

Eden



Eden

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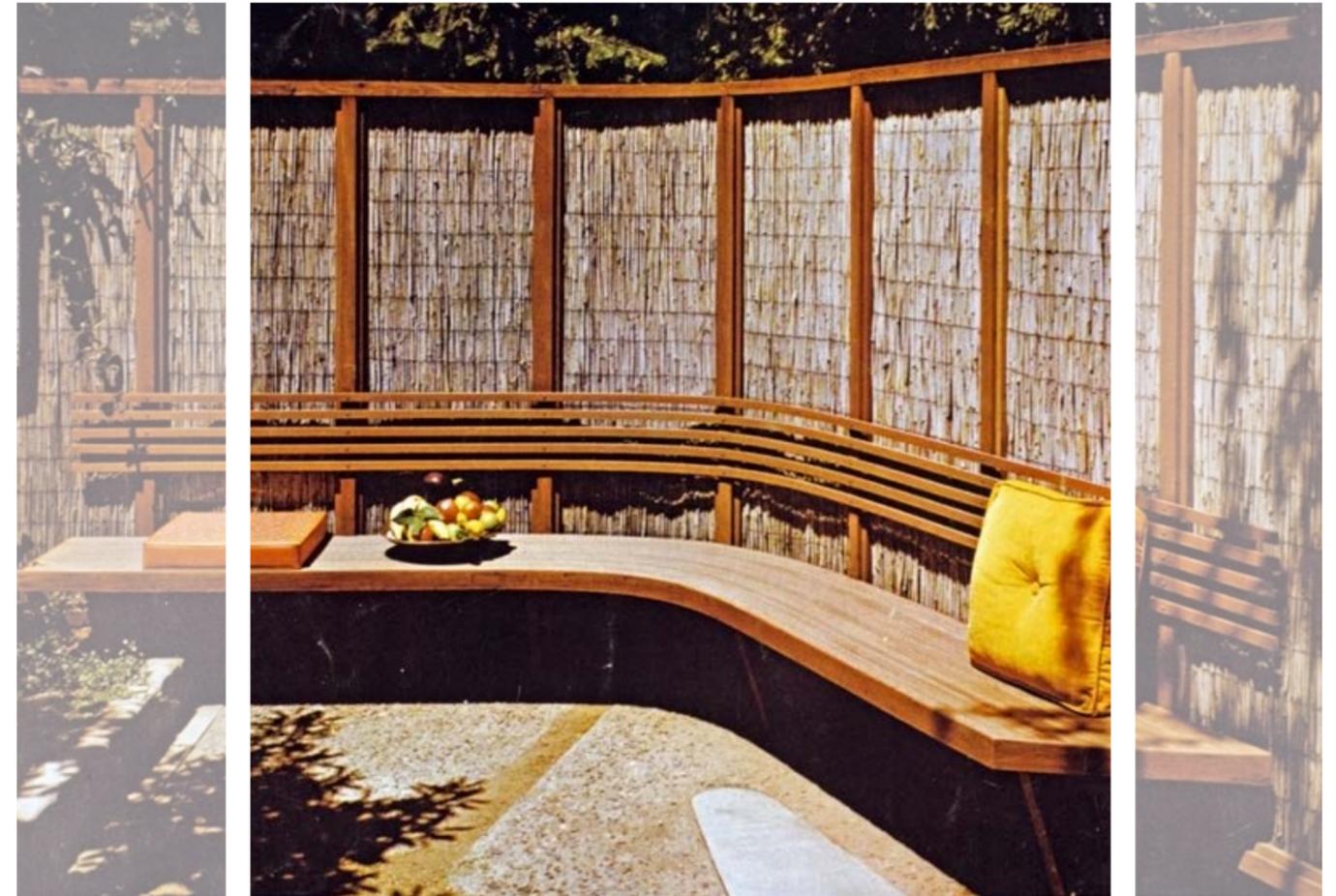
Barbara Marinacci

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Opposite: Portion of an Abstract Painting by Robert Royston. In his artwork Royston explores forms and relationships that recall his landscape designs. Collection of the author. Photo by JC Miller.
Above: Leon Lefson Garden, Sacramento, California, 1959. Robert Deering, landscape architect.



Heath garden looking south from top of embankment, a Royston designed outdoor table being set for an al fresco meal. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Robert Royston Collection. Photo by Robert Royston.



B IN HIS OWN ACK YARD

Robert Royston's
Modern Gardens
in Marin County

By JC Miller, ASLA



Previous spread: Wilson garden looking back toward the house. The "Sky Plane" was a novel device that Royston used to manage the down slope view. This photo was taken by a brave photographer that ventured out onto the structure. Collection of the author.

