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Opposite: Marin Art and Garden Center (MAGC)
Above: A Maud Daggett sculpture graces the pool of the Edward Finkbine garden in a landscape by Helen Van Pelt, Pasadena, 1924. Photo from California Southland.
Helen Dupuy Van Pelt: Quiet Pioneer
BY MARLEA GRAHAM
Very few of Van Pelt’s commissions involved commercial or other large-scale projects. She seems to have followed the advice of U.C. Berkeley’s founding landscape professor John W. Gregg, who told another aspiring student, Laurenus Clark Seelye, that “the landscape gardener needed to know how to plan for colors at different seasons and at varying heights.”

As an artist, the landscape-gardener needed to know “the social habits of the people” who would use the locale. And be able to arrange the entire construction in a pleasing manner and to provide scenic vistas. He must, for the convenience, comfort, and safety of the humans for whom the project was planned. As an artist, the landscape-gardener needed to know how to plan for colors at different seasons and at varying heights.

Taking a brief leave from the Simonds firm to further her education, Helen toured Europe in the summer of 1909, traveling under the protection of her maternal aunt, Sarah Van Pelt. Judging by her later slide lectures, she visited gardens in England, France, Italy, and Switzerland. The Smith Alumnae Quarterly (October 1909) reported that “Helen Dupuy, who has just returned from Europe, will continue her study of garden designing this winter and expects to work under Mr. C. Martin, head gardener at Smith, for six months beginning in March, to develop the horticultural side of the profession.” Perhaps it is only coincidental that the class announcement for the 1910-1911 horticulture class added the study of “elements of landscape gardening” to its description.

Christopher Vernon gives some insight into the Simonds firm, writing “Simonds is known to have given new staff members ‘apprenticeship of service in the cemetery and on private landscape work on which he was engaged.’” J. Roy West (1880-1941), who was Simonds’ partner after 1910, assisted in training these younger men. West is described by Geiger as “a congenial man who was known for mentoring new staff members.” Despite her five years with Simonds, only two jobs are documented as involving Helen during her time there: Brucemore, the estate of George Bruce Douglas in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, now a National Trust property, supervised by West; and, independently, a summer retreat on the lake at Charlevoix, Michigan, for the Robert Stuart family. Douglas and Stuart were cousins of a distinct “Prairie Style” popularized by Jens Jensen, though Simonds himself disclaimed there was any such thing. Simonds did advocate design that emphasized local landscapes and familiar, especially native, plants. Geiger noted Simonds’ belief that “the landscape gardener seeks first to appreciate the natural beauty of a place, and then makes the most of these features in his design. He has a reason for everything, even though it may only be that it looks well.” Extrapolating from his article, “The Landscape-gardener and His Work,” Geiger paraphrased Simonds: “The landscape gardener needed to know soils, drainage, road construction, architecture, botany, horticulture, climate, and the ‘social habits of the people’ who would use the locale. And be able to arrange the entire construction in a pleasing manner and to provide scenic vistas. He must, for the convenience, comfort, and safety of the humans for whom the project was planned. As an artist, the landscape-gardener needed to know how to plan for colors at different seasons and at varying heights.”

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Helen Agnes Dupuy was born in Chicago, the eldest of four daughters, on December 28, 1885. Her parents both had college educations. The family settled in Ravenswood, designed in 1806 to be Chicago’s first commuter suburb and annexed to the city in 1889. Among the family’s closest friends and neighbors was Ossian Cole Simonds (1855-1931), the internationally famous landscape gardener of nearby Lakeview Cemetery. Helen Dupuy’s first exposure to professional landscape gardening could only have come through the connection to Simonds. She attended Chica- go’s Lake View High School, and very briefly, Lake Forest College, then Smith, from which she graduated in 1907.

At Smith, Helen had the opportunity to absorb the legacy of FL Olmsted & Co., the firm hired in 1890 to create a new landscape plan for the campus. The college’s president, Laurens Clark Seeley, had engaged the Olmsted’s “to lay out the entire campus more symmetrically and artistically for the location of future buildings and to carry out a plan of a botanical garden arranged so that it should offer as far as possible the best facilities for scientific study and form, at the same time the most attractive feature of the landscape.” Although Helen’s early class selections showed no evidence of a burning desire to become a landscape architect, in her third and fourth years she developed a marked interest in botany, earning top marks every semester in horticulture classes from botany professor William Francis Ganong, as well as gaining practical experience from the campus head gardener, Edward J. Canning.

Following graduation in the spring of 1907, the Smith College Monthly reported: “Helen Dupuy will study landscape gardening.” While the inspiration behind this decision remains unclear, the implementation began a five-year-long apprenticeship in the office of O.C. Simonds. Whether and how the Simonds might have influenced her choice of profession remains undetermined, but she seized this rare opportunity, bypassing alternative courses offered at MIT and the Lawrence School in Groton, Massachusetts. Few landscape architects were willing to accept a woman as an apprentice at this time, and the firm’s incomplete archive (including Simonds’ papers at the Sterling Morton Library and family-held correspondence) contains no record of Helen’s employment. Simonds biographer Barbara Geiger learned of Helen’s presence in the firm from the Brucemore estate’s head gardener, Deb Engmark, who closely examined the garden diaries of Simonds’ client, Mrs. George Bruce Douglas.

What did Helen learn while working for Simonds? In his book The Prairie Spirit of Landscape Gardening (1915), William Miller included Simonds as one of several practitioners of a distinct “Prairie Style” popularized by Jens Jensen, though Simonds himself disclaimed there was any such thing. Simonds did advocate design that emphasized local landscapes and familiar, especially native, plants. Geiger noted Simonds’ belief that “the landscape gardener seeks first to appreciate the natural beauty of a place, and then makes the most of these features in his design. He has a reason for everything, even though it may only be that it looks well.” Extrapolating from his article, “The Landscape-gardener and His Work,” Geiger paraphrased Simonds: “The landscape gardener needed to know soils, drainage, road construction, architecture, botany, horticulture, climate, and the ‘social habits of the people’ who would use the locale. And be able to arrange the entire construction in a pleasing manner and to provide scenic vistas. He must, for the convenience, comfort, and safety of the humans for whom the project was planned. As an artist, the landscape-gardener needed to know how to plan for colors at different seasons and at varying heights.”

