

Meadow Brook

Spirited
Legacy





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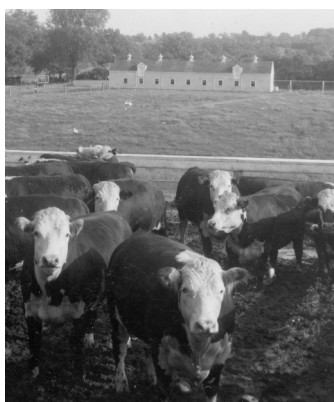
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On the Cover:

The Games Room serves as the backdrop for two bottles from The Hall's extensive collection of pre-Prohibition spirits: Old Saratoga Whiskey, Rosskum, Gerstley & Co., Philadelphia, Penn., c. 1905-1919; Mohawk Kümmel, Detroit, Mich., c. 1933-1944.
Photo by John Sobczak.



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

| Editor's Column

Raising the barn

Meadow Brook Hall and its Tudor-Revival outbuildings are not the only Oakland University structures winning preservation awards of late. This Spring, one of the early Meadow Brook Farms barns won the 2016 "Barn of the Year Award" from the Michigan Barn Preservation Network in the Non-Profit Agricultural or Adaptive Use category ... as well as the 2016 Earl Borden Award for Historic Preservation from the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission.

Built prior to John and Matilda Dodge's purchase of the 320-acre Meadow Brook Farm in 1908, the sheep barn was originally located near the property's late-1800s farmhouse on the dirt lane that later became Dodge Road (now Adams).

Likely sometime in the late 1920s, Matilda and her second husband, Alfred Wilson, moved the barn to its present location on what was originally the Douglas Farm on Walton (then Pontiac) Road. The Wilsons were in the process of expanding the farm property into a country estate, and they moved a number of barns and their attendant barnyards to more distant locations, away from recreational facilities ... and preferably somewhat "downwind."

Between Fall 1929 and Spring 1930, they moved a larger hay barn from the farmhouse location to the Douglas Farm. That barn deteriorated so dramatically over recent years that when the university began preparations to restore and rehabilitate the two structures in 2014, the "South Barn" was too far gone. Allocated funds instead were spent on bringing the "North Barn" up to snuff, both structurally and aesthetically.

The North Barn project was initiated, designed and engineered by the university's Facilities

Management department, which also headed up a team of internal and external professionals. The lead architect, Tammis Donaldson, principal of Royal Oak, Michigan's Ekocite Architecture, grew up in the Rochester area and long remembered the campus landmark. The Meadow Brook Hall curatorial staff assisted with historical research, including original paint colors.

The newly restored barn makes a visible statement to the community about the university's commitment to historic preservation and the legacy of its founding Dodge and Wilson families. If you want more on the history of Meadow Brook Farms, be sure to read the third in Kim Zelinski's series beginning on page 20 of this issue.



A close one

Meadow Brook Hall experienced a dramatic incident this past February when one of its two boilers overheated, causing the duct work insulation to burn.

The Hall's fire alarm system, which includes both heat and smoke detection, alerted OU Facilities & Maintenance personnel, MBH security staff and the OU Police department who dispatched the incident to the Oakland County Sheriff's Department. Four local fire departments responded, including Rochester Hills, Rochester, Auburn Hills and Oakland Township.

Although the fire was contained to the ductwork and was quickly extinguished by the firefighting team, irreparable damage to the boiler will require a full replacement. Fortunately, the second boiler was not damaged and able to function without any interruption to The Hall's operation.

According to OU Police Chief Mark Gordon, "The prompt, efficient and professional actions of all responders was exemplary. Their work saved the university founders' home and National Historic Landmark from any damage to historic finishes or collection items."



Todd Walker

Welcome, Todd!

We are pleased to announce that Todd Walker was hired as full-time security manager for Meadow Brook Hall in February. This new role embodies supervision of security guards and assisting with implementation of The Hall's new security policies and procedures.

Todd's position includes a dual reporting structure to both Chief Mark Gordon of the Oakland University Police Department and Meadow Brook's facility operations manager, Nikki Thomas. This team has worked together over the last few months to put into effect a variety of new security measures focusing on protecting The Hall and improving overall safety for guests, staff and volunteers.

Next time you are at The Hall, be sure to stop by to welcome Todd to the Meadow Brook Hall family!



Back to 1929 “new”

Restoration projects – an ongoing activity at Meadow Brook – preserve the character-defining features that make The Hall unique, including the decorative carved plaster ceilings.

While plaster is a relatively rigid material that should last almost indefinitely, like many other building materials, it shares a common enemy – water.

The south bay plaster ceiling in The Hall’s living room experienced significant damage last year when water filtrated through exterior mortar joints. The plaster became saturated, damaging the ceiling’s ornamental medallions and cornice.

Before repair to the ceiling could begin, tuck pointing of the mortar joints on the south façade ensured the source was protected against further moisture. After a lengthy drying out period, skilled craftsman Patrick O’Shea (*left*) from Russell Plaster began the conservation process.

First, molds from the original undamaged medallions and cornice were made in order to replicate the damaged elements. Once the castings were made, they were adhered to the ceiling and within several weeks of curing, painted to match adjoining surfaces.

The project, made possible by the Matilda R. Wilson Fund grant, recreated the inspired decorative work crafted by The Hall’s original architects and artisans.

Downton finale preview

In a farewell celebration for one of the world’s most beloved television series, devoted followers of both Meadow Brook Hall and Detroit Public TV attended a special pre-showing of Downton Abbey’s final episode in March. The airing was the capstone of The Hall’s month-long Downton-inspired community event that included servants’ tours, afternoon teas and a lunch, lecture and tour series.

While The Hall has collaborated with DPTV on other projects, this one was especially meaningful because many of the attendees are supporters of both organizations. Dan Alpert, senior vice president of philanthropic giving at DPTV, commented that there wasn’t a more appropriate place to air the finale than Meadow Brook Hall.

Guests, many decked out in period attire, along with Oakland University students who were enrolled in a Downton Abbey class, were treated to an English-style afternoon tea in the Christopher Wren dining room before retiring to the Ballroom for the viewing of the 97-minute series conclusion. The much anticipated finale concluded the many plots and sub-plots in a sentimental ending that brought both cheers and tears.

Top: Meadow Brook Cornerstone Society members Mary Sloan and Jeff Lichty; Below: Oakland University students and guests in the Ballroom before the preview.





You Won't Want to Miss...

SUMMER TOURS MAY 31- SEPTEMBER 6

HOUSE TOUR

Includes the three main floors of The Hall. Tours are offered Monday through Sunday at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES TOUR

Explore rarely seen areas of the home on this extended tour, which includes staff wings, bathrooms, closets and playrooms. Tours are offered Monday through Sunday 1:00 p.m. and 2:15 p.m.

ESTATE WALKING TOUR

This guided tour will take you around the Estate gardens and grounds, past numerous outbuildings and into Knole Cottage (the playhouse of Frances Dodge), Danny's Log Cabin and the Dodge Brothers exhibit located in the Family Garage. Tours are offered Monday through Sunday at 1:00 p.m.

Reservations are not required for summer tours.

NEW! SUMMER CONCERT SERIES BIG BAND, CLASSICAL GUITAR AND JAZZ \$30 PER PERSON, CASH BAR

JULY 7 – DAVE BENNETT BAND
(BENNY GOODMAN STYLE)

JULY 14 – THE LENTINI DUO
(CLASSICAL GUITAR AND VOCALIST)

AUGUST 18 – SHERYL MARTIN (JAZZ VOCALIST)

Enjoy a relaxing and fun evening of conversation and light hors d'oeuvres, stroll the gardens and take a self-guided tour of the main level of The Hall.

