A Self-Guided, Historical and Horticultural Tour of Oakwell

For more a comprehensive description of the property and more information including maps, photos and related links, visit:
http://growoakwell.wix.com/home

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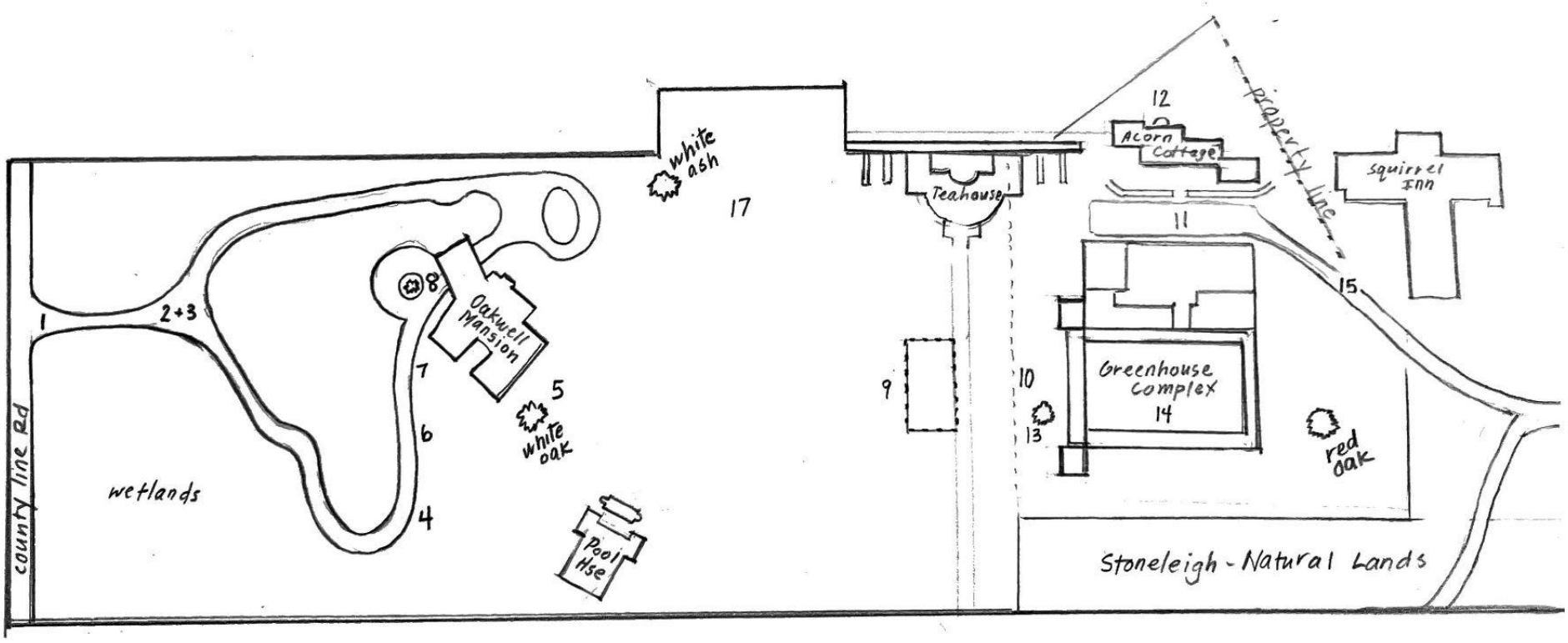

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1 Entrance

Welcome. This property is currently owned by the Lower Merion School District who originally intended to clear cut the area for auxiliary fields. Grassroots activism has appealed to the school board to see the value of preserving this green space and use it as an outdoor, K-12 education center and arboretum.

2 This Land

In order to appreciate Oakwell's rich historical and ecological significance, it's important to understand the history of the land on which it stands and its first inhabitants, the Lenape.

The Lenape People lived in harmony with the land. As Europeans arrived on this continent, Lenape social systems and physical landscape were altered. Learn how the arrival of the Europeans, the fur trade, land sales, Penn's Purchases and the "Walking Purchases" affected the Lenape and their landscape.

3 "10 acres of fine woodland" is how this land was described in a 1887 newspaper article. As we begin down the winding drive, we get a sense of what that might have looked and felt like. Today, this is not technically a "forest", but scan the area from the floor to the canopy to notice the horticultural diversity.

The majority of mature and declining trees you see likely began to grow after the land was originally logged and ploughed for farmland and are from the post-colonial era. There are a large number of these uniquely valuable and irreplaceable "heritage trees" whose live wood sequesters enormous amounts of carbon. Notice the large, mature, native hardwood including the red oak, white oak, tulip, black gum and beech.