Above: The staff of the Eckbo Royston and Williams office in the early 1950s. Left to Right: Garrett Eckbo, Francis Dean, Edward Williams, and Robert Royston. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Robert Royston Collection.

Opposite: Wilson garden plan. This plan was developed from archival materials and period photographs. Collection of the author.

Robert Royston had a long and successful career as a landscape architect, but it is in three of his earliest works, mid-century gardens in Marin County, that he was able to explore the dynamic spatial compositions that exemplify his sophisticated understanding of three-dimensional design. In these gardens, the Wilson, Nelson and Heath gardens, he devised innovative modern solutions to address the challenges of topography and to respond to client need. His design for the Wilson garden involved screening an unsightly downhill view with a horizontal trellis he called a "sky plane." In the Nelson garden, he worked with architect Joseph Stein to create a structured terrace garden with intricate geometry derived from the architecture. For ceramicist Edith Heath and her husband Brian, he created a garden space that anchored, quite literally, the houseboat they called home to a steep embankment that dropped into San Francisco Bay. Sadly, while the houses discussed in the following profiles still exist, albeit all altered, none of these innovative modern gardens remains.

Before embarking on an exploration of these remarkable places, a short introduction to the landscape architect and an outline of his professional path will provide useful context for the gardens. Robert Royston was born in San Francisco in 1918 and moved with his family in 1924 to a ranch near Morgan Hill in Northern California's Santa Clara Valley. After service in the Pacific Theater in World War II, Royston returned to San Francisco and lived and worked in the Bay Area for his entire career. His work as a landscape architect

included the planning and design of residential gardens, neighborhoods, recreation parks, and urban spaces. Although he and his firms worked in many states and a number of countries, his primary creative focus was Northern California. Royston built his home in Mill Valley, California - an experimental modernist design created by his friend and eventual neighbor, the architect Joseph Allen Stein - in 1947 and lived there until his death in 2008.

His landscape design career began with part-time work for Thomas Church while he was still a student at the University of California Berkeley. Following his graduation in 1940 with a degree in landscape architecture, Royston began working full-time for Church, who was at that time one of the country's most prominent garden designers. By the late-1940s, postwar prosperity, advances in technology, and a surge in population had led to the development of new building types that required new landscapes and an approach to design appropriate to the times. Upon returning from a tour of duty in the Navy, Royston left the Church office to join the next generation of modernist practitioners.

In his partnership with Garrett Eckbo and Edward Williams (1945-1958), Royston produced some of his most outstanding residential work. He put the design vocabulary of modernism - grids, arcs, and biomorphic shapes - to practical use, creating engaging, functional spaces for outdoor living. His gardens were carefully crafted to his clients' increasingly suburban lifestyles, but he also strove for a sense of timelessness in his design that went beyond popular fashion. By the

early 1950s, Eckbo, Royston and Williams had developed into one of the nation's leading modernist landscape architectural firms.

At this point in time, roughly eighty percent of the new firm's commissions were residential gardens, which Royston considered "fun projects" that allowed him to develop relationships with clients who were willing to experiment with new ideas. During this period, he produced some of his most outstanding designs: the Naify garden in Atherton, California (1947), the garden for his own home and that of his neighbor, the architect Joseph Allen Stein, in Mill Valley (1947), and numerous others. His work was frequently featured in such publications as *Sunset*, *House & Garden*, *Arts and Architecture*, *Architectural Record*, *Architecture and Engineering*, and *House Beautiful*. These commissions helped establish Royston's reputation as a leading landscape modernist.¹

In 1958, Royston, Eckbo, and Williams parted amicably, and Royston launched his own firm, building on the collaborative, interdisciplinary model developed with his first partners. The next partnership, Royston, Hanamoto, and Mayes, quickly established itself by acquiring important residential and civic commissions. The firm's expansion into public work was particularly meaningful for Royston, who saw his park designs, (he called them "Public Gardens"), as the natural evolution of his residential gardens and important contributions to the larger framework of the urban and suburban environment.

In his earlier residential work, Royston developed the sensitive, client-oriented approach to design that would characterize his career. After interviewing a client and visiting the site, he produced a scaled plan based on a topographical survey of the property. Next, he drew a garden diagram showing areas of use arranged to avoid functional conflicts, such as placing a children's play area next to a quiet space for contemplation. Royston used the diagram to inform his final design, considering alternatives as he worked, but always delivering a single, finished plan. Presentation drawings often included isometric plans highlighting the spatial qualities of the design and perspective sketches to help clients visualize their gardens. For clients who enjoyed gardening, Royston located the planting beds without specifying individual species. This was a design strategy he had learned while working in Thomas Church's office.²

Like his modernist peers, he regarded space as the primary medium of his profession and respected the intrinsic qualities of materials. His use of plants emphasized their role in defining space and contributing to the multi-sensual dimension of spatial experience, especially color, texture, and scent.

