

# The Ruthmere Record

THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION, INC. • 302 E. BEARDSLEY AVENUE • ELKHART, INDIANA 46514

SPRING 2006

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## WHY PLAN A NEW GARDEN?

Paula and Stuart Barb



*Paula and Stuart Barb have donated funds to Ruthmere to help create a new master plan for the garden. The funds will help pay for the design work to be created by Buettner & Associates of Fox Point, WI. The master plan encompasses all of Ruthmere's current landholdings, including the museum grounds, the lot to the east of the fenced area of the Ruthmere property, and the property surrounding Creek House at the end of Grove Street. While not all of these spaces will be developed as gardens in the short term, once the master plan is complete, we will have a long-term vision for the landscape that will guide our planning for many years.*

We believe that an expanded Ruthmere garden will fit nicely with the revitalization of Elkhart that has started with the River Walk and is continuing with the Wellfield Botanic Gardens. Taken together, these investments will help improve the quality of life for all of our area residents and stimulate continued development in the city. The Wellfield Botanic Gardens will become a major regional tourist destination in the years ahead, with a projection of 150,000 new visitors annually.

Ruthmere will be in a great position to benefit from the increased tourism in our city, especially with a gardens tie in. Buettner and Associates is the firm that has developed the master plan for the Wellfield Botanic Gardens.

The new Ruthmere garden will provide many benefits. It will help to stimulate improvements in the Crawford Street neighborhood. More visitors will be drawn to tour Ruthmere where the gardens provide a calm place for meditation and reflection in a fast paced world. A spiritual sense of peace can be found in a garden. The Ruthmere garden can help to educate people about the art of creative landscaping and gardening. Perhaps it will provide additional areas for ceremonies and events like weddings, reunions and parties, and these events can also provide revenue to help support the museum financially. The garden may also attract more volunteers to Ruthmere from people interested in caring for a garden. And above all, the Ruthmere garden will be a delight to see, enhancing an already beautiful facility.

We are the beneficiaries of the hard working people who came before us, who built Ruthmere and the bridges and roads we use, who founded our schools and parks and planted the gardens and orchards we enjoy. If this generation continues to invest in our community, many future generations will be able to enjoy the fruits of our vision. ✿



See page 5 for details

# A FEAST FOR THE EYES: RUTHMERE PRESIDENTIAL CHINA

*Robert B. Beardsley, President, Board of Directors*

Collecting Presidential china was just one of those things that grew out of a chance remark over 20 years ago from one of our most distinguished Trustees, James Moore Goode of Washington, D.C.: “Ruthmere should have some examples of White House china.” Before joining our board, Goode had been curator of the Smithsonian Castle, and his suggestions were worth consideration. Normally, one would not expect a 1910 house museum in the Midwest to be interested in that sort of thing. But since members of my family have attended every Republican Inauguration since A.R. Beardsley and Grandfather Andrew “Hub” Beardsley went to Washington for William McKinley’s Inauguration in 1897, it seemed worth a try. Besides, my father, Walter, dined at the White House several times and, thanks to him, I had enjoyed two private tours there myself, although they never let me get near the china.

How we got our White House collection ties in with another story. About the same time, I had purchased for Ruthmere two pairs of eyeglasses that undeniably had belonged to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The octagonal pair with the black rims we have at Ruthmere today; the other, a jaunty pince-nez with a black ribbon, we thought should be given to the Smithsonian. They agreed. At that time the only FDR memorabilia the Smithsonian had was a tie clasp and three ivory poker chips the President always carried in his pocket for good luck.

Through Margaret Klapthor, then curator of First Ladies’ Inaugural Gowns and a real power at the Smithsonian and a charming lady as well, I made the necessary connections. With some fuss and ceremony, the gift was made at a luncheon at the Smithsonian. Just as dessert arrived and my well-rehearsed presentation was about to get underway, a waiter

came into the room to announce there had been a bomb scare and would everybody please immediately “vacate the building” and go out onto The Mall!

At that luncheon I met Mr. Klapthor, Margaret’s husband, a Washington antiques dealer, who had supplied the Smithsonian with a number of pieces of White House china. Did he have anything left to sell to me? “Well, maybe a few pieces.” We went to his house and shop nearby. Never had I seen so many interesting things with Washington and presidential connections. Mr. Klapthor had collected all his life and was about to retire. “This dinner plate Mary Todd Lincoln bought for their first Administration, the one with the purple and gold border and the American eagle in flight clutching arrows in his left foot and an olive branch in his right.” “Of course, the Arthurs used the same design as the Lincolns and this was a later re-issue for public purchase, but quite handsome, don’t you think?” “But what I think you should have is such-and-such...” as we went down his aisles with Ruthmere’s shopping basket in hand.