MEADOW BROOK WRITING CAMP

JUNE 22-26, GRADES K-2, GRADES 3-5 AND GRADES 6-8
JULY 6-10, GRADES K-2, GRADES 3-5 AND GRADES 6-8
JULY 13-17, GRADES K-2, GRADES 3-5 AND GRADES 6-8
JULY 20-24, GRADES 3-5, AND GRADES 6-8
JULY 27-31, GRADES 3-5, GRADES 6-8 AND GRADES 9-12
AUGUST 3-7, GRADES 3-5, GRADES 6-8 AND GRADES 9-12

\$225 PER CAMPER

Young authors will interact with award-winning, specially trained experts in the field of writing with a National Historic Landmark as the backdrop.

MEADOW BROOK'S ANNUAL GOURMET WILD GAME DINNER & AUCTION SEPTEMBER 22

\$100 PER PERSON OR \$750 PER TABLE OF 10

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

DINNER AND A MOVIE OCTOBER 6, 13 & 26

\$40 PER PERSON, CASH BAR

Meadow Brook presents Hitchcock at The Hall. Guests will enjoy a casual three-course dinner while watching the famous director's classics on the big screen in the Ballroom. Check website for movie titles.

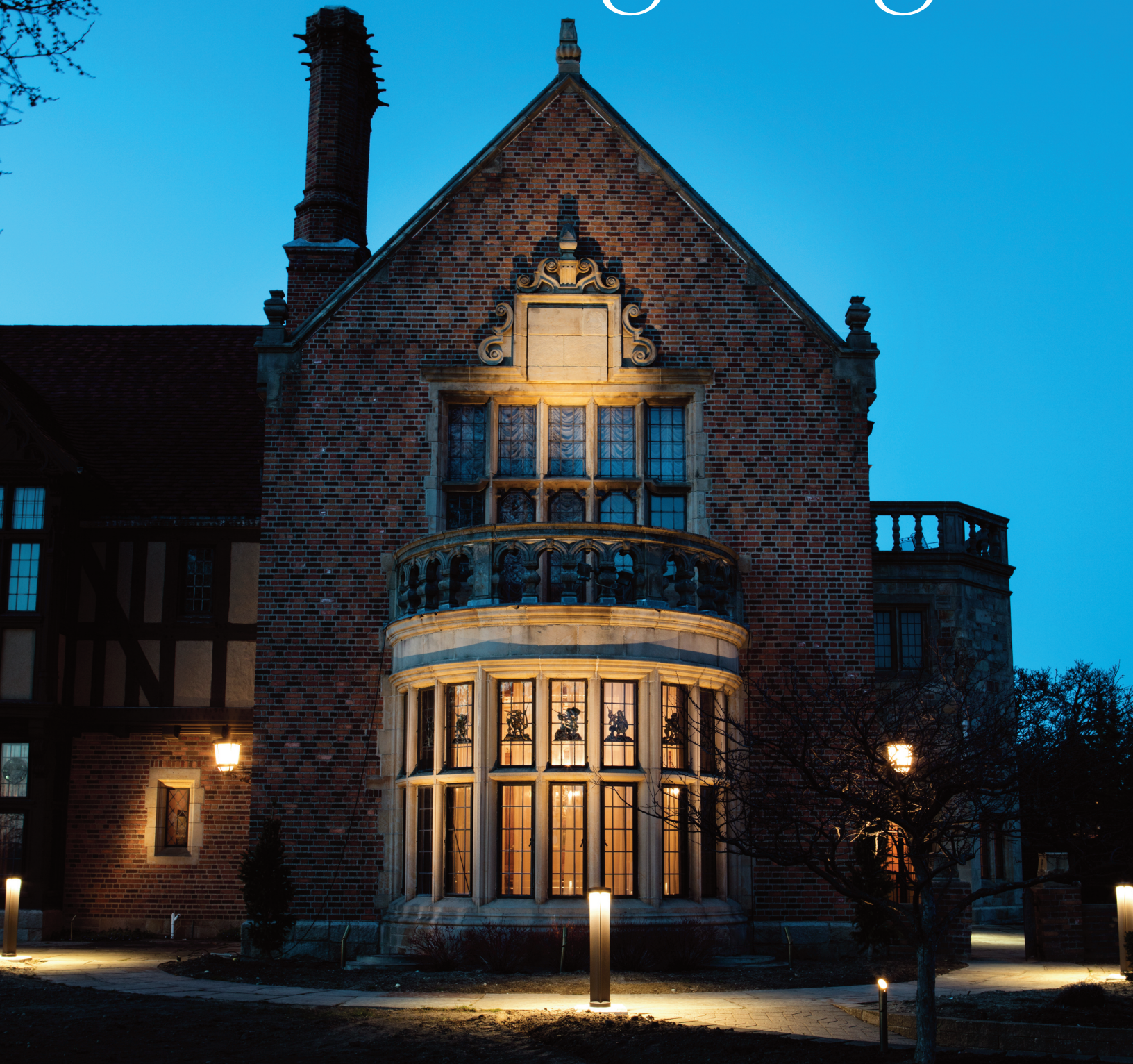
MYSTERY DINNER, OCTOBER 23

\$75 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. **MB**

Reservations are required for all Meadow Brook Hall special events. Please call (248) 364-6252 or visit meadowbrookhall.org for more information. All special events support the preservation and interpretation of The Hall.

Shining a light



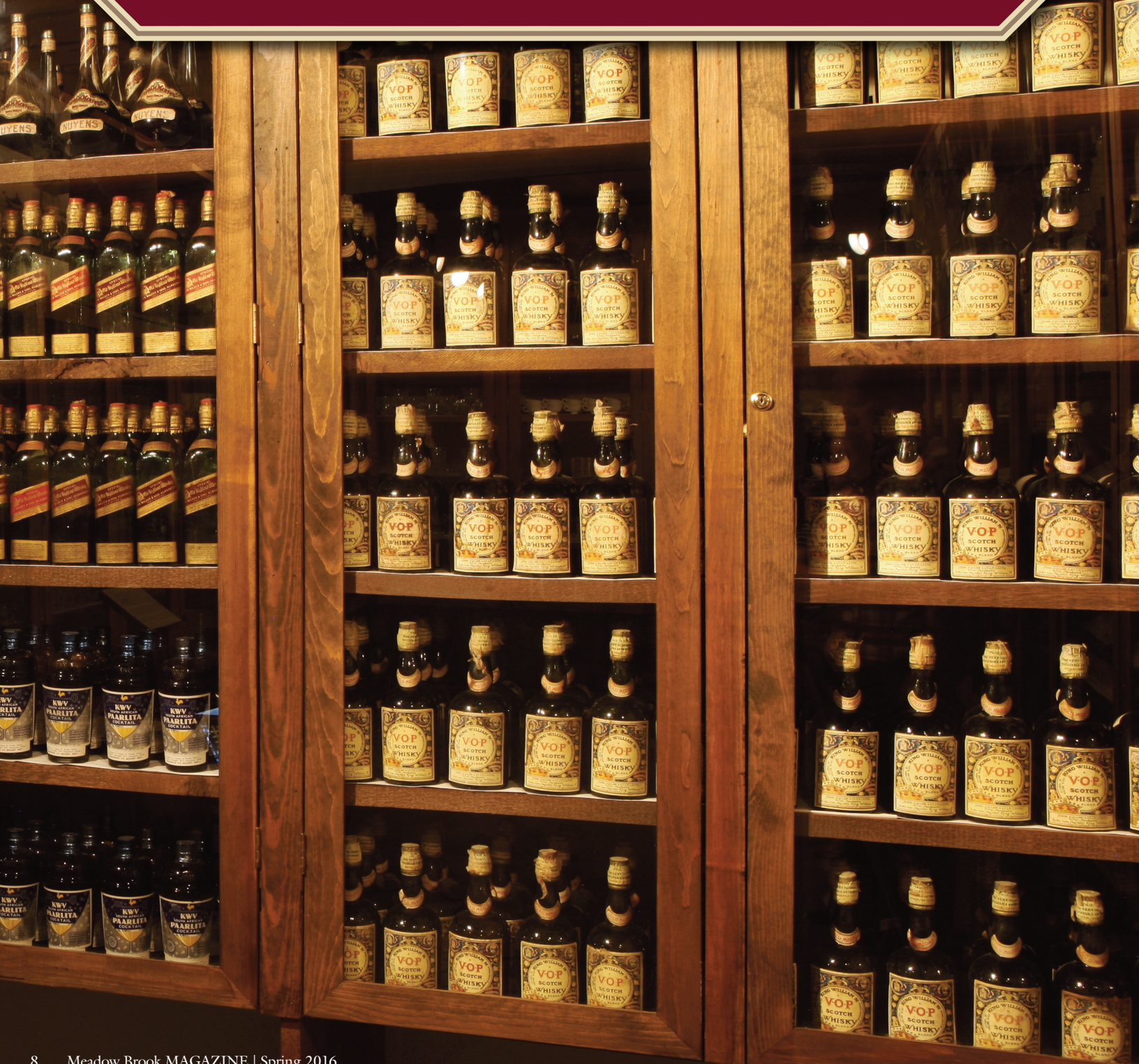


The nightscape at Meadow Brook now radiates a warm spectrum thanks to the recent installation of a new exterior lighting system. The \$250,000 project, funded by the Matilda R. Wilson Fund, added illumination on walkways for the safety of guests, restored original lighting fixtures on the building and improved uplighting on the facades and roofline.

