

Art Institute to Reap Aid on Epstein Estate

By Thalia

NEXT SUNDAY afternoon one of the most beautiful estates in this part of the country will be open to the general public for the first time when Edgecliff, the Max Epsteins' house and gardens, will be the scene of a benefit for the emergency fund of the Art institute. The tour will be another project of the energetic Winnetka group of the woman's committee of the fund.

Under the generalship of Mrs. John Hooker and Mrs. Walter Wallace, the Winnetka group already has collected \$105,549 toward the \$1,600,000 financial transfusion needed to rejuvenate our Art institute, within whose aging 73 year old frame beats one of the most vigorous artistic hearts in the country, even if some of its vital organs—boilers, for instance—show time's ravages.

Probably the fact that Mr. Epstein is a trustee of the institute made the unique occasion possible, for only once before has a group wandered thru handsome Edgecliff.

The Epstein estate is the realization of any architect's dream; the house was designed as a setting for one of the finest collections of old masters in the country. The architect, Samuel Marx, also served as decorator. Its gardens were designed by another Chicagoan, the late Mrs. Walter Brewster, who was famed for her gardens in Lake Forest,

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Estate Tour to Assist Art Institute Drive

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which were matchlessly beautiful
and ingenious.

Perhaps never again will the Epsteins' setting for an art collection be built, for not only are fewer private collections being made, but the days of museum class houses seems to be over. Everything that went into the Epstein house—including such minor details as the jade knobs on dressing room tables — was custom made.

Whole rooms of French boiserie were removed from their original houses and reinstalled. In the circular library [with a ceiling covered in gold leaf] only the central motif of a fine old Aubusson carpet was used, because no circular Aubusson could be found. It, of course, will be covered by canvas for the tour, as will all the matchless floors, but everything else will be just as the Epsteins and their guests enjoy the house and the gardens.

The gardens, like the house, are a masterpiece, with long vistas, like those of a French private park, highlighting the nine acre estate. The lake is a blue backdrop as the eye travels toward the east. Greenery soothes and spots of color catch the eye.

Whether visitors go to see the house, the gardens, or the collection of old masters [among the canvases is a Botticelli for which, I hear, Mr. Epstein paid \$285,000], the visit will be a memorable one.

Recent flowers, when Mrs. William H. Mitchell, Illinois chairman of the women's finance division of the Taft committee, recently announced the plans for a "Tribute to Taft" luncheon to be held Tuesday at the Conrad Hilton hotel, she did it in a highly patriotic floral setting with a handsome luncheon table centerpiece of delphiniums, white carnations, and scarlet roses, and tricolor corsages which lifted everyone's patriotic spirits. Mrs. Mitchell's co-hostess was Mrs. Alfred O'Gara who will act as chairman for the luncheon which they hope will swell the campaign funds for their candidate. Each person at the luncheon will contribute \$50.

The guest of honor and principal speaker will be Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, chairman of the national Citizens for Taft committee. He will be introduced by Gen. Robert E. Wood, honorary chairman of the luncheon who also is Mrs. Mitchell's beloved and devoted father. The 27 women on the Tribute to Taft committee include Mrs. Laurance Armour, Mrs. Merrill C. Meigs, Mrs. Lloyd W. Bowers [whose husband is Mrs. Taft's nephew], and the two daughters of Frank Lowden, a famous Republican governor of Illinois who nearly became President, Mrs. Albert F. Madlener Jr. and Mrs. C. Phillip Miller.

Speaking of beautiful houses again, Mrs. Clive Runnells recently opened her new Lake Forest home for the summer sale which the Hull House shop offers suburban buyers each year. I hear that the house was almost as much a drawing card as the charming handmade items and the unique bits of china and glass that have made the Hull House shop famous. Everyone was fascinated with what Mrs. Runnells did with the old Ernest Hamill house. The whole top floor was sliced off, a new trend, I am told, in modern remodeling of big houses. Before his death, the famous architect David Adler, outlined the plans for the remodeling and the house bears his unmistakable autograph, never signed to anything except beauty. The completion of the remodeling was in the hands of young George W. W. Brewster of Boston, whose marriage to Mrs. Donald M. Ryerson's daughter, Joan, brought another gifted young architect to Chicago. Mrs. Runnells' lovely home has the clean, crisp lines of a "modern" house and all the charm and graciousness of an old one. Its huge living room, for instance, has almost two walls of ceiling to floor glass, bringing into the room the green of a garden on one side and the terraces looking out to Lake Michigan on the other. It is furnished with beautiful antiques, among them pieces Mrs. Runnells bought from the famous Castle Hill home of the late Mrs. Richard T. Crane, in Ipswich, Mass.

One of the most beautiful estates in mid-Illinois was Robert Allerton's in Monticello, which he gave to the University of Illinois when he moved to Hawaii. An invitation to a week-end at "The Farms" never was refused by anyone lucky enough to receive it. The great country house, magnificent gardens, and miles of lush farm land gave one a new idea of what country life in America can be. The taste of its owner, of course, had everything to do with its beauty. In the days when he lived there and in Chicago he was one of the most active trustees of the Art institute, and one of its most generous donors. The Allerton wing was his gift.

Mr. Allerton and his adopted son, John Gregg, who was one of the city's most promising young architects, return to this country

for brief annual visits. At the University of Illinois they meet the young architects who have won the traveling scholarships which are also among Mr. Allerton's benefactions. The scholarships take their recipients to New England and the south to show them the American architectural heritage, Mr. Allerton says. Mr. Allerton and Mr. Gregg were in Chicago briefly recently [too briefly, their devoted friends always declare] and Mrs. John A. Winterbotham had a tea party for them.

Benefits are in the air these days, especially special nights at summer theaters which are taken over by organizations. One of the most colorful will be Wednesday night at the Music theater, which will be a benefit for the Church Mission of Help and its auxiliary. Mrs. H. Stuart Stone Jr. is president of the board of the fine old Episcopalian organization which offers help to any needy person, no matter what her race or creed. Mrs. Abner A. Webster is chairman of the benefit.

On Wednesday the Artists Advisory council had a luncheon and musical at the Opera club for the benefit of a fund to aid young musicians. It was called "A Musical Fiesta" and proved to be well named.