

# Bowled Over by Lovely Lyndhurst



Photo courtesy Lyndhurst Estate

Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.

## NEW YORK STATE, GOTHIC REVIVAL ESTATE BOWLING ALLEY CASE STUDY: November 2016

### Certigrade® Shingles for a circa 1894 Bowling Alley on a Gothic Revival Estate

A winding drive lined with ancient trees is the prelude to a 67-acre estate that proudly overlooks the Hudson River in New York State. Located thirty miles north of New York City and five minutes from where Ichabod Crane had his famous encounter in Sleepy Hollow, **Lyndhurst** is a beautiful, National Historic Landmark property that is a delight for all the senses. It is indeed a rare opportunity to visit a site where a Gothic revival mansion overlooks a bevy of dedicated-purpose outbuildings, one of which is a cedar shake-clad bowling alley built in 1894. Rarer yet is the high level of dedication and devotion to historic preservation



Original watercolour for Knoll/architectural design.  
Photo courtesy Lyndhurst Estate.

exhibited by **Lyndhurst's** preservation staff and volunteer team. Together they ensure all visitors are taken on an incredibly fascinating journey through time.

#### Estate Origins

**Lyndhurst** had its origins in the year 1838 when local Tarrytown resident and former New York Mayor **William Paulding** commissioned a relatively unknown architect, **Alexander Jackson Davis**, to design a Gothic Revival summer home. Now considered the **Frank Lloyd Wright** of his day, Davis not only designed the "Knoll" for **Paulding** but more than fifty pieces of furniture and fireplaces surrounds that remain in the home today.

Early New York City life lacked many of the modern conveniences people today take for granted. By 1836, the year this land was purchased, New York was the nation's largest trading port (the Erie Canal had opened 11 years earlier, extending trade routes and the distribution of goods across America). Population growth in the city had exploded and New York City was becoming increasingly industrialized. With this unbridled growth came problems of overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and diseases that reached epidemic proportions in the summertime. Furthermore Manhattan had become very noisy, very dirty, and very smelly. For the wealthy at least, there was the possibility of escape in the form of the country villa, and these were springing up throughout the Hudson Valley. Such was **Paulding's** plan when he purchased 184 acres of land in Tarrytown, NY.

Constructed to emulate the medieval Gothic style, it is key to note that this form of architecture celebrates asymmetry. One of the most stunning displays of

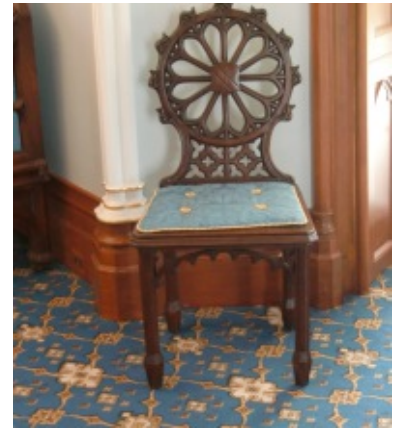


*Yellow faux marble. Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.*

craftsmanship is noted upon entry into the main foyer where all walls are covered in faux marble. Perfected in an elegant, creamy yellow color, with correct veining as seen in quarried stone, it is a trompe l'oeil that fools even the most discerning visitor. Wooden columns faux painted to match real stone mantelpieces abound. The carved wood panelling in the large dining room would even convince Mother Nature herself that it was burnished maple by her own hand.

Taking a note from earlier European influences, displays of good fortune helped stratify America's nouveau society members into either the upper or the working classes. At the time, New York was the vibrant epicenter of rapid industrialization and new

discoveries. One could make a fortune with an innovative product or service. Once the fortune was made, it was important to demonstrate one's knowledge and refinement through the type of home you built and how it was furnished. Being invited to a formal dinner where twelve courses (from soup to nuts) was served, afforded the host and guests alike the proper venue to display their manners and conversation skills. Dressing in formal wear for dinner was a must. Elegant gas lit chandeliers, faceted crystal glasses, imported French gilt-edge china and sterling silver service were the pieces of choice.



*Intricate carved, light and portable parlor chair.*

*Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.*



*Photo courtesy Clifford Pickett.*

Having a well-stocked library was another way to communicate your sophistication. Before mass production, books were rare treasures indeed; one's latest acquisition was proudly displayed on a purpose-built table in the center of the room to invite the envy of admiring society guests.

As books became widely available to the middle class by the mid 19th century, the wealthy turned to collecting art to demonstrate their refinement. Although it was later owner **George Merritt** who converted this gorgeous room from a vast library to a picture gallery, the paintings on view today feature the exceptional collection of 19th century French



Guest bedroom pink stained glass window.  
Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.

Academic paintings acquired by rail road speculator **Jay Gould** and his children specifically for **Lyndhurst**.