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garden of some big estates. There she met Mr. Deusner, who also is a landscape gardener, and their betrothal followed.³⁴ This marriage probably did not endanger Helen to Simonds, since it deprived him of both a seasoned employee of eleven years, Charles Deusner, as well as an apprentice in whom he had invested five years of training. This alliance also would not have made it any easier for other women to obtain apprenticeships, since the risk and results of propinquity with fellow employees was one of the very arguments made against hiring women. Helen and Charles Deusner immediately left Chicago for California to practice on their own, at first settling in Los Angeles but soon moving up to Pasadena, where they lived and worked until the end of 1914. Nothing more is known of them during this period. After leaving Pasadena, the couple settled on a small farm in Batavia, Illinois, growing belladonna plants for pharmaceutical use, for which there was a special demand during World War I. During this period Helen became an active member of the Woman's National Agricultural and Horticultural Association (later known as the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association). She served on committees, organized a conference, and gave a lecture on "Landscape Architecture as a Profession for Women" and on the cultivation of medicinal plants. She also gave birth to a daughter, Mary Dupuy Deusner.⁶

**PASADENA: PERIOD II (1919-1928)**

By August 1919, the Deusners were selling the Batavia farm and moving back to Pasadena. Helen's son, David Newhart Deusner, was born there on March 26, 1920. In that same month, the Missouri Botanical Garden Bulletin announced that "Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Deusner...have resumed the practice of landscape gardening in Southern California, with an office at Pasadena." Despite this seemingly auspicious new start, there was trouble in paradise. By September, 1920, Helen and Charles had separated, and Helen sued for divorce. According to Geiger, Deusner returned east to work for Simonds again, supervising the creation of the Morton Arboretum. Helen remained in Pasadena and was soon granted a divorce.⁷

**LA MINIATURA AND MORENO HIGHLANDS**

From 1922 through 1927 Helen continued her Pasadena practice alone, with the bulk of her work focused on small residential gardens. Newspaper reports of the period indicate that Helen was now using the women's network to find clients by giving talks to garden clubs and similar organizations. The earliest known, and also the most famous of her Pasadena commissions, was her design for the grounds of La Miniatura, the house Frank Lloyd Wright created for Alice Millard in 1923-24. Helen's training with Simonds made her a perfect fit with Wright's own ideas about landscape. Though Wright's son, Lloyd, is sometimes credited with designing the grounds, Wright biographers Charles E. and Bernadene Agar noted that "the only site plan for La Miniatura bears the name of Hela [sic] Deusner..." Their biography added that Wright called the site "a ravishing armoire, in which stood two beautiful eucalyptus trees," requiring minimal excavation or grading and allowing the preservation not only of those existing trees, but "much of the natural vegetation, including shrubs, vines, and ground cover." ⁸

A much larger project, the planting plan for the Moreno Highlands subdivision was published in the Los Angeles Times from 1926-1928. Helen had obtained the commission intended to beautify the "rolling hills" of the fashionable subdivision overlooking Silver Lake. This commission apparently exhausted her, for biographer Rockwell D. Hunt noted that she left Pasadena for Carmel in 1928, where she spent time in "rest and recuperation." However, Helen maintained that she was still engaging in landscape work, in partnership with a delightful Schuchowsman, Mrs. Jane Todd. "She designed the plan for Carmel's Deerwood Park and Todd planted it. In November 1929 Helen announced she had legally changed her last name from Deusner to her mother's maiden name of Van Pelt and 'moved my office to San Francisco because there were such excellent business prospects, and I prefer the exhilarating climate.' The Los Angeles Times (Feb. 22, 1932) reported that 'Mrs. Helen Van Pelt, landscape architect, has named the forest and converted it into a park in the immediate vicinity of the building.' It may have also led to her admission in 1931 to membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects.⁹

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: 1929-1931**

**ARDEN WOOD, THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION SANATORIUM AT SAN FRANCISCO**

Helen's conversion to Christian Science may have helped her obtain the commission to landscape Arden Wood, the Christian Science care center in San Francisco. This project remains the most significant in Helen's career largely for the professional publicity it generated. Articles appeared in Architect & Engineer (July 1930), California Arts & Architecture (September 1930) and Architecture and Allied Arts (Summer Edition 1930). The descriptions of her work were glowing. "Mrs. Helen Van Pelt, as landscape architect, has named the forest and converted it into a park in the immediate vicinity of the building." It may have also led to her admission in 1931 to membership in the American Society of Landscape Architects.⁹

**INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN AT TEHACHAPI**

In 1932, Helen received what would be her largest commission: creating and executing plans for the first women's prison, the California Institution for Women, near Tehachapi, California. Located in Cummings Valley some 120 miles north of Los Angeles, the land purchase comprised approximately 1,650 acres, though the money appropriated for the project would barely cover the landscaping around the cluster of buildings. Designed to resemble a quaint European village or bucolic college campus, three "cottages" were set among wide expanses of trees and flower beds. Meant to provide job training in agriculture, industrial sewing, and laundry work, the prison was the culmination of many long years of campaigning by assorted California women's clubs and organizations, with the San Francisco Civic League (later, the League of Women Voters) being the most effective. Helen's contacts with various women's clubs likely led to her receiving this commission. The Smith Alumnae Quarterly (February 1932) noted "Helen (Dupuy) Van Pelt...is now laying out the grounds of the new Woman's Prison for California." The Berkeley Californian (Feb. 22, 1932) reported that "Mrs. Helen Van Pelt, landscape architect of San Francisco, will be..."
The Garden Center Movement began with the organization in 1929 of the National Council of State Garden Club Federations (now National Garden Clubs, Inc.) by thirteen existing state garden club federations. The idea originated with Mrs. Frederick T. Fisher of Hachemacki, who proposed a garden center where people could come and learn more about gardening to her New Jersey State Garden Federation in 1929. The national organization soon promoted the concept throughout the country. California formed its own federation of garden clubs in 1932 and started publishing a newsletter, Golden Gardens. The federation quickly took up the idea of garden centers, and Van Pelt, the first state chairman, immediately pushed for a garden center for Marin, where the Marin Garden Club had been meeting since 1931. The San Anselmo Herald reported in 1934: “A garden center is in the process of formation in Marin County. This nation-wide movement has gained great strength in the East and a number of centers have been established on the Pacific Coast. Marin County is fortunate in having Mrs. Helen Van Pelt ... to aid in the formation of the local unit.” The Mill Valley Record added that Santa Barbara and Pasadena “have at this time, the only established garden centers in California. Marin County will be the first in Northern California to affiliate with this outstanding movement,” and while Marin wouldn’t have the first garden center in the state, it would be the first county-wide center in the United States. “The headquarters of the center will be in Gentile Park at San Rafael,” the former Gentile mansions had already been in use as the headquarters for the Marin Art Association. The facilities would now be shared by these two groups.12

