## 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Meadow Brook Hall

Other Name/Site Number: Meadow Brook Farms; Wilson, Alfred G. and Matilda, Residence; Meadow Brook Stock Farm; Meadow Brook Hall & Gardens

## 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 480 South Adams Road

City/Town: Rochester Vicinity:

State: Michigan County: Oakland Code: 125 Zip Code: 48063

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

| Ownership of Property | | Category of Property | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Private: | __ | Building(s): | __ |
| Public-Local: | __ | District: | X |
| Public-State: | X | Site: | __ |
| Public-Federal: | __ | Structure: | __ |
| | | Object: | __ |

Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 26 | 3 | buildings |
| 1 | 1 | sites |
| 7 | 4 | structures |
| 3 | 4 | objects |
| 37 | 12 | Total |

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 15

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

## 4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

## 5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:
____ Entered in the National Register
____ Determined eligible for the National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register
____ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

## 6. FUNCTION OR USE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Historic: | DOMESTIC | Sub: | single dwelling |
| | | | secondary structure |
| | | | institutional housing |
| | AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE | | agricultural |
| | | | animal facility |
| | | | horticultural facility |
| | | | agricultural outbuilding |
| | LANDSCAPE | | garden |
| | | | forest |
| | | | unoccupied land |
| | | | street furniture/object |
| Current: | RECREATION AND CULTURE | Sub: | museum |
| | | | music facility |
| | | | work of art |
| | | | sports facility |
| | EDUCATION | | college |
| | DOMESTIC | | single dwelling |

## 7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Tudor Revival
LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival
LATE VICTORIAN/Gothic
LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman
MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne
OTHER/log cabin

MATERIALS:
Foundation: Stone; Brick; Concrete
Walls: Brick; Stone; Wood; Stucco; Glass; Concrete
Roof: Terra cotta; Wood; Asphalt; Synthetics; Earth; Glass
Other:

## SUMMARY

The Meadow Brook Hall estate, located 25 miles north of Detroit, Michigan, is nationally significant in the area of architecture under NHL Criterion 4. With its monumental Tudor Revival residence, secondary buildings (many of which are also in the Tudor Revival style), and structures set within an intact pastoral landscape, Meadow Brook Hall is an outstanding example of a twentieth-century American country estate. This property epitomizes the luxurious country estate which displayed its owner's wealth through imposing architecture, large land holdings, and an extensive agricultural complex. With most of its secondary buildings and landscape features preserved, the Meadow Brook Hall estate is an exceptionally well-documented example of the American country estate of the 1920s with exceptionally high integrity. This nomination is for a portion of the estate immediately surrounding Meadow Brook Hall which retains the greatest integrity and which includes the contributing resources associated with the property's period of significance, 1915-47.

**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

**OVERVIEW (location and setting, type, style, method of construction, size, and significant features)**

The estate of Meadow Brook Hall is located approximately 25 miles north of Detroit in the modern-day suburb of Rochester, Michigan. This nomination is for a portion of the original property encompassing the contributing resources that convey this country estate's original setting, feeling, association, and which are associated with the property's period of significance, 1915-47. This period reflects the era when the country estate's design intent was fully achieved. With the 88,000 square foot, 110-room Tudor Revival mansion Meadow Brook Hall as its centerpiece, collectively the estate is of national significance under NHL Criterion 4 as an exceptional and well-preserved example of the early 20$^{th}$ century country house movement in the United States.

The Meadow Brook Hall estate, which at its peak included approximately 1,400 acres, was once owned by Matilda Rausch Dodge Wilson. The estate was originally surrounded by open farmland. Today, the property is situated in a commercial and residential neighborhood developed in the last half of the twentieth century. This property is bound on the north by Walton Boulevard (formerly Pontiac Road), on the east by Adams Road (formerly Dodge Road), on the south by Butler Road. To the west is Oakland University, established by a bequest made by Matilda Wilson in 1957. The university is situated on the western part of the original estate and is not included in this nomination. Additionally, a large portion of the original estate located to the south of Meadow Brook Hall developed as golf courses in the 1980s is not part of this nomination.

Matilda Wilson, with her second husband Alfred G. Wilson, developed and expanded the property beginning in 1926. The Wilsons continued the work begun by Mrs. Wilson's first husband, automobile manufacturer John F. Dodge who purchased the original 320 acres in 1908. Dodge, before his death in 1920, expanded the existing farmhouse, constructed a nine-hole golf course and clubhouse to the south of the farmhouse and began planning—but did not realize before his death—a large residence, formal gardens, and the secondary structures requisite for a large country estate. Following their marriage in 1925, the Wilsons developed an extensive farming operation on the property with an award-winning herd of cattle, stables, dairy, poultry group, and crop cultivation. Meadow Brook Hall, a country house based on the Tudor Revival style, was constructed between 1926 and 1929. The residence was designed by William E. Kapp of Smith, Hinchman and Grylls in Detroit, Michigan. Landscape architect Arthur E. Davidson drew up the landscape plan between 1928 and 1929; subsequent development and execution of the designed gardens and associated landscape occurred over the course of the next three decades at the direction of Mrs. Wilson with assistance from her architect William Kapp. The combination of the massive country house, associated formal gardens and designed landscape, distinct agricultural areas, and outlying pastures and woodland, made this country estate one of the most elaborate in the nation.

Throughout their occupancy of the property, the Wilsons continued to refine the agricultural operations by constructing new facilities and expanding existing ones. Their residential needs also changed and in 1951-3, they constructed their retirement home on the property. Sunset Terrace (outside the boundary of this nomination, but also designed by William Knapp), designed in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright's mid-twentieth century work, was the last major addition made to the estate by the Wilsons. In 1957, Matilda Wilson signed an agreement with the State Board of Agriculture of Michigan to donate the estate and $2 million to establish "a college to serve southeastern Michigan."[1] She retained life tenancy of a portion of the property until her death in 1967. Since 1971, Meadow Brook Hall has been open to the public as a residential conference, cultural center for continuing education and museum. In 1979, the Meadow Brook Hall and fourteen resources within a 123.5-acre portion of the estate were listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

This nomination includes the 37 buildings, structures, sites, and objects associated with the period of significance of the property. The focal point of the estate is the Tudor Revival Meadow Brook Hall which originally was one of the largest country houses in the nation, as well as one of the largest open to the public as an historic house museum. This mansion historically was surrounded by gardens on the east and west and that remains the case today. Other extant buildings supported the Wilson family's agricultural, equestrian, and recreational interests and include stables, barns, playhouses, and garden structures. Notably, many of these buildings are also in the Tudor Revival style. Although the farming operations no longer exist, the landscape remains intact with rolling turf and marsh areas separated by extensive wooded areas. This is due in a large part to the two eighteen-hole golf courses constructed south of the mansion. While the golf courses are more manicured than the agricultural fields and pastures they replaced, these golf courses have preserved the estate's open spaces and limited the intrusion of non-historic buildings. The university has also established two biological preserves that contain forests, meadows, streams, and wetlands south of the mansion, which help to preserve the estate's historic setting, feeling, and view sheds.

## SITE

The original farm that formed the basis for Meadow Brook Hall was acquired by John Dodge in 1908. It was a large L-shaped tract of 320 acres. This farm was composed of forested areas, cultivated fields, and pastures. Assorted agricultural buildings (including two barns, a chicken house, well house and milk house), probably predating Dodge's purchase, were clustered around the farmhouse on the estate's eastern edge. Dodge built a nine-hole golf course in 1914 and the following year constructed a Tudor Revival clubhouse for his personal use south of the farmhouse. Also in 1914, Dodge planted an orchard of nearly 700 trees in the northeast corner of the estate which included 250 Baldwin apple trees, 25 plum trees (Diamond, Imperial Gage, and Burbank varieties) and 100 peach trees (Anderson, Banner, Early Crawfords, Late Crawfords, and New Prolific varieties). These varieties were planted in the 27 rows that composed the orchard.[2] Additional parcels acquired by Dodge (including the parcel east of Adams Road where he built three workers' cottages in 1917) increased the size of the estate to 832 acres prior to his death.

The next major phase in the site's development occurred in 1926, when Matilda Wilson began to conceive of the property as the primary seat for her family and second husband. It was at this point that the property began to take its present-day form. Matilda Wilson expanded the agricultural activities on the estate as she purchased new parcels of land. A survey map from 1938 shows that the property continued to be a patchwork of pastures, cultivated fields, and woods. For example, three pastures (of 7, 8, and 14 acres) were located south and

[1] Agreement between Matilda R. Wilson and the State Board of Agriculture of the State of Michigan, 20 September 1957 (copy in Meadow Brook Hall Archives)

[2] Original documents are in the Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

southwest of the farmhouse approximately where John Dodge's nine-hole golf course was formerly located. Another 12-acre pasture was located northeast of the mansion. Two hundred acres situated in the middle of the estate remained in the hands of other property owners (and would remain so until the university acquired this land in the 1960s).

With Matilda Wilson's new vision for the estate came a major building campaign that dramatically transformed the property. The large Tudor Revival mansion, the focal point of the estate, was constructed beginning in 1926 and was quickly followed by the other trappings of an elaborate country estate of the early twentieth century such as gardens, broad swathes of lawn, and garages for the Wilsons' fleet of automobiles and those of their guests. It was during this period, too, when many of the estate's buildings were erected or repositioned on the estate. These agricultural-related buildings were clustered into discrete farm groups dedicated to a specific function. On the west side of the estate (outside of the boundary of this nomination) was the farm group which had been established by 1938 for dairy, beef and Belgian horses. Barns for sheep and hogs were located in the northwest corner and west portion of the estate, respectively (again, outside the boundary of this nomination). The poultry group was located in the southeast corner. The area around the original farmhouse was dedicated to growing and storing food for the family and staff's consumption. Nearby and clustered around John Dodge's clubhouse were buildings constructed for the family's recreational needs including playhouses for the children, the outdoor pool, and cabana. Further to the west were the expansive stables and a riding ring constructed for the use of the family's children. Even a system for fire protection was provided. Fire hydrants and small gabled hose houses built of fieldstone were placed throughout the estate. Light fixtures were also installed along the estate's roadways.

By 1938, there were at least four entrances to the property. One entrance located on the western edge of the property (outside the boundaries of this nomination) gave access to the farm group located there and then connected with an interior road that wound easterly through the property. A service entrance (no longer in use) off Adams Road and just north of the original farmhouse provided access to the buildings, orchard, and garden in that area. The formal entrance for guests to the property was accessed from Adams Road (near Crooks Road) and is marked by an extant gatehouse. This entrance led to a road that wound northerly through the estate, passed the estate's non-extant deer park, deer shelter, and large animal cemetery terminating at Meadow Brook Hall. Finally, the entrance on the southern edge of property was accessed from Butler Road but only provided access to the poultry group of buildings. Most of the estate's roads appear to have been originally dirt but in some cases were paved with gravel.

The estate's bucolic appearance and design is documented in photographs taken of the property from the 1910s through the 1940s. The landscape of gently rolling hills was dotted with grazing animals and clumps of trees and Matilda Wilson fondly recalled the views of cattle and horses from the residence. A stone wall (date unknown) ran along Adams Road beginning at the service entrance and extending south to the formal entrance. Simple fences made of white posts stretched with wire divided fields and later more elaborate board fences were added in the area around the stables and riding ring. Scattered across the estate were the precincts dedicated to residential use, raising livestock, and recreation. Housing for the estate's workers was located on the east side of Adams Road. The orchard planted by Dodge had begun to mature in the northeast corner of the estate. A deer park—an essential feature of a large country estate—just inside the main gate gave visitors glimpses of these animals as they wound their way to the mansion.

Viewsheds were an important aspect of the historic setting and feeling of the property. From Meadow Brook Hall, the primary vista was south with views of the broad turf and fields offered from the rooms located on that side of the house, from the loggia and the outdoor terrace along the south elevation of the house. Additionally,

impressive views of Meadow Brook Hall were available from the agricultural-related buildings to the east of the mansion and as visitors approached the house from one of the estate's entrances.

## INTEGRITY

As a result of the estate's evolving patterns of use and activity, alterations have been made to the property's landscape since its period of significance. As a concession to the property's current use by the university, several hard surfaced parking lots have been added. In all cases, these parking lots have been landscaped in a way to minimize their visual impact. Other changes include the white board fencing which encircled some of the fields near the riding ring that was recently replaced with vinyl fencing of a comparable design. A large platform on which to erect tents was installed southeast of Meadow Brook Hall c. 1986. Other than a section from the gatehouse at Adams Road to the modern Golf Course Maintenance Building) the estate's original road system is intact but has been paved with asphalt. Other entrances and roadways have been added to the estate. Two new entrances located in the northeastern quadrant of the estate connect to new internal roads. The first entrance is on Adams Road and connects to two modern roads named Meadow Brook Road and Sunset Lane. A second entrance is located off Walton Boulevard and connects to Festival Drive and Meadow Brook Road. A more extensive roadway system has been added to the western part of the campus where the modern university is located.

The university has also constructed several new buildings to support the Meadow Brook Music Festival north of Meadow Brook Hall and maintenance buildings for the golf course to the south. The buildings are low in height keeping with the historic structures on site and in most cases have been placed on sites with low elevation. Additionally, these modern buildings employ materials and forms historically used on the estate. In all, the placement, height, materials of the later university buildings respect the property's original character and the estate retains integrity of setting and association. While the boundary for this nomination has been drawn to exclude these non-historic buildings, their design, profile, placement have been done in a sensitive manner, and in a way that preserves the historic viewsheds of the estate, especially views from Meadow Brook Hall.

Significantly, the visual and spatial experiences that the family, employees, and guests enjoyed historically on the estate are largely intact. The gardens which Matilda Wilson developed continue to be beautifully maintained. The open fields and forested areas that emphasize the property's natural topography and landscape are preserved. The golf courses, while not original, have a precedent on the property in the golf course John Dodge established in 1914. Moreover, the golf courses reinforce the open and undeveloped quality the estate possessed during its period of significance. The grouping of buildings on the eastern edge of the property maintain their integrity. On the western boundary is Knole Cottage still situated in the wooded setting as it was in 1926. All of these resources—site, buildings, structures and objects work together to convey the historic association of the estate. The estate would be recognizable to anyone who had viewed it during its period of significance.

The university has taken other important steps to preserve the estate's historic character. In 2005, the staff embarked on a $7 million restoration of Meadow Brook Hall to restore the exterior envelope and make critical repairs on the interior. A comprehensive condition assessment and preservation plan is also underway. Matilda Wilson's intention in donating this property to public use was two-fold. Her first goal was to make the property into an educational facility, a purpose it serves today as part of the university campus for 17,000 students and as a research, study, and training laboratory for students and faculty interested in art history and historic preservation. Matilda Wilson's second goal was to create a cultural center. More than 100,000 people visit Meadow Brook Hall and its gardens each year.

While the museum collection is not part of this nomination, its quality, breadth, and integrity are worth noting. The collection contains more than 75,000 fine and decorative art objects amassed by the Wilsons to complement the design of the house. Included in the collection are nineteenth-century European paintings, seventeenth and eighteen-century French and Flemish tapestries, porcelain, silver, Lalique and Tiffany art glass and nineteenth- and twentieth- century furniture. The library, including the design books which Matilda Wilson consulted while the house and gardens were being designed, also survives in the house. Meadow Brook Hall also retains the estate's archives, which contain hundreds of the original architectural drawings for historic buildings on the estate, landscape and site plans, correspondence related to the property's design and construction, family photographs, and papers relating to the early history of the automobile industry. This collection and archives represent a comprehensive record of the rich social and cultural history of life on an American country estate during the first half of the twentieth century and are available to the public for research.

In summary, the Meadow Brook Hall estate encompassed within the boundary of this nomination is distinguished by a remarkably high degree of integrity. While the ownership of the property has changed from a private hands to institutional ones, Oakland University has made few changes to the core area. Taken together, the estate's location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association reflect its period of significance, 1915-47. The predominance of the mansion on the site, along with views to and from this building, approximate the character of the views the Wilsons and their guests would have enjoyed. Taken individually, the contributing resources within the property's boundaries, with few exceptions noted below, retain their historic location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Meadow Brook Hall as the centerpiece of this nomination, in particular, retains a high degree of integrity and remains virtually unaltered. On the mansion's interior, the original character defining features, such as low lighting levels and dark paneling that give the house a sense of age and its picturesque quality, have been retained. The architectural elements including mantels, doors, and stained glass which the Wilsons acquired remain in place. Original lighting fixtures, window treatments, decorative plaster, and bathroom fixtures that contribute to the overall effect the Wilsons intended also survive. Perhaps as important is the documentary and pictorial evidence for the design, construction and furnishing and management of the estate which has been retained and is available for study.

The following is a detailed description of the property which begins with the gardens adjacent to Meadow Brook Hall, followed by a description of Meadow Brook Hall and the other contributing buildings, structures and objects. For each resource, the historic name appears first and if the name has been changed, the new designation follows. A table listing the noncontributing resources follows. The location of each contributing and noncontributing resource is keyed by number to the site plans.