The home is filled with an impressive collection of genuine Tiffany lamps as well as stained glass windows that illustrate three distinct periods in the development of this craft in America. The magnificent upstairs guest bedroom boasts a pink-themed stained glass window so brilliantly colorful that one truly believes the fairy tale that Tiffany mixed real flakes of gold into this masterpiece. In the long corridor, a Tiffany grandfather clock stands tall, a stunning housewarming gift for one of the estate's owners.

The furniture on view today represents the tastes and style of three families and five owners spanning 150 years of continuous occupancy. When original owner **Paulding** commissioned the architect to design pieces for the main house, **Davis** created intricately carved furniture and asymmetrical Gothic-style mantelpieces to complement his soaring room designs that make you feel like you truly are in a castle. Subsequent owners brought in a fabulous Gothic Revival oak bed, Renaissance Revival parlour suites as well as custom-made Japanesque-styled **Herter Brothers** furniture. Despite the varying furniture styles, there is a sense of continuity in the house. Rooms transition to each other seamlessly, largely due to the intricate plasterwork found throughout the home.

## America's Gilded Age

**America's Gilded Age**, began shortly after the Civil War and lasted until the early part of the 20th century. It is a period characterized by rapid industrialization, immense wealth building, immigration and much social conflict. While **Lyndhurst's** owners saw massive fortunes in factories, mining and railroads, immigrant labourers struggled to earn a living wage. So while the estate was enlarged and enhanced, it also becomes the site of two vocational schools, twenty-five years before it became a national trend.

## Estate Sold to George Merritt

**Paulding's** son **Philip**, who received the house upon his marriage in 1851, divorced four short years later and finally sold the glorious estate to **George Merritt** in 1864. **Merritt** was the son of a successful dry goods merchant but earned his own fortune by patenting a railroad car spring that cushioned the ride, and was installed into almost every Pullman rail car. Married with four children, he invited the architect of record back to set about doubling the footprint of the main house and adding numerous outbuildings including a large greenhouse. **Merritt** was keen on showcasing his wealth and the transformation of this manor house in to a Hudson River Valley villa was perfectly suited to the task. He changed the name "**Knoll**" to "**Lyndenhurst**" after the many Linden trees that grace the rolling landscape ("hurst" means "wood" or "grove"). Considered by most architectural historians to be **Alexander Davis'** masterwork, the roof of the **Knoll** was raised, a Porte Cochère (think carport for carriages to pass through) added, and a new wing built that included an expanded kitchen in the basement, a huge dining room all punctuated by a 5-story tower that was used as an astronomical observatory. **Merritt's** requirements for his country retreat reveal that Americans of his stature felt that it was compulsory to have a larger home with rooms dedicated to special forms of entertainment and socializing. The guests who called during the day were not necessarily the same ones who attended a formal dinner in the evening.

**Merritt's** lasting contribution to Lyndhurst was the building of the Greenhouse and the hiring of **Ferdinand Mangold** as superintendent of the estate. Trained on the estate of the **Duke of Baden in Germany**, **Mangold** drained the surrounding swamps, devised sweeping vistas across rolling lawns and planted specimen trees that were selected for their natural beauty and showiness.

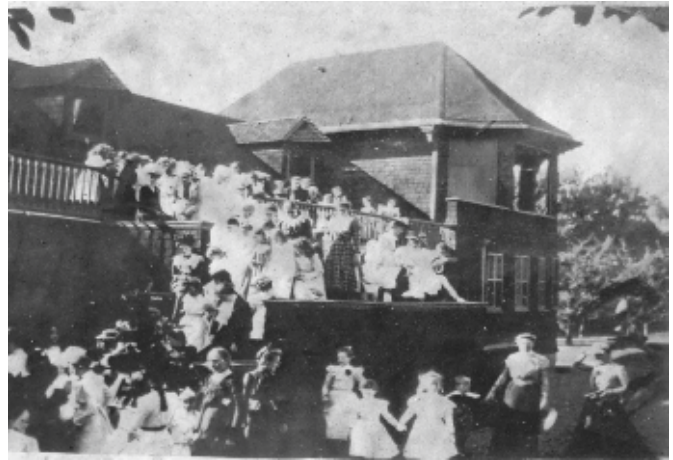
He would work at Lyndhurst for 40 years with one of his crowning achievements being the design and construction of a domed greenhouse that attracted the interest and envy of horticultural collectors. Amenities included sleeping quarters for the nurseryman as well as a billiard room and bowling alley. Sadly, **Merritt** was not able to enjoy the fruits of his labour. He died of a kidney infection eight years after acquiring the estate, and three years after the work was completed.

