Greeting
Welcome to the Glensheen Estate, and the new Grounds tour of 2005. I am ______(tour
guide’s name), and I shall be your tour guide. If you have any questions, feel free to ask
at any time.

Introduction
Begin standing near Ticket House.

The Glensheen estate was owned by Chester Congdon, who was in his late 40s at
the time of Glensheen’s completion. Mr. Congdon became wealthy during the Gilded
Age in America; and he like other fellows of his time, such as, Andrew Carnegie, rose
from the poor class straight to the stratosphere of the wealthy, the modern American
dream. He then earned incredible amounts of wealth from land speculation later in his
life, but his skills as a lawyer brought him into the small circle of powerful men who
defined the Industrial era. When he decided to build a new home in Duluth around 1901,
he and his wife, Clara Congdon, wanted to live in a more private environment than their
home in east Duluth, which Mr. Congdon called the Traphagen house.¹ It was called the
Traphagen house because it was designed and lived in by the famous Duluth architect
Oliver Traphagen.² That home was a duplex, and it was where the Congdon’s lived
during the construction of Glensheen.³ Mrs. Congdon was excited to move away from the
Traphagen home because of the noise of the neighborhood.⁴ Her new neighbors at
Glensheen would be quiet because on one side there was a Norwegian cemetery and on
the other, nothing. When they arrived on the property, the beauty of Lake Superior,
Tischer Creek and Bent Brook touched the couple. By 1903, they were already on the
property doing measurements.⁵ They would later agree to the idea of having the home
between these two streams of water. This would provide a very majestic and naturalistic
foundation to their landscaping project.

To design the grounds of the estate Mr. Congdon chose Charles Leavitt Jr. as the
landscape designer. Mr. Leavitt was a civil and landscape engineer from New York City.⁶
The home was being constructed in an era when the naturalistic designs of Frederick Law
Olmstead inspired all. Mr. Olmstead became famous for his design of New York City’s
Central Park, which focused on preserving nature with man as more of an onlooker than a
participant.⁷ At the time, Mr. Leavitt was one of more renowned in his field. He became
known for his work on such projects as Long Beach, NY, Monument Valley, and the
estates of George Post and John D. Rockefeller.⁸ The grounds were designed almost
entirely from his office in New York City. After the designs were completed and then
approved by Mr. Congdon, Mr. Leavitt’s chief subordinates, Arthur Nichols and Anthony
Morrell, would adapt them to the property.⁹ Sometimes the designs would change in
order to adapt to the property, but most of the time Mr. Leavitt was able design the
grounds flawlessly. These two men would later become pioneers in landscape design as
well. Mr. Morrell and Mr. Nichols would go into business together and would complete
such projects as Morgan Park and develop plans for Lester Park.¹⁰ After Mr. Morrell
passed away, Mr. Nichols worked on a section of Skyline Parkway and later the Minnesota State Capital. While Morrell worked with Nichols on many projects as a team with Leavitt, it seems from the correspondence letters we have that he was the higher-ranking employee to Leavitt at the time of the construction of Glensheen.

The property the Congdons originally purchased in 1905 was around 22 acres, and at the time the University of Minnesota was donated the home, it was 22.7 acres. When Mr. Leavitt purchased the plants for the grounds, he purchased over 266 varieties at a cost of $1,506.50 on March 21st 1907. These plants were hand-selected by some of the best nurseries in the country. To help grow all these new plants, over 500 pounds of black soil was brought to the estate. Now, let’s starting walking!

**Pasture/ Parking Lot**

*Start speaking near entrance of parking lot.*

This parking lot you are standing in used to be a Pasture for the horses and cows. In the early days of Glensheen, they had a goal of keeping enough animals and plants to be self-sufficient, so an area for grazing and riding horses was necessary. After Mr. Congdon passed away in 1916 due to heart failure, Clara inherited full ownership of the estate till her death in 1950 at the age of 96, when her youngest daughter, Elizabeth, assumed ownership of the estate. During Clara’s years, the Pasture more than likely transitioned into an open field or prairie. From the photos we have in 1969, it was a very plush, tall field.

*You should be standing near the retaining pool.*

The Pasture/ field was turned into a parking lot when the University took over the property in the late 70’s. The Parking Lot can hold 300 people for events if need be. The lot itself has changed over the years as well. The lot initially was divided by a paved lot and a dirt lot. The dirt lot was generally the staff lot while the paved lot was for the guests and docents. As years progressed, the University decided to update the lot due to environmental concerns. The goal of the University was to reduce the runoff of the lot. The runoff can be unhealthy for the environment because of the oil, gas, and other forms of pollution that would fall off in a concentrated area closer to Lake Superior. It’s safer for the environment if you can have the pollutants go through the ground in smaller doses, this way the ground can act as a filter. In 2004, UMD built a retaining pool at the southern end of the lot and a swale between the dirt and paved lot to help solve the runoff issue. In the future, UMD plans to use a new material for the paved lot called a permeable surface, which would allow the lot to drain straight through the pavement.

**Gardener’s Cottage**

*Start speaking near the front of the GC.*

The GC has gone through two different styles. It was initially done in the Jacobean Revival style to match the home. Later on, it was enlarged to fit the family of the Wynesses in 1927 and was remodeled in its current style, which is the English Tudor style. This is also the same style as the Carriage House today. After it was remodeled by the Duluth Architectural firm, Starin and Melander, the Gardener’s cottage had nine
rooms, including three bedrooms, with a total square footage of 1,916. They transformed the potting room into the kitchen and pantry. When the Greenhouse was still in existence, the room you entered the greenhouse from was the potting room, where the gardener kept most of the pots and maintenance tools for the Greenhouse. Also in the basement of the GC, two pipes are visible that were used to heat the Greenhouse. These pipes were attached to the boiler in the basement.