Notice trees in all stages of the life cycle, from seed to sprout to seedling to sapling to mature to decline and snag or rotting. Older trees with decay and cavities offer shelter for birds and mammals. Snags and dead trees, both standing and laying on the ground, provide homes to wildlife. Due to the different levels of moisture, standing deadwood and fallen deadwood host different types of fungi and insects. You can also observe regrowth. Notice the circles of saplings that form around the base of stumps. Beech trees begin putting up clone (genetically identical) shoots as they begin to decline. As the tree breaks off, the root system will survive and support new trees. This hedging strategy ensures the survival of the species. Stump sprouts are another hedging strategy for trees. If a tree breaks off or is cut down, the tree will grow shoots off of its trunk. Shoots grow in a ring from the center of the stump and, over time, larger stems push out others as they fight for canopy space. Look for a large two-stemmed ash tree. Over one hundred years ago, this tree either fell or was cut down. Because there were no stump grinders, it began to resprout at the stump. Two of them beat out the others and appear as a double trunk.

Please continue on the driveway, but where this road bends, we detour, stepping off the path and onto the grass toward a tall white oak. Keep your eyes peeled for a pair of great-horned owls who have been sighted here.

4 Farming Tradition

This area was settled by Welsh immigrants in the late 1600s and by the 1700s, saw mills, papermaking mills, powder mills and metal works lined the banks of Mill Creek. The area south of Mill Creek and west of the Schulkyill River (now Lower Merion Township) was predominantly ploughed farmland. It has been said that, due to its high ground, one could see from Lower Merion down to the Schuylkill River. During that time, the Ramsey family owned this land which was part of a 65 acre plot. They most probably farmed this land. Ellis Ramsey (1808-1875) was the "Hotel Keeper" of the Green Tree Hotel at the intersection of Old Gulph Rd and Spring Mill Rd. Ellis and Mary passed away within weeks of each other in 1875, and two years later their heirs sold the 65 acres to a Pennsylvania Railroad Company executive Edmund Smith (1829-1895).

5 Stoneleigh Estate

From this spot by the white oak, pan from your left (the north side) to the right (over the hill to the east) from this garden. This property on the left and the Natural Lands' *Stoneleigh* was one estate between 1848-1922. Take a moment to take in the 65 acre expanse.

Edmund Smith (1829-1895), the young Pennsylvania Railroad Company executive who bought this property, was one of many Gilded Age success stories and powerful elite. Here he built a mansion and called it Stoneleigh with a productive farm, garden paths, pasture and mowing land, woodland, and orchards. Livestock such as Jersey cows and horses.

6 Heritage Trees

Along the wooded drive and before you, are over 80 species of deciduous and coniferous trees. A large number are native but over half are cultivated. Many are considered "big trees" or "heritage trees" and there is one "champion tree". These specimens anchor an intact biodiverse landscape that has been stewarded for generations.

To our left, beside Oakwell Mansion, we have a white oak that has been growing since the birth of our nation. In 1919, when distinguished WWI veteran William Bodine was deciding where to place the new home for his young family amongst the forested corner of the Bodine's Stoneleigh estate, he placed it between multiple oak trees that formed a continuous canopy shading the Oakwell home, their roots intertwined throughout the property, anchoring the soil and communicating through their fungi networks. Deciduous trees planted on the south-facing side of the residence would have allowed for light to warm the house in winter and shade the house in summer. There is a telegram from 1919 from the Olmsted landscape architect to William Bodine requesting to save this precise tree.

From here, you are able to see the top of the largest red oak in Montgomery County, the "County Champion" located at the back right corner of the greenhouse complex. To the right of the red oak is the 3rd largest tulip tree in Montgomery County. In the Lenape language this tree is called *mùxulhemënshi*, which means "canoe making tree". And to round out this big tree quartet, turn to face Oakwell Mansion to see the tree crown of the second largest white ash in Montgomery County on the north property line. Various calculators estimate that a white ash with a diameter this wide is approximately 300 years old. Also of note is the line of large oak trees along the rear lawn of Oakwell Mansion which shade the poolhouse.

7 The Bodine Family

At the turn of the 20th century, Samuel Taylor Bodine (1854-1932), head of United Gas Improvement Company, acquired the 65 acres property. In addition to his impressive career and membership to prominent organizations, he had many notable accomplishments that give us insights into why the legacy he and his family left at the Bodine homesteads of Stoneleigh and Oakwell is worthy of celebration and preservation.

Samuel and Eleanor created a cutting-edge complex, designed by architect Frank Miles Day before 1903, was where Bodine's innovative staff would produce award-winning flowers and vegetables. Eleanor Gray Warden Bodine (1860-1927) was a woman firmly in charge and looking to the future. She shaped decisions about landscape grading, garden placement, and trees planted. Samuel Bodine was active in many scientific, horticultural and farming societies. During WWI, Samuel Bodine served on committees that provided soldier's aid and re-employment for veterans. On the home front at Stoneleigh, the greenhouse complex, with its sprawling vegetable and fruit gardens, became places that fed the community and the training grounds for women aspiring to careers in gardening and horticulture.

