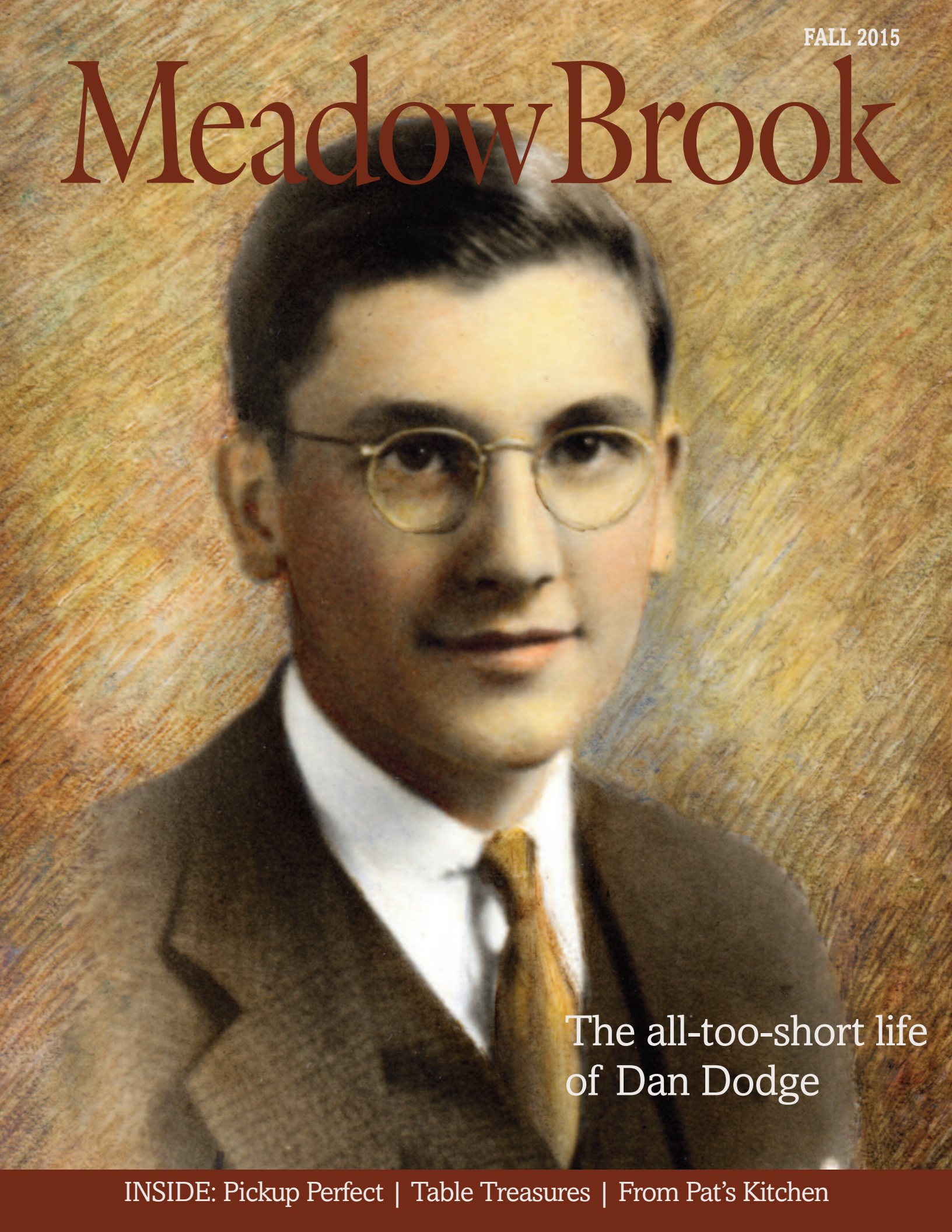


FALL 2015

# Meadow Brook



The all-too-short life  
of Dan Dodge

INSIDE: Pickup Perfect | Table Treasures | From Pat's Kitchen

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*Daniel Dodge, 1936. Colored photo by John Henderson*

# 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

### Early adopters

This issue of MEADOW BROOK MAGAZINE, like so many others, highlights contributions of varied friends and supporters – all of whom have one thing in common: the preservation of an 88,000-square-foot building and its 75,000 collection items. And, let's not overlook our grounds, gardens and outbuildings!

But, of all the contributors over the past six months, I find the story of one group to be the most compelling. We have dubbed them the “early adopters,” those individuals and groups who figuratively adopted the conservation of objects and finishes in the Breakfast Room and Sun Porch through their contributions.

We introduced the Adopt-an-Artifact program in the Spring issue of the magazine. The results thus far have been nothing short of amazing and heartening as well (see related article on page 4). Thanks to roughly 20 individuals, the Matilda R. Wilson Fund and the Meadow Brook Ladies' Committee, almost all the needy objects in the two rooms have been conserved or are in the process of repair and restoration.

I am proud to say that my wife, Suzanne, and I can be counted in the initial group. We were married on the Sun Porch on the first evening of the Holiday Walk last year, so that room holds special meaning to us. When Curator Madelyn Rzadkowolski was sharing the program highlights with Cornerstone Society members at a dinner this past summer, she revealed that several Sun Porch objects had yet to be adopted. Suzanne and I readily raised our hands to fund the cleaning and restoration of two rattan fan-back chairs – objects that have been part of the Wilsons' home since 1929.

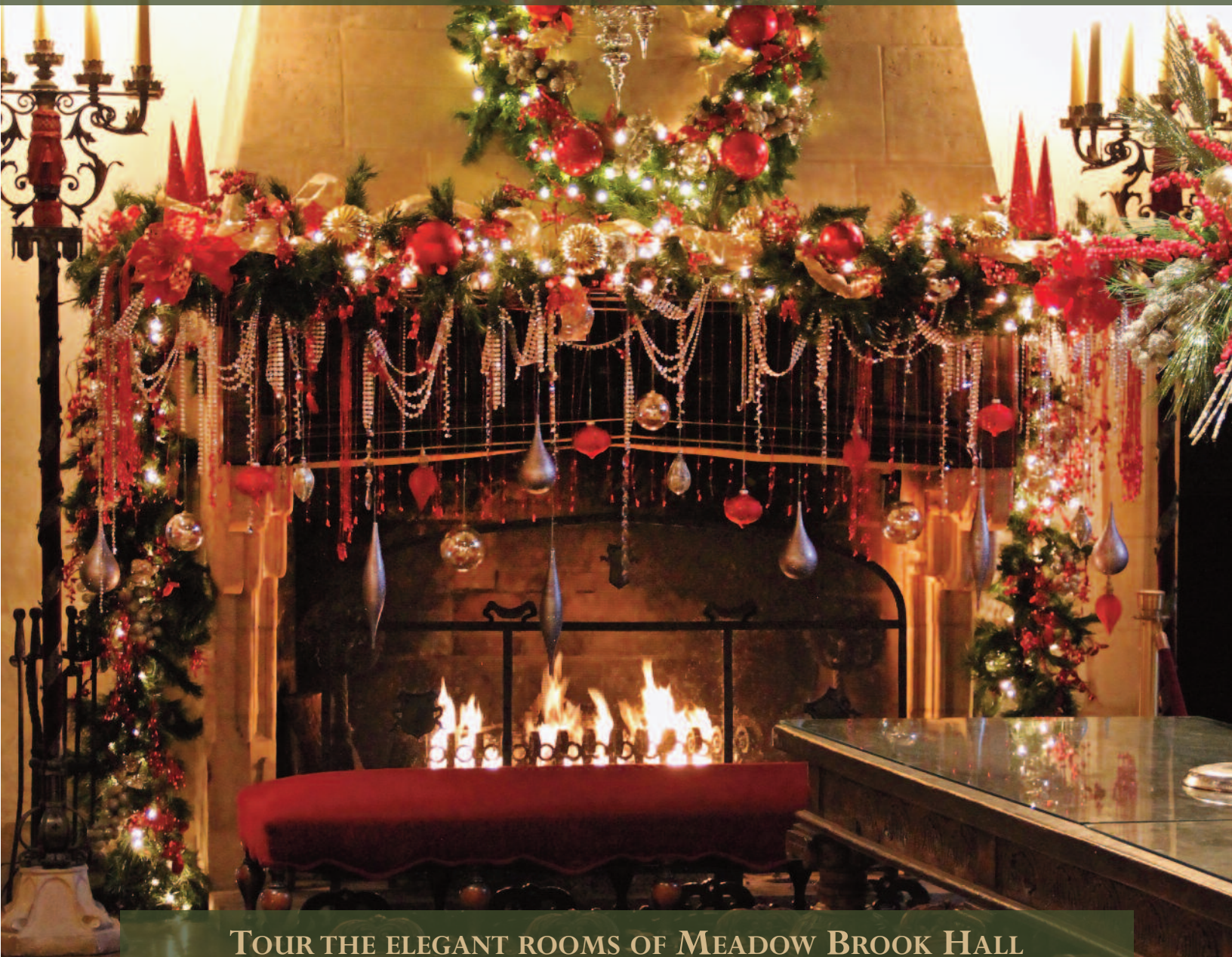
In addition to the chairs, friends have funded conservation and upholstering of bamboo furniture, the rug, a Majolica-style urn, a 1930s croquet set and a hanging pewter tray from India. In the Breakfast Room, the dining table, chairs, sideboard, chandelier shades, two Japanese embroideries and marble floor have all been saved.