The lighting plan was designed by architect and senior lighting designer Mollie Clarahan of Santec and installed by J&J Electric. In all, six different types of lighting, totaling 70 LED fixtures, were installed and seven original light fixtures restored. **MB**

SPIRITED LEGACY

MEADOW BROOK'S COLLECTION
OF BOTTLES SPINS FASCINATING STORIES OF
PROHIBITION AND FAMILY HISTORY



IN TIMES OF celebration or in grief, in wartime or in peace, in the public eye or in a basement speakeasy, alcohol has played a role in American society since its beginnings. As novelist Captain Frederick Marryat said in 1839, “I’m sure the Americans can fix nothing without a drink.”

From 1920 to 1933, the 18th Amendment, or “Prohibition,” tried to legislate alcohol away from America’s lips. Some states, however, went dry before the country did. In 1917, the citizens of Michigan approved an amendment banning alcohol, which gave some enterprising residents ample opportunity to become experts at illegally obtaining alcohol before National Prohibition began.

And become experts, they did. Historians estimate that 75% of the alcohol that came into the United States during this time came across the Detroit River. Detroit’s 1,800 licensed saloons before state Prohibition in 1918 mushroomed into a conservatively estimated 25,000 illegal “blind pigs” by 1925.

A SALOON BY ANY OTHER NAME

Matilda Wilson’s parents, George and Margaret Rausch, owned several saloons after emmigrating from Canada to Detroit in 1885. In the early years, George Rausch was proprietor of the Dry Dock Hotel, serving rooms and drinks to rather rough-and-tumble sailors and laborers. The couple simultaneously ran the Princess Saloon and Boarding House across town in a more genteel neighborhood.

Around 1888, George Rausch built a beautiful new saloon, with



Facing page: The Dodge/Wilson family’s spirits collection is stored in Meadow Brook’s China Vault. This page, clockwise from top: Rausch Saloon at 216 St. Aubin Street in Detroit with George Rausch second from left, c. 1900; bar tokens from the Geo. Rausch Saloon; business card from the Princess Saloon, c. 1885.

a boarding house next door and the family home upstairs. The saloon was unnamed, but every local man knew that a tall beer, an excellent home-cooked meal, and a fragrant cigar awaited him at George Rausch’s.

Saloons in the 19th century were safe and welcome havens for men who

worked long hours in hot and dirty factories. The tendency for husbands – and their paychecks – to disappear into saloons was one of the contributing factors that led to the temperance movement. It was a movement that brought severe consequences to businessmen such as George Rausch.

PRE-PROHIBITION WHISKEY

Prohibition banned the manufacturing, sale and transportation of alcohol into and across the United States. A common misconception is that Prohibition banned the consumption of alcohol: It did not. Some enterprising Americans purchased cases of their favorite spirits to last through what they expected to be a very short Prohibition. It will likely never be known if that is why Meadow Brook has so many pre-Prohibition bottles of Old Saratoga, King William IV VOP Scotch Whiskey and “Johnnie Walker” in its collection, but another explanation may be convenience.

There were no corner liquor stores in 1917, so John Dodge purchased cases of alcohol at a time for entertaining. With the need to stock his Detroit home, the Meadow Brook Farms house and clubhouse, his yacht and his northern Michigan lodge, it’s possible that there were a lot of leftover bottles

when they were combined after his death.

Old Saratoga, John Dodge’s favorite whiskey, is best known for being prominently featured in Cassius Marcellus Coolidge’s 1894 painting of dogs playing poker. This cute and iconic image was used by Rosskam, Gerstley & Co to advertise their product.

Other advertising images – some bawdy, some patriotic, but all encouraging hard drinking (responsibilities and decorum be damned) – inspired the following from a 1914 book on advertisements: “We hear it on every hand: ‘Prohibition is coming fast.’ Maybe so. And if it be true, one of the contributing causes is whiskey advertising like that of ‘Old Saratoga.’”

MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

Though liquor greased the wheels of many new partnerships and transactions in the business sector, it was

generally considered not to be appropriate in the hands of women. Upper class women did not visit bars or clubs until, ironically, Prohibition made it acceptable. Before the 1920s, women like Matilda Wilson might have sipped on a cordial glass of sherry after dinner. Meadow Brook has several brands of sherry in its collection, but its most interesting, Garrett & Co.’s “Virginia Dare,” tells a story of those



Virginia Dare’s Tonic with engraved “MRW” (Matilda Rausch Wilson) cordial glass.

who flouted Prohibition laws.

A caveat to the 18th Amendment was that alcohol could be prescribed by doctors. Liquor had long been used as pain relief, cough suppressant, nourishment and a depressant for the ill. In a medical journal in 1920, a doctor wrote, “Alcohol is, I suppose, the most valuable sedative and hypnotic drug we possess for infants and young children.”

As Prohibition neared, Garrett & Co. used some of its wine to create Virginia Dare Tonic (actually sherry), recommending the alcoholic concoction for convalescents. And some was sold as concentrated grape juice with specific and detailed instructions on what not to do to ferment the juice into wine. Garrett & Co. was discovered to be selling the means and methods for making wine. The government ordered the firm to stop, but a New York judge ruled that the company’s actions were not illegal. Home wine-making had been excluded from the 18th Amendment, and Garrett and Co. just happened to “accidentally” assist in that creative endeavor.



From left: Rosskam, Gerstley & Co Old Saratoga, c. 1905-1919; John Walker & Sons Special Old Highland Whiskey, 1908-1909; King William IV V.O.P. Scotch Whiskey, 1905-1919.

RISKY BUSINESS

Americans were concerned about the ill effects of alcohol long before the 18th Amendment was ratified. The first formal temperance society in Michigan formed in 1830. At that time, the average American over 15 years of age drank the equivalent of 88 bottles of whiskey a year. Liquor licenses, several temporary prohibitions, general fearmongering, mandatory closing of bars on Sundays, and a ban on providing free lunch with a drink at saloons were all ways that activists worked to lessen alcohol consumption in Michigan.

The general reaction to anti-saloon laws in Michigan, even among government officials and police, was to break them. During a short-lived Prohibition in 1850, Detroit continued issuing liquor licenses to saloons because the money received was important to the successful running of the city. During National Prohibition, the Michigan State Police raided a speakeasy only to find the Detroit mayor, sheriff and a state congressman among the 800 offenders inside.

In 1907, Detroit Alderman Richard M. Watson put forth the Watson Ordinance, which established certain residential districts within which the opening of saloons was forbidden. In illustri-

SALOONIST TO DEFY THE LAW

Will Open Barroom on Location Included in Restricted District.

Headline from the Detroit Free Press, Jan. 2, 1908; collection of liquor from Rausch's closed saloon.

ous neighborhoods like Indian Village, bars were thought to bring noise, violence and general riffraff. Unfortunately for Matilda Wilson's father, George Rausch, he had just built a new saloon in Indian Village.