The first gardener at Glensheen was John Kenny, who worked at Glensheen till 1917. A man named Shepard was Head Gardener from 1917 to 1920, and was followed by the short tenured gardener, Aston Plague, till George Wyness replaced him in 1921. George Wyness came from Scotland, where he had become famous for his skills in gardening at the Usan estate of Lord Keith in Montrose, Scotland. He would use his reputation to move to America and eventually work at one of the Frick estates. When the Congdons were looking for yet another gardener, they took the advice of Frick’s daughter and hired George Wyness to take over the Glensheen grounds. This would be the start of a long Wyness gardening legacy. George Wyness would transform the grounds to a new style, one that would be plush, full, and more similar to the current grounds layout.

George would stay in charge of the grounds up till 1945. His family had the pleasure of growing up at the Glensheen Estate, so we have different photos of them enjoying the estate, such as his son, John Wyness, riding horseback and his other son, Bob Wyness, fishing in Lake Superior.

Shortly after his son, Bob, returned from World War II, he let his son takeover as Head Gardener of the estate in 1945. Bob had lived at Glensheen since he was 6 years old and was considered a part of the Congdon family and later the University family. Bob would remain living on the Glensheen property with his wife Elsie till May 2004. Bob not only became a part of the staff and family of the Glensheen community; but, also, he himself became a living monument of the history at Glensheen. Many times, Bob would venture out of his home and would mingle with guests. He was well known for his kindness and compassion.

The Gardener’s Cottage itself is in need of repair in many ways, since little maintenance work has been done since the University took over the property. When the University began examining the site last May, they noticed there was damage to the roof, and that it had been leaking for quite some time. The University plans to repair this leaking roof sometime in the near future. But the overall future of the Gardener’s cottage is undecided. Some have hoped to turn it into another self-guided building like the Carriage House; others have felt it would make a great gift shop or coffee house. Either way, the GC will always stand as a memorial to the Wyness family.

**Vegetable Garden/ Sundial garden**

*Start speaking at the entrance of Vegetable Garden and eventually walk them up to the Sundial Garden.*

The vegetable garden was originally used to help feed the family throughout the year. It was one of the many functions to help keep the Congdon family entirely self-sufficient. The original gardening staff varied from three to nine people. Today the staff is around six strong, mainly composed of university students led by our Head Gardener, Sher Lind. The garden itself had a wide assortment of vegetables and fruits. Your
common vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, rhubarb, corn, and radishes were grown. Like wise, fruits such as raspberries and strawberries were grown periodically. One of the unique things about the location of the grounds of Glensheen is how close it is to the lake. Since the gardens are so close to the lake, the plants are in a different climate zone than plants in Hermantown, which is just on the top of the hill. This makes the growing season a little different than it would be in more inland locations in Duluth. When the University acquired the property, they used the Vegetable Garden as an experimental garden. The plants, which were grown at Glensheen, were picked by the Minnesota Extension Service; and some were even scientifically modified. These different types would be grown to compare growth rates, size, and many other variables.

You should be standing in the Sundial Garden.

The Sundial garden in the past was comprised mostly of annual flowers so it has also been named the Annual Garden. We today call it the Sundial Garden because of the sundial post in the center of the garden. The name that was placed on this area by the landscape designer was the Flower Garden. The Sundial Garden used to have a sundial on the top of the post, but someone stole it. We are in the process of trying to acquire a new sundial. Back when there was a Greenhouse, all the annuals were grown in there from seedlings and transplanted to the garden, which would explain the large gardens of beautiful annuals in the old 1930s photos. Most of the annuals you see on the property today have been donated by local businesses. For example, in the summer of 2004, most of the annuals were giving to us by Home Depot. Also, we get much maintenance help from local volunteers in the community.

The Rose Garden was built to be just that since the property was constructed in 1907. Today there are more than roses in there, but the University plans on using only roses again sometime in the near future.

Greenhouse

You should start speaking on the east side of the Sundial Garden.

The Greenhouse used to exist right behind the GC and extended up to the Tennis Court. There was also a row of Lombardy Poplars alongside the East Gate Entrance to act as a windbreak, but they were taken down because the branches would fall and break the Greenhouse glass panels. Lord & Birnham Company built the Greenhouse in 1907. The Greenhouse was comprised of four rooms: the Palm House, the Rose House, the Carnation House, and General Growing House. The Palm House was the largest and most stylistic section of the Greenhouse. It was 25 by 50 feet and was used to store exotic plants such as orchids and banana trees. It was featured in most photos of the Greenhouse because of its external aesthetic quality. The other Greenhouse rooms were not of this style. The Rose House was 18 by 25 feet and was used to grow roses for the family year round. Easter lilies were also grown in the Rose House. The Carnation House was 18 by 25 feet and grew carnations for floral arrangements. Carnations in the early 20th century served as purpose of style and were a symbol of prestige. It has also been said that Mr. Congdon was a fan of the carnation. The General Growing House was 18 by 40 feet and was used for seedling and bedding plants. The gardener would purchase seeds and begin growing the plants in this section of the Greenhouse. More than
6,000 seedlings were grown each year. Almost all of the annuals used to be grown in the Greenhouse till the University asked the Congdons to tear it down.

The University urged the Congdon Corporation, which was the body running Glensheen between Elizabeth and before the University gained full ownership, to tear down the Greenhouse because of the heating costs. When the home was heated by coal it needed 70 tons a year, but the Greenhouse needed 65 tons. It wasn’t a big deal back when coal was $12 a ton, but with modern heating costs, it became unreasonable. Between 1908 and 1927, the Greenhouse boiler needed to be hand stoked periodically, even in the middle of the night. This was the job of the head gardener. In 1927 the Congdons purchased an automatic stoker; this also was the same year the GC was remodeled. But on January 15th, 1971, the Greenhouse was terminated. Today you can see the old roof lines on the back of the GC where the Greenhouse connected to it. Also, the heating pipes are still in the ground. Many spare parts that belonged to the Greenhouse are still in existence today, such as panels of glass. We are lucky to have so many great photos of the Greenhouse today. It’s the dream of the current Head Gardener to reconstruct the Greenhouse.

Tennis Court

Start at the staircase of the Tennis Court and lead them around the fencing towards the Bowling Green.

