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Ford House makes a splash, completes restoration of historic lagoon and pool

GROSSE POINTE SHORES, Michigan (July 20, 2022) – Using historic records combined with modern engineering, Ford House staff and architects from Detroit-based Albert Kahn Associates have completed the restoration of the estate’s swimming pool, lagoon and surrounding landscape.

One of the most extensive restoration projects to date on the 87-acre estate, the team restored the entire southeast corner of the 87-acre property to how Edsel and Eleanor Ford, architect Albert Kahn, and landscape architect Jens Jensen originally envisioned it in the late 1920s. The restored area will officially open to the public after August 1, 2022.

“As stewards of a National Historic Landmark, this is an important piece of Ford House’s mission to preserve and restore the physical fabric of this estate,” said Mark J. Heppner, President & CEO of Ford House. “We’re excited to turn back the clock so that visitors will now be able to experience the pool, lagoon, landscape and lake views as the Ford family did nine decades ago.”

Ford House needed to make vital repairs to the iconic swimming pool, which had developed irreparable leaks since its installation about 95 years ago. In addition, the landscaping had been altered over the years, with additional rocks, paving materials, trees and shrubs that were not part of the original design.

To achieve historical accuracy, the architects relied on Ford House’s extensive archives and team of researchers. They were able to reference the original plans, architectural drawings, historical photographs, family films and other historical records.

“We had to make it look like the photography from the 1930s but use modern technology and construction techniques to make it last for another 100 years,” said Stephen White, Principal and Director of Landscape Architecture & Urban Design for Albert Kahn Associates.

The elegance of the Fords’ kidney-shaped pool’s design and peaceful wooded landscape holds significance as a historical treasure in the world of landscape architecture.

The original design called for the area to feel like the woods of northern Michigan, or “Up North” as Michiganders call it, relying on native trees and shrubs. A grassy shoreline around the lagoon made it sunny, open and relatively accessible on foot. Multiple vantage points afforded expansive vistas of Lake St. Clair.

“Before the restoration, the landscape behind the pool had become overgrown. It lost its hierarchy, the diversity of material, and the layering that were meant to replicate a northern Michigan landscape,” White said. “The landscape had lost its character, but we were able to bring it back.”

Albert Kahn Associates applied new technologies to implement significant rehabilitation of the swimming pool's structural integrity, plumbing and mechanical systems. The lagoon was dredged, pipes have been replaced, and the grassy perimeter was restored. Organic and plant matter were manicured or removed to reveal once lost stone pathways, sightlines to the lake, and rock outcroppings.

Now that the restoration is complete, visitors can experience the pool and lagoon area when they come to Ford House for a tour, grounds and garden walk, or other special event. Sorry, you have to leave your swimsuits at home. No swimming is allowed in the historic pool! The estate is open six days a week, and admission for a grounds pass is just \$5. For hours, more information and tickets, go to www.fordhouse.org.

Ford House will also host a Poolside Party at 7 p.m. August 4, featuring music, light hors d'oeuvres and summery cocktails. Admission is \$60 for the public, \$45 for members and includes one drink ticket. A cash bar will also be available. Tickets are at www.fordhouse.org/events.

About Ford House

Ford House is located at 1100 Lake Shore Road in Grosse Pointe Shores. The historic lakeside estate was the family home of Edsel Ford – Henry and Clara Ford's only child – where he lived with his wife Eleanor and their children beginning in 1928. Since 1978, Ford House has welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors to share in Eleanor Ford's vision of preserving the estate for future generations to enjoy through interpretive tours, family activities, lectures, exhibits, and gardens and grounds events. Ford House was named a National Historic Landmark in 2017. For more information, visit fordhouse.org or call 313-884-4222. Connect with Ford House on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

About Albert Kahn Associates

Albert Kahn Associates (Kahn) is a full-service architecture and engineering firm specializing in commercial, healthcare, industrial, and historic restoration projects around the world. Today, Kahn is still headquartered in Detroit and calls the Kahn-designed Fisher Building home. Kahn's expertise encompasses architecture, engineering, design, planning, and program management. To learn more about our services and recent projects, visit our website AlbertKahn.com or engage with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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