### Lyndenhurst Estate Sold to Jay Gould

**Merritt's** widow sold **Lyndenhurst** to **Jay Gould** in the spring of 1880. **Gould** was a self-made man and prolific entrepreneur, heavily involved in the railroad and financial dealings. As a result of **Gould's** attempt to corner the gold market in 1869 and the subsequent Black Friday panic, the **Gould** family met with a rather frosty reception from traditional New York society. This fuelled the family's desire to own an estate outside of the traditional glittering mansions of Newport, Rhode Island where many of the wealthy magnates and their loved ones retreated for summer vacations. **Gould** enlarged the estate by purchasing additional land bringing the size of the property to a total of 426 acres. He also shortened the name of the estate to "**Lyndhurst**". **Gould** gained quite a reputation for being a merciless businessman, and when he was swindled out of valuable stock, his pursuit and subsequent kidnapping of the phony Scotsman "**Lord Gordon Gordon**" resulted in voracious sabre rattling between Canada and the United States!

### From Father to Daughter Gould: A New Focus on Philanthropy at Lyndhurst

Celebrities from the Gilded Age include **Rockefeller, Mellon, Carnegie, Vanderbilt and Morgan**. Many of these privileged industrialists shouldered a self-imposed burden of philanthropy and one of **Lyndhurst's** owners was heavily involved in making life better for the underprivileged. After **Jay Gould's** death in 1892, his daughter **Helen Gould** eventually acquired ownership of the estate and maintained it as it was during her parent's lifetime with one major exception; she expanded the sewing school that started in the mansion and added a cooking school where the kennels were located. Knowing high society's preference for French cuisine, she



*Graduation party from the cooking and sewing schools.  
Photo courtesy Lyndhurst Estate.*

hired a French chef to lead the cooking school, and brought professional teachers in from New York City to teach sewing and tailoring. Determined to provide **Lyndhurst** servants' children with better career opportunities than their parents, **Helen Gould's** vocational schools graduated as many as 300-400 students a season for more than 20 years. The archives contain samplers and graduation pins made by **Tiffany & Co.** that were gifts to the students. Her commitment to enriching the lives of those less fortunate in her community was cemented by the fact that the greenhouse's vast collection of exotic plants were open all who wished to see them every day but Sunday. Much to her credit, **Helen Gould** blazed an impressive philanthropic course which leads us to the **Certi-Sawn® cedar shake project Lyndhurst** undertook.



*Sewing School graduation. Photo courtesy Lyndhurst Estate.*



*Exterior of bowling alley. Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.*

### **The Bowling Alley: Destined for a Certi-Sawn® Shake Makeover**

In 1894, Helen Gould commissioned the building of a bowling alley and recreation pavilion located within 500 feet of the banks of the Hudson River. Believed to be the oldest regulation two-lane alley in the country, this structure served not only the family's entertainment purposes but as a location for sewing school that served thousands of children from the surrounding community. When the estate passed to Helen's



*Upstairs sitting area above bowling alley. Photo courtesy Lyndhurst Estate.*



*Restored bowling alley.  
Photo courtesy  
Clifford Pickett.*

sister Anna, she maintained the community use of this building by inviting soldiers returning from the Second World War to use it as a respite before returning home. Numerous black and white photos of these brave soldiers are on site, depicting the men with smiling faces, uniforms and a distinct appreciation for the break from the horrific battles occurring on land, sea and in the air.

**Stephen Tilly, Architect and Robert Gabalski, Architect** (both from **Stephen Tilly, Architect**) met **Krystyn Hastings-Silver, Associate Director, National Trust for Historic Preservation, CSSB Director of Operations Lynne Christensen**, and **CSSB Northeast District Manager Tony Bonura** on site for a detailed tour of the Bowling Alley. **Anbrook Industries, Ltd.** manufactured the **yellow cedar Certi-Sawn® tapersawn shakes** used for the field of the roof and the hip and ridge assemblies (**18" X 5/8" Premium Grade, 100% edge grain**). **Certi-Last® pressure impregnation preservative treatment**, giving even more protection to an already durable species, was provided by **Western Wood Preservers, Ltd.**

This is one of the most fascinating buildings on site. The first recorded article about the structure is dated from January 1895. It cites the private parties that were hosted, as bowling was one of the few sports that men and women could engage in together with societal approval. In its day "Pin Boys" around the age of eight were hired to sit at the end of the lanes and physically reset the pins after each turn. Mechanized pin setting did not occur until about 1936. Comments made during the site tour included the observation that this building exudes a definite *Boardwalk Empire* feel.

The bowling alley is unique in that it has self-levelling lanes that allow for seasonal changes in the maple lanes. Most bowling alleys from this time that survive are found in the basements of mansions and glued down to a cement floor. The last piece of work



*Parlor c. 1842 décor. Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.*

remaining to open the building back up to the public is the installation of a fire hydrant so we may have a certificate of occupancy. The interior has been restored to the **Helen Gould** period encompassing 1894 to 1938 before the building was electrified and when it served as the sewing school.

