

Nineteenth Century

A detailed still life painting of various vegetables. In the foreground, there are several red tomatoes, a long green cucumber with a yellowish-orange interior, and a yellow and green squash. Behind them is a large, dark eggplant. The background is filled with a large green cabbage and other leafy greens. The painting is set against a dark, textured background.

Editorial

Something to be Grateful for

As many of us are spending more time cooking on account of the pandemic, we thought it would be a good opportunity to reflect back on dining and cooking in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As Leela Outcalt writes in our lead feature, “During the nineteenth century, the home became the locus of middle-class respectability and hosting, and attending dinner parties offered prime opportunities to display one’s social status.” In the case of her article, that display was often happening in the American ex-patriot community in London.

Two of our other contributors offer in-depth detail about hosting in the new American city of Chicago. These, along with our fourth feature, are an outgrowth from a November 2019 symposium held at Glessner House, in that city. It was sponsored jointly by Glessner House and the Victorian Society in America and the topic was servants, kitchens, and dining in the Victorian Era.



While some may not be as enthusiastic as others about having to spend a great deal more time preparing meals at home, at least none of us are likely to be putting in the eighteen hours days of one Mattie Williamson, described in this issue by Justin Miller.

Something, in these difficult times, to be grateful for.

Warren Ashworth

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Editor

Warren Ashworth

Consulting Editor

William Ayres

Book Review Editor

Karen Zukowski

Managing Editor / Graphic Designer

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Printed by Official Offset Corp.
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Warren Ashworth

Dennis Andersen
William Ayres
Anne-Taylor Cahill
Christopher Forbes
Sally Buchanan Kinsey
Michael J. Lewis
Barbara J. Mitnick
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Karen Zukowski

For information on *The Victorian Society in America*, contact the national office:

24 Wilkins Avenue
Haddonfield, NJ 08033
(856) 216-8124
Fax (856) 216-8125
info@victoriansociety.org
www.victoriansociety.org



Cover: James Peale (1749-1831), *Still Life: Balsam Apple and Vegetables*, c. 1820. Oil on canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



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THANK YOU TO OUR PEER REVIEWERS

Nineteenth Century would like to acknowledge our peer reviewers. We at the editorial board are, as always, deeply grateful to this group of anonymous scholars who review all our author submissions for accuracy of content and application of up-to-date methods of research and scholarship.



Ralph Wormeley Curtis (1854-1922), *James McNeill Whistler at a Party*, c. 1880. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Elizabeth Robins Pennell's Cookery Book:

A SYMPHONY IN THE GENDER POLITICS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY DINING

Leela Outcalt

Everybody eats and everybody should enjoy eating.

Elizabeth Robins Pennell, My Cookery Books, vi

By her own description, Elizabeth Robins Pennell (1862-1952) had always relished food. "I have always been blessed with a healthy appetite, a decent sense of discrimination in satisfying it and also a deep interest in the Philosophy of Food."¹ A peripheral figure in the Aesthetic movement, Pennell was central to the Aesthetic social scene and adopted the artistic lifestyle as the foundation for her approach to food. Bucking the trends in Victorian dining and eschewing nineteenth-century misogyny, Elizabeth Robins Pennell sought to claim dining as a creative art form and reclaim both cooking and eating as avenues for female expression. This article explores the contemporary influences that shaped Pennell's approach to dining, with particular focus on the dining practices of her close friend James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903).

Philadelphia born Elizabeth Robins Pennell lived most of her adult life in London. When Pennell and her husband settled in England, they opened their house on Thursday nights as a salon, hosting Aesthetic luminaries and artists including James McNeill Whistler, Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), and Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898). While the only refreshments served on those evenings were simple sandwiches and whiskey, Elizabeth Robins Pennell's theory of food took shape during these late-night gatherings.²

It was in this house that Elizabeth Robins Pennell stored her cookbook collection, which, at its height, included over a thousand volumes. This collection began with a gift of Alexandre Dumas's *Dictionnaire de la Cuisine* from William Earnest Henley, then art critic and editor at the National Observer and a Thursday night regular. The book was intended to serve as an aid to Pennell in her latest assignment: Pennell had been invited to contribute as a food

writer to a column in the *Pall Mall Gazette* featuring prominent women writers. At the time, she described her qualifications as "the healthy appetite and honest love of a good dinner, usually considered 'unbecoming to the sex'."³ The 1893 column—titled, dismissively, "The Wares of Autolycus,"⁴ was named after Shakespeare's prankster in *A Winter's Tale*, who sells "unconsidered trifles"—included articles on food, decorative art, and poetry by well-known female authors. A compilation of Pennell's articles for the column was published in 1896 under the title *The Feasts of Autolycus: The Diary of a Greedy Woman*. Even today, Pennell's subtitle, *Diary of a Greedy Woman*, feels subversive; at the end of the nineteenth century it was a provocation.

Dining was as central to the Victorians' conception of themselves as it is to our understanding of them today. During the nineteenth century, the home became the locus of middle-class respectability and hosting and attending dinner parties offered prime opportunities to display one's social status. As such, dining was a source of anxiety for middle-class Victorians, and publishers responded with a flood of guides to help navigate the unspoken rules of dining etiquette. These books, marketed to the newly upwardly-mobile audience, served as guides to the ideals and beliefs that have come to define the Victorian period.

Dining, along with the rituals that surrounded it, was crucial to how Victorians understood themselves. In Isabella Beeton's (1836-1865) 1861 edition of her best-selling *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, she writes,

Dining is the privilege of civilization. The rank which a people occupy in the grand scale may be measured by their way of taking their meals.⁵



James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Firelight (Mrs. Joseph Pennell)*, 1896. Lithograph. Courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Victorians viewed dining as an opportunity to prove mastery over their baser instincts; women should never ask for second helpings regardless of how hungry they might be, some guides suggest that, to avoid any unpleasant odors, women skip cheese altogether,⁶ if space allowed, a home's kitchen and dining room were placed at opposite sides so that cooking smells wouldn't intrude into living spaces often resulting in lukewarm food. Even commenting on the flavor of food was frowned upon. Elaborate rules ensured that Victorian dining was anything but a sensory experience.

At the same time dining etiquette was becoming codified, cookery books were becoming standardized. In *Modern Cookery in all its Branches: Reduced to a System of Easy Practice for the use of Private Families, in a series of receipts, which have been strictly tested, and are given with the most minute exactness*,⁷ published in 1845, Elizabeth "Eliza" Acton (1799-1859) introduced the practice of listing measured ingredients and specifying cooking times. While Acton is often cited as the inventor of the modern recipe, it was Isabella Beeton who popularized it.⁸ First published in full in 1861, *Mrs. Beeton's Cookery Book: A Household Guide* was one of the most popular guides to cooking and dining in Britain during the nineteenth century. In her 2005 article, Natalie Kapetanios Meir argues that the rigid Victorian social structure was mimicked in the book's form.⁹ In 1896 Pennell recognized that the gender norms that were openly enforced through dining etiquette were implicitly reinforced through the structure of the nineteenth-century cookbook:

I have any number of ambitious books of this kind, all based on The Whole Duty of Woman...Take a few headings of chapters...Of Religion; The Duty of Virgins; Of Wives; Of Gravies, Soups, Broths Pottages. But the system, the careful division of subjects, now become indispensable, is observed even in these compilations. The new love of order has one drawback. It gave writers less opportunity for self-revelation.

Pennell highlights the sexism with humor showing how, if taken to the extreme, the nineteenth-century emphasis on categorizing and systematizing equates virgins and wives with gravies and soups. At the end of the nineteenth century, both dining etiquette and recipes were becoming increasingly codified and standardized. These rules reified a concept of women as naturally domestic and placed domesticity in opposition to creativity.

I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

—Algernon

The Importance of Being Earnest
Oscar Wilde

Pennell and her dinner table were surrounded by prominent Aesthetes and we cannot paint a full picture of her approach to artful dining without contextualizing it within this movement. Born out of the Design Reform Movement and the Arts and

Crafts Movement, the Aesthetic movement promoted an approach that saw life and art as critically entwined. Aesthetes broke down the hierarchy of the arts; they were just as interested in painting as in writing, furniture design, or clothing. If we consider the Aesthetic movement as it was in its own time, as a lifestyle, it is surprising how little has been said on the subject of food thus far.

While Aesthetes were interested in breaking down the hierarchy of the arts, they showed little interest in dissolving gender disparities.¹⁰ Design reform may have promoted arts education for middle-class unmarried women, but this was only as a reflection of what they saw as a woman's natural talents.¹¹ Even a plea for funding for the Women's Design School in *Art Journal* (1861) reinforces the gendered nature of artistic and domestic spheres.

Women should nowise exceed the well-defined bounds that have long ago been marked out for them, but employ themselves only in domestic matters and those feminine duties, which properly constitute their province, and which they alone are able to efficiently perform... Woman owes allegiance to the hearth.¹²

The South Kensington Museum opened the National Training School for Cookery in 1873. A review in *The Times* the year after it opened makes clear who attended.

Still a pupil is sometimes heard to declare that she could not do it "by herself." This, it is needless to observe, never happens with cooks who come to improve themselves, nor with the more intelligent class of "lady-learners."¹³

Even within the Aesthetic movement, a woman's place was often in the kitchen as a cook, not a chef. By relegating women to the kitchen, Pennell's contemporaries diminished both her gender and passion simultaneously.

Elizabeth Robins Pennell saw food as an unrecognized traditionally feminine art form that, if reconceived appropriately, could be an avenue for women to express their artistic creativity. *The Feast of Autolycus: Diary of a Greedy Woman* is Pennell's manifesto, intended to inspire both men and women to create and enjoy good food.

Pennell believed that the newly systematic presentation of recipes in contemporary cookbooks was at fault for the current state of Victorian cooking. She describes *The Feasts of Autolycus* writing,

it does not pretend to be a 'Cook's Manual,' or a 'Housewife's Companion': already the diligent, in numbers, have catalogued recipes, with more or less exactness. It is rather a guide to the Beauty, the Poetry, that exists in the perfect dish, even as in the masterpiece of a Titian or a Swinburne.¹⁴

She was nostalgic for the narrative qualities she found in her collection of antique cookbooks.

And the cookery books are full of this brocaded language, full of extravagant conceits, full of artificial ornament; a lover writing to his mistress, you would say, rather than a cook or a housewife giving practical directions. After the modern recipe, blunt and to the point of brutality.¹⁵

Pennell saw food, when done well, as art, and her book reads more as a love letter to good food than as a cookbook.

Rather than focusing on the standard rules of etiquette or a list of recipes, Pennell wrote about dining from a personal perspective, turning suppers into ballads and breakfasts into works of art. *Feasts* includes chapters such as: "The Virtue of Gluttony," "Bouillabaisse; A Symphony in Gold," "A Dish of Sunshine," and "A Study in Green and Red." Pennell's chapter titles signal the profound influence Whistler had on her approach to food.

Pennell and her husband became friends with Whistler in the mid-1880s and in 1908 published an immensely detailed, authorized biography of him. I don't think her respect for him and his influence on her can be overstated. She described their relationship saying,

he would be our friend, with us constantly, letting us learn far more about him and far more intimately than from all the talk at a café table of those who already knew him, accepted him as a master, and loved him as a man.¹⁶

Whistler was as particular about food, and its presentation, as Pennell, so it is hardly surprising that she looked to him as a model for her approach to dining.

Pennell's keen interest in Whistler's dining habits is clear from the numerous descriptions of his entertaining included in the artist's biography. His unusual dining habits drew comment; in a fanciful description of Whistler's table, one diner claimed he would

throw perfume into the vases at the close of the feast, killing the fishes, and causing them to spurt the perfumed water toward the guests in their expiring gasps.¹⁷

In a more measured description, the Pennells note

his respect for the art of dining. If he gave a dinner he studied the menu as carefully as he studied his palette when he painted a picture.¹⁸

They describe how the first impression Whistler made to guests contrasted with the formal entrance to dinner required by Victorian etiquette:

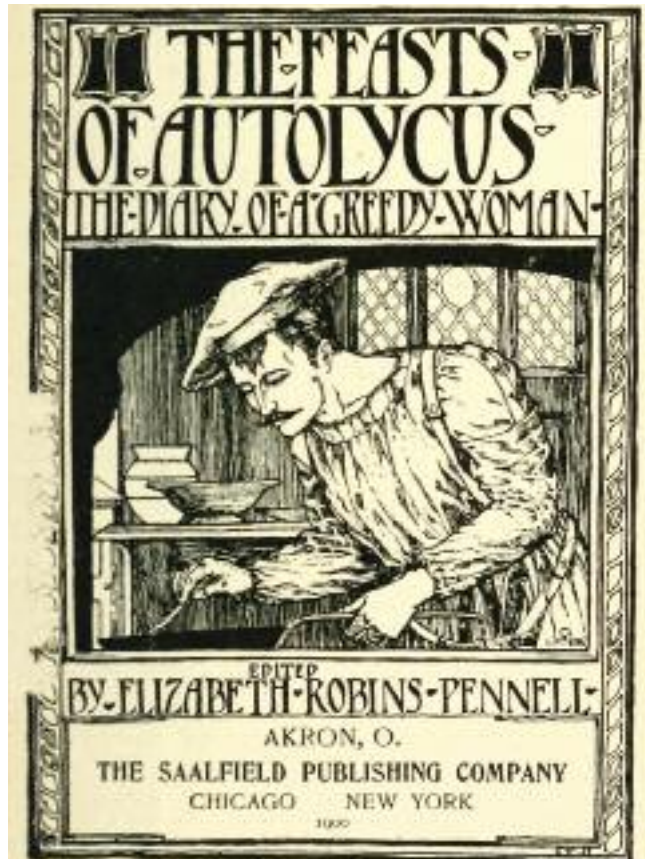
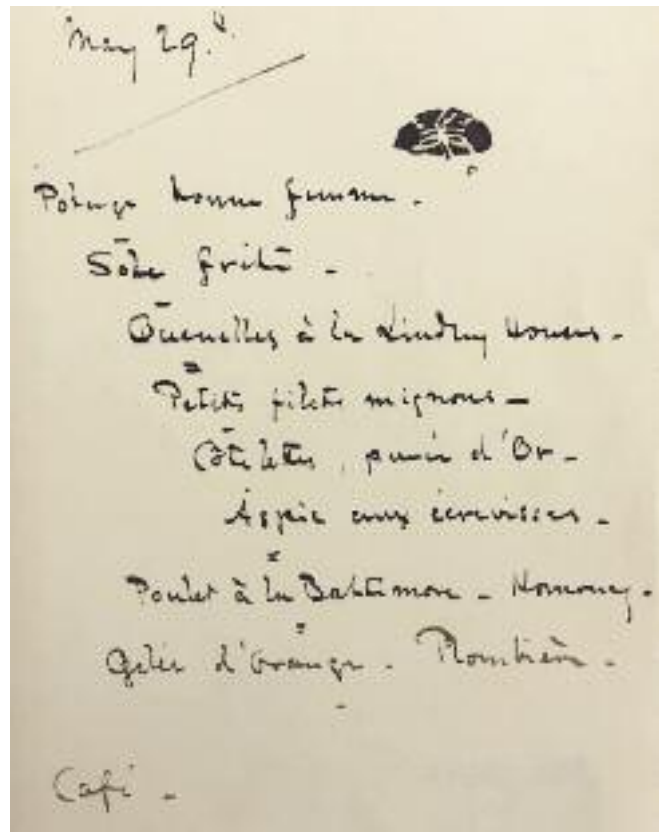
Mrs. Alan S. Cole recalls a single tall lily springing from the bowl; though invited for twelve, it was wiser, she adds, not to arrive much before two for to get there earlier was often to hear Whistler splashing in his bath.¹⁹

On another occasion, Whistler arrived only in time for dessert, and proceeded to eat dinner backwards, starting with dessert and finishing with the soup.²⁰

Even Whistler's hours for entertaining were eccentric. Rather than throwing dinner parties, the traditional Victorian meal for entertaining, he was known for his "Sunday breakfasts." Pennell writes,

Whistler invented Sunday breakfasts. The day was unusual in London and the hour—twelve instead of nine.²¹

Whistler was famous for his buckwheat pancakes at these breakfasts, though the meals were often much more elaborate affairs. There are many invitations to breakfast included in his



(Top to bottom): James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Menu, May 29* (1876?). The Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. Photograph by the author. *The Feasts of Autolycus, The Diary of a Greedy Woman*, by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, c. 1900.



Plates, ginger jar and vase owned by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) and his neighbor, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), c. 1662-1772, Qing dynasty China. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum.

correspondence, which convey a warmth and casualness that feels very modern.²² Despite the informal tone and timeline of the invitations, the breakfasts were often multicourse affairs held to court patrons,²³ as can be seen from the dates on bills that include lobster.²⁴ Whistler enjoyed entertaining and would produce carefully crafted menus regardless of the time of day. Pennell notes,

He devoted no less attention to his breakfasts and dinners that made the talk of the town. He respected the art of cookery—the ‘Family Bible’ he called the cook-book; he ate little but that little had to be perfect both in cooking and serving.²⁵

The “Family Bible” was Whistler’s mother’s recipe book, which he treasured.²⁶ If Whistler was unusual in what he served and when, he was equally unusual in how he served it.

The University of Glasgow, to whom Rosalind Birnie Philip, sister-in-law of Whistler, bequeathed her collection of Whistler memorabilia, has made available a huge trove of primary sources on the artist: they have transcribed, annotated, and now offer online access to approximately 10,000 pieces of correspondence written to or from Whistler.²⁷ Included among these letters are 138 menus that Whistler devised himself.

Born in Massachusetts, Whistler settled in London in 1859. The menus date from his time in London, when he was at the center of the Aesthetic scene. Guests at his dinners (or breakfasts) included some of the most renowned Aesthetes: E. W. Godwin (1833-1886), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), George Moore (1852-1933), J. J. Tissot (1836-1902), and Frederick Leyland (1831-1892), just to name a few.

Whistler’s menus were precious to him. Scribbling on one such menu, composed by Whistler for December 18, 1876,

British art dealer Charles Augustus Howell noted,

Whistler wrote out a menu every morning—these he treasured as if they were drawings—sometimes as a special favour he would present a distinguished guest with one, make a note of it, and place it in the Japanese Cabinet where he kept the whole collection.²⁸

That we have so many of his handwritten menus, and that each of them is inscribed with his famous butterfly signature, is a testament to this sentiment. He was fastidious in prints, letters, and other art works to ensure that these were only finished when his butterfly monogram was added.²⁹

While Whistler’s menus had much in common with popular Victorian ones, the overall flavor of Whistler’s menus was markedly different. Many of Whistler’s favorite foods were humble dishes. One of his most oft-repeated soups was *potage bonne femme*, or “housekeeper’s soup.”³⁰ Even the oyster soup mentioned above appeared in Beeton’s book as a household supper and is listed as economical. But these simple dishes often appeared next to servings of lobster and caviar. Whistler’s menus also included more eccentric dishes not listed in Beeton’s book, such as *poulet à la Baltimore*, which he often served with hominy, a uniquely American dish, or his “Quenelles de Merlan, Lindsey Houses,” a fish dumpling dish named after his Chelsea address that appears ten times among his menus.³¹ These menus weren’t formulaic; they were personal—they told guests about Whistler’s background and his tongue-in-cheek sense of humor—Whistler used his idiosyncratic menus as an opportunity to reveal himself to his guests.