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

In 1934, Helen, along with three other members of the Marin Garden Club, Caroline Livermore, Sepha Evers, and Portia Forbes, began what would be her most important and long-lasting accomplishment, the founding of the Marin Conservation League. This organization grew out of the fear that the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge in 1937 would pose a threat to the preservation of Marin County’s natural beauty. During Helen’s period of active involvement (1934-1951), the organization was responsible for the preservation of Stinson Beach, Samuel P. Taylor Park, the beaches of Drake’s Bay and Tomales Bay, the Audubon Canyon Ranch, Bolinas Lagoon and the Richardson Bay Wildlife Refuge. The League also halted the commercialization of Angel Island, later assisted in the creation of the Point Reyes National Seashore, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Marin Open Space District. Helen was elected as a vice president of the organization, and even after she left Marin County for New Mexico, she held the title of “honorary vice president.”13

VAN PELT & KNIGHT

Geraldine Knight [Scott] (1904-1989) later recalled: “At the end of the summer in 1933, Helen van Pelt asked me to come over to do some drafting for several days. I stayed six years.” A 1926 graduate of the U.C. Berkeley College of Agriculture’s Landscape Division, Knight was soon made a partner in Helen’s business, but apparently she was doing the majority of the actual work while Helen was socializing to bring in new clients. Though the partnership did not last long, the two women continued sharing office space until 1930, when Knight left to marry urban planner Mel Scott. Commissions received during the Marin period were not confined to that region; residential clients ranged as far away as Fresno, Berkeley and the San Francisco Peninsula. The Leon Levy residence in the Old Fig Garden district of Fresno remains a particularly noteworthy work, as it is the only such garden known to have preserved some portion of the original Van Pelt design to the present day. Those who attended the April 2013 CGLHS “Fresno Frolic” may recall visiting the garden.14

Business had scansely recovered from the Depression when the advent of World War II severely limited private landscape work, and government projects often went to men. (Women also got some of these projects, e.g. Katherine Badikian.) Helen kept busy with the Marin Conservation League, and as chairman of the Defense Gardens Committee, part of the Women’s Division Civilian Defense organization for Marin County, including supervision of Victory gardens for 75,000 shipyard workers at Marin City.
Martin County Garden Center Re-Imagined

As early as 1941, Caroline Livermore began working to preserve the Kitse estate in hopes of making it the new home of the Martin County Garden Center. By 1943 she had brought together eight local organizations (including the Marin Art Association) to purchase the property. The center was incorporated in 1945 as the Martin Art & Garden Center. By summer 1947, the Martin County Garden Club was ‘‘very deep in blueprints for its permanent garden center, which will be a memorial to members who have died—the late Mademoiselle Leland Lathrop (wife of Mrs. Leland Standsford, younger brother), William Fennell and Miss Martha Korbel [of the former Sonoma vineyardists, Korbel Winery].’’ Helen Van Pelt is also designing this garden, which will be a drawing card at the [fall garden show]. The Center also would house the Marin Dance Council, Marin Music, Chest, Marin Nature Group, Ross Valley Players and an affiliate group, Paris Park. This Center will be hosting the annual LGHSS 2018 conference in November.

New Mexico Years (1930–1939) and The Return to Pasadena (1939–1972)

In 1949, Helen’s son, David, graduated from the Department of Agriculture at Berkeley College of Agriculture and also received his master’s degree in Landscape Division and left in 1950 to work for the National Park Service in Santa Fe. Helen followed her son (and two grandchildren) to Santa Fe for an eight-month ‘‘visit,’’ while probably trying to decide whether to make the move permanent. She chose to settle in Albuquerque and remained there until about 1950, keeping remarkably active with teaching, lecturing, and landscape projects. During the hottest months, she made frequent trips back to Marin County and San Diego to visit old friends. By May 1956 her son had moved his family back to Marin, but Helen remained in Albuquerque for another three years, though no records of work done in that period have been found. Helen returned to Pasadena in 1959, remaining in the greater Los Angeles region until her death in 1972. Though listing herself in any directories as ‘‘retired,’’ she posted an advertisement in Golden Gardens magazine, offering her services as a lecturer and landscape consultant. When her obituary appeared in the San Rafael newspaper, it contained no surprises. Her most significant accomplishments were all named: the founding the Marin Conservation League, her part in creating the Marin Art & Garden Center, Arden Wood, the state women’s prison, and the Millard house in Pasadena. The Smith Alumnae Quarterly (November 1933) included Helen’s obituary. Her new obituary had died after a long illness.

Helen Van Pelt could be described as a great or iconic landscape architect; not only was she, in her own way, particularly famous, but she managed to accomplish a decent body of work, while raising a family and traveling. Her professional focus remained largely on the small residential garden, but she handled large projects with great manpower, and she undoubtedly contributed to the acceptance of women in landscape architecture. Nevertheless, her contributions to the establishment of both the Marin Art & Garden Center and the Marin Conservation League remains her most lasting legacy. She was a quiet pioneer.

The author would like to give particular thanks to Anne School for first suggesting that Helen Van Pelt’s career deserved more attention, also for providing some early and vital clues to follow up.

Endnotes
1. Because Van Pelt used three different professions in different phases of her life, it is often difficult to pin down exactly what Helen Van Pelt or Helen Van was—she is sometimes known by her maiden name to avoid confusion. ND Family connection was Helen Van Pelt’s paternal grandmother. Helen Van Pelt Wilson (1902–1970), the two new bachelors, are both of these names.
2. Laurence Clark Sosbe, ‘‘The Early History of San Rafael,’’ Vol. 1: (San Rafael, 1936), (San Rafael, 1936).
4. Another article was initially published in the Los Angeles Times. ‘‘Woman’s Prison, and the Millard house in Pasadena. The Stuart’s summer home was featured in ‘“With an Office at 15 North Euclid Avenue, Los Angeles—One of the Few Gardens Where the Work of Landscape Gardener O.C. Simonds Was Unquestionably Contributed to the Acceptance of Women in Landscape Architecture. Nevertheless, Helen’s Contribution to the Establishment of Both the Marin Art & Garden Center and the Marin Conservation League remains her most lasting legacy. She was a Quiet Pioneer.”’’
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In His Own Backyard ~ Part 2

THE EVOLUTION of ROBERT ROYSTON’S MILL VALLEY GARDEN - 1947–PRESENT

BY JC MILLER
During his lifetime, landscape architect Robert Royston filled dozens of sketchbooks with plain air drawings of the natural landscape, concept sketches, detail studies, and doodles. As important as the act of drawing and his sketch books were to his creative process, his imagination went well beyond two-dimensional depiction. He rendered his ideas in physical form with prototypes built in his small workshop and in the creation of his own gardens that evolved continuously under his hand for over sixty years. The space outside the Royston home was an ever-evolving testing ground for his ideas about planting, spatial composition, construction materials, furniture design, and the needs of family living. Innovative from the start, the garden morphed over the decades in response to shifts in personal need and the inevitable changes wrought by time. A setting for a remarkable range of activities, the garden at the Royston home accommodated a life lived to a great degree out of doors. Such a lifestyle would become synonymous with California in the popular imagination by the latter half of the twentieth century, but in the immediate postwar period it was a concept that was just beginning to emerge from the work of a new generation of designers that included Robert Royston and his friend and architect colleague Joseph Allen Stein.