The Tennis Court at Glensheen is a unique item itself. It was one of the few natural red clay courts that are not made of synthetic materials in Minnesota today. Most clay courts that are built in the present and the last 90 years are not all natural clay courts. Clay courts, synthetic in particular, are staging a comeback though, despite them being expensive and time consuming to maintain. The surface is more forgiving than concrete, and they help prevent injury which helps provide an additional level of safety and comfort for the player. Also, there is a nostalgic feel to these clay courts. In 1909, fast dry clay courts were invented in England, and the modern day concrete courts didn’t become popular for quite sometime. But in 1908, this was a modern court. The downside to the court is how slow it takes to dry after even a little rain and is the reason it needed to be flattened daily. Most US clay courts today are made of synthetic materials or are fast dry because of this reason.

Tennis became formally a sport in 1873 as a lawn sport. Tennis comes from the French sport “Real Tennis” which is similar to our tennis “Lawn Tennis” but is indoors and setup more in a Racquetball/Tennis like environment. The name “Tennis” comes from the French word “Tenez”. The modern tennis game we play today, “Lawn Tennis”, was termed by Arthur Balfour back in the early 1900’s.

The Glensheen Tennis Court is in some need of repair. For example, the fencing is broken in several sections throughout the court, and the retaining walls and staircases are in dire need of repair. Still, the University is making headway; for example, in 2004 they cleared the court of the massive field of dandelions and even held a short tournament. To this day, we still have the concrete roller that was and is still used to flatten the surface for playing. In 1904, the Congdons purchased some tennis shoes for $1.25 and some laces for a nickel.
Bowling Green

You should be standing in the middle of the Bowling Green.

The term Bowling Green is defined as a field of closely mowed turf for playing Lawn Bowling. Lawn Bowling is an old lawn sport consisting of a jack and biased wooden balls. The rules are similar to Bocce ball with the jack replacing the smaller white ball used in Bocce. The object would be to throw the jack and then try to throw the biased wooden balls as close as you can to the jack. The biased wooden balls are not round but are curved balls, which make it very difficult to anticipate rolls.

The Bowling Green at Glensheen originally was a very quiet and majestic environment. It used to be one of the quieter sections of the property because it was away from the waves of the lake and the flowing creek water, which added more background noise than you would assume. Today, it does not seem that quiet because of the busy traffic on London Road, but it still manages that feeling of isolation from the road. The road wasn’t as busy before because the automobile was not a popular icon of transportation; originally, it would have been the sound of horses and carriages.

At the far west end of the Bowling Green used to be a stone staircase down to the Bent Brook London Road Bridge. None of the staircase is in existence today due to the loose clay soil in this location and the near hundred years of aging. The Bowling Green was used for other lawn sports as well by the Congdon family such as Bocce Ball and Croquet. Today the Bowling Green is used still for lawn sports, but is also used for special events such as the Glensheen Arts & Craft Show.

Bent Brook

You should be standing on the upper Bent Brook Bridge.

Bent Brook is one of two creeks that run alongside the home, the other is Tischer Creek on the opposite side of the estate. Bent Brook is the smaller of the two. During the construction years of the estate, soil was transported all over the property to help grow the new trees planted on the estate. There was a worry that all the new soil added to the estate might wash away because of the creek, so they placed stones in concrete along the entire Bent Brook route on the property. This solved the problem of runoff and created a unique, quick-flowing creek. The concrete needs to be repaired yearly, which can be a tough job. On a rainy day, the creek flow will be tripled and wild. Also on a rainy day, the creek will carry so much sediment from the soil that it will push the dirty brown sediment far into Lake Superior, which can be easily seen from the beach.

On June 23rd 1952, the concrete walls couldn’t hold the water back from a tremendous rainstorm that struck Duluth, and the result was 15,000 dollars in damages to the estate. In under an hour, 1.9 inches of water fell upon Duluth. It goes down as one of the worst storms in Duluth history. There was unprecedented damage all over the city. The heavy rains overflowed the top of the concrete walls in Bent Brook and destroyed everything in its path. Water even leaked into the basement of the home in the Recreation Room. The concrete walls themselves were even destroyed. Because of the damage, the Congdons hired an appraiser, Richard Northup. The only reason we know of this storm is because we have his appraisal on record here at the Glensheen archives.
You will notice a wooden bridge that crosses Bent Brook. This is obviously a new version, but this bridge has always been wooden. Sometimes the shifting ice in the winter will move the bridge, and this maybe the reason it is wooden. That way it’s easy to repair or inexpensive to build a new one if the winter was especially rough. In the early days, this bridge was very rustic. It was comprised of small logs of cedar and oak made into post and rails as we can tell from old photos. The bridges made in the northern part of the West Trail System were of similar design to this.

**East Trail System**

*Start speaking at the east entrance of ETS and move towards the creek.*

The East Trail System is one of two series of trails here at the Glensheen estate. This set of trails is the less adventurous of the two, but also is possibly the more relaxing. As you enter the East Trail System near the Rose Garden staircase, you immediately walk into Bent Brook. You will notice the stone staircase down to the creek. If you come down to the creek on a sunny day, you can walk up the creek on the stones to the Bent Brook London Bridge Tunnel. In this immediate area, it’s hard to imagine a more peaceful fall setting, with the creek water flowing and the colorful leaves falling into the creek. There used to be a trail on the east side of the creek that met with a stone staircase from the Bowling Green which would lead you into this peaceful environment. The University would like to place a small table and chairs in this area to invite guests to enjoy its isolation and beauty.

As you cross the creek, you enter into a small forest with a circular path that would lead you directly to the front of the home. In the north side of this small forest is a maintenance valve, which was part of the original construction of the estate. The valve is connected to a holding tank; and the valve controls to where the reservoir water system is allowed to flow. So if you wanted water to only flow to the Tennis Court, you could do that here. Today, the University uses the city water so there is no need for creek water from the reservoir system. The University in the future would like to renovate the trails back to their original design and also repair the reservoir lines so that the valve can be of use again.

