

Charles E. Appleby's Trout Pond

by Daniel E Russell
City Historian
City of Glen Cove, New York

Charles Edgar Appleby (1824–1913) was a wealthy New York City land speculator who, in the early 1870's, purchased a large tract of farmland at Garvies Point in Glen Cove, Long Island, New York with the intent of making a summer home for himself on the property.

Appleby was one of the succession of owners of the lands at Garvies Point in Glen Cove. Originally called "Sheep Pen Point" during the colonial era, the 90 acre parcel was acquired in the early 19th Century by Dr Thomas Garvie, a Scottish-born physician who had emigrated to New York in 1803. During the second half of the 19th Century, title to the lands became conflicted when John LaFarge, a wealthy New York City land speculator, foreclosed on the property after James Garvie (eldest son of Dr. Thomas Garvie) defaulted on outstanding mortgages. Dr. Thomas Garvie's wife, Helen Garvie, appears to have argued in court that as widow of Thomas Garvie, her claim to ownership of the property superseded the right of her son to mortgage the property. While the matter was still under litigation, both LaFarge and Helen Garvie died. Charles Appleby, a friend of the LaFarge family, purchased the property at Garvies Point/Glen Cove Landing in the early 1870's. Meanwhile, Helen Garvie MacKenzie, daughter of Dr. Thomas and Helen Garvie, claimed ownership of the property based upon inheritance from her mother, as did Helen Garvie MacKenzie's daughter Mary Helen MacKenzie. The legal battle over title to the land between members of the Garvie/MacKenzie family and the LaFarge/Appleby faction dragged on through the courts for at least 50 years (and probably longer).

The 1873 Beers atlas plate for Glen Cove remains strangely moot on the issue of property lines and ownership. While an 1891 Hyde atlas plate of Glen Cove shows the property divided roughly in half between Appleby and MacKenzie, a 1904 map shows the entire parcel as owned by Appleby, with MacKenzie relegated to the status of tenant.

While the Garvie family maintained their residence in a large old colonial homestead (which pre-dated their ownership of the property) which faced modern-day Garvies Point Road (then called "Bay Street") Appleby resided in a mansion on the northern border of the parcel. Whether this is the same mansion that LaFarge built on this site, or a new structure, is unknown. The Appleby residence was accessed either via "Garvie Avenue" (modern day McLoughling Street) or by way of a now-defunct, unnamed road which was later absorbed into Morgan Memorial Park. This latter road provided convenient access to the Glen Cove steamboat landing. The main residence is shown on the west side of the roadway, along with a semicircular drive for horse-drawn vehicles leading up to and away from the mansion. Two structures east of the main mansion are also shown.

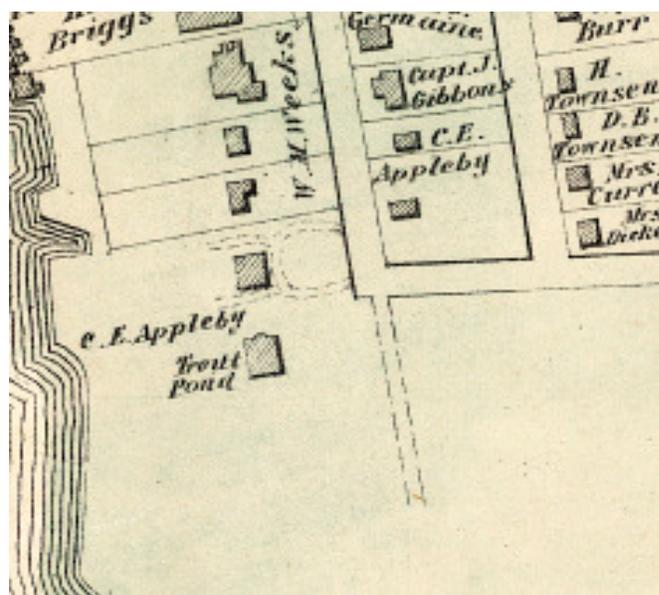


Fig. 1 - 1873 Beers Atlas Plate for Glen Cove showing details of the Appleby estate.

