

GLENSHEEN GLEANINGS

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GLENSHEEN: A MANSION FOR ALL SEASONS

By Ann Russell and Geva Lou Severlanson

SPRING: Glensheen sees a resurgence of activity. Tischer Creek bubbles with the snow melt rushing to the lake, the crocus and tulips are finding their way toward the sunshine. The gardener, Bob Wyness, is busy planting annuals and the water lilies have been taken from their winter shelter and placed into the water-filled pool. Inside the house all is a bustle--busy phones with people making reservations either for a tour or special dinner party, the cleaning crew is doing their "deep cleaning" and the staff is conducting volunteer training for new recruits and update for veteran volunteers. Lists of volunteers are being prepared for the Day Captains, security staff is being organized all in preparation for the busy season of--

SUMMER: The parking lot becomes alive with visitors and the gardener's spring efforts are obvious as the gardens become a gorgeous blaze of glory. This is our busiest season with tours of twenty persons every ten minutes from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Last year free concerts were held on the grounds and hopes are to continue these concerts this summer. An annual picnic, honoring all volunteers, has become a tradition and will be held again in August.

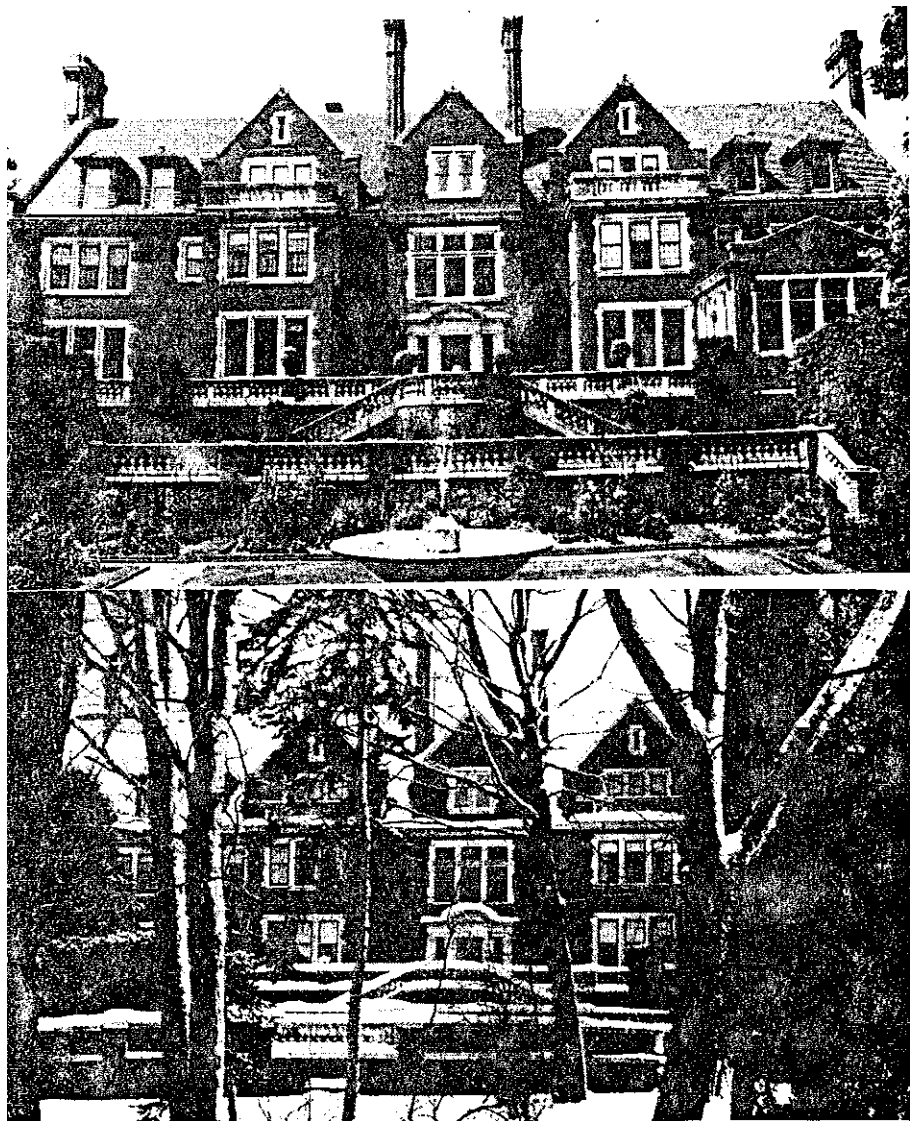
FALL: This is our Director, Michael Lane's favorite season, when the leaves turn to an autumn haze and the gardens take on the same hues. Also, we continue summer hours as many visitors travel north to view the changing colors and the beauty of Glensheen. Mid-October, we leave the bustle of Summer and Fall behind to prepare for --

WINTER: The scent of pine envelops us as we prepare for the holidays and 'Christmas at Glensheen'. Visitors see the house decorated with garlands of pine, floral arrangements, and lighted trees. While there is a quiet serene beauty of the snow

covered grounds and an ethereal mist rising from the lake, the staff is busy preparing for the quickly approaching Spring and Summer. New volunteer brochures are nearly completed as is a four-session training program for new volunteers. A committee of staff and

Docent Council members has met every Friday to review the volunteer program, hoping to make it even more effective.