**West Gate Entrance/ retaining wall**

*Start speaking in the Court Entrance and move towards the West Gate.*

In the early design of the estate, Mr. Leavitt decided to build an S curve driveway at the West Gate Entrance to take advantage of the natural shape of the landscape. This S curve also provided a more naturalistic touch that the landscape designer was for which aiming. Since the driveway was built on a hill, they needed to build a retaining wall to level it. The retaining wall is made of the same brick as the home, and its design matches seamlessly. When builders constructed the home, they dug out a tremendous amount of dirt and gravel. They used this excess to build the driveway and retaining wall, which was sealed by the brick wall. Alongside this 15 ft retaining wall is a staircase that leads down to the West Trail System. Today the staircase could use some repair; but overall, it is in pretty good shape. It is only roped off today because of the inherent danger of falling while going through the West Trail System.
The forested area between London Road and the home has gone through different cycles. In the early years of the home when Chester lived there, little brush existed between the home and the road. Then around the time of George Wyness, brush was grown, and the house was barely visible from the road. It stayed this way till recently when the University gardening crew started cutting down the brush again to make the home more visible from the road.

Staff story: The grounds staff found a deer on the property during the time of day when there were tours, and grounds staff were told to chase the deer off the property. Two of the student staff were picked for the job. They found the deer by the GC and East Gate Entrance between the large Cottonwood trees. They began chasing the deer, but it ran in the opposite direction intended. It ran west, not east. So the two men followed the deer through the Bowling Green, through the East Trail System, and then the deer leaped right over the 15ft retaining wall. The men, surprised, found the deer laying on its side and shaking its head. It then got up and continued to run. The men stood in awe, for this deer had just jumped a 15ft wall. They would continue pushing the deer across the Stone Bridge and eventually off the estate, where it was finally safe in the cemetery.

The West Gate Entrance is the main entry point of the estate while the East Gate Entrance is designed to be used by the servants. It was even referred to as the service drive in the early layout of the home. So the wealthy that would come to visit Glensheen would enter through the West Gate Entrance. The carriages and automobiles usually would turn around in the Entrance Court in front of the home and leave through the West Gate Entrance.

You should be standing at the West Gate.

The mouth of the West Gate Entrance near London Road is gated with steel fencing and stylistic brick posts similar to the home, which stretch the entire length of the Glensheen London Road distance. The immediate entrance is flanked on both sides by two larger, stylistic brick posts. The eastern brick post by the entrance has the name Glensheen on the north side of the post. This fencing, which is the most visible section of the estate from London Road, is in need of much repair. The brick posts that hold up the steel fencing is falling apart all along the way. The steel fencing itself has rusted and broken throughout as well. The University plans on repairing the fencing in the near future because of the visibility from the road.

North side of the home
You should be standing near the 1905 cornerstone.

Here is the stone that clarifies for you when the construction of the home began in 1905. The construction of the home was busiest in the summer, because the winters were so cold and snowy. The home took 45 months to complete with most materials coming by train and unloading at Howard’s Crossing. So there were more employees in summer than any other time. We are lucky enough to have the pay logs of the construction workers. The construction supervisor was J.C. Bush, who answered to Clarence Johnston for the construction of the exterior of the home. William A. French company and its designer, John Bradstreet, worked on the interior of the home. Charles Leavitt Jr, and his subordinates Anthony Morrell, and Arthur Nichols worked on the design of the landscape, and finally all answered to the demands of Chester Congdon. On a busy
day, there would be up to 80 workers on the estate working 8-10 hour shifts a day. There were many different specialty occupations utilized. There were bricklayers, electricians, carpenters, masons, night watchmen, laborers, and plumbers. Bricklayers were paid the most at 75 cents an hour and water boys were paid the least at 7 ½ cents an hour. The peak year of construction was 1907. When the home was finally completed on February 9th of 1909, it was at the total cost of $854,000, and was 27,000 square feet, with 39 rooms, 15 bedrooms, and 15 fireplaces.

**Servants Porch and courtyard**

*You should be standing in the center of the Servants Courtyard.*

In the initial layout of the home, this was and still is the Servants Porch and Courtyard. Most mansions of this era would have sectioned off the living area of the staff from the family, and this mansion was no different. The door on the front side of the home near the 1905 cornerstone is the servant’s entrance door. If you were a servant riding along with your boss on a trip to Glensheen, you would have to enter through this door while your boss could enter the main front door to show class distinctions. Generally speaking, the east side of the home is the servant’s side. It is where you find the Kitchen, Laundry Room, Milk Room, Boiler Room, Coal Room, and the Servants Dining Room. So on the east side of the home, you have the Servants Courtyard where they would dry laundry on the clothesline. Also the Congdon doghouse was kept in the Servants Courtyard. Japanese Lilacs were planted in and around the courtyard, and today they have almost outgrown their environment. The courtyard itself is gated in three different directions.

The Servants Porch, which is connected to the home, is a unique place to sit and relax after a long day’s work. We are sure the porch was utilized for relaxation in its early days for now it is one of the most common places for the current staff to sit back. Also the porch is an extension of the kitchen so it is, and was, used for many practical purposes. On the wall of the porch is a small metal door that was used for bringing ice blocks inside. This way the workers wouldn’t bring dirt into the kitchen from their boots while bringing in the ice blocks. Also, there is a door right into the kitchen from the porch, which was used for carrying food items and other such necessities inside.

Today we don’t use the courtyard and porch for strictly servants, but rather it’s open to the public to stroll through. All the steel gates of the courtyard are generally always open. The University gardening crew has built a small garden about where the clothesline used to be and another small garden right in front of the east entrance of the courtyard. Generally, these are filled in with annuals such as petunias and impatiens. Also, the exit door for all tours of the house is located below the porch and all tours entering the house walk by the courtyard and porch. So almost all tours today see both these areas. It is unlikely many guests would have entered the home this way when the Congdons lived here. When caterers and other outside businesses participate at Glensheen, they tend to park their vehicles in the courtyard and unload their material from here. Either way, today the courtyard and porch are still used for the servants of Glensheen, but also are now open for the public to view.