We will be celebrating completion of the rooms and thanking contributors at a Hall gathering in 2016. Around that time, we will be revealing another subset of artifacts in serious need of conservation. We hope we can count on you to raise your hands and join our adoption program.



*Meadow Brook Hall presents its 44th annual*  
**HOLIDAY WALK**

November 27-December 23



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*\*Last admittance one hour prior to closing. Reservations are not required.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TICKET PRICES VISIT [MEADOWBROOKHALL.ORG](http://MEADOWBROOKHALL.ORG)

## Tea for the tiller women

This past August, the Michigan division of the Women's National Farm and Garden Association held its annual International Tea at Meadow Brook Hall against a backdrop of glorious gardens and a fitting tribute to its former national president, Matilda Wilson.

The International Tea is the association's annual fundraising event that supports the Michigan International 4-H Youth Exchange, a program through which high school age youths can study abroad. This year marked the association's 62nd year of hosting the event and was reminiscent of the International Tea that Matilda Wilson hosted at Meadow Brook Hall 50 years ago.

Hosted this year by the Troy Garden

Club, the event was attended by nearly 300 members and guests, including two exchange students, one from Kyrgyzstan and the other from the Ukraine. The program included a lunch in the garden tent, a historical overview of The Hall's gardens presented by Director of Museum Operations Kim Zelinski and a garden tour presented by the Meadow Brook garden club, an ener-

getic group of dedicated volunteers who have kept The Hall's gardens and grounds looking beautiful for nearly 20 years.



PHOTO BY: SARAH PURLEE

## Adopting Success

Meadow Brook's inaugural Adopt-an-Artifact program was launched in June of 2015 with the bold goal to completely restore both the Breakfast Room and the Sun Porch to their 1929 splendor. The program, which allows individuals or groups to select and sponsor an artifact or artifacts for conservation or restoration, has been a resounding success thus far.

With more than \$9,000 in private adoptions, \$10,000 from the Matilda R. Wilson Fund matching grant program, and \$20,000 from the fundraising events sponsored by the Meadow Brook Ladies' Committee, both rooms will be nearly fully restored. "When we started this program, we could only hope the community would believe in it and support us by adopting objects," Curator Madelyn Rzadkowolski said. "It is unbelievable that only three months later, our friends and volunteers helped us achieve our goal."

Work has already begun on the rooms and objects and will continue for the next six months. The rooms will be revealed at a reception for all of the adopting sponsors in 2016. The next round of objects available for adoption will be released then.



# Picture Perfect

Over the past 45 years, one noticeable obstacle has kept Meadow Brook Hall from appearing as it did when the Wilson family lived there. After Matilda R. Wilson's death in 1967, some of the most valuable fine art and sculptures were sold or bequeathed in her name. Though other paintings were moved around to fill in the empty walls, guests would never again see Gilbert Stuart's *George Washington* hanging in the dining room, Anthony Van Dyck's 6-foot-tall *Prince of Bracciano Orsini* in the Great Hall, or the equally massive *Caroline, Duchess of Marlborough* by Sir Joshua Reynolds, a gift from Dan Dodge to his mother, which hung in the ballroom.

But never say never. Two years ago, Meadow Brook began searching for the paintings in the hope of creating high-quality replicas to hang in The Hall. Of the twelve paintings that were sold or gifted, eight have been located in public

Reproduction of *Portrait of an Officer in Plumed Hat*.

or private hands. Seven of the current owners or caretakers have given Meadow Brook Hall images of the paintings and permission to reproduce them for this project. The first one now hangs opposite the front door in the Great Hall: a replica of *Portrait of an Officer in a Plumed Hat* from the School of Rembrandt was provided by our friends at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Meadow Brook is in the process of finding the funds to have high-quality painting and frame replicas made of the other six ... and maybe someday all 12.



# Welcome Jill!

We are pleased to introduce Jillian Gust as the new Director of Administration and Finance, a key position in the Meadow Brook Hall operation.

Jill joined the staff at Meadow Brook this past

June by way of Oakland University's finance division, serving four years as the university's manager of accounts payable. Prior to



Jillian Gust

that, she held various financial positions at RGIS World Headquarters in Auburn Hills and BestBuy in Novi. Her educational background includes a B.A. in Finance from the Eli Broad College of Business at Michigan State.

Jill will apply her experience in identifying and implementing process improvements to The Hall's finance department which includes financial management, business operations and administration.

"Having the opportunity to manage a self-supporting business of the caliber of Meadow Brook Hall is a dream come true," Jill said. "I am grateful for both the framework set up by my predecessor, Robin Gardner, and for such a great group of colleagues to work with.

"Yes, we have daily financial and operational challenges, but this incredible building and the history it represents are worthy of our most inspired and dedicated efforts."



Lydia Lohrer

## Dodge Sportsman Awardee

Meadow Brook presented its third annual Dodge Sportsman Award to Lydia Lohrer at the 8th annual Wild Game Dinner & Auction in September.

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



A professional archer, Lydia Lohrer became the first female co-host of an internationally televised hunting show in 1999,

"Huntress." Now she is hitting a new bull's-eye as a *Detroit Free Press* special writer.

Before her television debut, Lohrer was a columnist for *Michigan Out-of-Doors* magazine and the *Voice* newspapers (titled "Backwoods") and also hosted and produced a wildlife radio show for WJR-AM (760), as well as a television segment, "American Family Outdoors," providing tips to get families outdoors.

Lohrer is also a conservation educator with the goal of making sure no child is left inside. "Children decay in their seats playing video games not half as exciting as the outdoor adventure," she said. "I take them away from the screen and into the green."

The Wild Game Dinner & Auction, planned and executed each year with the assistance of a volunteer committee, is Meadow Brook's second-largest fundraiser.

## Security is job one

Meadow Brook Hall, in partnership with the Oakland University Police Department, has stepped up security measures to improve the overall protection of The Hall's buildings and collections through the integration of a new security program expected to be in full operation by the first of the year.

The program, developed from recommendations submitted by Architect's Security Group, Inc. – a consulting firm that specializes in museum and cultural property security – will greatly expand current practices with a new model that addresses security policies, procedures, personnel and hardware.