The craftsmanship in this building is distinctive, so much so that **Tilly** remarked, "You can definitely see the hand." **Tilly** is not only an award winning preservation architect but also a member of the **Association of Preservation Technology**. The knowledge gained from this project assisted with choosing period-appropriate restoration materials and installation techniques.



*A lovely picture gallery. Photo courtesy Clifford Pickett.*

The lanes were laid by the **Narragansett Machine Company of Providence Rhode Island**, who were the sole Licensees of the **Reisky & Wolf patent for Adjustable Bowling Lanes**.

The interior restoration is mostly complete. The only outstanding work remaining is some exterior repointing and site lighting as well as the fire hydrant to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy. It's interesting to note that the billiard room in this structure has fantastic acoustics. Fundraising got underway and construction bids for Phase 1 opened in the spring of 2014. Additional donations are needed so that this building can be given back to the community as a unique river front venue where a private function can take place, various groups can hold meetings, and conduct educational programs. Due to its fantastic location and charming appearance, numerous questions are received each month and this is helping to spread the word.

### Lyndhurst Today

Of course, with so many priceless treasures to protect, the estate is well equipped with a fully modern, state-of-the-art security system. The gate houses have both been renovated and are now home to appreciative tenants. Museum offices now occupy the Chauffeur's apartment at the Carriage House Complex, and an Exhibition Gallery featuring changing exhibitions with objects rarely on view, is located in the one of the former stable buildings. The mansion itself continues to be maintained and restored.

Portions of **Lyndhurst** may be rented for a variety of private functions including: weddings, television commercials, feature filming locations, music festivals, and other special property uses. Visitors can take guided tours of the mansion or stroll the grounds and enjoy pastoral views that allow one to be transported back in time. It is one of the Hudson River's key attractions on its sign-posted walking trail. Even a keen apiarist has beehives on the grounds (which are located a safe distance from the other buildings and clearly marked) that take advantage of the purple-flowering clover grass that adds a unique flavor to honey. **Lyndhurst** is striving to become a self-sustaining property. Adding a fully restored and functional Bowling Alley to its facility roster will no doubt make this goal much easier to reach.

### A Jewel on the Hudson

This lovely estate continues to play a key part in America's history. The **Gilded Age** was one of discovery and wonder, a time when untold riches were earned, fortunes lost and legacies created. **Anna**, the youngest daughter of **Jay Gould**, was the last private owner of the estate. In true *Downton Abbey* style, where an American heiress married into European Aristocracy, **Anna** married a French "Count", who she divorced after 11 years of marriage on the grounds of infidelity. The second time around she married up and became the **Duchess of Talleyrand, Princess de Sagan**. **Anna** was exceedingly fond of **Lyndhurst** and upon her death in 1961; she left **Lyndhurst** and the majority of its contents to the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** in memory of her parents.

**Lyndhurst Estate** stands proud today, a reminder of what once was, as well as offering an experience that future generations will certainly cherish. Whether one admires the faux marbling craftsmanship, secret drawers in a unique travel desk, the intricate plaster work, the Gothic revival architecture or simply wonders at the splendid landscaping accentuated by weeping beech trees... **Lyndhurst** has something for everyone. The **Cedar Shake & Shingle Bureau** offers its sincere appreciation to both trustees and staff for their careful stewardship that ensures **Lyndhurst** remains a viable, treasured estate for future generations to enjoy.



Sculpture in front of bowling alley. Photo courtesy Tony Bonura.



*Aerial view of Lyndhurst Estate. Photo courtesy Lyndhurst Estate.*

**Special Thanks: Krystyn Hastings-Silver, Associate Director, National Trust for Historic Preservation**, for her tireless dedication and enthusiasm towards the preservation and promotion of Lyndhurst Estate. Contact **Krystyn Hastings-Silver** for more information at [www.lyndhurst.org](http://www.lyndhurst.org) or at 914-303-6835, email: [ksilver@savingplaces.org](mailto:ksilver@savingplaces.org)



**Written by:**

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**All Photos by (except where otherwise marked):**

Tony Bonura is the CSSB's District Manager, Northeast. He has over 40 years sales and marketing experience in the forest products industry and shares his immense knowledge with a wide range of marketplace participants. Bonura is the Past Chairman of the Joint Forest Products/Coatings Committee, headquartered at the Forest Product Laboratory in Madison, WI. He resides in New York State.



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Email Lynne Christensen, Director of Operations, with more details. While we can't promise to profile every project brought to our attention... we do try our absolute best!