**Terrace**
Gather the group around the Juliet Balcony.

Where the group is standing is called the Juliet Balcony and is one of the best views on the estate. Surrounding the Juliet Balcony, there are two parts to the terrace: the Upper Terrace where you are standing now and the Lower Terrace right below you. The Upper Terrace reaches to the Green Room and then all the way to the Living Room Porch. The Lower Terrace leads east towards the Servants Courtyard or west towards the West Trail System entrance.

The Juliet Balcony was named by the University, because it’s a perfect location for a romantic setting, and, therefore, reminded UMD of Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet”. Of course, this is a great location for a wedding, and there have been many different weddings at Glensheen through the years. Robert Congdon, the youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Congdon, was married on the grounds of Glensheen; and today almost every summer weekend is booked with a wedding at Glensheen. And, of course, the perfect location is the Juliet Balcony with the bridal party flowing down the corresponding staircases. We know it to be one of more common locations for the Congdons to take photos. We have a fabulous photo of all the Congdon children sitting at the Juliet Balcony.

Move the group to the entrance of the Living Room Porch.

The living room porch is enclosed today but was not enclosed until more recently. The enclosure is built to keep bugs out from the porch, but also takes away from the architect’s plan for the room. The room was built to be open, half outside, half inside. The room is located right near a rock bluff alongside Tischer Creek; and on any summer day, the sound of the creek flowing is easily heard. The view and sound of the creek provides a very majestic, relaxing scene, a location Chester Congdon himself enjoyed. It is known that Chester Congdon would sit, read his newspaper, and eat breakfast in this place. The enclosure that is there today is not visible in any photos we have when the Congdons owned it. It’s a likely assumption that later in Elizabeth’s life, she may have put the screens in. When the University acquired the estate, they by law had to install a fire emergency staircase to the 2nd floor; and it’s visible from the moment you walk into the porch. Since the area had been enclosed before the University owned it, it is one of the few areas guests rarely enter. But you are allowed to rent the room out for meetings or parties. There has been debate about the future of the enclosure; there are some who want it turn down and open for tours, and there are others who want to keep it for a meeting space and buffer zone from keeping quests from just walking inside the living room.

You should be standing by the main center door.

The Upper Terrace’s focal point is the main south door, which is at the center of the terrace and mansion. The family is said to consider both the north and south doors to be the front doors. This maybe true because many of the early guests may have come by boat and would enter the home through the south door. The large main door is made of oak. Its frame has many Neo-Classical themes and is made of Vermont granite.

The Lower Terrace is more of a transition between the Upper Terrace and Formal Garden but still acts as peaceful place of meditation that many guests use today. It has the grass and trees of the Formal Garden but the brick flooring that is common on the terrace.
It is from the Lower Terrace that you can see into the Winter Garden of the home. The Winter Garden is a unique room, but we don’t know much about it. The Winter Garden was always unheated until the University acquired Glensheen. Today, it is used to hold dinners and conferences and is the largest room in the house. It is picked for many wedding receptions because it is the length of the home and was recently renovated for that purpose. The west side of the Lower Terrace has a staircase that leads down to the West Trail System. The most common staircases used by guests of the Glensheen are the two staircases that lead into the Formal Garden.

**Formal Garden**

*You should bring the group near the fountain.*

The Formal Garden architecturally is an extension of the Jacobean revival design of the home and has 10 flower plots, one grass plot, a fountain, and a pool. On each side of the Formal Garden are two extended wings with granite benches. On the north and south side of the Formal Garden lie two large garden plots both dominated by the existence of 9 ft tall colorful delphiniums that have graced the estate for more than 70 years. These are not the same ones, but rather they are in same location. In the far north plot alongside the brick wall grows clematis, a beautiful vine that has bright purple or blue flowers in late-mid summer. On the north side of the pool is a grass plot that is today used for seating for weddings and other events. The focal point of the formal garden is the fountain and pool.

The pool was filled with creek water from the water reservoir located up in northern section of the West Trail System and was filled with lilly pads and goldfish. The lilly pad was one of Chester Congdon’s favorite flowers, and it is in his remembrance that they are put into the pool. The color of the pool was initially the color of the granite that frames the pool; but in the summer of 2004, it was painted a more vibrant blue. In the early days of the pool, it was used for swimming. We have found at least one photo of the family swimming in the pool. In the southeast side of the pool is the drain. Today, the University invites anyone to throw change into the pool for good luck. The change will go towards restoring the grounds of Glensheen.

The fountain of Glensheen is not the first, nor the second, fountain installed at Glensheen, but rather the third. The first fountain installed at Glensheen was not a fountain but a series of fountains that shot out from all different angles from the sides of the pool. This initial design worked but rusted out quickly and was soon replaced. The second fountain was a large central fountain that gushed into the sky from the center of the pool. The third, and lasting, fountain was the one sculpted by George Thrana in 1913. George Thrana was a famous local master stone carver who carved many of the buildings in and around Duluth. Some of the more famous buildings are the Lyceum Theatre, Central High School, and Denfield High School. George Thrana immigrated to Duluth from Norway in 1889, where he had been trained as a stone carver. His exceptional talent is well showcased in this fountain. George Thrana’s son remembers his father installing the fountain because he remembers delivering his father’s lunch to him. The water for the fountain, was originally from the creek; and if all the lines were let wide open to the fountain it would shoot 75 feet in the air.
The Formal Garden, like the rest of the grounds, has gone through several planting transformations. In its early stages, it was more exotic and almost classically fashioned. All the annual flowers were first grown in the Greenhouse and then transplanted to the Formal Garden. In the age of George Wyness, the gardens may have begun the transfer. This transfer could have occurred before George, but we have no photos to prove the earlier existence of this transformation. The flowers and overall gardening went from a more ornate classical development to a more plush, and almost overwhelming, look. Some speculate that the change is less due to George Wyness and more to do with the death of Chester Congdon in 1916. Chester, in the years before his death, began a keen interest in gardening and landscaping with special attention to trees and paths instead of flowers. It seems that after his death, many sections of Glensheen seemed to be of less interest to Mrs. Congdon and were given less, if any, attention. But it seems Mrs. Congdon did care maybe more than Chester about the flowers of Glensheen, which may explain the growth in flowers on the estate. Today, the University gardening crew follow the model set by Bob Wyness, the son of George; and it is probably similar to George’s initial designs. So the current grounds plant layout has followed more along the lines of Clara’s wants in the 1930s instead of Chester ideals in the early 1910s. But in 2005, the University gardening crew plans on using the combination of two 1916 Leavitt plant layouts for the Formal Garden, once again bringing forward Chester and Leavitt’s vision.