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

| Resource | Map Key # | Architectural Classification (if known) | Designer (if known) | Construction materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Buildings:** | | | | |
| Meadow Brook Hall (1926-9) | 1 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | William Kapp | Foundation: stone; Walls: brick, stone, wood; Roof: terra cotta |
| Carriage House (1928) | 2 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | William Kapp | Foundation: stone Walls: brick, stone, wood; Roof: terra cotta |
| Open Auto Shed (1930) | 3 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | William Kapp | Foundation: stone; Walls: brick; Roof: terra cotta, wood |
| Dog house/Gardener's Shed (c. 1926) | 4 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood, stucco; Roof: terra cotta |
| Knole Cottage (1926; moved 1929) | 5 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | William Kapp | Foundation: stone; Walls: brick, stone, wood; Roof: terra cotta |
| Guardhouse (c. 1929) | 6 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood, stucco Roof: terra cotta |
| Knole Pump house (c. 1929) | 7 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | | Foundation: stone; Walls: brick; Roof: wood |
| Stable (c. 1935) | 8 | | | Foundation: stone Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Riding Ring (1935) | 9 | | | Foundation: stone Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Stud Barn (c. 1938) | 10 | | | Foundation: concrete Walls: wood; Roof: wood |
| Well house (c. 1928) | 11 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals | | Foundation: stone Walls: stone; Roof: wood |
| Pump house (1918) | 12 | | | Foundation: stone Walls: stone; Roof: wood |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Garage and Heating Plant (1926) | 13 | | | Foundation: stone Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Garage/Golf Course Maintenance Building (c. 1938) | 14 | | | Foundation: stone Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |

| Resource | Map Key # | Architectural Classification (if known) | Designer (if known) | Construction materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Farmhouse (c. 1898; alterations in 1908 and 1914) | 15 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Classical Revival | Alterations by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Greenhouse (c. 1917) | 16 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival; Late Victorian/Gothic | Lord Burnham Co. | Foundation: stone; Walls: metal, glass, wood, stucco; Roof: metal glass |
| Guardhouse (c. 1917) | 17 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood, stucco; Roof: asphalt |
| Clubhouse (1915) | 18 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | William Kapp | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood, stucco; Roof: asphalt |
| Tea house/Cabana (c. 1926) | 19 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals | | Foundation: brick; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Playhouse/Golf Starter Station (1934) | 20 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | William Kapp | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood, stucco; Roof: asphalt |
| Danny's Cabin (1926, 1937 addition) | 21 | Other: Log | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Worker's cottage A 415 Adams Road (Alpha Delta Pi Sorority) (c. 1925) | 22 | Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements/Bungalow/ Craftsman | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Worker's cottage B 437 Adams Road (1917) | 23 | Late 19th & 20th Century American | | Foundation: stone; |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Movements/Bungalow/ Craftsman | | Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Worker's cottage C 449 Adams Road (Phi Sigma Sigma Sorority) (1917) | 24 | Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements/Bungalow/ Craftsman | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Worker's cottage D 461 Adams Road (1917) | 25 | Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements/Bungalow/ Craftsman | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Garage (c. 1925) | 26 | Late 19th & 20th Century American Movements/Bungalow/ Craftsman | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| **Sites:** | | | | |
| Estate | 27 | | | |

| Resource | Map Key # | Architectural Classification (if known) | Designer (if known) | Construction materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Structures:** | | | | |
| Gazebo (c. 1928) | 28 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | | Walls: brick, stone, wood; Roof: terra cotta |
| Bridge (1928) | 29 | Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Tudor Revival | | Foundation: Brick, stone; Piers: brick, stone; Balustrade: wood |
| Root cellar (c. 1918) | 30 | | | Foundation: Walls: stone; Roof: earth |
| Ice house (c. late 19th century) | 31 | | | Foundation: stone; Walls: wood; Roof: asphalt |
| Outdoor pool (c. 1936) | 32 | Modern Movement: Moderne | | Walls: concrete; Walkway: stone |
| Road system | 33 | | | |
| Boundary wall | 34 | | | Walls: stone |
| **Objects:** | | | | |
| Birdhouse (1918) | 35 | | | Walls: wood; Roof: wood |
| Fountain (c. 1930) | 36 | | | Bronze, stone |
| *Colt Pegasus* Fountain (created c. 1943, installed 1947) | 46 | | William Kapp; Avard Fairbanks | Bronze, stone, tile |

Gardens adjacent to Meadow Brook Hall

There are several discrete gardens immediately surrounding Meadow Brook Hall significant to the overall design of the estate and important to the historic setting of the mansion itself. These gardens have not been counted as separated resources but rather are considered features of the overall design for the estate. In some cases, it is possible to discern the genesis of these garden designs in plans prepared by landscape architect Arthur E. Davidson in 1928. As was often the case with American country houses of this period, Davidson's scheme employed formality and symmetry. Despite their formality, these gardens—in their variety, the diverse selection of plant material and their orientation to the main house—were intended to underscore the property's overall picturesque quality.

Although Matilda Wilson and her landscape architect Arthur E. Davidson conceived the gardens along with the design of the house itself, the landscape design evolved over the course of four decades. For this reason and the evolutionary nature of landscapes, the documentation for their design and subsequent changes is far less detailed than other parts of the estate. Most of the gardens were part of the estate's original landscape plan and were established during the property's period of significance. Those gardens which were established after the property's period of significance are so noted.

The date of the English Walled Garden, which sits west of the entrance court, is unknown, but probably dates to 1929 when the house was completed (an unnamed garden in this location does appear on Davidson's plan). This garden was separated from the entrance court by an original brick wall topped with stone coping. The entrance to the garden is through an arched opening (with wood door) located approximately in the center of this wall. On the courtside of the wall, there are two original lanterns mounted on either side of the door. On the garden side there is a single lantern hanging above the door.

Once in the English Walled Garden, the brick wall provides a backdrop for the perennials planted in the flowerbed running parallel to the wall. Currently, the garden is planted with hollyhocks (*Althaea*), lilies (*Lilium*), larkspur (*Delphinium*), and foxglove (*Digitalis*). Vines have been trained to climb the brick wall uniting architecture with landscape. Running parallel to the flowerbed is a wide flagstone walkway which then wraps around the west and south sides of the house. This walkway joins the Loggia Terrace and other paved patio areas on the south elevation.

Matilda Wilson built the Rock Garden at approximately the same time the house was completed in 1929. This garden is located on a hillside located north and west of the English Walled Garden. The garden is composed of sandstone rocks that are placed on this hillside. Tucked into the crevices formed by these rocks are cascading perennials, alpine species, and dwarf conifers (*Pinus*). Immediately to the east of the Rock Garden is the Gazebo (#28) described below.

On the south elevation of the house is an extensive paved patio which runs the length of the building and where the Wilsons enjoyed expansive views of the Greensward and Great Lawn. The stone paving, low stone walls, shrubs, planted containers, and other low vegetation spatially define this area. The plantings currently in place are probably similar to those used during the Wilsons' occupancy. Nearby are a variety of elm trees including an American (*Ulmus americana*), Scottish (*Ulmus glabra*) and weeping variety (*Ulmus glabra 'Camperdownii'*). A walkway continues along the south side of the house, turns the corner near the dining room, and leads to the entrance to the Breakfast Garden.

The Breakfast Garden appears in Davidson's original design and was staked out in 1928. It is symmetrical in plan and has a strong axis which extends from the patio located immediately outside the Breakfast Room door

to the *Colt Pegasus* fountain. A flagstone walk reinforces this axis and on either side of the walk are turf panels bordered by shrubs and perennials. The garden is bound by brick walls (with stone coping) on its south, north, and east sides. On the south wall, there is a semicircular niche with a built-in stone seat. Directly opposite on the north wall is a tall niche (with brick laid in a diaper pattern) holding the gilt bronze sculpture *The Golden Fleece* which was acquired by Mrs. Wilson in 1940.

The dominant feature in the eastern end of the Breakfast Garden is the bronze sculpture *Colt Pegasus* set within a fountain. This tall bronze statue of the winged horse of Greek mythology is set on a crest of a wave carved in stone. This sculpture, set within an octagonal fountain, is by sculptor Avard T. Fairbanks and dates to c. 1943. The fountain was designed by William E. Kapp in 1947. Plantings around the fountain include low hedges of boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) and barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). Radiating from the fountain are walkways which terminate at short iron gates set in low brick walls. These gates lead to the service court (to the north) and the grass lawn on the south. The eastern gate leads to the Rose Garden. Like *Colt Pegasus*, *The Golden Fleece* is also by Avard T. Fairbanks who sculpted the model in 1939. This work was donated to Oakland University in the late 1990s by Mr. Fairbanks' son.

The Rose Garden appears on Davidson's plan and was staked out in 1928. However, it is believed that the garden was not planted until the 1940s. Although the plant palette has been changed, the garden retains its principal design features. In plan, this garden is a large oval bisected lengthwise by a brick walkway which terminates at a terrace located at the southern end. This terrace is octagonal in plan and is encircled by a low brick wall capped with stone. Seating in this area is in the form of freestanding stone benches. The center of the terrace is paved with stone laid in a large octagonal shape and in the center of the terrace is a decorative stone baluster that may have supported a sundial originally. Secondary brick and grass pathways further divide the garden into semicircular rose beds. Originally, Matilda Wilson maintained 1,600 rose bushes. Today, there are approximately 250 bushes as well as perennials, annuals and shrubs. In 2005, the original rose arbor lining the main walk way was recreated based on original drawings. This arbor is composed of wood columns lining the main walk which support arched trusses overhead.

The Herb Garden is located in the courtyard area formed by the wall of the Breakfast Garden on one side and the projection of the Servants' Dining Hall and Sitting Room on the other. Originally, Davidson envisioned a "Maid's Garden" in this area—a euphuism for an area in which to dry laundry. It is not known when this parterre garden of herbs was established but its proximity to the kitchen suggests that it was planted soon after the house was completed. Directly adjacent to the Kitchen Porch is a concrete patio which is visually separated from the Herb Garden by a low brick wall constructed in the late 1990s.

The Orientation Garden, located at the east end of the Open Auto Shed, is not original and was designed by Grissim Metz Associates in 1996. It includes a large octagonal stone planter set in the center of this space paved with asphalt block. The garden is defined by a low brick wall and clipped boxwood. There are plantings and freestanding seating placed around the perimeter of the garden.

<u>Meadow Brook Hall (contributing building, map key #1)</u>

Meadow Brook Hall (1926-29) is situated on the eastern half of the original estate. The public approach to the house is from the north via a driveway (now Mansion Drive) which passes through the brick entrance gate (41) and through a forested area providing a dramatic vista to the house. After crossing the bridge (29), this roadway terminates in a circular drive in front of the house. The original driveway was gravel but this was replaced with granite block edged with slate pavers and a granite curb in 1997. Narrow stone walkways are located approximately halfway between the face of the house and the drive and follow the curvature of the driveway.

Other than these paved areas, this forecourt area is lawn. There is a stone block for mounting horses placed in the grass east of the main entrance to the house and a natural rock outcropping within the grassy circle.

The secondary approach to the house is from the east on an original roadway (now named Golf View Lane) that connected the Hall to the original farmhouse. This road terminates at the service court located on the rear of Meadow Brook Hall. Originally, this service court had a large oval-shaped grass area in the center which was surrounded by shrubs. Around this oval ran a 20-foot roadway. In 1997, this area was redesigned with the grassy oval removed. The entire area was paved with asphalt block, and a low brick wall capped with stone was constructed on its southern and eastern edges. Designed to improve vehicular access for visitors, this change altered the informal intimacy of the original estate's service yard.

South of the house was the broad turf area referred to by the family as the "Greensward" and further south the "Great Lawn" (now the Katke-Cousins Golf Course). To the west of the house is Evergreen Hill which Mrs. Wilson created with the planting of 100 trees in the 1930s**.**

Meadow Brook Hall exhibits the key characteristics of the Tudor Revival style and does so on a monumental scale that has few rivals in the history of domestic architecture in the United States. The building's profile, massing, eclectic use of materials and details on the exterior of the house contribute to its extraordinarily irregular and picturesque quality. The residence's diverse exterior design conveys the intended effect that this building evolved over a protracted period of time. For the exterior, the Wilsons and their architect William Kapp drew on several English examples including Compton Wynyates, Hampton Court, and the Tower of London.

In plan, the complex form of the building belies a simple description. In general, the house is in the shape of an "L" but rooms set diagonally from the main face of the exterior, turrets, bay windows, and projecting blocks, create a far more active composition. Additionally, several elevations have oriel windows and in some areas, the second story extends out over the floor below.

Materials and construction techniques include brickwork in a variety of patterns, such as English bond and diaper work, half-timbering with stucco and brick nogging, random ashlar stone masonry, stucco, and areas of brick alternating with courses of stone. There is also an extensive use of stone in the building's architraves, parapets, quoining details, crenellation, and roof balustrades. Ornamental stonework in the form of carved shields and cartouches inserted in the walls and corbel blocks carved with human figures, animals and vegetation appear liberally on the exterior. The extraordinary brick and stone chimneys create a picturesque interest and dramatic profile for the residence at the roofline**.** The chimneys appear in fourteen separate groups of one to four stacks. Decorative patterning on the chimneys includes chevrons, diaper work, and spiral designs. The gables of the house also have a variety of decorative bargeboards.

Despite the extraordinary variety of materials and details, some consistent elements work to unify the exterior design. The building sits on a random ashlar stone foundation. Although the window openings are in a variety of sizes and shapes, most of the sashes are metal casements with diamond-shaped leaded lights. On the first floor, windows are usually set in stone architraves but wood architraves are more commonly located on the second story (but not exclusively). The gable roof and its many dormers are clad with clay tiles. Flat roof decks were originally metal or slate. Downspouts have lead repoussé conductor heads.

The main entrance to the residence is on the north elevation and its relative importance to the other entrances on this elevation is expressed architecturally in several ways. The entrance is located in a two-story crenellated limestone structure which projects from the brick wall. This entrance structure is constructed of multicolored

dressed limestone blocks with finished dense grey limestone coping, architraves, and detailing. The entrance is through an arched portal with decorative iron gate by Oscar Bach. Above the entrance is a crest inscribed with the Wilson family motto "Pro Legibus ac Regibus."[3] A three-part casement window above is surmounted by a large clock and crenellation at the roofline. Flanking this entrance are two large bronze lanterns. On the south elevation (rear), there are several entrances, namely at the loggia, dining room and breakfast room. The main entrance for servants was located on the east (rear) elevation of the service wing.

The exterior of the building is in a remarkable state of preservation. Oakland University has recently completed a rehabilitation of the roof, replacing broken tiles in kind, and replacing flashing. Few changes have been made to the exterior although three alterations should be noted. A metal fire escape has been added to the west elevation near the library. This elevation is a secondary one and the visual impact is minimal. The remaining alterations occurred on the east elevation where the original kitchen porch and the original servants' porch were enclosed in the 1970s and 80s respectively. These changes have been sensitively carried out and are reversible.

## INTERIOR

Structurally, Meadow Brook Hall is constructed of reinforced concrete and concrete block. The interior is replete with ornamentation and finishes that complement the design aesthetic of the Tudor Revival style. Public rooms and spaces occupied by the Wilson family are finished with carved paneling, stained glass windows, ornamental plaster, carved stone elements, mantels, lighting fixtures, and ornamental hardware. In a number of instances, the Wilsons had their architect copy elements from English houses such as Knole House, Belton House, Hatton House, and Chastleton House. Most of the interiors, however, were custom designed expressly for the Wilsons and were executed by some of the country's leading artisans and craftsmen. In most cases, the original drawings and related documentation survive in the archives. Significantly, the interior is intact and is in a remarkable state of preservation.

Architect William Kapp organized the residence into two parts. Generally, the western half of the L-shaped plan is dedicated to space used primarily by the Wilson family and their guests. The eastern half of the plan, on the other hand, contains service space. Horizontal circulation runs along the spine of the two wings and in most cases takes the form of a corridor with rooms arranged on either side. In most cases, the rooms used by the family have southern exposure. Most of the guest bedrooms are located on the northern side of the house.

Also on the northern side of the house, Kapp provided vertical circulation at several points. The main staircase is located within the Great Hall and connects the lower level to the second story. The Mid-Stair Hall (room 118) is a secondary staircase that connects the lower level to the second story. A service staircase located approximately in the center of the service wing connects the basement to the third floor. A private circular limestone staircase links the basement to the third floor near rooms used by Alfred Wilson. Two original elevator cores in the residence extend from the lower level to the third floor. The first is the elevator located just east of the Great Hall. The second elevator is a service elevator located adjacent to the service staircase. To address code issues, in the 1970s, the university added an enclosed fire stair at the northern end of the service wing (located in rooms 136 and 238).

There is also a shift in grade within the floor plan at the northern end of the service wing. Beyond the point that the service stairs is located, there is a mezzanine level inserted between floors. The mezzanine level between the first and second floors housed maids' quarters. The mezzanine level between the lower level and the first floor housed the laundry and staff lounge. Additionally, there is a subterranean level (located below the lower level) which contains mechanical space.

[3] Latin for "Law and Order."

There are several technological features in Meadow Brook Hall worth noting. First, in conjunction with the concrete structural system which lowered the risk of fire, the architects also installed a firebreak between the main house and the service wing. This firebreak included a metal door on a track which would be lowered in the event of a fire to help prevent fire from spreading. The steam heating system was fed by a boiler located in the subterranean level of the house and the warm air was distributed through ducts set into the masonry walls. An extensive refrigeration system cooled the residence's walk-in refrigerators and freezers. A saline tank and coil panel from this system made by the American Carbonic Machinery Company survives in the basement. The Wilsons also had an extensive call system with call buttons installed in rooms used by the family. A switchboard located in room 122 (first floor) was used by the house operator to route incoming and outgoing phone calls.

The following is a description of each floor of the residence which includes a detailed description of significant rooms. Room numbers are keyed to the attached floor plans.

**First floor**

The western half of the first floor contains the public spaces used by family members and their guests. The eastern leg of the "L" houses the primary kitchen for the residence, flower room, the servants' dining and sitting rooms, and other service areas.

Sun Porch (room 101): The westernmost room of the first floor is the Sun Porch, which is accessed from the Living Room through a double doorway. The floor is covered with random stone pavers and the south, west, and north walls are constructed of random coursed sandstone. Arched openings on the south, west and north elevations are infilled with iron French doors with sidelights and transom. The original bronze and wood chandelier and a wood rafter ceiling supported on decorative stone corbels remain.

Living Room (room 102): The Living Room is a one of five large rooms on the first floor and is a compilation of several English rooms the Wilsons admired. The walls are finished with oak paneling based on the Bromley Room in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. The plaster ceiling is ornamented with strap work based on the Reynolds Room in the Knole House, Kent, England. The focal point of this room is the fireplace located on the west wall. The stone fire surround is a Tudor arch framed by a wood mantel based on one from the early seventeenth century in the Spangle Bedroom in the Knole House. Two bay windows, with stained glass panels depicting knights holding various armaments and roundels depicting a bird, winged lion, woman, and angel, are located on the south and north walls. The floor is laid with random oak flooring fastened with wood pegs.

Organ alcove (room 103): This room provides circulation from the Drawing Room to the Library. This space, largely oak paneled, houses the Æolian Pipe Organ which John Dodge purchased for his residence at Grosse Pointe. Cabinets holding the original organ rolls are mounted on the east wall. The floor is laid with random oak flooring fastened with wood pegs.

Library (room 104): The Library has built-in oak bookcases and oak paneling on all four walls. One of the room's most interesting features is the iconography used to underscore the intellectual purpose of this room. The entablature is ornamented with portraits of poets, philosophers, artists, writers, and composers including Plutarch, Socrates, Mark Twain, Gainsborough, and Bach. The doors leading from the Organ Alcove also have portraits of medieval figures engaged in reading and writing. The west bay window has seven stained glass panels illustrating architecture, astronomy, a scribe illuminating a manuscript, literature, astrology, a stained

glass artist, and sculpture. These windows were manufactured by the G. Owen Bonawit Studios in New York.[4] The limestone mantel with a Tudor arch and crockets is carved with seals of universities and colleges in the United States. The floor is laid with random oak flooring fastened with wood pegs. Immediately to the right of the fireplace is a narrow staircase leading to an upper room located at the mezzanine level called the Magazine Room (no room number) where the Wilsons stored periodicals.