Yes, every season at Glensheen has its own spectacular beauty -- making it truly A MANSION FOR ALL SEASONS.



DAYS GONE BY

By Betty Ketchum

She loves working with wood, but can she sew? "No, my mother says I handle a needle like a crowbar." This then is Sam Plourd, collection curator at Glensheen. Organized, quiet-spoken, and knowledgeable, Sam hails from Windsor, the oldest town in Connecticut (circa 1600), and had always thought to stay on in New England. Only problem, it was difficult to find a job in the museum in her home area.



Then she saw an advertisement for Glensheen in a national museum publication, sent in an application and heard from Director Michael Lane long distance. She came for an interview, arrived on an evening in late October '81 - weather marvelous, in the high 60's, an enormous harvest moon over the lake -- "hm-" she thought, "this isn't too bad." And tremendously impressed with Glensheen, she accepted the post.

She returned in January '82 to begin her work as curator of collections. She now recalls January and February weren't the greatest months, it went to 30 below, there were big snows and she spent a lot of time shoveling. The dryness of the climate impressed her and the snow she cleaned off her car was like the fake stuff in department stores.

Getting down to Glensheen business, she soon found a sizable collection of manuscripts, daybooks, letters, blueprints, and paybooks from the beginning. "The unique thing about this house is there may be no other museum anywhere so well documented." She has often wondered why so much was kept. Was it deliberate? The foreman, Bush, was told to save all blueprints, and there were instructions from William A. French, decorators, in every detail, even to the placing of a light switch, exactly three feet above a floor moulding.

It is the job of the curator to inventory everything within the house. For example, there are probably 15 oak tables. Each must be correctly classified with such as name of artisan or manufacturer, period, condition, method of acquisition, appraisal, location and the like. This is the first step - a basic inventory on the whole collection. Then one must go back and do research on each item, writing all that can be found, and ever searching. "I keep learning something every day."

A book on yachts turned up in the attic, with a description of the Congdon yacht "Hesperia" - it had been built in Bath, Me. All building materials are stored in the attic - electrical equipment, light globes, tiles, and plumbing supplies. These will have to be cataloged. Asked if it was a finished area, Sam said "No, you can see the steel beams, the terracotta roof, and the plastering from within. It looks like anybody else's attic." Until recently it was filled with piles of newspapers and magazines. In sorting they found newspapers from New York, Chicago, Australia, and New Zealand. These were put in large plastic bags and recessed under the eaves. The magazines were sorted by title. There were Farming and Mining journals, Colliers, National Geographic, House Beautiful and Craftsmen. The latter, representing an arts and crafts movement of the time, dealt with design in general, building a house, and telling how certain furniture was made.

Sam is also accountable for the other buildings on the property - the gardener's cottage, and the carriage house. There are more than 200 blueprints to catalog and discover which were actually used. They have been rolled away for years and now must be flattened, minor repairs made, then cleaned. All will take time.

By spring or summer she wants to get into the second floor of the carriage house, "where there are enough storm windows to build another home." Sam says there must be two sets of everything, piles of screens, a sleigh, another carriage. And, she added, "Bob Wyness has a graveyard for dead lawnmowers in the storage over the hayloft." The wicker furniture from the west porch is also there, and more record books. It will take all summer to catalog these.

An area under the garage has been a catch-all for the ground crew. "I know there is a lot of old plumbing, glass, even blocks for a block and tackle, and I have no idea what that might be used for."

And down in the boathouse there is a diving bell which belonged to Alfred Bannister, Mrs. Congdon's nephew, who lived with them. He was something of an inventor.

It is of special interest to Sam that the first floor, with its public rooms - living, dining, and library - are all more in keeping with fine homes built at that time. But when you get to the second floor you find bedrooms designed for individual taste. It intrigues her that someone of Chester Congdon's wealth and standing should have built a house in the manner of the arts and crafts movement, particularly in personal and family rooms, simple, with no embellishment. Scorning ostentation, she feels he was highly

individual, strictly family, and having none of the ideas of the Newport crowd who built to outdo each other.