**South Side of the Home**

*Stand at the junction of the Stone path and the tarred lake path.*

This is one of the best locations for photos of the home, so take advantage of scenery while you can. When the home was completed, this entire area was covered in trees and brush to seclude the view of the home from the lake. This stone path was a trail down to the lake, where now it seems there is a stone path alongside an open yard. In 1942, George Wyness cleared away the trees and brush that used to make up the south yard to open the view of the lake from the home. The fact that boating declined dramatically from the early times of the home helped their decision to open the area up. This location is one of three must-see locations for photographers. The first one is the view from the Upper Terrace, the second is from here, and the third is from the Stone Bridge.

**Stone Bridge**

*You should be standing in the center of the Stone Bridge.*

There is no other location on the grounds of the estate more photographed than the Stone Bridge over Tischer Creek. The Congdons cherished the Stone Bridge so much that they had postcards made of the Stone Bridge with the home in the background. Also, the Congdons had printed these square paper prints of the Stone Bridge and the home, which they would seal to the inside cover of their books. It was the Congdon seal of ownership. Today, when weddings are held at Glensheen, it is very common for the wedding party or at least the bride and groom to take photos on the Stone Bridge.
Also, in early spring, it is a great place to come and watch fish in Tischer Creek down below.

Tischer Creek is only called Tischer on the Glensheen Estate. Once the creek is off the estate, it is referred to today as Congdon Creek. The Creek itself begins somewhere near the UMD campus. In the early spring, many fisherman can be found at the mouth of Tischer, even though Glensheen is private property. It is not uncommon to see fairly large fish swimming around in the creek.

**West Trail System / North West Trail System**

*Start walking towards the Outlook from the West end of the Stone Bridge.*

One of the main differences between the grounds today and after the completion of the estate in 1908 is the condition of the West Trail System. In the original design of the estate, there was a series of trails alongside Tischer creek. They started near the mouth of the creek and followed up to Superior Street. These trails were beaten dirt paths that at sections were solidified in rock and cement. All the staircases were made of a mix of cut stones and cement. This is the same material used at the connecting Congdon Creek Park that begins after Superior Street. Throughout the West Trail System, there were more than 15 staircases, 2 miles of trails, and possibly more than 4 bridges across the Tischer Creek. Once again, these trails were more important, it seems, to Chester than Clara, because shortly after his death, the condition of the trails diminished. At the time the home was designed and completed, hiking trails were a new, popular phenomenon. The eccentric US President Theodore Roosevelt spearheaded this adventurous trend. President Roosevelt is the president best known for conserving vast tracts of land. He was also very well known for his many wild and crazy adventures. He may not have represented the average American male well, but he represented what most American males wanted to be in the turn of the century.

*You should be standing in the Outlook.*

The West Trail System begins with the Outlook. The Outlook was a concrete and stone pavilion that overlooked Lake Superior. It was built on a rock bluff on the shore of the lake. It is about 20 feet high from lake level and provides one of the best panoramic views of the lake. From the Outlook looking westward, you can see the Aerial Lift Bridge of Duluth, and eastward you can see the endless jagged lakeshore of Lake Superior. Not much is known about the Outlook because we have zero photos or blueprints of it. And we have very little written documentation. But still today there are fragments of the early structure, so we know it was built and of what. We know its basic shape because it is in the early grounds layout design, but without much detail.\(^{132}\)

The dam at the mouth of Tischer Creek does not exist today, but you can easily understand why they would have built it. The dam was built to build up enough water for a swimming hole for the family. The reason the Congdons would rather swim in the creek than the lake was two-fold. First, Lake Superior’s water temperature is bitterly cold almost year round. Second, the sewage from the house poured directly into the lake out of a pipe from the end of the pier.\(^{133}\) The pump room in the Boathouse today was originally used as shower facility for after swimming.\(^{134}\) This is why the room is lined in white tile similar to the bathrooms in the mansion. Today, Glensheen uses a modern sewage
system, so today it is not uncommon for staff to go swimming after work in the summer in the Lake. But today few people ever swim in the creek because it is too shallow.

The original location for the Boathouse, according to the 1904 plan, was alongside Tischer creek, but there was too much movement from Tischer Creek so the Boathouse location was adjusted to fit alongside Bent Brook.

*Begin walking back towards the Stone Bridge.*

The retaining walls you see today on the south west side of Tischer were probably not part of the original design, but later put in to help slow down the erosion of the west bank. At the bottom of the retaining wall could possibly be a walking path right alongside the creek. This path looks similar to the concrete path that follows underneath the Tischer Creek London Road Bridge. So it is possible that the retaining wall was built at the same time that the concrete path under the bridge was constructed. It’s puzzling because certain sections of potential walkway are underwater, but barely. It is possible that at the time the walkway was constructed, the water level was lower.

*Walk to view of TCLR Bridge.*

There is a trail from the Outlook to the Stone Bridge but then it splits with one trail leading west towards the Norwegian cemetery and the other continues north toward a broken up stone staircase. This broken staircase leads down toward the water level of the creek. In front of the TCLR Bridge used to be a stepping stone bridge across the creek. We have a photo of a Congdon sitting and another walking across the stones. In this spot today looks to be a beaver dam, but it is a large pile of driftwood.