Our tour now continues back to the driveway where we will walk towards Oakwell Mansion. On the way, we see many trees of note: Notice three Dawn Redwoods on the left side of the driveway as you approach the walled area. Dawn Redwoods were rediscovered in 1944 as a fossil that scientists reasoned were related to the Giant Sequoia and Coast Redwood. They were given the scientific name, "metasequoia" to show that it is related. These are deciduous conifers who lose their needles annually.

There are many conifers that are younger than 100 years old on both sides of the driveway. There are cultivars of the European Beech such as the fern leaf with its serrated, thread-like leaves, the weeping beech with its pendulous branches and the weeping atlas. The owner of this property during the 1980s altered the driveway and is said to have added many conifers to this collection.

Notice the tree in the circle in front of Oakwell Mansion. This is a Persian Ironwood, an ornamental tree from Iran.

8 Oakwell Mansion

The Bodines' son, William W. Bodine, was educated at Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania and then served overseas as Captain with the 149th Field Artillery, Battery A. He received the American Distinguished Service Cross. He was wounded in action just days before the war's end on November 18, 1918, and later served in the National Guard (1920-1937), achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

After his 1919 discharge from military service, William Bodine began preparations for an estate to be carved out of the northwest corner of his family's Stoneleigh homestead. The residence was designed by William Wayne Jr. in the Tudor Revival style. Tudor Revival took the style of English vernacular architecture of the Middle Ages. Here at Oakwell you can see grand stone fireplaces, dark wood paneling and wainscoting, exposed decorative timbers on ceilings, arched doorways, half-timbering in their upper storeys and gables, tall ornamental chimneys.

Working with Olmsted Brothers, William Bodine planned a driveway from County Line Rd. designed to navigate the cluster of oak trees on this part of the property, leading to a mansion where he would live with his wife Angela, and their two young sons Samuel and William, Jr. More children were to come in later years and like his father, William Jr served with distinction in the military (WWII), then went on to an impactful career like his father and grandfather before him. By 1922, newspapers were regularly reporting on the Bodines of "Oakwell," the name of this property for the last 100 years.

Oakwell is home to one of the largest collections of "Mercer tiles" from Henry Mercer's "Moravian Pottery and Tile Works" of Doylestown, Pa. The residence has original woodwork, windows, servant stairs, call boxes, wiring and plumbing. Originally, there was a servant's wing on the second floor above the garage with six bedrooms. There is a sleeping porch off the main bedroom which would have been a cooler option for the Bodines on hot summer nights.

William W. Bodine Sr's Oakwell mansion is listed as a Class II historic resource, protected under Lower Merion's Historic Preservation Ordinance of 2000. It is not endangered at this time.

Walk through the porte cochere, the covered entrance for vehicles, and head down the hill towards a fenced garden. Our tour now goes back in time, before William Bodine's return from war and construction of Oakwell, to tell a story of stewardship and philanthropy. Stop in front of the white picket fence where we continue our tour.

9 Wartime Efforts & Victory Gardens

As WWI expanded overseas, Samuel Bodine served on the Executive Committee of the Citizens Soldier's Aid Committee (1916), and after the US was drawn into the war in 1917, Samuel Bodine chaired the Committee on Disbursements for the War Welfare Council that organized re-employment of veterans.

On the homefront at Stoneleigh, there was a shift away from the previous years of acclaim at Flower Shows, and instead the greenhouse complex, sprawling vegetable and fruit gardens became places that fed the community and the training grounds for women aspiring to careers in gardening and horticulture.

Through newspapers, we learn that in 1917 Samuel T. Bodine was a leader of the "Main Line Community War Garden Committee." The Committee organized donations of unused land one mile north and south of the Pennsylvania Rail Road all the way from Merion to Villanova along with seed, equipment, horses, and labo. We learn that as their high school studies wrapped up for the year, young women in Philadelphia were "registering for farm work during the summer... planting, cultivating, pickling, and canning foods" which echoes information about the women who worked in Stoneleigh's gardens. By May 1917, over 400 acres had been planted along the Main Line as the Committee worked in conjunction with the National Emergency Food Garden Commission in Washington D.C. The Bodine supported the local Community War Garden Committee and produced potatoes, beans, cabbages, carrots, turnips, and onions that sustained the community through wartime shortages.

Comparing maps of the 65-acre property produced in 1921 by renowned landscape architects Olmsted Brothers with landscape features on Google Earth, we estimate the extent of these Victory gardens at approximately 2.5 food-producing acres (in addition to the 1-acre greenhouse complex). Family oral history also tells that the Bodines planted large food gardens across Spring Mill Road during the war. There was an approximately 1 acre vegetable garden across Spring Mill Road, according to a 1921 survey.

The Olmsted map also provides information on some of what was being grown: apples, pears, cherries, gooseberries, and currants, alongside large vegetable beds. And the maps provide information on the landscape that surrounded and supported this food production with ecosystem services like water retention and pollination - for example, every single tree is mapped along with its species name and diameter over a century ago.