When George Rausch discovered that his new saloon was in a restricted area, he and his sponsor, the Union Brewing Company, quietly obtained a liquor license and opened up anyway. After neighbors complained to the city, Rausch protested the validity of the ordinance and ended up taking the case to the Michigan Supreme Court. Though he lost the case, he was refunded a small portion of the liquor license fee.

George Rausch closed the saloon and opened a grocery store in its stead. Leftover liquor from the saloon made its way to Meadow Brook Hall, where it remains in the collection.





Upper left: K.W.V. Paarlita and K.W.V. Very Old South African Brandy, with silver cups from Spain, a horn letter opener and a mother-of-pearl inlaid table from Morocco; right, Frances Dodge with friend at costume party, 1934; below, the iconic “Poker Game,” by Coolidge features a bottle of Old Saratoga whiskey sitting in the lower left-hand corner.



THE COCKTAIL HOUR BEGINS

After National Prohibition ended, spirits continued to complement the meals and celebrations of Americans. A new cocktail culture, spurred by attempts to mask the sometimes unsavory taste of alcohol available during Prohibition, brought a light-heartedness to entertaining, especially at popular Tiki-themed parties in the mid-century.

In 1934, Frances Dodge took her parents, Matilda and Alfred Wilson, on a World Tour that included a 20-day cruise of the West African coast and an 18-day automobile tour of South Africa, in

addition to countries as distant as Palestine and India. Newspapers of the time reported “the only part of [Frances’] trip that really thrills her is the travel into Africa.”

Frances brought back gemstones from Ceylon, zebras from Rhodesia and cases of K.W.V. South African liquor for parties. First a wine producer, K.W.V. began producing brandy and pre-mixed bottled cocktails in the 1920s for the European market. Meadow Brook’s rare collection of unopened K.W.V. bottles – including the Paarlita Cocktail, Cocktail Dry, and Very Old South African Brandy – contains examples that do not exist in the K.W.V. Archives. These and other bottles in the collection can be viewed on The Hall’s Behind-the-Scenes tour running through Labor Day.





THE CLASSIC MAI TAI

J. Wray Nephew's Rum, Combier Orgeat (a sweet, almond-flavored liqueur) and Au Gourmet Rock Candy syrup (a sugar/water mixture) were most likely used to mix a Mai Tai, a popular Polynesian cocktail whose creation has been attributed to Trader Vic's in California in 1944. The Wilson family may have encountered the drink during their travels to Hawaii or California or at their winter home in Scottsdale, Arizona. Meadow Brook's collection of bottles suggests that Matilda and Alfred Wilson were eager to embrace the themed "Tiki party" trend of the 1940s and 1950s, where guests would enjoy cocktails like the Mai Tai surrounded by decorations of palm fronds, coconuts and exotic flowers.

The modern Mai Tai is hardly recognizable when compared to the Mai Tai of the mid-20th Century. Here's Trader Vic's original recipe:

MAI TAI

- 2 OZ 17-YEAR OLD JAMAICAN J. WRAY NEPHEW'S RUM
- JUICE OF ONE LIME
- 1/2 OZ HOLLAND DEKUYPER ORANGE CURACAO
- 1/4 OZ *ROCK CANDY SYRUP
- 1/2 OZ *ORGEAT SYRUP

ADD A GENEROUS AMOUNT OF SHAVED ICE AND SHAKE VIGOROUSLY.

GARNISH WITH THE LIME PEEL AND A SPRING OF MINT. **Orgeat and Rock Candy Syrup may be hard to come by, but a specialty liquor store might be able to locate some.* MB

The Hidden ART DECO of Meadow Brook Hall



BY MADELYN RZADKOWOLSKI

Meadow Brook Hall is renowned for its English-style architecture, but Matilda and Alfred Wilson's interest in contemporary art of the early to mid-20th Century becomes obvious upon closer inspection. The Wilsons created an architectural masterpiece decorated with timeless elegance, but the bold graphics of Art Deco design lurk behind bathroom doors, on side tables and even beneath guests' feet.

Art Deco was named after its first major public appearance at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925. However, Art Deco's loud patterns, adoption of Asian, Middle Eastern and South American design and stylized modernism had started years before, and would continue into the 1940s. While on her 1925 honeymoon in Europe, it is likely that Matilda Wilson visited this exposition and purchased many of the "Art Deco" objects that adorned Meadow Brook Hall then and now. ➡➡



Above, a floral carpet by Poirer's Atelier Martine. Facing page, detail of lamé suit with rhinestone buckle purchased by Matilda Wilson, 1925. Right, Paul Poirer fitting model in lamé suit similar to Matilda's.



King of Fashion

If there was an art form that epitomized the vivacity of Art Deco design, it was fashion, and no designer more so than the legendary Paul Poirer. Possibly the most defining characteristic of early Art Deco was the fascination with the exotic... a desire to reinterpret the architectural masterpieces of the Middle East and the ruins of the Egyptians and Mayans. In 1911 – more than a decade before Art Deco would be named – Paul Poirer launched the genre through fashion by creating his own theatrical world inspired by the fashions of the Orient, with his clients serving as actors/models. Paul Poirer sold fantasy. He is credited with creating the first “lifestyle” brand as he designed home goods, perfumes and cosmetics to pair with the extravagant clothes he created.

At the start of his career, Poirer worked at the renowned House of Worth in Paris. On one of the first commissions he was trusted with, he made a plain black wool coat with straight sides. The “Confucius” style would become a signature look, but when presented to the Russian Princess Bariatinsky, she cried and declared it a sack fit for a prisoner. Poirer promptly left, founded his own fashion house in Paris in 1903, and became famous for making Asian-influenced coats. Matilda Wilson's c. 1925 coat (*following page, top right*) is similar to the one the princess rejected, but with raised asymmetric stitching, gold ribbon edging and a long metallic leather tassel. Walking through the streets of Paris, Matilda would have been on the cutting edge of Art Deco fashion.

In 1911, Poirer founded Martine, a workshop staffed by young, untrained girls with natural artistic talent. He encouraged the girls to visit zoos and gardens and sketch the scenes using bright pastels, which were then judged by Poirer and other artists. Many of these sketches were translated into fabrics, wallpaper and rugs that were sold across the world. Three floral rugs at Meadow Brook (one is at left) epitomize the strength of Atelier Martine; unfettered



Above left: Poiret-style cocoon coat; above right, black coat by Poiret; below left, lamé and velvet suit by Poiret; below right, gold dress by Poiret.



by knowledge of art history or trends, the girls created shockingly loud designs with multiple and contrasting colors. When Meadow Brook Hall was completed, both the Sun Porch and the Fountain Room were decorated with the innovative designs of Atelier Martine.

The bold fuschia and copper brocade on the “cocoon” coat pictured (at left) is complemented by a royal blue velvet lining. The bands of black fox fur, use of gilt fabric and unusual cocoon shape of the coat are all signatures of Paul Poiret’s design, but the coat is not labeled. Possibly produced by an imitator, the coat speaks volumes about Poiret’s influence on the design world. He was the first designer to be copied on such a large scale that he had to trademark his label and publish advertisements warning consumers about purchasing fakes.

The best of Art Deco fashion boasts a juxtaposition of fabrics, like the clusters of seed pearls and raw wool against the metallic gold lace of the c. 1925 Paul Poiret dress pictured (at left). The military-inspired braiding is softened by the exaggerated lotus design in wool along the hem. This gold dress, very similar to one at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), is proof in practice of Poiret’s admanance that style can never be one size fits all. Poiret pushed his clients to buck trends and to dress in the colors, fabrics and silhouettes that suited their bodies and personalities. Poiret’s characteristic bell-shaped sleeves and low, loose waistline, though present in the dress at the MET, were replaced in Matilda’s garment with a silhouette more flattering of her then-petite figure. Those elements suggest this was a custom-made dress.