He finally paused in front of various pieces from the “Flora and Fauna of America” service purchased in 1880 by President Rutherford B. Hayes and made for the White House by Haviland of Limoges, France. “These are my favorites.” They have become mine, too: not unlike majolica in coloring and texture, each piece is hand-painted and slightly different, no two being alike. For example, the oyster plates: each dish is formed of pearly half-shells (to receive the oyster on the “half-shell”) in nests of deep blue surrounded by gold-edged seaweed. They are gorgeous things. For soup dishes, or plates, a tarpon from the Gulf of Mexico swims in warm tropical waters next to Dungeness crab from Alaska next

to red lobster from Maine, and so on, across the nation. Dinner plates feature the western bison, bears, antelopes, deer, otter, and game birds like duck, pheasant and geese from the Carolinas and elsewhere. This service is a Celebration of America’s Coming of Age and was conceived and manufactured about the time of our Centennial in 1876. The service without food on its plates is a feast for the eyes alone.

But the best part (Mr. Klapthor did not have one to sell) is the 20” turkey platter that features a huge gobbler in full-feathered majesty. Outside the Smithsonian, the only other turkey platter like it I have ever seen was on a dish rack in the dining room of Thomas Alva Edison’s winter home in Fort Myers, Florida. But we have the Socko salmon fish platter, a prize in itself, some 24” long, showing this magnificent fish struggling to escape the net in which it was caught. Our nine pieces are first-rate examples from this monumental service, no part of which is obtainable today at almost any price. Our earliest dinner plate, by the way, is from the Jackson Administration. It’s not much to look at but, well, pull up a chair and imagine President Jackson dining off it all by himself.

Very little White House china is available anywhere today, like Lalique or Carl Faberge jewelry. During the first Woodrow Wilson Administration, all chipped, cracked or otherwise damaged White House china was ordered destroyed on the spot, no doubt to keep it out of the hands of collectors. That spoiled the fun for a lot of us, but it protects something decorative and highly personal to each administration. Copies appear regularly, but real pieces rarely leave private collections.

Also, with a White House connection, Ruthmere has a partial service of red,

white and gold china made for the Governor of Ohio in Foecy, France in the late 1850s (the large serving pieces from this service are spectacular). According to tradition Abraham Lincoln had dinner on this service in the Governor's mansion in Columbus on his way to his inauguration. We keep it in the glass cases in the butler's pantry by the kitchen along with souvenir after-dinner coffee cups and saucers from some of the great transatlantic ocean liners between the two World Wars.

Our Presidential china is housed in mahogany beveled-glass display cases purchased from Sykes Jewelry Store in its final location in Elkhart's Bucklen Hotel. That famous store went out of business when that landmark was torn down about 1970.

The Presidential china is displayed in these cases on the third floor. Not normally on public tours, the collection may be seen by special arrangement with our

director, Laurel Spencer Forsythe (574-264-0330). Come feast your eyes. We have other treasures, too. I will tell you about them in future notes, with more to come about our Rodin bronzes and other bronzes and our growing art collection. And our clocks!

Join up! Become members of Ruthmere. Spring is here and with it many new and interesting programs and exhibits are on their way to entertain you and your guests. Our visitors come from all over the country and abroad, too. The word is out. Ruthmere has been discovered. It is not a well-kept secret anymore.

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\* I spotted these glasses in a small glass case in my optometrist's office in Charlestown, MA, and asked where he got them. He answered that his father had immigrated to this country from Poland in the 1920s and was a great admirer of

FDR. When FDR died he wrote Mrs. Roosevelt, explained his appreciation, and asked, rather naively I thought, could he have a pair of his eyeglasses as a souvenir? Within days back came the glasses, along with three embroidered glass cases of her own that Mrs. Roosevelt felt she no longer needed and a very nice from note from the former first lady. I convinced the optometrist that FDR's glasses belonged to the nation, and he agreed. You know the rest. By the way, we know that the pince-nez prescription was written about 1940, his last change before he died in 1945. My friend speculated that because the president spent so much time in his wheelchair he likely had only the two pairs. Look closely in news photos of our War Time president and you will see them, although he didn't like being photographed wearing them, I was told, and he often smiled jovially at guests he could barely see! ✚

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## DESCO GLASS WEDS NAOMI MCKNIGHT

Ruthmere staff member Desco Glass married Naomi McKnight on January 28, 2006. Desco was employed by the Miles family for many decades, and has been a member of the Elkhart community for 60 years. Desco celebrated his 84th birthday just a few weeks before the wedding. Naomi is the sister-in-law of Ruthmere staff member Amos Enane.