You can see one garden, now surrounded by a white picket fence. This was not how the original garden appeared. The Pentecoste & Vitale designs and Olmsted blueprints indicate that where this fence line now is was a patio in the middle of a symmetrical line of weeping mulberries. More gardens were located within the walls of the greenhouse complex, which we will explore later on this tour. To your right is the south property line where, over the fence on the Stoneleigh side of a berm (a steep slope), is the location of one of these Victory Gardens.

You may be wondering by now who worked the gardens. That may be, perhaps, the most interesting story of all at Oakwell. Let's continue this tour by focusing on Eleanor Bodine and her innovative training program for young women.

10 Eleanor Bodine

During an era of social reform, Eleanor Bodine created an inspiring gardening and horticultural training program for young women right here. During World War I into the 1920s, she recruited women aspiring to careers in gardening and horticulture to hone their craft in this garden and in the sprawling flower, fruit and vegetable gardens surrounding the greenhouse complex.

The food these women grew had an impact within the community during wartime and beyond. Through a 1926 article about Stoneleigh in The Gardener's Chronicle, we learn that the massive vegetable garden shown in this Olmsted blueprint had been a Victory garden, "from which the poor people in the neighborhood received their supply of fresh vegetables."

100 years ago, Stoneleigh's grounds were busy working landscapes reflecting social movements of the time. For example, in May 1919, Eleanor Bodine welcomed to her gardens fellow members of the newly founded Woman's National Farm and Garden Association, which was holding its annual conference nearby at Bryn Mawr College. In 1920, the same year that women finally gained the right to vote in the U.S, she recruited college-educated women for Stoneleigh's horticultural training program through the Women's Educational and Industrial Union headquartered in Boston. The following year, she hosted a summer garden tour organized by the Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women at Ambler, the first school of its kind in the U.S. (now Temple University Ambler).

In 1921, an article in House & Garden titled "Consider the Gardener" again shone a public spotlight on this program for training of young women, "offered by Mrs. Samuel T. Bodine of Villa Nova, Pa whose extensive estate and eminent superintendent-gardener, Mr. Alexander MacLeod, have formed an exceptional combination." The article focused on the need to foster the interest of more young people in gardening and horticulture, with these lines that resonate over one hundred years later:

> *nature study classes and school gardens are awakening special powers of observation and emphasizing the practical value of patience and diligent perseverance.... public and private enterprise must combine to throw searchlights on the path to be chosen, revealing the mysteries of science related to horticulture [because] even soil... teems with history, science, poetry and religion.*

Eleanor Bodine would have welcomed attendees to view Stoneleigh's magnificent gardens at the front of the property but given the interests of the membership, the back of the property likely would have been center stage. For this is where Mrs. Bodine and her superintendent Alexander MacLeod hosted an innovative gardening and horticultural training program for women, centered on a greenhouse complex designed by noted architect Frank Miles Day and a unique "Cotswold cottage" style Superintendent's cottage..

Friday, May 23, 1919 was a busy day for Stoneleigh's Eleanor Gray Warden Bodine. Bryn Mawr College hosted the 5th Annual Conference of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association. As an association member, Mrs. Bodine listened to talks on topics ranging from War Gardens to Community Gardens to the Woman's Land Army. After the program, the conference attendees toured 4 nearby farms and gardens, with Stoneleigh the last stop of the day.

We will now take a left, perpendicular to the fenced garden to a small brick cottage on the north property line.

11 Acorn Cottage

This residence was built as the Superintendent's Cottage sometime before 1903. It is surrounded by shrubs, gardens and a winding path and tucked under a row of deciduous heritage trees which are located on the southern side and no doubt shaded the home during hotter months. The home certainly complements the horticulture. With its elevated placement on the property, each window has distinct views of the greenery and one can imagine it feels like a treehouse from within.

The hipped rooflines, with their dramatic and seemingly curved slopes and original tiles, resemble those of the traditional thatched roofs of English cottages. The architect included brick pathways, oversized chimneys, pairs of hipped dormers with small-paned casement windows on the second floor--all features of Cotswold cottage architecture. The front door features a curved dormer and porch that mimics the curve. It has ionic columns and two delicately curved wooden benches. You also see fine details such as a denticulated cornice, sash windows on the first floor with original muttons. Inside the original footprint, there are original closets and cabinets, deep window sills, paneled doors and wood floors.

There is ongoing research to discern the architect of this one-of-a-kind structure. While this structure does not have the characteristically ornate style of Frank Miles Day, it is likely that he was involved in its design since it was built at the same time and integrated with the Greenhouse. There are several clues that suggest this structure was built in 1903 and was designed by Frank Miles Day. Basement pipes correspond to those found in the greenhouse basement. A tunnel runs between the two basements and it is possible that wiring and plumbing ran through this tunnel. It may be that the house was also heated by the coal fire heat at the greenhouses. There are marble slabs at both of the cottage's original doors as well as at those at the greenhouse. Acorn Cottage is built in the style of cottages in the English countryside, a "Cotswold Cottage" that Frank Miles Day would have seen on his travels to Europe. Here, the architect created a vernacular cottage style and achieved in creating the cozy, rural aesthetic.