Whistler was an avid collector of blue-and-white china. Three hundred and thirty pieces from his second collection of



A dish from Whistler's second collection of Chinese porcelain, c. 17th century. The Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. Photograph by the author.

china, dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—and including both native and exported forms—are now housed in Glasgow's Hunterian Collection. Similar to some of his contemporaries, Whistler served meals on his treasured collection of blue-and-white. In Oscar Wilde's lecture "The House Beautiful," he exhorted,

Those of you who have old china use it I hope. There is nothing so absurd as having good china stuck up in a cabinet merely for show...if you can't use good old china without breaking it, then you don't deserve to have it.³²

On one occasion, when Whistler was asked what he would do if one of his prized plates were broken, he responded, "Why then—you know, we might as well take hands and go and throw ourselves into the Thames!"³³ Describing a dinner given by Whistler in 1863, Du Maurier wrote,

Jimmy...has bought some very fine china; has about sixty pounds worth, and his anxiety about it during dinner was great fun.³⁴

Whistler's use of his precious china was significant, making clear that the appearance of his meals was important to him.

Combining historical descriptions with the dinnerware in the Hunterian, one begins to paint a picture of what Whistler's table looked like before the food was served. While the majority of the china is blue and white, there are some surprisingly colorful pieces. The napkins and tablecloth, both embroidered with Whistler's iconic butterfly signature, are white linen. His silver collection, also inscribed with his butterfly, are Georgian and include cutlery with mother of pearl handles and an array of baskets in which we know he served strawberries on several occasions. Compared with the heavy table décor of most Victorians, the ceramics, silver, and linen left behind by

Whistler suggest a much more restrained aesthetic.

Like Whistler, Pennell believed that the table setting set the stage for the meal. Among her descriptions of meals are suggestions for decorations that one could easily picture on Whistler's table. Describing a breakfast in spring, she writes,

The table's ornaments should be few...See, only, that [the daffodils] are fresh...and make sure that the glass, though simple, is as shapely as Venice or Whitefriars can fashion it.³⁵

Or, as an alternative,

From your own garden gather a bunch of late tulips, ...Fill a bowl with them: it may be a rare bronze from Japan, or a fine piece of old Delft...Open with that triumph of colour which would have enchanted a Titian or a Monticelli: the roseate of salmon of the rhine.³⁶

The appearance of food was as important as its taste. Describing an oyster croquette, she wrote:

A symphony in golden brown and soft fawn grey, it should be crisp without, within of such delicate consistency that it will melt in the mouth like a dream. Pyramidal in shape, it is of itself so decorative that only with the rarest blue and white china, or the most fairy-like Limoges, will it seem in perfect harmony. It would be discourteous, indeed, to serve so regal a creation on any stray dish or plate.³⁷

Here she seems to take inspiration from Whistler's table settings, his art, and his mode of elegant suggestive prose as seen in *The Ten O'Clock Lecture*. By playing on the titles of Whistler's artwork, such as his painting *A Symphony in White*, or his cabinet *Harmony in Yellow and Gold*, these titles themselves references to another art form—music—she lyrically transformed the oyster into a poem.

While not specified in *Diary of a Greedy Woman*, Pennell in *Our Philadelphia* makes clear the source of these regal croquettes: Peter Augustin, a renowned Black Haitian chef and entrepreneur. In 1899 W. E. B. Du Bois spoke about Augustin's seminal role in making Black catering the center of the Philadelphia culinary scene:

It was the Augustin establishment that made Philadelphia catering famous all over the country. The best families of the city, and the most distinguished foreign guests, were served by this caterer.³⁸

Pennell's recognition of Augustin's contributions is tempered by a casually racist outlook evident in statements such as "Augustine [sic] was a colored man, with the genius of his race for cookery."³⁹ While Pennell was racist, she also praised Black cooking and had multiple Creole cookbooks in her collection.⁴⁰ Despite her racism, Pennell felt Augustin's genius was undeniable and wanted "his name [to] go down in history with those of Vatel and Carême and Gouffé: an artist if there was one!"⁴¹ While Augustin was well remembered in the decades after his death, his many contributions to American culinary and cultural history remain worthy of further study.⁴²

Whistler was just as particular about the food that he served as the visual experience of dining. Many of Whistler's meals began with *consommé à la royale*, translated by Beeton in her



James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *The Kitchen*, 1858. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

bilingual menus as “clear soup”⁴³ and described as clarified stock.⁴⁴ On these occasions, guests would have peered through their first course to admire Whistler’s impressive collection of Chinese porcelain. Often the food itself was colored for effect, as was the case for his “Purée de Volaille Magenta”⁴⁵ or “Lamb cutletts [sic] (gold sauce),”⁴⁶ “Côtelettes de Mouton, purée d’Or”⁴⁷ or “Harengs—Sauce Rouge.”⁴⁸ Variations on all of these dishes appear multiple times in his correspondence. Menu items like these can’t help but color our understanding of Pennell’s observation, “If he gave a dinner he studied the menu as carefully as he studied his palette when he painted a picture.”⁴⁹ Against a backdrop of crisp white linen and blue and white china, Whistler crafted menus with dishes that acted as harmonic variations of color.

In contrast to the staid, formal, and bland dinners for which

Victorians are known, Whistler brought a sense of playfulness and individuality to his meals. Where Victorians favored formality, Whistler splashed in the bath. Where Victorians prized uniformity, Whistler created menus that included dramatic contrasts, as in his combination of housekeeper’s soup and lobster. While most Victorians would have served a bland roast chicken and mashed potatoes, Whistler’s palette included chicken dishes enlivened with magenta and gold sauces. Whistler inverted Victorian values. Against a backdrop of elegant refinement, Whistler’s entertaining style was personal and playful, serving comfort food alongside luxury delicacies. Pennell was smitten with Whistler and the casual style of dining and colorful food described in *The Feast of Autolycus* could well have been scribbled down at one of Whistler’s lively soirées or breakfasts.

While her approach to the food and her aesthetics of dining were strongly influenced by Whistler, her style of writing was inspired by her own collection of cookery books. While Elizabeth Robins Pennell remains little known in material culture studies, she has been deservedly championed as reimagining the Victorian novel from a feminist perspective. Literary historian Talia Schaffer has led the charge exploring how Pennell deployed the language of aestheticism to reclassify women’s work as art. Pennell self-consciously repositioned dining as an art form at which women could excel. Describing the earliest recipe books in her collection she specifically selects traditional examples of women’s work,

The old manuscript collection of recipes has that touch of romance we feel in a bit of half-worn embroidery or faded sampler.⁵⁰

In “Camping in the Kitchen: Locating Culinary Authority in Elizabeth Robins Pennell’s *Delights of Delicate Eating*,” literary historian Jamie Horrocks examines how Pennell exaggerates the Aesthetic voice to forcing the reader to reconsider the Aesthetic movement’s latent misogyny and reconfigure women’s labor as art.⁵¹ Both Schaffer and Horrocks insightfully saw what might be mistaken for a simple cookbook and argued for its literary merit. Using implied women’s work as the foundation, Pennell employed Aesthetic tropes to build up a description of dining as a fine art. What Schaffner and Horrocks did not dwell on was Pennell’s genuine love of food and her efforts to describe a new cuisine.

Elizabeth Robins Pennell defied Victorian dining conventions. She believed that food was worthy of contemplation and sensuous enjoyment—even by women! In *My Cookery Books*, she forthrightly describes her perspective on dining, as contrasted with conservative Victorian mores:

It is still considered demoralizing, or, at least, “bad form”

to think much about food and drink. But this is a mistake. It was when men and women began to think about eating that they developed it into the Fine Art it ought to be. Sounds might have remained mere noise but for the musician, colors mere discord but for the painter; eating would never have been more than a gross necessity but for the gourmet.⁵²

Here she alludes to the Aesthetic notion of elevating the “minor arts” to the status of the fine arts, and of the power of transference between art forms. Pennell believed that dining should have a place among the revered art forms.

Victorian cuisine was notoriously heavy and fussy. In contrast, the meals described by Pennell feel casual, fresh, and multicultural; that is to say, distinctly modern. She replaces the Victorian “salad cream” with a mustard vinaigrette on dandelion greens or chervil with a touch of onion in a bowl rubbed with garlic.⁵³ She recommends peeled whole tomatoes served on “silver or delicate porcelain” with whipped cream and pistachios.⁵⁴ She raves about gazpacho and simple pleasures like mushrooms sautéed in butter on toast. For breakfast she recommends an omelet with asparagus tips or an Indian pilaf with curry!⁵⁵ Perhaps my favorite, she praises oysters with “a sprinkling of salt, a touch of Cayenne [and] a dash of lemon juice” which she suggests serving at midnight with a Chablis. This is a woman who loves food.

Pennell takes on the prevailing Victorian norms in her first chapter, writing,

To-day women, as a rule, think all too little of the joys of eating...They refuse to recognize that there is no less art in eating well than in painting well or writing well.⁵⁶

Pennell reveled in the “joys of eating” and “The Virtue of Gluttony.” She disdained traditional British food⁵⁷ and found Victorian cooking rigid and lacking in imagination.⁵⁸ Much like the anthropologist Garrick Mallery, who wrote in 1880 that “Brutes feed...Only the cultured man can dine,” Pennell saw dining as an expression of culture:

The coming of the salad in England marks the passing of the Englishman from barbarous depth to civilized heights. Has he not exchanged his old-love Frith for Whistler.⁵⁹

Pennell specifically equated high culture with the Aesthetic movement, as shown by the artists she references.

Pennell believed that food could revolutionize society; that when food is given its due...pretense will be wiped away, conversational shams abolished, and the social millennium will have come.⁶⁰

Picturing a husband and wife enjoying a meal together, Pennell argues for food creation and appreciation as a way towards equality between men and women.⁶¹ Pennell felt that food, as art, could be a force for social change. In Pennell’s writing about food as fine art, she made it clear that to create a great meal was to create a work of art:

All his life a Velasquez devoted to his pictures, a Shakespeare to his plays, a Wagner to his operas: why should not the woman of genius spend hers in designing exquisite dinners, inventing original breakfasts, and be

respected for the nobility of her self-appointed task? For in the planning of the perfect meal there is art; and, after all, is not art the one real, the one important thing in life?⁶²

Not only did she exalt cooking as a form of artistry, but she also encouraged women to be artists and agents for social change through this art form.

As her subtitle, *The Diary of a Greedy Woman*, suggests, Pennell’s essays vividly depict her personal experience of the sensual delights of cooking and eating. Both Whistler’s and Pennell’s menus reflected their own personal histories. They valued conviviality over formality, choosing to entertain at midday on Sunday. They saw the food they served as just one element of the dining experience, just as that dining experience was but one element of the Aesthetic lifestyle. What we get a taste of in Whistler’s menus, we see exalted in Pennell’s essays. For Pennell, dining was a performance art that was essential to everyone’s lived experience and took advantage of all the senses.

The elevation of food to an art form can feel like a recent phenomenon, but over a century ago Elizabeth Robins Pennell presciently framed dining as fine art. By elevating traditionally women’s work to an art form, Pennell intended to give women an artistic outlet. She saw dining as on par with music or painting, and advocated the radical idea that women were artists. Rather than using the systematic approach to recipes that was increasingly prevalent in the late nineteenth century, in *The Feast of Autolycus: Diary of a Greedy Woman* Pennell used a narrative approach thereby leaving room for imagination and inviting the reader to participate in the creative act. Pennell’s *Diary of a Greedy Woman* is a manifesto that aims to bring equality of the sexes through something she believed everyone could enjoy—food.



Leela Outcalt, holds a B.A. from Reed College, Oregon and an M.A. from the Bard Graduate Center, New York. For over ten years, she has worked at The Metropolitan Museum of Art where she cares for the American Wing collection. She has a healthy appetite and delights in indulging it.

Notes

1. Elizabeth Robins Pennell and Joseph Pennell, *Our Philadelphia*, (London: J.B. Lippincott Co. 1914), 414.
2. Pennells, *Nights*, 210.
3. Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *My Cookery Books*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and company, 1903), 2.
4. Multiple authors, “The Wares of Autolycus” *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1893.
5. Isabella Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management: a guide to cookery in all branches*, (London, Cassell & Co., 1861, reprint 2000), 905.
6. Aristocrat, *Manners*, 118.
7. Elizabeth Acton, *Modern Cookery, in all its Branches*. (London Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845) Frontispiece.
8. Beetham “Of Recipe Books and Reading in the Nineteenth Century:

- Mrs Beeton and her Cultural Consequences,” in *The Recipe Reader: Narratives, Contexts, Traditions*, ed. Janet Floyd and Laurel Forster (New York: Routledge, 2003), 15-30.
9. Natalie Kapetanios Meir, “‘A Fashionable Dinner Is Arranged as Follows’: Victorian Dining Taxonomies.” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33, no. 1, (2005): 138.
 10. This is not to say that some Aesthetes were more forward thinking than others. For example, Edward William Godwin believed the creative impulses of women could make them good architects. Edwin William Godwin, “Lady Architects” *The Architect and Building News*, v.11 (January-June 1874) 335.
 11. Roger B. Stein, “Artifact as Ideology: The Aesthetic Movement in Its American Cultural Context,” in *In Pursuit of Beauty: American and the Aesthetic Movement*. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 28.
 12. “Women, and Art,” *The Art Journal* V.7 (1861): 107.
 13. “National Training School of Cookery,” *The Times*, (London) October 03, 1874, 4.
 14. Pennell, *Feasts*, vi.
 15. Pennell, *My Cookery Books*, 10.
 16. Pennells, *Nights*, 93.
 17. Likely a caricature of Whistler’s dining habits, the fact that Whistler’s unusual dining habits elicited responses like this points to a fascination in his flamboyant approach to hosting. Otto Bacher, “Stories of Whistler,” *The Century Magazine*, (1907): 103.
 18. Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, *The Whistler Journal*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1921), 283.
 19. Pennells, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, Vol. 1, 138.
 20. Helena E. Brigman, “A Domesticated Idea: British Women Writers and the Victorian Recipe, 1845–1910” (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 2015), 149.
 21. Pennells, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, Vol. 1, 137.
 22. Whistler, *Correspondence* 07889 From Whistler to Alan Summerly Cole or 05349 from Whistler to James Rennell Rodd.
 23. “Sometimes eighteen or twenty sat down to breakfast, more often half that number. All were people Whistler wanted to meet, people who talked, people who painted, people who wrote, people who bought, people who were distinguished, people who were royal, people who were friends.” Pennells, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 137.
 24. For Fishmonger bills see Whistler, *Correspondence* 08848 and 08849. It was this extravagance that would eventually put an end to his breakfasts. *Correspondence* 05455 Whistler to Mary Singleton: “The Gods are against me for the moment—and my breakfast next Sunday is stopped—pour cause—Fishmongers and bakers have risen up in arms—and stampede is the order of the camp.” Two months earlier Whistler had declared bankruptcy in part to avoid paying bills owed to the fishmonger among others.
 25. Pennells, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, Vol. 1, 134.
 26. Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler’s Mother’s Cook Book*, (Rohnert Park, CA: Pomegranate Publications, 1995), 7.
 27. Margaret MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort, and Nigal Thorp, eds., *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*. www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence.
 28. Note by Howell on a Menu of Whistler’s. *Correspondence* 02813.
 29. Whistler’s monogram evolved from his initials into a butterfly inspired by Japanese marks. “He began to arrange his initials somewhat after the Japanese fashion. They were first interlaced in an oblong or circular frame like the signatures of Japanese artists...But with the Nocturns and the large portraits the Butterfly appeared, made from working the letters J.M.W. into a design, which became more fantastic until it evolved into the Butterfly silhouette.” Pennells, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 89.
 30. *Potage bonne femme* appears sixteen times in Whistler’s menus. Whistler, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, Glasgow University, www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence.
 31. Also written as “Quenelles, a la Lindsey Houses.” Whistler, *Correspondence*.
 32. O’Brien, “‘The House Beautiful’: A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde’s American Lecture.” *Victorian Studies* 17, no. 4 (1974): 412.
 33. MacDonald, *Whistler’s Mother’s Cook Book*, 30.
 34. MacDonald, 30.
 35. Whitefriars was a renowned Aesthetic glass manufacturer. Pennell, *Feasts*, 19.
 36. Pennell, *Feasts*, 23.
 37. Pennell, 110.
 38. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899), 34.
 39. Pennell, *Our Philadelphia*, 438.
 40. Célestine Eustis, *Cooking in old Créole days. La cuisine créole à l’usage des petits ménages* (New York: R.H. Russell, 1903) and Elizabeth Kettenring Bégué, *Mme. Bégué and her recipes; old Creole cookery*. (San Francisco, California, 1900).
 41. *Our Philadelphia*, 439.
 42. High on the hog, 34.
 43. Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton’s book*, 277.
 44. Beeton, 71.
 45. Whistler, *Correspondence* 10965.
 46. Whistler, 06930.
 47. Whistler, 06881.
 48. Whistler, 06869, 06864 Whistler’s January of 1876 menu includes “Harengs – note rouge” reminiscent of one of his painting titles – Whistler, *Correspondence* 06871. For help picturing a recreation of this dish see Katherine MacDonald, “Harengs – note rouge,” *Dining with Jimmy* (blog): whistlermenues.wordpress.com/2014/09/21/harengs-note-rouge/#more-245. *Dining with Jimmy* is a delightful passion project of Margaret MacDonald, a leading Whistler scholar, with her daughter and son-in-law. They try to recreate Whistler’s menus using period recipes.
 49. Pennells, *The Whistler Journal*, 283.
 50. Pennell, *My Cookery Books*, 13.
 51. Jamie Horrocks, “Camping in the Kitchen: Locating Culinary Authority in Elizabeth Robins Pennell’s *Delights of Delicate Eating*,” *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 3.2 (Summer, 2007).
 52. Pennell, *My Cookery Books*, VI.
 53. Pennell, *Feasts*, 159, 197.
 54. Pennell, *Feasts*, 177.
 55. Pennell, 30, 27.
 56. Pennell, 3.
 57. “If you still hanker for the roast beef and horseradish of Old England, then go gorge yourself at the first convenient restaurant. Would you interrupt a symphony that the orchestra might play ‘God save the Queen’? There is a place for all things, and the place for roast beef is not on the ecstatic menu.” Pennell, *Feasts*, 48.
 58. “But supper does not mean, necessarily, veal and ham pie, above which British imagination dares not soar...It may be as fair and harmonious as dinner itself, as noble a tribute to the artist, as superb a creation.” Pennell, *Feasts*, 63. Or when speaking of soup, “The conservative Briton might think this a subject upon which the last word long since has been spoken. If soup at all, then must it appear between hors d’oeuvres and fish: as well for a Catholic to question the doctrine of infallibility as for a self-respecting man to doubt the propriety of this arrangement.” Pennell, *Feasts*, 79.
 59. Pennell, *Feasts*, 195.
 60. Pennell, *Feasts*, 15.
 61. Pennell, 15.
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Dining room of the Glessner House, with inlaid 16th-century Iznik tiles surrounding the fireplace. Photo by James Caulfield. Courtesy Glessner House.