Low Passage (room 107): The Low Passage is the main entrance to the house. Flooring is set with random stone pavers and the walls are random coursed stone block with visible chisel marks. The ceiling is flat plaster with exposed oak beams with chamfered corners. The exterior door is located on the east wall.

Great Hall (room 106): The Great Hall was the first grand space visitors would encounter upon entering the residence. This large space is one story in height except at north end where the main staircase rises to the second story. The floor is set with random-size stone pavers. The walls are plaster with stone bases and door and window architraves. The fireplace is located in the center of the west wall and the Wilson family coat of arms is mounted on the stone chimneybreast. The ceiling is divided into plaster panels by three major wood beams resting on wood corbels carved with grotesques. A large beam (carved with zigzag ornamentation alternating with scrollwork) runs transversely from east to west. Modern lights have been recessed into the ceiling.

The oak staircase to the second floor is U-shape in plan and has a dado mounted on the wall and a balustrade topped with a molded handrail. The woodwork is carved with linen fold panels, arches, and balusters. Stone mullions divide the large vertical window in upper part of stair hall. Clear glass windows have stained glass inserts decorated with fleur-de-lis, a swan, unicorn, lion, and shields. A garter inscribed with “Honi soit qui mal y pense” encircles one shield (French for “shamed by the person who thinks evil of it”).[5] The area under the stairs is filled with a paneled wall and a door leading to the staircase to the lower level.

Loggia/Gift Shop (room 111): This space was originally open to the exterior but was enclosed at some undetermined date. It is a three-bay space organized by the groin vaults with limestone ribs which rest on corbels carved with figures including a jockey on a horse, a mechanic with an automobile, and an artist holding a model of Meadow Brook Hall carved by Corrado Parducci. The walls are rough, irregular stone block varied in color. The quoining, door, and window architraves are limestone. The floor is set with random stone pavers. The north wall contains the door to the Great Hall which has a pointed arch. In the bay to the right of this door is a three-sectioned casement window and in the third bay is a plain wall. The east wall has a door placed slightly left of center and which provided access to Matilda’s Study (room 112). This door opening is rectangular and is filled with an original wrought iron door behind which is an oak paneled door. The south wall has three pointed arched openings which have been filled in with wood frames and glass to enclose this space. The western most opening is filled with a French door, sidelights, and transom above.

Gallery (room 114): This long circulation space connects the Great Hall with the Christopher Wren Dining Room. This space is an adaptation of the early seventeenth- century Brown Gallery in the Knole House and has oak paneled walls with a cornice supported by scroll brackets. In the middle of the north wall are three leaded glass windows which look out over the two-story ballroom located on the lower level. On the south wall are doors leading to the Wilsons’ studies. The floor is laid with random oak flooring fastened with wood pegs.

---

[4] According to a communication from Kathryn Eckert to Roger Reed dated March 2, 2011, the manufacturer of these windows was documented in the Michigan Stained Glass Census by Francoise S. Harrod.

[5] This is the motto of the Order of the Garter, founded by Edward III in the fourteenth century. The motto was inspired by an incident during which the Countess of Salisbury’s garter fell off while dancing with Edward.

Matilda's Study (room 112): Architect William Kapp based the design of Matilda's study on the Garden Room in Hatton House in London (c. 1730). The study has a flat plaster ceiling with paneled walls of clear pine. The door leading to the Gallery is framed with an elaborate shouldered architrave ornamented with a swag and face. On top is a broken pediment with a cartouche surmounted by a figure resembling a court jester. In the center of the east wall is the fireplace mantel, also based on an example from Hatton Garden House. On either side of the fireplace are recessed rounded niches with the same shouldered architrave as the door leading to the Gallery. The floor is laid with oak parquetry. A door located on the west wall leads to the vault where Matilda stored her papers and extensive collection of keys to the estate.

Alfred's Study (room 115): This room is entered from the Gallery through a small oak paneled anteroom. The study has a ceiling decorated with plaster strap work based on a seventeenth-century room in Haddon Hall in Derbyshire, England. The study walls are finished with oak paneling that extends nearly to the ceiling. At the top of the paneled walls is a row of carved vignettes depicting scenes from the lives of Matilda and Alfred including their marriage ceremony, Alfred's lumber business, seals from cities where Alfred lived, and emblems representing Alfred's membership in the Masonic order and the Knights of Columbus. The west wall contains the fireplace located right of center and the southern wall has a deep rectangular bay window framed by an oak Tudor arch. The upper windows are fixed with stained glass roundels illustrating ships and eagles set into clear leaded glass. The New York firm Ostrander & Eshleman designed and made the unusual hardware for this room which is inspired by Wilson's career in the lumber industry. For example, the lever door handle is a log surmounted by a lumberjack and the escutcheon plate is a circular saw blade. Hinges are ornamented with chains and hooks used to hoist logs. The floor is laid with random oak flooring fastened with wood pegs.

Christopher Wren Dining Room (room 116): This is a large rectangular space with a semi-circular bay at the south end of the room and a rectangular bay window on the east wall. The design of the room is based on the chapel at Belton House in Lincolnshire, England. The elaborate carved plaster ceiling is a focal point of the room with high relief ornamentation executed by sculptor Corrado Parducci. The center of the ceiling is a large oval set into a rectangle. Each of the four spandrels has plaster wreaths of flowers and foliation. A border of putti set within a rinceau runs along the perimeter of the ceiling and partially separates the three main parts detailed above. The walls are walnut paneled with dado, pilasters, and entablature. Elaborate wood architraves are surmounted with segmental arches each of which is filled with a basket of fruit and flowers carved in basswood. The fireplace, located on the west wall, has a mantel and hearth made of richly veined marble. Above the mantel is an elaborate carved swag in the style of the English carver Grinling Gibbons incorporating fowl, flowers, fruit, and grains. Stained glass panels in the windows feature scenes associated with hunting and dining including a servant serving a boar's head, a bowman, and musician with bagpipes. The floor is laid with walnut parquetry.

Breakfast Room (room 117): This Oriental-inspired room is where the Wilsons took their breakfast and where the family's young children took their evening meal. This space is vaulted and is octagonal in plan. The floor is laid in yellow and green marble in a design of concentric octagons. The upper part of the wall is painted with freehand Chinoiserie landscape scenes featuring pagodas and Chinese garden ornaments. A fireplace with a green marble mantel is on the northwest wall. The six-armed ormolu chandelier is decorated with a porcelain female figure and Chinoiserie decoration.

Kitchen (room 124): The primary kitchen for the residence is rotated at a slight angle from the adjacent East Corridor. The ceiling is flat plaster and the walls are tiled with glazed yellow subway tile. On the west wall is an inscription "Waste Not Want Not" painted on the tile. Original kitchen fixtures include a sink in the south

corner of the room, refrigeration units with stainless steel and Carrara glass doors. Appliances, floor tile, and cabinets have been replaced.

An adjacent space has similar finishes and currently holds the ovens. To the northwest of this room is an irregular shaped room (marked Servants' Pantry on the 1928 plan) which has original built-in oak cabinets and a lower base cabinet. The kitchen porch was enclosed in 1979 and is currently used to store pots and pans.

East Corridor (room 123): This hall served as the service corridor connecting service spaces with the rest of the house. The corridor has flat plaster walls and ceiling, oak base, architraves, and chair rail. The wood floor is laid with carpeting. Along the east wall are a series of doors leading to closets and adjacent service spaces. The original firebreak in the form of a rolling metal shutter survives in this hall near the kitchen.

Servants' Dining Hall and Sitting Room/Wilson Room (Rooms 126 and 127): This large space was originally divided into two rooms that is the servants' dining hall (room 126) and servants' sitting room (room 127). In 1972, the interior partition was removed and the flat plaster ceiling was lowered in the 1970s to accommodate air conditioning. The walls are flat plaster with oak bases and architraves. The fireplace is in the center of this wall and has a plain oak mantel. The eight chandeliers and two ceiling fans are non-original. The wood floor is laid with carpeting. This space is now used for meetings and conferences.

Servants' Porch/Garden Courtyard Room (room 128): This space was originally the Servants' Porch but was enclosed in 1987. Openings have been filled in with windows and doors set in oak architraves. The ceiling is rough plaster with large exposed wooden beams sitting on top of brick walls. The floor is paved with non-original tile. Walls are red brick with non-original oak base. The door leading to Rooms 126/127 and the East Corridor have stone architraves with quoining. A set of French doors lead to an exterior brick staircase. The ceiling fixture and recessed lights are not original.

Flower Room (room 129): The walls of this room are tiled with glazed brick in cream with green border tile. A curved plaster cove joins the wall with the flat plaster ceiling. The floor is covered with linoleum that probably dates to the mid-twentieth century. The original stainless steel cooler for flowers is located on the north wall. Ceiling mounted lighting fixtures are non-original.

**Second Floor**

The second floor contains the upper hall and sitting alcove, gallery, the family's bedrooms, and guest rooms. Each bedroom has its own bathroom which retain their original plumbing fixtures, ceramic tile, and lighting. The service area at the eastern end of the house contains bedrooms for servants, linen room, pressing room, sewing room and other service spaces. The most significant second floor spaces are described below.

Frances' Bedroom (room 201): The decoration of Frances' Bedroom was described in 1929 as being in the "early American manner."[6] This room has a flat plaster ceiling and crown molding. Walls are flat plaster and covered with original wallpaper. The mantel, dado, floor and window and door architraves are pine. The original brass ceiling fixture and sconces survive in the room. There is a short two-part hallway which connects Frances' Bedroom with the Upper Great Hall. The easternmost part of the hallway connects to the staircase that ascends to Frances' Playroom on the third floor.

Upper Great Hall (room 205): This informal family gathering space is the most voluminous room in the house—the effect in large measure created by the barrel arch spanning overhead. This ceiling, with its strap

[6] W. E. Kapp, "Notes for Newspaper Articles," 16 November 1929: 4, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

work and band of fleur-de-lis, acorns, and floral ornaments, is based on the early seventeenth-century ceiling of the Long Gallery in the Chastleton House in Oxfordshire. Detroit sculptor Corrado Parducci executed this plasterwork. The walls of the Upper Great Hall are flat plaster with oak bases and stone architraves. The south end of the room is a paneled wall topped with an oversized wood cove with a cornice. The eastern end of the paneled wall is treated as a screen to separate the Sitting Alcove beyond. The floor is random width oak boards with wood pegs.

Danny's Bedroom (room 203): Daniel "Danny" Dodge was 12 years old at the time the house was completed in 1929 and accordingly, his bedroom was decorated with features that would delight a young child. This space has a high vaulted ceiling with five exposed oak beams which rest on corbel blocks carved with a caricature of a figure from children's literature such as Robinson Crusoe, John Silver, Captain Kidd, King Arthur, Friar Tuck, and Merlin. The door hinges are strap hinges in the shape of an airplane. The door pull is ornamented with automobiles and the switch plate is decorated with an airplane. The fireplace is located in the corner of the room on a paneled wall. The stone surround is a low Tudor arch carved with the initials "DGD" (for Daniel George Dodge) and the date 1929. The floor is random width oak boards with wood pegs. A small room within Danny's suite contains an iron ladder that leads to his playroom located on the third floor.

Matilda's Bedroom (room 214): Matilda Wilson's Bedroom was described in 1929 as decorated in "the manner of Louis XIV."[7] This large-scaled bedroom has exposure on three sides affording expansive views of the estate to the south, east, and west. The walls are covered with silk damask and the dado is walnut with gilt highlights. The walnut door and window architraves are scalloped and are surmounted with carved shells. The Rococo-style mantel is of red and pink variegated marble. The floor is carpeted over soft pine wood flooring. Matilda's suite also included an octagonal bathroom, dressing room, and large closet.

English Room (room 217): The Wilsons' son Richard used the English Room as his bedroom. This bedroom has flat plaster walls and ceiling, oak base and door architraves. The flooring is random width oak boards fastened with wood pegs. This room has one of the rolling steel shutters that serve as the firebreak between the service wing and the rest the house. The English Room is also notable for its bathroom. While each of the bathrooms in the house is finished with exquisite and often custom-made tile; the red, black, and cream Art Deco tile work in this bathroom is distinctive for its bold and modern character.

**Third Floor**

This floor contains storage space, playrooms for the two Wilson children, circulation space, space for organ pipes and valves, Mrs. Wilson's beauty parlor, and a bedroom.

Frances' Playroom (room 301): This space has vertical knotty pine paneling on the walls to approximately eye level with textured plaster above and on the ceiling. There are built-in bookshelves and seating along the south wall. At the west end of the room is a fireplace with red brick and a pine mantel. The floor is carpeted laid over pegged random width pine flooring.

Danny's Playroom (room 303): Danny's Playroom is a large space with vaulted ceiling with exposed rafters. The walls are covered with random width pine boards run horizontally. There are built-in pine cupboards and on the east wall is mounted a large frame and wood circular disk from which originally hung Danny's punching bag. The floor is covered with faux wood sheet linoleum.

[7] W. E. Kapp, "Notes for Newspaper Articles," 16 November 1929: 4, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

Dodge Suite/Director's Office (room 310): Matilda Wilson had this room designed as a reproduction of the bedroom in the Boston Boulevard house shared by Matilda and John Dodge in Detroit. Here she displayed memorabilia and objects dating from her first marriage. Walls are flat plaster as is the ceiling. The original decorative painting (a freehand painted floral border) on the ceiling survives but the wall painting (style unknown) has been painted over. Bases, architraves, and doors are made of bird's-eye maple. The floor is carpeted. The original sconces with Tiffany shades survive but modern recessed lights have been installed in the ceiling. All door hardware is ormolu. The adjoining bathroom retains its original white tile and plumbing fixtures (with the exception of the toilet).

**Lower Level**

The lower level contains a mixture of space used by the family for entertaining and service space. The service area included separate storage areas for furs, rugs, food and glass, kitchens, and mechanical spaces.

Staircase: This stone staircase is a continuation of the main staircase in the Great Hall. The staircase is U-shape in plan and wraps around a monumental Romanesque style column. A large window with eight fixed and casement sashes set into stone mullions lights this staircase. The staircase terminates in a rectangular foyer space separated from the Fountain Room by three open arches.

Undercroft (room 16): This circulation space provides a linkage from the Fountain Room to the Games Room and as well as access to the Entertainment Room. An alcove holds a fireplace with a large wood mantel supported by corbels carved with faces. The flooring is random width oak boards with wood pegs.

Ballroom (room 13): The family used the Ballroom for large parties (for example, in 1939 Frank Sinatra and Tommy Dorsey's band performed in the Ballroom for Frances' birthday). The family also watched movies in this room. It is a two-story space and is separated from the Undercroft by five arched openings. Above these openings are the interior windows and oriel window located within the Gallery on the first floor. The windows in the upper part of the north wall have stained glass illustrating drama (Shakespeare's "As You Like It"), poetry/literature (Dumas' "The Three Musketeers") and music (Gounod's "Faust"). The ceiling has exposed rafters that rest on corbels mounted on the wall and six large arches. These beams and rafters are decorated with polychrome paint and stylized ornamentation. The mantel on the east wall has a low Tudor arch. An image from "The Little Tramp" and a piece of film is carved on the right-hand side of the mantel. Above the fireplace is the original motorized movie screen. The flooring is random width oak boards with wood pegs.

Games Room (room 20): This room is composed of three spaces. The flooring in all three spaces is of random size slate pavers. Bases are stone and all the walls and ceilings are of textured plaster. The first space one enters from the Undercroft was used as a sitting room. It has a flat ceiling with molded beams partially painted with polychrome and decoration. The carved wood decoration and door hardware in this space is exceptional and was custom made for the Wilsons. The double door leading to the Undercroft has strap hinges with hearts and spades. The spandrels above the door are ornamented with painted depictions of checkers and cribbage and above the door is a carved pool stick and painted pool balls. Finally, along the top the wall are carved chess pieces mounted on a painted checkerboard cove. On the south wall of this first space is a large rounded arch opening that leads to the second space where the billiard table is located. The space has a large groin vault in the center and narrow barrel arches on either side. The west wall has the fireplace with is trimmed in stone. Above the firebox opening is a wood mantel shelf supported by two stone brackets in the shape of crouching human figures. To the right of the fireplace is a door leading to Alfred's circular staircase. This door has strap hinges (in the shape of cue sticks with balls) and a box lock enameled with a checkerboard and chess piece.

The last area is an elevated sitting niche where players could sit on built-in seating and watch the billiards table. This area is accessed by climbing four stone steps and has oak paneling to about chest high and with textured plaster above that.

Carriage House (contributing building, map key #2)

The Carriage House, an L-shaped building in plan, was constructed in 1928 to house the Wilsons' automobiles. This Tudor Revival building, connected to the main house by a roofed automobile portal, includes a guardhouse, storage area, four-bay garage, and entry foyer at the east end. In keeping with the picturesque design of the residence, the Carriage House is constructed of brick, limestone, and half timbering. The building has a series of gable roofs with a flat platform over the area used for garaging automobiles. The roof and its dormers are clad in clay tile. At the intersection of the "L" is the stair tower topped with a cupola which contributes to the picturesque roofline. The garage doors are recessed within a shallow overhang. The interior had space for four automobiles, restrooms for men and women, and a cedar closet. In 1973, the first floor of the Carriage House was sensitively renovated to serve as a meeting space. At that point, a kitchen was installed in the section located at the east end. The second story has a concrete floor, exposed wood timbers, and casement windows. Four non-historic skylights have been inserted into the flat area of the roof. Other than these changes, the building is in good and original condition.

Open Auto Shed (contributing building, map key #3)

This four-bay open auto shed was built in 1930 and accommodated eight vehicles. Perhaps as a measure of economy during the Depression, architect William Kapp designed it as a simple and severe interpretation of the Tudor Revival style. The building is constructed of concrete block faced with brick on the exterior. The saltbox gable roof, clad with clay tile on the front and wood shingles on the rear, has dormers outfitted with louvers. The wood garage doors were added at some indeterminate date. The interior survives intact including its concrete car stop on the rear wall and concrete floor imbedded with stones. The auto shed has a high degree of integrity. The building is currently used for storage and is in good condition

Dog House/Gardeners' Shed (contributing building, map key #4)

This one-story half-timber Tudor Revival building was constructed c. 1926 for the Wilsons' dog. It is now used as a shed by the volunteers who maintain the property's gardens. It is situated northeast of the Rose Garden. The building retains its integrity and is in good condition.