### House Tours:

Tuesday - Saturday on the hour at 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. and at 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00 p.m.  
Sundays on the hour at 1:00, 2:00, and 3:00 p.m.  
Closed all major holidays.

### Facilities Rentals at Ruthmere

Ruthmere offers a unique atmosphere for business meetings and private events. Our game room is a warm, yet distinctive setting for seminars, presentations, and other professional gatherings. Year-round, we can help you to plan the perfect indoor or outdoor wedding ceremony, birthday party, or other private celebrations.

For more information about reserving Ruthmere for your special event, please call (574) 264-0330 or e-mail us at [info@ruthmere.org](mailto:info@ruthmere.org).

The Ruthmere Record is published quarterly from 302 E. Beardsley Avenue, Elkhart, Indiana 46514

## NOTES FROM AN OAKEN AERIE...

Marilou Ritchie, Archivist/Librarian

It's spring again, and men's thoughts lightly turn to gardening! As do women's thoughts, and there is a lot of thinking going on now at Ruthmere about our new plans for improving our gardens—all of which brings us to our two shelves of gardening books in the Robert B. Beardsley Arts Reference Library. We've written about several of these books before (they include some of our favorites); now we'll try to look at those we've not mentioned before.

One such book is *The Fragrant Year* by Helen Van Pelt Wilson and Leonie Bell. How satisfying to walk through a garden and pick up the scent of roses or lilacs, honeysuckle, heliotrope, or lily-of-the-valley. Published almost forty years ago, this book lists nine categories of scented plants gardens to enhance your garden by scent as much as by color all through the year. We've written about the use of color by Gertrude Jekyll in other columns. If you've missed her famous work, come in and see that book as well to use the two ideas together.

*For Every House a Garden* by Rudy and Joy Favretti and *Victorian Gardens* by John Highstone deal with gardens suitable for certain periods of architecture, which is, of course, the goal of the gardens at Ruthmere. Here are lists of plants appropriate to the period and plans for gardens

for homes much like Ruthmere.

Looking through *Suburban Home Grounds* by Frank J. Stone, published in 1870, is a real treat. The first plan I found had a space reserved for a drying yard; shielded from view by trees and shrubs the Victorian maid could hang her mistress's laundry without offense. We've often surmised that the space along the back driveway served the same purpose for Ruthmere. Fortunately dryers have rendered such spaces unnecessary, but there are other good ideas in this book. Another

old book is *Old Time Gardens*, written by Alice Morse Earle in 1901; she shows no restraint in her descriptions of flowers, but instead goes into poetic raptures as she paints pictures of her blue border or her tussy- mussies. To the uninitiated, let me explain that a tussy- mussy is a scented nosegay.

As you make your choices for spring planting, do visit us and see what we have to offer in the way of ideas for your garden. We're here every Wednesday from 10 to 3 and on Thursday from 1 to 3. ✿



Mark your calendars for the Children's Summer Garden Party on Saturday, June 10 from 1 pm to 4 pm. This family-friendly program features storytelling, art, and magic—all with a multicultural theme. Free admission to grounds. Refreshments available.

## IN MEMORY OF CHARLOTTE FORNEY

In the early days of Ruthmere as a museum, the voice of Ruthmere was the gravelly contralto of Charlotte Forney, who joined the museum early on as a sort of executive secretary—although she would have denied the word secretary. She hired and trained the docents, booked tours, greeted guests, guarded the finances, and answered the telephone—a one-woman office, but she did not take dictation. And she continued to do all of those things for 15 years.

Char was 94 when she died on February 8 at Rosewood Terrace. For many years she lived at Corey Lake where she enjoyed being close to nature and watching the bird and animal life in her area. She loved wildflowers and once scattered wildflower seed on the yard at Creek House.

At Ruthmere we appreciate the solid basis that she brought to a fledgling venture and thank her for her many years of service. ✿



The Year of the Museum is a time to celebrate the many ways that museums enrich our lives and our communities. It also represents the beginning of a major national effort to encourage all Americans to experience, celebrate, and support the museums in their communities. It is the centennial of the American Association of Museums.

By month's end, we will reach the end of the first full year of our membership program. There is still time to join and become one of the inaugural year members. We hope you will!

If you join soon, you might become our 100th member.