The concrete path under the TCLR bridge leads you into northern section of the West Trail System while the stone staircase alongside the east bank leads you into the trail system on the east side of Tischer. Within these trails are 3-5 stone staircases. Some are very little; others are fairly large, such as the staircase leading down from near the Formal Garden down toward the midway path. This midway path is built about ten feet above the level of Tischer and leads back to the stepping-stones or the West Gate Entrance retaining wall brick staircase. The West Trail System is not an easy trail system to walk on and at points, is quite dangerous, especially today considering most staircases have deteriorated. It is also fairly difficult to walk through because of its many staircases up and down the banks of Tischer, especially if you follow it all the way up through the north section of the West trail system. This may be an additional reason why Mrs. Congdon seemed to not care about the condition of the trail system, considering her age at the time of Chester’s death.

**The Congdon Creek/ Northern West trail system**

If you were to follow the concrete path under TCLR Bridge, you would enter into the other half of the West Trail System. This northern section contained the reservoir, the Swiss Chalet, the northern dam, the apple orchard, up to two wooden bridges, and the pavilion over the intake well. This area, like the South West Trail System, slowly deteriorated at probably the same pace.

The reservoir system was located in the center of Tischer Creek and could hold 60,000 gallons of water. The filter chamber that is located immediately next to the
reservoir is filled with sand, gravel, and leaves which is meant to be a natural way of filtering the water of impurities.\textsuperscript{137} The filter system as of today is still in good working order.\textsuperscript{138} The reservoir itself has a 25ft radius.\textsuperscript{139} The vacuum system in the home was powered by the water reservoir.\textsuperscript{140} There was a propeller in the mass coil room that would be turned by the water coming down hill from the reservoir.\textsuperscript{141} This helped the humidifier system pump moist air throughout the home.\textsuperscript{142} The reservoir used a gravity pressure system to pump water down to the irrigation and fountain lines on the estate.\textsuperscript{143}

Reservoir water was fed down hill through a ten-inch water main that cost an estimated $5,200 in 1908.\textsuperscript{144} The water went into the home, the fountain, and the 20 or so water spigots around the estate.\textsuperscript{145} In the early days of the estate, this provided the grounds with local uncontaminated water that is better for plants on the estate than the chlorinated city water.\textsuperscript{146} Today, the ten-inch water main and the irrigation system is in need of repair and doesn’t function quite the same as it had in the past. The current head gardener of Glensheen would like to repair the irrigation system so that they once again can water the plants and the grounds with the natural creek water instead of the chlorinated city water.\textsuperscript{147} Also, it would make available many more convenient water spigots. Today, there are only two functioning water spigots used by the Grounds crew. One is located in the East Servants Courtyard, and the other is located near the Gardener’s Cottage, so you can see the need for the old irrigation system.

One of the mysteries of the NWTS is the existence of the Swiss Chalet on top of the reservoir.\textsuperscript{148} Charles Leavitt sent blue prints for a Swiss Chalet to be built on top of the reservoir, and we have slips and a letter with the estimated costs of this possible little guest house.\textsuperscript{149} But today there is no material existence of the Swiss Chalet. But if it did exist, this would be an almost perfect location for a couple to sit back and relax, surrounded by the creek and the forest. The location sits inside a narrow valley and is hidden away from the normal bustle of city life. From this location, you would have no idea that you were surrounded on both sides by homes. Even today, this location provides a level of calm that is unheard of anywhere else on the estate.

Further up the creek past the Swiss Chalet site is the dam that stops the creek to flow through the water reservoir. Right next to the dam that cost an estimated $350 in 1908 is a small round brick structure similar to a small tower called an intake well.\textsuperscript{150} Leavitt had sent blue print plans of a small round pavilion to be placed on the top of this intake well.\textsuperscript{151} Once again there is no sign of its existence today, but we know from the blueprints and a letter that the materials to build it could have easily deteriorated by today. For example, the roof was to be built with straw thatch.\textsuperscript{152} Once again, though, this small pavilion would have added even more to the naturalistic landscaping of the estate. It was something that did not take away from the natural surroundings, but complimented them.

Up the west bank of Tischer Creek leads you to the Congdon Orchard. The orchard used to contain 59 trees in 1909 and was one of Mr. Congdon’s favorite pet projects.\textsuperscript{153} The orchard had Apple, Crab Apple, Pear, Plum and Cherry Trees.\textsuperscript{154} Before Mr. Congdon started building his orchard, he had sent letters all around the city of Duluth looking for recommendations on growing fruit trees.\textsuperscript{155} He wanted to know the length of the season, and what type of fruit trees grow well. At one point, Mr. Congdon had written to a Duluth insurance agent, E.C. Little, who recommended that Mr. Congdon contact one of his friends, L.P. Hall, living in Deerwood, Minnesota, who was a regional expert
at growing apples in Duluth before he moved. Mr. Congdon’s interest is well-represented by him spending thousands of dollars on an apple orchard in Washington. Later this large Washington apple orchard would produce apple juice for the Treetop Apple Juice Company. Mr. Congdon also built a vacation home in Yakima, Washington, called Westhome, which was modeled after a castle in Great Britain. It was 42,000 square feet compared to the 27,000 square foot home at Glensheen.

If you were to walk through the trails, you could have possibly walked across two wooden bridges and multiple stone staircases. When the trails and bridges were completed, they cost Mr. Congdon $971.21. The NWTS is more difficult and longer than the SWTS but very little is known because today it is in absolute disarray. Neither wood bridge exists today, and only chunks of the stone staircases exist. We know of the two bridges only because of photos taken in the early days of the home and some historical data. But the views in NWTS are more spectacular and breathtaking than the SWTS and well worth the hike. Some of the rock bluffs carved by the creek are 60 feet high on both sides. The University has a long-term plan of reconstructing the entire West Trail System so that it would lead right to Congdon Creek Park like it did in 1908. This would provide over 5 miles of hiking alongside one of the most breathtaking creeks in Duluth and return the Glensheen estate to the more naturalistic and adventurous setting it was meant to be.