Mr. & Mrs. John J. Glessner Request the Pleasure...

DINING WITH THE GLESSNERS IN GILDED AGE CHICAGO

William Tyre

Shortly after the death of Frances Glessner in October 1932, John J. Glessner wrote a loving tribute to his wife of 61 years in which he noted, in part:

She was a home-maker, a home-preserver—that was her first ambition, that was her most desired and profound success. But the home was not to be confined within its own four walls. It was to bring other friends within its sweet influence.¹

The story of Glessner house, located in Chicago's Prairie Avenue Historic District, is usually told in terms of its progressive and influential architecture. The National Historic Landmark is widely regarded as the urban residential masterpiece of architect Henry Hobson Richardson.² To truly understand the house and the brilliance of its design, however, one must look past the heavy rusticated granite walls to explore the dinner parties, suppers, and other functions for which it was built and how successfully they were executed, due to the hospitable nature and efficient management of its mistress.

John Glessner and Frances Macbeth were born into modest circumstances in central Ohio in the 1840s, as evidenced by the couple meeting when he rented a room at the Macbeth family boarding house in Springfield. In 1870, after Glessner was made a vice president in the farm machinery firm in which he had worked for seven years, the couple married and moved to Chicago, where he was put in charge of the sales office.³ The Great Chicago Fire of October 1871 spared both Glessner's business and his home (where their first child, George, had been born just six days earlier). The business thrived as the city experienced meteoric growth, and the Glessners were welcomed into Chicago's social circles. In 1875, they moved out of their first rented home and purchased a larger home on Washington Street in the fashionable near west side, the stately Italianate brick house centered on a lot occupying half a city block. Within a decade, business and industry began to change the character of that neighborhood, resulting in the Glessners purchasing a large corner lot at Prairie Avenue and 18th Street, upon which the Richardson-designed house was completed in time to move in on December 1, 1887.

Prairie Avenue was Chicago's most exclusive residential street, with the city's three wealthiest citizens numbered among the Glessners' neighbors—department store magnate Marshall Field, meat packer Philip D. Armour, and George M. Pullman, maker of the luxurious Pullman Palace Cars. Nearly ninety mansions lined the street between 16th and 22nd streets, with the then-popular Second Empire style and its ubiquitous mansard roof dominating the streetscape, one article referring



Top to bottom: Glessner house, 1800 S. Prairie Avenue, c. 1888; Prairie Avenue showing the home of Marshall Field at center, c. 1888. Photographs by George Glessner. Courtesy Glessner House.

to Prairie Avenue as “almost monotonously stiff in architecture and style.”⁴ Into this environment came the radically different Glessner house which received mixed reviews from neighbors, many of whom agreed it looked more like a fortress than a house. Opinions ranged from the negative, as expressed by George Pullman, “I don’t know what I have ever done to have that thing staring me in the face every time I go out of my door” to the positive response of Marshall Field “That house is coming out all right. I have kept still and now can have the laugh on them.”⁵



Dining room of the Glessner House, as published in *The Story of a House*, 1923, by John J. Glessner. Courtesy Library of Congress.

In spite of its 17,000 square feet of floor space (more than half of which was given over to use by the live-in staff of eight), the warm and inviting feel of the house would have been sensed immediately by guests entering through the front door. Frances Glessner, in her first meeting with Richardson at her Washington Street house, noted that “We assured him that we wanted to keep the cosy effect of this one in our new one.”⁶ Richardson achieved that effect through the extensive use of warm golden oak paneling, an asymmetrical arrangement of rooms and doorways that eliminated long vistas, and lower than normal ceiling heights, creating rooms with a human scale to them. Frances Glessner reinforced the feel with an extensive use of rugs, textiles, and wallpapers by Morris & Co., a mix of decorative objects that displayed good taste rather than ostentation, and comfortable furniture, much of it created by A. H. Davenport & Co. and its chief designer, Francis H. Bacon.

A series of dinner parties, musicales, and other entertainments commenced as soon as the family had moved

in. The Glessners quickly discovered that Richardson had done a masterful job in designing a house that served its varied functions perfectly. As a general rule, they preferred smaller dinners and gatherings, demonstrated by the dining table designed for the house by architect Charles A. Coolidge,⁷ which could accommodate four to eighteen persons, and the adjacent parlor which comfortably sat a comparable number.⁸ This fondness for smaller gatherings was noted after the Glessners attended an elaborate dinner party hosted by the queen of Chicago society, Bertha Honore Palmer, set in the huge southwest picture gallery of her “castle” on Lake Shore Drive. Upon returning home after an evening marked by servants in full livery and silk stockings, huge gilt candelabra, and gold dishes, Frances Glessner wrote:

The whole thing was costly and ostentatious...We made up our minds that we like better small un-pretentious dinners where people are brought together for the pleasure of meeting each other—and not to fill a table or room which seats a certain number of people.⁹

When the Glessners did host larger entertainments, however, the house expanded, almost like magic, to accommodate however many guests had been invited, Frances Glessner noting, "For all its granite, this home is wonderfully elastic. You can squeeze as many as you want into it."¹⁰ John Glessner later reflected back on those occasional larger events:

The house responds: it seems available for almost any social function. Large companies have been entertained in it comfortably and easily; there are two or more entrances or exits to every principal room, so that it is easy to move about, and passages are so planned that servants rarely are in evidence. Music and dramatic readings have been given to hundreds of persons, and receptions to more than four hundred at one time, without any feeling of crush, confusion or heat. Elaborate course dinners have been served in its rooms to more than one hundred guests at a time, the cooking all done in our own kitchen and by our own cook. Twice the full Chicago Orchestra has dined there, and once the Commercial Club.¹¹

Frances Glessner kept meticulous records of her dinner parties, noting who was in attendance, the seating arrangements, and the menu. Many of those listed are of no surprise—business associates, Prairie Avenue neighbors, university presidents, and friends the Glessners gathered through their cultural and philanthropic activities. A closer examination of the guest lists, however, reveals something unexpected—a significant number of musicians, artists, craftsmen, architects, and authors—which speak to the Glessners' specific interests and their desire to bring people together for the simple pleasure of meeting each other and engaging in enlightened conversation.

Two of the Glessners' closest friends, Theodore Thomas and Frederick Stock, the first two music directors of the Chicago Orchestra (now the Chicago Symphony Orchestra), regularly brought as dinner guests the leading musicians in the world who were in Chicago to perform with the symphony – Ignacy Paderewski, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Maud Powell, the Flonzaley Quartet, Percy Grainger, and Sergei Prokofiev to name but a few. Landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and author F. Hopkinson Smith were frequent guests, as were Maud Howe Elliott, her artist husband John Elliott, and the artists Albert and Adele Herter. Architect Hermann V. von Holst (who took over Frank Lloyd Wright's practice when Wright ran off to Europe with his mistress in 1909) and harpist Enrico Tramonti and his wife, were part of an intimate circle regularly invited for holidays including Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The inclusion of these men and women at dinner spoke as much to the Glessners' individuality as did the design and furnishing of their home and their shared library with its huge partners desk. Whereas many of these individuals may have been hired by the Glessners' Prairie Avenue neighbors as the paid entertainment for the evening, they would rarely, if ever, have been invited to sit at their dining tables.¹²

Frances Glessner had a natural ability to assemble the right mix of people and to also identify individuals, such as unmarried professors and widowers, who might otherwise find themselves excluded from formal dining parties. Her husband

wrote:

When the University of Chicago was started and the staff drawn from all over the world with their families, all cultivated people but strangers to each other...she made life more bearable by social attentions. These and the World's Fair gentlefolks found ever a cordial welcome at our doors, and every Sunday afternoon, and many a weekday evening, found a roomful of gentlefolks and a table full of appreciative guests.¹³

When Richardson designed the house, he considered the prominent role the dining room would play in entertaining guests and made it the largest room in the home. Measuring eighteen by twenty-seven feet, the room contains almost 500 square feet of space, including a five-sided bay window facing south into the private courtyard, hung with deep wine-colored velvet drapes. The décor is simple and elegant—quarter sawn oak paneling extending up to a plate rail, with a frieze of Japanese leather above. As is the case throughout the house, there is no chandelier; rather the room is illuminated by five five-arm brass wall sconces. To provide soft lighting for the dinner table, and to supplement that provided by shaded candles, the plaster panels of the beamed ceiling are covered with 23-karat gold leaf, providing a reflective surface for the light coming from the sconces.¹⁴ This was a feature the Glessners noticed in Richardson's own library and specifically requested for this room.

The north wall of the room is centered by a wood-burning fireplace faced with extraordinary 16th-century Iznik tiles acquired through the decorator Lockwood de Forest. The Glessners enjoyed collecting artistic tiles for the house as it was being built, but these are the only ones that were installed in a public space, the others being used in bedrooms. The lack of a mantel shelf and the unadorned wall above the fireplace only add to the prominent role afforded to the Glessners' treasured tiles.¹⁵

The furniture for the room was made by A. H. Davenport & Co., the firm contracted to make all the new furniture for the house, and included the large dining table which measured six feet in diameter when closed; it could be expanded lengthwise to seat eighteen people. The table sat atop heavy square legs with carved acanthus leaf decoration.¹⁶ The two armchairs and sixteen side chairs were designed by architect Charles A. Coolidge and are based on similar chairs H. H. Richardson designed for other commissions. They are notable for their gently curving lines and tapered spindles, flattened and contoured on all four sides, that echo the emerging Art Nouveau. A massive sideboard on the west wall featured stunning carved panels and held some of the Glessners' choicest objects, including two pieces of English creamware dating to the turn of the nineteenth-century and a patinated copper Turkish coffeepot produced by the Gorham Manufacturing Company in the early 1880s. Other furniture pieces included a drop-leaf breakfast table and a tall embroidered oak screen, which concealed the doorway leading to a hallway to the kitchen, utilized by the staff to bring food in and out of the room.

Two items of special significance were housed in the dining

room. The first was a large silver niello rice bowl with stand and ladle which the Glessners used as a punch bowl. It was displayed atop the breakfast table (where it remains today) and had been purchased from the government of Siam at the close of the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.¹⁷ Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke, director of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) noted during a visit to the house that the bowl “was a museum piece so fine that our Art Institute should keep an eye on it and never let it get away.”¹⁸

The second item, also acquired at the close of the Fair, was



a silver gilt tea and coffee service made by Henry Chawner and John King between 1792 and 1795 for the Prince of Wales (later King George IV). The strikingly modern design would have appealed to the Glessners' aesthetic and foreshadowed the work of such innovative designers as Christopher Dresser and Charles Robert Ashbee. The set was stored along with the Glessners' other silver pieces in the butler's locking silver closet at the northwest corner of the room. A letter acquired with the service from John Wells, a dealer from London, England, confirmed:

The silver gilt service was made for King George IV in 1792-5, when he was Prince of Wales; and about the year 1825, when he was King of England, he gave it as a marriage gift to the Marchioness of Conyngham, and it afterwards descended to the late Lord Charlemont, who resided near Dublin; and at his death about two years ago his plate was sold in Dublin, and I purchased the service and many other things.¹⁹

Frances Glessner would have given as much consideration to the arrangement and furnishing of the kitchen wing as she had to the dining room it supported. In the years leading up to her marriage, she was responsible for the running of her mother's boarding house, making her aware of the hard work that went into the preparation of meals and the need for properly equipped spaces for that work to be done. Years later, her husband noted:

As she grew up, her elder sisters being engaged elsewhere and her mother physically unable to take charge of her house, the entire chore of it fell to Frances when she was about seventeen years old, and she had it always afterwards. This necessitated her rising very early in the mornings, going to market to buy the household supplies, engaging the household help, looking after expenditures, or rather the saving of money, and taking entire charge.²⁰

She would have also been no stranger to cooking. Although there would have been no need for her to prepare meals in Chicago, she did occasionally cook at her White Mountain



L to R: Butler's pantry. Photo by Robert Shimer, Hedrich Blessing; detail of carving on sideboard by A. H. Davenport & Co., 1936. Photo by Kaufmann & Fabry; Siamese rice bowl acquired at the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893. Courtesy Glessner House.

summer estate, The Rocks, in Littleton, New Hampshire. Each year in late summer, the servants would be given a full day off for their annual picnic, and Frances Glessner and her daughter would take charge of preparing the meals:

The servants all went off for their annual picnic at the Flume...Fanny and I got dinner, washed the dishes and got supper. We fried chicken, cooked corn, potatoes and beans, made coffee and Charlotte russe, and had cake and fruit and champagne. For supper we had scalloped tomatoes, baked apples, beans, farina etc. The servants had a delightful day—and we all enjoyed our part of it.²¹

The kitchen wing in the Glessners' home comprises five rooms—kitchen, butler's pantry, dry pantry, cold closet, and servants' dining hall—and is 50% larger than the dining room itself. Unlike most Prairie Avenue homes, the kitchen is located on the first floor rather than in the basement, eliminating the need for a dumbwaiter to transport the food, and is provided with large windows facing south into the courtyard for light and ventilation. Planned and constructed in the same decade in which Robert Koch was conducting his important work on germ theory, the kitchen wing would have been considered hygienic with glazed brick on the walls, encaustic tiles on the floors, and a glazed finish on the ceilings, all of which could easily be cleaned.

Frances Glessner introduced another modern innovation into the kitchen in 1892²²—a gas-burning stove to replace the original which burned wood—but this created a problem. She soon discovered that the pool of available cooks lacked any that knew how to operate a gas stove. As she noted in her journal,

I dismissed my seventh cook last week...Mattie Williamson is going to try my cooking. I shall have her taught.²³

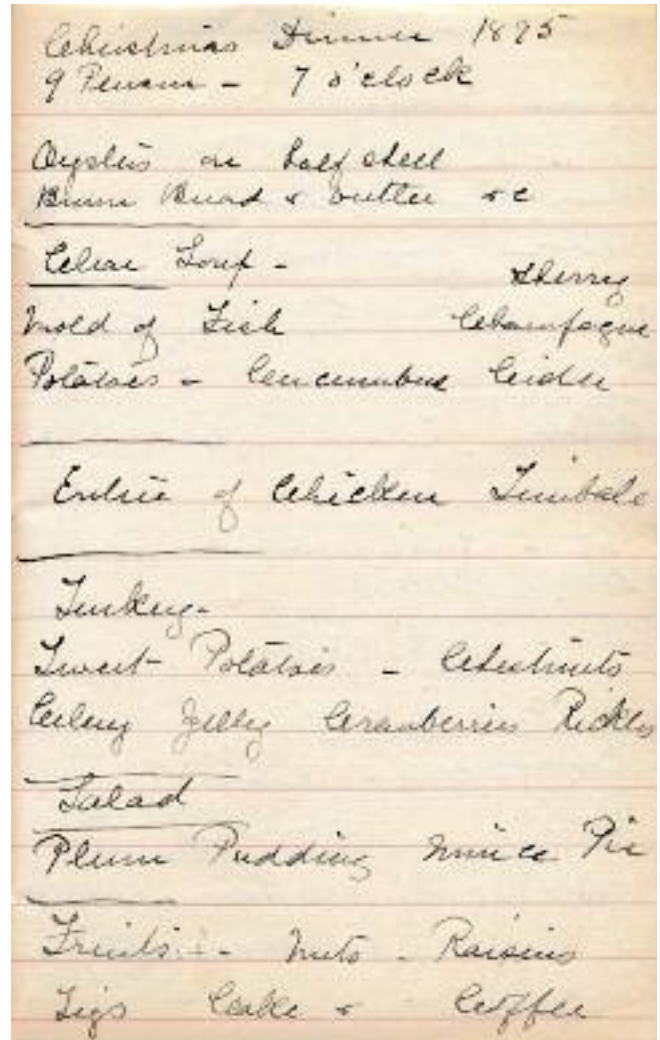
The plan worked perfectly and the beloved Mattie remained with the family for the next twenty years, the Glessners' daughter later writing that Mattie was “one of the finest people that ever lived.”²⁴

To assist with the preparation of menus, Frances Glessner maintained a collection of more than 100 cookbooks, which she carefully arranged on the shelves in the library for easy reference. Some show little sign of use, reflecting her interest in book collecting, but her favorites are well worn, and her manuscript cookbook contains special recipes written in her own hand, including several credited to Mattie Williamson, who was especially known for her bread and rolls. A favorite cookbook appears to have been the 1896 edition of *The Century Cook Book* by Mary Ronald, wrapped in a brown paper dust jacket hand made by Frances Glessner after the original had apparently worn out beyond repair. A small slip of paper still marks the page containing recipes and illustrations for timbales, a frequent item on Glessner menus.

In addition to nearly 500 pages of receipts, the book also contained useful information on topics ranging from “Etiquette of Dinners” and “Laying the Table” to “How to Utilize what Some Cooks Throw Away” and “To Train a Green Cook.” Frances Glessner would have had little need to consult the information on etiquette by the time she acquired the

cookbook, as her knowledge of the subject was well known. An article regarding the custom of “at home” days lists the home of Frances Glessner as one of three in Chicago in which the custom was “observed with the utmost elegance and perfection of style.”²⁵ The same newspaper invited the Glessners to write an article on etiquette which focused on three subjects, “the acknowledgement of invitations, the use of visiting cards, and formal calls.”²⁶

Dinner parties held in the Glessners' home are well documented. In addition to details provided in Frances Glessner's journals (52 volumes covering the years 1879 to 1917), she also maintained a series of “Dinner Books” where



“Bill of Fare” for Christmas Dinner, 1895. Courtesy Glessner House.

she meticulously recorded the date of each dinner party along with a list of those who were invited, noting who accepted and who declined. The guest list would have been carefully considered, including the seating arrangements and, most importantly, who would be seated to either side of the host and hostess. Useful and somewhat humorous information on the importance of the guest list can be found in another book in the Glessner library, *The Little Dinner*:

One cardinal principle should govern the giver of small dinners: she should ask only such guests as will be, in the highest sense of the word, worth while. Life is too short for busy people to waste any portion of it in cultivating uncongenial acquaintances. Uninteresting people doubtless have their uses in the great economy of nature, but their place of service is not at the dinner-table.²⁷

A valuable record of the food consumed at Frances Glessner's dinners is contained in a notebook begun in 1892 labeled "Bills of Fare," which provides the menus for dinner parties she considered to be of special note. A typical menu consisted of eight courses and usually began with oysters on the half shell, followed by soup, and then three courses of fish, poultry, and meat, each served with vegetables and potatoes. A salad was then served before two courses of dessert. Foods which would be foreign to most modern tongues, including sweetbreads and terrapin, show up with regularity. Quail and partridge are served nearly as often as chicken, mutton is far more common than lamb, and pork is noticeably absent other than cold ham occasionally being used in a salad. The popularity of molded foods is evident, with items ranging from molds of fish to timbales, and jellies (gelatin dishes) to ice cream in a plethora of shapes, including books, candles, pumpkins, and four-leaf clovers.