His formal vocabulary was influenced by twentieth-century painting and sculpture, and he strove to create environments suitable for modern living.

Certainly, spatial manipulation was not a new design concept developed in postwar California gardens. The Baroque gardens of seventeenth-century France, the villa gardens made by aristocrats of the Italian Renaissance, and even prehistoric sites such as Stonehenge enclosed spaces, controlled views, and manipulated perspectives. What was novel in Royston's approach was the application of a modernist design vocabulary and cubist spatial concepts to the suburban California garden. Promotion of these art-driven ideas put Royston and his partners at the forefront of landscape design in the postwar period. In earlier periods art had been incorporated into the garden as a static element, and landscape gardening was sometimes discussed as an artform akin to landscape painting, but the work of Eckbo, Royston and Williams, and many of their California peers, changed the discourse entirely. No longer was it about art in the garden or artful gardens; the garden (or backyard) itself was now art.

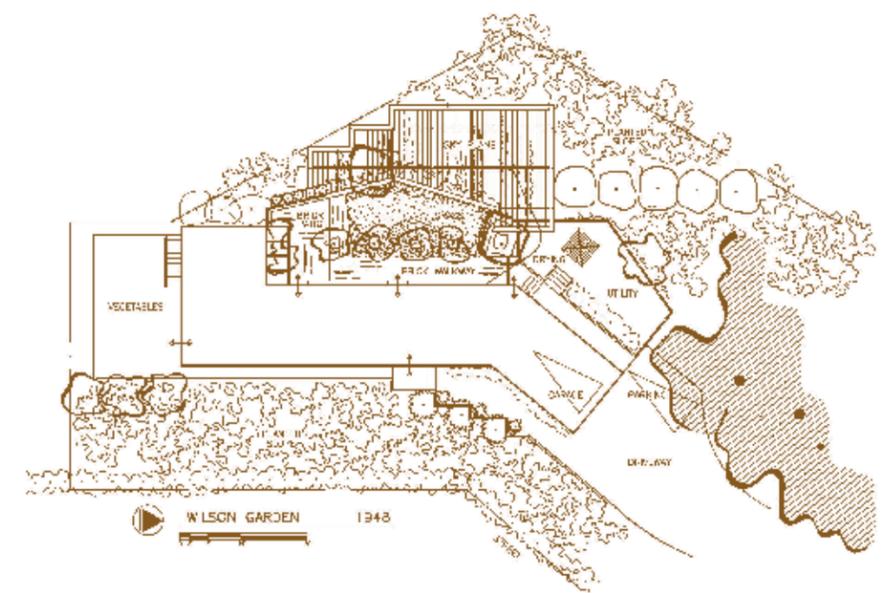
WILSON GARDEN, MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA, 1948

This small commission for a young couple was quite challenging.³ The site offered a beautiful panoramic view toward Mt. Tamalpais, a

local landmark, but it was marred by an ugly middle ground. Also, the space allotted by the architect for a garden on the steep slope was far too small to be of much use for entertaining and other outdoor activities. Architect Gryffyd Partridge's one-story house was quite small, consisting of one bedroom, a living room, kitchen, and garage. Its steep narrow lot was flanked by houses on either side that looked into the small, flat, 10 x 30-foot space Partridge's grading plan had provided for a garden at the rear of the house. The view to the west of Mount Tamalpais, was appealing, but the middle ground was dominated by a conspicuous road and an ugly four-story apartment building at the base of the lot's steep slope.

As was the case with the Naify garden, where he created a breakthrough design that was published widely and gained a great deal of professional attention, Royston was required to deal with the site's challenging problems. The Wilsons asked him to enlarge the too-small garden, provide privacy for its users, and do something to improve the view. The design that he proposed in response was complex and unusual, so he built a model to communicate his ideas to the client, a practice that was more typical of his work on larger commercial or institutional commissions.

The usual strategy of expanding the garden by terracing down the slope was not an option since the gradient was too steep. Instead, Royston substantially increased the flat surface of the garden by extending its width by 5 feet and its length by 14 feet. He supported its extension with a wood cribbing structure anchored to the steep slope. At the north end of the enlarged garden space he





Above: Wilson garden looking north toward Mt. Tamalpais. Management and enhancement of the view was the primary goal of Royston's design for the Wilson garden. Collection of the author.