Bridge (contributing structure, map key #29)

The Bridge, located on the main approach north of Meadow Brook Hall, was constructed in 1928 to span the ravine located north of Meadow Brook Hall. Structurally, the Bridge is constructed of reinforced concrete that is faced with brick. Vaguely Tudor Revival in style, the Bridge is composed of three brick and stone piers, connected with a wood balustrade lining each side of the bridge. The Bridge was restored in 1976 using a donation from Mr. and Mrs. John F. Van Lennep (John F. Dodge's grandson). At this time, the original wood deck was replaced and resurfaced with asphalt. Otherwise, the structure retains its original integrity and is in good condition.

Birdhouse (contributing object, map key #35)

Reiber Bird Homes Company of West Webster, New York made this birdhouse in 1918. Judging from surviving architectural plans in the archives and a 1919 inventory of birdhouses on the estate, birds were of particular interest to John Dodge. This purple martin birdhouse was originally located near the Farmhouse (precise location unknown) but was moved to the location near the Rose Garden after the completion of Meadow Brook Hall. Although this birdhouse has been moved from its original location, it is a contributing object because it was relocated during the property's period of significance. Additionally, its current location preserves its close historic relationship to the property's primary residence. Other than its new location, the Birdhouse retains its original integrity.

Gazebo (contributing structure, map key #28)

The Gazebo, built c. 1928, is a Tudor Revival structure located north of the English Walled Garden. It is positioned on a platform supported by a one-story octagonal brick building. The Gazebo (also octagonal) is supported by wood posts which carry a conical roof clad with clay tiles. The floor is paved with stone pavers. This gazebo is accessed via the staircase leading from the English Walled Garden. A second access point is via the pathway which leads from the circular driveway and which winds through an area now called the Hillside Garden. The brick building under the Gazebo houses a tool room that is accessed from a stone platform located several steps above the English Walled Garden. Door and window architraves are trimmed in stone. A stone belt course runs across the top of the wall and ties into the belt course on the adjacent brick wall. The building retains a high degree of integrity and is in good condition.

Fountain (contributing object, map key #36)

Located on the platform below the Gazebo, this marble fountain sits within a shallow round pool filled with water in season. Three classically draped female figures standing on a plinth support a shallow stone basin on their heads. This upper basin also holds water which spills out over the edge and into the pool below. The date of this fountain is unknown but likely dates to c. 1930.

Knole Cottage (contributing building, map key #5)

Knole Cottage is a one and one-half-story Tudor Revival cottage designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls in 1926 as a playhouse where daughter Frances Dodge could learn homemaking skills. Built at a cost of $10,000, this building was originally located near the Farmhouse (precise location unknown) and was named Hilltop Lodge. In 1929, the Wilsons had the building moved to its present location northwest of Meadow Brook Hall and renamed it Knole Cottage. The design was based on Knole Park, an English country house but in this case built at two-thirds scale for the use of a child. The building is approximately 22 x 30 feet and is cruciform shape in plan. The exterior walls are built of brick laid in Flemish stretcher bond and the roof has wood shingles. Windows are casements with diamond shaped leaded lights. At the time the cottage was moved in 1929, a half-timber gable and window was added over the entrance door on the south elevation. Originally, a white picket fence encircled the cottage. A non-original maze of lilac bushes has been planted to the west of the cottage.

There are two entrances to the cottage. The main entrance is on the south side of the cottage through a gabled porch with timber frame and nogging of red and black bricks. (There is also a door on the north side of the house from the kitchen.) The interior contains an entrance hall, living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, hall, and two bedrooms. The walls and ceilings throughout are plaster. Base and architraves throughout are

oak. Floors are covered with replacement wall-to-wall carpet (with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom) which replaces the original carpet. The cottage also retains its original lighting fixtures including sconces and ceiling lights.

The largest room in the cottage is the living room, which has features not found in the rest of the building. The ceiling has exposed wood beams and the west wall is wood paneled with a fireplace. The south wall has a built-in window seat set in a shallow bay. The bathroom and kitchen also retain their original integrity. The bathroom is outfitted with its original plumbing fixtures including bathtub, sink, and child-size toilet. The walls and floor are tiled with pink and white ceramic tile. The kitchen retains its original cabinets, sink, refrigerator, stove/oven all located on the south and north walls. The floor is covered with its original sheet linoleum. The original lighting fixtures do not survive and two spotlights have been added to the ceiling. The cottage has a full basement.

Although Knole Cottage is not in its original location, it was moved during the estate's period of significance and therefore is considered a contributing building. Other than the missing picket fence and the finish changes to the interior noted above, the cottage retains its integrity.

Guardhouse (contributing building, map key #6)

To the northwest of Knole Cottage is a small Tudor Revival guardhouse designed as a companion building to the cottage. This guardhouse was erected in 1929 when the cottage was moved to its present location and was used by the security detail who guarded Frances Dodge when she stayed at the cottage. This stucco and half timber building has a gable roof and dormers. Each side of the building has windows to allow for good visibility. The entrance is located on the south elevation. The Guardhouse retains its integrity and it in good condition.

Knole Pump House (contributing structure, map key #7)

This building was constructed c. 1929 as a pump house to provide water service and fire protection for Knole Cottage. It is a simplified Tudor Revival style brick building with a gable roof covered with wood shingles. Corbelled brick supports the eaves on the long sides of the building. The entrance is located on the south gable end. Windows are casements with leaded glass lights. The building retains its original integrity.

Farmhouse (contributing building, map key #15)

This Classical Revival clapboard farmhouse was built c. 1898 by James L. Higgins who owned the property at the time. The building's Classical Revival features include a symmetrical façade (east elevation), Doric porch pillars, oval window with keystone and pedimented dormers. When John Dodge purchased the property in 1908, he renovated the house removing a section on the west side and adding a larger wing substantially expanding the house. In 1914-15, Dodge had Smith, Hinchman & Grylls design sleeping porches at the second story level and enclose the lower porches on the north and south elevations. The family used the Farmhouse as a weekend retreat until the time of Dodge's death in 1920.

With few exceptions, the exterior retains its c. 1914 appearance and character-defining neoclassical details. The building sits on a stone foundation. The exterior is clad with clapboard and the gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The original double-hung windows have been replaced with metal clad double-glazed sashes. A handicap-accessible ramp and entrance have been added to the north elevation. The interior retains moderate integrity including original bases, door and window architraves, and fireplace mantels. The interior has been

renovated for office use at which point the ceilings were lowered and modern finishes, including wall-to-wall carpeting, were installed throughout. The Farmhouse is in excellent condition.

Icehouse (contributing building, map key #31)

The Icehouse is a frame building with vertical wood siding and a fieldstone foundation. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The entrance (sliding wood doors) is located on the gable end. The few windows are single hung sashes. The building is topped with an open cupola at the south end of the gable which originally held a bell. A second cupola for ventilation is located on north end of gable. During the estate's early history, "Meadow Brook Stock Farm" was painted in large black letters on the east wall. The building's subtle Italianate features such as the bracketing under the roof and the pedimented cupola suggests that it may date to the late nineteenth century. The Icehouse retains its original integrity and is in good condition.

Greenhouse (contributing building, map key #16)

Lord & Burnham Co. constructed the Greenhouse c. 1917. The building has a high foundation of fieldstone that supports the Gothic arch metal and glass structure above. The building is T-shape in plan. Forming the horizontal bar of the T is a Tudor Revival style office wing constructed of half-timbering and stucco. The windows in this portion of the building are double hung sashes, with six lights over one light. The building retains its original integrity and is in fair condition.

Guardhouse (contributing building, map key #17)

This guardhouse was positioned at the service entrance for the Farmhouse, Greenhouse, and other buildings located in the vicinity. It is a Tudor Revival style building dating from c. 1917 with half-timbering and stucco. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the building sits on a fieldstone foundation. Each of the four elevations has a door and/or window for enhanced visibility. The Guardhouse retains its original integrity and is in good condition.

Clubhouse (contributing building, map key #18)

The Clubhouse was built in 1915 by contractor S.E. Wood for Dodge's nine-hole golf course laid out the previous year. It now houses offices, the pro shop, and restaurant for the R&S Sharf and Katke-Cousins golf courses. This two and one-half story Tudor Revival building was designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls and is built into the hillside. The foundation of random ashlar stone rises a full story at ground level on the east, south, and west sides. The upper walls are constructed of half-timbering and stucco. A section on the south side of the building originally had an open porch on the upper level (enclosed prior to 1936). The gabled roof as well as the hipped roof on the south side are covered with asphalt shingles. A massive chimney on the east elevation is constructed of the same random ashlar stonework as the lower story. The entrance is through a small gabled porch on the north elevation. Windows are a combination of double hung sash with six over six or six over nine lights as well as casement windows. At some undetermined date (probably in the 1970s), a one-story half-timber and stucco addition was built onto the west side of the Clubhouse and now houses the pro shop. The flat roof on top of this addition is used as an outdoor dining area. The exterior, otherwise, retains its original architectural integrity.

The interior of the Clubhouse is in a high state of preservation and retains its original woodwork, exposed wood rafters, wood flooring and lighting fixtures. The Clubhouse originally had an indoor pool located in the lower level. However, the pool has been filled in and this level has been renovated for offices and storage.

Teahouse/Cabana (contributing building, map key #19)

The building that is now known as the cabana is a wooden structure square in plan with a low hipped roof. The roof is supported by wood Doric columns and rafters extend from the edge of the roof giving the building a subtle Japanese quality. Originally open, the building has been enclosed with wood bead board and a set of metal double doors has been located on the east elevation. A colored glass window has been inserted in the west wall.

A photograph of this building dated June 26, 1926 is located in the Meadow Brook Hall Archives. Labeled "Tea House", this photograph appears to shows the building in its original form. When first constructed, the building was open except for a light wood trellis attached to the west wall. On either side of the building, was a rectangular pergola with flat rafters supported by Doric columns (removed at some indeterminate date). The building was probably renamed the cabana when the swimming pool was constructed c. 1936. The original form of the Teahouse remains despite the enclosure of the building at some undetermined date. The structure is in deteriorated condition.

Swimming Pool (contributing structure, map key #32)

The Swimming Pool, built c. 1936 east of the cabana, is in the shape of a peanut. The pool is surrounded with random-sized slate pavers that now extend to the cabana and to the stone stairs to the south. Although this area is overgrown, the pool and cabana retain their historic setting surrounded by pine, birch, and maple trees. Although the pool is in fair condition, it retains its original integrity.

Root Cellar (contributing structure, map key #30)

The Root Cellar was constructed c. 1918 and is built into the side of hill located west of the farmhouse. This structure's one exposed wall is on the south and is constructed of fieldstone. There are two doors with multi-paned windows on the south elevation. The parapet of this wall is semicircular and this line continues uninterrupted to the adjacent retaining wall on either side of the root cellar. Originally, there was a staircase cut into the retaining wall just west of the western door. This staircase was used to access the upper area and a non-extant barn there. The roof of the Root Cellar is earthen and is pierced with several metal ventilators. The Root Cellar retains its original integrity and is in good condition.

Playhouse/Golf Starter Station (contributing building, map key #20)

This one and one-half story Tudor Revival building was built in 1934. Also known as Barbara's Dollhouse, it was built for the Wilsons' adopted daughter. The building is rectangular in plan with upper walls of half-timber and stucco. The lower part of the walls is clapboard. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The entrance to the Playhouse is under a small cross gable on the east side of the building. The original built-in wood seating on either side of the entrance has been removed. The original double-hung windows (which probably were multi-paned) have been replaced with modern double-hung sashes with single lights. The interior has plaster walls and ceiling and the floor is wood. Other than the changes to the windows, the building retains its architectural integrity and is in good condition.

Danny's Cabin (contributing building, map key #21)

In 1926, the eastern portion of this log playhouse was constructed for son Danny Dodge. It was designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls and constructed by Leonard C. Vecclius of Hamburg, Michigan. The entrance was

located at the east gable end and was protected by a small wood canopy overhead. At the opposite end of the building is the massive stone chimney. The foundation is fieldstone and the roof is clad with asphalt shingles (the only known photograph of the building shows the roof covered in snow but the roof probably had wood shingles originally). Windows are wood casements. The rustic interior had varnished log walls and ceiling, a maple floor and stone fireplace. A bathroom was located in the southeast corner of the building. Historic images of the interior of the main room show Danny's drum set, Victrola, and skis in place. Today, the walls have been covered with vertical wood paneling but otherwise, the interior remains unchanged.

In 1937, a workshop addition was constructed on the west side and was placed perpendicular to the original building. This structure is also of log with a fieldstone foundation and asphalt shingled roof. The workshop had a separate entrance on the west side sheltered by a substantial gabled entrance porch of log. This section of the building is now used as a snack bar for the golf course. Its interior was recently renovated which included the installation of new finishes and painting the interior paneling.

In 1938, Danny was killed in an accident and thus his use of the workshop was brief. Although Danny's Cabin was expanded with the construction of the workshop, this alteration took place within the estate's period of significance and thus this building is considered to be contributing. Other than the changes to the interior finishes and possibly the replacement of wood shingles on the roof, the building retains its original integrity.

Pump House (contributing structure, map key #12)

This structure was constructed c. 1918 out of fieldstone. It sits in its original location which is a small triangular shaped island formed by the intersection of three of the estate's roads. The building has a hipped roof with wood shingles. The windows are leaded glass casements set deep into the wall. There are two doors, one on the east elevation and the second on the north. The interior is plain with plaster walls and ceiling and wood floors. This structure retains a great deal of integrity and is in good condition.

Garage and Heating Plant (contributing building, map key #13)

This wood frame building located just north of the Golf Cart Building was constructed c. 1926. The exterior walls are covered with horizontal bead board siding and the gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A large garage door is located on the east wall. A lean-to addition, located on the south, contained a heating plant for the estate in its basement and the large brick chimney for this furnace survives. The building is in good condition and retains its original integrity.

Garage/Golf Course Maintenance Building (contributing building, map key #14)

This wood frame building, dating from c. 1938, is located west of the Golf Cart Building. The building sits on a fieldstone foundation. It has a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. The walls are covered with horizontal bead board siding. There is a large garage door opening on the south elevation. Windows are original multi-paned single hung sashes. The building is in good condition and retains its original integrity.

Well house (contributing structure, map key #11)

This small ornamental wood well house is located in a meadow just south of Golf View Lane. It sits on a foundation of fieldstone. Four wood pillars support a conical roof covered with wood shingles and topped with a decorative finial. No documentation has been located for its date of construction, however, its design and

placement within the estate suggests that it dates to the late 1920s. The structure appears on a 1954 map of the estate and is labeled "water trough." This structure is in good condition and retains its original integrity.

Stable (contributing building, map key #8)

Ray Rewold and Sons of Rochester built this stable building c. 1935. The building is one-and-one-half stories. The walls are horizontal bead board. The gable roof is clad with asphalt shingles and there is a pent roof attached to the east elevation. The foundation is of fieldstone. The roof retains its dormers and five metal ventilators. The windows have been replaced and a new large arched window has been inserted on the west elevation. The stable is connected to the riding ring (#9) by an original one-story hyphen. The hyphen also has fieldstone foundation, horizontal sliding that matches the stable, and a roof ventilator.

The first floor of the stable has been converted into offices with modern finishes. However, in the eastern end of the building is the original staircase which leads to the office used by the stable manager. These rooms retain original features including wood paneling, bathroom tile, and fixtures. The remainder of the upper level now houses mechanical equipment but otherwise retains its original architectural character.

Other than the alterations noted, the building largely retains its original integrity and is in excellent condition.

Two other stable buildings similar in design and size were constructed c. 1929 immediately south of the riding ring. These two buildings were also connected by hyphens to the riding ring. A fire in the 1980s destroyed these two stables.

Riding Ring/Shotwell-Gustafson Pavilion (contributing building, map key #9)

This building replaced an outdoor riding ring in the same location. The Riding Ring is rectangular in plan and encloses nearly 23,000 square feet. It was constructed in 1935 for the use of the Dodge children. Frances, in particular, was an accomplished rider. The Riding Ring and adjoining stables served as the center of operations for Dodge Stables until Frances relocated the enterprise to Lexington, Kentucky in 1948. The Riding Ring has a hipped roof (with large flat platform on top) and dormers covered with asphalt shingles. The eight metal ventilators on the roof have been removed. The exterior walls are wood bead board and the original metal industrial-style windows with cranking mechanisms are intact. A large garage door is located on the west elevation and a secondary pedestrian entrance is located on the south. The building is connected to the Stable building to the north by an original hyphen (described above).

The main pedestrian entrance into the Riding Ring is through a lobby located on the east side of the building. This space retains its original terrazzo floor and vertical board paneling. In the southeast corner of the building is a room containing a wood staircase that ascends to a space used by the Wilsons and their guests to observe the riding ring and to display trophies. On either side of this room (in the northeast and southeast corners of the building) are dressing rooms and bathrooms for the boys and girls. These rooms retain their original wood paneling, ceramic tile, and wallpaper.

The main space in this building is the large indoor equestrian arena and, with a ceiling nearly 20 feet tall, is the most voluminous interior space on the historic estate. Exposed steel beams span this riding ring and the wooden walls surrounding the ring are slanted outward to protect the riders' legs. The floor is covered with a rubberized material. Other than the aforementioned changes to the building, this important structure retains its original integrity. Today, the pavilion is used for exhibitions, horse shows, and other large events and is in good condition.

Stud Barn (contributing building, map key #10)

This long wood building (91 feet x 12 feet), located just west of Riding Ring, was originally used to stage horses prior to their showing in the riding ring. It likely was built c. 1935 along with the riding ring. The barn has horizontal siding, a wood shingle roof and retains its eight original Dutch doors. The foundation and interior floor is concrete. The Stud Barn is used for storage, is in good condition, and retains its original integrity.

Workers' Cottages and Garage (contributing buildings, map key #22-25)

These four cottages, designed in the Bungalow/Craftsman mode, are located on the east side of Adams Road and have street numbers 415, 437, 449, and 461 Adams Road. These residences were constructed on a piece of land John Dodge acquired in 1914. Originally, each cottage had a detached garage and hen house located behind the house. 415 Adams Road is the only cottage to retain its original detached garage (26) which is described below. None of the hen houses survive.

John Dodge had four workers' cottages built in this location in 1917. Three survive (cottages B, C and D), while the fourth was destroyed by fire in the 1970s. A final cottage (Cottage A) was built ca. 1925. Cottages B, C and D share similar design elements in their two-story height and fieldstone foundations. The first floor has clapboard and the second story is clad with wood shingles. The roofs have jerkinhead gables and dormers. Windows are double hung sash with six over six lights. The houses have a living room, dining room, kitchen, pantry, bathroom, hall, two downstairs bedrooms, and three bedrooms on the second story. Floors are wood and in some cases covered with carpet. Walls and ceilings are plaster with wood trim. Additional bathrooms have been added but otherwise these cottages retain their architectural integrity.