Frances Glessner would also occasionally make notes after a dinner party, as a reminder of things to improve upon in the future. Notes for a dinner for Harvard professor George Herbert Palmer and his wife Alice Freeman Palmer, then serving as Dean of Women at the University of Chicago, included:

Men were restaurant men, not good waiters...Dishes were removed too quickly before people were all finished...Silver was not sufficient, forks were washed between courses, plates also.²⁸

In addition to recording the fact that men outside of the live-in staff were sometimes hired to serve at table, the issue of timing and its management is worthy of note. According to advice contained in Frances Glessner's trusted *The Century Cook Book*:

Two hours is the extreme limit of time that should be given to a dinner; one hour and a quarter, or a half, is preferable. Eight courses served quickly, but without seeming haste, take as much time as most people can sit at the table without fatigue. Last impressions are as enduring as first ones, so it is important not to surfeit, for when fatigue enters into so-called pleasure, failure begins.²⁹

The issue of insufficient silver was addressed three years later when the Glessners' daughter married Blewett Lee, later general counsel for the Illinois Central Railroad. Among the gifts the Glessners presented to the newlyweds was a sterling silver flatware service for eighteen, in the same severely plain "Antique" pattern the Glessners used, produced by Gorham, and acquired through the high-end Chicago retailer Spaulding & Co. By combining the daughter's service with their own, they now had service for up to 36 when needed, with thirteen pieces per place setting including four spoons, four forks, and five knives. The need to wash forks between courses had been efficiently eliminated.

The unadorned flatware complimented the equally simple design of the Glessners' china, manufactured by Spode for Copeland's China and retailed by A. B. Daniell & Sons in London which exported it directly to Marshall Field & Co. in Chicago. Commissioned at the same time the house was under construction, the design consisted of a thin scalloped gold rim on a plain white body, the only decoration being the monogram "JGF" at the top, in a stylized spiral design that mimicked the wrought iron grille over the window of the front door. Additional pieces, used for special occasions, included small plates



Detail of the Glessners' monogrammed china, c. 1886. Courtesy Glessner House.

by Wedgwood, soup bowls by Minton, and chargers by Royal Worcester with a richly detailed border, all designed in gold and red to coordinate with the main china and the red velvet drapes.

One of the first dinners detailed in Frances Glessner's "Bills of Fare" book was given on March 1, 1892. She had recently purchased and read *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, John Addington Symonds' two-volume English translation of Cellini's autobiography, and was inspired to recreate an artistic dinner described therein. Planning for the dinner was more complex than usual, requiring a special table and décor. She even commissioned a period costume in which she was later photographed in her conservatory, posing with a chrysanthemum that had just been named in her honor. She noted the following in her journal:

We had a table nineteen feet long and three feet wide. The gentlemen sat on one side and ladies on the other. Candelabra were at each end with red candles and red shades. No one sat at the ends. John sat on end of the gentlemen side and I at the opposite end of the ladies' side. We had a background behind the ladies of red velvet which was put up by Field's upholstery man. The flowers were all red and white roses—all low, so that the talk was across the table and in groups of four.³⁰

A disaster was averted when the Glessners' 13-year-old daughter Fanny was called into service after it was learned one



L to R: Frances Glessner in her conservatory, wearing the dress made for her Cellini-inspired dinner c. 1896; pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski sent Frances Glessner a signed portrait of Edward Burne-Jones in May 1893, with thanks for her hospitality during his visit to Chicago.

of the invited ladies would be unable to attend. Four men were hired to serve the meal, which was cooked by Fanny Biggs, a former cook filling in while Mattie Williamson was receiving her training as the new cook.

The menu included oysters; anchovy croutes Parisienne; a choice of clear soup Royale or a puree of cauliflower with croutons; cutlets of salmon with hollandaise sauce, served with cooked cucumbers and potatoes; boudins of chicken and macaroni with tomato sauce; saddle of mutton with cherry sauce, served with potato croquettes and spinach; mushrooms au gratin; and fromage a la Cowper with pastry crackers. Dessert featured whole pineapples, ice cream in calla lilies (a favorite) and cake. Spirits included sherry, champagne, claret, and a variety of liqueurs.

A highly anticipated dinner took place on April 10, 1893 when the renowned Polish pianist, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, made the first of several visits to the Glessners' home, arranged by Theodore Thomas, music director of the Chicago Orchestra. Guests arrived at 7 p.m. and Paderewski, accompanied by his secretary, Mr. Gerlitz, arrived at a quarter of eight. Among those attending the dinner was the well-known American pianist, Fanny Bloomfield-Zeisler, and her husband, attorney Sigmund Zeisler, who had achieved notoriety a few years earlier when he defended the eight "anarchists" put on trial following the Haymarket Riot. As the guests were preparing to enter the dining room, Gerlitz took Frances Glessner to the side and said, "Mrs. Glessner, I cannot sit the evening through by that odious man—to me he is intolerable!"³¹ (meaning Zeisler).

The Glessners' daughter Fanny saved the day yet again when the seats were quickly rearranged, and Fanny was placed next to Sigmund Zeisler. Although she was only 15, she was mature beyond her years, and her parents knew she would handle the situation flawlessly.

Paderewski "praised, ate, and enjoyed"³² the dinner, which included typical fare (for the Glessners), except for caviar replacing oysters on the half shell for the first course. Theodore Thomas didn't arrive until 11 p.m., after conducting the Apollo Club concert, at which time he was slipped into the dining room where he was received with a hot supper of roast beef, asparagus salad, rye bread, and champagne with Paderewski and Frances Glessner as his only companions. The men then smoked cigars and the evening concluded around 12:30 a.m.

The Glessners had been devoted supporters of the Orchestra since its founding in 1891. Frances Glessner attended nearly every concert and rehearsal and often invited the musicians to her home. In time, her passion for the orchestra,

was so agreeable to the Orchestra and its leaders that frequently they slipped into our house unannounced and gave a choice concert for ourselves only, or if it was an anniversary evening, for us and our guests.³³

The entire orchestra was entertained in the Glessners' home at several suppers and two dinners, the last in January 1913, when 105 musicians and guests were served a sit-down dinner, with tables set in the dining room, parlor, hall, and library. The



Miniature orchestra model created by Frances Glessner Lee, and displayed during a dinner hosting the Chicago Orchestra, January 1913. Courtesy Glessner House.

occasion was the presentation of a detailed model of the orchestra, built on the scale of one inch to one foot, which featured all ninety musicians, plus their instruments and music stands, and miniature music written out by the music director, Frederick Stock. It had been planned and executed by the Glessners' daughter, Frances Glessner Lee, and presented to her mother as a birthday gift on New Year's Day. Lee had spent considerable time at orchestra rehearsals noting the hair color, facial hair, and general body type of each musician to make the model as accurate as possible. The journal entry for the event noted:

The men were much interested in the little orchestra and seeing themselves as others see them and went back again and again to the room over the parlor where it was, and Frances Lee was fully satisfied with their appreciation.³⁴

Frances Glessner specifically noted that the entire dinner was prepared by the cook and the cost of the evening was around \$900 (the equivalent of \$23,500 in 2020). Based on records of the earlier 1903 orchestra dinner, the cost would have included all of the extra staff, with more than a dozen waiters, a headwaiter, two women to help in the kitchen, two more to wash dishes, and one man whose sole task was to unmold and serve all the ice cream.

The 1913 dinner was "simple" and consisted of just four courses: chicken soup with whipped cream and crescent rolls; casseroles of guineas with hominy and wax beans; vegetable salad with cheese balls, hot sausages, crackers and rye rolls; and ice cream in the form of fruits with cakes of various types, hot house grapes, and candy. In addition to large quantities of wine, champagne, and hundreds of cigars, the evening required 50 pounds of soup meat, 35 pounds of Deerfoot sausage, 24 guineas, 24 heads of lettuce, 36 packages of cream cheese, 20 quarts of wax beans, and 21 pounds of grapes.

Following an amusing program provided by members of the orchestra, the evening closed with a toast by John Glessner, who noted in part:

You artists of this organization have no warmer friends and admirers, no more sympathetic and truly loyal friends, no friends who appreciate your art more or



Frances and John Glessner in the library, circa 1915. Courtesy Glessner House.

rejoice so much in your success. Of all the activities of the city, this organization has the leading place in our esteem, and outside of home we have more enjoyment in the work of what truly is our Chicago Symphony Orchestra than in all besides. We have had good times in this house, and much pleasure in entertaining you, but do what we may, always you do more and leave us in your debt.³⁵

The toast would have been especially poignant for John Glessner, who turned 70 years old later that month. On that occasion, he looked back on his life and his twenty-five years of entertaining in his beloved Prairie Avenue home beside his equally beloved wife. The countless dinner parties, both large and small, were an essential element of the warm hospitality that gentlefolk and world-famous musicians alike enjoyed within the confines of the granite fortress. The Glessners truly felt they were receiving just as much pleasure, if not more, in sharing their home with their guests.

Prairie Avenue was slipping into decline by that time, and over the next two decades, many of the Glessners friends died

or moved to other parts of the city. Dinners continued to take place on a smaller scale and with less frequency until Frances Glessner's health declined to the point where all social activities were given up. After her death in 1932 and that of her husband in 1936, the house was gifted to the Armour Institute which eventually sold it to the Lithographic Technical Foundation for use as its research facility. Threatened with demolition in the mid-1960s, the house was rescued and since that time has been extensively restored, with Glessner descendants returning most of the original furnishings, and huge quantities of archival materials that have allowed for a detailed and accurate assessment of the Glessners and their home. Today, visitors entering the house can sense the same feeling of warmth and hospitality that guests arriving for dinner would have felt more than a century ago.



William Tyre is a native of Chicago and has served as Executive Director and Curator of Glessner House since October 2007. He received his M.A. in Historic Preservation from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where he wrote his thesis, *After the Ball is Over: The Decline and Rebirth of Chicago's Historic Prairie Avenue Neighborhood*. In 2008, the thesis was reworked and published by Arcadia Publishing as *Chicago's Historic Prairie Avenue*. Other publications include *Fifty Moments: Highlights from the First Fifty Years of Glessner House Museum, 1966-2016* and *Frances Glessner Lee and the Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*, both published by Glessner House. He serves on the board of Friends of Historic Second Church, which oversees the restoration and interpretation of Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago's only individually listed National Historic Landmark church. He resides in a restored manager's house in the Town of Pullman, designated a National Monument in 2013.

Notes

1. John J. Glessner, *Mrs. John J. Glessner, January 1, 1848-October 19, 1932, An Appreciation, A Little History, A Tribute*. 1932. Privately printed.
2. In 1923, John J. Glessner wrote *The Story of a House*, an intimate history of the house at 1800 South Prairie Avenue, prepared for his two children, George, and Frances. In Glessner's story, he wrote, "From what he (Richardson) told me and what his young men said afterwards, I am convinced that this house of ours is the one of all that he built that he would have liked most to live in himself."
3. John Glessner was hired as a bookkeeper by Warder & Child in 1863. It was reorganized through the years, becoming Warder, Bushnell and Glessner in 1879. In 1902, the firm merged with four others to form International Harvester which was capitalized at \$120,000,000. John Glessner was appointed a vice president and chairman of the executive committee.
4. "New Things in Town, A Queer House Out on the Avenue: Reaper Man Glessner's Dutch House in the Aristocratic Precincts of Prairie," from an unidentified Chicago newspaper, c. 1887, pasted into a Glessner scrapbook.
5. Journal of Frances Glessner, May-September 1887.
6. Journal of Frances Glessner, May 15, 1885.
7. Richardson died in April 1886, just a few weeks after finishing the design of the Glessners' house, at which time the firm was reorganized by its three senior architects as Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge.

8. The parlor featured a hand-painted burlap wallcovering, reproduced in 2011, by the English decorator William Pretzman (see "William Pretzman, Designer" by John Waters, *Nineteenth Century*, Volume 32, Number 1, Spring 2012).
9. Journal of Frances Glessner, January 26, 1896.
10. "Famous Glessner Home to Be Scene of Debut Party Today," *Chicago Tribune*, December 22, 1925.
11. *The Story of a House*
12. Readers who watched the PBS series *Downton Abbey* on Masterpiece, will recall the episode in season four when the opera singer Nellie Melba was invited to give a concert. The bigger storyline involved the controversy over whether "the singer" should eat dinner on a tray in her room or be invited to eat with the family.
13. *Mrs. John J. Glessner...A Tribute*.
14. The ceiling was painted over during the post-Glessner era. New gold leaf was installed by members of the Society of Gilders during its Chicago conference in 2015.
15. The Glessners acquired two sets of fireplace tiles for their bedroom and a guest bedroom, both designed by William De Morgan, who was greatly influenced by Iznik and Persian tile designs.
16. The dining room table, chairs, and sideboard were left in the house when it was deeded to the Armour Institute by the Glessner heirs in 1938. Only the two armchairs and two side chairs remain today. A recent gift will be used to recreate the table and sideboard based on historic photographs and records in the Davenport archives held by Historic New England.
17. In 2014, the Deputy Secretary to His Majesty the King of Thailand visited the house, noting that the decoration on the bowl, including a tiger and peonies, confirmed it would have originally been made for use in the palace, before being selected for exhibition at the Fair.
18. *The Story of a House*.
19. *The Story of a House*. The note from Wells contains an error—the Marchioness was the long-time mistress of King George IV, so the silver was not received by her as a marriage gift. The Glessner heirs donated the service to the Art Institute of Chicago, which later sold it at auction. Its present whereabouts are unknown.
20. *Mrs. John J. Glessner...A Tribute*.
21. Journal of Frances Glessner, September 19, 1894.
22. Most people in Chicago would not see their first gas stove until the next year, when they were exhibited and demonstrated in the Women's and Horticultural Buildings at the World's Columbian Exposition. Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), page 41.
23. Journal of Frances Glessner, February 21, 1892. Within a period of just a few months, seven cooks were hired and fired (or quit), but Frances Glessner maintained her schedule of entertaining, calling upon former cooks to step in as needed.
24. John Glessner Lee, *The Lee News* (a privately produced family newsletter), October 5, 1959, quoting the letter from his mother, Frances Glessner Lee.
25. "Etiquette of Calls," *Chicago Sunday Herald*, undated, probably autumn 1892, pasted into a Glessner scrapbook.
26. *The Chicago Saturday Evening Herald*, February 9, 1889.
27. Christine Terhune Herrick, *The Little Dinner* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), page 7.
28. Frances Glessner, *Bills of Fare*, January 31, 1895.
29. Mary Ronald, *The Century Cook Book* (New York, The Century Company, 1896), page 7.
30. Journal of Frances Glessner, March 4, 1892.
31. Journal of Frances Glessner, April 11, 1893.
32. Journal of Frances Glessner, April 11, 1893.
33. *Mrs. John J. Glessner...A Tribute*.
34. Journal of Frances Glessner, January 17, 1913.
35. Journal of Frances Glessner, January 17, 1913.



The Glessner House kitchen, photographed in 1923 by Kaufmann & Fabry Co. The door to the right of the stove leads to the servants hall. To the left is an exterior door leading to the service courtyard. Partly visible to the left of the stove is a door leading to a storage pantry and a walk-in cold room. The kitchen's durable glazed brick walls are visible, although its original encaustic tile floor had been covered over by the time this photograph was taken. Courtesy Glessner House.

Eighteen Hours with Mattie Williamson:

RECREATING A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE GLESSNERS' COOK

Justin Miller

One afternoon in August, 1891, Mattie Williamson received an unusual request: would she please come up to the Big House as soon as possible? Mattie was spending the summer as she usually did, in Littleton, New Hampshire, with her brother and sister-in-law, where he managed the farm operations at The Rocks, the summer estate of a wealthy Chicago family. Mattie sometimes helped on the estate with cleaning or other chores, but this request seemed urgent. When she got to the Big House, she learned why: the entire household staff had abruptly quit that afternoon, leaving Mr. and Mrs. John Glessner without help (along with their twenty-year old son, their eleven-year old daughter, their daughter's paid companion, and a distraught houseguest recovering from a broken engagement). Mattie helped "put them out of their trouble" that night, as Mrs. Glessner later recalled; one night turned into days, days into weeks, and when the family returned to Chicago in September, Mattie went with them to work as a maid. Over the next few months, she watched the departure of seven cooks unable or unwilling to use the kitchen's new-fangled gas stove, and in February 1892, Mattie Williamson, unmarried at age thirty, began the job that she would hold for the next twenty years: household cook to John and Frances Glessner.

Today the Glessner House in Chicago has been restored as a house museum and its service spaces look much as they did when Mattie worked there. When visitors see the kitchen with its large stone sink and its single work table, they sometimes ask, "How did she cook six meals a day without any counter space?" Thanks to the wealth of information in the Glessner House archives, it is possible to answer that question in surprising detail. This article is an attempt to more fully understand the time management and physical requirements that Mattie Williamson experienced every day.

Reconstructing Mattie's Day

The first step in the project was to select a day to recreate based on materials from the Glessner House archives including

household account books; bills of fare (menus); and most importantly, a detailed journal that Mrs. Glessner kept for several decades. April 10, 1893, emerged as an ideal date, not only because the Glessners hosted an important dinner for concert pianist (and later the first prime minister of the sovereign nation of Poland) Ignacy Paderewski, but also because the journal contains enough additional information about the preceding and following days in order to form a broader context of what Mattie's life was like in the kitchen.



Sarah L. "Mattie" Williamson (1862-1919), c. 1900. Courtesy Glessner House.

The dinner menu for that day exists in Mrs. Glessner's own handwriting, along with the menu for a late-night buffet supper served to a late-arriving family friend. Although the specific menus for the day's other meals are not recorded, breakfast and lunch menus for the family were taken from lists of suggested meal plans included in Mrs. Glessner's household instructions. Conjectural staff menus were assembled from various sources including firsthand accounts, menus from boarding houses, and dietary studies undertaken in Chicago working-class neighborhoods.¹

Other factors to consider in recreating Mattie's day were mealtimes and numbers of diners. Family breakfast was served at 8 a.m. to Mr. and Mrs. Glessner and teenaged daughter Fanny. On most days, Mr. Glessner left the house for his office after breakfast and took lunch at one of his downtown clubs. Luncheon for Mrs. Glessner, Fanny, and Fanny's paid companion, Violette Scharff was served at the house at 1:30 p.m. Family dinner was served at 7 p.m. and could range in size from the immediate family, to less formal meals for close friends, usually with eight at table, to multi-course formal dinners with twelve to sixteen guests. Meals for the eight live-in staff were timed around the family meals: breakfast at 7 a.m., a substantial dinner at noon, and a lighter evening meal at 6 p.m. In the terminology of the time, "dinner" referred to the largest meal of the day, not a specific mealtime; so while the family had their dinner in the evening, the staff had theirs at noon.