Opposite: Nelson garden plan 1951. This plan was developed from archival materials and period photographs. Collection of the author.

installed a gently curving 6-foot-high wooden fence to block lines of sight from neighboring houses. The fence also served as a buffer from the cold northwest winds typical of the area's climate. On the southern end of the garden Royston created a suntrap to facilitate the garden's year-round use. This was a small rectangular seating area partially enclosed by a 10-foot-high checkerboard-like wall of translucent plastic panels interspersed with wooden ones of varying textures. The plastic panels allowed sunlight to filter into the space, providing illumination and warmth on cooler days.⁴

To create "a sense of space," Royston kept the central area of the garden quite open. The ground plane was a small lawn surrounded by brick pavers. A row of four Karo shrubs (*Pittosporum crassifolium*) in standard tree form planted near the rear glass façade of the house provided much-needed shade to the western exposed windows and a foreground, adding depth to the view of the garden from the living room and kitchen. Royston limited the planting design for the remainder of the garden to

a few small trees, including Japanese maple, low evergreen shrubs, and flower planters. The entire western edge of the garden facing out above the steep slope was bordered by a low wooden seating wall as a safety precaution to prevent nasty falls. This far edge of the garden was not parallel with the façade of the house but pointed out slightly to draw the eye toward the panoramic view.⁵

To deal with the problem of the ugly middle ground, Royston created an ingenious device he called the "sky plane." This consisted of a 20 x 48-foot structure at its widest point supported by steel pipes grounded in the slope below. These poles were supported on a large frame of wooden beams configured on mostly an 8 x 8-foot grid. Royston strung stainless steel wires from the beams to support a thick cover of fragrant Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) planted behind the perimeter seat wall. The surface of this large green "sky plane" was level with the ground plane of the garden. It completely blocked the view of the unsightly road and apartment house below, and drew the eye

towards the distant view of Mt. Tamalpais. It was purely a visual device to improve the view and create the illusion of an even larger garden. To add additional visual interest to the structure, Royston designed the sky plane with a straight edge on one side and a serrated edge on the other. Functional as well as pleasing to the eye, the serrated edge also responds to the property line. The garden's seating wall helped to prevent one from venturing out onto the jasmine "groundcover." On one occasion, Mr. Wilson, whom Royston recalled was "quite agile," deliberately walked out on one of the supporting beams and fell through the jasmine to the slope below. However, he was not seriously injured.⁶

Having solved the main problems, Royston turned his attention to the remainder of the site. He created a small space for a kitchen garden to be designed by the owners on the south side of the house and planted the down slope opposite the front façade with ground cover and shrubs to prevent erosion. It was typical of Royston to consider a site in its entirety, rather than confining his efforts to the design of the garden alone.

The sky plane was not repeated in any of Royston's future garden designs, simply because it was not useful to address their specific problems. Its one-time application is typical of Royston's design process: strive to approach each project with an open mind, devoid of preconceptions, and produce a design tailored to the site's specific opportunities and limitations, as well as the wishes of the client. The Wilson garden was published in a number of books and periodicals, further enhancing Royston's reputation after his success with the Naify Garden.⁷

NELSON GARDEN. MILL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA 1951

Four years after the completion of the gardens for their adjoining residences, Royston was again in collaboration with his neighbor Joseph Stein on a project in Mill Valley. The pair had worked together on the site plan and the first-phase homes and gardens associated with Ladera, a cooperative housing project proposed for development in 1945 for the hills near Palo Alto, California, by the Peninsula Housing Association.⁸ Also, recently completed was a home and garden that the pair designed in Atherton for Silicon Valley pioneer Kurt Appert. For the Appert garden, it was Royston who introduced Stein to the client; for the Nelson garden, the process was reversed, as Stein was first hired to design the

