

Alfred was the fourth of six children of Presbyterian minister Samuel Newton Wilson and his wife, Eliza Jane Phillips. Though his was a happy childhood, money was tight for the family and Alfred usually had a job as a newspaper delivery boy. As the family moved quite often on the instructions of the Church, it provided

Alfred a chance to meet all of his neighbors, even though some proved to be difficult customers!



SAFE OFF THE GROUND

During World War I, Alfred worked in the lumber division of the aviation building program which was crucial to the war effort. His role involved testing wooden plane parts – like propellers – to determine whether they were suitable for flight.



TIMBER!

After graduation, Alfred worked at a number of lumber companies before deciding to forge his own path. In 1919, he and his brother Donald opened Wilson Lumber Company; they were a large producer of hardwoods with massive sawmills in Indiana and Florida. They sold their products in Detroit, which was booming with new workers and the homes, shops and office buildings that were needed to support them.

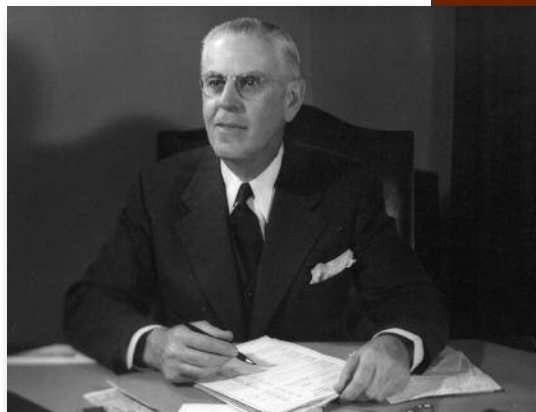


HERITAGE PANELS

Inset in the frieze are smaller, square panels that depict Alfred's heritage, such as the Wilson Coat of Arms (*pictured below*) and the thistle flower (*right*), a symbol of his Scotch-Irish ancestry. The Dodge Coat of Arms is also in the room, a sign of the love and respect Alfred had for his two stepchildren, Frances and Dan Dodge, whom he fully welcomed into his family and his "story."



Though it can be easy for a person's accomplishments to fade in a lifetime, the life events and organizations represented on Alfred Wilson's frieze stand as an enduring testament to a man of humor, integrity and enormous character. **MB**



2016 MEADOW BROOK ESTATE DONOR REPORT

(GIFTS RECEIVED JANUARY 1, 2016-DECEMBER 31, 2016)



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Every year the Meadow Brook Estate teaches thousands of individuals, families, and schoolchildren about the significance of the Dodge and Wilson families and the rich heritage they contributed to the community. The support of the individuals listed here makes it possible for us to continue this work.

Their gifts allow us to preserve and maintain the National Historic Landmark building, its grounds and outbuildings, and to present programs that show how the values of hard work and mastery of craft have impacted our region. We are grateful for every contribution that allowed the Meadow Brook Estate to fulfill its mission last year.

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The Hall's extensive collections of art, furniture, ceramics, glass, silver, textiles, costumes and archival materials are highly regarded for being original to the house as well as for their intrinsic value. Preservation of these items is a considerable task but our Adopt-an-Artifact program has allowed the community to be involved in the process. The support of the donors listed here has allowed the finishes and artifacts in the Library to be preserved for future generations of visitors to enjoy. We are grateful for their generosity.



ADOPT-AN-ARTIFACT DONORS

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CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION GIFTS

Meadow Brook Hall is grateful for the support of our corporate and foundation partners. Their support allows us to share with our visitors from near and far the important legacy of the Dodge and Wilson families and their magnificent country estate.

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The heat was on

One year and a month after a serious boiler fire, Meadow Brook's heating system is back to full steam.

Staff from Oakland University's Facilities Management department led a team of engineering and HVAC professionals in redesigning the two-boiler system and controls. When the repair and replacement project concluded in March 2017, all indications were that the heating system should run more efficiently and reliably for years into the future.

That clearly wasn't the case when a small fire broke out in the sub-basement boiler room the evening of February 22, 2016. Fortunately, due to the quick thinking and actions of two employees, a major disaster was averted.

Ted Prisbe, the university's mechanical trades foreman, happened to be in the building around 5 p.m. and saw smoke when he opened the door to the boiler room. Flames were spreading along the duct insulation. Almost simultaneously, Meadow Brook's security manager, Todd Walker, saw smoke billowing up the back stairs to his first-floor security office.

At great personal risk, Prisbe had the foresight to get to the overheating boiler (which registered 900 degrees Fahrenheit) and hit the burner kill switch. At the same time, Walker was on the phone with the OU Police Department who confirmed the alarm with local fire departments (Rochester Hills, Rochester, Auburn Hills and Oakland Township).

The rapid response of the firefighters, police officers, university trades and fire marshal brought the fire under control quickly and remarkably saved any damage (including smoke and water) to spaces outside the boiler room.

Meadow Brook owes much to Ted Prisbe and Todd Walker for their personal acts of heroism and to the first responders for their professionalism and the care they took with irreplaceable assets in a time of great need. **MB**

Weddings at The Great Estate



Theresa Finck Photography

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“And they’re off!”

The latest book from the Meadow Brook Press will be hot off the press in June 2017 – a fascinating biographical account of automotive heiress Frances Dodge and her ascendancy into the highly competitive worlds of horse shows, harness racing and high society. . . with a trend-setting style all her own.

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