GROUND AND GARDENS TOUR (GLENSHEEN)

Five Main Stations:

I. Greenhouses/Gardener's Cottage
II. Boathouse and Shelter
III. Pathways
IV. Formal Gardens and Fountain
V. Main Approach (London Road Side of House) and Manor House

I. Greenhouses/Gardener's Cottage (Mounted and framed black and white photographs of the four greenhouses.)

A. Greenhouses

1. Philosophy of gardening re. English country estates
   a. Designed to be self-sufficient (vegetable gardens, pasture, etc.)
   b. Layout of land (E/W flavor; tennis courts, bowling green, etc.)

2. Experimental gardens—UMD

3. Secondary formal gardens

B. Designed by Lord & Birnham Co. from New York City during 1907 and 1908

1. Were torn down in 1970 when the heating plant in the basement of the gardener's cottage failed. (coal heating plant)

2. Acted as a windbreak for the garden.

3. Built in four sections:
   (Going from the largest down to the gardener's cottage)
   a. Palm House—contained many tropical plants including a banana tree and an orange tree
   b. Rose House—There was a thermostat located in the Rose House which had an alarm which would sound when the temperature dropped.
   c. Carnation House—This section had carnations, poinsettias and other flowers which were given away at special times during the year, especially at Christmas and Easter.
   d. General Growing House—In this section were grown the annuals and perennials which were to be used in the formal gardens on the estate.
An average of 6,000 bedding plants were grown each year.

C. Gardeners

1. John Kenny (1907-1917)
2. ( ) Shepard (1917-1920)
3. Aston Plague (1920-1921)
4. George Wyness (1921-1945)
   a. Was the father of Robert Wyness.
   b. Previously worked as a gardener in Scotland, England, Pittsburg, and Boston (Frick Estate) before coming to Glensheen.
   c. Mrs. Congdon (Clara) was the person who looked for and hired George Wyness as the Head Gardener for Glensheen.

5. Robert Wyness
   a. Was the son of George Wyness.
   b. Was the last full time Head Gardener employed by the Congdon family at Glensheen.
   c. Came to Glensheen in 1921 with his father. He was six years old at the time.
   d. He and his wife, Elsie, still live in the gardener’s cottage at Glensheen.

D. Gardener’s Cottage:

1. Currently employs an English Tudor style of architecture. It was changed to the Tudor style of architecture from the former Jacobean Revival style of architecture which was a smaller variation of the style used for the manor house at Glensheen.

2. Was modified in 1927 by the architectural firm of Starin and Melander. They were a Duluth architectural firm.

3. The architects raised the eastern half of the cottage roof to provide more room for the Wyness family. Downstairs, the potting shed was converted into a larger kitchen and a pantry was added.

II. Boathouse and Shelter (Mounted and framed black and white photograph of the Hesperia.)

A. Boathouse

1. Is only building on site made of stone.

2. The original site location for the boathouse was to be in mouth of Tischer
Creek. The boathouse was instead built at the mouth of Bent Brook.

3. Pier and dock were on the navigational maps of Lake Superior in the early part of the 20th. century. Because the pier and dock had lights, they had to be listed on the navigational maps of the day.

4. The Hesperia was registered as a yacht.

5. The Hesperia was burned in 1916 during refueling and was never repaired.

6. The roof of the boathouse is flat. Sometimes for parties, small groups of musicians were allowed to play from the roof of the boathouse. (Robert Congdon’s wedding had an orchestra playing from the top of the boathouse. Japanese lanterns were strung around the boathouse and throughout the woods to create a "magical air").

7. Lake Superior has destroyed part of the pier (through wave action). Pier used to be "L" shaped.

B. Shelter

1. Built at a later time than the original construction (1905-1908) so that the family could come down and enjoy the view of Lake Superior regardless of the weather.

2. Elisabeth used to sketch from here.

3. Originally, hot and cold running water (faucets) were located where the sewer pumps are now located (in the boathouse).

4. This area was tiled and was used by the Congdons as an "outdoor" shower area, to be used after swimming in Tischer Creek.

III. Pathways (Mounted and framed black and white photograph of Chester Congdon sitting on the stepping stones located in Tischer Creek.)

A. Tischer Creek runs through the property on the western side. (Bent Brook runs through the property on the eastern side.)

B. Masonry work was done on the creek beds to help prevent undercutting of the banks.

C. Charles Leavitt (New York) was the landscape architect for Glensheen.

1. It was proposed that a network of paths be designed to transverse the
estate proper to connect to a system already in place which followed Tischer Creek and Vermilion Road. This system was part of a Duluth City Park system.

2. This plan involved installing strategically placed stone "steps" in the creek to allow people to cross without getting wet.

3. It also required that "steps" be carved or placed into the adjacent creek banks so that one could go back and forth with little effort.

4. In some places, wooden bridges were constructed to allow passage.

5. Remnants of this system exist today, but they are in poor condition.

D. Water Reservoir

1. The path to the reservoir follows the course of Tischer Creek.

2. Water from this reservoir is used to supply all outdoor water needs of Glensheen.

3. The reservoir is located across London Road, just east of Greysolon Place along the west side of Tischer Creek. The reservoir uses gravity to direct the water into an intake pool.

4. The water then goes through an underground pipe to a filtering bed.

5. The water is filtered through several layers of natural materials ranging from a fine sand on top to a course layer of gravel found on the bottom. By varying the types of materials according to density, clean water is allowed to trickle through and out the bottom while the debris and dirt settles on top. (The sand layer can be changed several times, if desired, to help filter the water and make it cleaner.