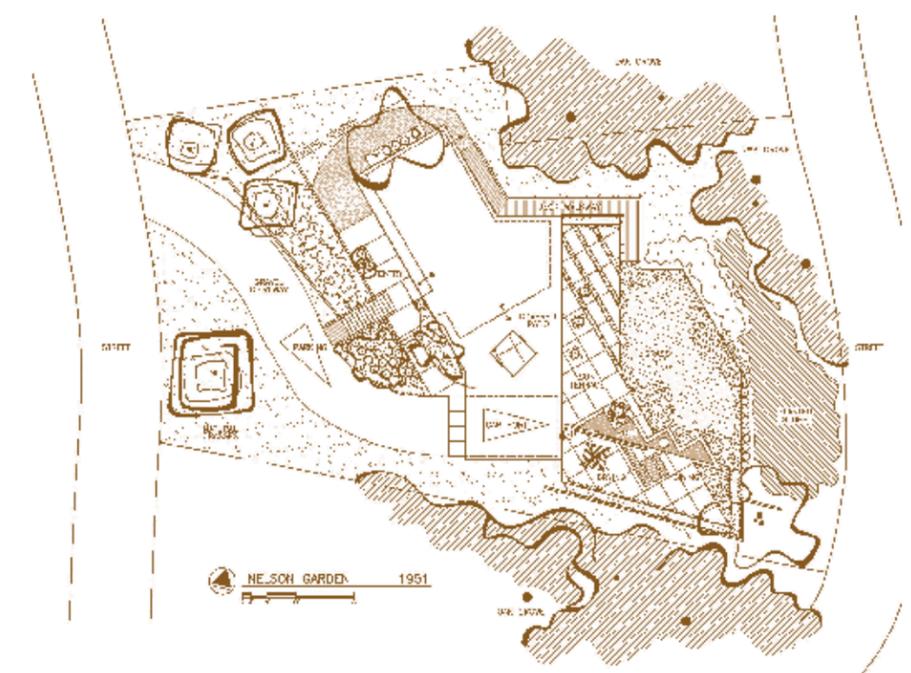
home. He suggested Royston for site planning and design of the garden.

The clients for the new Mill Valley project were a recently married couple, Helen and Nathan Nelson. In anticipation of a growing family, the couple asked Stein and Royston to allow for expansion of the house in the design plan. They also desired as much functional outdoor space as was possible, given the limitations of the sloped lot on which they planned to build. Stein responded with a 1,000 square-foot one-bedroom home and designed an addition of two bedrooms to be built when needed.⁹ Royston's garden plan provided a series of outdoor rooms that related functionally to the indoor spaces and significantly enlarged the living area of the house. The floor plan arranged the living spaces in a rectangular volume set roughly parallel to the street above. Stein offset the carport fifteen feet and rotated it 30 degrees, creating a covered patio area that opened into the east-facing back garden. Stein brought light and air into the covered outdoor area by means of a 6-foot square opening in the roof. With this gesture Stein introduced yet another set of angles to his composition, as the opening was turned at a 45-degree angle to the carport walls. Royston in turn expanded the paved patio area and partially enclosed it with a curved vertical picket screen, shielding the patio from the view of the driveway.

Royston and Stein worked collaboratively, blending ideas so that house and garden functioned as a coherent composition. Especially important was the placement of the house

and the shaping of the hillside to maximize the useful area for both house and garden. Even mundane details such as the relationship of driveway and carport were worked out cooperatively. Stein's design relied on a single roof plane connecting the house and carport. Matching the floor level of both structures would have resulted in an uncomfortably steep driveway and elevating the roof of the carport would have interrupted the important architectural design line. To resolve the problem, the team decided to raise the carport floor level 30 inches above that of the house and covered patio. The trade-off in this solution was reduced headroom in the garage and no exit door to the patio. Royston took advantage of this situation, making the route from carport to front door more interesting by introducing a gentle curve to the path as it makes its way along the perimeter screen. How people moved through the spaces he designed was an important aspect of the garden that he approached thoughtfully. Later in life when discussing his ideas about design Royston would talk about the experience of the vertical or horizontal curve. Because he believed that people preferred to move through space along gentle curves or shallow angles, he avoided 90-degree angles, both for ease of circulation and also to soften the meeting point of vertical and horizontal planes.¹⁰

This preference for oblique angles and geometries can be seen in the exuberant non-orthogonal paving pattern that Royston introduced on the east side of the house. Building on the tension that Stein created with the





Top to bottom, left to right: Nelson garden looking south. Royston introduced the screen wall and water feature on the south side of the garden as a focal point for the view out from the living room. Nelson House View from Top of Driveway. Stein's continuous roof line and the higher carport floor level are visible in this photo. Nelson Garden Looking West. Clearly visible in this image, the covered patio was an important living area for the small home. Nelson Garden Looking North from Covered Patio. Royston's eye-catching paving pattern is clearly visible in this view. The space between the paving strips were planted with Woolly Thyme. All images from the collection of the author; all photos by Phil Fein.

Opposite: Heath garden view from interior to garden room. The garden steps that lead to the upper level carport are visible in the background. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Robert Royston Collection. Photo by Robert Royston.

rotated volumes of house and carport, Royston used the various angles to create a trapezoidal lawn panel and an angular terrace that draws the eye out from the public rooms of the house to a garden pool backed by a decorative screen wall that also serves to shield the laundry drying area from view. The screen wall includes painted plywood panels and decorative relief geometry that reflects the structural system of the roof. Unfortunately, no documentation or color photographs are currently available to accurately confirm the colors of the house, screen, or decorative embellishments of the garden screen wall. Similar features in other Royston designed gardens of this period, including his own home and the Wilson garden discussed above, allow for speculation that the body color of the house and screen was likely a red-brown, the triangular inserts a light yellow, and the plywood square an orange-red. This last color was a Royston favorite that he called "Chinese Red" and used frequently throughout his career.