MENUS • APRIL 10, 1893

STAFF

Breakfast • 7 a.m.

Applesauce
Rolled Wheat
Hash on Toast
Baked Potatoes
Coffee

Dinner • Noon

Potato Soup
Round Steak
Mashed Potatoes
Creamed Lima Beans
Corn
Cake

Supper • 6 p.m.

Cold Meats
Sweet Potatoes
Corn Bread
Fruit Sauce

FAMILY

Breakfast • 8 a.m.

Stewed California Prunes
Sweetbreads
Shirred Eggs
Hominy
Rolls
Oranges
Tea & Coffee

Luncheon • 1:30 p.m.

Tomato Soup
Squabs
Peas, String Beans
Olives
Bavarian Cream

Dinner • 7 p.m.

Buffet Supper • 11 p.m.

Roast Beef, Boiled Ham
Cold Salmon
Cheese, Rolls
Ice Cream, Strawberries
Cake
Sherry, Claret
Sauternes, Champagne

Menu to Paderewski - April 10 1893

Leaves -

Cream Soup

Fish Cucumbers - new Potatoes

Boiled Chicken -

Peas - Egg Plant

Asparagus - White Sauce

Tomato Salad.

Crackers.

Ice Cream. Strawberries

Cake!

Oranges - Coffee - Candy

Grapes

Sherry

Claret

Champagne

L to R: Menus and mealtimes for April 10, 1893. Family menus for breakfast and luncheon were sourced from Mrs. Glessner's household instructions; the buffet supper menu is recorded in Mrs. Glessner's journal. Staff menus were created by author using period sources; Mrs. Glessner's handwritten menu for dinner, April 10, 1893. Courtesy of Glessner House.

The last crucial step in reconstructing Mattie's day was to catalogue the preparation times for each dish in every meal. Techniques and cooking times were provided by period cookbooks such as *Miss Parloa's New Cook Book* (1880) and *The Century Cook Book* (1895), both included in Mrs. Glessner's own library. By studying period recipes, it was possible to create a schedule of all dishes and thereby enable a twenty-first century audience to walk through the complex timetable that Mattie knew instinctively.

5:30 a.m. • April 10, 1893

Shortly after sunrise, Mattie rose, washed, donned a plain dress and floor-length apron, went down to the kitchen, and lit the gas stove.² After cooking for the house every day for over a year, Mattie probably knew instinctively the order in which to start various dishes for both the staff and family breakfasts: longest cooking times first (like baked potatoes, applesauce, and hominy) with shorter-cooking items like toast and coffee prepared closer to serving time. Around 6:45 a.m., Julia, the

housemaid, set the table in the servants' hall and helped dish up the staff breakfast.

7 a.m.

Mattie sat down to breakfast with the rest of the staff at seven. By 7:30 a.m., she was back in the kitchen to finish the family's breakfast. She put the risen rolls into the oven, began stewing the prunes (which had been soaked overnight), and broiling the sweetbreads (which had been parboiled the day before). As the family meal came together, Frederick, the butler, was setting the table in the dining room and arranging the fruit that Mr. Glessner liked for breakfast ("oranges, always oranges," in one of Mrs. Glessner's household instructions). By 8 a.m., Mattie had plated the family breakfast for Frederick to serve.

Once the family meal went out, Mattie started on the long-cooking round steaks for the staff midday meal. Round steak was one of the cheapest cuts of beef available, even by Chicago standards, where the Union Stockyards made beef a staple on tables rich and poor alike. After the beef was in the oven, Mattie

could start in on the dirty dishes—at least fourteen bowls and pans; mixing utensils; plus serving dishes, china, and cutlery from the eight servants.

When breakfast dishes were done, Mattie had a chance to sit, rest, and plan the rest of the day. At some point in the morning, she would receive last-minute instructions from Mrs. Glessner or the butler about the day's meals. Menus were generally set several days in advance, which allowed Mattie adequate time to order ingredients for the daily deliveries of meats, fresh vegetables and fruits, and ice. The Glessner household had its choice of suppliers since Chicago had thousands of grocers (an 1892 city directory included approximately 3,500 listings).

Groceries were delivered by wagon, usually mid-morning. Total household food costs were about \$45 a week—or roughly \$2,300 a year. For comparison, a working-class Chicago family of five living in the north side Lake View neighborhood spent an average of \$312 a year on food.³ This disparity of spending between different socioeconomic classes is representative of the broader wealth inequalities of the Gilded Age, where Mattie's own salary was \$260 a year, compared to the \$20,000 salary that might be typical of one of the dinner guests she cooked for—a reality Mattie would have faced weekly as she settled the household grocery accounts.⁴

After checking over the morning's grocery delivery, Mattie would have placed an order for the next day. By mid-morning, Mattie had also prepared the Bavarian cream, a molded custard dessert, and lunch preparations were underway: peeling and boiling potatoes, cooking dried lima beans, assembling two pots of soup, cleaning squabs, and boiling string beans for at least one hour, as recommended by period cookbooks. At around 11:45 a.m., most of the staff dinner was ready and the housemaid was back to help set the table in the servants' hall.

Noon

The staff sat down to dinner at noon. Most of the staff probably had forty-five minutes to an hour for lunch. After she ate, Mattie headed back to the kitchen to put the squabs into the oven, rewarm the tomato soup, and began a roux for the gravy. Frederick carried out the soup course at precisely 1:30 p.m., and Mattie arranged the squabs on toast points and sweetened the sauce with a bit of currant jelly before serving. The unmolded Bavarian cream went out shortly after 2 p.m., and Mattie could start in on the pile of dishes that had been accumulating on the stove and work table throughout the morning.

Mattie had a chance to rest in the early afternoon before continuing on dishes that could be made ahead for the evening meals. She started boiling a ham for the 11 p.m. buffet, and started the soup for the 7 p.m. dinner, which involved forcing soft-cooked chicken and vegetables through a sieve for a velvety texture. The dinner dessert course called for ice cream, which was made at home before the advent of electric refrigerators in the 1920s. To make the ice cream, Mattie made a custard, cranked the ice cream freezer by hand until the mixture was mostly frozen, scooped it into decorative molds,

and set it on ice to freeze solid.⁵

Mattie spent the rest of the afternoon with other components for the family dinner: assembling long-simmered sauces for the fish and broiled chicken; preparing a soup garnish; and preparing the celery and mayonnaise filling for the tomato salad. At some point in the afternoon, additional deliveries arrived; probably wine, champagne, or perhaps a cake from the Exchange for Woman's Work, which Mrs. Glessner often patronized.⁶

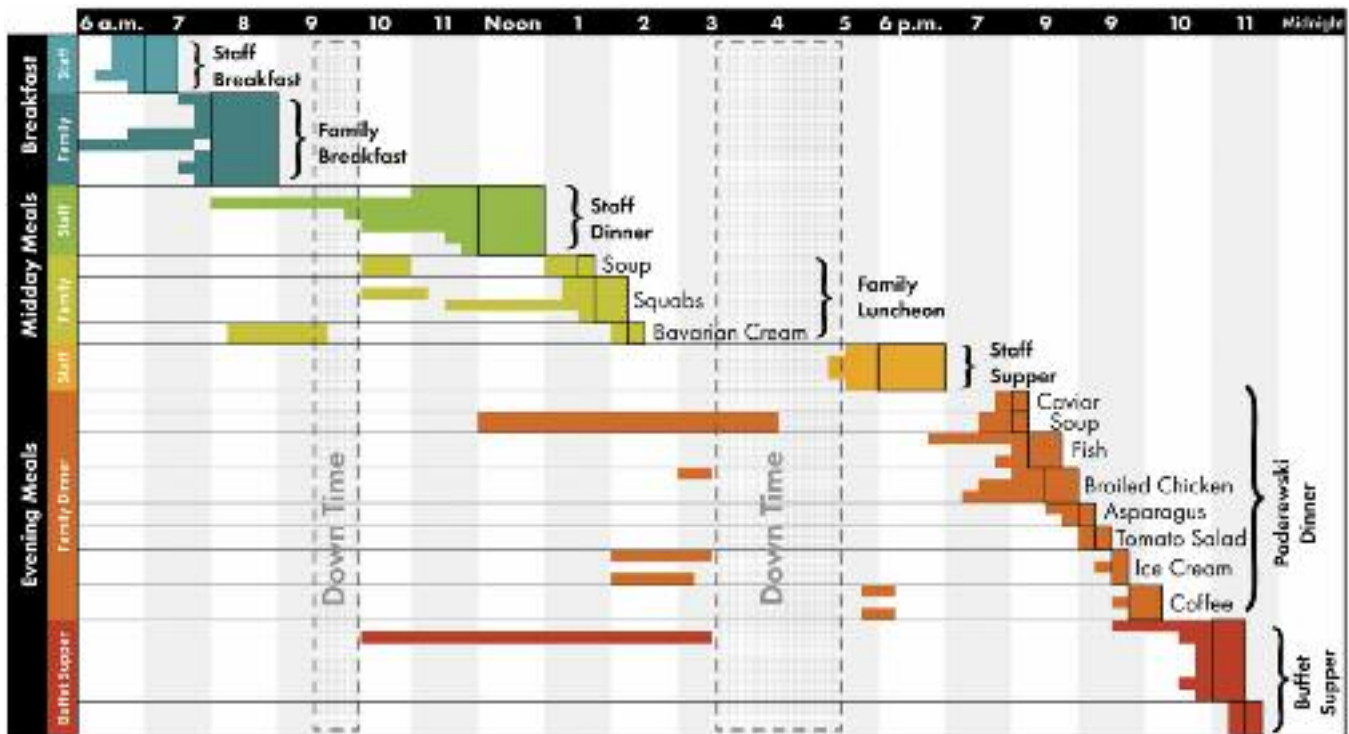
By late afternoon, Mattie had been on her feet for nearly twelve hours. Although the April weather outside was only 44°F, the kitchen was probably closer to 80°F because of the stove.⁷ Around 5 p.m., Mattie started preparing the staff supper. The butler was busy filling and arranging decorative dishes of candies and oranges in the dining room. Most of the prep work for the family dinner was ready by the time the staff sat down to their supper at 6 p.m.; Mattie could not linger over her meal, however. Around 6:30 p.m., she went back to the stove to rewarm the soup and garnish the caviar with thin slices of lemon and minced onion.

7 p.m.

The first two courses of caviar and soup were ready to serve. A few minutes later, however, word came back that two of the guests had not arrived, meaning that course service times for the entire dinner would need to be delayed. Since the Victorians generally preferred their foods cooked much longer than twenty-first century diners, dinner preparation moved forward as usual in the kitchen.

At 7:45 p.m., word came that the guests had finally arrived and dinner began, forty-five minutes late.⁸ Once service started, dishes came together at a fast pace and in a well-choreographed partnership as Mattie plated each course and the butler or footman carried them to the dining room. The first course of caviar and toast points left the kitchen, and Mattie plated the soup with its garnish; dressed the cucumber salad; and put the eggplant and prepared chicken under the broiler. As the soup course went out, Mattie plated the poached salmon and its side dishes. At 8 p.m., Mattie started boiling the prepared asparagus and plated the chicken and its side dishes. The chicken course went out at 8:20 p.m., and Mattie plated the boiled asparagus with its white sauce.

At 8:40 p.m., nearly an hour since the beginning of dinner, the fifth course of asparagus went out, and Mattie plated the tomato salad course along with store bought crackers. The tomatoes went out at 8:55 p.m., and Mattie unmolded the ice cream, then placed it back into the cold room to firm up. The roast beef went into the oven for the later buffet supper. At 9:10 p.m., the ice cream was served, along with the cake and strawberries that were already in the dining room. As the dessert course went out, Mattie started making strong, dark coffee, perhaps adding an egg since the yolk added richness and the white and crushed shell helped clarify it. At 9:30 p.m., after-dinner coffee went out, and Mattie's major work on dinner was complete.



This chart illustrates the preparation and service times of each meal throughout the day. Time of day is indicated across the top bar. Service times are indicated by outlined boxes, with each meal or course broken down into individual components. Also indicated are two periods of lesser activity during mid-morning and afternoon. Chart courtesy of author.

9:30 p.m.

Mattie spent the next hour washing dishes and bringing the kitchen back to a manageable order, and then began assembling the buffet supper around 10:30 p.m. The roast beef and boiled ham were kept warm in the oven; the cooked asparagus could be served at room temperature along with rolls and cheeses; the ice cream was waiting in the cold room; and the cold salmon was plated just before service. Around 11 p.m., the buffet supper was served, and Mattie turned off the stove. There were more dishes, of course, although the housemaid probably helped wash and put away. Mattie’s day ended around 12:30 or 1 a.m. She would be awake in five hours to repeat the entire process again.

Despite the grueling hours and physical demands, Mattie continued cooking for the Glessner family until 1912. That May, she went to New Hampshire to get Mr. and Mrs. Glessner settled into their summer estate at The Rocks as she did every year. Three months later she gave her notice: she was to be married to a widower living in Santa Barbara, California. Few details are known of the circumstances of the wedding, but by then Mattie was fifty years old and marriage may have offered a financially stable alternative to her physically demanding occupation. One of the last letters she wrote to her former employer hints at the paradox of Mattie’s experience cooking for the Glessner family for two decades:

Have often thought of the beautiful place at The Rocks and the many pleasant times I have had. Would have been pleased to go back and work for you many years

longer, but on account of my age, thought it would not be advisable to work over the hot stove.

After her marriage, Mattie spent much of her time with relatives in Los Angeles.⁹ Mattie died at her sister’s house in 1919. Like numerous other domestic servants, her story remains largely untold. It is the hope of this article to recognize Mattie’s contributions to the Glessner family and to reveal the daily experiences of the woman who was an integral part of the family’s life for twenty years.



Justin Miller is an architectural historian at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where he specializes in historic preservation and cultural resource compliance. His professional experience includes architectural surveys, historic tax credit consultation, and National Register of Historic Places research and documentation for private clients, municipalities, and federal and state agencies. As a volunteer at Glessner House, he serves as a member of the House and Collections Committee. He has helped develop several specialized events for Glessner House, including a seasonal architecture-focused tour, a servants’ tour, and an annual children’s gingerbread house decorating party. Recent lectures include “The Milwaukee Public Schools: An Intensive Survey” and “Careers in Public History,” both presented for the Wisconsin Historical Society; “Not So Convenient or Artistic as We Had Expected,” an exploration of the Glessner family’s process of selecting an architect; and “Looking at H.H. Richardson’s ‘Other’ Chicago House,” co-presented with John Waters, associate director of the Victorian Society in America Chicago Summer School.

Notes

1. Family menus were taken from “Bills of Fare” and from meal plans included in “Instructions for the Household, 1901, 1800 Prairie Ave.,” which also includes a section emphatically titled “Things Mr. Glessner Does Not Like.” Two publications were especially helpful in assembling conjectural staff menus. *Dietary Studies in Chicago in 1895 and 1896* (U. S. Department of Agriculture Office of Experimental Stations Bulletin No. 55, by W. O. Atwater and A. P. Bryant with the cooperation of Jane Addams and Caroline L. Hunt), was undertaken in Italian, Russian Jewish, Bohemian, French-Canadian, and “American” working-class neighborhoods around Hull House on Chicago’s near West Side. Researchers recorded the types and quantities of food families purchased, and how much they spent on it. (Researchers also analyzed the nutritional value of each family’s food choices, in hopes of illustrating the cost benefit of eating an “American” diet. The text of the finished study suggests that some researchers were surprised to find that many immigrant families, even the poorest ones, bought food based on taste, rather than nutritional value). Ellen H. Richards and Marion Talbot undertook a similar study at the University of Chicago. Titled *Food as a Factor in Student Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1894), this study recorded specific menus—breakfast, lunch, dinner—seven days a week, for several weeks, in three dormitories.
2. Sunrise on April 10, 1893, occurred at 5:18 a.m., according to the NOAA Solar Calculator (Washington, D. C.: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Global Monitoring Laboratory). Sunset on the same day occurred at 6:26 p.m.
3. Food costs were estimated using *Retail Prices, 1890 to 1911* (Department of Commerce and Labor: Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor, No. 105, Part I).
4. An examination of wages for various professions provides a more detailed view of the economic spectrum of Mattie’s world. In 1893, Mattie earned \$5 a week, or \$260 a year. A factory worker in an agricultural works like Warder, Bushnell & Glessner, of which Mr. Glessner was a partner, made between \$260 and \$455 a year. A musician in the newly-formed Chicago Symphony Orchestra was paid \$480 for the season, many of whom were regular guests at the Glessners’ table. A female department store clerk made an average of \$390 a year. A female stenographer in one of the new twelve-story skyscrapers springing up in the Loop might make around \$620 a year, although if she lived alone, rather than with family, her total yearly expenses (including room and board, laundry, dressmaking, healthcare, and transit fare) could total nearly \$550. Frederick Reynolds, the Glessners’ butler, was paid \$12.50 a week, or \$650 a year—nearly \$400 more than Mattie. A Chicago policeman made \$1,000 a year, while the Superintendent of Police made \$5,500. Professor James Laurence Laughlin, one of the dinner guests, earned \$1,800 for his courses in economics at the University of Chicago. Theodore Thomas, founder and conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (and the sole guest at the April 10 late-night buffet supper) was awarded \$20,000 as Musical Director for the Bureau of Music at the World’s Columbian Exposition, although he resigned the post halfway through the Fair over internal politics and controversies. Information about wages compiled from *Deering Factory Time and Payroll Books*, vols. 24-26 [August 1892-January 1894], *International Harvester Financial Records, 1879-1984* (McCormick Ms 701, reels 15-16), Wisconsin Historical Society, Division of Library, Archives, and Museum Collections; Philo Adams Otis, *The Chicago Symphony Orchestra*, (Chicago: Clayton F. Sumny Co., 1924); *Wages & Standards of Living for Female Clerical Workers, Chicago, 1892* (Illinois Bureau of Labor Statistics Seventh Biennial Report: Part One: Working Women in Chicago); Thomas E. Hill, *Hill’s Souvenir Guide to Chicago and the World’s Fair* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1892).
5. One of Mrs. Glessner’s favorite ways to serve ice cream (as evidenced by multiple mentions in her journal) was to shape the frozen ice cream into calla lilies and to present the flowers tied with a decorative ribbon.
6. Although Mattie was an accomplished baker (and would go on to win awards for her bread and rolls in a Chicago Womens Club competition) it is unknown whether she regularly baked the kinds of elaborate cakes expected at a multi-course formal dinner. Mrs. Glessner often purchased cakes from the Exchange for Woman’s Work, the local chapter of a nationwide system of charitable organizations “for the reception and sale of any marketable item which a woman can make in her own home,” as described by British journalist William Thomas Stead, author of *If Christ Came to Chicago*.
7. The weather was typical for April in Chicago, with outside temperatures ranging from 42°F at 8 a.m. and 44°F at 8 p.m. U. S. Weather Bureau, *Department of Agriculture Weather Map, April 10, 1893* (Washington, D. C.: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Central Library Data Imaging Project).
8. As noted in our companion piece written by William Tyre, unknown to Mattie, another social crisis unfolded in the parlor when Ignacy Paderewski and his secretary Hugo Gerlitz arrived, as Mrs. Glessner later recorded in her journal. Gerlitz informed Mrs. Glessner he could not sit next to the “odious” and “intolerable” Sigmund Zeisler, the German Jewish husband of concert pianist Fanny Bloomfield-Zeisler. Zeisler, a lawyer, had unsuccessfully defended the eight anarchists tried for murder following the 1886 Chicago Haymarket bombing. In order to placate Gerlitz, Mrs. Glessner quietly reshuffled the seating arrangement for the entire table, putting 13-year old daughter Fanny between Zeisler and Gerlitz. Mrs. Glessner may not have been shocked by this unconventional request from Gerlitz since he had not even replied directly to her dinner invitation but rather cabled Mrs. Theodore Thomas to accept, noting that he had mislaid the Glessners’ address.
9. Mattie even considered building a house in Los Angeles near her sister, nephews, and niece, in the newly-annexed Hollywood neighborhood. Based on correspondence in the Glessner House archives, Mattie had little savings of her own, having helped support her father and other family members. She had, however, invested in bonds and public service stock on the guidance of Mr. Glessner and son George Glessner. In June of 1913, Mattie requested a loan from Mr. & Mrs. Glessner for \$1,000 in order to purchase a lot; her husband, still living in Santa Barbara, would pay for the construction of a house. Mattie offered the bonds as security until she could repay the loan to the Glessners. It does not appear that the house was ever built.



