

**“Alswel,” 12720 Alswel Rd., Sunset Hills, 1911-1914, Guy T. Norton,  
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“Alswel,” located in the Sunset Hills vicinity, is a country estate associated with the Lemp Brewing Company. Unlike his romantic and detached younger brother, William Lemp Jr. aggressively sought to fill the shoes of his illustrious ancestors, and for a time exceeded them. Described in his later life as being “not unfriendly, but by nature rather cold and crisp,” he expanded the Lemp brewery significantly.

He was no less active in his social life, and in this respect he shared some of the idiosyncrasies of his brother Edwin. His first wife, Lillian Handlan, was the celebrated “Lavender Lady” of St. Louis. Perhaps styling herself after the empress Alexandra of Russia, she created a sensation everywhere she went, wearing a separate lavender outfit for each day of the week. The couple had one son, William III, but parted in 1909. William Jr. was married a second time in 1915 to Miss Ellie Kohler, the daughter of the president of the Columbia Brewing Company.

Like Edwin, William Jr. chose a dramatic view from the bluffs overlooking the Meramec River. Alswel was begun in 1911 and completed in about 1914 on a property of 192 acres. Estimated to cost almost \$300,000, the main house is clad in delicate cypress but is actually a sturdy steel-frame structure with a first floor of reinforced concrete and hollow tile. Designed by Guy T. Norton, the staff architect of the brewery, it is in the Swiss Chalet Style, otherwise unknown in this area. Japanese cypress and white oak finish many of the main rooms. Servants’ quarters, a garage, a machine shop, and offices were erected in the same style on the property.

The Lemp Brewery faltered in the second decade of the century due to obsolete equipment and heavy competition from the Anheuser-Busch Brewery. Prohibition dealt the final blow. The Lemp Brewery did not make the transition to non-alcoholic beverage production which allowed its competition to survive. William Jr. sold the brewing plant to the International Shoe Company in 1922. He shot himself with a revolver that December, becoming the fourth suicide in the Lemp family.

The Alswel estate was threatened with demolition in the late 1980s even though it was given National Register status. While the outbuildings were demolished and the estate subdivided, the main house has survived and is privately owned.

**Kahle-Laumeir House, 10580 Rott Rd., Sunset Hills, 1917, 1935, Ernst  
Janssen**



The focus of Laumeier Sculpture Park is the Kahle-Laumeier House, constructed in 1917 and 1935. Roland L. Kahle bought 47.67 acres on Rott Road in 1916. He took out a building permit in 1917, listing himself as the owner, builder, and architect. The house was actually designed by Ernst C. Janssen, who had a practice of more than sixty years centering around the German-American families of St. Louis' south side. Although born in the United States, Janssen studied in Karlsruhe, Germany. The mainstay of his practice was brewery architecture, and his characteristic style for residential buildings has been called "brewer's baronial." The Kahle-Laumeier House reflects the popularity in those years of the bungalow, the low-lying informal house type originating in British India. As far as is known, the house is unique as a documented example of a bungalow style country house by a major St. Louis architect.

At the time he purchased the property, Roland Kahle was the department manager of the Ringen Stove Company, which merged with the Quick Meal Stove Company to form the American Stove Company in 1901. Kahle built the stone garage on the property in 1931 and the gatehouse in 1936. He died in 1938, and his wife Ada sold the property to Henry H. Laumeier in 1940.

Laumeier was the son of Herman Laumeier, the founder of the United Bank and Trust Company, and Christine Hinck Laumeier, later recognized as one of St. Louis' wealthiest women. Laumeier married Matilda Cramer in 1941 and recommenced construction on the house, modifying it somewhat.

The 97.8-acre Laumeier Park and the seven-room stone mansion were bequeathed to the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation by Mrs. Laumeier in 1968 in memory of her husband. The house now functions as an art gallery, displaying selected museum exhibits. It forms the center of Laumeier sculpture Park, which features work in internationally acclaimed artists.