The cottage is constructed of red brick, a most accessible material at the turn of the century. The architect used the "Flemish Bond" pattern that consists of alternate stretchers and headers for each course. This style of brickwork is not native to Flanders but does appear on late medieval buildings in areas of northern and central Europe that Frank Miles Day might have toured. The choice of brick is part of what makes this a "vernacular" design, which means using local materials and styles. Brickmaking in Philadelphia goes back to the arrival of the first settlers who knew the brick trade and unearthed the local clay deposits for brickmaking, so as not to be reliant upon the British for building materials.

When you climb the steps to Acorn Cottage, you actually approach the rear of the house and you see by looking at the brickwork and roof lines that the original home has had two additions. Walk to the left around the side of the cottage to see the facade of the original cottage which is actually on the north side.

12 Francis Canning

The Bodine family recruited botanist, horticulturist, and gardener Francis Oswald Canning from his work at Fairmount Park to become the superintendent for the Stoneleigh estate. He oversaw the entire grounds, gardens and greenhouse complex. Francis and his wife Sarah Jane Holmes Canning were both immigrants (he from England, she from Ireland), and the 1910 census confirms that they lived here. During his tenure, Canning made presentations about dahlias and summer flower gardens to the Farmer’s Institute at Philadelphia, wrote about chrysanthemums for The American Florist, and his time as Superintendent bookended an appointment as Instructor of Horticulture at the Massachusetts Agricultural College (an institution still going strong over 100 years later). In a 1903 issue of The American Florist, he shared a photograph of early spring tomatoes interspaced with string beans, giving us an inside view of these productive greenhouses. That photograph accompanied his short article describing how the Lorillard tomatoes were grown, with tips like “give the vines a vigorous tapping on sunny days, when in flower, to assist pollination.”

Canning’s remarkable story ends in tragedy, as the cause of his untimely death at the Superintendent’s Cottage was listed by the coroner as “accidental poisoning supposed to be caused by eating toadstools.” There were numerous obituaries in gardening and horticultural periodicals describing his impressive career and noting that he was “highly esteemed by all who knew him.” But how could it be possible that a 44-year old gardener with his level of expertise and at the peak of his career was poisoned by deadly mushrooms? A 1911 obituary in Horticulture gives us the devastating answer: he was poisoned by mushrooms "gathered by one of the men employed under him and given to his wife to cook without his looking them over. Few gardeners knew the edible kinds better than he.” Francis Canning is interred at Westminster Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd, marked with a solitary headstone, and attempts to trace what became of his no-doubt-heartbroken wife of 18 years, Sarah Canning, have turned up no answers.

From here, we continue our tour by following the path back to the white oak tree by the brick wall of the Greenhouse.

13 The White Oak or “Giving Tree”

As we approach the greenhouse, notice a White Oak towering over the greenhouse complex. This was the centerpiece of Stoneleigh’s WWI-era gardening and horticultural training program for young women. A recent owner and his children nicknamed this the "Giving Tree".

In a highly detailed map by the renowned landscape architects Olmsted Brothers, we see this white oak surveyed with 30” diameter. It’s not the biggest white oak on the map (though they were and are all connected underground, through their root and fungi networks that keep soil stable and protect against erosion), but given its location it can serve as an anchor to trace this landscape through time. The same tree is seen in a photograph of the greenhouse complex in the 1903 House and Garden article. Can we go farther back in time? The only accurate way to measure a tree's age is by counting its rings. Estimating age by measuring the diameter of a living tree with a known growth rate is a less-than-exact science, but can be a useful heuristic. Various calculators estimate that a 30” white oak is approximately 150 years old. Which means now, a century after this Olmsted Brothers map was produced, this white oak has grown to be about 250 years old and is older than the United States.

Oak trees are wind pollinated, and they mature & reach peak acorn production when approximately 50-100 years old. Only a tiny proportion of acorns successfully make the transformation from uneaten seedling to mature tree, so we might infer that the tree we see today grew from an acorn created by a parent tree that started growing sometime between 1672-1722. Was this parent tree planted by the first settlers of this place, Quaker refugees traveling from Wales, who arrived in the late 1680s and 1690s and cleared the land as far as the eye could see to create farms, build structures, and supply the water-powered paper mills of Mill Creek? Or did this parent tree provide shade, medicine, wood, and sustenance to the Lenape people, whose ancestors date back 12,000 years and stewarded this land for countless generations? The ancestors of this parent tree, a valuable keystone species, most certainly did.

14 Greenhouse

This Greenhouse complex was where Francis Canning and his team grew award-winning flowers such as hyacinths and chrysanthemums, as well as vegetables such as celery, beets and cabbage which they exhibited at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society’s annual Flower Show. In later years, the Greenhouse became the centerpiece of Eleanor Bodine’s innovative training program for young women aspiring to careers like Canning's.