In 1945 the nascent firm of Eckbo Royston & Williams shared office space at 50 Green Street in San Francisco with young architects Joseph Allen Stein and John Funk. Personal friends as well as professional colleagues, the principals of both firms would go on to work, collaboratively on a regular basis gaining a reputation for thoughtfully detailed and innovative single family residential projects. The group held a generally progressive outlook on social and political issues as was evidenced by their participation in Telesis, a voluntary association of architects, landscape architects, planners, and related design professionals whose forward-looking discussions and studies would have a significant influence on urban design in the San Francisco Bay Area during the postwar period. Given these connections, the cooperative development of homes for their families on a shared piece of property was a natural undertaking for Royston and Stein.

In 1946 Stein located a hillside parcel that he felt would meet their needs. Located in then sparsely populated and semi-remote Marin County, the nearly three-acre site was situated on a wooded north facing slope with views across the valley toward Mt. Tamalpais, a regional landmark. After visiting the lot, Royston agreed that it was ideal for the project, so it was purchased and plans were begun for two houses. The gardens that resulted were as professional colleagues, the principals of both firms would go on to work, collaboratively on a regular basis gaining a reputation for thoughtfully detailed and innovative single family residential projects. The group held a generally progressive outlook on social and political issues as was evidenced by their participation in Telesis, a voluntary association of architects, landscape architects, planners, and related design professionals whose forward-looking discussions and studies would have a significant influence on urban design in the San Francisco Bay Area during the postwar period. Given these connections, the cooperative development of homes for their families on a shared piece of property was a natural undertaking for Royston and Stein.

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Site grading completed the foundation line of the Stein home is visible in this photo taken by Joseph Stein. His wife and their future neighbors, the Royston’s, take in the view while seated on formwork for the precast wall panels. Note the proximity of the neighboring home. Collection of the author.

At both homes the primary entry is a gate that opens into a garden room. The entry sequence leads the visitor through a walled space open to the sky before moving him or her indoors. Photographer unknown, likely Robert Royston. Collection of the author.

The Royston and Stein collaboration resulted in architectural and landscape spaces that were highly integrated and complex. In this image the entry garden at the Stein home is seen shortly after installation. The opening between the free standing panel wall and the building is the open gate that is the home’s front door. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of William Higgins, AIA.

A recreation of the grading plan diagram for the Royston/Stein residences. The placement of the buildings at a 45 degree angles in relation to the street, driveway, and roughly rectangular building areas mimics the arrangement of spaces within the homes, adding subtle complexity to the composition.

Previous spread: Twin houses on a shared lot in Marin County California – the Royston and Stein residences circa 1949. This photo was taken from the hillside behind the Stein home. The Royston home is visible in the background with Mt. Tamalpais in the distance. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of William Higgins, AIA.

The concept plan that Robert Royston prepared for the gardens depicts subtle relationships between forms within each garden and between the two. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA), Robert N. Royston Collection. Drawing by Robert Royston.

(All images are courtesy of William Higgins, AIA)
SITE PLANNING
AND DESIGN

At about the same time that the Royston and Stein residences were being designed, Robert Royston was exploring the idea of two homes on a single lot for brothers Tom and Allen Hudson in Berkeley. He approached the design of his own garden and the garden for the Stein household in a similar fashion, thoughtfully separating busy and quiet areas, attending to views from the site to the landscape beyond, and providing screening and seclusion for the private zones of the homes.

The Mill Valley property for the Royston and Stein homes was bounded on the uphill south side by a street and other large and irregularly shaped residential lots on all other sides. A short, fairly steep slope dropped from the street to a natural shelf below. Although incorporated as a city at the turn of the twentieth century, residential development in the area was limited prior to World War II. The handful of homes already in the vicinity were set on the natural shelf, located by the dictates of topography rather than regard for property-line setbacks, so it is somewhat ironic that the new homeowners found themselves with immediate and relatively close neighbors. After a survey, Royston also chose to locate the buildings on the shelved area, placing them closer to the center of the property to allow for distance from the neighbors and the creation of level spaces around the new homes.

Unlike his site plan for the Hudson residences, where a significant portion of the lot was used jointly by both families, the Royston and Stein households would have only the driveway and the automobile circulation areas in common. Automobile access to the property was only possible from the road above, a physical constraint that directed the site design. In response, Royston minimized the space required for automobile access by designing a single driveway aligned perpendicular to the road. The driveway and automobile circulation areas created a center line and a functional divide of the property. Guided by a site plan that provided privacy to both residences and took advantage of the views, Royston’s grading scheme expanded the natural shelf by cutting into the uphill portion of the slope and filling the downslope areas to create level spaces for the gardens. This resulted in two roughly rectangular level areas, each approximately 50’ x 75’.

ARCHITECTURAL
DESIGN

These twin houses on a Marin County hillside enabled Stein to put into physical form ideas about family housing that he began to develop in the late 1930s while working in Los Angeles in Richard Neutra’s office. During that time, he had begun to explore modest
and compact structures inspired by the work of his mentor Neutra and Bay Area architect William Wurster. The October 1940 issue of Architectural Forum titled ‘Design Decade,’ included Stein’s plan for a low-cost housing prototype with a series of spaces rotated 45 degrees within a square building, an idea that he continued to develop after his move to the Bay Area in 1942. His plan for a low-cost single-family house was included in the San Francisco Museum of Art’s ‘Houses for War and Post-War’ exhibit displayed in that same year, and it bears a strong resemblance to the homes that he would build in collaboration with Royston.