Cottage A, the northern-most cottage, (22) is similar to its predecessors, but its overall design and details are different. This house is a one and one-half story cross gable building with wood clapboard. The foundation is fieldstone. The porch is cut out of the northwest corner. The interior finish is similar to its neighbors with wood floors and in some cases covered with carpet. Walls and ceilings are plaster with wood trim. The Wilsons' gardener Herman Siewert lived in this cottage.

The one surviving garage (26) is located behind Cottage A, 415 Adams Road. The garage is a frame building with clapboard siding. It has a clipped gable and sits on a concrete foundation. This building retains its original integrity and is in fair condition.

## LIST OF NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

| Resource | Map Key # | Architectural Classification (if known) | Designer (if known) | Construction materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Buildings:** | | | | |
| Bath house (c. 1985) | 37 | | | Foundation: brick<br>Walls: Wood<br>Roof: Asphalt |
| Driving Range Building (1999) | 38 | | | Foundation: concrete<br>Walls: Wood<br>Roof: Aspalt |
| Golf Cart Building (2000) | 39 | | | Foundation: Concrete<br>Walls: Wood<br>Roof: Asphalt |
| **Sites:** | | | | |
| Tennis court (after 1980) | 40 | | | Concrete |
| **Structures:** | | | | |
| Entrance gate (1977) | 41 | | John Grissim and Associates | Foundation: stone<br>Walls: brick<br>Roof: n/a |
| Woodland Shelter (c. 1996) | 42 | | | Foundation: brick<br>Walls: wood<br>Roof: wood |
| Pergola (c. 1985) | 43 | | | Foundation: brick<br>Walls: wood<br>Roof: n/a |
| Pagoda (c. 1985) | 44 | | | Foundation: brick<br>Walls: wood<br>Roof: n/a |
| **Objects:** | | | | |
| *The Golden Fleece* (1939); installed late 1990s | 45 | | Avard Fairbanks | Bronze, stone, brick |
| *Rhythms & Vibrations* ( 1981) | 47 | | Hanna Stiebel | Metal |
| *Sunset Cube* (1981) | 48 | | David Barr | Metal |
| *Telegraph Exchange* (1981) | 49 | | John Piet | Metal |

Moved and non-extant resources

In addition to the relocation of Knole Cottage and the birdhouse, two late nineteenth-century barns, originally located near the Farmhouse, were moved to their current locations on Festival Drive c. 1928. Additionally, as with many properties, this estate has experienced some losses and there are several non-extant resources located within the boundary of this nomination worth mentioning. These buildings are summarized in the table below. A water tower (approximately 78,000-gallon capacity) was located north of the root cellar. This structure was

built c. 1908 and had a wooden barrel set on a metal frame. This water tower, which was listed as a contributing resource in the property's National Register nomination, fell into disrepair and was demolished in the early 1980s. A second water tower appears in a photograph dated 1925. It was removed sometime prior to 1953. A Quonset hut also included in the National Register nomination was demolished in the 1990s. A deer shelter located west of the gatehouse was removed at some indeterminate date. Finally, a large Tudor Revival dog kennel (approximately 72 feet long by 26 feet deep) was constructed in 1934 southwest of Danny's Cabin. A fire in 1976 destroyed this kennel. Likewise, a fire in the 1980s destroyed two stables south of the riding ring. One of the workers' cottages along Adams Road was destroyed by fire in the 1970s and the three garages located in the rear have also been removed at some indeterminate date.

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally:

| | |
|---|---|
| Applicable National Register Criteria: | A_ B_ C_X_ D ___ |
| Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): | A_ B _ C_ D_ E_ F_ G _ |
| NHL Criteria: | 4 |
| NHL Theme(s): | III. Expressing Cultural Values<br>5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design |
| Areas of Significance: | Architecture |
| Period(s) of Significance: | 1915-1947 |
| Significant Dates: | 1926-29, 1930, 1934, c. 1935, 1936, 1937, c. 1938, 1947 |
| Significant Person(s): | N/A |
| Cultural Affiliation: | N/A |
| Architect/Builder: | William E. Kapp, architect<br>Charles Wellford Leavitt, Jr., landscape architect<br>Arthur E. Davidson, landscape architect<br>Bryant & Detwiler, builder |
| Historic Context: | XVI. Architecture<br>M. Period Revivals<br>3. Tudor (1890-1940) |

**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

## SUMMARY

The Meadow Brook Hall estate, located 25 miles north of Detroit, Michigan, is nationally significant in the area of architecture under NHL Criterion 4. With its monumental Tudor Revival residence, secondary buildings (many of which are also in the Tudor Revival style), and structures set within an intact pastoral landscape, Meadow Brook Hall is an outstanding example of a twentieth-century American country estate. This property epitomizes the luxurious country estate which displayed its owner's wealth through imposing architecture, large land holdings, and an extensive agricultural complex. While the landscape design does not rise to the caliber of a nationally significant property, it does support and provide a historic setting for the pristine Meadow Brook Hall, the largest and most impressive example of Tudor Revival domestic architecture in the United States. With most of its secondary buildings and landscape features preserved, the Meadow Brook Hall estate is an exceptionally well-documented example of the American country estate of the 1920s with exceptionally high integrity. This nomination is for a portion of the estate immediately surrounding Meadow Brook Hall which retains the greatest integrity and which includes the contributing resources associated with the property's period of significance, 1915-47. The year 1947 marks the last design contribution by architect William Knapp with the installation of the cast Pegasus fountain. After that date new construction included a retirement home for the owners and buildings constructed for Michigan State University.

The Meadow Brook Hall estate must be viewed in the larger context of the American country estate in the twentieth century. The economic expansion and technological transformations in the early twentieth century created new sources of wealth that were expressed in the establishment of largely unprecedented country estates complete with baronial residences, constructed landscapes, and agricultural complexes. Wealthy Americans created these vast estates in part to give the illusion of self-sufficiency and to imply a claim as landed gentry. Historian Clive Aslet has noted that the English country estate model appealed to wealthy Americans because that it created "the appearance of an independent, possibly self-sufficient, landed life, even though the money that supported it never came from the land."[8] Meadow Brook Hall is a nationally significant architectural representation of the dramatic economic expansion and cultural values of the twentieth century. The strong desire of the original owner Matilda Wilson to execute the Tudor Revival aesthetic using exclusively American materials and craftsmen further distinguishes this property.

## HISTORY

In 1908, automobile manufacturer John F. Dodge purchased the core portion of the Meadow Brook Hall estate from James L. Higgins who himself had purchased the property in 1896. Soon after acquiring the property, Higgins built the Classical Revival farmhouse on the property's eastern border. Although little is known about the state of the property during Higgins' period, a photograph dating from c. 1908 documents several barns, a windmill and fenced in lots for livestock in the area adjacent to and west of the farmhouse. Higgins, an insurance and business executive, used the property as a retreat from the city.

Like Higgins, Dodge used the estate as a retreat for himself and his family. One of the first changes made by Dodge was to renovate the farmhouse by replacing a wing on the rear with a larger addition and in 1914, he added sleeping porches to the north and south elevations. That same year, Dodge constructed the nine-hole golf course south of the farmhouse and in 1915, built the Tudor Revival clubhouse. In 1917, Dodge built four cottages for the estate's workers east of Adams Road (then Dodge Road).

[8] Clive Aslet, *The American Country House*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) vi.

John Dodge not only had the financial means to develop this estate but also the desire to escape his taxing professional life. John Dodge (1864-1920) and his brother Horace (1868-1920) had been born to modest means, however, their mechanical expertise and organizational acumen enabled them to become major players in the burgeoning automobile industry of the early twentieth century. The Dodge brothers quickly became the largest suppliers of parts in the automobile industry and were the major supplier to Henry Ford. They ultimately broke ties with Ford and begin production of their own automobile (an early prototype was designed by Horace at the Meadow Brook estate). The Dodges' first car was wildly successful and within a year, the company established itself as the third largest producer of automobiles in the United States. The dramatic growth of their company led them to employ architect Albert Kahn and later the prominent Detroit firm Smith, Hinchman & Grylls to design their ever-expanding manufacturing facilities. At the time that John and Horace died in 1920 from complications arising from influenza, they were widely recognized for their contributions to the nation's economic progress. They were also among the richest men in the country.

Matilda Rausch Dodge Wilson (1883-1967), like her first husband John Dodge, came from a modest background. She was born in Walkerton, Ontario and the following year, she and her family relocated to Detroit where her father operated a saloon. After completing eighth grade, Matilda enrolled at Gorsline Business College where she studied bookkeeping, typing, and shorthand. Her first job out of business school was at the Dodge Brothers' factory and she became John Dodge's secretary in 1903. A professional relationship between the two developed into a romantic one and in 1907 she and John Dodge married. They lived with their two children Frances and Daniel in a generously sized Tudor Revival house on Boston Boulevard in Detroit designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls.

Before his death, Dodge was contemplating building a grander estate on the Rochester property. In 1917, he commissioned landscape engineer Charles Wellford Leavitt, Jr. to plan the estate. Although this plan was not realized, it foreshadowed the scale of the estate as it was ultimately developed. Leavitt's surviving presentation drawing shows a residence approximately 200 feet in length surrounded by extensive formal gardens.[9] Other features included in Leavitt's plan were a sylvan theater, tennis court, greenhouse, orchard, vineyard, and vegetable garden. Leavitt positioned a long greensward extending from the residence to the north entrance. At the south end of the estate, Leavitt placed the estate's entrance which was to be through a courtyard formed by seven farm buildings. A sheep barn and kennels were to be located to the west of the courtyard. Several water features including a water garden, dam, large lake, and small lagoon were shown to the southwest.

Soon after Leavitt prepared plans for Rochester estate, the Dodges broke ground instead on a large residence in Grosse Point, Michigan. This impressive Tudor Revival house, which had 110 rooms and 24 bathrooms, was to be one of the largest houses in the country. Designed by Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, the lead designer was Beaux-Arts trained Bloodgood Tuttle who was brought in expressly for his knowledge of English medieval architecture. The young architect William E. Kapp worked as Tuttle's assistant. While this house was substantial, it sat on a relatively constricted city lot. Leavitt was also responsible for the landscape plan for this property which was to include a farm building and extensive parterre gardens. After John Dodge's death in 1920, Matilda Dodge suspended construction and later removed building elements that she incorporated them in Meadow Brook Hall. In 1941, the Grosse Point residence was demolished.

After the death of her husband John Dodge, Matilda took over management of her deceased husband's business affairs and made an extended trip to Europe with her children. The Rochester estate was left in the care of estate manager John Cline. Unwilling to return to the house in Detroit she shared with John, Matilda had Smith,

[9] Leavitt's presentation drawing, dated January 30, 1917, is on display in Oakland University's Special Collections Division. Framed and under glass it was not possible to obtain a quality reproduction for this project.

Hinchman & Grylls design a smaller house on Lincoln Road in Grosse Point. In April 1925, Matilda Dodge and her sister-in-law Anna Dodge (Horace's widow) sold the company Dodge Brothers to the New York investment banking house of Dillon, Read & Company for $146 million in cash. At the time, this cash transaction was the largest ever made. Matilda Dodge's share was $30 million. The next development in Matilda Dodge's life was her marriage to Alfred Wilson in June 1925.

Alfred Gaston Wilson (1883-1962), Matilda's second husband, was a lumber baron. He was born in 1883 in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, and in 1900, his family moved to Wisconsin. Alfred graduated from Beloit College in 1906 and immediately entered the lumber business. In 1919, he and his brother Donald founded Wilson Lumber Company and he served as the company's president until 1942. Alfred was involved in a number of philanthropic and service activities including serving as director of the Boys' Club of America, a trustee of Beloit College, a member of the Masonic Order, and a member of the Society of Arts and Crafts. Alfred and Matilda would later adopt two children Richard and Barbara in 1930.

Having decided that she would not continue construction of the Grosse Point mansion begun by her first husband, Matilda Wilson considered where she, Alfred, and her children would settle. The Rochester property offered easy access to Detroit's cultural amenities and business community while providing rural tranquility. Matilda Wilson later recalled, "We chose to build in the countryside for the sake of the children."[10] Planning for the estate began immediately after the wedding and in fact, the Wilsons spent their seven-week long honeymoon in England looking at country houses and visiting museums with their architect William Kapp. Ground was broken for Meadow Brook Hall in October 1926.

Given that Matilda Wilson's previous residences were in the Tudor Revival style, it is not surprising that she would choose this style for Meadow Brook Hall. This style enjoyed great popularity at the time, and many of America's wealthy enthusiastically commissioned Tudor Revival buildings from their architects. Architect William Kapp was predisposed to the style himself. He believed that the period offered the modern architect great freedom and a potential for honest expression. Kapp argued, "The Tudors in Merrie England had developed what was probably the most flexible planning, the most honest exterior, and the freest use of material of any of the architectural styles."[11]

The residence as Kapp designed it is a compilation of ideas from a variety of sources interpreted in a way to meet the clients' needs and taste. In many instances (such as the entrance and the chimneys), William Kapp copied designs from legendary English buildings such as Compton Wynyates (Warwickshire), Hampton Court (London), and Knole House (Kent) which the Wilsons and Kapp visited. From the Royal Institute of British Architects (London) and the Victoria & Albert Museum (London), Kapp acquired measured drawings of buildings the Wilsons admired during their 1925 trip. In 1927, the Wilsons made a second trip to England with their architect to examine English interiors that might be suitable for the house. Interestingly, there is one documented American design source for the house. John Russell Pope's Bonniecrest (1912-14) in Newport, Rhode Island provided the inspiration for the diaper brickwork used on the exterior of the house and in the Breakfast Garden.

Matilda Wilson also drew ideas from books. Her library, which remains intact, contains numerous monographs on English medieval architecture that she studied and marked up for her architect's reference. Books she referred to include H. Avary Tipping's multi-volume work *English Homes*, Charles Latham's *In English*

[10] Matilda Rausch Dodge Wilson, *Guidebook to Meadow Brook Hall*, 1966, reprinted as *A Place in the Country: Matilda Wilson's Personal Guidebook to Meadow Brook Hall* (Rochester, MI: Oakland University Press, 1998) 2.

[11] As quoted in W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980) 271.

*Homes*, and C.J. Charles' *Elizabethan Interiors*. The sumptuous details of Meadow Brook Hall were the result of her architect's skill and her own firsthand knowledge of these medieval buildings.

Despite the fact that Meadow Brook Hall was part of a broad national passion for English design, in other ways, the mansion stands apart from other residences of the period. Matilda Wilson openly acknowledged that the architectural ideals for her house were from abroad but the materials for her house and the craftsmen who built it were *American*—a distinction she advanced and which held extreme importance for her. Mrs. Wilson's biographers described her "immigrant's pride in her American citizenship" and perhaps it was her desire to merge this fidelity to her adopted country with the aristocratic associations of the Tudor Revival aesthetic.[12] Secondly, unlike many of her contemporaries who were importing entire buildings and rooms from England to erect in their own houses (a practice to which Mrs. Wilson was reportedly opposed), the Wilsons took a different approach. As William Kapp wrote, "It is not our desire to make these rooms look like antique rooms nor do we want them to look new, hard and shiny, the desire being to soften them and give them a mellow appearance."[13]

When it came to constructing the house, the Wilsons again turned to a firm with whom they had a longstanding relationship. The Wilsons hired Detroit general contractor Bryant & Detwiler (who had erected many of Dodge's manufacturing buildings) to build the house. This firm subcontracted for specialty trades, services, and materials drawing on some of the most important companies in the country. Two companies that specialized in creating historic interiors provided the interior woodwork. The first, the Hayden Company, based in Rochester, New York, was one of the nation's premier cabinetmakers collaborating with notable New York architects such as McKim, Mead & White, Charles Platt, and George B. Post. This firm carved the paneling in the Great Hall, Living Room, Library, and Great Stair and were also responsible for the interior decoration. The second firm, Irving & Casson/A.H. Davenport, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was equally renowned. This firm made the paneling in the dining room, Alfred and Matilda's studies, the first floor Gallery and the Entertainment Room. The Rookwood Art Pottery in Cincinnati, Ohio and the American Encaustic Tile Company of Zanesville, Ohio provided the tile for the bathrooms. Stained glass panels were made by John David Bowen and G. Owen Bonawit, Inc. (some of these windows had been made for the Dodge's Grosse Pointe mansion and were reinstalled in Meadow Brook Hall).

George Owen Bonawit (1891-1971) was a prominent stained glass artist based in New York. His formal education was from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, but it was his uncle Owen Bowen, a stained glass artist, who taught Bonawit the art and craft of stained glass. Around 1918, Bonawit established his own firm G. Bonawit, Inc. in New York, and according to historian Gay Walker, his specialty was secular windows although he was an accomplished creator of ecclesiastical windows as well. Many of Bonawit's projects came to his studio from architect James Gamble Rogers who commissioned him to design and fabricate the stained glass windows for Yale University and Northwestern University in the 1920s and 30s. Bonawit also collaborated with architects Horace Trumbauer and well-known Gothicists Ralph Adam Cram and Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue.

Corrado Parducci (1900-1982) of Parducci Studios (Detroit) was another important artist involved in the construction of Meadow Brook Hall. Parducci was born in Pisa, Italy and immigrated with his family to New York in 1904. He studied with Czech-American sculptor Albin Polasek and then served as an apprentice in the studio operated by sculptors Angelo Zari and Ricci. In 1924, Parducci moved to Detroit where he would spend the rest of his career. His masterpiece for Meadow Brook Hall was the dining room ceiling, which was a copy of the plaster ceiling in the chapel of Belton House (Lincolnshire, England), designed by Christopher Wren in

[12] Arion Marzolf and Marianne Ritchie, *Matilda R. Wilson: Mistress of Meadow Brook Hall.* [Rochester, MI.: s.n., 1983?] 15.
[13] As quoted in John B. Cameron, *Meadow Brook Hall Tudor Revival Architecture and Decoration* (Rochester, MI: Oakland University, 1979) 5.

1688. Parducci also created the plaster models for nearly 70 stone carvings throughout the house including the medieval style stone carvings in the Loggia which depict contemporary subjects including a figure repairing an automobile, a skier, and an artist (possibly Parducci himself) with a model of the Meadow Brook Hall.