The Greenhouse was designed by Frank Miles Day (1861-1918), a Philadelphia-based architect who specialized in residences and academic buildings. He graduated from the Towne School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1883 and then studied in England at the South Kensington School of Art, the Royal Academy in London, the atelier of Walter Millard and the office of Basil Champneys. When Day returned to Philadelphia in 1886, he gained further experience working for architects George T. Pearson and Addison Hutton. He established his own office in 1887.

The design of the Greenhouse complex adheres to the three principles to which he subscribed throughout his career. He described these principles in the forward of *Historic Houses and Their Gardens,* published in 1908.

- union of architectural style and horticulture
- the garden serving as an extension of the house
- house and garden simultaneously enhancing each other's beauty

A "union of architectural style and horticulture" is seen in the combination of architectural eclecticism and eclectic horticulture. The working garden, the greenhouses and container gardens and beds, would have contained a variety of vegetables and flowers, often companion plants. We see in the Olmsted blueprints that there are also rose gardens which are a feature of a more formal garden. The garden serves as an extension of the structure. While the brick walls create firm boundaries, defining the borders of gardens and greenhouses, the open doorways and arches, pergola draw the visitor in and, from within, convey and openness to the outdoors. There is a masterful balance between green space and brickwork, structure and gardens house and garden "simultaneously enhancing each other's beauty."

Frank Miles Day was heavily influenced by the architecture he sketched and photographed on world travels, a blend of classical and gothic styles of architecture. Day, with a small group of young Philadelphia architects, developed an informal association they called the T-Square Club and referred to their styles as "New Eclecticism" or "Creative Eclecticism".

They freed themselves from the rigidity of both the Beaux Arts principles (classical Roman and Greek forms) and Victorian Eclecticism (steeply pitched roofs, ornate gables, towers and turrets to draw the eye upward). Their structures were "sensitive in detail, delicate in ornamentation, and subtle in proportion." The Greenhouse is just this.

At Acorn Cottage, brick served as a vernacular material. Here, brick was used to correspond to the brick at Acorn and also as it was Frank Miles Day's material of choice. He was a master of intricate brickwork, as seen in the examples of his architecture shown below. In 1895, he published *Suggestions in Brickwork*, a 244 page text with Illustrations from the architecture of Italy, together with a catalogue of bricks made by the hydraulic-press brick companies. This guide is extensive: It includes instructions for construction of arcades (a series of arches supported by columns or other vertical elements) and loggie (open balconies), doorways and entrances, windows, moulded bands (trim), cornices (the horizontal decorative moulding crowning a building), brick mosaics, fire-places, balconies, piers (vertical weight bearing elements) and columns and gate posts. It includes a catalogue of shapes and, of course, instructions for ordering.

The Greenhouse includes many examples of complicated brickwork depicted in the book's illustrations: curved, Jacobean style arches, curved porticos over the doors and globe-like finials. The windows are arched and have the original triangular panes. When you look at the facade, you notice small openings or gaps in the brick walls that would have held beams for the pergola and circular footing where the pergola's classical columns stood.

Enter the greenhouse and look around.

Three of the four greenhouses, which would have had wooden and iron frames and glass ceilings, have been taken down, but you can imagine where they once stood, lining this complex. In between the greenhouses were paths and another hothouse. To the left is the building that was used as a shop and, over the wall to the right, more gardens. The sheds and workshop spaces are entered on the back side of this wall facing Acorn Cottage. A few interesting original details can be seen on the shop exterior: a sign bracket, bronze bell, bird box. Within the shop are original barn doors and intricately designed hinges, clay pots from the early 1900s and enormous structural beams. The basement has high ceilings and arches, a huge plumbing system and coal boxes with original shovels (with grates above where coal would be delivered). Within the one still intact greenhouse are original potting tables, iron framing, iron gutters and iron piping...and even a tiny loo.

The only published commentary we have discovered regarding the Greenhouses is the dissertation of Patricia Keebler from 1980 and confirms these connections, as well as suggests the influence of several well known landscape architects and popular concepts of the early 1900s.

Keebler writes,

> *The grouping of glass greenhouses, garden sheds, and stable were all enclosed within a distinct area, tidily confined by a brick wall. This idea was patterned after a suggestion by Gertrude Jekyll, an established and highly esteemed British landscape architect, whose work Day knew well. He owned a copy of her book, Wall and Water Gardens and, as one of the editors of House and Garden, was probably responsible for a review of the book which appeared in Volume I of October 1901. Jekyll was an influential force in landscape design and frequently worked closely with Luytens.*
>
> *In keeping with her suggestion that service areas should be enclosed in walls that were both useful and decorative, Day's greenhouses at Villanova were surrounded by brick walls high enough to conceal the glass buildings but low enough to avoid becoming a barrier. An open colonnade of paired columns formed a pergola on the southwest, between two garden sheds. These sheds were transformed into quaint little houses with carved stepped gables ornamented by stone finials. On the west side, a one-story brick building with a suggestion of crenelation contained the stable, tool shed, and boiler room. The pergola with end pavilions was not an unusual form in walls surrounding formal gardens, but, incorporated into a utilitarian wall in an effort to integrate the ornamental and functional aspects of garden design, it was an innovative solution to one of the problems of garden architecture.*