Even more characteristic of Poiret’s style is the silver lamé and green velvet day dress with Aztec-inspired trim (at left). The October 1925 advertisement of Poiret dressing a model in the dress (see page 15) suggests that Matilda may have fallen in love with the outfit on paper, but her name

handwritten on the label prove that it was custom-tailored for her. Paul Poiret is perhaps most famous for “freeing” women from the corset by designing clothes that could never pair with the stiff and unnatural S-curve corsets used by Victorian women. The athletic, loose dresses of the 1920s might never have been designed if Poiret hadn’t bucked trends and tradition. This particular dress was to be paired with a cloche, a slim-fitting hat also made popular by Poiret.

The way that Poiret incorporated foreign motifs, bright colors, artistic expression, unbounded ingenuity and theatrical glamour through costume earned him his title “The King of Modernity.” In the somewhat fading Victorian era of strict convention and modesty, Poiret’s costumes must have seemed like fireworks. Unfortunately, just as quickly as it appeared, Art Deco was lost. Poiret, unable to draw back from the fantastic and embrace the solid forms and clean lines of the 1930s, died a pauper in obscurity. And he no longer held the rights to his name.

Man of Steel

Though Poiret’s fluid lines and naïve floral patterns were a harbinger of Art Deco, the movement developed into a geometric and delineated form known today as “Streamline Deco.” The clean, sinewy lines of Streamline denoted strength and speed and were quickly adopted by the transportation industry in car, train and bus designs. Skyscrapers, epitomized by the Guardian Building in Detroit, echoed both Streamline and the over-the-top theatrics of Poiret’s fashions by stretching toward the heavens in a vertical cascade of pyramidal ornamentations.

As incredible as the exteriors of Art Deco skyscrapers were, their interior details truly made them masterpieces. No elevator button, door handle or heating grille was too small to receive an Art Deco motif that would complement the building’s design. The most renowned metal artist for this work was

Oscar Bach. German-born Bach boasted that he learned secrets of metalsmithing in villages across Europe and was uniquely able to apply them to modern design. Among his hundreds of building commissions were the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center, Radio City Music Hall, the educational and artistic Cranbrook campus in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and Meadow Brook Hall. A master of imitating the old styles that the Wilsons loved, he created the forecourt gate, a fireplace insert and a number of other objects at Meadow Brook in Tudor, Spanish and Renaissance styles. Only a few of Bach’s pieces at Meadow Brook show the Wilsons’ interest in Art Deco.

Art Deco, like its predecessor Art Nouveau, examined the natural form and often included plants and animals in the designs. Bach’s pair of lamps in Alfred Wilson’s study are gilt steel with triangular panels (above right). Inside the panels, a deer, dog and ducks have been stylized to the point of abstraction. Bach’s pieces have the advantage of being so structurally stunning that the secondary design motifs fade; studying the detail that makes the whole is like lifting a magnifying glass to an ant hill.

The trio of crested birds on the bronze lamp (at right) evoke the hoopoe, a bird often depicted in ancient Egyptian art. The tension of the birds as they rest together on the sphere can be seen in their intense facial expressions, patterned feathers and wing positions. A 1928 advertisement



Above, detail of Bach's triangular lamp; Below, hoopoe lamp by Bach.



showing the lamp described it as “essentially modern, with a note of the grotesque in its treatment of the bird forms. A piece thoroughly unique.”

Art Deco Client

Several rooms at Meadow Brook incorporated Art Deco elements in their textiles and accessories but there is only one truly Art Deco room: the English guest room bathroom. To step from the Tudor-style English Room into the bathroom visitors are taken aback by the geometric black, red and cream tile. The tile was so out of character from that found in other rooms of The Hall that for several weeks in 1928, the contractors debated whether the delivery of the tile was a mistake. When the architect wrote a questioning note to Mrs. Wilson, convinced that she would hate the tile when she saw it in person, she coolly responded that it was exactly as she chose.

Many Art Deco designers and architects had studied the Beaux-Arts method, which taught that everything from the window views from inside to outside to door knobs and ceilings were integral parts of a room or building's final construction. Meadow Brook Hall's architect, William Kapp, was trained in Beaux-Arts, so every detail of the English bathroom fits the Art Deco aesthetic, even if perhaps he did not like it himself. It seems the Wilsons were well-versed in the style as they sent several notes to their architect reminding him that the toilet and other plumbing fixtures in the room were to be black. The bath curtains, mats and towels were custom-made with black and red fabrics and embroidered with Matilda Rausch Wilson's very modern monogram. The bathroom vanity was the coup de grace of this modern room, and so Art Deco in style that it was literally imported from France (where most elements in the house were American-made).

The wrought iron and brass mirror and vanity console were made by Hibou of Paris. The sloping triangular console was wall-mounted, while the

mirror, patterned like waves, hangs above. The dancing woman at the center of the console embodies the spirit and freedom of not only Art Deco, but also the “roaring” 1920s.

Though it looks like a 16th-century English country house, as Matilda Wilson said, “to me, Meadow Brook Hall is really American.” And it is. Created by its own strong and spirited Art Deco couple, The Hall is thoroughly modern, thoroughly unique and still impressing with its architecture and interior design after nearly 90 years. **MB**

Facing page, English room bathroom; this page, details of bathroom console from France.



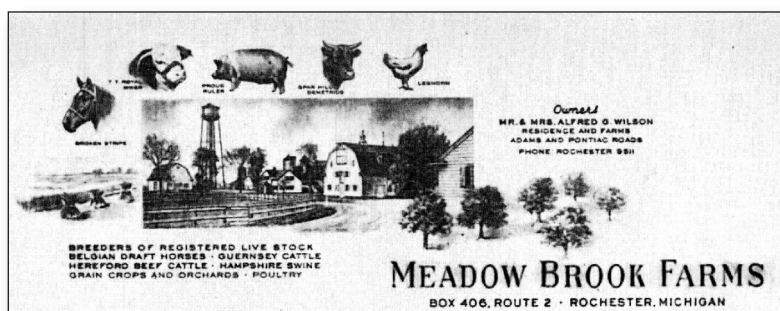


THE LURE OF THE LAND

From family farm to thriving business –
Meadow Brook Farms, 1920-1957

*“We like to think of it as
a real farm; we haven’t
the slightest objection to
seeing the cattle from
our window; we want to
keep as much as possible
the country feeling.”*

– Matilda Wilson



BY KIM ZELINSKI

Third of four parts

In the aftermath of automaker John Dodge’s death in January of 1920, Matilda Dodge, although endowed with profound inner strength, experienced a dramatic shift in her life. A widow with three young children at age 36, she also assumed enormous responsibilities as a major automotive industrialist, particularly for a woman of her time. In addition to the matters of a thriving motor car company, the fate of the couple’s three domestic properties also rested in her hands.

While the decision to complete their new mansion in Grosse Pointe, Michigan wavered in the ensuing years, Matilda decidedly sold their home in Detroit and without the slightest trepidation, retained the one property that had brought their family the greatest joy – Meadow Brook Farms in rural Rochester. In addition to the camaraderie of the animals

and pets and the rewards of growing her own food, she also loved the idea of a sporting life and the freedom that only country life could provide. She was not intimidated by the management of the farm, instead trusted the educational principle that you “learn by doing” and relied on a personal trait of “never being satisfied to turn details over to someone else.”

*“Everything on the farm
had her hand it.”*

*—Judy Johnson, granddaughter of
John and Matilda Dodge*

Meadow Brook Farms was somewhat inactive during the years following John’s death. Matilda all but closed it up prior to her year-long trip to Europe in 1922 and 1923, disposing of the stock before leaving. It wasn’t until 1924 that activity resumed when she began to purchase 12 adjacent farms (in some cases hiring the owner to work them) increasing her property size from just under 800 acres to around 1,400 acres, an investment of more than \$200,000. The motivation for this real estate accumulation didn’t fully unfold until 1925 when she married Alfred Wilson and they decided to build a permanent residence, Meadow Brook Hall, on the farm property.

That same year, the Wilsons commissioned landscape engineer Charles Leavitt to create a second master plan (his first was proposed to John and Matilda Dodge in 1917) that allowed them to envision the full potential of the property, one that incorporated a grand residence, numerous recreational facilities and a robust farming operation. As the construction of Meadow Brook

Hall began in the Fall of 1926, so did the build-up of farming activity.

