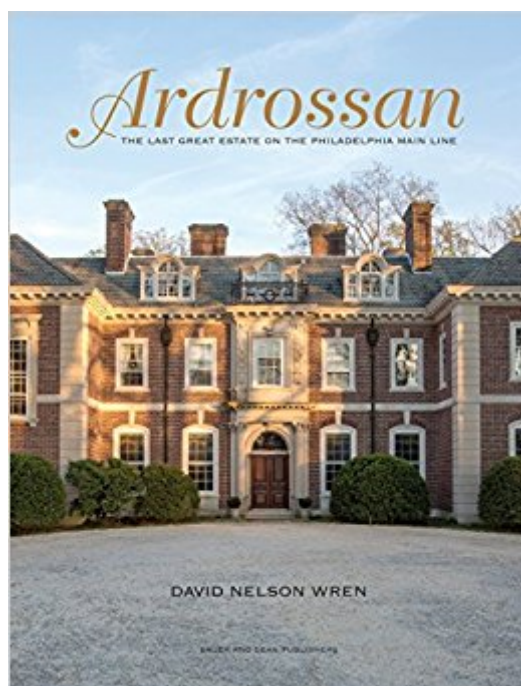


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# Ardrossan: The Last Great Estate On The Philadelphia Main Line



## Synopsis

A unique and fascinating chronicle of the construction and furnishing of an early 20th-century country house, vividly brought to life by letters from the family archive. Never-before-published drawings from Horace Trumbauer's architectural office, including the original and revised plans for all three floors, drawings of interior finishes and exterior details related to the main residence, as well as designs for other projects on the estate, including a never-built gate lodge, beautifully represented in Trumbauer's colored rendering. More than 450 historic and newly commissioned images and two 8-page gatefolds. An intimate portrait that captures the elegant lifestyle of the Montgomerys and the majesty of their beloved home and estate. A richly detailed history of the baronial splendor of the Philadelphia Main Line estate Ardrossan and of the Montgomery family who built it. Real-life American counterparts of the Granthams of Downton Abbey, the Montgomerys are best known as the family on which Philip Barry based his 1939 play, *The Philadelphia Story*, featuring Katharine Hepburn, who also starred in the later Hollywood film of the same name. The Montgomerys entertained in the grand manner, hosting fox hunts and dinner dances. Guests included diplomat W. Averell Harriman; first lady Edith Roosevelt, Mrs. Montgomery's cousin; and famed vaudevillians the Duncan Sisters. At its height, the magnificent estate encompassed roughly 760 acres of rolling Pennsylvania hills. The Montgomerys home, still owned by the family, stands as a glorious reminder of the halcyon days of the Gilded Age. The fifty-room Georgian-style manor house was designed in 1911 by Horace Trumbauer, one of America's foremost classical architects who designed the Elms in Newport, Rhode Island, for E. J. Berwind, and Whitemarsh Hall, Trumbauer's masterpiece built for the Stotesburys outside of Philadelphia. The first-floor rooms, essentially unaltered since 1913 when the London-based firm of White, Allom & Company finished decorating them, feature the family's art collection, including ancestral portraits by Thomas Sully and hunt scenes and landscapes on or near Ardrossan by Charles Morris Young. The book also chronicles the history of the family's commercial dairy and prized herd of Ayrshires. This beautifully illustrated book features never-before-published architectural drawings from Trumbauer's office and interior photographs shot by Mattie E. Hewitt in the 1930s, as well as family snapshots and images by celebrated photographers Cecil Beaton and Toni Frissell commissioned by *Vogue*, *Country Life*, and *Town & Country*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ardrossan is one of the great houses of America, English in inspiration but American in its way of life. Epitome of the Philadelphia Main Line, the house stands almost unchanged from the moment it was finished in 1913. David Nelson Wren has quarried the riches of the family archive to produce an irresistible, erudite portrait of the Montgomery family at home the doors of Ardrossan have been thrown open to reveal how these and other preoccupations helped shape a true Philadelphia story.

--Clive Aslet, author of *The American Country House* A masterwork of patrician American ambition,

Ardrossan was built in the very grandest anglophile style, but with all the up-to-the-minute comforts and innovations of modern living and none of the privations of the drafty, poorly plumbed manses

across the Atlantic that inspired it. To this day, the distinguished rooms that the architect Horace Trumbauer conceived and the blue-chip decorators White, Allom & Company filled with elegant eighteenth-century recreations are an evocative testament to a long vanished age. Wren s

fastidiously researched book provides a rich document of fascinating lives led in a fabled setting on

Philadelphia s Main Line. --Hamish Bowles, International Editor-at-Large, *American Vogue*An

unparalleled look at an American country estate in the first half of the twentieth century. In a most

engaging way, Wren brings to life the story of Ardrossan and the family that inspired the play and

then movie *The Philadelphia Story*. He weaves the details of architectural design, furnishings,

collections, and the history of a gentleman s farm with wonderful accounts of the people who lived and worked there. This is a must-have for anyone interested in American architectural and social

history or who enjoys a very readable glimpse into another time and way of life. - Jeff Groff, Estate

Historian, Winterthur Museum, Garden and LibraryA brilliant profile of a family on Philadelphia's

Main Line and their splendid historic estate that to this day defines a bygone era. Highly readable

with glorious photographs. Thoroughly enjoyable! --Liz Smith, author and columnist

David Nelson Wren is an independent scholar who focuses mainly on history and art. In the late 1980s, Wren, a native of Dallas, Texas, relocated to Philadelphia, where his love affair with Ardrossan began. He currently divides his time between Philadelphia and Trumansburg, New York, where he and his husband own Halsey House, a landmark Greek Revival farmhouse that is one of the top-ranking inns in the Finger Lakes region. Wren writes a twice-monthly column for the Ithaca Journal and is a longtime member of several of Philadelphia's more venerable institutions, including the Athenæum of Philadelphia and the Franklin Inn Club.

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