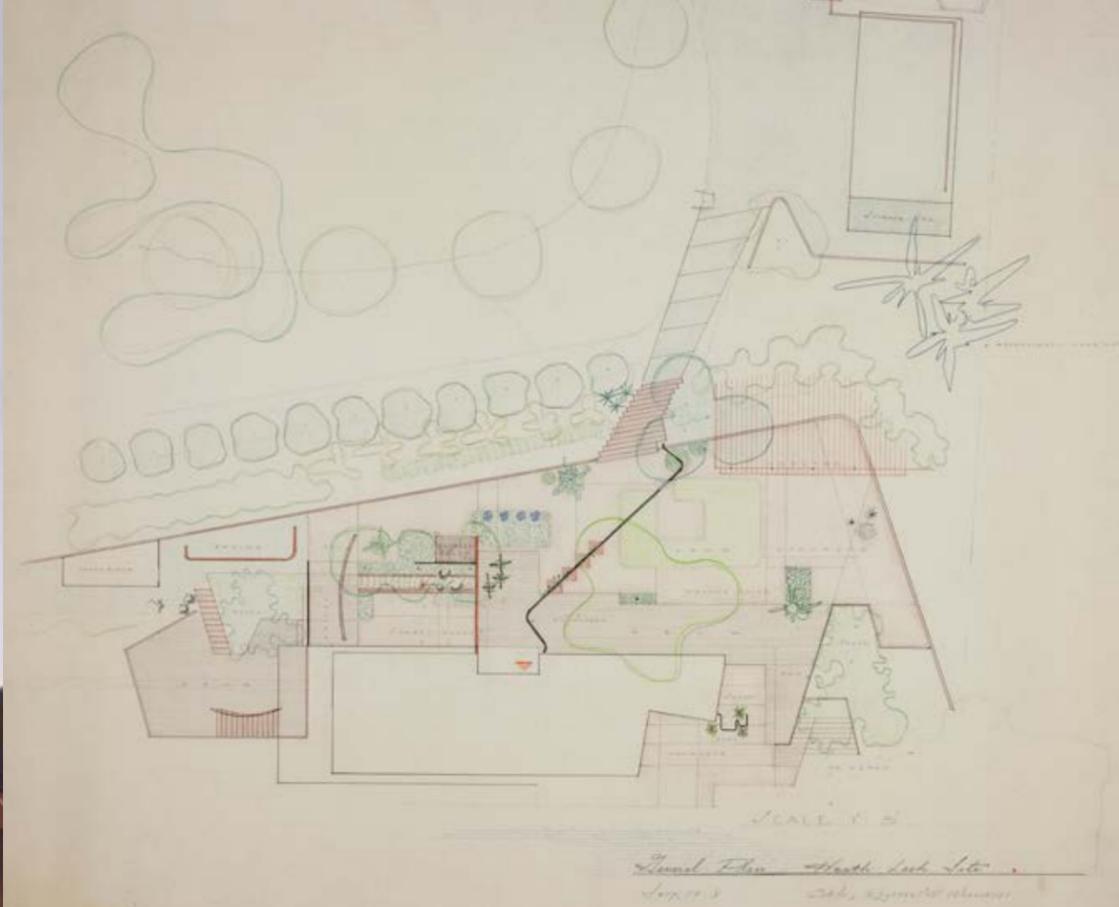
Existing groves of California coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and volunteer blackwood acacia (*Acacia melanoxylin*) provided Royston with clear edge boundaries on the north and south sides of the Nelson garden. The irregularly-shaped parcel is situated between streets running uphill and downhill, so the property was open on the east and west sides. Along the south edge of the property, presumably to address privacy concerns due to the proximity of the closest neighbor, Royston reinforced the grove edge with a 6-foot-tall fence backed by a hedge of Karo (*Pittosporum crassifolium*). Large-scale trees were restricted to the perimeter of the garden. He called for large-scale evergreens at the street, including Mondell pine (*Pinus eldarica*) and a dwarf blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus 'compacta'*). Within the garden he specified smaller deciduous trees, including his favorite patio tree, the Japanese maple. An exception to this is a large California native tree, the big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*). This tree was planted quite close to the house on the west side, in the area proposed for the future bedroom addition. This fast-growing tree was likely a temporary measure to provide shade on the dwelling until it was removed for the expansion. A multi-trunked coast Myoporum (*Myoporum laetum 'Carsonii'*) is visible at the south-west corner of the back garden. The apparent age and size of this tree are inconsistent with other new planting in the garden, and it can be assumed that this tree predates the house. Royston incorporated existing trees into his planting plans when it was possible, another practice that he learned while working for Church. Not native to the region, Myoporum is known to self-seed in Marin, so it is likely a volunteer that Royston retained.