While Matilda Wilson maintained a long and productive relationship with William Kapp and the various craftsmen working on the residence, her dealings with the landscape architects were less amicable. The first landscape designer to work on the estate was Charles Wellford Leavitt, Jr. (1871-1928), a self-styled "landscape engineer." Leavitt spent his early career working as engineer in charge for the railway in Caldwell, New Jersey and later became city engineer for Essex Falls, New Jersey. In 1897, he opened his own landscape design office in New York City. Leavitt struck a sympathetic note writing in 1927 of the challenges clients and architect posed by "high taxes and unsettled business conditions"—a sentiment which must have resonated with his wealthy clients.[14] Clients included William C. Whitney, Daniel S. Lamont, and Henri Bendel. For Chester and Clara Congdon in Duluth, Minnesota, he created a naturalistic setting for their house. He also designed a number of estates on Long Island including Sefton Manor, Blythewood and Maple Knoll. Leavitt received considerable attention for his landscape design for the Charles Schwab estate in Loretto, Pennsylvania, which featured a 14-level waterfall reminiscent of an Italian Renaissance garden published in *Country Life in America* and *Architectural Record* in 1920. Other Leavitt projects were featured in *Country Life*, *House and Garden*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*. John Dodge may have learned of Leavitt through his published work or may have been introduced to him by someone at Smith, Hinchman & Grylls.

Leavitt, who had designed the landscape for the Grosse Point residence and who had made preliminary plans for John Dodge's Rochester estate in 1917, was brought back to the estate by the Wilsons to design the landscape around Meadow Brook Hall. Leavitt's plan of August 1925, completed just days before the Wilsons returned from their honeymoon, reportedly incorporated some features from his earlier scheme including a large lake that Leavitt argued would "greatly enhance the landscape and add interest to what is now practically waste land" and the requisite gardens around the mansion. Leavitt also recommended bridle paths which would cross the estate's road ways only where necessary and he noted that "no path will run on a main road for any distance."[15] The relationship between Leavitt and the Wilsons was fleeting however, and Leavitt was terminated in the fall of 1926 due to a disagreement over charges and unauthorized work.[16] Leavitt appears to have had a role in deciding the siting of the house recommending that it be placed in the center of the estate and "built in a hollow, with the ground rising on every side, and be almost hidden from the outside roads, affording you all privacy within your own boundaries."[17] Otherwise, it appears that work on the landscape was postponed until the residence was further developed.

The next phase in the development of the estate's landscape plan came in early 1928 when English landscape architect Arthur E. Davidson (c. 1894-?) was hired. Davidson may have met the Wilsons during their trip to England in 1927 or more likely was recommended to the Wilsons by someone at Smith, Hinchman & Grylls.[18] While working on the project for Meadow Brook Hall, Davidson maintained an office in the McKerchey Building in Detroit. The few letters that survive in the Meadow Brook Hall Archives provide some information about his approach to design. Davidson emphasized the effect of light and atmosphere on the landscape as well as the experience of moving through the estate.[19] His letters also contain numerous references to English

[14] Charles Wellford Leavitt & Son, "Executed Work and Drawings from the Office of Charles Wellford Leavitt & Son" (New York: n.p., 1927) n.p.

[15] Letter to Matilda Wilson from Charles Leavitt, 31 August 1925, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

[16] Letter to Charles W. Leavitt & Son from Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, 6 October, 1926, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

[17] Letter to Matilda Wilson from Charles Leavitt, 31 August 1925, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

[18] Arthur Edwin Davidson was born c. 1894 in England. He married Mabel Jeanetta Seeley in November of 1923 in Ontario Canada. *Ontario, Canada Marriages, 1857-1924*; Ancestry.com; accessed 9 September 2008.

[19] Letter from Arthur E. Davidson to Matilda Wilson, 5 March 1928; letter from Arthur E. Davidson to Matilda and Alfred

examples and architectural forms substantiating the belief that he was originally from England.[20] His presentation plan for Meadow Brook Hall is accomplished, detailed, and beautifully rendered suggesting that, by the time he worked for the Wilsons, he had received formal training and had considerable experience. Otherwise, Davidson remains an elusive figure and to date no other projects by him have been identified.

By the time Davidson arrived on the project, construction of the residence was well underway and his work reflected decisions already made about the siting of the house. He conducted a site visit in February and met with Mrs. Wilson. In March of 1928, he wrote Mrs. Wilson commenting on the site and giving her a preview of what his preliminary study would contain. He particularly admired the ravine to the north of the house writing, "It reminds me of an old dry moat usually seen in England in homes of this character." He proposed that this feature be crossed by a bridge, an idea the Wilsons ultimately adopted. Other recommendations that the Wilsons would late implement included the construction of a teahouse or "Garden Observatory" where the Wilsons could view the gardens and woodlands "from a diagonal axis." Davidson also successfully persuaded them that the garden gate leading from the courtyard to the gardens to the west should be on an axis with the woods also to the west.[21]

The large lake proposed by Leavitt in 1925 must have still been part of the Wilsons' plan as Davidson addressed it directly in his correspondence. He wrote, "I like the lowland immensely, it would be a pity to have it all lake when it would make an ideal Great Lawn, illuminated at night for summer dancing, croquet or bowls with say a narrower lake at the southern boundary." He expressed concern that the stream was not large enough to supply a large lake and noted "nothing would look more objectionable than a half dried up lake in so prominent a location."[22]

He advised moderation in other areas of the landscape plan,

> I would like to see the same restraint and dignity carried out in the landscape work as prevails in the architecture. Dispense with the shrubbery base plantings, it grows up as a rule into a meaningless tangled mass fighting for its very existance [sic]. I would suggest well placed vines and pleached Pear Tree against one of the walls. Low growing hardy Yews (Taxus Cuspidata) and Juniper, (Juniperus Pfitzerianna). A climbing rose with a companion of Clematis Jackmanii hanging over the gate lintel. A vine covered garden wall with the vines running from the wall to the natural rock work at the end. Several big American Elms well placed and selected for their shape and size.[23]

Mrs. Wilson responded with her own ideas sending Davidson a letter the following month suggesting features she wished to have incorporated in his design. She must have been persuaded by Davidson's cautions about a large lake because she specified a south lawn, along with a children's garden, "Parterre Garden – Suggested as Broughton Castle," Dancing Garden and "Service Court of Stone." She also requested a rose garden which must have been of particular interest as she indicated to Davidson that she would forward a sketch.[24]

Davidson's preliminary design was an ambitious landscape plan that incorporated his client's wishes and his own ideas and incorporated both formal and informal designed areas. His accompanying letter urged Mrs.

---

Wilson, 2 May 1928, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

[20] Letter from Arthur E. Davidson to Matilda Wilson, 5 March 1928; letter from Arthur E. Davidson to Matilda and Alfred Wilson, 2 May 1928, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

[21] Letter to Matilda Wilson from Arthur E. Davidson, 5 March 1928, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Letter from Matilda Wilson to Arthur E. Davidson, 12 April 1928, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

Wilson to "suppose we imagine the gardens were already built as indicated on the drawings and rambles were taken through the various gardens." He commenced his "ramble" through the entrance lodge past the lake that would feature "large patches of native Water Lilies" noting that the reflection of the native flora would make a very charming still water scene, like the river Thames at Windsor or Hampton Court." Davidson continued that the residence would be visible "here and there" and "sufficient[ly] can be seen to appreciate its rambling form and hospitable chimneys."[25] His preliminary site plan detailed an extensive parterre garden to the west of the house, a bowling green, a wildflower garden, a rock garden and a children's garden near Knole Cottage. According to time logs and invoices, work on the landscape that year was limited to grading the site, installation of irrigation and septic systems and the preparation of drawings. Davidson did, however, work diligently to convince his client of the importance of a select number of large elms in the courtyard. He counseled that if the planted trees were not mature, then the sunlight coming over the house from the south would cast "hard, straight edges" in the courtyard.[26] By late summer of 1928, Davidson's health began to fail and his assistant Granville D. Jones began to play a larger role in the project. In September 1928, stakes were set out for the Great Lawn, Greensward, Breakfast Garden, and Rose Garden with Jones on site frequently to check excavation and grading and to consult with the Wilsons and Kapp. In early 1929, Mrs. Wilson dismissed Davidson and settled her account.[27] A letter from Davidson's wife to Mrs. Wilson indicates that by July 1929 he had returned to England.[28]

Despite the difficulties experienced with the landscape architects, the larger estate began to take form. William E. Kapp wrote this description of the property which conveys the intentions of the architect and client, as well as the state of the property in late 1929:

> The terrain is quite rolling, in parts thickly wooded and elsewhere broad open meadows transversed by two small streams. The house is located in a secluded spot almost out of sight of the public highways surrounding the property. In fact, it appears to be in a lowland, but is actually on a knoll command lovely views in all directions.
>
> The approach is through a gate lodge near the junction of Adams and Crooks Road. From the gate lodge to the house a winding gravel drive dips over the hills and meadows, affording an occasional view of the house. A final swing around the side of a hill, through the woods and across a bridge brings one to the forecourt.
>
> The architectural design of the house is of Tudor inspiration modified to suit our present day living conditions and enlarged in scale to harmonize with the size of the house.[29]

In the same document, the architect noted that the owners "would now embark upon the task of developing the grounds", evidence that the landscaping and gardens had been put aside.[30]

In late 1929, after three years of construction and nearly $4 million, Meadow Brook Hall was finally complete. To celebrate, in November of 1929, the Wilsons hosted a housewarming party attended by 850 people. The timing of the party was unfortunate as it took place just weeks after the stock market crash. Undoubtedly, because of the nation's economic woes, the new house also received little attention in the press other than a

[25] Letter from Arthur E. Davidson to Matilda and Alfred Wilson, 2 May 1928, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.
[26] It appears that William Kapp preferred two elms. Letter from Arthur E. Davidson to Matilda Wilson, 17, January 1929, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.
[27] Letter from Ruby M. Stautz to Arthur E. Davidson, 2 February 1929, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.
[28] Letter to Matilda Wilson from Mabel J. Davidson, 9 July 1929, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.
[29] W.E. Kapp, "Notes for Newspaper Articles," 16 November 1929: 1, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.
[30] W.E. Kapp, "Notes for Newspaper Articles," 16 November 1929: 1, Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

photographic essay which appeared in the *Detroit News* in December 1929. The Wilsons occupied their residence for several years, enjoying holiday gatherings and important family events and hosting receptions for various groups of which the Wilsons served as benefactors. The Wilsons closed the house two times and moved to the Farmhouse. The first relocation was for a period of five years during the Depression. A large portion of the house was also closed during World War II because of the scarcity of fuel.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Wilsons continued to develop the property as a model farm and country estate. Dodge Stables, operated on the estate by daughter Frances, bred and trained world champion saddle horses. Matilda and Alfred bred and raised Belgian draft horses, Guernsey and Holstein milk cows, and several breeds of poultry. The estate's animals supplied the kitchens with food and the surplus butter, eggs, milk, and meat was sold to local and regional markets. Indeed, this enterprise was so successful that the Meadow Brook Hall estate was described as "an agricultural food factory" operated on business principles.[31] Additionally, estate operations were structured in sub-agricultural districts contributing to the sense of business efficiency and organization. In 1930, the Wilsons established poultry houses for chickens in the southeast corner of the estate. Buildings for the Wilsons' prized Belgian horses, beef cattle, and dairy were erected on the western border of the estate. Pigs were raised just south of that area. This organizational plan developed for the estate also created important visual, auditory, and olfactory separations that enhanced views and the overall experience for the family and their guests.

As with the estate's livestock, the Wilsons also attended to the estate's gardens and fields. The landscaping matured and others elements like the plans for the Rose Garden were fulfilled. A three-acre vegetable garden, which also produced food for the estate's tables, thrived in the area north of the farmhouse. Further north was the 16-acre fruit orchard. Cultivated fields yielded grain fed to the estate's livestock while other areas of the estate were dedicated to pastures where animals grazed. All of these agricultural activities contributed to the pastoral quality of life on the estate. In recognition of Matilda Wilson's agricultural accomplishments, she was appointed to the Michigan State Board of Agriculture in 1932 and served until 1938. Matilda also continued to be involved in business and civic affairs. In 1931, she became chair of the board for the Fidelity Trust Company in Detroit and she served on the board of the Graham-Paige Motor Corporation.

Farming continued into the 1950s, but during this decade operations at the estate moved into a different phase. In 1951-3, the Wilsons built Sunset Terrace, a smaller retirement home on the property where they moved. In 1957, Matilda Wilson announced her intention to give the 1,400-acre estate, mansion, and $2 million to establish a branch of Michigan State University on the property. The first three university buildings were completed in 1959 and the first classes were held in the fall of that year.

One of the many provisions of the agreement Matilda Wilson signed in September 1957 detailing the terms of her gift was that she retain life tenancy of Meadow Brook Hall, Sunset Terrace, 127 acres surrounding the two residences and the piece of land on which the workers' cottages were situated. Alfred Wilson died in 1962 and Matilda moved back into Meadow Brook Hall where she lived for the next five years. Matilda Wilson died in 1967 while in Brussels where she had traveled to purchase horses for the estate. Upon her death, the houses and the land for which she retained life tenancy were transferred to Michigan State University. In 1971, Meadow Brook Hall was opened to the public as a residential conference and cultural center for continuing education. Today, the house is operated as a historic house museum and more than 100,000 visitors tour the house each year. Concours d'Elegance, one of the most prestigious antique and classic car exhibitions in the world, is also held at the house each year.

[31] "Meadow Brook Farm Real Food Factory of Business Type," *Saint Claire Press* [Saint Claire, Michigan] 17 April 1931; article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

## SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

### Overview of the Tudor Revival Style

Americans, at all economic levels, had an enthusiastic and long-standing infatuation with the Tudor Revival style in the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. Popular from approximately 1880 to 1940, Tudor Revival was adopted for a range of building types including libraries, academic buildings, and commercial buildings but it was predominantly an architectural style used for residences. According to architectural historian Gavin Townsend, the Tudor Revival was second in popularity only to Colonial Revival for residences during the period 1890 to 1930. This style drew on the architecture of Tudor England of the late fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century but historically, this architectural style was also known as "Elizabethan," "Jacobean," "Old English," "Modern English," and the "Cotswold Style." Americans learned about period English buildings, which were illustrated and described in such books as H. Avary Tipping's *English Homes* (1920-7), Thomas Garner's *The Domestic Architecture of England During the Tudor Period* (1908-11), and Charles Holme's *Old English Mansions* (1915) and in periodicals such as *American Architect*, *Architectural Forum*, and *Arts and Decoration*. Wealthy Americans and their architects also traveled to England to see these examples firsthand. Practitioners of the Tudor Revival in America included architects H.H. Richardson, John Russell Pope, Louis Kahn, Richard Morris Hunt, Charles Follen McKim, and Stanford White who designed urban and country residences for their wealthy clients.

The Tudor Revival style allowed for a highly individual architectural interpretation within the context of an established architectural language. Characteristics of the Tudor Revival include a picturesque and asymmetrical composition with a variety of materials, elements, and structural systems used in a single building--and often within a single elevation. The palette of materials in Tudor Revival buildings encompassed brick, stone, half timbering, stucco, wood shingle, and/or wood clapboard. Roofs were typically steeply pitched with fake thatch, wood shingles, and slate or clay tile. Cross gables, dormers, and decorative bargeboards contributed to the characteristically picturesque profile these buildings have. Large chimneys (often clustered into large masses) were constructed out of patterned brickwork and topped with chimney pots. Windows were either casement or double-hung and usually had small panes of glass. Window and door openings commonly had pointed or rounded arches. Other features, such as turrets and bay windows added to the picturesque composition. In plan, Tudor Revival buildings were also asymmetrical, organic, and rambling. Notably, these sprawling plans provided more utility and flexibility than their classically-inspired or colonial counterparts which were more rigid and relatively unresponsive to function. As one practitioner of the Tudor Revival put it, "by wholly ignoring symmetry, [one can] gain at the very outset an immense freedom."[32] Typically, Tudor Revival interiors carried through the multiplicity and variety established on the exterior with wood paneling, exposed rafters, stained glass, ornamental plaster, and decorative elements such as crests, coats of armor, crockets, and grotesques. The iconography employed in these interiors served to underscore to guests the family's real or fictitious ancestry.

The popularity of the Tudor Revival is related to the Centennial in 1876, which fueled an interest and passion for the county's founding and early history. This period loosely referred to by historians as the Colonial Revival period had many architectural expressions including a revival of the classicism of the federal period. For many Americans, however, the Tudor Revival was a more appealing architectural expression because it directly referenced the country's English foundations. For wealthy American Anglophiles in particular, the Tudor Revival style created a "fictious lineage" for their families as architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson has described it. Another architectural historian Gavin Townsend has argued, "the biggest selling point about

[32] Allen Jackson from his 1912 book *The Half-Timber House* as quoted in Mark Alan Hewitt, *The Architect & the American Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 77.

Tudor houses was their association with things aristocratic." Townsend has noted the style "was evocative of aristocracy and genteel living, with connotations of dynastic stability, culture and higher education."[33]

**Smith, Hinchman & Grylls and William E. Kapp, architect**

The nationally significant firm Smith, Hinchman & Grylls (now Smith Group) is the oldest continuously operating architectural firm in the United States—a distinction the firm shares with Bohlen, Meyer, Givson & Associates in Indianapolis founded the same year. The firm was unusual because it supplied both architectural and engineering services. These dual skills put the firm in the enviable position to design production facilities for the automobile industry and the residences for the industry's wealthy executives. The firm's work for some of the country's most important manufacturers, including Hiram Walker, the American Seating Co., Dow Chemical, and Chrysler Corporation, earned them a national and later an international reputation for architectural and engineering excellence.

Based in Detroit, Smith, Hinchman & Grylls was in an excellent position to capitalize on the great wealth generated by the automobile industry, and no other firm in the city had such a profound influence on the city's development and building stock in the early twentieth century. In the 1920s, Detroit's rate of new construction ranked third in the country coming behind New York and Chicago. According to historian W. Hawkins Ferry, "a lion's share of all this building activity fell to the firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, and from their drafting boards come Renaissance public buildings, Gothic churches, Tudor mansions and clubs, and modern skyscrapers."[34] Their transformation of the Detroit skyline, in particular, drew the attention of the national architectural press and their forty-seven story Penobscot Building (1928) was the city's tallest structure until 1977. The Guardian Building designed by the firm in 1927-28 (NHL, 1989) has been described as "the most exuberant Art Deco skyscraper built in America."[35]

As a result of their training and the individual proclivities of their chief designers, the firm was able to offer stylistic variety to clients. One of the firm's leading modernists was Wirt Rowland (1878-1946) who designed the Guardian Building. Also in the firm in the 1920s were Amedeo Leone who studied at the Beaux-Arts Institute in New York and Fred Graether. Both Leone and Graether were experts in period detail and assisted with design of Meadow Brook Hall.