Key components to the program include upgrades and expansion of interior and exterior surveillance equipment and the addition of a second security surveillance post located at The Hall's back entrance. The program will also include the addition of a full-time security coordinator and part-time guards whose oversight will be managed by Oakland University's Chief of Police, Mark Gordon, and MBH Facility Operations Manager, Nikki Thomas.



According to Chief Gordon "The new initiatives will not only serve to better protect The Hall but will also improve overall safety for those who visit the site." Chief Gordon said "The historical value of Meadow Brook Hall is priceless and the added security equipment and protocols will serve to ensure that the house and the grounds will be better protected today and for years to come."



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

# Dynamic Duo

2014 was a great year for Meadow Brook Hall and our volunteers! This year among dozens of volunteers achieving milestones at our annual Volunteer Appreciation and Awards Dinner, we gave special recognition to two of our own for their achievements and contributions. Diane Gurzick, a longtime volunteer at The Hall, received her Gold Castle award for giving 50 hours of her time every year for 20 years. Diane is an invaluable member of the Meadow Brook Hall community, donating her time working in the rose garden as a member of the Meadow Brook Garden Club, as well as inside the house as a Hostess and making sure that the volunteer hours are recorded correctly. Always will-

ing to lend a hand and help new volunteers settle in, Diane's enthusiasm and dedication to The Hall is truly inspiring.

Each year, the Barbara Thorpe Memorial Award recognizes an individual, or couple, who habitually go above and beyond the call of duty in service to Meadow Brook Hall. This year's recipient, Hildy Fleming, is a docent inside The Hall. She makes the history of the home and family come alive when giving a tour, and is always willing to help out in any way that she can. Whether it's helping to clean some of the artifacts in our collection, helping prep The Hall for Holiday Walk, or taking on the challenge of being a Captain, Hildy em-



*Hildy Fleming*

braces the challenges with a positive attitude and always-present sense of humor.

Meadow Brook Hall is fortunate to have both Hildy and Diane on board as we pursue our mission. **MB**



*Diane Gurzick*





# *Pickup with a past*

1947 DODGE, JOB RATED, WC PICKUP


The newest addition to The Hall's small fleet of historic Dodge vehicles, including four owned by The Hall and four on loan, is a 1947 Dodge, Job Rated, WC pickup. The truck, highly desirable because of its streamlined styling, sloped windshield, long sleek front and rear fenders with embossed "speed lines" and a sharp "V" shaped grille, was exactly what The Hall was looking for to take on a much-needed role.

The truck was made possible by a \$20,000 gift from the estate of Francis C. and Betty McMath. Betty had been a volunteer at The Hall for years and the family felt the purchase of a historic vehicle was something Betty would have liked.

Nicknamed “Clarence” by its previous owner, the half-ton, short bed truck spent most of its years on a farm in Oregon before its most recent owner put it up for sale and The Hall’s good friends in the Dodge Brothers Club (an international club of collectors) found it for sale.

The truck will need some mechanical repairs but restoring it will not be too difficult since the model ran 8 years (1939-47). Parts are fairly abundant given so many were purchased by the

government and later sold off as surplus. These trucks also have some components in common with Dodge cars, which further bolsters the parts stream.

The ‘47 joins a long history of farm trucks used to support the Meadow Brook estate (beginning in 1908). Once restored and decaled with the Meadow Brook Farms logo, the truck will be utilized once again as a “working” vehicle for hauling equipment and for grounds maintenance. 



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# Great Expectations:

THE ALL-TOO-SHORT LIFE OF DANIEL G. DODGE



*Danny Dodge, c. 1937*

BY MADELYN RZADKOWOLSKI

On July 23, 1917, automobile magnate John and Matilda Dodge welcomed a second child into their lives. Shy but kind, Daniel George Dodge became known for his sense of humor and intense curiosity. As much as Dan loved exploring the world around him, particularly on camping trips across North America, he was most fascinated by a smaller world – the complex and intricate puzzles inside of machines. Tragically that curiosity would have unforeseen consequences.



## EARLY LIFE

Soon after Dan's birth, his parents decided to build a 100-room mansion in Grosse Pointe that would become their home as well as the home of maternal and paternal aunts, older sister Frances and future sister Anna Margaret. Located in a wealthy suburb of Detroit and near the best schools, with an indoor pool, ballroom, play places and a boat launch, it would have been the perfect place to raise the Dodge heirs.

Dan was John's second chance at having a son with the skills and drive to take over Dodge Brothers Motor Company, as his son by his first wife Ivy Hawkins, John Duval Dodge, was more taken with pursuits of pleasure and was eventually disinherited. Unfortunately, his father would never get a chance to see the man Dan would become.

Tragedy struck in January 1920 when John died, leaving his three children without a father and his dream home an empty shell that was never completed.

In 1922, the widowed Matilda took her family on a year-long trip to Europe to escape the grief and tumult in Detroit and to educate her children



about the larger world. Danny, as he was called when a youngster, played with monkeys, visited art museums, spoke French with his French governess and visited World War I battlefields. Matilda believed in life-long learning and demanded that even on vacations, her children receive meaningful education.

## CHANGING TIMES

After their return from France, 4-year-old Anna Margaret passed away from complications from the measles. Supporting the family during this time was a gregarious and charming bachelor, a deacon at the First Presbyterian Church in Detroit. Alfred Wilson wooed Matilda as well as her children, and in June 1925 the couple were married.

For the next three years, the Wilsons would devote their energy to constructing an 88,000-square-foot, 110-room home on their farm property in rural Rochester, 30 miles north of Detroit. Dan would have his own wing at Meadow Brook Hall, with a bedroom, guest room, and attic playroom outfitted with the interests of the 12 year old. But carvings of Robinson Crusoe, wall-mounted swords and a punching bag were eclipsed by Dan's real passion: flying. His wing boasts airplane-shaped light switches, framed photo-

graphs of airplanes and a printed map of the trans-Atlantic route of Charles Lindbergh, his hero.

Hidden details in Meadow Brook Hall's ballroom reveal another role model of Dan's, the actor and comedian Charlie Chaplin. Dan loved taking photographs and making home films. Those who got to know the Dan behind the camera knew him as a jokester who loved to make people laugh. One time, Dan



brought winter indoors at Meadow Brook Hall, chasing his mother through the halls with snowballs, much to her amusement. Dan played with his much younger siblings, Richard and Barbara, making them laugh with joy and a measure of awe when they watched him race his Graham-Paige automobile around the grounds, sending dirt up in great clouds.

During his tumultuous childhood, one man remained a constant in

*Top to bottom: Danny on tricycle, 1919; with bodyguard Tom Compton, 1921; with sister Anna Margaret, mother Matilda and sister Frances, c. 1923.*



Top: Danny competing in horse show, c. 1929; fishing with friends at his Manitoulin Island lodge, c. 1936.



young Danny's life: his security guard and companion, "Tom" Erastus Waldo Compton. A war veteran who had once worked security at Dodge Brothers, Tom was hired as one of several body guards for John Dodge's children. Tom was a driving force in Dan's life, teaching him to hunt, fish and camp.

## ADVENTURE SEEKER

By the time Dan was 10 years old, Compton was taking him on yearly camping trips across North America. They were sometimes accompanied by Dan's best friends and cousins, Don and Oliver Wilson. In one of the postcards sent home from camping, Dan joked that he forgot his swimming trunks and was forced to wear his "BVDs" in the lake. The boys' most unusual camping trip was at Meadow Brook Hall: they were the first ones to sleep in the unfinished mansion.

In the summer of 1930, Dan



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*The Electric Roadster*

took a lengthy road trip throughout Michigan, the Upper Peninsula, and across the plains states to California. Only 13 years old, he was accompanied by Tom Compton. Along with postcards sent home, Dan kept a daily journal to document their activities and the things he learned along the way. By the end of the trip, Dan estimated they had traveled a distance of 4,727 miles by auto, train, bus and ferry.