Whether these are outbuildings connected with Appleby's estate (stables/barns, groundskeeper cottages, etc) is uncertain.

The 1873 Beers atlas plate for Glen Cove shows an interesting feature associated with the Appleby estate: a "Trout Pond" located south of the mansion (see Fig. 3). It is of rectangular shape, with a distinct convex bulge evident on its northern side. Its morphology clearly indicates that it is, if not a completely man-made structure, a considerably modified natural feature.

Fresh trout were considered a delicacy by many 19th Century New Yorkers, and the wealthy estate owners at Glen Cove were no exception. However, a stringently regulated trout fishing season and a dwindling trout population – the result of over-fishing and pollution of local trout streams and ponds – made a dependable supply of

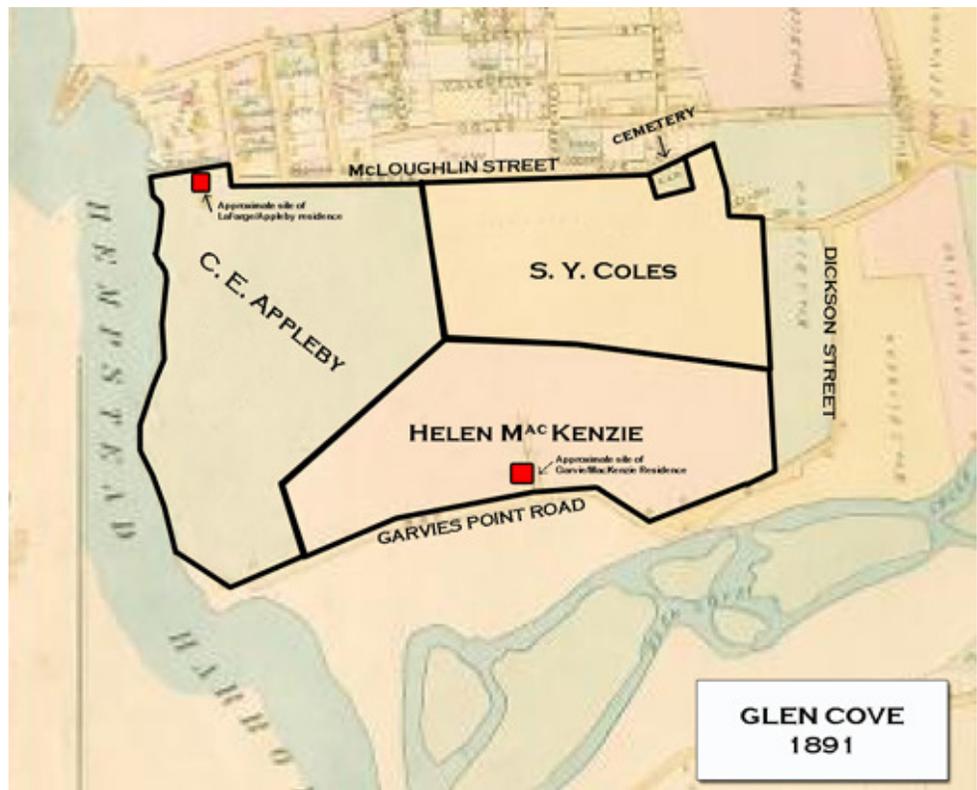


Fig 2. Property boundaries of the Appleby, MacKenzie and Coles estates in 1891.