The basic footprint of each of the Mill Valley homes was a square with a small angled extension. A single flat roof plane covered the living space, extending over the adjacent parking area and beyond the living space perimeter to provide deep overhangs over pre-determined glass panel spaces. During the course of the homes, the floor plan was rotated 45 degrees to the walls, providing an almost flat ceiling. This unusual arrangement of interior spaces resulted in rooms with long walls adjacent to the exterior, ideal for maximizing the connection between the interiors and the landscape. In Stein’s plan, the living room, dining room, and kitchen, as well as adult and children’s sleeping areas, all opened to patios and the gardens beyond.

DESIGN OF THE GARDENS

As he had done during the site planning phase of the project, Royston addressed the two gardens as a single design. While each has a distinct character and reflects the preferences and needs of their respective owners, there is a unity to the initial design that is not often seen in neighboring properties. While it differs in some ways from the built work, the concept plan that he prepared clearly shows his intention to create subtle relationships between forms not only within each garden but between the two. The Royston garden on the left of the drawing shows a slightly more informal and asymmetrical arrangement of planting and patio spaces while in the Stein garden to the right, features adhere more closely to a geometric layout and parallel lines are more closely related to the architecture.

Although the gardens depicted in the concept plans were never fully realized as drawn, the idea of placing spaces within the home, the size, form, and texture of planting, and the extension of lines originating in architecture and the landscape are the early indications of the approach to garden design that Royston explored in subsequent projects throughout his career. The concept plan clearly expresses his emphasis on connection between the organization of the home and corresponding outdoor spaces. The result of this design strategy was spaces that were highly integrated and connected with the dividing line between them two intentionally ambiguous. At both homes, the entry sequence begins with what appears to be a rather traditional-looking door that is actually a gate opening to a garden room. The visitor is then led through a walled space open to the sky before he or she moves indoors. The free-standing panel wall, a repetition of the building’s structural system reinforces the hybrid nature of the space.

Although less literally, other walls of the homes were brought out into the landscape, generating outdoor spaces that were rooms without roofs. Royston was bold about pushing a line or plane that originated in architecture out into the landscape, and his patio design reinforced the strategy by extending the ground plane with only the minimum necessary drop in elevation from the interior floor. Circulation patterns, zoning for use, and screening for privacy were fundamental issues considered by Royston when preparing a garden design, but such program-generated concerns were only the starting point for his design process. His interest in translating the forms developed in early twentieth-century painting into three-dimensional compositions is clearly illustrated in the gardens he designed for his new home and the neighboring garden for the Stein family.

PLANTING AS PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

While Royston’s early concept plan for the new gardens does not indicate specific plant materials, it clearly indicates his intention for creating a balance of planting design with considerable variety in size, form, texture, and presumably color. Royston’s approach to planting design was certainly grounded in a strong knowledge of the fundamentals of botany and climate, but it went well beyond horticultural pragmatism. His background in painting and interest in sculpture informed his planting design choices and the selection of various plant varieties to a great degree. The study of planting designs throughout his career also reveals an ongoing interest in color relationships. As with many of the innovative modernist design projects of the early twentieth-century and immediate postwar period, black-and-white photography tends to impact the sense that these early works were somber and reserved. Fortunately the gardens received considerable attention in popular magazines and local newspapers and from those accounts with color photographs the vibrant and colorful planting compositions developed by Royston for his own garden can be understood.

A series of articles appearing in Sunset between 1930 and 1932 provide a detailed description of the color combinations found in the first iteration of the Royston garden. In the entry garden the back of the freestanding concrete wall was painted dark blue to provide a contrasting background to the pale-yellow space frame. The white spring bloom of the espaliered apple set in front of the dark wall certainly provided a dramatic seasonal display of color. On the other side of the same patio room a honeysuckle vine was trained informally against the thin horizontal slats of a redwood screen stained gray. The glossy foliage and abundant cream to yellow flowers of this scrambling vine provided another point of seasonal interest as well as complex contrasts of color, form, and texture. Other dramatic plant combinations in the garden included dark and dense purple-leafed plum paired with the airy gray foliage of Bush Germander, smooth white-barked Eurotrash birch trees under-planted with the dark rough texture of Carpet Bugle, and the deep green needles of Muhgo or Swiss mountain pine contrasted with the flat soft leaves of Dusty Miller.

As a landscape architect, Royston undertook the challenge of a medium that was constantly changing over time. The immaterial trees and shrubs in the initial planting in a garden or park could hardly define space effectively. In response to this situation he often employed architectural features such as walls, pergolas, and screens to give immediate form. He reinforced these architectural elements with vines and shrubs which would develop in concert with trees to eventually provide nuanced and powerful spatial definition. The sixty-plus years that unfolded witnessed the passage of their creators. Under Royston’s design on a Marin County hillside allowed him the opportunity to experience firsthand, and in intimate detail, the process of change over time.

While conceived as a single composition, the trajectories of the Royston and Stein gardens diverged long after they were created and each developed in response to the site that dwelt there across a shared driveway. Both places experienced the addition of features, the development, decline and removal of planting, and the eventual creation of new buildings. While the Stein house and garden remained relatively static
over time with its composition and spatial relationships holding more or less to the original forms, the Royston home and garden experienced a process of almost continuous evolution. This can be explained by the fact that while the Royston home remained in the family for many years, Joseph Stein departed to India to serve as the Head of the Department of Architecture at Bengal Engineering College in Calcutta in 1952. Although he would return from time to time, Stein never again lived for any length of time in the house he had designed. Eventually the property passed into the hands of second owners who appreciate its nature and have acted as a thoughtful stewards, affecting little change. Across the driveway however, the Royston portion of the property reflects the remarkable consequences of decades of attention and experimentation by one of the twentieth-century’s most talented landscape architects.

**EVOlUTION OF A GARDEN**

The Royston garden has seen several distinct phases of development since its creation in 1947. These include the initial period of design and construction, embellishment of that initial design, changes made in response to the needs of a growing family, reorientation of the garden toward the view of Mt. Tamalpais, and an extended period with little change other than the growth of trees followed by an active editorial period. Through each of these episodes Royston’s hand guided the changes to the garden.