While sister Frances took their parents on a 6-month world tour in 1934, Dan continued his studies at The Choate School in Connecticut. When the school year ended, he took a train to New York City where he sailed at midnight on the *SS Bremen* to meet his family who were attending horse shows in England.

## NEED FOR SPEED

Daniel, too, engaged in the family's equestrian pursuits, even winning several times as he followed sister Frances to horse racing competitions across the Midwest. But Dan's real passion was with machinery. Of her 16-year-old brother's hobbies, Frances said, "[Dan] isn't very interested in horses. He spends all the time he can with boats and tinkering and mechanics."

A childhood toy was an expensive Doll et Cie steam engine from Germany, a small, yet complex machine with which he operated a miniature drill press and grinder, somewhat like his father would have had in his own machine shops. Also like his fa-

ther, young Dan loved speed. At 10 years old, he was gifted a Red Bug, an electric go-cart that farm staff recalled him racing around in, making pit stops to observe the construction of Meadow Brook Hall. A break on the front of his Red Bug

and the piece of wood crudely nailed behind the gas pedal suggest Dan was permanently reprimanded for driving too dangerously. The Red Bug's missing engine today was likely a casualty of tinkering; throughout his life, he seemed unable to keep himself from taking machines apart to see how they worked and whether he could improve them.

## EDUCATIONAL PURSUITS

The Dodge-Wilson children attended Cranbrook schools in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, for elementary and middle school. Later, the family took a train east every fall, with Frances going to boarding school in Washington, D.C. and Dan to The Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut. Dan's parents made sure that he received the Sunday edition of both *The Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* while he was gone.

In the five years he attended Choate, Dan was on league teams for basketball, football and baseball, a valued member of varsity crew and



*Top to bottom: Danny with Choate skeet team, c. 1936; formal portrait, c. 1937; Danny's friend and pilot standing on his plane Osa Ark, c. 1937.*



wrestling teams, and a member of the gun club and skeet team.

Choate's headmaster recalled that Dan wasn't a remarkable student at the prep school but that he had a real knack for machines.

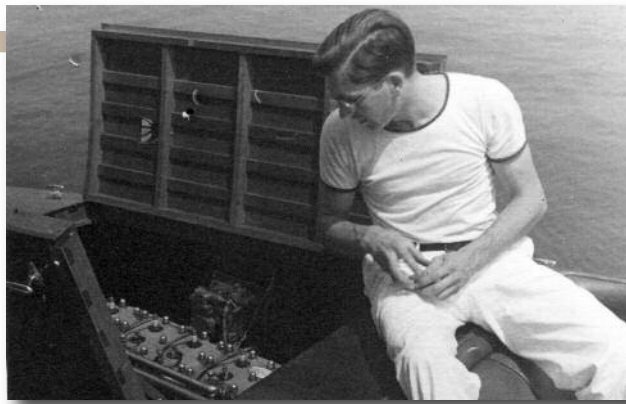
After watching the spritely 15-year-old buy an old Ford car for \$5 and somehow resurrect it with meager resources, the headmaster encouraged all of Dan's teachers to allow him to work some of his studies around engineering. Dan's aptitude and prowess with machines completely transformed him, and he even wrote an essay on diesel engines that would impact his future work life. After his death, Matilda donated the money to start the Daniel Dodge Shop in Detroit, a place where boys like Dan could learn practical skills like wood and metal working.



## BEST OF THE BEST

Though Dan eschewed much of the privilege and glamour awarded to him by his wealth, he wasn't afraid to spend his inheritance on the best transportation technology. In 1937, he added on a large workshop to his log cabin playhouse so he could tinker with his many vehicles. Beyond a 1937 custom Graham-Paige convertible coupe, he owned a 1936 Indian motorcycle, a Lockheed Model 12A Electra Jr. plane (one of 70 built), and a 1932 amphibian airplane called Osa's Ark (one of 110 built). The zebra-patterned plane was first used by legendary explorers Martin and Osa Johnson to take aerial film of Africa.

In 1937, 19-year-old Daniel Dodge signed the papers to incorporate his first business venture at a cost of \$50,000. A development company for automotive diesel engines, it was located in a factory on Woodward Avenue in Detroit, just 400 feet from the home where he had once lived with his father, John Dodge. Though Dan's early death prevented the company from any major business activity, its president and vice president were former high-

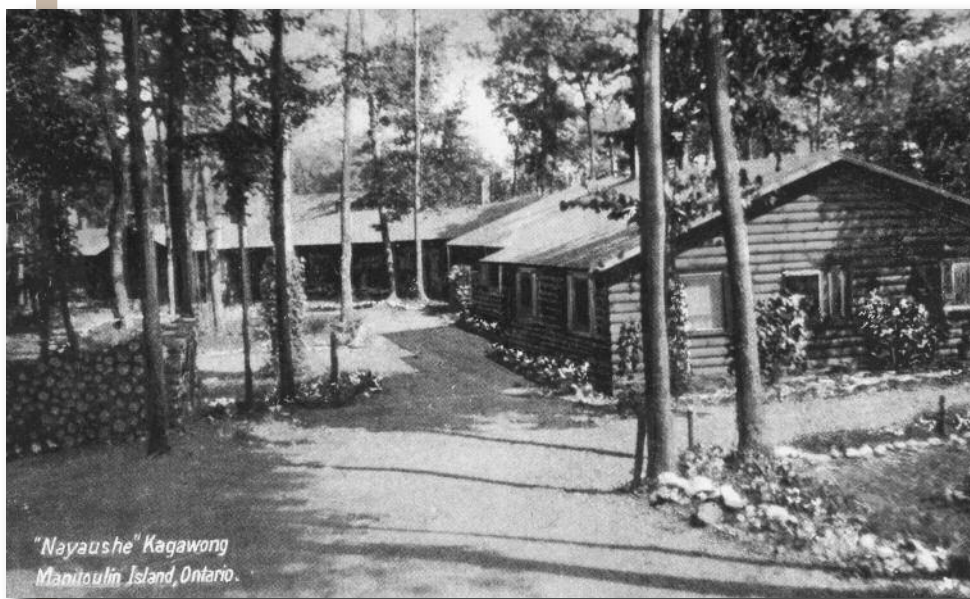


*Danny on boat at Manitoulin Island lodge, c. 1937*

ranking Ford executives William Mayo and Frank Klingensmith.

## A GREAT ESCAPE

When Dan Dodge was 17, he purchased a 10-bedroom lodge in Kagawong on Manitoulin Island, Ontario called "Camp Nayaushe." Dan retained the previous caretakers to maintain the lodge property and make meals, but on at least one occasion he brought his own snacks: pecans, cashews, and chocolate mints. He also brought a dozen rolls of 16mm Kodascope film to preserve his adventures in motion. The two-to-three-day journey to reach Kagawong from Rochester was shortened to three hours when Dan purchased his amphibian airplane in 1937.



*Manitoulin Island Lodge*

Camp Nayaushe was situated in a bay off Lake Huron, on which Dan regularly took his wood-hulled speedboat, rowing skull and even a surfboard. In the following years, he spent many summers there hunting, fishing and boating, often joined by his friends or

cousins. Like his father, who had owned a hunting lodge in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Dan found the lodge to be a respite from the societal pressures and pace of Detroit. To the local townspeople, Dan mattered more than his inheritance.

While spending time at his lodge, Dan met a local girl, Annie Laurine MacDonald, the island's telephone operator. Not only was she beautiful, she complemented his sense of adventure and love for the outdoors. Laurine's father said it was love at first sight for both of them. It wasn't long before the pair spoke of marriage, agreeing to wait until Laurine turned 21 on May 20 of 1938.