It's interesting to compare the design elements of Oakwell's Greenhouses with some of Frank Miles Day's most well known Philadelphia architecture. The majority of his residences and academic buildings have ornate brickwork with Byzantine influences, as seen in the arched windows, decorative brickwork and geometrical and animal motifs. Some of the best examples of his "New Eclecticism" are the Philadelphia Art Club, the University of Pennsylvania Museum and Franklin Field and Weightman Hall ("The Fieldhouse") at the University of Pennsylvania which you can view on our website.

15 Squirrel Inn

Walk through the Greenhouse towards the back left corner where you will walk towards a driveway. Just beyond the Oakwell property line is a private residence known as "Squirrel Inn". Look up the driveway, as this is a private residence, to view the structure that the Bodine family built as a dormitory for the women who attended Eleanor Bodine's Gardening and Horticultural Training Program. The only name to be found that was associated with Eleanor Bodine's training program is that of Wilhemna Josopait, who traveled from Wellesley College and spent time on the Bodines property. It is possible that she stayed here.

The dormitory was in close proximity to the greenhouse complex and, like Acorn Cottage, it is tucked behind the trees which creates a cozy, country aesthetic. Squirrel Inn, as cheekily named by Training Program students, was built in 1916 by J.A.P. Crisfield Engineer & Gray Brothers. It is a wooden building with a façade that is both stone and wood siding. On the second story is a gabled balcony that is evocative of a Swiss chalet. There are three tall chimneys that seem more Tudor in style with Queen Anne trim. The attached structure on the right side of the residence was a two-story shed, some of which has since been enclosed.

From the Squirrel Inn, we will tour the rear of the property (east) and turn up the south side of the Oakwell property. As you follow the road, notice the champion red oak and tulip tree mentioned earlier on the tour. Turn west toward along the southern property line where you can see where , over the fence, on the Stoneleigh side of a berm (a steep slope) Victory Gardens.

16 Teahouse

At the turn of the 20th century, Samuel and Eleanor Bodine hired George F. Pentecost and Ferruccio Vitale to design a series of Beaux Arts-style gardens at Stoneleigh. Vitale (1875-1933) is known for his landscape design for estates of the wealthy, as well as public gardens on the National Mall, at the Washington Monument and National Gallery of Art. This structure was built as a Teahouse in 1906. It was set on the far north property line of the Stoneleigh estate and accessed by long, winding woodland paths or a direct allee called Linden Lane, presumably lined with Linden trees. Linden Lane stretched all of the way across the property, to a lychgate and stone pergola at Stoneleigh.

This Teahouse was a long stroll or drive away from the main gardens, a secret garden of sorts. A place for afternoon tea, to discuss horticultural practices, to read a book on a spring day? Notice the telephone line that runs behind the Teahouse and the empty phone box hidden on the inside of a pillar. This telephone would have been used to send orders to the estate staff.

The Beaux-Arts style of architecture developed from the French Louis XIV's Académie des Beaux-Arts in Paris that was founded to educate the most talented students in the arts. After the Revolution, Napoleon III changed the name to "L'École des Beaux-Arts". The Beaux-Arts style became widely popular in cultural and government institutions and homes for the wealthy during the late 19th and early 20th century. Some defining characteristics of Beaux-Arts architecture were flat roofs, a focus on symmetry, arched and pedimented doors and windows, hierarchy of spaces ("noble spaces" such as grand entrances and staircases to smaller utilitarian spaces), statues and figures embedded within the façade and the use of stone or stone-like materials. Pentecoste and Vitale adhered to Beaux-Arts principles in the design of this Teahouse. There are Byzantine arches, a flat roof evocative of the Japanese teahouses. We see an impressive wooden meander, or Greek key pattern, between the vertical brick. The brickwork is a Flemish bond, much like Acorn Cottage. We see the hierarchy of spaces with the gracious steps and the cozier interior.

Interestingly, this structure, like Acorn Cottage and the Greenhouse, adheres to the three principles of Frank Miles Day, though it predates his greenhouses. Delicate architectural features that match the delicacy of the organic greenery surrounding the structure. A wide, long, curved step and open paths that connects garden and structure, as if to invite one in for shelter or out to explore the gardens. Horticulture and architecture in harmony.

This Teahouse is similar to one which was torn down on the Clothier Estate, Clairmont, where Black Rock Middle School is now located. The map included on the website show the closeness in proximity of these two estates and there are photos from the construction of the Clairmont Teahouse which would have been quite similar to that of this structure.

Now imagine what could become of this Teahouse. It could fall into disrepair or be razed as was the Teahouse at the Clothier estate. Or, it could be preserved or even restored to its original condition. Can you envision students performing dances, playing musical instruments, hosting open mic, wellness practices? By the way, there are great acoustics.