**INITIAL DESIGN (1947–1950)**

The initial iteration of the garden shows a strong emphasis on spatial relationships and dynamic lines. “The constrains of a limited construction budget prompted Royston to pursue imaginative design solutions and non-standard material choices for his new garden. Low retaining walls were made from surplus precast concrete laundry sinks, the play terrace was surfaced in redwood pieces obtained from a tree trimming company, and easily propagated placeholders such as gourds, iris, and agapanthus dominated in the planting plan. This first generation of the design included only a limited the amount of concrete paving. Rather, for the terraces adjacent to the house, Royston employed a compacted aggregate called Haydite, a lightweight expanded shale product that was used in the construction of Liberty and Victory ship decks during World War II.” With the end of ship building in the Bay Area it was inexpensive and readily available while other building materials were scarce. This sort of imaginative fragility was likely part of the appeal and broad interest in the gardens, especially in California, where a post-war housing shortage confronted the ranks of returning veterans anxious to return to domestic life. Unlike the famous Miller Garden, Dan Kiley’s 1955 masterpiece which was executed for the chairman of a large manufacturing corporation, Royston’s garden was a decidedly middle-class affair. The photos that appeared in magazines such as Sunset, showed a liveable modern environment where many in the San Francisco Bay Area’s burgeoning middle class could imagine themselves living and raising their baby-boom families.

Because of its prominence in the original design and its longevity in the garden, the art screen wall that separates the north garden from the laundry and service area merits special attention. Royston designed and built the screen to showcase sculptural tiles made by artist Florence Swift, whom he had while employed in the office of Thomas Church. Royston recalled later in interviews that he admired her work from the outset and hoped to eventually have several pieces. His interest in her work was strong enough that he prepared a number of study drawings at that time in which he worked out ways to incorporate the artist’s sculptural panels into garden structures. This was Royston’s first interaction with a professional artist, an aspect of his work that he would develop with great success. Over the course of his career he would collaborate on both private and public work with such notable artists as Claire Falkenstein, Benny Bufano, Ruth Asawa, and Henry Moore.

One of Royston’s study drawings for the garden eventually appears in Garret Eckbo’s Landscape for Living, published in 1950. It is interesting to note that the screen of Royston’s imagination was considerably longer and incorporated more of Swift’s tiles than the eventual built structure. In 1949, Eckbo Royston & Williams was asked to contribute an exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Art entitled “Design in the Patio.” This afforded Royston the opportunity to realize the art screen wall that he had envisioned. He built the screen as well as the furniture for the exhibit at his new home in Mill Valley with the idea in mind that all would return as an integral part of the garden.

The screen project also provided Royston with another opportunity to explore the use of a new material developed during wartime for garden construction. Perspex, also known as Plexiglass was used in lieu of glass in aircraft windshields, canopies, and gun turrets by both Allied and Axis forces. Royston was interested in the material also as a glass substitute because of its lighter weight and resistance to shattering.

**EMBELLISHMENT OF INITIAL DESIGN (1950–1955)**

Time and financial success enabled development of the Royston garden to a level along the lines originally imagined. A free-standing work shop was added to the service yard. Concrete terraces were installed adjacent to the home in areas that had been compacted by Haydite aggregate paving. Permanent planning replaced earlier place holders. With encouragement and help from their father, the Royston children colonized the down slope area as an adventure playground that included ad hoc play forts and excavated caves.

**RESPONSE TO GROWING FAMILY (1955–1960)**

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BRINGING MT. TAMALPAIS INTO THE GARDEN (1970)

The addition of an expansive deck with studio-space below realized the capstone of the design — the integration of the garden into the greater landscape. Changes made a decade earlier had directed the views from the house and terraces toward Mt. Tamalpais, and with the addition of the deck, the connection between the garden and the mountain was made complete.

Reached by a set of three broad shallow steps, the nearly 60’ long deck created a promontory and allowed for a dramatic view across the valley. Royston furnished the deck with built-in benches and tables and tucked a new design and art studio beneath it. Japanese Maples and additional Redwoods appeared in the garden and the planting in general was simplified. From this point through the following two decades, the paving, structures, and arrangement of the garden remained static, but plant growth and development of the tree canopy altered the character of the garden noticeably. This work includes the removal of a number of large trees and shrubs that had become rampant is also removed and the art screen is restored to prominence. The non-decript workroom is removed, and the slab foundation is re-purposed as a rose garden. The lowest portion of the garden is cleared, and decomposed granite is installed as a surface for games of Bocce or Petanque. One of Royston’s signature disc-style garden umbrellas is installed below the studio room to provide shade for his guests.

CONCLUSION

The garden that Robert Royston designed and maintained for himself and his family holds a special place in the catalog of his professional output. While much of his work in the public realm has endured for decades, a notable achievement given the sometimes-ephemeral nature of the designed landscape, the hillside garden in Mill Valley has lasted longer than any other. While it has certainly evolved over the nearly seven decades since its inception, the original design vision seen in his earliest concept sketches is still legible and clear. Over the course of his long career, Royston designed hundreds of gardens, parks, and urban spaces and in many of these places, glimpses of ideas first explored in his own garden can be seen as features developed and expanded to suit the scale and purpose of the project-at-hand.

In the early 1990s, Royston reduced his professional activity and turned his attention back to his garden. An editing process begins to bring light back into the garden and reveal its fundamental structure. This work includes:

1. Removal of several large trees
2. Removal of the original design vision seen in his earliest concept sketches
3. Corrections of the garden’s landscape
4. Removal of the non-decript workroom
5. Re-purposing of the slab foundation as a rose garden
6. Reinstalling the disc-style garden umbrella
7. Repairing the art screen
8. Reinstalling the deck as a visible feature in the garden
9. Reinstalling the bocce/pétanque court
10. Reinstalling the studio beneath the deck

This period coincided with the apex of Royston’s professional career. Concurrently changes to his family situation likely drew his attention away from the garden. Photos from the 1970s show all parts of the garden in dappled to deep shade. The strong legible lines from the 1970’s show all parts of the garden in vibrant red and Heath tile. Photographs by JC Miller, 2008.

With the ivy covering removed, the art screen returns as a prominent feature. The new rose garden can be glimpsed through the openings in the screen created where the weathered plastic panels have been removed. Photographs by JC Miller, 2008.

4. See “Surprise Companions” Sunset, Magazine of Western Living (February 1950), and “Design in Plant & Structure” Sunset, Magazine of Western Living (July 1949).
5. See “Winter Houses: Berkeley, California,” Progressive Architecture (March 1952)
The Marin Art and Garden Center (MAGC) is an important example of the role women's garden clubs and organizations played in the early environmental movement. Located in the town of Ross in southern Marin County, just north of San Francisco, MAGC was the creation of a determined group of women activists who set out in the late 1930s to ensure the preservation of Marin County's scenic beauty and open space. In 1936 the completion of the Golden Gate Bridge physically linked San Francisco and Marin, initiating changes that would transform the rural and bucolic County into a suburban appendage to the city.