## LOVE AND AFFECTION

In 1938, Dan spent several months in Harper Hospital and at home recovering from mastoid surgery. Laurine visited Meadow Brook Hall for the first time to be with Dan. At the hospital, Dan surprised her with a 2.5-carat diamond engagement ring, cementing their fairy tale romance. On Sunday, May 22, 1938, some 30 guests came to Meadow Brook for a surprise engagement party for not only Laurine and Dan, but also his sister Frances and her beau, Jimmy Johnson. Dan wrote in the guest book, "The Greatest Day in All History of Meadowbrook Hall."

Only five weeks later, Dan walked



sister Frances down the winding staircase of Meadow Brook Hall and gave her away in a glamorous formal wedding ceremony in front of the living room fireplace. On August 2, 1938, Annie Laurine and Daniel married with significantly less pomp. Unlike Frances' 500-guest, \$25,000 wedding, Dan and Laurine's was an intimate reception for 8 people with punch and cake.

Still recovering from the lingering effects of his mastoid surgery, Dan decided to take a drive instead of fly to their honeymoon location on Camp Nayaushé. Once there, the newlyweds settled into an easy routine at their lodge. Back in Rochester, final renovations were being made on the home Matilda and Alfred had purchased for the new couple. "Lawnridge," located just across Dodge Road (now Adams) from Meadow Brook Farms, was originally built and occupied by Alfred's brother Donald and his family. Dan had spent much of his child-



*Danny with Annie Laurine on wedding day, 1938.*

hood in the warm home with his cousins Don Jr. and Oliver. The diesel engine company was stalled during Dan's absence.

On August 15, Dan and employee Frank Valiquette decided to try to light some dynamite, convinced it was too old to catch. Tragedy struck when the dynamite exploded immediately, injuring Dan, Valiquette, Laurine and caretaker Lloyd Bryant. The only person spared was Mrs. Bryant. The injured were quickly moved onto Dan's speedboat and Laurine began what should have been a 45-minute journey through choppy, stormy waters to reach a doctor on the other side of the bay. After two hours and only halfway across, Dan stood up, presumably to help Laurine steer, and instead fell off the boat. Dan's body would not be found for three weeks.

Upon hearing of the accident, Alfred Wilson departed immediately for Manitoulin and arrived the next morning to assist in the search. He and Matilda offered a reward for Dan's body, and even hired the inventor of a submarine to bring it and assist in the recovery. Frances and her husband left their honeymoon early to return to Rochester. On September 7, 1938, Dan's body was brought home to Meadow Brook Hall.

An injured Laurine returned to Meadow Brook Hall to recuperate. The inquest into



*Alfred Wilson (right) arrives at Manitoulin Island to assist in search for Danny's body, 1938.*

the accident commanded international attention and so received careful scrutiny. Although it was determined to have been nothing more than a tragic accident, speculation and rumor mongering persist to this day.

Dan's will, signed just two days after his 21st birthday and one week before his wedding, as well as a prenuptial agreement, granted Laurine \$250,000 and the contents of Camp Nayaushé. A four-year dispute over the will persisted until the Dodge women decided to settle; Laurine's share was \$2.5 million. In the settlement, Laurine was also granted the lodge itself. The property deed lists her payment as "Love and Affection," a tribute to the love that Dan and Laurine shared.

Daniel Dodge's untimely death was a tragedy. But the greater tragedy would be allowing his death to define his life. Dan traveled the world, loved the outdoors, built a diesel engine that impressed seasoned automotive manufacturers, enchanted friends and family with his personality and antics and most of all, lived life with love and passion. **MB**

*Madelyn Rzadkowsky is the curator of Meadow Brook Hall.*

# The Art of Gracious Living

*Etiquette and Decorum in the Grand Manor*

BY KIM ZELINSKI

*Royal Ansley dinner place setting with a 1953 plate commemorating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.*



Matilda and Alfred Wilson no doubt anticipated entertaining “appropriately” when they considered the design of Meadow Brook Hall in 1926. Their new lifestyle would require elegant spaces for the simplest of occasion to elaborate celebrations. Evidenced by the grand scale of Ballroom and Dining Room and the incorporation of large vaults to store china, silver and linens, the Wilsons’ plans set them up for four decades of gracious living.

To give a perfectly executed dinner party of ceremonial formality was the supreme accomplishment for a hostess in mid-century America. Whether a great dinner for 200 or a small one of six, the necessity for perfection increased in proportion to the formality of the occasion.

Of greatest importance – aside from a congenial guest list - were a suitable menu perfectly prepared and dished, immaculately laundered linens, brilliantly polished silver, proficient dining room servants (and enough of them) and of course, a hostess with charm. Charm said everything – tact, sympathy, poise and good manners – always.

Inevitably, to both the host and guest, the focal point of all occasions was the beautifully accessorized dining table. There was something about a handsome table setting that seemed to elevate one’s manners as well as conversation. Every accessory that built the table picture – the silver, china,



“Few things are endowed with such gracious charm as a beautiful appointed dinner table. For out of its lavish play of color and luxurious air of bounty rise the twin graces of formality and glamour.”

Excerpt from *“The New Vogue in Dinner China”*  
by Mrs. John Alexander King, a booklet in the MBH Library collection.

glass and linen – needed to have a creative harmony to produce a compelling statement.

The place settings that follow, all from the Meadow Brook Hall collections, illustrate how the Wilsons would have entertained guests using the proper etiquette of the day.

Top: cherub bowl, Moore Bros. Potteries, c. 1880; bottom left: Royal Dalton lavender dinner plate, early 20th century; Bottom right: Meissen epergne, mid-19th century.





## The Breakfast Tray

As an alternative to a breakfast laid out on the dining room sideboard where family and guests could come down at their leisure, the breakfast tray, a tradition from England, allowed family or guests to stay in their rooms and ring for their breakfast when ready.

Each bedroom had its own set of breakfast china to match the room's décor. Often, the trays were "all set" in the pantry in advance.

In place of "stiff" formal china, the colors were more in tune with morning sun: bright warm yellow or turquoise or leafy patterns. Trays included a coffee pot, hot milk pitcher, a cream pitcher and sugar bowl. Most people who breakfasted "in bed" enjoyed only coffee or tea, an egg, toast and possibly fruit.

*Top: yellow Vaseline glass, early 20th century; inset: demitasse porcelain cup and saucer, Meissen, early 20th century. Bottom: Victorian cranberry epergne, early 20th century, Ming china by Lenox, c. 1917*

## The Luncheon Table

The formal luncheon, commencing at half past one, usually occurred on Sunday or holidays and were generally given by, and for, ladies, but could also include an equal number of gentlemen. Although not as challenging as a dinner, it could be every bit as formal.

Having the advantage of the light of day, the table required no candles, instead, an appropriate ornament of glass, china or a porcelain figure was suitable. Latitude was allowed in the matter of cloths, they could be runners, or linens of damask and either white or colored which enhanced the jewel glow of the glassware and body of the china, usually a pleasing floral motif.

Menus consisted of five courses at most: fruit or soup in cups, eggs, meat and vegetable, salad, and dessert. An informal lunch menu was seldom more than four courses and would eliminate either the fruit/soup or eggs.

By a quarter to three, the last guest usually departed unless it was a bridge luncheon, or because (especially in the country) they had come to spend the day and participate in other activities.





## The Dinner Table

The dinner hour was not necessarily a fixed time, however an eight o'clock start was typical except when dining and going to the theatre or symphony, in which the appropriate time was seven-fifteen or seven-thirty. Otherwise, only "quiet" people dined before eight.

Linens were usually classical linen damask, or for the fanciest of occasions, elaborate lace coverings. The centerpiece, the principal ornament, usually consisted of flowers placed in vessels of glass, porcelain or silver, bal-

anced by candelabras or candlesticks, and on the ends compotes containing bonbons or mints.