Changes to old farmstead began immediately, some barns were torn down while others were relocated to new sites. Between 1926 and 1938, twenty new farming buildings were constructed and developed into separate and distinct groupings, including barns, paddocks and granaries.

The Wilsons commissioned Jamesway Manufacturing Company to produce blueprint drawings for each farm group that were then turned over to local carpenter Frank Rewold to construct. Rewold was one of Matilda most valued employees and right-hand man who Richard Wilson, (son of Alfred and Matilda) recalls “did everything.”

Rewold employed a crew of about 10 men who, when not constructing farm buildings, did a variety of other tasks including grading roads, building fences, hauling materials and carpentry repairs. As one of the largest employers in, and supporters of, Rochester, the Wilsons insisted that when work contracts or materials needed to be purchased, they did so in that village.

Systematically, Matilda and Alfred expanded the farm group and took charge of the planning and construction details. The barns were equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, the first of its kind in some cases. Starting in 1926, they also began to buy pedigree stock: Hereford and Guernsey cows, Hampshire hogs and sheep. The poultry group was stocked with

leghorn chickens, turkeys, squab and pigeons. Managers were hired for each farm group and the Wilsons divided the duties of oversight. In addition to running Meadow Brook Hall, Matilda managed the horses (Belgians, Hackneys and Shetlands) and the dairy operation; Alfred managed the sheep, cattle and hogs, and together they oversaw the poultry group.

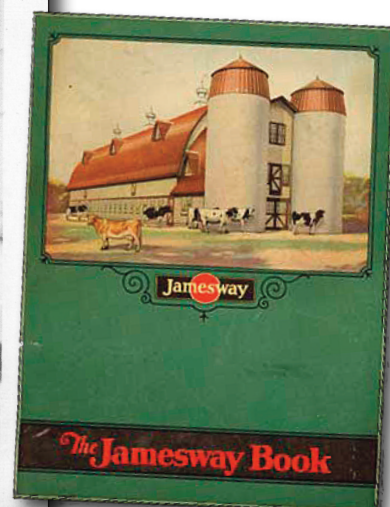
HEREFORD DISPERSION

*Mr. and Mrs. Alfred G. Wilson
Welcome You to Meadow Brook Farm*



**PICTURE TAKEN IN FRONT OF MEADOW BROOK HALL.
TT ROYAL MIXER 6TH, IN THIS SALE**

ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN



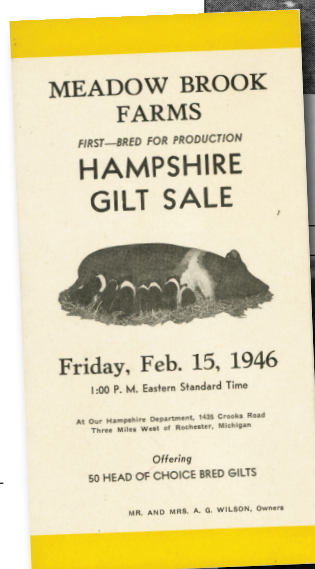
*Opposite: Dairy group, c 1940;
above, Jamesway barn plans
catalog, c 1928.*

“Farming is a business.”

— Matilda Wilson in a 1931 newspaper
interview

In 1931, Matilda was elected to the Michigan Board of Agriculture, an honor owing to both her stature with civic and business organizations and in recognition of the farm’s newly respected standing as serious agricultural enterprise. Referred to as a “real food factory of the business type” by a local newspaper, the farm was in fact, just that. Every operation or activity on the estate was assigned a budget. If the Meadow Brook Hall kitchen needed chickens or eggs from the poultry group or meat from the beef department, purchases were made from that department and money actually changed hands.

Around 1942, the Wilsons expanded the farms business operation, deciding to breed for production Hereford and Guernsey cows and Hampshire hogs. No expense or effort was spared in their efforts to obtain good foundational stock, all carefully selected for bloodline, type, conformation and even show ring ability.

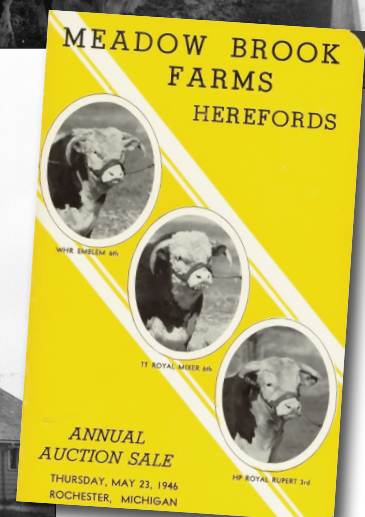


Group Picture of Gilts In This Sale

Taken at Six Months of Age, Showing Uniformity, Growth and Quality Offered



This group of gilts were all bred and raised on Meadow Brook Farms. It is good proof that we are on the right track in the production of better type Hampshires.



Under Alfred's purview, new barns for the hogs, cattle and sheep were constructed and equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, including the installation of heaters that were far better than found in most domestic homes. He was known for being the more frugal of the pair, yet, for the most part, happy to break even. Breeding production for the Hampshire sows averaged around 100 young each year, while the Herefords averaged about 25 head. He was most successful with the sheep, his one operation that made a profit primarily because it could operate 12 months a year.

In the dairy operation, Matilda was believed to have the finest Guernsey herd in the Midwest, importing stock from the island of Guernsey, England, itself. The cows were milked twice a day, some of which was bottled, the cream still floating at the top, and brought down to the Hall's kitchen by a team of Belgian horses. Butter was made in the Creamery three times a week, producing hundreds of pounds each month most of which was sold to the market in specially designed Meadow Brook Farms packaging. During World War II, Matilda gave as Christmas gifts to friends and employees a pound of butter each, a well-received gift in times of food rationing.



"At one time, I had 1,000 laying hens and a huge flock of turkey"

— MRW

The Poultry Group was established in 1938. While most farms kept between 50 and 300 birds, the Meadow Brook Farms poultry operation numbered nearly 1,000. Matilda and Alfred sought advice on both development and operation from a Michigan State University poultry extension expert by the name of John Hannah. Hannah

later became the president of Michigan State and was instrumental in helping the Wilsons arrange the donation of their property to MSU to found Oakland University.

The poultry group consisted of five buildings including a laying house (which was one of the first to have raised wire cages so the birds' feet never touched the ground), a processing/dressing house, incubation house, an office/service building and the farm manager's home. Such modern amenities as a refrigeration system were installed to help maintain poultry and egg temperatures.



Opposite: top, Hampshire pigs, c 1946; middle, Hereford cows, c 1946; bottom, all-steel silo/granary at Hereford cow barn, c 1945. Above: interior of Creamery, c 1940; left, Dairy Office/Creamery, c 1940.

“Self-sufficiency is what we strove for back then.”

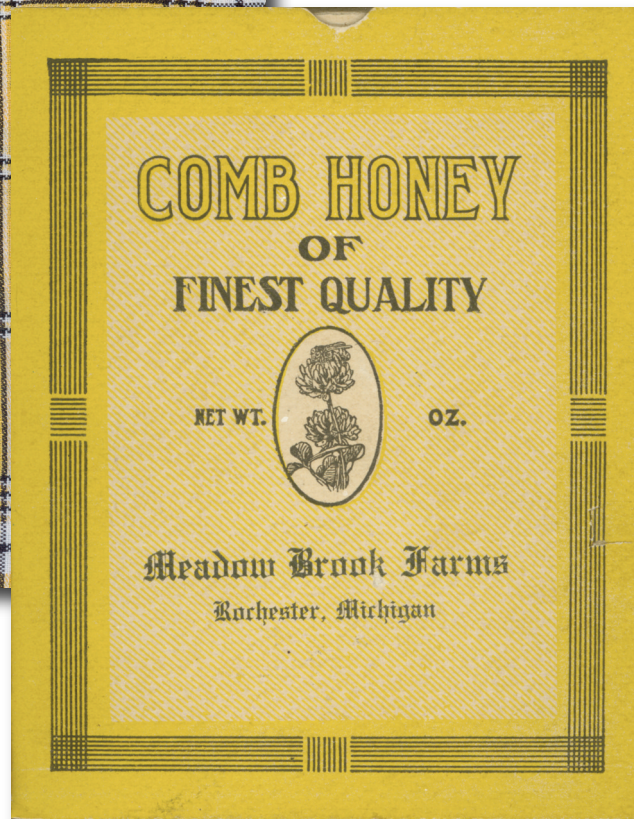
– Barbara Wilson, daughter of Alfred and Matilda

Acres of grain supplied the feed for the herds and flocks of animals on the farm: oats, wheat, rye, alfalfa, clover and corn, all stored in cribs or in one of the seven silos, including some that were all metal and the first of their kind. The food supply for the residents and workers on the estate included acres of vegetables and fruits – stored in the root cellars or canned in the fall. Barbara Wilson recalls the family having a victory garden during WWII and trading rationed shoe stamps for sugar so they could can.