**Lakeshore**

*Begin standing at the Shelter and eventually walk towards hidden staircase.*

The Shelter was a project initiated by Elizabeth when she was young. The legend goes that Elizabeth began building it herself; and when Chester saw this, he paid the Gardener to build it for her. Later on, this would be one of Elizabeth’s favorite places to sketch.

Lake Superior was created because of volcanic activity and at one point was covered by a Glacier. When the Glacier resided, Glacial Lake formed. The shoreline of Glacial Lake would be where the Skyline drive is today.

The Lakeshore of Glensheen has undergone different transitions that match the changes of the Lake. In its initial state, it was similar to how it looks today, but the shoreline was closer to the home. But probably sometime in the 1930s, the water level of the lake dropped drastically. It dropped to a level so dramatic that the Congdons had built a stone staircase leading down to the lake. Today this staircase is covered in beach rocks and can only be found after digging through them.

This plot of land may have been picked also because there is a larger beach with no rock bluff in the front of the home. Leavitt may also have leveled the beach more to produce a smoother rolling beachfront than had existed before.

**Boathouse/ Pier**

*Bring the group to north side of the Boathouse and eventually lead them to the Pier.*

When the Boathouse and Pier location was finally decided, construction began on September 6th, 1906. Construction on the Boathouse was no easy operation because of the freezing cold waters. Large concrete slabs were dropped in timber cribs made of
hemlock, which would be the foundation of the Pier. The rock needed for the Pier construction came from Engle’s quarry. These timber cribs can still be seen today on a still day. The original length of the pier went out in the water an estimated thirty feet further and turned right for a hundred feet. So the original pier was in the shape of an L. This L shape provided a breakwater for boats and yachts to flow smoothly into the Boathouse. Today there is no L because the waves of Lake Superior have destroyed it; and because the L was broken, the boathouse has been landlocked by rocks washing ashore.

The Boathouse probably stored sailboats that were purchased before the home was constructed originally, but later, with the purchase of the Hesperia in 1911, were placed elsewhere. The Hesperia was a registered yacht in Lloyd’s register of American yachts in 1911. The designer was Morris M. Whitaker, and it was built in Bath Marine Construction Company in Bath, Maine. It had a four-stroke, six-cycle gasoline engine. It arrived at the Glensheen estate July 22 1911 from Maine, and it was 53 feet by 12 feet. The Congdon family yacht was a favorite pleasure of the family. But tragedy struck the Hesperia in 1916. While refueling the Hesperia, it set on fire by accident so it was sent up to Two Harbors for repair but never returned. The Congdons eventually sold the hull for $300.00.

The Boathouse itself is the only building on the Glensheen estate made of large stones and has only a hundred less feet of square footage than the GC. The retracting wall in the front of the Boathouse no longer retracts. When the Boathouse was still in good shape, the family would play shuffleboard on the roof. The family used the Boathouse to store rowboats after it was landlocked. The staircase on the northern side is in disarray today. The roof of the Boathouse was layered in fine arts tile. Today, some of the tile still exists but only because of the garden that had grown on the top of the Boathouse. In the summer of 2003, a full-grown Lilac tree flourished on the roof of the Boathouse. The inside of the Boathouse used to be another unique item of the estate; but after it was landlocked, the family seemed to stop caring. The shower room was turned into the pump room or engine room. In the landlocked pool of the Boathouse is a diving bell, that had resided there long before the University owned the property. Since the University took over the estate, very little has been done to the inside of the Boathouse.

One of the unique stories involving the Boathouse revolves around the wedding of Robert Congdon. It is said that for Robert’s wedding, they set Chinese lanterns all around the Boathouse and yard. In addition, they had an orchestra play on the roof of the boathouse to an audience on the pier and in the yard. From photos we have found, we know that there was electrical wiring all around the boathouse, so the Chinese lanterns were a definite possibility and the roof of the Boathouse would still be ideal for a band.

In recent years, the roof of the Boathouse has been cleared off better than it has in over probably 30 years. The University plans on fixing up the roof of the Boathouse so that bands can once again play on the roof. They also want to set up the inside of the Boathouse so that tour groups can partially walk in and see the inside. One of the local museums in Duluth has offered Glensheen money for their diving bell so that may be transported elsewhere or be used as an historic piece on site.

You should be standing on the Pier.
The Pier itself was broken up long before the 1950s, but before then, it was listed in maps of Lake Superior because of the Pier and Dock lights. In the corner of the L was a concrete seat. And at the entrance of the Boathouse was another wall of concrete to fasten the yacht to before going into the Boathouse. The Pier today is one of the more visited ground’s landmarks in the summer, and its view of Lake Superior rivals only the Outlook.

Carriage House Yard

*Move the group to the center of the Carriage House Yard.*

Well, congratulations you made it this far. This is the last stop on the Glensheen estate tour and the quickest one. The Carriage House itself is part of the self-guided section of the tour so feel free to roam through it. When Glensheen first became the property of the University, they planned on converting the estate into a conference center for advanced studies. With the occurrence of a specific event and unexpected additional costs for the home, the University decided to move towards a mix plan, one that included conferences and tours of the estate. Part of the initial plan was to convert the second floor of the Carriage House to hotel rooms and to convert the Sleigh and Carriage Room into a conference room. This may come up sometime in the future, but it doesn’t look to be happening anytime soon.

The Carriage House Yard had a paddock for the cows and horses located today near where the large cottonwood trees are today. A paddock was a pen where racehorses are saddled and paraded before a race. The paddock fence was to be made of green posts with white paneling that cost $337.51. It was outlined in a sketch from Leavitt in July of 1908. These Green posts would eventually be the reason that Glensheen would be associated with the color Green.

Conclusion

That concludes your tour of the Glensheen estate. If you have any other questions feel free to ask me.

Thank you for embarking on this new tour with me.

Guide book written by Daniel Francis Hartman 3/30/05

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