William E. Kapp (1891-1969) was the primary designer of Meadow Brook Hall and the other buildings on the estate. Kapp was born in Toledo, Ohio, and he received a certificate of proficiency in architecture in 1914 from the University of Pennsylvania where he studied under Paul Cret.[36] After his formal studies, he traveled in France and England and in 1914 joined the firm Smith, Hinchman, & Grylls in Detroit. From 1915 to 1917, he worked in the offices of Mills, Rhines, Bellman and Nordhoff, Architects in Toledo (he had previously worked for the firm 1909-12). Kapp served in the Construction Division of the U.S. Air Service from 1917-18. He then rejoined Smith, Hinchman & Grylls and rose to become head of the firm's architectural department during its most active period.[37] In 1941, Kapp left the firm and established his own practice in Detroit. From 1942 to 1944, he served as president of the Detroit Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and in 1947, he became a Fellow of the AIA. Although later in his career he abandoned strict historicist styles in his work, he became an important champion for historic architecture. In the 1950s and 1960s, Kapp led several efforts to

[33] Gavin Edward Townsend, "The Tudor House in America: 1890-1930." Diss. U of California, Santa Barbara, 1986, 246, vii.
[34] W. Hawkins Ferry, *The Buildings of Detroit: A History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980) 328.
[35] Kathryn Bishop Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 68.
[36] Biographical folder on William Edward Kapp, Alumni Records Collection, University of Pennsylvania Archives; Transcript for William Edward Kapp, Graduate School of Fine Arts Student Transcripts, 1895-1922 (UPB 8.6, Box 3), University of Pennsylvania Archives.
[37] Ferry, 328.

preserve historic buildings in Detroit including the Wayne County Courthouse tower, Detroit's art museum, and the City Hall. He also served as chairman of the Detroit chapter's Committee on Preservation of Historic Buildings and was a member of the national AIA committee of the same name. Buildings designed by Kapp include the Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church (1921), The Players (1924-25), Wilson Theatre (1928; designed for Matilda Wilson), the Downtown Library (1930), University Club (1931), Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan (1937), Detroit Historical Museum Building (1943), and Temple Israel (1951-60).

Smith, Hinchman & Grylls was responsible for the development of the Meadow Brook Hall estate beginning in 1914 and continues to be involved today as its preservation architect under the name Smith Group.

## Landscape Design

The landscape design of Meadow Brook Hall is consistent with the country home era and is a skilled design that conveyed the wealth and taste of its original owners. However, unlike the mansion and its secondary buildings, the estate's landscape was not the vision of a single creator executed within a discrete period of time. Instead, the landscape and gardens evolved over a period of four decades, beginning with decisions made by John Dodge in the 1910s and developed by Matilda Wilson well into the 1940s. The design was further challenged by the Wilsons' difficulty in establishing a lasting working relationship with a landscape architect and in 1928, they chose instead to shift their focus to the completion of the house and secondary buildings. When the house was finally completed at the end of 1929, they intended to next turn their attention to the gardens, however, this phase of the project was hampered by the economic realities of the Depression. Thus, instead of a concerted effort to execute a well-conceived plan of a single designer, over the next fifteen years Mrs. Wilson and her architect gradually constructed a landscape, incorporating her ideas as well as some elements envisioned by two landscape architects she briefly engaged years earlier. Significantly, it was also during this period that Mrs. Wilson was consumed with developing the agricultural aspects of the estate and building a model farm with prize livestock, creating competing priorities for both time and money. Because of the piecemeal approach taken with the landscape design, the documentation for this aspect of the estate is thin and the landscape design does not have the same clarity or unified composition as the estate's architectural elements. Despite these limitations, the estate's landscape and gardens support and provide an appropriate setting for the Tudor Revival style mansion and its collection of secondary structures.

## The Evolution of American Country Estate Design

By the mid-nineteenth century the country house phenomenon, which had been associated with only the wealthiest of Americans, began to expand to the upper middle class. This broadening of the movement was propelled in measure by the writings of landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing, who advocated country living in his journal, *The Horticulturist,* and in his books including *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1841) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850). Downing's publications were liberally illustrated with the designs of Alexander Jackson Davis, Richard Upjohn, and other architects who developed thriving practices designing the country houses of merchants, bankers, and other wealthy individuals.

While the country estate in America had its origins in the colonial period, many historians consider the period c. 1880 to c. 1930 to be the golden epoch.[38] These decades were marked by extraordinary wealth concentrated in the hands of a relatively small group of industrialists, merchants, businessmen, and investors who, like the

[38] Large country houses continued to be built after 1930 and indeed historian Mark Alan Hewitt in his book, *The Architect and the American Country House* considers the period up to 1940. However, the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression which followed tempered the desire for large houses and estates.

Wilsons, developed large country estates--not as a *source* of wealth but rather as a place to *display* their wealth. Although country houses were built in all areas of the United States, they were particularly concentrated around large cities of commercial and industrial activity including New York, Boston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Detroit, with its automobile industry and allied manufactories, had great wealth in the first two decades of the twentieth century and this led to the construction of large country homes in the suburbs and countryside surrounding the city. Regardless of the region of the country, the American archetype was a large house, typically surrounded by elaborate gardens with the requisite outbuildings all situated on an estate of several hundred acres.

Large estates were often the work of a single architect or firm which coordinated the design of the landscape and buildings. In other cases, such as Biltmore by Richard Morris Hunt and Frederick Law Olmsted, architects collaborated with a landscape architect to create a coordinated design which expressed the values and aspirations of their client. Entrances and roadways were placed so to maximize views of the estate and the underscore the scale of the property. Expansive gardens, requiring a large staff to maintain, were also conspicuous expressions of wealth and refinement.

Meadow Brook Hall and many other country estates also had an agricultural component with livestock, crop cultivation, vegetable gardens, and orchards which contributed to the overall scale of the estate. In turn, these farming activities necessitated a large workforce, some of whom also lived on the estate. Agricultural buildings including barns, stables, poultry houses, dovecotes and dairies. Fenced pastures dotted with grazing sheep, cows, and horses contributed to the pastoral scene. However, as historian Clive Aslet has noted, American estates "rarely, if ever, supported the house" and the farming was an economic illusion.[39]

Leisure activities were an important aspect of these estates and, according to *House and Garden* magazine, offered an opportunity to get away from the storm and stress of active business or professional life."[40] Pastime activities took many forms including bowling, swimming, boating, horseback riding, and tennis all requiring specialized buildings or structures. The possibility of numerous options for leisure on a single estate also underscored the family's status and the availability of free time.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

While the Meadow Brook Hall estate was developed towards the end of an era that saw the construction of hundreds of country estates, both historically and today, this property has few rivals in terms of quality and scale. Additionally, developmental pressures and changing economic conditions have led to the demolition and subdivision of large country estates throughout the nation leaving few comparables and further underscoring Meadow Brook Hall's importance. The following is a discussion of a number of relevant extant properties that offer a historical context valuable for understanding the national significance of Meadow Brook Hall.

Shelburne Farms (c. 1886-1915) is an earlier country estate but its development as a retreat and farm make it a useful comparison. In terms of original acreage, the two properties were within 100 acres in size of each other (Meadow Brook Hall being larger at 1,400 acres). Like the Wilsons' estate, Shelburne Farms is composed of functional groupings of working farm and pastures, woodland, and family residence and leisure areas. As with Meadow Brook Hall, most of the buildings at Shelburne were designed by a single architect. While the plans of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. were not fully implemented for Shelburne, the property does possess a more unified landscape design than that of Meadow Brook Hall. However, the ratio between non-contributing resources (54)

[39] Clive Aslet, *The American Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 135.
[40] "Lake Forest, Illinois," *House and Garden* 5.6 (June 1904): 275 as quoted in Hewitt, *The Architect & the American Country House*, 7.

and contributing resources (28) at Shelburne Farms is significantly higher than what exists at Meadow Brook Hall, making the latter arguably a more cohesive and intact design overall.

Skylands in Ringwood, New Jersey (NR) built for Clarence McKenzie Lewis, is an important surviving example of a Tudor Revival country estate designed in 1922-25 by John Russell Pope and landscape architects Vitale and Geiffert. Like Meadow Brook, the nominated property does not include the entire original estate, although the grounds included in the nomination are also known for their dramatic vistas. Skylands also retains a collection of outbuildings (although they pre-dated the house and are not designed by Pope). Unlike Meadow Brook, Skylands was designed with a significant amount of European artifacts incorporated into the design. It is significant as an important work by Pope, but alterations to the house include an auditorium and dining room added when the estate belonged to a local college.

Ormston is a 1913 Tudor Revival built for John E. Aldred and designed by Bertram Goodhue with landscape designs by the Olmsted Brothers (NR). This Long Island "Gold Coast" estate provides an important collaboration between two nationally-significant design firms. The New York financier who built this estate demolished a small village to create a show place for the house and grounds. Absent were the trappings of a working farm that were integral to the Meadow Brook estate. Like Skylands Ormston was converted for institutional uses.

Stan Hywet Hall (NHL, 1981) is often held up to Meadow Brook Hall for comparison. This 64,000 square foot mansion in Akron, Ohio, was built between 1911 and 1915 in the Tudor Revival Style. Like the Dodge family, its owner Frank Seiberling, was connected to the automobile industry, having been co-founder of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. Looking for an opportunity to showcase his wealth and business acumen, he embarked on a project to establish a country estate for himself and his family. Like many of their peers, Frank Seiberling and his wife Gertrude were inspired by specific English buildings, such as Haddon Hall, Compton-Wynyates, and Ockwells Manor, all of which they had visited. The Seiberlings instructed their architect Charles Schneider to study firsthand these examples to devise a design that captured the spirit of the Tudor and Stuart periods. Moreover, it was important to the Seiberlings that the house appear "historic" when finished and look as though it had evolved over the course of several centuries. Despite this interest in historicism, the Seiberlings used no historic fabric or architectural fragments (a single window is the one exception) in the construction of their residence. Today, Stan Hywet Hall retains its outstanding formal gardens but historically the estate never possessed the extensive landholdings, secondary buildings or agricultural focus of Meadow Brook Hall.

Fair Lane (constructed 1913-15; NHL, 1966; under revision), Henry Ford's house in Dearborn, Michigan, perhaps comes somewhat closer as a comparable. Like Meadow Brook Hall, this house was built using the fortune generated by Detroit's automobile industry. The house was designed by architect William van Tine and like Meadow Brook Hall, looks to the English past, however, the house's form and details are articulated in a Prairie style idiom—modern and quintessentially American. The Prairie style aesthetic is also carried out in the elaborately designed landscape by noted designer Jens Jensen of Chicago, and includes intimate garden spaces around the house and broad meadows beyond. The house at 31,770 square feet does not begin to rival Meadow Brook Hall in scale and only half of the original Fair Lane estate is intact.

Another Ford Estate that is comparable is the Edsel and Eleanor Ford House in Grosse Pointe Shores. Constructed in 1927-29, it is contemporary to Meadow Brook Hall. The architect was Albert Kahn and the landscape architect Jens Jensen. Kahn, better known for his often innovative office buildings and automobile factories, designed what architectural historian Kathryn Eckert has called a example of "comfortable Cotswold

architecture of Worcestershire, England, but on a grand scale."[41] While similar in the sense that the design derived from a love of America's Anglo-Saxon heritage, the stone exterior exhibits a monolithic quality the contrasts with more traditional English Tudor. The 1935 remodeling that added an Art Deco bedroom suite and music room illustrated a more eclectic motivation in the Ford's treatment of their estate.

In the context of these examples, Meadow Brook Hall is a nationally significant example of an intact and high quality Tudor Revival country estate. This assessment is substantiated by expert testimony. Richard Guy Wilson, architectural historian and commentator on "America's Castles," has written that Meadow Brook Hall is "of the highest order, with explicit details taken from a variety of English examples." Architectural historian Gavin Townsend, who has undertaken an extensive study of the Tudor Revival in America, has concurred with this assessment of the mansion's architectural merit, noting that it is "the equal of the finest Tudor Revival houses." Kingsbury Marzolf, Professor of Architecture (emeritus at the University of Michigan), has written of the exquisite craftsmanship visible in the mansion. Eugene C. Hopkins, FAIA, former president of the American Institute of Architects, likewise has remarked on the quality of the architectural craftsmanship and its national importance as an expression of the architect and client's affection for the past.[42] Indeed, the Tudor Revival style allowed for a highly individual architectural interpretation and William Kapp exploited this possibility with an eclectic use of materials, forms, building techniques, and in the variety of carvings and details which conveyed personal meaning for the Wilsons. Importantly, Matilda Wilson expressly wanted to build Meadow Brook Hall using American materials and American craftsmen exclusively.

Beyond the main house, the estate is also distinguished as an important example of a unified design aesthetic. The Tudor Revival style made its first appearance on the estate in 1915 with the construction of the Clubhouse. An English-derived style continued to be the prevailing architectural idiom governing the development of the estate for the next two decades. More than a dozen buildings on the estate, including Meadow Brook Hall, two playhouses, carriage house, auto shed, doghouse, gazebo, two guardhouses, Knole Pump House, entrance gate, and greenhouse, can be classified as in the Tudor Revival style. A more simplified rustic English aesthetic was employed for the workers' cottages and led to the extensive use of fieldstone in other buildings on the estate. The estate's gardens complemented the picturesque architecture. The net effect is an aesthetically unified and cohesive landscape and collection of buildings and structures from the twentieth century that is unsurpassed in quality.

The Meadow Brook Hall estate is also notable for its extraordinary scale. The house, at 88,000 square feet and with 110 rooms is the largest Tudor Revival residence in the country. Architectural historian Gavin Townsend has argued that what separates Meadow Brook Hall from other mansions in the Tudor Revival style is its "sheer size" and cost. Only Biltmore, the Breakers, and Winterthur are larger residences and none of those are in the Tudor Revival style. While many American homeowners were devising ways in which to reduce the need for servants, at Meadow Brook Hall, the opposite was true. Approximately one-third of each floor of the house is devoted to service space and on the attic and basement levels, it is significantly higher. In addition, Meadow Brook Hall ranks as the fourth largest historic house museum in the United States and the largest house museum in the state of Michigan.[43] Originally encompassing 1,400 acres, the estate was also unusually large and afforded the Wilsons the opportunity to develop the extensive farming operations they desired while preserving the open and pastoral landscape that evoked the holdings of landed gentry.

---

[41] Kathryn Bishop Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan*, (Oxford University Press: New York and Oxford, 1993), p.116.

[42] Richard Guy Wilson, Statement of Significance of Meadow Brook Hall provided to Community Planner Susan Vincent, (2004); email correspondence from Gavin Townsend to Susan Vincent, 23 October 2004; Letter from Kingsbury Marzolf to Susan Vincent, 24 February 2004; Letter from Eugene Hopkins to Susan Vincent, 30 November 2004.

[43] "Historic House Museums Square Footage," undated, Meadow Brook Hall files.

Finally, the integrity of the Meadow Brook Hall estate is exceptional. Although the use of the property has shifted from country estate and farm to a modern university and museum, new structures have been inserted so that they do not detract from the historic character of the property. Moreover, individual contributing resources have been conserved with a strong preservation ethic. The fact that most of the buildings, structures, landscape features and furnishings survive from the period of significance creates an exceptionally valuable record of life on an American country estate in the twentieth century. Collectively, the estate possesses the qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association necessary for National Historic Landmark designation.

## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"America's Castles II: The Age of Invention." New York: A&E Home Video, 1994.

*American Country Houses of Today*. New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1912-35.

Aslet, Clive. *The American Country House*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Bentley, Jeanie Huntley, Cynthia Newman Helms and Mary Chris Rospond. *Artists in Michigan, 1900-1976*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press in association with the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1989.

Cameron, John B. *Meadow Brook Hall Tudor Revival Architecture and Decoration*. Rochester, MI: Oakland University, 1979.

Ciavola, Michelle. "Corrado Parducci: Set in Stone." *Hour Detroit, Metropolitan Detroit's Monthly Magazine*, 11.4 (November 1999): 88-92.

*Directory of Historic American Architectural Firms.* Washington, DC: The American Institute of Architects Foundation and the Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979.

Downs, Jennifer Milliken. "The Hayden Company: Furnishing American Interiors with the European Past. " M.A. Thesis, Parsons School of Design, 1999.

Eckert, Kathryn Bishop. *Buildings of Michigan*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Ferry, W. Hawkins. *The Buildings of Detroit: A History*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980.

Gallagher, James P. and Holleman, Thomas J. *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls: 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978.

Garner, Thomas. *The Domestic Architecture of England during the Tudor Period*. 2 vols. London: B. T. Batsford, 1911.

Goff, Lee. *Tudor Style*. New York: Universe, 2002.

*Guide to Knole Cottage*. 2nd ed. Rochester, MI: Oakland University, 1992.

*Guide to Meadow Brook Hall*. Rochester, MI: [Meadow Brook Hall Guild?], 1991.

Hewitt, Mark A. *The Architect and the American Country House*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Hohmann, Heidi. "Charles Wellford Leavitt, Jr." Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds. *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Holleman, Thomas J. and James P. Gallagher. *Smith, Hinchman & Grylls: 125 Years of Architecture and Engineering, 1853-1978*. Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1978.

Hyde, Charles K. *The Dodge Brothers: The Men, the Motor Cars and the Legacy*. Wayne State University, 2005.

Interview with Corrado Parducci, conducted by Dennis Barrie, 17 March 1975; transcript available at http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/parduc75.htm; accessed 2 February 2006.

Kapp, William E. Student Records. University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Kapp, William E. Member File. Michigan Chapter, American Institute of Architects, Detroit, Michigan.

Kapp, William E. Member File. American Institute of Architects, Washington, DC.

Kocher, A. Lawrence. "The American Country House." *The Architectural Record* 58.5 (November 1925): 401-515.

Leavitt & Son, Charles Wellford. "Executed Work and Drawings from the Office of Charles Wellford Leavitt & Son." New York: n.p., 1927. [copy provided courtesy of Heidi Hohmann]

MacKay, Robert B., et al. *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940.* New York, W.W. Norton, 1997.

Marzolf, Marion and Marianne Ritchie. *Matilda R. Wilson: Mistress of Meadow Brook Hall.* [Rochester, MI.: s.n., 1983?].

McAlpine Map Co. *McAlpine's Atlas of Oakland County, Michigan*. Birmingham, MI: W.S. McAlpine Map Co, 1930, 1947.

Meadow Brook Hall Archives [includes original architectural drawings, correspondence, family papers and photographs].

"Meadow Brook Hall: Rose Terrace." [video recording of interview with Matilda Wilson conducted by Shelby Newhouse in 1967] Rochester, MI: Oakland University, 1997.

Moss, Roger W. *The American Country House*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990.

"Newly elected fellows of the A.I.A." *National Architect* 4 (May 1947): 6-7.

Perrett, Geoffrey. *America in the Twenties: A History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.