The place settings – china, silver utensils, glasses and napkins – were an expression of the hostess's good taste. The china was usually robed in colors of maroon or cobalt and banded in gold. The lofty stemmed glasses of exquisitely cut crystal added a sparkle to the table as did the stemware, which was polished silver, not plated.

Menus were not to be excessive, yet portions typically were "healthy." The courses, likely to be six or seven, consisted of hors d'oeuvre, soup, fish, entrée, roast, salad, dessert and coffee.

At the conclusion of dinner, the hostess would stand, signaling the adjournment of dinner. The ladies and gentlemen retired to separate rooms in the house to enjoy coffee, smokes and liqueurs before joining together at the end of the evening in the drawing room. **MB**



*Top: Royal Crown Derby cup and saucer, early 20th century, Mintons gilded plate made for Tiffany & Co., c. 1900;*

*Bottom: Sevres style porcelain bowl, France, late 19th century.*



# It wasn't all work...

## THE EARLY YEARS OF MEADOW BROOK FARMS, 1908-1920

BY KIM ZELINSKI



“MR. DODGE WAS INTERESTED IN A PLACE IN THE COUNTRY – TO RELAX, PERHAPS FOR THE WEEKENDS – A PLACE TO COME OUT AND TRAMP ABOUT THE GROUNDS.”

— *Matilda Dodge Wilson*

*Top; Dodge farmhouse and clubhouse, c. 1918.  
Bottom; John and Matilda Dodge, c. 1914.*

## Second of Two Parts

It took only a brief visit to the Meadow Brook Farm in April of 1908 for newlyweds John and Matilda Dodge to appreciate the property's captivating assets enough to tender an all-inclusive purchase offer of \$40,000 to its owner, James Higgins.

The farm's rolling hills, vast meadows, winding brooks, woodlands and a turn-key farming operation fulfilled the Dodges' nostalgic longing for a country place that offered a reprieve from the burdens of business and city life. They saw it as a place that genuinely reflected their own interests and personal experiences, particularly those reminiscent of their childhoods; John's in the rural outskirts of Niles, Michigan and Matilda's on her grandparents' sheep farm in Walkerton, Ontario.

But nostalgia was not their sole motivation. The farm offered them the gratification of supplying their table with the richness of the land, raising livestock, harvesting crops and providing milk and butter from their own cows. It also provided a level of inde-

pendence that was not possible in the confines of the city; the freedom to drive on their own roads, hunt on their own land, fish in their own streams and play golf on their own golf course.

These recreational pursuits, coupled with the simple therapy of rest and solitude, produced a transformative happiness that the Dodges, John in particular, would not experience in any other place or time of their lives.

### SUNDAY, THE LAZY DAY OF SUMMER

Regardless of the season, John Dodge showed up at Meadow Brook Farms on most Saturdays, sometimes leaving on Monday morning. And, while Saturdays were busy with farming oversight and leisure activities, in



*Top: Matilda practicing rifle shooting, c. 1912.*

*Bottom: Picnicking with the Horace Dodge family, back row: Delphine, Anna, Horace, Horace Jr., front row: Isabelle, Matilda and Winifred, c. 1910.*

keeping with his religious upbringing, Sundays were generally observed as a day of rest. He could be found taking a relaxing break in one of the comfortable rocking chairs on the front porch, enjoying a picnic on the lawn or taking a scenic drive around the property in a car or horse-drawn carriage. More often than not though, John preferred to take invigorating tramps through the woods and across the fields on foot, often lasting hours at a time. Guests sometimes accompanied him





*Clubhouse and birdhouse, c. 1918; inset: John Dodge with friend on porch, c. 1917.*

on these walks, although few could keep up with him.

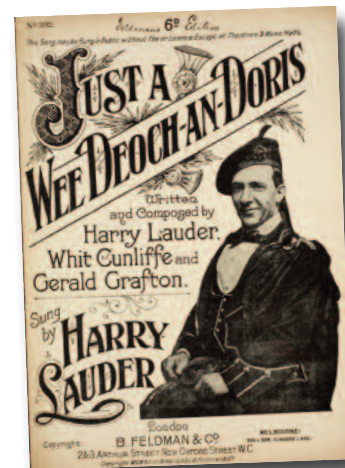
John always carried a rifle or shotgun over his shoulder and sometimes brought along the Farm's guard dog. While the gun was primarily a security measure, he, and on occasion Matilda, also engaged in a little tin-can target shooting while out in the fields.

Sundays always featured a bountiful feast prepared by Matilda's mother, Margaret Rausch, one of John's greatest pleasures at the farm. After dinner, the family retired to the parlor where Winifred and Isabelle Dodge (children from John's first marriage to Ivy Hawkins) played the piano or Matilda's sister, Amelia, loaded the Victrola with

John's favorite operatic music or tunes sung by Scottish comedian and theatre singer, Harry Lauder.

### JOHN'S PRIVATE CLUB

In 1915, with the expansion of the farming operation and renovation of the farmhouse mostly complete (see *Part One, Spring 2015 Meadow Brook Magazine*), John turned his attention to the recreational development of the property, specifically the construction of a clubhouse with an indoor pool and adjacent 9-hole golf course. While some accounts suggests that he built the course in response to his and his brother Horace Dodge's membership snub by a Detroit country club, it is

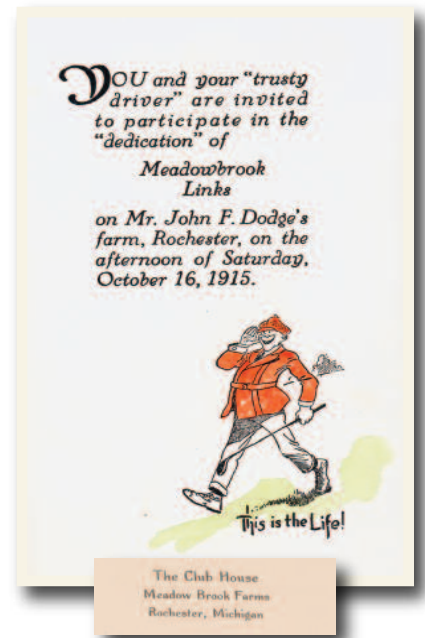


more likely that John's love of the game and the opportunity

provided by his wealth were the real contributing factors.

The two-story Tudor-style clubhouse, with a price tag of \$50,000, was primarily designed for entertaining family, friends and business associates. A large club room was furnished with leather lounge chairs, card tables, a cigar rack and another Victrola. The





*Interiors of the clubhouse's club room and indoor pool, c. 1918.*



screened-in porch at the back of the building overlooked the rolling landscape that made up the 3,081-yard 9-hole golf course featuring sand traps, water hazards and underground sprinklers. It also boasted its own score card and caddies to carry guests' golf bags. For its official dedication, John sent special invitations to friends and their

"trusty drivers" for the inaugural round of golf and a post celebration in the club room.

In addition to regular visits by his brother, Horace, John also entertained Dodge Brothers employees as well as politicians such as Detroit Mayors George Codd, Philip Breitmeyer and Oscar Marx, and good friends that in-

cluded real estate developer Robert Oakman and saloon/cafe owner Charlie Churchill.

The clubhouse also served as John's private haunt when he had some knotty mechanical problem or business transaction to pore over. When he left his factory for the farm with a big bundle of blueprints under his arm, his



*Top to bottom: Meadow Brook greenhouse, c. 1918; Margaret Rausch with Danny and Frances, 1918; Matilda and Isabelle feeding fawn, c. 1912.*

company confidants knew he might be gone several days. While engaged in business matters at the farm, he allowed no one to interrupt him, no matter how pressing their business might be.

The first floor also had a locker room and a staircase that led to down to the “Plunge.” This heated indoor pool featured inset white tiles, a mural depicting a Tuscan mountain scene painted above the tile, tropical plants and rattan furniture. John and the older Dodge children, Winifred, Isabelle and John Duval, were experienced swimmers; Matilda and Amelia could not swim and were restricted to wading in the shallow end.