This move reflects a frugality that is seen in many of Royston's early gardens. Limited resources for construction and garden installation in the immediate postwar years often prompted the use of readily-available species that were easily propagated. The Nelson garden includes prolific perennial shrubs such as geranium, Nile lily (*Agapanthus orientalis*), and Hahn's ivy (*Hedera helix 'Hahn's'*); these plants can also be found in the first iterations of the Royston and Stein gardens.¹¹ A significant portion of the site was also left open for native and natural grasses – likely a planting decision prompted by limited funds available for the initial garden installation. Accent planting in the garden included dwarf umbrella palm (*Cyperus alternifolius*) in the raised planters at the garden pool and northwest corner of the house as well as citrus and golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*) in wooden plant tubs designed by Royston. It was not unusual for Royston to design site-specific planters, benches, and other furniture for his gardens. His interest in this expanded to a line of outdoor furniture offered for sale by Eckbo, Royston and Williams in the early to mid-1950's. Prototypes for many of the pieces from this line can be seen in the garden that he designed for Edith and Brian Heath in Tiburon, California.

HEATH GARDEN, TIBURON, CALIFORNIA 1951

From 1940 to 1950, the urban population of California grew by nearly fifty percent, the greatest increase in the nation.¹² The World War II home-front effort brought industrial production to California coastal cities in general, and the San Francisco Bay area in particular, on a scale many times greater than anything seen prior to the war. The influx of people from other parts of the country who moved to California to work in wartime industry, plus the thousands of returning veterans who arrived at the ports of Oakland and San Francisco and chose to remain, permanently transformed the Bay region. This boom in growth was nourished by post-war industrial expansion, high-paying jobs, and educational opportunities offered by the GI Bill. In response to the acute housing shortage, the Federal Housing Authority offered home mortgages, which financed the resultant housing and construction boom. Booster rhetoric sustained the alluring myth of the state as a paradise, blessed with a mild climate,





Clockwise: Heath garden looking north. Garden screens terminate the view along this edge.
Concept plan Heath-Leek garden. This Royston drawn plan shows a garden designed to meet the needs of the two couples that shared the home.
Heath garden looking south from garden room. The continuous level surface made possible by the bridge deck is clearly visible in this photo. The low table in foreground is a Royston/Heath collaboration that was part of the ERW furniture line.
All images courtesy University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Robert Royston Collection. Photos by Robert Royston.



Above: Heath house view from beach below. The Heaths moved their barge houseboat onshore and it became a grounded home. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Edith Heath Collection.

a beautiful, unspoiled landscape, and abundant economic opportunity. Hollywood films, orange crate labels, and popular magazines like *Sunset* and *House Beautiful* drew people from across the nation for new beginnings in the Golden State. The resulting growth rate was astonishing. The most volatile growth occurred on the edges of existing urban areas, generating suburbs on what had previously been agricultural land. In these newly-minted suburbs Royston would design his innovative parks and would also meet most of his residential clients.¹³ Agricultural land within a 30-mile radius of San Francisco, including Marin County to the north, was especially affected by the growth of the postwar suburb.

The opening of the Golden Gate Bridge to automobile traffic in 1937 dramatically improved access to Marin County, altering its predominantly rural character. Prior to this connection, the small towns and relatively undeveloped countryside of Marin were accessed by ferries that crossed the Bay to San Francisco and Oakland, by rail service from

the north, or by circuitous roads that required considerable travel time. Three years after the completion of the bridge, the county's population was roughly 52,900. By 1950, Marin had boomed to 85,600 and by 1960 to 146,800.¹⁴ Robert Royston and his family, along with Joseph Stein and many other architects, designers, artists, and performers were among those who sought an ideal suburban life in the wooded hills of Marin County. Ceramicist Edith Heath and her husband Brian relocated their business to Marin in 1947, when they leased a large workspace in Sausalito to house the growing operations of Heath Ceramics. The Heaths immediately joined in the creative and somewhat bohemian social circle that had developed in Marin, and it was through that circle that they met Robert Royston and his wife Evelyn. They became life-long friends.¹⁵

Shortly after shifting their business, the Heaths also relocated their domestic life to Sausalito, purchasing a barge named the *Dorothea* together with another couple. The two couples remodeled the barge anchored at