Note the row of Atlas Cedars behind the teahouse. These trees are native to the Atlas Mountains in north Africa. There is also a long row of oak trees along the north property line that would have shaded the paths from the Teahouse to Acorn Cottage.

17 Everyday Life

Who were the people behind the scenes, doing the work in the homes, on the farm, and in the gardens? Who was answering the phone calls from the Teahouse and delivering refreshments? The annual census gives us clues about some of the people who worked in this place and also called it home.

Census data from 1850-1930 tells us most of the staff were immigrants from Ireland, Sweden, France, Scotland, England, Germany, Poland, and Canada. A few were born in the US (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Tennessee). They were laborers, farmhands, gardeners, cooks, waitresses, parlor maids, chamber maids, coachmen, nurses. They ranged in age from 15 to 52, with names like Mary, John, Louise, David, Lillian, Anna, Alfred, Agnes, and Vera. Most of these people appear on a census, and then recede into anonymity, but there are a few whose stories can teach us about the history of our country and beyond:

There's Francis Canning, born in England, and Alexander MacLeod, born in Scotland, who lived with their families in Stoneleigh's charming Superintendent's Cottage. They built distinguished careers stewarding the property's vegetable, fruit, and flower gardens and training future generations of gardeners and horticulturalists. MacLeod served as President of the National Association of Gardeners while he was Stoneleigh's Superintendent, and his sons later served in WWII.

There's 15-year-old Nellie Mitchell and 16-year-old Irish immigrant Cecelia "Celia" Kennedy, servants in 1870 and 1930 respectively. Children serving families, families who sent their own children at those same ages to school. When she arrived at Ellis Island in 1929, Celia listed as her contact her aunt, Nellie Rogers, who was the waitress at Stoneleigh. In the census of the Oakwell property carved out of Stoneleigh, Celia is listed as a chambermaid along with the waitress, her cousin Margaret Rogers. Not a single woman on any census until 1930 would have been able to vote. Theses shared the servant quarters over the garage with mother and daughter Martha and Anastasia "Annie" Thater. These German immigrants were Oakwell's cook and nurse, whose petitions for US citizenship required them to renounce "the German Reich". Annie's photo is the only image we have of a staff member and can be viewed on our website.

There's 19-year-old Sandy Kennedy listed as a Black farmhand in the 1870 census, and recorded as unable to read or write. He was born in Tennessee in 1851, which means he was born enslaved to parents who were enslaved. He was born one year after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, meaning during his childhood the federal government was responsible for returning people seeking freedom to their enslavers, even if they were in a free state. The surname of Kennedy may be a clue to where Sandy's family had been enslaved prior to the end of the Civil War, held as property by one of the 40 different enslavers in Tennessee with the last name of Kennedy listed in the US government's 1850 "slave schedule." The Ramsey family that employed Sandy Kennedy to work their 65-acre farm in Villanova had sent two sons to fight in the Civil War, First Lieutenant Theodore F. (15th Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment) and Corporal William Horn (1st Pennsylvania Cavalry, 44th Regiment). There is a "Henry Sandy Kennedy" listed in the membership of the Lower Merion Baptist Church at the corner of Old Gulph and New Gulph Rds.

Further back, there is Jacob Ganges in the 1850 & 1860 census – he was biracial with occupation listed as a hostler, caring for horses at Ellis Ramsey's "Green Tree Hotel" a few blocks from the family farm, and then as a farmhand. He was 41 years old in 1850, and unable to read or write, though a decade later he is marked as literate. Ellis Ramsey had five children attending school at this time, including a son who later became a schoolteacher. Perhaps they shared their lessons with the man who worked their farm? Its Ganges' surname that hints at much more, because it is distinctive for this time and place. A surname of "Ganges" implies his mother was among the 135 enslaved Africans aboard the ships Phoebe and Prudent, who were rescued off the coast of Cuba by the USS Ganges in 1800 and brought to Philadelphia to be placed under the guardianship of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and indentured throughout the area. Each freed African received the surname "Ganges", named for the river flowing from the Himalayas into the Bay of Bengal, and the namesake of the warship that saved them and their children from a lifetime of enslavement on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean.

We have come to the conclusion of our tour. We hope you have enjoyed learning about all that Stoneleigh and Oakwell represent. Oakwell tells the story of the land we now call Lower Merion, the story of the people of our community and, really, the story of our nation.

The information shared on this tour has only been uncovered in the past year. It is only the beginning of what could be uncovered. Oakwell's story is a work-in-progress. What other stories might Oakwell tell? How can you help us tell these stories? We hope you will be in touch if you have any information pertaining to Oakwell's historical or ecological significance...or have ideas as to how this land might be used going forward for the greater good.

As you exit the property, follow the wooded driveway. Look to your right as you pass Oakwell Mansion to see the white ash mentioned earlier on the tour during the discussion of significant trees.

Take it all in.

Sources can be found at http://growoakwell.wix.com/home