The orchard, boasted an inventory of more than 700 fruit trees. During harvest time, the Wilsons employed workers from Jamaica to pick the hundreds of bushels of apples, pears and cherries. While some of the fruit was stored in the root cellars, some was taken to market and in later years, the harvest was so bountiful that the Wilsons shared the excess free of charge with students at Michigan State University.

For Richard and Barbara Wilson, Meadow Brook Farms was always referred to as just “the farm,” rather than Meadow Brook or The Hall. Barbara recalls growing up around animals, the Sunday evening drives around the farm with her parents, riding on the hay wagons and during the harvest season, helping with canning.

Richard’s involvement was as a bit more laborious. Beginning at the age of 12, Alfred and Matilda insisted that he work during the summer months, getting paid what he referred to as “very little” to clean out pig pens and tend to the cattle. He especially liked the cattle, checking on them, tak-



Opposite: Alfred Wilson (top row, second from right) with farm staff, c 1940; middle, farmhand Bert Rewold (brother of Frank Rewold), c 1935; bottom, Guernsey cow barn, c 1957.

ing head counts and rounding them up from the fields at the end of the day.

“People made this place.”

— Richard Wilson, son of Alfred and Matilda

Employees, like carpenter Frank Rewold, farm manager Art Ferguson and head dairy herdsman Frank Gay, all could have made a living doing other things, but they stayed because they loved the farm and felt privileged to have the opportunity – and the fair treatment – that very few others in those times had.

In the summer, the Wilsons also hired the older children of their employees, paying them for jobs such as picking up apples and, as they grew older, baling hay, planting crops and filling the seven silos with grain.

It was, however, not all work for the offspring. With a thousand acres to play on, their fondest memories include hay rides, playing basketball on the second floor of the hay barn, roller skating down the cement alleyways of the cow barns and battling it out with a BB gun in the horse barn. For the late Barbara Gay Thorpe, daughter of Frank Gay, the barns were her childhood theatre where she could sing and dance on the platforms.

“She [Matilda] knows more about the operation of MB Farms than any man working on it. She can outwork any man on the estate.” *Newspaper article, 1931.*

Slowly, the farming operation began to wind down when in 1957 the Wilsons donated their by-then 1,500-acre estate to Michigan State University to found Oakland University. The stock was sold off and paddocks graded in preparation for new university build-

ings. During the transition, many farm buildings were utilized by the students; the Dairy Barn was adapted as a student theatre, the granaries used for

storage, the chicken coops were used as classrooms and the Implement Shed was a temporary motor pool.

Matilda and Alfred Wilson and their four

children lived a full life on the farm, developing it into a 2,000-acre-plus agricultural enterprise that included state-of-the-art farm buildings and the finest breeding stock.

Matilda often expressed her sentiment that “we like to think of it as a real farm, we haven’t the slightest objection to seeing the cattle from our window, we want to keep as much as possible the country feeling.” And, Meadow Brook

Farms was just that. It was, as Judy Johnson recalls “the lifestyle of a couple who believed it was something of value. Matilda and Alfred – rather than worrying if the eggs were being produced properly or there was going to be enough rain to grow decent plums or pears – could have spent their entire lives sitting on a boat in the Mexican or French Riviera. Yet, they chose not to do that, they chose to produce something of important value. I don’t know what drives people, but that’s what my grandparents were like.” **MB**

Editor’s note: Originally planned as a two-part series, the author has discovered enough new material on the farm to extend the series to four parts. Fall 2016: Part Four, “Recreational Pursuits.”





ADOPT AN ARTIFACT

TURNING THE PAGE

Restoration Planned for the Library

BY MADELYN RZADKOWOLSKI

The restoration of Meadow Brook's Library calls for creativity. Most of the textiles have aged due to time, sun and touching... and can never be replaced. Some of the room's original characteristics – like more intimate seating arrangements and table lamps (rather than chandeliers) – can never be replicated because the space is so often used for events and tours, honoring the Wilsons' tradition of using their home for parties and community events.

Lighting has taken its toll on other areas of the room and house in general. To combat this, The Hall will debut a new preventative lighting project in the Library. The cleaning of John Dodge's portrait will have great impact because of the recent invention of LED bulbs compatible with Meadow Brook's painting light fixtures. If it tests well for heat, UV rays and appearance, the rest of the painting light fixtures in the house will gradually shift to LED.

Sticking with the lighting theme in the adjacent Organ Alcove, the Tiffany Studios chandelier will be rewired so the bulbs hang at the proper height.

The Knoll sofa was moved from the window bay and now blocks access to the south wall of bookshelves. As awkward as this placement is, it protects the couch from further sun damage, and we will take this opportunity to educate guests on the irreparable damage of sun bleaching. Once a pine green, the silk brocade has faded to a golden mint color. The brocade is irreplaceable, but a textile conservator will stabilize the antique tapestry on the seat back. Well-intentioned repairs were attempted in the past when a noticeably modern trim was applied to hide tears in the fabric. This trim will be removed and replaced with a more historic-looking example. Most of the labor will be done in-house to keep repair costs down.

Though most of the work will be done in the Curatorial department, an Oakland University student will be hired to create a new and in-depth digital record of the hundreds of original books in the Library. The student will also be taught to properly handle and clean the books.



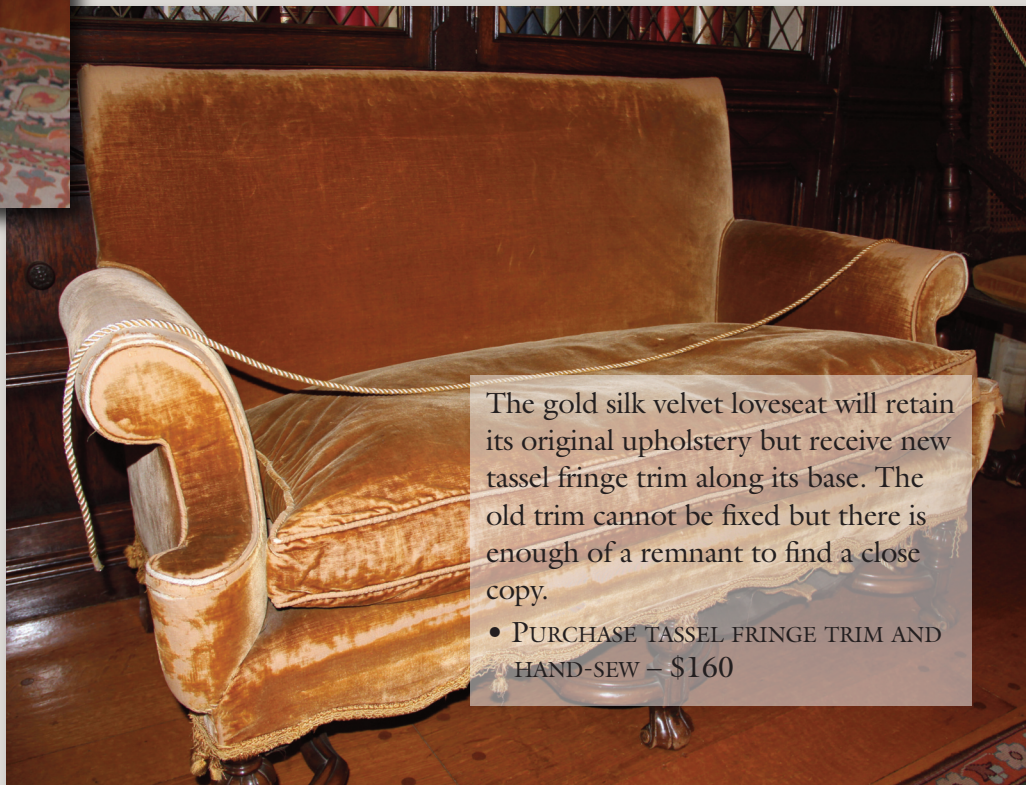
UP FOR ADOPTION

The Genoese velvet that once covered the pink satin wing chair has been located and will be made into a pillow while the chair will be re-upholstered in a close copy of the original fabric.

