



The Lost History of Innis Arden Cottage

By Christopher P. Franco

Who would have thought a year ago that research into the history of the charming beach cottage at Greenwich Point would take us on such a fascinating journey? Using the investigative capabilities of the Internet, we visited the corridors of high finance in turn-of-the-century New York, the field hospitals of the Spanish-American War and World War I, the historical photo archives of the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, and a rare book shop in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The search started when the Greenwich Point Conservancy was considering potential preservation projects for the historic structures at the Point (in addition to the cottage, there are several, such as the cow barn and the chimneys building). Town budget constraints have led to the present run-down condition of these buildings, which are at serious risk of loss.

The board decided that the gracious but derelict cottage, known as the Queen Anne building, was an excellent candidate for attention.

Although the building's layout is largely unchanged from its early years, it has experienced significant deterioration and water damage. There are collapsed ceilings, broken plumbing, broken and boarded-up windows and other evidence of neglect.

Often admired, despite its condition, by residents as they come and go from Greenwich Point, the picturesque structure's provenance — including the year in which it was built — was a mystery, even to those well-schooled in town history. In fact, the Greenwich Historical Society archives had only a single photo of the building from its early years, and Greenwich Library's excellent oral history, *Tod's Point*, had none. Worse, not a single mention of the building's history could be found in town records.

Finally, there was the matter of the building's unofficial name. Surely, its understated cottage style could not be considered Queen Anne, an architectural design popular in the 1880s and 1890s characterized by an exuberant, sometimes excessive use of towers, spindles and other flourishes.

In its research, the conservancy learned that the cottage was built around 1904 by Mr. and Mrs. J. Kennedy Tod, who owned the 147-acre part island, part peninsula that would become Greenwich Point. Originally, the Tods did not intend the cottage for their personal use but as a summer retreat for one of the most important figures in American nursing history, Anna C. Maxwell, and her students. And then, quite unexpectedly, conservancy members discovered long-lost photographs of Anna Maxwell and her nurses enjoying the beauty and serenity of the newly built Innis Arden Cottage, as it was named by the Tods.

Innis Arden Cottage was designed, built and furnished during the seminal years of the Arts and Crafts movement in America. Its early Craftsman bungalow style was a simple and elegant departure from the Queen Anne and Romanesque revival architecture of the Tods' mansion, Innis Arden House. At its center was a two-story foyer and parlor, with a wraparound staircase and stone fireplace. A built-in settle bench was to the right

of the fireplace, and the furnishings were of the sturdy Craftsman style.

Other public rooms on the eastern end of the cottage's first floor (which had four additional fireplaces) included a dining room and a reading room, with the kitchen tucked away in the corner. The western end of the first floor and the entire second floor comprised suites



Anna Maxwell (seated, second from left) and her nurses escaped the sweltering New York summer heat for the cooling breezes of Innis Arden.

The front veranda is now gone, while the back porch (below) is much the same today as when it was first built. The original staircase (opposite page) still stands but the stained glass window is lost.



of rooms, which were used by the nurses as sleeping quarters.

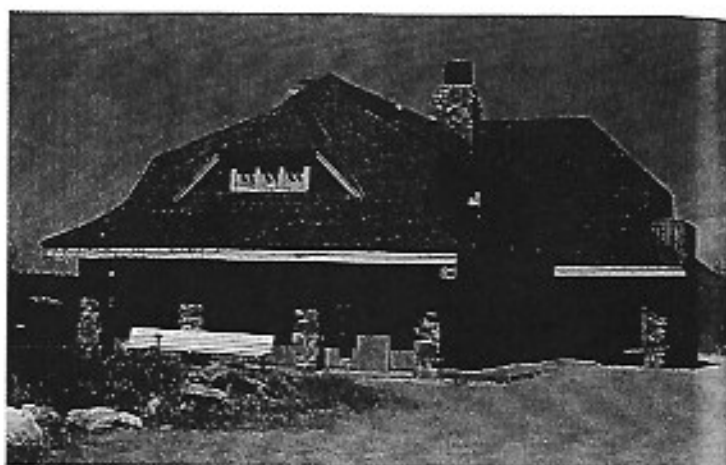
The exterior of the cottage originally had a narrow open porch at the cove-side entrance, centered under the gable, with ends topped by shoulder-high flower boxes. Its exterior was clad in stone and cedar shake shingles, the window casement sashes and Dutch door tops had diamond lights, and its profile was dominated by a low-slung roofline. The original row of dormers was expanded sometime after 1911.

Known during her lifetime as the American Florence Nightingale, Anna Maxwell was largely responsible for the use of trained nurses during the Spanish-American War, as well as the establishment of the Army Nurse Corps during World War I. Working with Dr. George Brewer, chief surgeon at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital, she formed one of the first of fifty base hospital units in World War I. For her work in stopping the spread of disease in war-torn areas, France awarded her its *Medaille de l'Hygiene Publique* (Medal of Honor for Public Health). This pioneer of the modern nursing profession also worked tirelessly to ensure that nurses received recognition for their military contributions. She is credited with the design of a uniform to aid their acceptance by other military personnel and with successfully lobbying for the title of officer for military nurses.

numerous academic scholarships, teaching chairs and nursing organizations named in her honor. Columbia University's imposing Maxwell Hall, which overlooked the Hudson River and the George Washington Bridge from the time it was built in 1928 until it was replaced by Columbia's Milstein Hospital Building in 1984, was grand evidence of her importance to the nursing profession.