### HORTICULTURAL PURSUITS

While John had his golf links, the addition of a greenhouse introduced Matilda to what would become a life-long passion for horticulture. The greenhouse and surrounding gardens provided Matilda her own haven where she could take creative liberties and make her own decisions.

The greenhouse was built from drawings produced in 1915 and 1916 by Dodge Brothers Engineering. Completed in 1917, the \$25,000 structure served as both a horticultural centerpiece for the estate and a facility

for suppling plant material for the farmhouse, the formal gardens adjacent to the clubhouse and the Dodges’ Boston Boulevard home in Detroit.

In addition to a medley of annuals grown in the greenhouse from the hundreds of seed packets she ordered each year, Matilda planted more than a thousand tulip and daffodil bulbs that she ordered direct from Holland and tended to her all-time favorite, roses.

Alongside the work room and propagation room, the greenhouse’s two wings were dedicated to growing

chrysanthemums and carnations, while the tropical room boasted orchids and both a lemon and orange tree that thrived for many decades. The greenhouse produced Matilda’s entries at the Detroit Flower and Garden Show where she competed favorably against some of Detroit’s most well-known society ladies.

### A HAVEN FOR WILDLIFE

Unquestionably, the woodlands, meadows and streams of Meadow Brook Farms appealed to the Dodges for both their aesthetic beauty and their harboring of an abundance of wildlife. Included in the 1908 farm purchase was a deer park full of bucks, does, fawns and a few rare white deer (a genetic variation of the Whitetail deer) that roamed the fenced-in area near the southern boundary of the property. The park also included a small lake and shelters with troughs that were kept filled by the farm’s caretakers. Some of the deer were tame enough to be fed by hand, particularly the fawns that arrived each spring.

Spring also brought a host of bird species that set-up residence in the farm’s large collection of bird houses. Matilda managed this backyard hobby, selecting the styles and types of habitats, which included some 30 houses, roosts and feeders that were either mounted on posts or perched in trees surrounding the farmhouse.

The most impressive was the stately Purple Martin house that stood on a pole in the garden near the clubhouse.

Designed in 1918 by the Dodge Brothers engineering department to match the architecture of the farmhouse, the house could nest up to 44 birds. *(This bird-house is currently located near Meadow Brook Hall’s Rose Garden.)*

The wide variety of bird species at the farm – from robins to wrens to chickadees; from



purple martins, and woodpeckers to crested flycatchers and bluebirds – were valued not only for their ability to control garden pests, but for their symphony of song.

## SLEIGHS, CARRIAGES, BIKES AND PONIES

During the Dodges' 13-year marriage, they traveled together only a handful of times, including one vacation abroad and several others to destinations within the United States. Instead, the farm served as their getaway for a host of seasonal activities, particularly those that the whole family could enjoy.

Swimming in the clubhouse pool, croquet on the front lawn, fishing in one of the property's lakes or steams and riding horses along the trails and meadows were other favorite summer pastimes. Matilda and Amelia often drove around in a horse-drawn carriage, Winnifred enjoyed horseback riding and 4-year old Frances Dodge rode atop her very first pony, Freddie, in a special wicker basket.

Not particularly fond of horses, John Dodge usually hit the trails on a Henderson motorcycle. A matching Henderson was reserved for Horace when he visited. The brothers would also use their own Dodge automobiles for a friendly game of car polo. Using the front bumpers of their cars, they would nudge a large ball across a farm field until it crossed the goal line. Their chauffeurs usually officiated the competition and more often than not, John won.

Although family did not visit as much in the winter, on those weekends the family did trek the hour and a half drive from the city, they enjoyed tobogganing and horse-drawn sleigh rides. John frequently drove his large, 16-passenger sleigh into Rochester to meet guests at the train station and take them back to the farm. Wool blankets and a big jar of Margaret Rausch's "special drink" put up a good fight against the cold.



Top: sleigh ride party, c. 1910; bottom: Frances on pony with bodyguard Tom Compton, 1922.

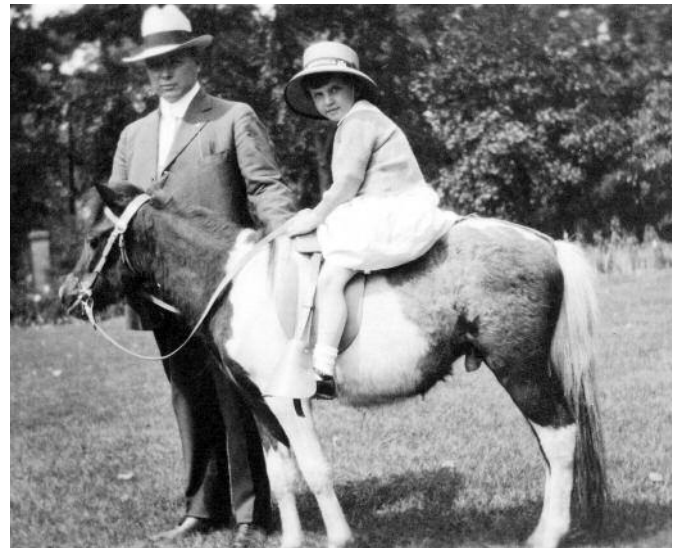
## END OF AN ERA

Farming and recreational expansion peaked around 1917. While considering the location for additional buildings, the Dodges commissioned landscape engineer Charles Leavitt of New York City to create plans for further development of Meadow Brook Farms. The extensive plan, both in size and vision, suggested that the family would either permanently reside at the farm, or at the very least, extend their stay beyond weekends.

The plan also proposed that each farm activity would be clustered in separate and distinct groupings, a second greenhouse and numerous formal gardens would be added and a new, much larger and more formal residence with expansive vistas built. Tenant houses, a bunk house and a community house were proposed for workers. An array of recreational facilities such as tennis courts, a theatre and a baseball field, no doubt for the Dodge Brothers baseball team to use, were also in the mix.

Whether the master plan was abandoned in favor of the construction of a new estate in Grosse Pointe, or

whether John deferred the plan for a future time, is unknown. Ultimately, his death in January of 1920 put to rest not only that particular dream, but also ended a magical era at Meadow Brook Farms. John Dodge's rough-hewn personality and innovative spirit were infused into every aspect of the farm's development and operation. In return, the farm, every bit his pride and joy, afforded him a very personal escape and genuine happiness. **MB**



*NEXT ISSUE (Spring 2016): The vision for the farm depicted in Charles Leavitt's master plan would emerge in 1926 as the catalyst for a new grand country estate, and at its helm a new life-force . . . Matilda Dodge Wilson.*


a not-so secret

# Recipe from the Chef



At the forefront of Meadow Brook Hall's reputation for exceptionally fine cuisine is culinary mastermind and executive chef Patrick Gazzarato, who along with his supporting cast of sous chefs, prepares extraordinary meals for The Hall's busy schedule of events.

The wide range of menus created by the Chef can vary from a duo of surf and turf served at weddings to Faroe Island salmon for visiting dignitaries to an exotic entrée of boar and elk that satisfies the adventurous attendees of the annual Wild Game Dinner. No matter the course, Chef Patrick is invariably asked by guests and staff to share his recipes.

"The following menu and recipe has been in my recipe "book" for years and has never failed to please," Chef says. "Note that the recipe requires some advanced preparation, but it should be well worth your effort. Bon appetit!" 

## Chef Patrick's Cajun seasoning

5 tablespoons kosher salt  
1 tablespoon cayenne pepper  
2 tablespoons garlic powder  
2 tablespoons sweet paprika  
1 tablespoon dried oregano  
1 tablespoon dried thyme  
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoon onion powder

Mix all items together in a bowl.  
Store what you don't need in an airtight container for future use.