Dining room of the Palmer House Hotel restaurant, c. 1879. Courtesy Chicago History Museum.

Dining Out in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Chicago

THE BIRTH OF MODERN AMERICAN PUBLIC DINING

Bruce Kraig

From its beginning as a village in the early nineteenth century, Chicago has always been a place that celebrated dining out. In modern urban societies the phrase “dining out” has a number of meanings and in Chicago some of these changed over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In terms of social history studies of public dining tell us a great deal about life in the past. Public dining can be divided into three broad categories, each with gradations according to type and quality of food, price, décor and social prestige. Sit-down restaurants ranged from fine dining establishments with fancy décor and famed chefs; to middle-class places that rose in the mid-nineteenth century; and at the bottom: cheap, swift-service eateries such as diners, the mostly-disappeared cafeterias, and lunch counters. Street food (including dining at public events such as ballgames, fairs, food trucks, food carts, and the like) is a second category and a third is a combination of these two, fast-food stands. All have venerable histories in Chicago that live into the present day.

To begin at the beginning, when Chicago was incorporated as a city in 1837 it's 4,000 people lived in small collection of wooden houses set on a floodplain that was sodden much of the year. It was a frontier town and true to that model of rough-and-tumble living, ten taverns served the city—far more taverns than churches. Mark Beaubien operated the most famous of them, the Sauganash (meaning “English speaker” in a Native American language) Tavern. Travelers often slept on the floor of the primitive building after a night of drinking and fiddling by the cheerful *Métis* proprietor. He supposedly said, “I eats 50 people for dinner every day, by gar.”¹ Tavern cookery consisted of boiling, roasting and frying local foods such as game, perhaps lake fish, beans, corn and greens. If one thinks that locavorism, alias farm-to-table, is some new trend, then they did not live in Chicago in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. Much of the city's food supply came from local farms and the city's meat factories while wild game appeared on the menus of every fine dining establishment until late in the nineteenth century.

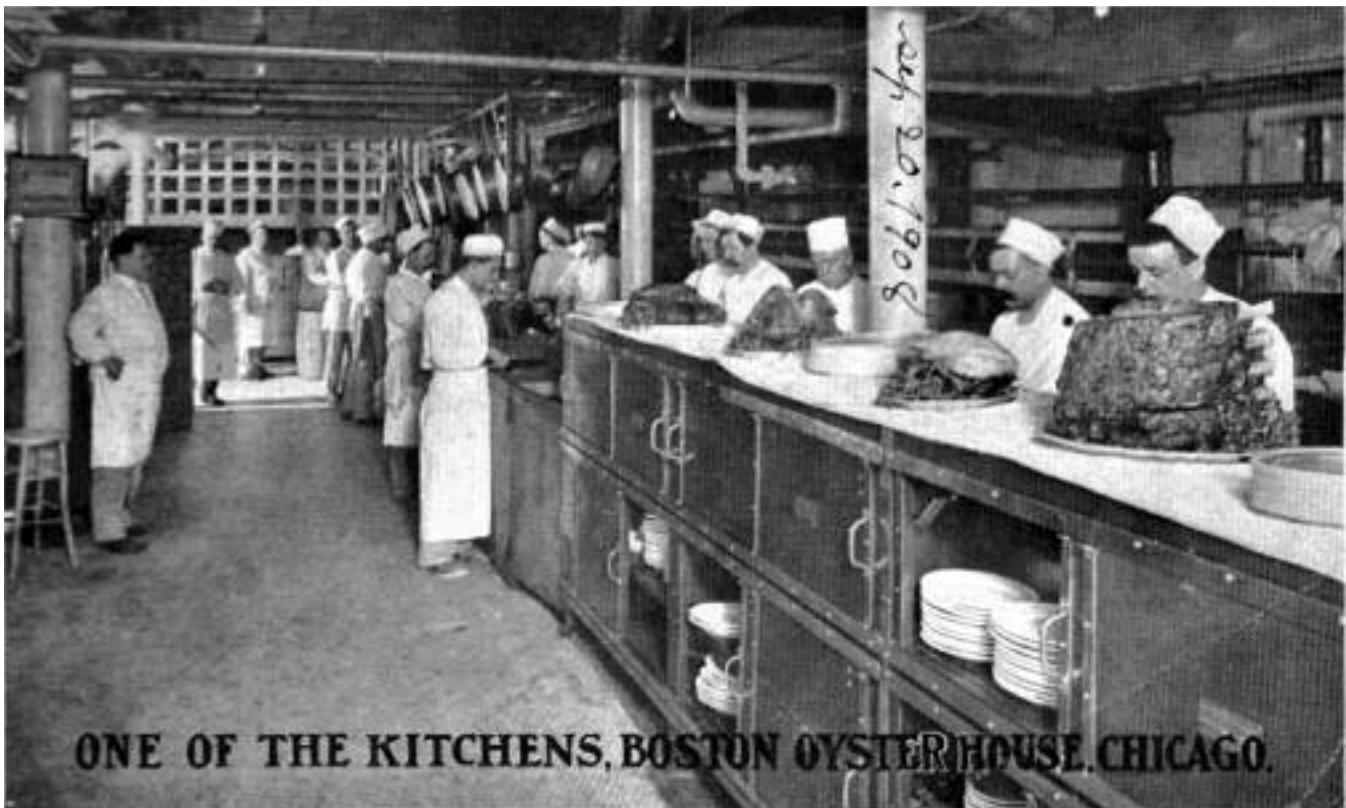
Fresh as the ingredients might have been in 1840, as James Parton claimed thirty years later, cooks prepared their foods badly. At the same time, fine dining appeared in Chicago's first grand hotel, the Lake House (later renamed the Sherman House). Built in 1835 it was a three-story brick building meant to match those in eastern cities. R. B. Macy, visiting from Wisconsin, described it as “the most magnificent hotel in the universe,” its dining room having the city's first printed menus and napkins. It also served live oysters imported from the East



BURCKY & MILAN'S
—POPULAR—
LADIES' AND GENTS' —RESTAURANT,
154 and 156 South Clark-St.
NEW FURNITURE AND FIXTURES THROUGHOUT.
Standing at the head of successful Chicago restaurant keepers is the above firm. Here, one or one thousand persons receive uniform attention, wholesome food, well cooked, clean, plenty of it, and promptly served. Suitable to the pockets of all classes, its patronage and good name extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific.—[Ed.]

Top to bottom: The Sherman House hotel, (formerly the Lake House), Chicago, c. 1870. Courtesy Library of Congress. Advertisement for Burcky & Milan's, a popular restaurant for visitors to Chicago.

Coast via the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes.² The Lake House and the grand hotels that followed in the nineteenth century served dishes made in the French style of the day, with German touches and using American game animals. As in a Briggs House menu of 1859, oysters were the *de rigueur* appetizer, followed by fish dishes, boiled meats, and then roasted meats, all accompanied by ornamental dishes such as quail pie. Wild game followed these, the likes of roast bear loin, roast squirrel and ever-present prairie chickens (now almost extinct). Dessert and a range of imported German and French wines and brandies helped get the feast down.



A kitchen in the Boston Oyster House Restaurant, c. 1908. Courtesy Digital Research Library of Illinois History Journal.

Visitors and the well-off locals often dined in Chicago hotels in the city's commercial center such as the Sherman House (home of the College Inn), the Tremont House, Briggs House, Grand Pacific Hotel, DeJonghe's Hotel and Restaurant (where shrimp de jonghe was created) among others. Their menus reflected national fine dining styles as did Chicago's great restaurants such as Wright's at Crosby's Opera House, Chapin and Gore, Kinsley's, Boston Oyster House, Rector's, Burcky and Milan's, and Henrici's. They were the equal of any in the country, though the dishes were not as ornamental as in the hotels' fare. H. H. Kinsley who began in the restaurant business in 1865 eventually built a dining palace that was called the "Delmonico's of the West." Incidentally, unlike almost any other restaurant, Kinsley welcomed African-American customers; many of his employees were black including a well-remembered cheerful meat carver who stood near the restaurant's front plying his skills. Upscale places were usually grand affairs, the main dining rooms large—though many had smaller private rooms available—highly decorated with wall and ceiling paintings, plaster wall ornamentations, and heavy drapery.³ In 1882 the newly built Thatcher's Mammoth Café was described having its walls being fitted up with mirror arrays eight feet in height, above which was fancy wallpaper and ceiling frescoes done in French, German and Italian Renaissance styles. The main room held 250 diners at one sitting.⁴

Orchestras were common even at lunch time, hotels and restaurants advertising them in the city's almost twenty daily



Waitresses and staff of the Boston Oyster House Restaurant, c. 1908. Courtesy Digital Research Library of Illinois History Journal.

newspapers. Customers were served in formal styles by professional waiters. Theirs was an honorable profession; the maître d' holding the highest rank among them. Such was the fictional George Hurstwood who presided over the grand saloon, Fitzgerald and Moy, in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*. Described by one of the characters as a "way-up, swell place," this was modelled after Hannah and Hogg, whose elaborate interior gleamed with cut glass and gold leaf.

Maître d's presided over the front of the dining houses, but in the kitchens were star chefs every bit as famous then as today's celebrity chefs. Among them were John Burroughs



Rector's Restaurant, Chicago, c. 1895. Detroit Publishing Company. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Drake who put on huge game dinners at the Tremont House and Grand Pacific hotels from 1855 to 1893; ibex and juniper flavored bear among the delicacies. As with oysters brought from New York and the Chesapeake, game from everywhere flowed into Chicago by rail. Prussian native Joseph Seyl presided over the Palmer House between 1871 and 1917. His kitchens produced both French-style dishes and more stolid German ones that appealed to a city where German cuisine was more popular than French. Still, French cookery was considered to be the height of culinary art. Urban Sobra, chef at the Hotel Richelieu and later the Auditorium Hotel between 1887 to 1896, was celebrated across the nation as the best French chef in America. No chef was more important nationally than Charles



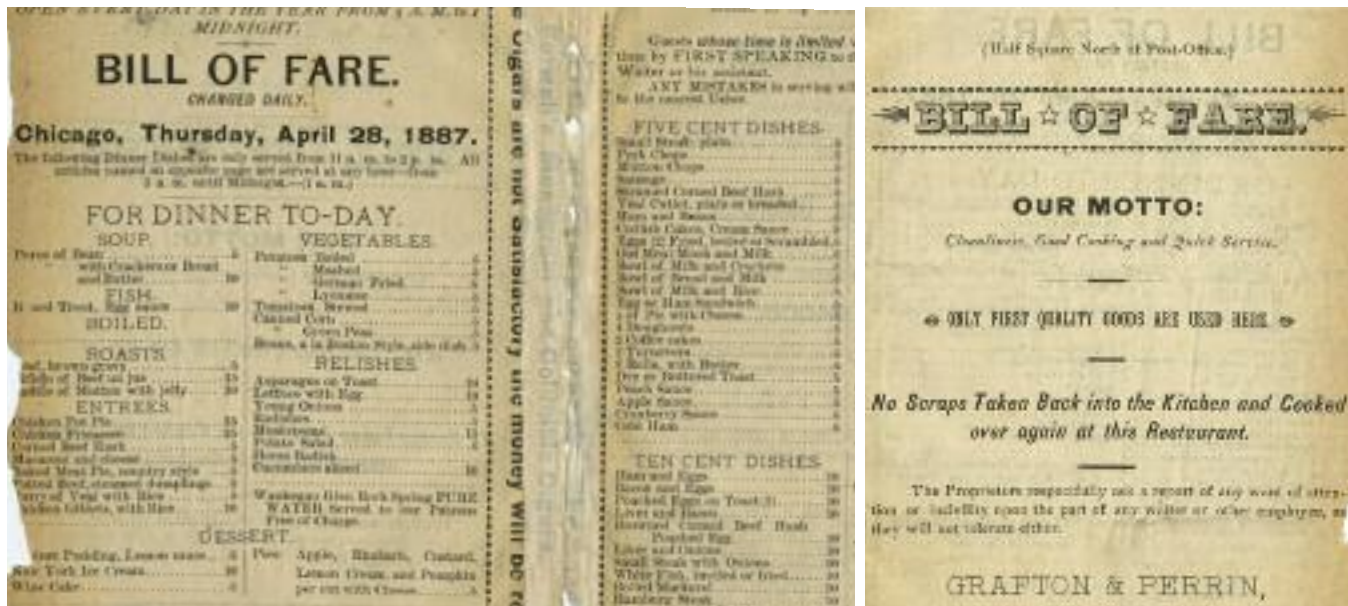
Hannah and Hogg, c. 1880. Courtesy Chicago History Museum.

E. Rector. He began by training in Chicago's Boston Oyster House in the 1870s (they served forty-two types of oyster preparation) and then opened his eponymous restaurant in 1883. From the start, his champagne, oyster and lobster dinners were highly successful, becoming the in-place for the rich, the famous, and the infamous, especially the somewhat scandalous theatrical crowd. In 1899 Rector opened a second location in New York's theater district where it became as famous a place as Delmonico's and Sherry's.⁵

African-American chefs and caterers were as well-known as any others. Agnes Moody had been born into slavery but escaped and settled in Chicago in 1866. Her cookery was so famous that she presented American corn dishes at the 1900

Paris Exposition. She opened the door to Black caterers and southern-style cookery to Chicago, and national, audiences. African-American chefs became even more prominent because they catered meals on Pullman Car Company railway cars. Rufus Estes prepared foods for many celebrities such as gourmand Presidents Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison. His book *Good Things to Eat, as Suggested by Rufus*, is a compendium of the quality cuisine that made railway car dining famous. Chefs such as Walter George, who worked on the Chicago to Minneapolis line, were national stars.

department stores appeared—Marshall Field & Co., and Carson Pirie Scott & Co., among others—catering to women shoppers who required luncheon after struggling through crowded stores and streets. One of many restaurants that served ladies who were downtown shopping, C. L. Woodman's, was described as offering excellent oysters, steaks and chops and especially the low cost ice cream and ices at only ten cents a plate. Many other middle price-range places followed these, from Woodman's to the well-known New York Restaurant that sold twenty-five cent meals and bragged that it never reused leftovers.⁶ As early as the 1880s, budget priced "hamburger



L to R: Bill of Fare and advertisement for the New York Restaurant, Chicago, 1887.

Meat was the core of Chicago's dining fame and Chicago steak houses were renowned. Kinsley's served 3,000-plus meals per day with roasted meats being the most popular dishes on the menu. Billy Boyle's Chop House was among the best known. Opened in 1878 in an area known as Newspaper Row or Gambler's Row, it was a magnet for city politicians, newspapermen, and gamblers. A fabulist self-promoter, Billy Boyle said that he introduced Chicagoans to beefsteak and roast beef. The only truth in that statement was that beef was king in restaurant and home dining, even for the masses. It still is, as the numbers of modern hamburger places and the Chicago original sandwich, Italian beef, attest.

From the start, Chicago's public dining spots were generally divided by gender, economic and social class, and by race. Unless accompanied by men, respectable women were expected to dine out in separate facilities. The first free-standing restaurant, the Exchange Coffee House, opened in 1844 and served somewhat simpler versions of grand dishes. Its menu listed pigs feet, tripe, tongue, pies, tarts, custard, Indian and graham breads, prairie and tame chickens, game, birds, "welsh rare-bits," and oysters fried, stewed or in soup. Ladies dined on the second floor where they could find ice cream and other dainties. By the 1880s Chicago's great

steak" appeared on the menu. Downscale restaurants catering to a less-gentile clientele permitted single women of dubious reputation to mingle with male customers. An 1884 newspaper story describes the clientele at one location called "a dime café." There a garishly bejeweled woman sat alone near some "toughs," a bouncer, a young inebriated "dude" out on the town and a rustic family, coarse in manners, who were visiting the city.⁷

Middle class restaurants came and eventually pushed out the rougher sorts of establishments from the main shopping areas, eventually becoming dining spots for families, such as Chicago's Toffenetti's that opened in 1914. Older New Yorkers may remember Schrafft's, begun in 1898, as an example of moderately priced family-oriented restaurants. These kinds of restaurants marked the change in restaurant dining in the last decades of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Historian Andrew P. Haley argues that the rising middle class, consciously or otherwise, drove snobby upper class restaurants either out of business or to change to more middle class tastes by simply not buying the immense feasts of old. Oysters, for instance, virtually disappeared from ordinary restaurant menus in the first decade of the twentieth century largely because of pollution in the East Coast oyster beds, thus



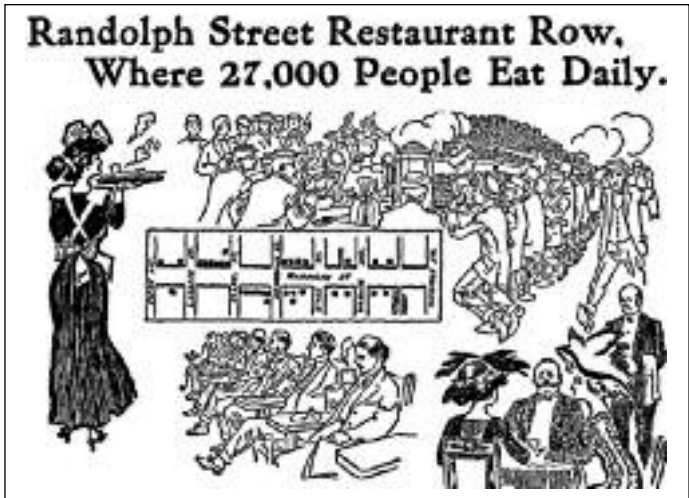
A lunch wagon in Chicago, featuring five-cent menu items, c.1920. Edwin Rosskam, photographer. Courtesy Library of Congress.

becoming the province of fancier restaurants and falling from popular use. At the same time, French-style dishes filtered down the restaurant scale such that chicken velouté became chicken á la king; and Welsh rarebit using American cheeses became all the rage. Hotel and restaurant menus gradually reflected the new tastes offering much simplified menus and often assimilating foreign dishes such as spaghetti and chop suey.⁸

While the rich feasted and the middle classes were driving changes in the restaurant industry, the working masses ate faster and cheaper. After the great fire of 1871, Chicago recovered rapidly. The numerous businesses in the downtown area and factories just at its periphery employed large numbers of workers. By 1892, an estimated half-million people commuted into the city by rail. As an example, Chicago's Loop had 7,000 errand boys, 10,000 stenographers and thousands more typists and clerks by 1900. Typewriters, introduced in 1873 and fully developed by 1895, were thought to be best suited to women's skills and so most of these new typists were young women. Where were respectable young women and morally-upright male office workers to eat? Where might they find inexpensive yet nutritious meals in sanitary settings within the usual thirty-minute lunch break? Chicago has long had street food. Snacks such as fruit and prepared foods had

always been the province of street vendors. Bananas from New Orleans, oranges from California, and ubiquitous apples became main snack foods. Street vendors sold peanuts, "red hots" (ancestral hot dogs), and even tamales beginning around 1893. In the 1880s, food wagons appeared on the scene. The forebears of today's food trucks, wagons serviced factories, schools, and the night-time entertainment crowds. There were also numerous saloons offering free food with five-cent mugs of beer. But none of these were considered suitable for middle-class office workers.