Sam is also in charge of housekeeping and security. At the height of activity there are two security supervisors and 13 attendants, with some less in the winter. It is their job to see that no one is left over from a tour, windows are closed and lights turned off, and they lock up and leave, with the security system taking over. Any movement after that should trigger the alarm.

The entire staff at Glensheen is very protective of it, with a real love of the house. As for Sam's security staff, all are UMD students. "Up to now we've had 30 kids, and maybe only one who didn't work out. I find it amazing."

Attendance has been phenomenal, with few museums around the country enjoying anywhere near the 130,000 average at Glensheen. The National Trust with six sights has clocked only 250,000, and the State Historical Museum in Connecticut draws only 40,000 visitors.

The plans call for computer documentation of Sam's findings. A number of museums have been having a hard time - "they fed information into a little box and now they can't get it out." Hoping to avoid such snags, Sam says micro computers are affordable, and it would be foolish starting from scratch if not to avail ourselves of this convenience. Once the facts are fed properly into the system, they'll be there for all time. As she said, "there may be no other museum anywhere so well documented."



VOLUNTEERS IN THE NEWS

Winnifred Stanco, sales shop volunteer, recently won second place in an essay contest "open to all RSVP Volunteers. They were asked to write on "What RSVP means for Seniors and the Community". Her winning entry is as follows: "Volunteering is a two-way street. The volunteer receives as well as gives. The stereotype of the elderly rocking on the porch is no longer acceptable. Volunteers have discovered that they have many skills they never realized they had. Sharing these skills as a volunteer has, for many, been the happiest years of their life." Congratulations, Winnie!

VOLUNTEERS--

Thought is being given to a name for the Gift Shop and we'd like your input. Please send written suggestions, along with your name, to Glensheen Gift Shop Committee.

Docents Corner

As the new president of the Glensheen Docent Council, I would like to express my appreciation to you, the volunteers, for making this position and the Council possible. Without you, Glensheen wouldn't be the extraordinary experience it is for tourists and local visitors alike.

One of the first things we have done this term is institute a second printing of "Recipes From the Glensheen Kitchen". There are now 2000 copies in print. The changes in the second edition are minimal and mostly "fine tuning" along with the statement that it is a second printing. There are a few first editions left if you are a serious collector.

The Docent Council also decorated the float for the Christmas City of the North Parade. We would like to see an entry by Glensheen each year and are open to ideas.

This years' Holiday Brunches were a new development for the docents and we would like to hear from you as to your feelings on this form of celebration for the season.

As the year progresses, we will be trying to create a more unified feeling between the volunteers in a few exciting ways. One is to design quality educational, or entertaining meetings -- one each month-- to pique the varied interests of the volunteers. Keep your eyes open for more information on these get-togethers.

The Docent Council is your platform to effect change at Glensheen and we would like to have any of your reactions through your Day Captain, Geva Lou, myself, or the suggestion box (we discuss them at the meetings even if they are not signed).

Thank you,
Jan Fournier
Docent Council President



THANK YOU!

Barb Romano, dedicated volunteer and Tuesday Day Captain, would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the many cards and caring notes she received when her husband passed away unexpectedly in December.

On a brighter note - she would also like to thank all the 40 or so volunteers who remembered her birthday by filling her mailbox with 'light-hearted' cards. She says, "it truly made my day, thanks!"

DOCENT COUNCIL SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Fred Schroeder, Professor of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences at UMD, is one of the four speakers who have been invited by the Docent Council to speak to volunteers.



You should have received your invitation by now; However, if you were inadvertently omitted you may call in your reservation to Neva Eylar at 624-1385. She is the Day Captain for all second docents and has agreed to take reservations for all speakers. The schedule is as follows:

February 15 - Wade Lawrence, an authority on stained glass, was our speaker.

March 21 - Laurel Ulland's topic is, "Architecture of Duluth"

April 11 - Fred Schroeder's presentation is, "Understanding the Decorative Arts: Traditions and Choices."

May 9 - Tom Boman, UMD Professor, has entitled his sharing with us, "Volunteering in '84 -- It's a Brave New World!"

GIFT SHOP NEWS

The purpose of the Glensheen Gift Shop is to provide a service to the many visitors who come and tour the estate. This is done by offering souvenirs and gifts as remembrances of their visit and by providing a source of educational materials. These will broaden the visitor's insights and understanding of the site, it's collection, the period and area in which Glensheen was built and the history and culture of that time.

The Gift Shop personnel include volunteer management, bookkeeper, and sales shop volunteers. An Advisory Committee, composed of volunteers and Glensheen staff oversees the operation.

Funds generated by the Gift Shop are used in an ongoing program of conservation and preservation and to provide operating funds for the Docent Council. The revenue is allocated in the following manner after expenses: 50% reinvested in new merchandise or to expand existing lines, 15% reserve, 30% conservation and preservation, and 5% to the Docent Council. The Council may use the money

Directors Corner

By Michael Lane.