## Chef Patrick's quick and easy Demi-glace

3 qts. beef stock (purchase a high quality low-sodium beef stock NOT broth and do not use the broth from the prepared short ribs).  
2 Tablespoons Bordeaux wine

Combine the stock & wine in a heavy-bottom pot over a low flame and let reduce down to approximately 2-3 cups. This will take a couple of hours or more. Skim any scum or foam off of that may rise to the top. Don't rush it by boiling over a high heat. The reduced stock and wine mixture will have the body/consistency to coat a tasting spoon when it is reduced enough/ properly. Season with salt & pepper as needed. Right before serving add 1 tablespoon of room temperature butter to hot demi-glace (not boiling) and gently stir in.

## Braised boneless beef short ribs with Bordeaux demi-glace

(Serve with roasted brussel sprouts & stilton smashed potatoes)

### Ingredients:

4 10-ounce boneless chuck short ribs – (prepped the day before with a slurry of Cajun seasoning and rice wine vinegar)  
1 cup Cajun seasoning (see Chef's own recipe, left)  
1/2 cup +/- rice wine vinegar  
2 qts. beef stock +/-  
2 tablespoons oil  
2 cups rough cut mirepoix (equal parts of yellow onion, celery & carrot)  
1 tablespoon garlic

### Directions:

The day before serving, mix the Cajun seasoning with the vinegar until you have a thin paste that would resemble thin toothpaste. Coat the short rib portions and put in an appropriate covered container and refrigerate overnight.

- In a heavy-bottom pot or Dutch oven, heat oil over medium flame.
- Strip the Cajun slurry off of the beef portions the best you can. Sear them until browned on what would be deemed the top and bottoms.
- Add the mirepoix and cook until golden. Add the garlic, stir all items together & add the stock. Only cover the portions by 2/3 of the stock.
- Bring to a boil, cover well & place in preheated 325-degree oven for upwards of 3 hours.
- Check with a fork after 2 hours for doneness (fork will enter meat with no resistance & will fall off of fork with ease when done). Be sure to re-cover the pot after checking at the 2-hour point before putting back in the oven.
- Once fork tender, remove the beef portions from the braising liquid and keep warm (140-160 degrees) while the other items are coming together.
- When ready to serve, ladle the Bordeaux demi-glace over short ribs.





## Falling from grace



Admired for its stately silhouette, characterized by an ascending trunk that disappeared into an arching canopy of dense foliage, the last remaining American Elm and arboreal pride of Meadow Brook Hall's circular entry drive finally gave way to its horizontal lean and fell quietly to the ground on August 11, 2015. (Fortunately, no one was hurt and no property damage sustained.)

The tree, over a hundred years old, was one of about 10 elm trees that were transplanted to the grounds in 1928 by Matilda and Alfred Wilson as already mature trees. At the time, their large size, measuring up to 20 inches in diameter and weighing over 4,000 pounds apiece, was especially important in portraying an established landscape that complemented the stately facade of Meadow Brook Hall.

While millions of American elms have succumbed to the deadly Dutch Elm disease, including those that perished at The Hall in the 1970s, this last elm, despite yearly fungicidal treatments and cabling support, was sadly lost. In recent years, The Hall has replanted four new elms on the south lawn with cultivars proven to be resistant to the disease. Additional planting in the front courtyard will be undertaken in an effort to restore the landscape to its original glory.

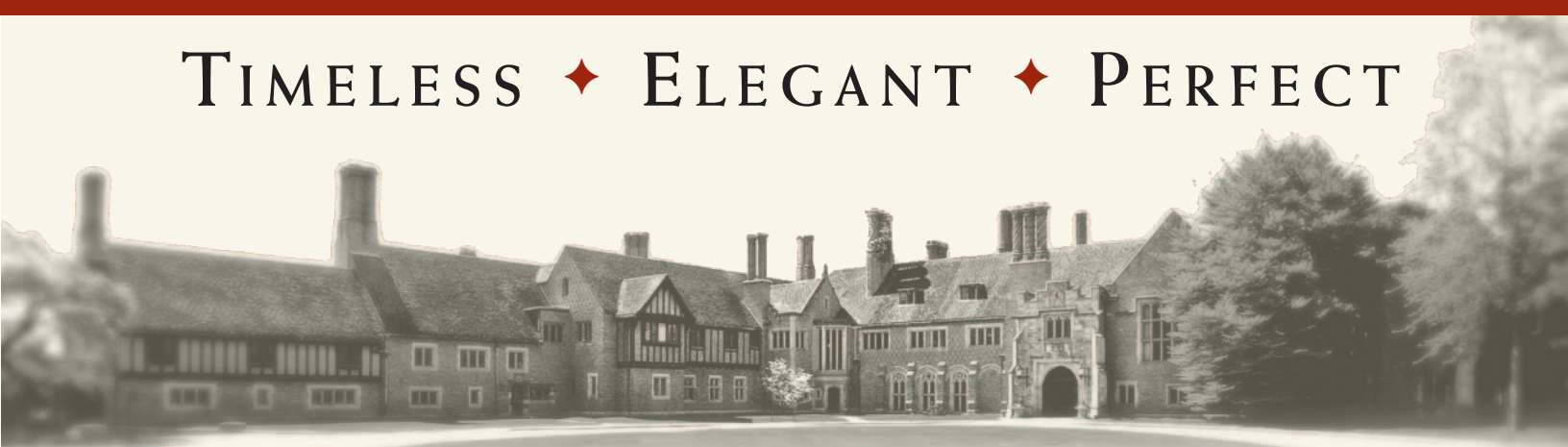


# Weddings at The Great Estate



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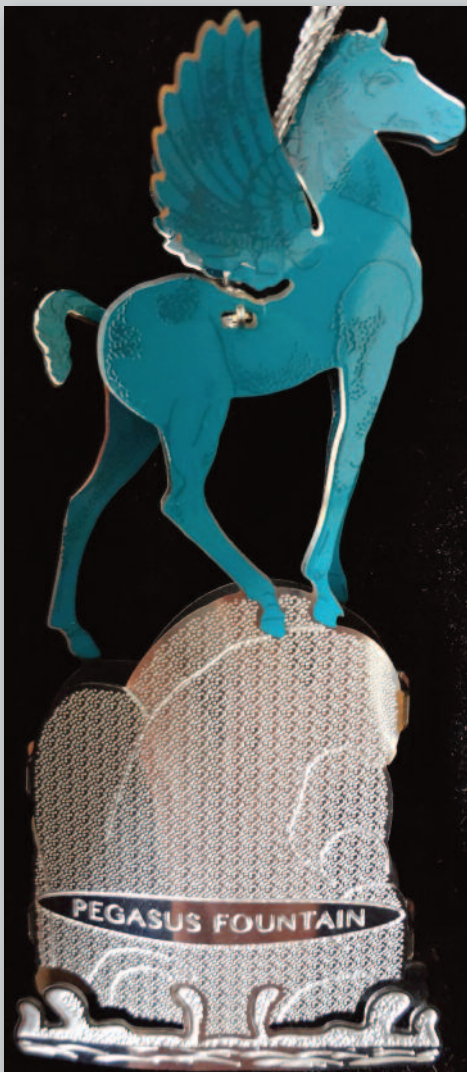


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## Museum Store



### Iconic ornament

Installed in 1947 in Matilda Wilson's Breakfast Garden above an octagon-shaped Pewabic-tiled pool, the bronze Colt Pegasus was inspired by one of her own Hackney Ponies. The sculptor, Avard Fairbanks, was recognized as one of America's most notable creators of monumental art, including the Dodge Ram hood ornament.

#### **A great holiday gift!**

Make Meadow Brook Hall part of your holiday tradition with this custom silver ornament featuring the Pegasus sculpture. Packaged in a custom box with informational card. Designed and crafted by The Charleston Mint, an Official U.S. Mint. Available this holiday season in the Meadow Brook Hall Museum Store.

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