Benefits of joining at the \$100 Patron level include: acknowledgment in each issue of *The Ruthmere Record*; a complimentary private tour for four; special invitations to members' events and receptions; member discounts for all programs; 10% off in the museum shop. 🍀

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# Ruthmere

Discover the Rewards of Membership



## CELEBRATE THE YEAR OF THE MUSEUM

In Celebration of the Year of the Museum, Ruthmere encourages readers of the Record to visit the Elkhart County Historical Museum for the Grand Opening of its newest exhibition, Preserving Historic Elkhart County Architecture on Saturday, April 29 from 7 to 9 pm. It won't surprise our readers to know that Ruthmere is one of the architectural treasures featured in the exhibition. The exhibition also includes architectural artifacts from Elkhart's Time Was Museum. This special display will be on view through June 30 in the auditorium of the Elkhart County Historical Museum in Bristol. The museum is open Tuesday-Friday 10 am – 4 pm and Sunday 1 pm – 5 pm. Admission is free. We invite you to share in the rich cultural heritage of Elkhart County and enjoy what our fine area museums have to offer.

## SPRING SALES IN THE MUSEUM SHOP

Until May 31, take 30% off any merchandise with a floral theme. Tiffany scarves, notecards, and bookmarks are included in this limited time offer. This is just in time for Mother's Day!

Stop in to see our fresh, new line of teapots and tea accessories in popular chintz patterns. In connection with the Mother's Day Tea on May 12, we'll offer 10% off all tea merchandise. 🍀



# LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY LEADERSHIP CIRCLE MEMBERS

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## LEAD DONORS SUPPORT LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY LEADERSHIP CIRCLE



*Ruthmere's historic dining room was the setting for an exclusive evening gathering for board member and major donor Alice A. Martin, her husband Rex, and their guests. The Louis Comfort Tiffany Leadership Circle is a giving program to encourage memberships at the \$1,000 level and above.*

*Lead donors Alice A. and Rex Martin invited guests to their elegant Return to Ruthmere dinner. Guests included new Leadership Circle members Tom and Elizabeth Naquin Borger, David and Janice Weed, and M. Scott and Kim Welch. Also pictured are Tom and Lois Dusthimer and George and Abby Thomas.*



# Mondays with the Muse

A Spring Lecture Series

## DANTE AND BEATRICE

Launching the series on Monday, April 17, 2006, Dante scholar Linda Flosi Lucchesi Ph.D. will present "The Road to Beatrice: Woman as Muse." Ms. Flosi Lucchesi will discuss the role of women as muse from the time of the early troubadours, through Dante's era and into the Shakespearean period. Dante, author of *The Divine Comedy* and *The Inferno*, was inspired by the beauty of young Beatrice although he only glimpsed her twice. A marble bust of Beatrice by Giovanni Broggi is a part of the Ruthmere collection, on exhibit in the Arts Reference library.



## RODIN AND CLAUDEL

Join us on May 8, 2006, when internationally recognized sculptor Tuck Langland will explore the dramatic relationship between sculptors Auguste Rodin and Camille Claudel and offer an overview of each artist's oeuvre. Claudel was Rodin's assistant, muse, lover, and competitor. Their intense love affair ended in heartbreak and misunderstanding, but each influenced the other artistically. Claudel's sculpture *Reaching Woman (L'Implorante)* is featured in the Arts Reference library. Rodin's bronze and stone works are displayed throughout Ruthmere. The lecture will include a brief tour of the Rodin and Claudel sculpture collection, led by Professor Langland.



## AUGUSTUS SAINT-GAUDENS AND HELEN FARNSWORTH MEARS

On May 15, 2006, Ruthmere's Executive Director, Laurel Spencer Forsythe will pre-sent "Sculpting A Legacy: Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Helen Farnsworth Mears." Premier Gilded Age sculptor Saint-Gaudens taught young Wisconsin artist Helen Farnsworth Mears, at the Art Students League, and she later became one of his female assistants. Ms. Spencer Forsythe will explore the influence of the master artist's work on Mears. She is distinguished as the first woman sculptor to have secured a commission to sculpt a female figure in Washington D.C.'s Statuary Hall.



LECTURE SERIES PRESENTED BY

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## ARCHITECTURAL STYLES POPULAR IN 1910

On Monday, May 22, 2006 at 4:00 p.m. in celebration of May as National Historic Preservation Month, Thomas Gordon Smith will discuss the various architectural styles that were popular in 1910, the year Ruthmere was completed. Mr. Smith is the former chair of the Department of Architecture, University of Notre Dame, and is a noted scholar

and award-winning architect. He is a member of Ruthmere's Board of Directors.



Become a part of the Ruthmere Team! It's not too late to join us for Spring Training and become a volunteer docent.

You will learn about local history, art, and architecture.