The Tods' estate, Innis Arden, was left to the Presbyterian Hospital upon the death of Mr. Tod in 1925, subject to the use of the property by Mrs. Tod during her lifetime. Fortunately for the residents of Greenwich, she lived a long and fruitful life. Had she not survived her husband by so many years, Innis Arden House, the magnificent mansion of thirty-nine rooms, would likely have become a convalescent home for the hospital and its nurses, as originally intended by Mr. Tod. In 1935, however, a gift of one million dollars to the hospital for the creation of the Mary Harkness Convalescent Home in Port Chester left no reason to retain the estate; so in 1945, the hospital sold the estate to the town. The mansion, converted into thirteen apartments, was leased to returning World War II veterans before it was finally demolished by the town in 1961.

The origin of the relationship between the Tods and the hospital's nurses makes for an interesting footnote in the history of Innis Arden Cottage. Tod's business mentor, John Stewart



Innis Arden Cottage is used today as a bathhouse, with several dozen residents enjoying its private rooms as seasonal "lockers." In addition, several oceanographic organizations use a few of the first-floor rooms for educational purposes.

Miss Maxwell, as she was known to her students, was the founding director of the Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing, now known as the Columbia University School of Nursing. She co-authored early textbooks that revolutionized the teaching of modern nursing techniques. In 1929 she was buried at Arlington National Cemetery in recognition of her distinguished service to our country. Today there are

Kennedy, an uncle from Glasgow, Scotland, served as president of the board of the Presbyterian Hospital. Kennedy built his fortune as the American representative of the Scottish-American Investment Company, which controlled much of the investment of Scottish capital in the United States at that time. He also financed some of the largest railroads and mining operations in the country. An ardent supporter of a training school for nurses, he donated a million dollars to build one and recommended an accomplished woman of Scottish descent for the post of director: Anna Maxwell.

Kennedy's interest in the hospital and the nursing school could hardly have been lost on his nephew, J. Kennedy Tod, who was in the process of assuming control of the business of J.S. Kennedy & Co. about the time the school was founded. The first sign of Tod's direct involvement came in 1901 during a sweltering New York August. Nursing school records (found in New Mexico, of all places) note that the soaring mercury "brought in many cases of severe heat prostration," which inspired "the generous Mr. Tod to offer the use of his house, Innis Arden, at Sound Beach, for the nurses during the summer. Refreshments were served in the evening on the roof many times, and evening drives were provided for the nurses during the hot weather."

After a much cooler 1902, the nurses returned the following

summer to "accept [the Tods'] hospitality during July and August at Innis Arden."

Those early visits by the nurses to Innis Arden House made a positive impression on the Tods: The nurses were about to become the beneficiaries of a seemingly unrelated development in the life of the Tods and their private estate. Since November 1899, the estate had been the home of the nine-hole golf course used by the Innis Arden Golf Club, which had been founded with sixty-four charter members, among them early luminaries in the town's history, including Edwin Binney, Benjamin Ferris, H. O. Havemeyer, Edwin Lucas and Luke Lockwood.

Innis Arden, which is Gaelic for "high meadow," was considered an ideal locale for golf, since its eastern end, where the course was laid out, consisted almost entirely of meadowlands. So beautiful was the setting, in fact, that a 1902 *Golf Magazine* article described the course as "the chosen home of golf as it should be played ... no golf course in the metropolitan district can compare with Innis Arden for picturesqueness of surroundings." However, on May 2, 1904 — a warm and sunny day, perfect for golf — Mr. Tod arrived a bit late for his customary Saturday round, and not a single caddie was left for him. For J. Kennedy Tod, who had been feeling of late that his hospitality was being abused by the neighbors, golfers and picnickers he had permitted to use his estate, this indignity was the last straw. From that day forward, Tod banished all, including the golf club members, from Innis Arden.

At about the same time, Innis Arden Cottage, which was located immediately outside the original gate of the estate, was completed. The causeway had not yet been fully built and the gathouse, then called the Lodge, was originally located in what is now the parking lot adjacent to the Seaside Center.

The Tods generously offered Innis Arden Cottage for "rest and relaxation" to Miss Maxwell and her nurses, and in 1906 made the arrangement permanent. From May 1 through December 1 of each

year, continuing through 1913, the nurses had use of the cottage. Dr. C. Irving Fisher, Presbyterian Hospital director and an accomplished amateur photographer, took several photographs of the cottage and the nursing staff in 1907 and 1911. These photos, which survive in the archives of the George Eastman House, show the beautiful original detail of the interior and exterior of the cottage.

After 1913 the cottage was "put to another use" (it is thought that Mr. and Mrs. Tod lived in Innis Arden Cottage during the war years, due to the shortage of fuel to run their mansion), and the "nurses camp for convalescence and recreation at Innis Arden" was moved to a point farther out on the west side of the estate. The Tods built several freestanding two-room cottages for the nurses on the current site of the picnic area facing the Manhattan skyline, which remained there until after the purchase of Greenwich Point by the town.

Mrs. Tod's niece, Elizabeth, also a nurse, and her husband, Sigourney Olney, lived on the estate until Mrs. Tod's death, in later years occupying Innis Arden Cottage. After the most valuable objects were removed from Innis Arden House for auction in 1940 by Parke-Bernet Galleries, Margaret W. Stevenson, a lifelong friend and companion of Mrs. Tod — and also a Presbyterian Hospital nurse — inherited the bulk of the remaining furnishings.

Although the mansion is lost to the town forever, it is not too late to save Innis Arden Cottage from disintegration. Today, as it enters its second century of service, a little sleuthing and some very good luck have unveiled its fascinating history and gracious identity. Let's hope that our rediscovery of its historical importance and relevance to Greenwich Point will be an inspiration for the preservation of this town treasure. ■

In August the Greenwich Point Conservancy is launching a capital campaign for the restoration of the Innis Arden Cottage.