Not everyone welcomed the real estate boom that followed bridge construction. Increases in population, the division of estates into suburban tracts, traffic, roadside commercialization, and local government enthusiasm for development schemes seemed to some to threaten the open space and natural beauty of Marin in unprecedented ways. These concerns were expressed succinctly by Kerry Allen, a member of the Marin Garden Club, when he exhorted his fellow club members that “we must maintain our standard of living—of recreation and beauty in the County.”

A number of new conservation groups coalesced around these concerns while existing groups placed a new emphasis on saving resources and open space. Many of these efforts were led by Marin's club women. Among these activists was Caroline Livermore (née Sealey), a Ross resident and Marin County social leader and environmentalist who stood out for her energy and leadership.

Livermore, along with a group of friends and garden club enthusiasts, was instrumental in founding the Marin Conservation League in 1934. The Conservation League was organized with the direct purpose of saving Marin open space and was instrumental in establishing Samuel P. Taylor, Tomales Bay, and Angel Island State Parks, as well as the Point Reyes National Seashore.

Wealthy and influential, these women were all members of the Marin Garden Club (established 1934) and the Garden Society of Marin (established 1934) and later became founders and supporters of the Marin Art and Garden Center. For Livermore and her friends, conservation efforts grew directly out of the garden clubs and the personal associations that they fostered among their largely female membership. Brought together initially by a love of gardening and wildflowers, these women quickly became advocates for public lands (forests, parks, and beaches), beautification in towns and cities, and scenic highways.

By the mid-1930s the League women set to work to secure open lands from private development, sometimes putting up their own money, as well as fundraising for purchases and applying political pressure on the County Board of Supervisors to subject land use decisions to condition of approval. They also succeeded in getting a County ordinance to ban billboards and advertising along County roads. In April 1937, the Marin Garden Club sponsored a car caravan to endangered Marin beaches to raise public awareness. The League worked closely with other organizations that shared their environmental goals, such as the Talamahis Conservation Club, the National Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, Save-the-Redwoods League, and the California State Park system. Acting as both members and leaders within some of these like-minded groups, the league founders and members maximized their social connections to build influential political alliances.

Condescendingly dubbed “the Ross housewives” by Marin County historian Jack Mason, these women were in fact knowledgeable, politically savvy, and generous in deploying their wealth to achieve the environmental goals they deemed important to the larger community. The Marin “housewives” mirrored the interests and activism of women across the country who became involved in their local garden clubs and joined together in national associations to further a conservation agenda. Far from retreating to their suburban homes after World War II, women were highly effective in raising public awareness and in organizing through groups like local and regional garden clubs.

In addition to supporting the conservation work of state and local garden clubs, the national garden club organizations encouraged the development of garden centers as meeting places, forums for education, and demonstration gardens. With the end of World War II they also saw a role for garden centers as memorial spaces commemorating war veterans as well as others. In Marin County at the end of WWII the availability of a virtually
The board of the Art and Garden Center first employed famed landscape architect, Thomas Church, and later, well-known Bay Area architects Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons of San Francisco. An approach to design and building was particu- larly well suited to the limited means and public purposes of the center.

As the MAGC began to expand its programs the board felt that an initiative should be undertaken to guide the physical development of the site to best serve the needs of its constituency. The Center was particularly fortunate in its early stage of development in attracting the attention and support of an outstanding group of young Bay Area architects and landscape architects. Among those who contributed to the planning and development of the center were Thomas Church, Gardener Dailey, Don Emmons and Bernardi and Emmons. Although only locally known at the time, these early propos- ection in Marin. It brought their energies to focus on establishing a center that would promote horticulture and conservation to also include the local visual and performing arts.

The groups that came together in 1945 to form MAGC organized programs and events that contributed to realizing the center’s goals. Throughout the year the calendar of the Center was occupied with theatrical events, dance performances, art exhibits and sales, and horticultural shows. Many of the events became annual affairs eagerly anticipated and widely patronized by Marin residents. As a result of these efforts the Center accomplished the broad goal of becoming a place of community activity and identity in Marin.

Unquestionably the largest event and one that boosted the Center’s profile throughout the County was the annual fair. In keeping with the MAGC’s purpose, conservation was highlighted in booths and displays not only by the Center’s own groups, but by many related organizations such as the National Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, and the Mt. Tamalpais Conservation Club. Arts demon- strations included painting, ceramics, and weaving, as well as gallery sales. Theater and dance groups provided entertainment both on stage and with performances throughout the grounds. The fair grew exponentially, from a few hundred attendees in 1947 to 40,000 in 1969. In 1970 the greatly expanded event was moved from the Marin Art and Garden Center to a dedicated space in the new Marin Civic Center.

Above, left to right: The Gladys Smith Memorial Fountain is a centerpiece of the formal landscape and commemorates an active member of the Marin Garden Club who contributed many hours to the planting and maintenance of the Helen Van Pelt-designed Memory Garden. Courtesy Marin Art and Garden Center.

While this pairing may have seemed to match was not as unlikely as it might seem. At both the local and national levels garden clubs viewed many horticultural activities as art forms, such as flower arranging, decora- tions made from natural materials, and garden design and ornamentation. On the arts side, Marin natural beauty served as an inspiration for artists and for many years Marin was a hub of plein air and landscape painting.

The relatively undeveloped condition of the property at the time of purchase allowed the Center a wide range of options to consider in meeting its stated goals and the needs and desires of its founding members. The prop- erty had a heavy tree canopy that extended to the property boundaries. A central open area broke the tree cover where the Kittle mansion stood before it was destroyed by fire in 1931. The main entry drive that had been associated with the mansion now serves as the primary path into the garden. There are two historic buildings associ- ated with the Kittles and earlier owners, the Octagon Building (originally built as a well house) and the barn. The Octagon Building, now housing a library and historical society, and the barn which functions as a theater, tangibly connect the center with the pioneer settlement phase of Marin County as well as the critical period of the Art and Garden Center development.

In 1947 the Board engaged landscape architect Thomas Church to undertake a topographic survey of the entire property. Along with an earlier tree survey, these were the first steps toward the creation of a master plan to govern development. In late 1947 Church informally presented his ideas for the development of the grounds to the Center’s Board. Although no copy of this prelimi- nary plan survives, we know that it included the Marin Society of Artists gallery/studio/ Frances Young Gallery (1948) designed by Gardener Dailey, improvements to the barn, and a barbeque area. Although Church did not complete a formal plan, the Board min- utes clearly indicate that he exerted substantial influence as the Center began to take shape.

