



TEN CHIMNEYS
TEN CHIMNEYS PRESS RELEASE

ABOUT TEN CHIMNEYS – THE ESTATE

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne designed and decorated Ten Chimneys the same way they crafted each performance – one delightful detail building upon another. Each room was carefully dressed as if it were a stage set. Their choices were more about theatricality and whimsy than opulence. After all, why use real marble when you can tease your audience with surprising trompe l’oeil? Yet, despite meticulous planning, Ten Chimneys exudes an easy comfort.

Ten Chimneys’ historic furnishings, hand-painted murals, enchantingly personal décor, tender mementos, and diverse collections are still intact and unchanged since the Lunts first assembled them in the 1920s and 1930s. And the magic is undiminished. As guests are welcomed through the Lunts’ remarkable creation, they are surprised and then moved by countless details. The comforting slope of the dining room ceiling. The flirtatious glance of a milkmaid in the upper hallway. The patina of the poolhouse cupola.

The décor at Ten Chimneys mirrors the lives and experiences of the Lunts, with mementos from international trips, remembrances from treasured friends, pervading theatrical techniques, and countless personal references. Ten Chimneys is as personal as a diary. As guests journey through the estate, they are surrounded, and often inspired, by Lynn and Alfred’s creativity, passion, and humor.

Nestled in the rolling Kettle Moraine of southeast Wisconsin (and surrounded by 90-acres of preserved land), the estate includes the elegant three-story, 18-room main house, a quaint 8-room country cottage, a Swedish-style log cabin (used as a studio for the era’s artistic and theatrical elite), a unique pool and poolhouse, a creamery, a greenhouse, barns, stables, and other outbuildings.

Ten Chimneys began in 1914. Alfred Lunt came into an inheritance from his father and purchased undeveloped land in Genesee Depot, Wisconsin, where he and his family had



often picnicked. He then personally designed the first portion of Ten Chimneys' Main House as a home for his mother and half-sisters. In 1922-23, after the Lunts were married, the house was extensively remodeled and the chicken coop was converted into a cottage for Lynn and Alfred to live in when they weren't performing.

Most of the renovations and additions to Ten Chimneys took place during the 1930s. After signing a contract that gave them every summer off, the Lunts decided to move into the Main House themselves. Alfred's mother and one half-sister moved into the chicken coop cottage, which the Lunts renamed "the hen house." A Swedish-style log cabin was built on the grounds of the Lunts' estate as a Studio for artistic creation and collaboration. In 1934, final additions were made to the Main House, giving it six chimneys (from a multitude of fireplaces and Swedish stoves). Added to the three chimneys at the Cottage and the one at the Studio, the estate now had ten chimneys, and a new name from its devoted owners.

As they were creating each room of the estate as a stage set, the Lunts invited a prominent scenic and costume designer from the Theatre Guild, Claggett Wilson, to visit Ten Chimneys and help them. Wilson thought he would spend a month there painting one mural. He ended up spending more than two years at Ten Chimneys painting murals on walls and ceilings throughout the estate, in addition to creating other unique decorative effects using intricately cut-out wallpaper and a variety of inventive stage techniques.

The estate is filled with remarkable collections of art and artifacts: Delft china, Staffordshire figures, rare original prints, converted pre-Civil War oil lamps, French bottles, Spanish statues, and much, much more - all with personal connections, theatrical references, and coexisting in perfect harmony. Desks, closets, safes, and bookshelves are overflowing with irreplaceable and treasured artifacts from the Lunts and their friends: scores of first edition books hand inscribed by friends like Alexander Woollcott and Edna Ferber; personal hand-made gifts from intimates Helen Hayes and Noël Coward; snapshots of the Lunts with Charlie Chaplin or the Queen Mother; letters from devoted protégé Laurence Olivier; and on and on. Even outdoors, the birch trees that populate the estate were a gift from Alexander Woollcott, and the beautiful copper mermaid on top of the poolhouse was designed by Cecil



Beaton, who crafted it himself as a gift to the Lunts.

Created with the same humanizing wit and passion for perfection that distinguished their stage performances, Ten Chimneys is the Lunts' most enduring and tangible artistic legacy. For decades, their idyllic retreat beguiled and inspired the country's finest actors, writers, designers, directors, and artists. Now, an invitation to Ten Chimneys, once coveted by the nation's greatest luminaries, is extended to everyone.

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