

The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See also the Fair of the Sisters of Notre Dame, Dec. XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and

Annals from the Archives

The House of Loretto, Ipswich, MA



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Written by

Nancy Barthelemy

Archivist

nancy.barthelemy@sndden.org

sndnewengland.wordpress.com

**The House of Loretto
Ipswich, MA
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—People arriving to visit the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Ipswich, Massachusetts are often curious about the large estate positioned directly across from the main entrance. Today the building is known as the House of Loretto, but through the years, it has had a variety of names, identities and functions.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the land was owned by Gustavus Kinsman (1850-1921), an Ipswich farmer and real estate agent. The property was known during that time as either the Treadwell Farm or the old Sutton place. But in June 1906, Boston attorney Charles Putnam Searle (1855-1917) bought the land from Kinsman for \$35,000. The *Boston Globe* reported on June 30, 1906 that the land was situated “on the easterly side of Town Hill, commanding an unobstructed view of ocean, river and country. There are 300 acres of land, upon which is an artificial pond, natural forest, etc., two complete sets of farm buildings. Both farms are supplied with water and electric lights.” Searle planned to convert the property into a summer home for himself, his wife, Cora (Hogg) Putnam and their three sons and daughter. He hired the architectural firm Kilham and Hopkins to design and build the home. The firm was begun by Walter Kilham and James Hopkins. They were well known in Boston, especially for their 20th century reform housing, exemplified by the Salem Point neighborhood in Salem, MA, which the firm built in 1915 for employees of the Naumkeag Steam Cotton Company.

For this estate, however, the architects relied on the popularity of Gothic and Renaissance design prevalent during what was known as the Beaux Art era, which originated in France. This architecture was fashionable with wealthy industrialists between the 1880s to the 1930s. Construction for the estate began in 1906 and was finished by the summer of 1907. Upon completion, the home bore resemblance to an Italian villa and was compared to Isabella Stewart Gardner’s mansion in Boston. The Searles named their summer home *Inglisby*. For the next decade, the family resided at *Inglisby* from May until either November or December. For the remainder of the year, they lived at their Commonwealth Avenue home in Boston. For quite a while, they hosted parties and weddings for many friends at *Inglisby* and were popular subjects in the Boston area gossip columns. In 1913, however, the family’s second oldest son, Charles Jr., died of scarlet fever at the age of 24. For the next couple of years, there were fewer gatherings at their home. But after a period of mourning, their daughter Corinna was married at the estate in September of 1916. Sadly, four months later, her father died on January 17, 1917.

In the fall of 1917, John E. Searle, Charles and Cora’s oldest son put the estate up for sale. It wasn’t on the market for long. In December, Isaac Rand Thomas (1865-1954) and his wife, Gertrude bought the property. Rand was a well known horse breeder in the area and named the estate after one of his most successful racing horses, *Monstone*. In addition to his horses, Rand also raised White Holland turkeys and Ayrshire cattle at Monstone Farm. Through the 1920s he was active in maintaining his horses and herds, entering them in competitions and races. By the 1930s, though, the Thomas’ lived a quieter life. It seemed that finances became a concern for the Thomas’ during WWII because in June of 1947, Gertrude began the process of selling the estate by auctioning off the contents of the home and farm. Everything from the family’s Steinway piano and Chippendale furniture to the farm equipment was sold. In August of that year, she sold the remainder of the property to film actor, Raymond Massey (1896-1983).

The word of the sale to Massey generated great excitement in the town of Ipswich. Massey never came to view the

property himself. Instead, the sale was managed by an agent, which caused much speculation as to when Massey would move into the home with his wife, Dorothy, and their children. But the property needed significant amount of work before the family could take up residence. In addition, the barns and other farm buildings had been torn down. And with the auction having emptied the house of furniture and other items, the Masseys would need time to refurnish it.

To the disappointment of many in Ipswich, however, Massey never lived on the estate. Instead, he sold it in May of 1948 to Barclay H. Warburton, an avid sailor and stepson to William K. Vanderbilt. Warburton renovated the home and moved in with his wife, Margaret in 1949. They renamed the estate Saracen Farms. Warburton took an interest in local politics and between 1953 to 1956, he served on the Ipswich Board of Selectman. He also ran and won office to the Massachusetts Statehouse. He resigned from the Legislature in 1959 after suffering injuries at his home. About the same time, he put Saracen Farms up for sale and in May of that year the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur bought the property. At the time of the sale, the land was home to herds of Guernsey cattle, as well as sheep and pigs. After the sale, Warburton gave up his seat in the Statehouse and retired to Newport, RI.

The manor house was used by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur during that summer as a vacation home. In the fall and winter, the sisters painted the rooms and laid tiling where it was needed. The North Beverly sisters donated furniture and sisters from across the North Shore sent supplies of food to fill the pantry. The following year, on May 1, 1960, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new novitiate took place. It also marked the official opening of the *House of Loretto* as the manor was now called, in honor of Sr. Loretto Julia Carroll.

Construction continued on the new novitiate during those next two years. When the work was finally finished, the dedication was set for July 4, 1962. The House of Loretto continued to be used for retreats and other activities until October of 1987. After 1987, the house was used for some provincial meetings and days of recollection. It was also leased for a time by Project Adventure. These activities ended in 1997 and the building has remained empty ever since.



Interior Staircase of the House of Loretto
2012.97

Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ House of Loretto Annals, 1960-1962.
- ◆ *Boston Globe* Archives, 1872-2019.
- ◆ *Ipswich Chronicle*, 1947-1959.
- ◆ Ancestry.com
- ◆ *Report on the History of the 1906 Searle Villa* by Susan S. Nelson, 2000.