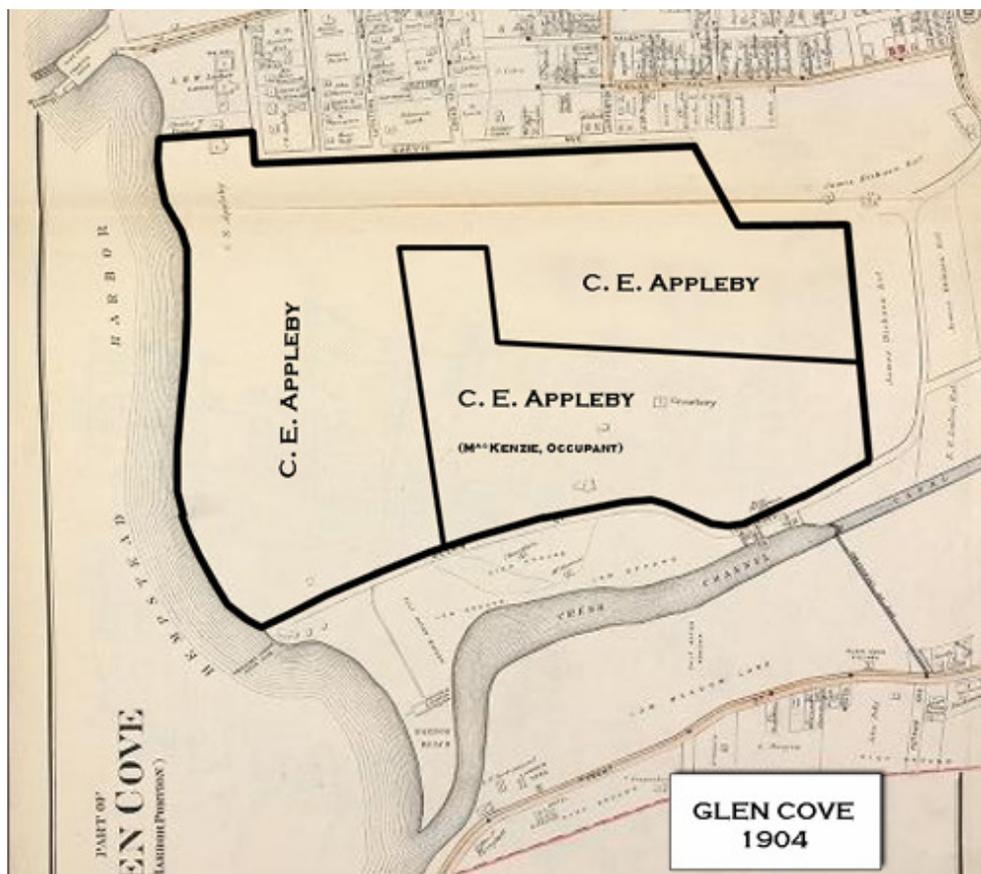


Fig 2. Property boundaries of the Appleby, MacKenzie and Coles estates in 1904.

fresh trout for the dinner table problematic. By the late 1860's and early 1870's, experiments were already being conducted to artificially stock Long Island's streams and ponds with trout, and parallel efforts were being made to establish commercial aquaculture of trout in man-made ponds on Long Island. Key to these efforts was understanding the basic environmental parameters which trout required in order to thrive. The most important factor proved to be an ample supply of cool, well-oxygenated water.

Appleby's trout pond was probably intended to maintain a modest population of fish for his dinner table, enabling him to share this gourmet treat with family and guests visiting his estate throughout the year, unconstrained by the sporadic availability of wild-caught trout and State imposed fishing seasons.

Using McLoughlin Street,



Fig. 4. The 1873 Beers Atlas plate detailing the south-west section of the Glen Cove Landing district, overlain on an aerial reconnaissance photograph.

Landing Road, Germain Street and Jackson Street as datum points, a rough overlay can be created on an aerial reconnaissance photograph to better establish the original location of Appleby's "Trout Pond." The pond appears to have been sited just inside the north-west boundary of modern-day Garvies Point Preserve. Examination of the area indicates that an artesian spring is present, which would have provided precisely the water resource necessary for a successful trout pond.

At present, no information has been found to indicate the construction materials used to fabricate the trout pond. A variety of options were available, ranging from a wooden tank to a concrete-lined pond. A survey of the site using Ground Penetrating Radar might refine the location of the pond, and exploratory trenches might yield useful information on how it was

built.

Appleby's trout pond was not unique in Glen Cove. A second "trout pond" is shown on the 1873 Beers atlas plate for Glen Cove, located west of modern day School Street (then considered part of "Glen Street"). This trout pond was positioned to take advantage of the artesian spring(s) which fed "Killbuck Brook," a small freshwater stream that paralleled School Street. It is uncertain who owned this second trout pond, but it appears to be located on the southern bounds of the estate of Judge Elias Beach.