This coming June, Glensheen will be completing its fifth year of operation. For the first four years the average annual attendance has been 121,151 visitors. So far this year (July-January) 86,154 people have visited this unique historic site. One reason for this consistency in visitation is that the estate is a very saleable product. The general public recognizes quality.

Another reason for this consistency, and probably the critical factor, is a dedicated and excellent sales force -- the volunteers. These individuals welcome the public, share their knowledge and their enthusiasm and provide a memorable experience for the visitor. The public response has been and continues to be, respect for the volunteers and the genuine warmth and personal dedication they espouse.

As this fifth year comes to a close, it is important to note that the success Glensheen enjoys is a result of team effort. The volunteers, staff, community, and University of Minnesota all have one thing in common, that this unique historic legacy will endure for future generations to enjoy. With this continued commitment, it will.



By Debbie Swenson

on activities or projects directly related to the Docent Program or Glensheen. The Advisory Committee has voted on a change in the volunteer/staff discount system. As of January 15, 1984, it is as follows: 10% off all regularly priced merchandise and 20% off all Glensheen publications, including the Glensheen Cookbook. No discount will be allowed on sale priced merchandise. We appreciate your steady patronage of our expanding line of merchandise.

We know many of you were unable to get in over the holidays, mainly due to the weather. With that in mind and the many collectors who will be visiting this Summer, we will continue to carry the limited edition, brass ornament. As a gesture of appreciation to our many volunteers, this first ornament features the Tudor Rose. This adopted symbol of our volunteers, represents a detail from the stained glass windows.

Currently sale priced are the Tom Boyd prints of Glensheen's front doors, the brass trivet, featuring the tudor rose, and the Glensheen Calendar, highlighting the fireplaces found throughout the house.

VOLUNTEERS VISIT MAYOWOOD By Corky McLean

Mayowood, home of the famed Mayo Clinic surgeons, was the highlight of a trip taken last October by Glensheen volunteers to Rochester, MN.

First opening for tours in 1966, one year after it was given to the Olmsted Historical Society by Dr. and Mrs. G.W. Mayo, Mayowood was a gift of not only the home itself, but the surrounding ten acres of land.

Tours are given twice daily from April through October. Groups of 30 are guided through on a two-hour tour and approximately 22,000 people visit annually.

Mayowood is supported by the Friends of Mayowood Residence which was established around 1980. It began as just that--a group of friends who wanted to see the interior of Mayowood refurbished. Their funds come from annual dues of \$5.00 and from Christmas Candlelight and Brunch Tours. Two Brunch Tours are scheduled each day during Christmas week.

The first year proceeds were used to buy back furnishings that had been sold in the years past. Last year's earnings were used to repair ceilings and replace carpeting. The Society is in charge of structural repairs and the Friends are responsible for redecorating.

The Olmsted Historical Society is in the process of trying to raise \$250,000 to keep Mayowood in repair. The idea of our volunteers supporting Glensheen appealed to them as a way of supporting Mayowood. Jan Fournier, who met with the members of the Society of our weekly sessions between management and volunteers and they felt something like that was needed at Mayowood. Jan's



Glensheen Volunteers at Mayowood

feelings (and I concur) is that Glensheen is a unique site and operation--staff and volunteers working together to maintain a high quality facility.

Geva Lou Severinson, Volunteer Coordinator, began formulating plans for this trip as early as December, 1982. After much detailed planning, docents boarded the buses in the Glensheen parking lot at 6:00 a.m. and shortly after were served coffee and donuts. The trip included a stop at Mantorville, a very old town in Minnesota with several buildings that are national historic sites. They enjoyed lunch at the Hubbell House and then did some browsing in the quaint old shops along the boardwalk.

At 3:00, the docents reboarded the buses and went on to the Olmsted Historical Society in Rochester where they looked through the museum and watched a film presentation on Mayowood and the Mayo family.

A Mayo guide boarded each of the buses and told docents of places of interest along

the way. They enjoyed the unique architecture of Mayowood and the insights into the Mayo family's life there.

Following the tour, docents were served refreshments and after picture-taking, again boarded buses for the trip back to Duluth. Even the ride home was fun. They watched a beautiful sunset, played bridge, dined on ham sandwiches and soft drinks and of courses -- conversation.

Docents agreed that Mayowood was unique in that it was built around an old oak tree which seemed almost like a park setting. One of the most interesting rooms was the library. The panaling was made entirely from doors of an old school building.

It would scarcely be possible for a group of dedicated docents to tour a mansion and not make comparisons to their own Glensheen. We (the docents) realize what a treasure Glensheen is; however, we are always keeping our eyes open for new ideas.

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