Shortly after his presentation Church withdrew from his consulting and master planning roles at the Art and Garden Center due to pressing demands on his growing landscape practice. The board then turned to Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons of San Francisco. An undated Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons pre- liminary master plan drawing shows buildings strung along the west side of Kittle Creek, with an administrative center (never realized) con- nected to the Octagon Building.

The board of the Art and Garden Center first employed famed landscape architect, Thomas Church, and later, well-known Bay Area architects Wurster, Bernardi & Emmons to create a master plan for the Center. It was never completed, but this preliminary Wurster plan situates the Center’s modernist buildings along the seasonal creek where they were later located. Courtesy Anne T. Kent California Room, Marin County Free Library.

Marin County Fair Director Marcella McCoy displaying a map of the grounds for the county fair. Courtesy Jose Moya del Pino Library-Ross Historical Society.
In 1956 the board shifted from planning to undertake an ambitious building program on the north side of the property along the creek to supporting various auxiliary groups affiliated with the Center. The Center also installed a children’s playground designed by Bay Area landscape architect, Robert Royston, who produced a space filled with modernist play structures that complemented the built environment.

The memorial function of the center and its horticultural purposes were served most conspicuously by the Memory Garden donated by the Marin Garden Club and designed by Helen Van Pelt, LSA, in 1947 and redesign in 1953 by respected Marin County horticulturist, Herman Hein. Adjacent to the Memory Garden a large centrally located pool and fountain is dedicated to Gladys Smith, an active Marin Garden Club member, providing a serene resting point in the center of the garden at the end of the entry path. Notable memorial plantings include dawn redwoods and a giant sequoia.

By 1970 the Marin Art and Garden Center had taken on a permanent form still visible in the landscape that remains today. The Center’s programs continue to reflect the horticultural, conservation, and arts centered values of the founders. For seventy-three years the Marin Art and Garden Center has remained a vital part of the Marin landscape and the local community. It remains a tribute to the wise and determined women who preserved this lovely open space in what is now a heavily urbanized environment and contributed so much to the legacy of conservation in Marin County and California.

Endnotes
7. Mason et al., 64.
8. Marin Art and Garden Center, Minutes, Oct. 10, 1946. (MAGC)
9. Marin Art and Garden Center, Archive Box 7. (MAGC)
INTRODUCING
STEVEN KEYLON,
OUR EDEN EDITOR

This summer the CGLHS board began a permanent search for the Eden editor. We are excited to introduce our choice.

STEVEN KEYLON is passionate about landscape history, with expertise in designed landscapes in Southern California from 1920 – 1965. He has been the interim Eden editor for the past year, guiding the journal in a series of articles from the Arts & Crafts movement to modernism. His strong vision for the direction of Eden has strengthened the quality of the publication, while also ensuring that new stories are told, and told well.

Steven is also passionate about preservation. He has received numerous honors and awards, including the California Preservation Foundation’s Preservation Design Awards for his work in 2012 on the Village Green Historic Structures Report, and a 2018 award for the Cultural Landscape Report of Pasadena’s Hindry House, co-authored with Lisa Gimmy. Steven joined the CGLHS board in 2013, was its treasurer in 2014, and became president in 2017 - he is committed to sustaining California garden and landscapes. In addition to board membership at CGLHS, Steven also serves on the boards of Docomomo US, SoCal, Beverly Hills Heritage, and is Vice-President of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. With commitments that reach to a national level, he serves on the Stewardship Council of the Cultural Landscape Foundation.

Steven is a talented writer and public speaker. He has published seven essays in Eden, and has written a book, The Design of Herbert W Burns which was published in 2018 by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. Current research includes the biographies of landscape architects Katherine Bashford and Fred Barlow, Jr., Tommy Tomson, and a monograph on architect Hugh Kaptur. He is a regular speaker at Palm Springs Modernism Week, so hopefully you’ll have the opportunity to hear one of his talks soon.

A native Californian, Steven was born and raised in Sacramento, and lived for many years in Los Angeles at Baldwin Hills Village (Village Green), a National Historic Landmark garden apartment community. Steven now lives in Palm Springs with his partner, metal sculptor John De La Rosa. They have been slowly restoring their 1950 Herbert Burns-designed Late Moderne house there, bringing back details such as the original paint palette and hardware, and will next bring the landscape design back to its 1950 glory.

Steven’s vision for the future of Eden is to continually improve the quality of the content, the images, and the design of the journal. He would also like to work with the editorial board to ensure the journal reflects the many interests of its readers and represents the geographic diversity of the state. Christine O’Hara, CGLHS President


CGLHS members Lisa Gimmy, ASLA and landscape historian Steven Keylon were recently recognized for their work on the rehabilitation of the landscape of the Hindry House in Pasadena. In May, the City of Pasadena awarded the project with the Historic Preservation Award, and in October, the California Preservation Foundation will present their Preservation Design Award. Besides Gimmy and Keylon, the project team was led by project lead and historic architect Kelly Sturhahn McLeod, FASLA, and the completed project photographed by CGLHS member Millicent Harvey.

Designed in 1910 by architects Alfred and Arthur Heineman, the Hindry House is in Pasadena’s Prospect Park Historic District, is a contributor to the district’s nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and has been designated a City of Pasadena Historic Monument. Because of that, the Rehabilitation of the landscape would require a thorough process of research of site development and landscape history, along with detailed analysis of existing elements. The resulting Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) identified two distinct periods of significance: Arthur Heineman’s original landscape and the 1970s design by Courtland Pool, FASLA, which was centered around an innovative and naturalistic pool. The subsequent rehabilitation plan had to retain the primary character defining features of the two periods of significance, while addressing the overall project objectives which included the correction of drainage issues that had compromised the structural integrity of the house, and the creation of a more resilient plant palette that would honor the historic plant palettes and spatial relationships. The team documented existing trees and protected and maintained healthy mature specimens, replacing important historic trees that had been removed. The addition of a dry river feature provides infiltration of roof water and corrects a major drainage issue. The restoration of the pool and boulder-lined pathways required cataloguing and documenting each stone to ensure accurate reinstallation. The rehabilitation respects the property’s historic character and legacy, while providing its owners with a vision for the next one hundred years with new uses for contemporary living.

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Front & Back Cover: Beyond adept planting design, Royston created furniture to complement his outdoor rooms. This image from the late 1950’s shows a pair of Royston designed wood and canvas chairs which share the patio with a concrete topped table. Many of the pieces he designed emphasized a low line. In this case the chair seat is only inches above the ground and the table top is less than a foot above the adjacent patio surface. Photograph by Ernest Braun, used with permission Ernest Braun Archive.