Pray, Eula. *A History of Avon Township, 1820-1940*. Ann Arbor, MI: The Nonce Press, 1986.

"Richest U.S. Women." *Fortune* November 1936: 194.

Rockford Map Publishers. *Farm Plat Book, Oakland County, Michigan*. Rockford, IL: Rockford Map Publishers, 1956.

Rogers, Elizabeth Barlow. *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2001.

Sadler, Jr., Julius Trousdale and Jacquelin D.J. Sadler. *American Stables: An Architectural Tour*. Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1981.

Snyder, Sherrlene A. "To Lay Her Burden Down: Why and How Matilda and Alfred Wilson Built Meadow Brook Hall." M.A. Thesis, Oakland University, 2001.

*Standard Atlas of Oakland County, Michigan*. George A. Ogle & Company: Chicago, 1908.

Taylor, C. Stanley. "American Homes of the Modern English Type." *Arts and Decoration* 26 (December 1926) 46-9, 85, 102.

Tipping, H. Avary. *In English Homes: The Internal Character, Furniture & Adornments of Some of the Most Notable Houses of England Historically Depicted from Photographs Specially Taken by Charles Latham*. 3 vols. [London] Offices of Country Life and G. Newnes; New York, Scribners, 1904-09.

Townsend, Gavin Edward. "The Tudor House in America: 1890-1930." Diss. U of California, Santa Barbara, 1986

Walker, Gay. *Bonawit, Stained Glass and Yale*. Wilsonville, Oregon: Wildwood, 2000.

Ward, James. *Architects in Practice, New York City, 1900-1940*. Union, N.J.: J & D Associates for the Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1989.

Wilson, Matilda Rausch. *A Place in the Country: Matilda Wilson's Personal Guidebook to Meadow Brook Hall*. Rochester, MI: Oakland University Press; printed by The McKay Press, Inc., 1998.

Newspaper articles (chronological order)

"Out in the Hills West of Rochester Detroiter has Beautiful Country Home," unidentified newspaper article dated 17 December 1911, article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

"Mrs. Dodge's Millions Unable to Buy Farm." *New York Herald Tribune* 25 May 1925, article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

"Widow of J.F. Dodge To Be A Bride Today." *New York Times* 29 June 1925: 13.

$10,000 Playhouse is Built for Girl of 10." *Evening News* [Cadillac, MI] 11 October 1926, article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

Brown, Vera. "Their Toy Houses Rival Rich Dads' Homes" *The Detroit News* 29 July 1928: 3.

"Meadow Brook Hall." *Detroit News* (Rotogravure Section) 8 December 1929, article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

"Meadow Brook Farm Real Food Factory of Business Type." *Saint Claire Press* [Saint Claire, Michigan] 17 April 1931; article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

"Frances Dodge Horses Capture 4 Blue Ribbons." *Chicago Daily Tribune* 5 December 1935: 26.

"Pictures from the Brief Life and Romance of a Dodge Heir," *The Detroit News* 16 August, 1938: 28. article in Meadow Brook Hall Archives.

"Dickinson Names Matilda Wilson Lieut. Gov." *Chicago Daily Tribune* 20 November 1940: 6.

Moon, Elaine Latzman. "Carved into Detroit's Heart, Parducci's Art is Unsigned and You'll Have to Look Up to See It." *Detroit Free Press* 14 March 1976.

Stetson, Damon. "Michigan U. Given $10 Millions." *New York Times* 4 January 1957: 21.

"Woman in Banking." *Time* 25 May 1931: 52.

Interviews and correspondence (chronological order), National Park Service Midwest Regional Office.

Interview with Kim Zelinski, 3 November 2005.

Interview with Rebecca Savage, 5 January 2006.

Interview with Michelle Akers-Berg, Rochester Hills Museum, 16 June 2006.

Interview with Steven Lindsey, 20 June 2006.

Email correspondence from Gavin Townsend to Susan Vincent, 23 October 2004.

Letter from Kingsbury Marzolf, AIA to Susan Vincent, 24 February 2004.

Letter from Eugene Hopkins, FAIA to Susan Vincent, 30 November 2004.

Statement of Significance of Meadow Brook Hall provided by Richard Guy Wilson to Susan Vincent, (2004)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

__ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
__ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
__ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
__ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
__ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

__ State Historic Preservation Office
__ Other State Agency

__ Federal Agency
__ Local Government
_X_ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Meadow Brook Hall Archives

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: approximately 130 acres

| UTM References: | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 17 | 319430 | 4726996 |
| B | 17 | 319786 | 4727098 |
| C | 17 | 320328 | 4726986 |
| D | 17 | 320324 | 4726844 |
| E | 17 | 320238 | 4726632 |
| F | 17 | 319426 | 4726642 |

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary begins at the intersection of Mansion Drive and Pavilion Drive. From a point 15 feet north of that intersection, the boundary parallels the northern edge of Mansion Drive following the curve in an easterly, then southerly, direction until it intersects with the eastern edge of Sunset Lane. From there it follows the eastern edge of Sunset Lane in a southerly direction to a point parallel with the southern edge of parking lot P-51 and from there due east crossing Adams Road. Following the eastern right-of-way, the boundary continues north approximately 150 feet; then east 260 feet and then turns south continuing approximately 375 feet to the southern property line. Following the southern property line, the boundary continues west to the right-of-way west of Adams Road. From that point, the boundary turns south approximately 625 feet and then turns west approximately 2,650 feet. At that point, the boundary continues north passing along the western edge of the tennis court to a point approximately 1, 125 feet north. From there the boundary turns east approximately 685 feet running along the southern edge of parking lot P-57 to a point 15 feet west of the western edge of Mansion Drive. From there, the boundary parallels the outer edge of Mansion Drive to the point of beginning.

The National Register boundary established when the property was nominated in 1978 was not used for the landmark nomination. The former boundary included areas of the estate such as Sunset Terrace and parking lots which do not contribute to the property's period of significance 1915-47. Moreover, this earlier boundary did not encompass the worker housing east of Adams Road which has been evaluated as contributing to the historic character of the estate and its period of significance.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of this nomination encompass the core historic portion of the property associated with the period of significance. This portion includes all of the historic resources from the period of significance and the portion of the estate which retains a high degree of integrity. The extensive acreage included within the boundaries relates to the historic function of the property as a country estate operated by Matilda and Alfred G. Wilson.

## 11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Paula A. Mohr, Ph.D., Architectural Historian

Address:

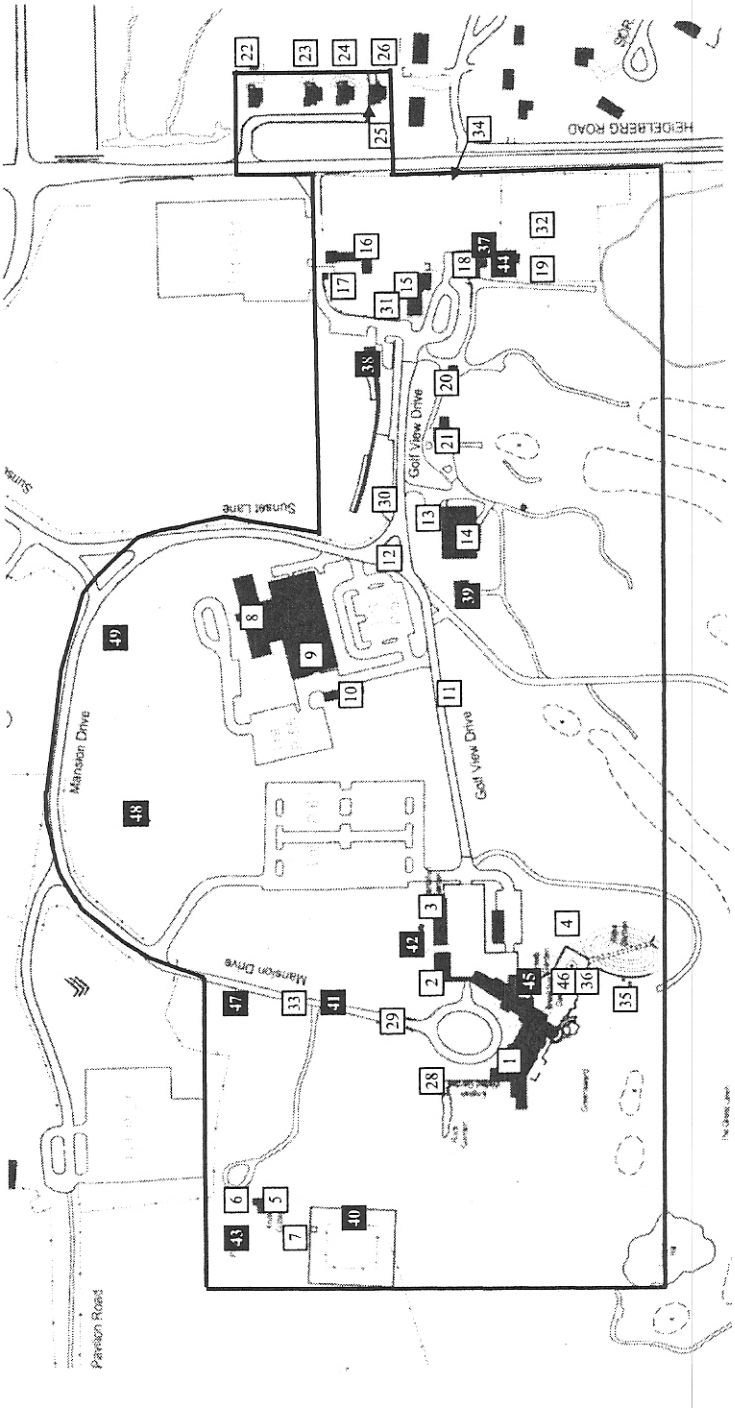
Telephone: (515) 783-2167

Date: 2/3/2010

Edited by: Roger Reed
National Historic Landmarks Program
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2278

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS PROGRAM
March 18, 2011

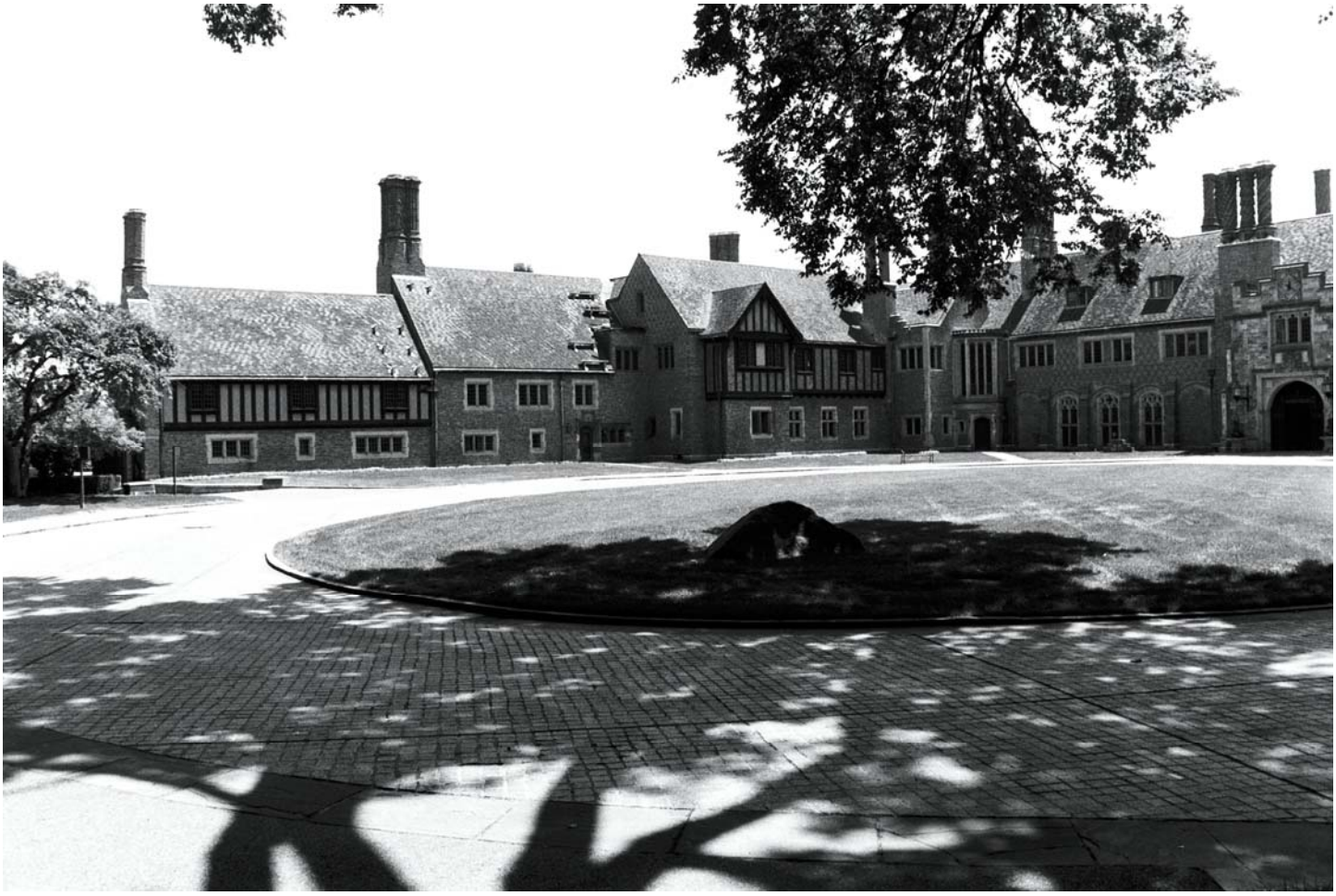



Contributing (white boxes) and noncontributing (black boxes) Buildings, Structures, Sites, and Objects
Meadow Brook Farms, Rochester, Michigan
Dark line indicates National Historic Landmark boundary

↑ N Scale: ¼ inch = 75 feet

Meadow Brook Hall at a distance, looking northwest.

Meadow Brook Hall, looking south across bridge to main entrance.



Meadow Brook Hall looking southeast.

Great Hall, Meadow Brook Hall, looking northwest.

Ballroom (lower level) Meadow Brook Hall, looking north.

Gallery (first floor), Meadow Brook Hall, looking northwest.

Upper Great Hall, Meadow Brook Hall, looking north.

Christopher Wren Dining Room, Meadow Brook Hall, looking north.

Matilda Wilson's bedroom, Meadow Brook Hall, looking northeast.

Rock Garden with Gazebo on right, looking north.

Guardhouse at Knole Cottage, looking northeast.

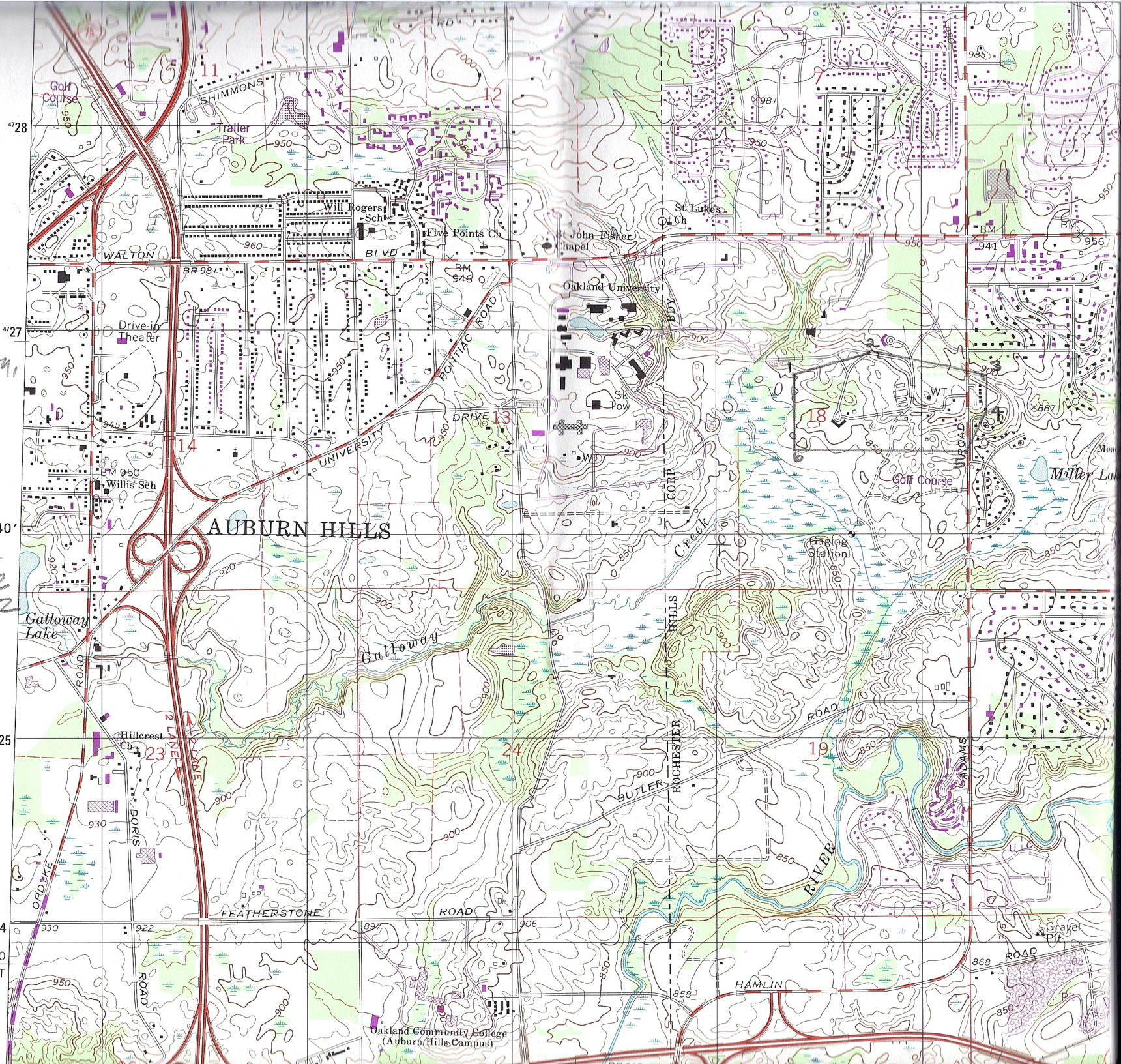
Greenhouse, looking southeast.

Knole Cottage, looking northeast.

Workers' Cottages, 437, 449, 461 Adams Road, looking southeast.

Ice House, looking northwest.

Meadow Brook Hall
Rochester, Oakland County,
Michigan

UTM References:

1 17/319430/4726996
2 17/319786/4727098
3 17/320328/4726986
4 17/320324/4726894
5 17/320238/4726632
6 17/319426/4726642