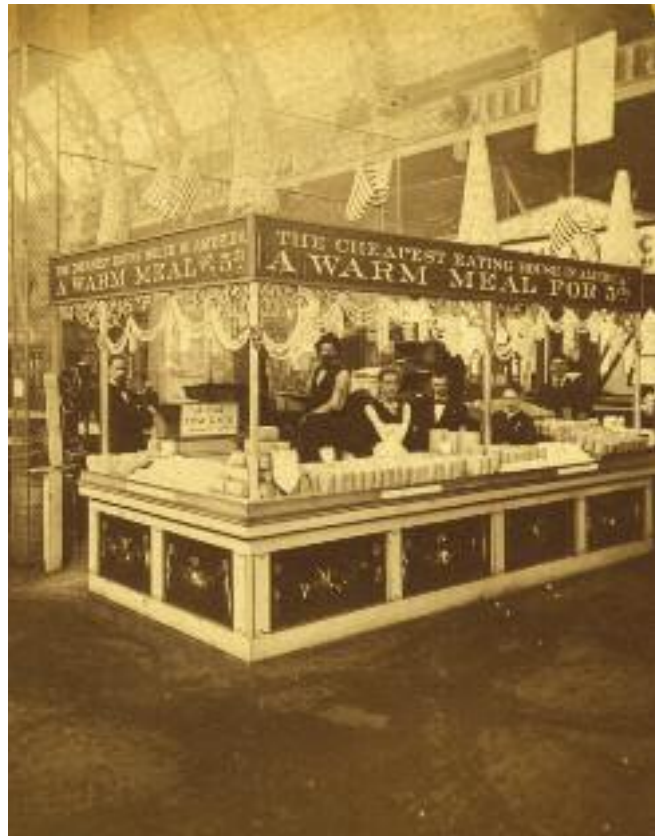
New fast-service restaurants that catered to workers, in what had become known as the Loop, were invented in the 1880s and 1890s starting with the concept of lunchrooms. In 1880 Herman H. Kohlsaat, who ran one of the country's largest commercial bakeries, founded a downtown "dairy lunch room" with fixed tables and swiveling chairs. Milk was thought to be wholesome and pure and had been featured at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition's Dairy Pavilion—just the thing for young women. Simple counters with stools or chairs with one arm for holding food—like a modern school desk—popped up across the city. Five- and ten-cent meal places were located in working-class parts of town and at the edge of the downtown business district. So numerous were the quick service places along Madison and Clark Streets that the area became known



“Restaurant Row,” as seen in a Chicago newspaper, 1909.

as “Toothpick Alley.” Nearby, self-service smorgasbord restaurants, made popular by the city’s large Scandinavian population, were lined up along “Herring Lane.” John Kruger, who operated a smorgasbord restaurant in 1890s Chicago restyled his place as a “Cafeteria.” The word “café” was in wide use usually associated with French and Viennese-style bakeries, coffee houses and casual restaurants of a better class. Kruger’s cafeteria was a marketing ploy supposedly inspired by a trip to exotic Cuba but more likely meant to be a lower-cost, popular version of a café. The name stuck and came to represent several kinds of establishments; some with waiters and others self-service, with prepared foods as in the old smorgasbords.⁹

The need for fast service eateries in Chicago gave opportunities for economic upward mobility within the city. As young women and men made their livings in the new urban economy so restaurateurs strove onward and upward, as in the American myth. “Lucky” Charlie Weeghman started as a coffee boy at a popular Chicago Loop restaurant in the 1890s. When he had accumulated \$2,800 he set off on his own to pioneer “one-arm” quick-service dairy eating places. He made a fortune, as did John Raklios, a Greek immigrant to Chicago, who arrived penniless in 1901 and began his food career by selling apples in the street. Saving his money, he built a chain of white-tiled, “one-arm” lunch restaurants that were kept spotlessly clean and served reasonably priced food. A farm boy, John R. Thompson opened his “one-arm” in the Loop in 1891 and by 1914 had 68 locations throughout Chicago. All of them kept keen eyes on popular food trends. Dairy was a part of almost every menu including children’s breakfasts of oatmeal and milk, oatmeal and cream, rice and milk, graham crackers and milk, creamed chicken on toast, creamed soups such as clam chowder, stews, lots of egg dishes, and sandwiches at costs from ten to thirty cents. Regular meals might be smoked boiled tongue, cold boiled ham, hot frankfurters with baked beans or potato salad, cold-cut platters and almost all of them serving fresh, hot bread made in the chains’ central commissaries.



Top to bottom: A food stand in Chicago, advertising “a warm meal for 5¢,” c. 1873. Courtesy Library of Congress. Interior of the Edelweiss Café-Restaurant, Chicago, c. 1905.

Another lunch room variant came to be called luncheonettes in the first decade of the twentieth century. The name implied lighter fare meant for more delicate sentiments, namely working or shopping women. Dairy lunches at these places were common as was simpler fare featuring more sandwiches and coffee than the cafeterias. In the course of



Thompson's, a "one-arm" style restaurant, Chicago, c. 1900.

time, luncheonettes came to refer to small, simply appointed places with standup counters or a few tables that served little more than egg dishes, pancakes, soups, sandwiches (often on toast) such as ham, tuna, grilled cheese, bacon-lettuce-tomato, along with coffee, pie and cakes.

In parallel fashion, "lunch counters" moved in to drug stores along with soda fountains. Lunch counters were actually the oldest of the fixed-location quick-service breed dating to early railway stations in the 1850s, but now had morphed into lunch rooms and cafés of various kinds. Walgreen Drugs (now Walgreen's, a huge international chain) put a soda fountain in its second Chicago location in 1909 with great success. A few years later they added lunch counters serving luncheonette-style dishes. In their first five years of operation, all the dishes were made by Mrs. Myrtle Walgreen herself. Five-and-dime general merchandise stores beginning with F. W. Woolworth (founded in 1879) opened lunch counters early in the twentieth century not only in cities but smaller towns throughout the United States. Fixed-location diners often shaped like trolley or railway cars served similar fare, becoming iconic features of urban landscapes including some in Chicago. Food preparation



Walgreen Drugs lunch room, the Oak Room, Chicago, c. 1909.

was simple: the equipment being a griddle, a grill, a soup kettle, and refrigeration as befitted the food served.¹⁰

As a great immigrant city, it was natural for newly-arrived Chicagoans to bring their foods with them, and for some of these, to spill out among the general population. Germans arrived as early as the 1850s with sausages, pickles, sauerkraut



L to R: Vogelsang (Norwegian?) Restaurant, c. 1900; Berghoff Café, the oldest German restaurant in Chicago.

and especially lager beer. Since German, Irish, and some Scandinavian dishes were similar in style and taste to mainstream American cuisine, assimilation was rapid. German sausages were sold on Chicago streets from at least the 1870s and at public events such as ball games. Later in the century, sausages were transformed by eastern European Jews (along with Greeks and Italians) into the classic Chicago hot dog. Even the city's elite ate them at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. In 1875, a quarter century before peak Italian immigration, 22 of Chicago's 175 restaurants were said to be Italian. Almost everyone knew what spaghetti was, but full-scale southern Italian cuisine arrived later in the century as immigrants swelled the area around Hull House. Out of this ghetto came the famed red-and-white checkered tablecloth establishments that more and more working and middle-class Americans patronized as part of the moderately-priced dining scene. And southern Italian cuisine changed in response with more meat being served; midwifing the creation of dishes such as spaghetti and meatballs.

Chinese eateries become popular during the 1890s when cheap dishes created by immigrants mainly from the Taishan area of Guangdong became popular among Americans. Chop

suey and chow mein spread from the small Chinese enclaves by catering to *demi-mondaines* in the levee (red light) district and adventurous Bohemian writers and artists. Cheap eats they were and soon many chop suey places could be found everywhere, including the Loop. Some of these became elaborately decorated eateries that served American dishes alongside American-Chinese inventions. One located where the city's administrative center now stands was called King Joy Lo. It was described as being as prestigious as the city's most costly French and German restaurants; a place where fresh, seasonal American and Chinese dishes were unequalled by any of the Chinese restaurants of America. Grand as such places were, cheap chop suey and chow mein spread to the menus of cafeterias and middle-class restaurants throughout the city.

Any Chicagoan born in 1860 who lived the normal lifespan (at the time, 60 years) would have seen extraordinary changes in the city and in its public dining. One mirrored the other. By 1920 the city had grown from its population of 4,000 in 1837 to twenty-five times its population. Chicago had become a major food packing and distribution center, home to numerous immigrant groups and was one of the most distinguished and interesting dining places in the country. Chicago was at the



King Joy Lo, c. 1900, Chicago. Published by E. W. Kelley, Universal View Co., Philadelphia. Courtesy Library of Congress.

center of old-style grand dining in in the nineteenth century and was a leader in the new styles that rose in response to changes in economic mobility, and to those arriving with new foodways. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the basis of modern public dining established to say nothing of modern life itself.¹¹



Bruce Kraig is Professor Emeritus in History and Humanities at Roosevelt University, Chicago, and Quondam adjunct faculty at the Culinary School of Kendall College, Chicago. He has written hundreds of articles on food history and culture and given hundreds of talks, conference papers, keynote addresses, and speeches on the subject around the world. He has written and edited ten books on cookery and culinary history including as senior editor of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*, *The Cuisines of Hidden Mexico*, *Hot Dog: A Global History*, *Man Bites Dog: Hot Dog Culture in America*, *Street Food Around the World* (with Colleen Sen), *The Chicago Food Encyclopedia* (with Carol Haddix and Colleen Sen), *A Rich and Fertile Land: America's Food History*, and *Food Cultures of the United States: Recipes, Customs, and Issues* (January, 2020). *Deep Fried: A Global History* will be published in 2021. He is the editor of the "Heartland Foodways" book series for the University of Illinois Press. Kraig is the Founding and Emeritus President of the Culinary Historians of Chicago, co-founder of the Culinary Historians of Northern Illinois and co-chair of the Historical Cookery Manuscript Project. And for fun, Kraig was a writer and on-camera host and narrator for a multi-award winning PBS series on food and culture around the world.

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— WINNER OF THE 2020 VSA PRESERVATION AWARD —

*for the remarkable and sensitive repair, restoration, and adaptive re-use
of the Chapman & Frazer-designed William Lindsey residence*

Preservation Diary

The Dahod Family Alumni Center, Boston

Dennis A. Andersen



Exterior of “The Castle” before restoration, 2015. Damage to the exterior masonry from erosion and urban pollution required a comprehensive assessment.

Our 2020 Historic Preservation Award winners included three very different projects, each with remarkable details. They represent significant investment, great technical expertise, and extraordinary stewardship. We describe one of them here.

The Dahod Family Alumni Center at “The Castle,” Boston University, 225 Bay State Road, was a project to convert an opulent mansion, at one time used as a university president’s residence, and adapt it as an event location for university-related functions.

Called popularly “The Castle,” it was originally built for successful Boston businessman William Lindsey. George F. Bosworth of the firm of Chapman & Frazer is credited as the

designer. Chapman & Frazer was the prestigious architectural practice of John Henry Chapman (1852-1895) and Horace Southworth Frazer (1862-1931). That Boston partnership began in 1891 and continued under the firm name even after Chapman’s death. Large, luxurious single-family houses in Boston’s Back Bay, Brookline, in Newport, Rhode Island, Maine, and New York City were signal products of the firm throughout its history.

Principal designer George Bosworth (1859-1953) studied at Yale in 1881, moved to Boston in 1886 and subsequently worked for Shepley, Ruten, & Coolidge, just after the death of H. H. Richardson. He joined the Chapman & Frazer

partnership about the time of Chapman's death. He was better known as an architectural illustrator and graphic artist and was a long-time member of the Boston Art Club.

William Lindsey would have been an ideal client for Chapman & Frazer and the talented Bosworth. Wealthy and retired at an early age from a lucrative military textile business, Lindsey and his wife Anne traveled widely, especially in England, France, and Italy. He was free to indulge in literary tasks and published novels, plays, and poetry. His 1895 romance, *Apples of Ishtakhar*, was published with a decorated binding by the fashionable Boston firm of Copeland & Day. Other titles convey his romantic and artistic inclinations: *The Severed Mantle* (Houghton Mifflin, 1909—reissued several times and translated into French!); *Red Wine of Roussillon—A*

in keeping with the romantic and eclectic taste of the Lindseys. Plasterwork on walls and ceilings of the principal rooms was of an elaborate character. Antique paneling and architectural features were imported from the British Isles and integrated into some of the rooms. The house became a gathering place for artists, musicians, students, and literary leaders, many supported by the Lindseys.

The completed house was the setting, on April 21, 1915, for the festive wedding of the Lindsey's daughter, Leslie Hawthorne Lindsey, to British-born Stewart Southam Mason. Less than a fortnight later, the young couple perished as passengers aboard the *Lusitania*. As a memorial to their daughter in the next year, the Lindseys acquired a substantial collection of historical musical instruments dating from 1460



Exterior of the completed Dahod Family Alumni Center shows the repaired and cleaned stonework and roof details. Photo by Raj Das Photography.

Play in Four Acts (Houghton Mifflin, 1915).

The architects began designs for the house in 1910. It was first occupied in 1915. The L-shaped sandstone exterior was modeled after Athelhampton House, near Weymouth in southwest England, which itself was built in stages between 1485 and the late sixteenth century. Peaked gables and dormers, clustered chimney shafts and ornamental stonework create a picturesque roofline profile. Crenellated, two story bays highlight the front and side elevations and feature clusters of heavily mullioned leaded glass windows.

The interiors included a series of rooms in a rich variety of Gothic, Tudor, Elizabethan, and Georgian period revival styles,

to 1850 and presented it with an endowment to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. They also commissioned a memorial chapel attached to Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Boston, designed by the firm of Francis Richmond Allen and Charles Collens, completed in 1924. William Lindsey, however, did not live to see the completion of the jewel-like gothic revival chapel, dying in 1922.

Oakes Ames purchased the house from Anne Lindsey in the mid 1920's. He and two other donors presented the house to Boston University in 1938 for use as a residence for the university president. It served in that capacity until 1967, at which time upstairs rooms were converted to office use. The



Above, L to R: The side and back elevations include a view of the discreetly added kitchen and dining facilities at the ground floor level. Raj Das Photography. Careful paint analysis revealed the original colors of the carved wood Georgian style mantle and plaster cornice in the original music room. Jane Messinger Photography; At right, top to bottom: The Great Hall is remarkable for the carved wood Elizabethan strapwork in the balustrade and carefully detailed paneling; the original library features a meticulously restored plaster ceiling and deeply carved woodwork. Jane Messinger Photography.

great rooms of the main floor served as event space for official functions, weddings, and university events. The Boston University Pub was a popular feature in the ground floor.

Restoration begun in 2015 involved careful repair of the sandstone exterior, replacement of damaged stonework with either salvaged stone or carefully tooled new stone chosen to match the color of the existing repaired stonework as closely as possible. The roof structure was entirely rebuilt and failing slate roofing replaced with new slate. Leaded glass windows were removed in their frames, the frames repaired if possible or replaced if necessary. Some leaded panes were entirely disassembled and rebuilt.

Interior finishes were painstakingly protected during the construction process, including the richly carved central staircase and significant light fixtures. Plasterwork damaged over years of water infiltration was cleaned, restored and in some cases replicated.

It was possible to insert an elevator and update all HVAC and utility systems. A discrete addition was designed at the ground floor level in the rear of the building, offering commercial kitchen and dining spaces, unseen from the front/principal elevation.

Finegold Alexander Architects of Boston were responsible for the design of this project which will have, in their words, "...preserved and transformed this unique, eclectic, Tudor-Victorian home into a beloved campus icon for Boston University and the neighborhood where it resides. The remarkable structure and richly detailed interiors speak to a time and place in American and European history that is worthy of preserving for future generations."



Dennis A. Andersen is a Lutheran clergyman who relocated upon retirement from the Pacific Northwest to Richmond, Virginia. He chaired the Seattle Landmarks Board for a number of years and was active in historic preservation organizations in Seattle and Portland, Oregon. He co-authored with Jeffrey Karl Ochsner *Distant Corner, Seattle Architects and the Legacy of H. H. Richardson* (University of Washington Press, 2003) and was a contributing author to successive editions of *Shaping Seattle Architecture: A Historical Guide to the Architects* (University of Washington Press, 1994, 2014).



Sources for further reading:

A more comprehensive account of the restoration process is contained in the Preservation Award nomination brochure by Finegold Alexander Architects, featuring photographs, plans, and detailed commentary.

The website of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Boston, includes a page describing the Lindsey Chapel and biographical information on William Lindsey:
www.emmanuelboston.org/mission/history/history-of-lindsey-chapel/

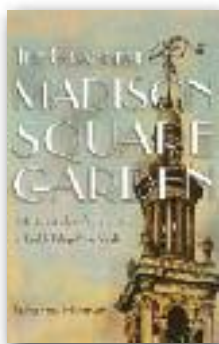
A brief description of the house is included in Morgan, Keith N., ed. *Buildings of Massachusetts: Metropolitan Boston* (Charlottesville and London, 2009), p. 200.