- REUPHOLSTER QUEEN ANNE STYLE WING CHAIR – \$1,170
- PURCHASE 10 YARDS FABRIC FOR CHAIR AND FOOT STOOL – \$1,000
- REUPHOLSTER FOOT STOOL – \$235
- MAKE PILLOW WITH THE ORIGINAL GENOESE VELVET – \$200

ADDITIONAL ADOPTIONS

- CLEAN TURKISH RUG THAT MEASURES 15' x 27' – \$750 to clean, \$300 to stain shield
- PURCHASE NEW TABLE PADS FOR REFECTORY TABLE – \$480
- CONSERVE TAPESTRY ON BACK OF KNOLL COUCH – \$1,000
- PURCHASE NEW TRIMMING FOR KNOLL COUCH – \$400
- REPAIR KNOLL COUCH (IN-HOUSE) – \$1,000
- PURCHASE CONSERVATOR SUPPLIES TO CLEAN TAPESTRIED FURNITURE – \$66 and \$30
- PURCHASE CONSERVATOR SUPPLIES TO CLEAN BOOKS (IN-HOUSE) – \$25
- CLEAN LOUIS BETTS PORTRAIT OF JOHN DODGE – \$800 (ADOPTED)
- HIRE OAKLAND UNIVERSITY STUDENT FOR DIGITIZATION AND RESEARCH PROJECT IN LIBRARY – \$10/hour. Adopt any amount of hours up to a total of 500 hours.
- RESTORE A BREAK AND THE CANE IN CARVED ANTIQUE OPEN ARM CHAIR – \$565
- RESTORE CANE SEATS IN A PAIR OF CARVED OAK SIDE CHAIRS – 2 adoptees at \$475 each
- UPGRADE WIRING IN TIFFANY STUDIOS CHANDELIER (BY ELECTRICIAN) – \$200
- RESTORE TIFFANY STUDIOS CHANDELIER TO ORIGINAL CONDITION – \$200



The gold silk velvet loveseat will retain its original upholstery but receive new tassel fringe trim along its base. The old trim cannot be fixed but there is enough of a remnant to find a close copy.

- PURCHASE TASSEL FRINGE TRIM AND HAND-SEW – \$160



COMPLETED

SUN PORCH AND BREAKFAST ROOM

The successful management of a self-supporting historic house museum requires passionate volunteers and employees, a supportive community and the willingness – and bravery – to experiment. Meadow Brook Hall’s launch of its latest experiment in fundraising, the Adopt-an-Artifact program, was not only a total success, but also created a blueprint by which The Hall hopes to continue raising funds for conservation and restoration.

The Breakfast Room and Sun Porch have been restored and were “revealed” to donors in early May. The work that was done not only restored the appearances of the rooms but also helped preserve their original features. **MB**



2015 MEADOW BROOK HALL DONOR REPORT

(GIFTS RECEIVED JANUARY 1, 2015 – DECEMBER 31, 2015)

TUDOR CIRCLE (\$10,000 AND HIGHER)

International Paper Company Foundation – Roger B. and Barbara R. Smith
The Kresge Foundation
Matilda R. Wilson Fund
MotorCities National Heritage Area
Oakland University Credit Union
The W.J. & Lillian Kemler Foundation – Margaret K. Savage

PEGASUS CIRCLE (\$5,000 – \$9,999)

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Gary & Ann Laidlaw

TIFFANY CIRCLE (\$2,500 – \$4,999)

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Richard & Deborah Lee

THE CORNERSTONE SOCIETY (\$1,000 – \$2,499)

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Northern Trust Bank
Mary Sloan & Jeff Lichty
Stoney Creek Questers #203
Geoffrey C. and Suzanne E. Upward
Village of Rochester Hills
Wells Fargo Foundation
Larry & Debbie Wilson

**Deceased*



THE GUILDERS OF MEADOW BROOK (\$250 – \$999)

Keith* & Barbara Bennett
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Carolyn Ress
Bradley & Holly Rush
Sanford Rose Associates
Frank & Susan Sonye
Michael St. Pierre
Stonebridge Farms & Retreat
Sturdy Grinding & Machining
Deborah Syme
Bradley & Simone Taylor
Pete & Irene Townsend
Troy Garden Club
David Vartanian
Richard & Judy Ward

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BROOK HALL**
(\$100 – \$249)

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Paula D'Ambrosio
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Sharon Fisher
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Linda Fleischer
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Lynn Oates
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Adam Panchenko
Gregory & Kristine Payne
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David & Michelle Powell
Craig & Rose Marie Prasatek
Debra Privert
Susan Riley

David & Peggy Rinehart
Cathy Ritondale
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Margaret Robbins
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Nicole Thomas
Mary Sue Trevarrow
Robert Ufer
Cheryl Verbruggen
Edward Walford
James & Sharon Walk
Denise Warren
Thomas & Kathleen Wencil
Donovan Wentworth
Christopher & Toni Wiley
William Wozniak
Kim Zelinski

**Deceased*

The farm no money could buy



Given the enormous wealth inherited by Matilda Dodge Wilson, it's hard to believe there was one prize, despite several generous offers, her money couldn't buy. In the heart of the 800 acres of farm property Matilda acquired between 1924 and 1926 was a 200-acre tract, known as Lone Dale Stock Farm, whose owner, 82-year-old Thomas Barnett, refused to sell to her at any cost.

Barnett, despite being aware that Matilda purchased 12 neighboring farms at prices well above local real estate values, was not enticed to give up the place he and his family had called home for 60 years.

While the average price for Rochester-area farm property was valued around \$70 an acre, Matilda paid the 12 owners between \$200 and \$550 an acre, and in one case \$800. Had Barnett agreed, he would have made nearly \$750 per acre – a profit he acknowledged would have made him “rich beyond the wildest dreams of my boyhood, but what's the use? All I ask for of the remainder of my life is the peace, contentment and happiness of the old home.”

With the exception of a one small two-acre parcel, the property was eventually purchased by Oakland University in the 1970s. **MB**

Weddings at The Great Estate



Theresa Finck Photography

TIMELESS ♦ ELEGANT ♦ PERFECT



www.meadowbrookhall.org

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Kosher catering available



Meadow Brook

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Permit No. 17

Museum Store



\$28.95 / \$26.06 MBH Members

Art Deco Floral Tote

In 1922, Matilda Dodge took her three children on an educational tour of Europe, spending almost a year living in a villa in Nice, France. While there, she fell in love with French art, architecture and fashion – most especially, the avant-garde clothes designed by the legendary Art Deco designer, Paul Poiret (1879-1944.) During one of Matilda's trips to Paris in the 1920s, she purchased three exceptionally rare hand-knotted wool rugs from Poiret, which she placed in the lower level Fountain Room at Meadow Brook Hall (*one of the rugs is at right and on p.15*). The bold colors and patterns exemplify Poiret's innovative and modern design aesthetic.

Poiret's exquisite floral design featuring bright yellow, orange, purple and green hues were the inspiration for our new tapestry tote bag, made right here in the USA.



Visit the Museum Store, order online at
www.meadowbrookhall.org/shop or call (248) 364-6206.