6. Filtered water is stored in a 60,000 gallon holding tank. The holding tank is constructed of concrete and has a radius of 25 feet. The interior floor is slanted down toward Lake Superior. The water will have to drop 32 feet to reach Lake Superior. There are no pumps used to make the water flow, only gravity. This gradual drop in height creates enough pressure to make the water flow to estate. The water is carried by a 10 inch main that crosses the creek and follows the eastern bank of Tischer Creek to an area near the railroad tracks. The water is carried underground underneath London Road to a center point near the manor house.

7. The system runs by gravity. The intake allows a natural flow of water to force its way through the pipes. The slope of the terrain carries water
through the various filtration beds into the holding tank. Valves located at the southern end of the holding tank permit regulation of the water flow either to Glensheen or to the bypass. The bypass allows the holding tank to be emptied of water to enable the tank to be cleaned.

E. Reservoir Water Uses

1. **Irrigation:** Several feeder lines which were placed underground are located at various spots on the estate. Water hoses are hooked up to these water lines.) This water irrigates all the grounds and gardens at Glensheen. **NOTE:** Feeder lines must be drained in the fall.

2. **Fountain:** Enough water pressure is provided to send a spray of water 75 feet into the air

3. **Mansion:**
   a. The vacuum pump, which operated the radiator valves, was operated by this source of water power.
   b. The propeller in the mass coil room was turned by a waterwheel which was powered by this water source. This propeller was part of the humidification system designed for the house. (This humidification system is no longer operational.)

IV. **Formal Gardens and Fountain** (Mounted and framed color photograph of the gardens in July. Also have enlargement of line drawing of originally proposed garden design.)

A. Formal Gardens

1. Gardens based on English landscape gardening concepts of the 18th and 19th centuries; Formal gardens planned, outside the gardens left to nature. Followed the lead of such 19th century American landscape architects as Frederick Law Olmsted. Glensheen was constructed at a time when President Theodore Roosevelt was establishing the first National Parks.

2. The English garden appears informal with a looseness of planting and an abundance of flowers, but in reality the gardens are structured around a framework of walls, hedges, beds, borders, and paved walkways.

3. Two main axes which run north and south provide needed symmetry and balance.

4. Brick walkways act as the garden’s "bones" to divide the space into separate compartments.

5. The terrace provides a clear view of the sunken gardens below
6. Broad terraces with balustrades are raised above the garden level.

7. Terraces are reached by climbing flights of stairs.

8. Formal gardens are designed and used rather than using a high, courtyard garden whose walls would have been high enough to ensure privacy.

9. Long, raised walkways define the sides of the designated garden areas

10. Charles Leavitt was the landscape engineer who was chosen by Chester Congdon to design the estate grounds.

11. Leavitt did not have a static plan for the gardens. The planting index (list of plants to be used) was changed three times in 1906, 1907, and 1909. Some of these alterations were probably made because selected trees were not hardy and did not adapt well to the Minnesota climate found along Lake Superior.

12. Many plants and trees were ordered to stock the four greenhouses and to be planted on the site. In 1907, Charles Leavitt made a list for Chester Congdon of the plants, trees, vines, grasses, shrubs, ferns, and perennials he wished to use. There were 266 items on the list.

13. The soil is clay. It had to be mixed with cow manure in order to make the dirt good enough to grow plants. Some soil from the house excavation was used for the garden beds. Some top soil still had to be brought in for the gardens.

B. Fountain

1. Made of marble.

2. Carved in Duluth by George Thrana.

3. Completed and installed in 1913.

4. Pool used to have side spouts, were removed because they rusted. Only the center spout remains.

5. The pool was raised (made less deep) when the fountain was placed in the center.

6. Water comes from the Tischer Creek reservoir.

7. Water lilies are saved from year to year. Water is drained from the pool. Lilies are buried underground in their pots until spring. Then, they are
unearthed and returned to the pool.

V. Main Approach and Manor House

A. Roadway

1. Construction of the west entry began in May 1905. The roadway is of a raised construction situated on fill. The brick retaining wall on the west side measures 14 feet from the ground level to the top of its granite coping. This building method did not require carving the road out of the slope and was thus able to save existing trees along the proposed edge of the roadway. This allowed the site to retain a natural and undisturbed appearance, making the home look like it had been there for many years. The road does not come straight in but follows the natural contour of the slope which creates an "S" shape approach. Viewed from the street (London Road), the mansion can barely be seen. The curve also made it difficult for carriages and later motor vehicles to enter or leave the property because there is a sharp turn (nearly 90°) at the gate.

B. Manor House

1. Jacobean Revival style of Architecture (1905-1908 length of time for construction of the estate) 39 rooms on 4 floors plus an attic and was designed by Clarence H. Johnston of St. Paul, Minnesota. There are 27,000 square feet in the manor house.

2. Constructed of brick using the "Flemish Bond" pattern. Mortar was tinted pink to match the brick for the visual impact. This way the only "white" that shows is the granite trim.

3. Steep sloping roof with clay tiles

4. Pediments used over doorways

5. Steep and shaped gables

6. Corbeled chimney caps

7. Bays

8. Symmetry

9. All utilities were originally placed underground. This included the electric lines, the water, gas, and telephone lines. The utilities were put in ducting and pipes. Manholes situated throughout the property provided access to the lines for repair and maintenance purposes.
10. The telephone and electrical wiring that was originally done for Glensheen has deteriorated over the years. The corrosion was caused by water with its freeze and thaw cycles.

11. Currently, a high pressure gas line and new telephone cables have replaced the original lines.