The Boston University website includes promotional materials, histories, and many illustrations of the Dahod Family Alumni Center:
www.bu.edu/meetatbu/explore-our-facilities/campus-venues/dahod-family-alumni-center-at-the-castle/

The website for Athelhampton House, Dorsetshire, includes a detailed history and contemporary photographs of the house and gardens: www.athelhampton.com/

The Bibliophile

—WINNER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA BOOK AWARD—
in recognition of its important contribution to the study of art and architecture in the Victorian era



The Grandest Madison Square Garden: Art, Scandal & Architecture in Gilded Age New York

Suzanne Hinman.

Syracuse University Press, 2019.

Taking up an entire city block, Madison Square Garden was one of the best-known buildings in New York during its lifetime. Dedicated in November 1891 (though it had been open for nearly a year while construction was completed), it was hailed and admired by many for its flamboyant architecture, its famous architect and the lavish performances that occurred in its theatres and halls. Yet, one might claim that the Garden was a failure. Despite financing by some of the wealthiest of the city (Morgan, Astor, Carnegie, etc.) the Garden seldom made a profit and was razed in 1925. Yet this iteration of Madison Square Garden (it was the second of four buildings to bear that name) remains the iconic one.

The architect Stanford White is, of course, the “hero” (if that term might be used) of the story. The energetic redhead is portrayed vividly: “up the five flights of tread bare stairs he would race, bursting through the book-filled reception room swish, bang.” But he was also a taskmaster who made at least one employee, Cass Gilbert, a “little sick of White’s arrogance and claiming all the credit for everything done in the office.” White drew upon Italian and Spanish Renaissance sources for the exterior of the Garden. He commissioned his old buddy Augustus Saint-Gaudens to sculpt and gild a weathervane in the form of a nude figure of *Diana of the Hunt* to cap the tower. Various version of Saint-Gaudens’ *Diana* exist; he and White did not hesitate to rework it several times to correct deficiencies. (While extremely important, there is perhaps a bit too much focus on *Diana* in the book, with at least ten chapters devoted to her.) Finally, the most sensational story linking White and the Garden has been told many times, in fiction and non-fiction. On the roof garden on June 25, 1906 Harry K. Thaw, husband of Evelyn Nesbitt, one of White’s former lovers, shot and killed White. At Thaw’s murder trial, the world heard about White’s private apartment in the tower where Evelyn became “the girl in the red Velvet Swing.” Hinman suggests Thaw may have had other motives than just his wife’s



View of Madison Square Garden from park, c. 1925. Wurts Brothers, New York. Courtesy New York Public Library.

earlier affair with White, an interesting theory well-worth the read.

An element that this critic feels is missing from the book is a more thorough analysis of how the Garden fits into the larger picture of American architecture and art of the period. The giant building used some of the latest construction technology such as Guastavino vaults, but also used traditional materials such as iron and brick. Moreover, steel was employed on the upper portions of the tower to achieve its height of 341 feet, at that time the tallest in the city. The author employs the term “American Renaissance” several times but fails to note how McKim and Mead – along with Saint-Gaudens and all of their peers – were attempting to create in America something equivalent to the Renaissance in Italy of the 15th and 16th centuries. At the same time that White was occupied with the Garden, Charles McKim was designing the Boston Public Library and collaborating with painters and sculptors, producing arguably the

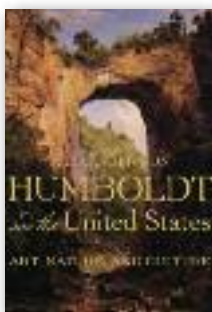
firm's most important building. White is of course given credit for most everything the firm produced, but McKim was the designer in charge. William Rutherford Mead whose name occupies the center of the partnership was the glue that kept them together. He ran the office, oversaw the drawings and managed the contracts with builders. Without Mead the firm could not have existed. Saint-Gaudens once drew a cartoon of Mead flying two kites with caricatures of Charles McKim and Stanford White pulling in opposite directions. This was indeed a Renaissance carried out by large, competing personas.

Aside from these minor criticisms, Suzanne Hinman has produced a masterful study of one of the great buildings in the United States. Hinman, an art and architectural historian who specializes in Gilded Age studies, has written a compelling and well-researched

study of a building that anyone interested in American architecture of the period should know. The footnotes alone are amazing at 80 pages. And to be noted, it received the Victorian Society in America's 2020 Book Award; very well deserved. One wishes this Madison Square Garden still existed and we could see the bright colors of the façade, hear the light opera inside, and gaze at *Diana* twirling in the wind.

Reviewed by Richard Guy Wilson

Richard Guy Wilson is Commonwealth Professor Emeritus of Architectural History at the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia. His research interests have long included the firm of McKim, Mead and White, and he has been the director of the Newport venue of the summer school of the Victorian Society in America.



Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture

Eleanor Jones Harvey.

Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2020.

Alexander von Humboldt and the United States: Art, Nature, and Culture, the catalog for the Smithsonian American Art Museum's long anticipated and temporarily shuttered 2020 exhibition, is a monumental achievement by Senior Curator Eleanor Jones Harvey. While the literature on Humboldt is expansive and multidisciplinary, Harvey explores a surprisingly underexamined aspect of the renowned German naturalist and explorer's multi-faceted career: his relationship with the United States. Though Humboldt spent just six short weeks in Philadelphia and Washington in 1804, his brief sojourn produced a lasting impact on the nation's cultural landscape from the nascent Republic to the Victorian era. Harvey's "mammoth" undertaking (indeed, the animal plays a starring role!) credits Humboldt with the cultivation of a vast network of scientific and artistic exchanges and cultural developments, ranging from his relationship with Thomas Jefferson to the founding of Harvey's home institution, the Smithsonian.

At the heart of Harvey's study lies her assertion that Humboldt's American interlude planted the seeds for a widespread adoption of nature as the premier symbol of U. S. national identity. For Harvey, the efforts of Humboldt, Thomas Jefferson, and Charles Willson Peale formed an intellectual triumvirate seeking to elevate the international standing of the United States

by promoting its natural features, such as Niagara Falls and the Natural Bridge, as evidence of American greatness and future potential. Looking to the paintings of Thomas Cole, Frederic E. Church, and the Hudson River School, Harvey explores how the "wilderness aesthetic" employed by these artists derived directly from Humboldt's embrace of the American landscape as an attribute of cultural prowess. Following Harvey, it would seem that Americans have Humboldt to thank for the hundreds of National Parks across the United States that have provided much needed inspiration and rejuvenation in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Perhaps most relevant to our current moment is Harvey's assessment of Humboldt's relationship to the debates over racial equity and justice that defined both his epoch and ours. Humboldt's belief in the "essential equality of all human beings" serves as a running theme throughout the text. Through a meticulous examination and documentation of his publications, letters, and diplomatic relationships, Humboldt emerges as a passionate, lifelong abolitionist who perceived the institution of slavery as America's greatest failing. Harvey asserts that Humboldt was equally skeptical of settler-colonialism and the treatment of Indigenous peoples by the United States and European colonial powers. However, by Harvey's own admission, Humboldt and his followers remained bound by the

“limits of the cultural awareness of their era.” At times, it becomes difficult to square Harvey’s championing of Humboldt’s humanitarianism in light of the profound influence his ideas exerted on the expansionist campaigns that ultimately resulted in the violent exploitation and disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples. Along these lines, a more detailed examination of Humboldt’s relationship to the “scientific” racism of his Swiss-American protégé, Louis Agassiz and others would have done much to clarify and nuance Humboldt’s attitudes towards racial equality beyond the institution of slavery.

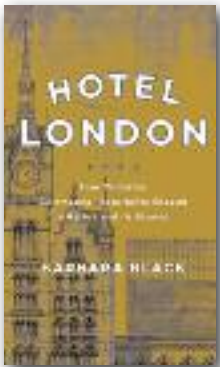
The book itself, a wonderfully designed volume with the feel of an edition de luxe, is a delight to peruse. Harvey’s lavish catalog is complete with hundreds of color illustrations, including paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, and archival documents illuminating the

lasting impact of Humboldt’s American sojourn. Much as Humboldt’s own writings conjured spectacular visions of faraway places for his Victorian audience, in the age of Covid-19, Alexander von Humboldt and the United States promises to bring the exhibition to life from the comfort of home.

Reviewed by Natalia Ángeles Vieyra

Natalia Ángeles Vieyra is the Maher Curatorial Fellow of American Art and a Ph.D. Candidate at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University. Her research explores transnational exchanges in the art and material culture of the nineteenth-century Caribbean.

—WINNER OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY IN AMERICA BOOK AWARD—
in recognition of its important contribution to the study of art and architecture in the Victorian era



Hotel London: How Victorian Commercial Hospitality Shaped a Nation and Its Stories

Barbara Black.

Ohio State University, 2019.

Hotel London provides both an educational and entertaining look at the influence of London’s “grand hotels.” This industry had a major impact on Great Britain’s culture and economy. Prior to the nineteenth century the concept of a grand hotel did not really exist. The basic needs of the traveler were usually met by the humble country inn situated near a traveled roadway. Although charming to twenty-first century eyes, they left a great deal to be desired in terms of comfort. One usually spent the night there and then hurried away the next morning. The London “grand hotel” was indeed something else. Comfort, convenience, elegance and fine dining were the hallmarks of the grand hotel. So entrancing were these hotels that guests often stayed for long periods of time or even took up semi-permanent residence there. The grand hotel was a place of rest and repose in the lap of luxury. Even their architecture advertised to any passerby their claims on wealth, exclusiveness and internationalism.

One chapter tells the biographies of five particular hotels: Browns (1837), Claridges (1854), The Langham (1865), St. Pancras (1868) and The Savoy (1889). The nuance of each was unique. Brown’s was quintessentially English, Claridges was the more glamorous hotel, catering to visiting royalty and the Savoy was all about nightlife and a haven for visiting literary and theatrical luminaries. The Langham was very popular with Americans for the simple reason it had been purpose-built to American hotel specifications. These hotels still exist and enthrall their visitors just as they did in the past.

In a chapter entitled the “Hotel Habit: Home and Away” the author recounts how the grand hotels influenced travel writing. The author notes that Henry James seemed “fascinated by the social phenomenon of hotel living.” In his novella *Daisy Miller* he demonstrates how the grand hotel is “a tool for rumor and scandal;” by the day after Daisy’s infamous evening

at the Colosseum the hotel porter and cab driver know what has occurred. A popular stage play *The Magistrate* (1885) elaborates some of the less salubrious effects a hotel can have on a family. In *Home Letters of a Contented Girl*, published by The Savoy as a hardly-disguised ad for it, we see an outline of the customs of London society folk. The book is narrated by an American girl staying at The Savoy who is loving every minute of it. The only cloud is her lack of appropriate clothes – not quite smart enough. She notes the English patrons “dress for dinner as Americans dress for a fancy ball” and that everyone was “awfully well behaved and distinguished.” The cultural expectations were clearly delineated. It is obvious that The Savoy only wanted a certain kind of patron.

“Hotel Living,” a chapter on living full-time in a grand hotel, tells how stimulating and strategic hotel living can be for writers. Seeing the grand hotel as theatre of human life, authors could find characters and plots aplenty. This chapter profiles several authors whose hotel existences are not normally well known. Mark Twain holds court in the Langham and Oscar Wilde’s escapades at The Savoy are recounted. An inveterate traveller, Mark Twain professes that “travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrowmindedness.” Robert Browning, among other literary notables, called on Twain at The Langham. This hotel even had a Poet’s Corner where poets could offer free public readings of their latest endeavors. Yes, Mark Twain was quite at home at The Langham in his third floor suite

with marvelous views of Portland Place. It is said that Oscar Wilde enjoyed a long stay at The Savoy with one of his male amours after they had a spectacular break up and reconciled. Apparently Wilde brought more than one of his lovers there; the staff were called to testify in his trials.

The dark side of the grand hotel is told in a chapter entitled “Hotel Noir.” Themes of human frailty, ghosts, dark legends and secret liaisons that occurred in hotels were fodder for Victorian readers who loved to terrify themselves. When Louis Napoleon III was exiled to London he stayed at The Langham until his death. Stories are still told about his ghost walking the kitchens. However, Room 333 in The Langham is said to be the most haunted. A properly-attired Victorian gentleman quite often appears in this room “first as an orb of light and then floating without legs below the knees.”

The London grand hotel is both a dreamland populated by the dark and scary as well as the bright and enchanting. Author Laura Black has a wealth of fascinating stories about these grand hotels, all worth reading.

Reviewed by Anne-Taylor Cahill

Anne-Taylor Cahill is a professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and serves on the national board of the Victorian Society in America.



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Milestones

Where are the Crown Jewels?

Anne-Taylor Cahill

No, they are not the British Crown Jewels. They are the Irish Crown Jewels, which are still unaccounted for. The Irish Crown Jewels are the regalia of the Order of St. Patrick. This order was created by George III in 1783, and until 1907 the jewels were housed in Dublin Castle from whence they disappeared. Exactly what comprised these jewels? The official list included: insignia of the Grand Master of the Order, a.k.a. the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and the collars and badges of the 22 Knights.

The Grand Master's insignia was an elaborate star and badge. The star was replete with Brazilian diamonds, and a central shamrock embellished with a cross set with rubies, all mounted on a blue enamel base. The Knights badges were a similar design but not quite so bejeweled. The original jewels had belonged to Queen Charlotte (wife of George III). The jewels were passed to George IV, then on to William IV. William thought the jewels would make fine ceremonial pieces for the Order, so in 1830 he presented them to the Order of St. Patrick. Their value at that time was £33,000; today they would be worth approximately £3,000,000 (\$4,000,000 U.S.D.)

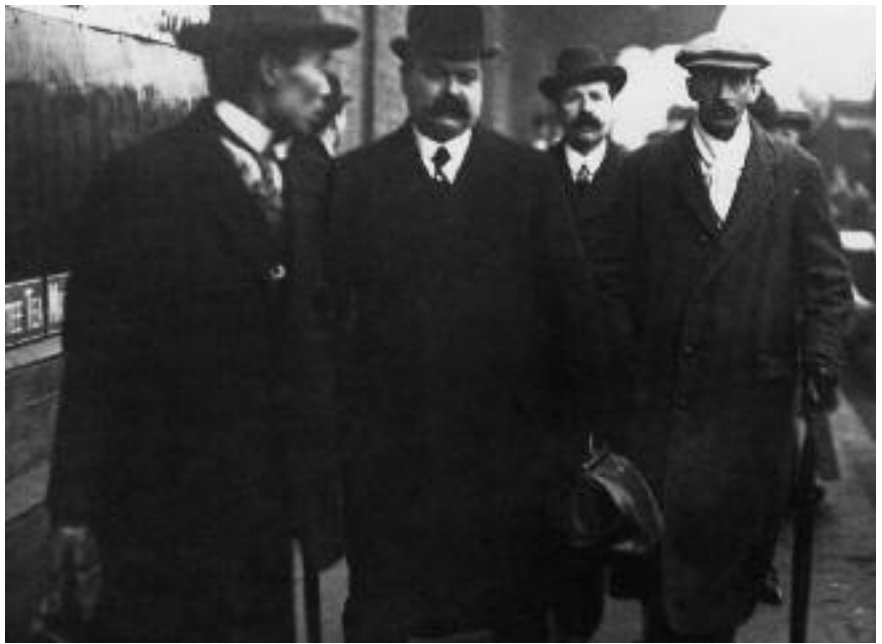
Prior to 1903 the regalia had been housed in a bank vault until they were moved to Dublin Castle's Bedford Tower. Eventually it was decided that a new strong room was needed for the safekeeping of these items. Sir Arthur Vicars, Officer of Arms and Keeper of the Regalia, offered to live on the premises as an added safety measure, but his offer was declined. The new strong room was completed and found to be too small for the large safe containing the jewels. The Officer of Public Works offered to correct the problem, and oddly Vicars refused the offer. Instead, Vicars had the safe placed in the library of Bedford Tower but still in Dublin Castle. This was deemed sufficiently secure as the Dublin police patrolled this area day and night. Besides the Grand Master regalia the collars and badges of the Knights, 2 silver maces, the Irish Sword of State, a jeweled scepter, and 2 heavy ceremonial silver spurs were also included in the secure area.

Here they quietly remained for some time.

On June 7, 1907, Vicars showed the jewels to the visiting librarian of the Duke of Northumberland. This was their last sighting. On June 28 Vicars discovered the key to Bedford Tower was missing. On July 3, a cleaning woman found the door to Bedford Tower unlocked at 7 a.m. On July 6, the cleaning woman found the door to the strong room unlocked. The keys had been



Top to bottom: Thomas Higham (1796-1844), *The Castle, Dublin*, 1839. Published by William Curry Jr. Courtesy Victoria and Albert Museum; circular posted by the Dublin Metropolitan Police, July 1907.



L to R: Sir Arthur Vicars, Officer of Arms and Keeper of the Regalia, c. 1903; Francis Shackleton (far right) with inspectors in Dublin, 1913. Courtesy *The Times* (London), Topical Press Agency/Alamy.

left in the lock; attached to other dangling keys, one of which was the key to the library where the jewels were housed. The unlocked doors had been reported to Vicars. According to testimony he seemed disinterested, and no action was taken. Later that same day, July 6, an agent of West and Son Jewelers called at the castle to return a Knight's Collar that been left behind by a recently deceased Knight. It was at this point the Irish Crown Jewels were discovered to be missing.

The Royal Irish Constabulary and the Dublin Metropolitan Police were called, but their investigation revealed little, so Scotland Yard was called in. No one could discern how the robbery happened. The safe had not been forced open and no duplicate keys had been made. Both Vicars and the Lord Lieutenant were convinced it was all an elaborate joke. Why a joke? A short while before, two of Vicars' aides had gotten him quite drunk. When he awoke from his drunken stupor, he had found himself draped in the regalia! Detective Chief Inspector John Kane of Scotland Yard was the investigator and he named a likely thief. However, the Chief Commissioner of the Royal Irish Constabulary refused to accept his findings. Detective Kane departed Dublin and his report disappeared...forever.

By the end of August 1907 King Edward VII was out of patience. Vicars was informed that his services were no longer needed. Three of Vicars' aides were also dismissed; they were Francis Goldney, Pierce Mahoney and Francis Shackleton. Vicars was convinced that Shackleton was the culprit. Eventually an investigating commission was formed and Vicars was judged not guilty of the theft, but guilty of "inappropriate care" of the jewels. Vicars was definitely out of a job with no pension. To make ends meet he sold his extensive library and became a professional genealogist. Vicars continued to live in Ireland at Kilmorna House, county Kerry, in a home provided by a relative. In April 1921 his home was attacked by the Irish Republican Army. Their stated intention was to burn the house down and they did. Everything in the house was completely destroyed. As the house

burned, Vicars was dragged out to the front lawn and shot dead in front of his wife.

Today the Order of St. Patrick no longer exists. The last Knight of St. Patrick was Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, who died in 1974. In 2015 a set of Knight's insignia showed up at a Sotheby's auction, but the whereabouts of the major collection of the Irish Crown Jewels still remain a mystery.



Anne-Taylor Cahill is a professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and serves on the national board of the Victorian Society in America.

For further reading:

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