Monday, May 1, 10 am Docent Training

This first half of this session will focus on Beardsley family history. Together, we'll map out the family tree to gain a good understanding of the Beardsleys of Elkhart. We'll view portraits of important Beardsley family members in the third floor Baldwin Room

to "put the faces to the names."

Rain or shine, the second half of this session will explore the architectural highlights of the Beardsley Avenue Historic District. (Please wear comfortable shoes.) If the weather is poor, we'll view a slide show of the walking tour.

If time permits, we'll also fit in a brief presentation about sculptors Rodin and Camille Claudel, in preparation for Tuck Langland's May 8 lecture (Mondays with the Muse, 4 pm)

# RUTHMERE MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Ruthmere*  
THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION, INC.  
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ELKHART, INDIANA 46514  
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## APRIL

- 2 Free Family Sunday
- 3 Volunteer Docent Open House (10-12)
- 10 Story Peddlers lecture: how to learn it; how to tell it! (10-12 pm)
- 17 “Mondays with the Muse” Lecture Series: Linda Lucchesi on Dante and Beatrice (4 pm) sponsored by the Rex and Alice A. Martin Foundation
- 23 Ruthmere Volunteer Spring Reunion 4-6 pm

## MAY

- 1 Docent Training (10-12)
  - 7 Free Family Sunday
  - 8 “Mondays with the Muse” Lecture Series: Tuck Langland on Rodin and Camille Claudel (4 pm) sponsored by the Rex and Alice A. Martin Foundation
  - 13 Mother’s Day Weekend Tea at Ruthmere (2-4pm)
  - 15 “Mondays with the Muse” Lecture Series: Laurel Spencer Forsythe on Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Helen Farnsworth Mears sponsored by the Rex and Alice A. Martin Foundation
  - 18 International Museums Day (Free admission: 10am-3pm)
  - 22 “Mondays with the Muse” Lecture Series: Thomas Gordon Smith on “Architectural Styles Popular in 1910: (4 pm) sponsored by the Rex and Alice A. Martin Foundation
- Every Saturday in May: Coffee on the Piazza (9:30-noon)

## JUNE

- 4 Free Family Sunday
  - 10 Children’s Summer Garden Party (1-4pm)
  - 25 Open House: National Register Properties in Elkhart County 1-5 pm (free)
- Every Saturday in June: Coffee on the Piazza (9:30-noon)

## MUSING ABOUT SPRING AT RUTHMERE

*Laurel Spencer Forsythe, Executive Director*

*Whereas museums nourish minds and spirits by fostering contemplation, exploration, critical thinking, and dialogue to advance knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of history, science, the arts, and the natural world...* excerpt from the American Association of Museum’s Year of the Museum proclamation

It’s the Year of the Museum and spring has returned to Ruthmere. We have eagerly opened the gates again after our three month winter closure. Collections Care Coordinator Joy Olsen has done a fine job of making the mansion shine. Since clocks are the heartbeat of this historic home, Robert Beardsley has kindly sponsored the repair and upkeep of our notable clock collection by honorary curator of clocks Mr. Hosea Jump—just “in time” for our reopening.

April and May are full of opportunities to nourish mind and spirit at Ruthmere. Our *Mondays*

*with the Muse* lecture series, sponsored by the Rex and Alice A. Martin Foundation, brings works of art, artists, and their inspiration to the fore. See the full series description on page (7). We look forward to welcoming and honoring our volunteers on Sunday, April 24 from 4 to 6 pm in celebration of National Volunteer Recognition Week. At the end of April I’ll travel to Boston to participate on a panel with colleagues at the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums.

At Ruthmere, May is an ideal month for advancing knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of art, history and culture. Training for our new volunteer docent corps includes a field trip to South Bend’s Copshaholm on May 15 and ongoing education about Ruthmere’s collections on May 1. May 18, International Museums Day, is a free day for all Ruthmere visitors. On Monday, May 22 at 4 p.m., in celebration of National

Historic Preservation Month, we’ll welcome architect Thomas Gordon Smith to discuss *Popular Architectural Styles in 1910*. The Garden Committee will complete its work with landscape architect Dennis Buettner on a master plan for Ruthmere, which we’ll share with the Board of Directors at the June annual meeting. We’ll be serving tasty Coffee on the Piazza each Saturday morning in May from 9:30 to noon featuring fresh-roasted beans by Theresa Slaski (of the former Exchange Bakery). Stop in to see what’s growing in the garden, come for a Mother’s Day Tea (May 12), or bring the family on Free Family Sunday (the first Sunday of the month, April through November). This season, Ruthmere is sprouting with fresh ideas, insights and inspiration. Whether you come to contemplate or explore, you’ll find your muse this spring at Ruthmere. 🌸