Sausalito to provide two living spaces. In 1949, the barge was floated to a waterfront parcel that the Heaths purchased on the Tiburon peninsula and then lifted to a stable position on shore. After buying out the other couple, the Heaths developed the houseboat, turning it into an on-land-residence and garden. Edith Heath turned to her friend Robert Royston for site planning and design of the garden.¹⁶

As was also the case with the Wilson and Nelson gardens, the Heath's home was located downslope from the nearest road. Because of the unique nature of the structure and its situation on the side of an embankment, it was impractical to build a garage adjacent to the house. On the site plan, Royston located parking, a carport, and storage on an upper level that was roughly 10 feet above the house. To hide the automobiles from view of the house and garden, Royston placed a vertical picket screen at the top of the slope and planted the side slope heavily with evergreen toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), a robust regional native plant well-suited to the bayside microclimate. A broad, gently sloping concrete path and a set of equally broad garden stairs brought residents and guests from the parking area to the living terrace and the entry to the home.

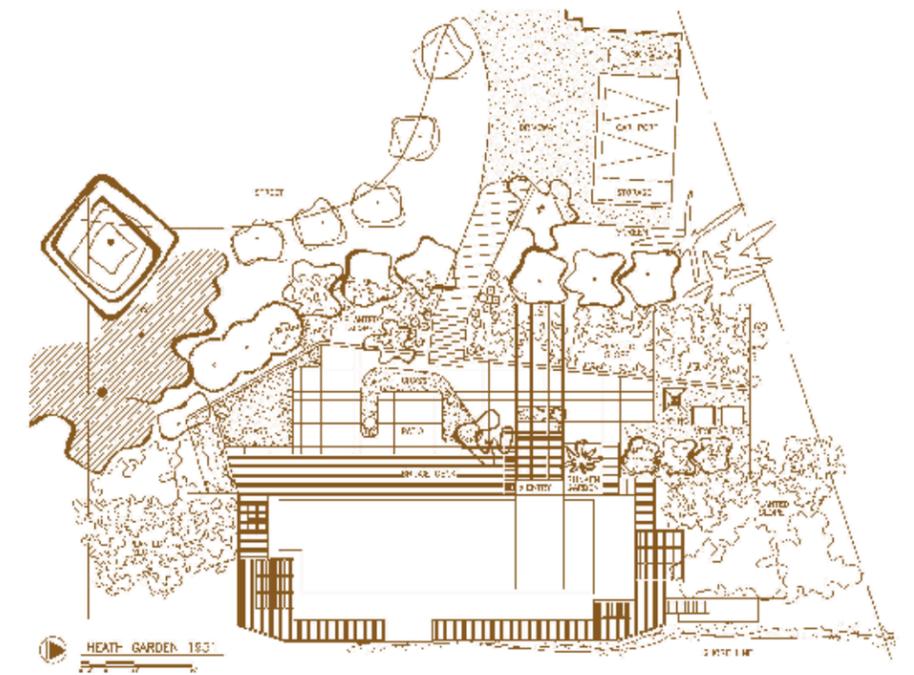
As an improvised structure, the houseboat-turned-home lacked an obvious front door, so in the initial concept drawing Royston guided visitors to the entry by means of another picket screen that angled dynamically across the central terrace. This screen divided that terrace into two spaces, presumably to allocate private zones for both couples who were to share the dwelling. This feature changed when the Heaths became the sole residents. In the built garden, the entry was shifted from the center of the structure to the north end, a location that Royston made prominent with a strong paving pattern of asymmetrical rectangles, an angled lawn panel, and a dramatic trellis anchored in the hillside. Spanning the entire width of the terrace, the trellis terminated in a garden room that Royston developed in collaboration with the Heaths. The garden room functioned as a foyer to the house, defining a space outside the glass entry with open grids of steel and wood, something like a modernist lath house. It was roofed in retractable canvas panels to provide shade in summer. Edith Heath embellished the space with tile murals (the plywood panels seen in the photos accompanying this article would eventually be covered in tile) and a kinetic sculpture of ceramic rings. It was furnished with a number of Royston-designed pieces, including a "sun sled" lounge and planter tubs. The structure was painted in Royston's favorite color, "Chinese Red," and trimmed with black accents. This color scheme extended to wooden construction throughout the garden.



To the north of the garden room was a sunken garden that accommodated a stairway to a lower level of the dwelling and a second stairway to the shoreline. The planting in the sunken garden took advantage of the protected microclimate and included exotic species such as banana (*Musa spp.*), a choice not typically seen in Royston-designed gardens; it likely reflects input from Edith Heath. In the initial concept sketch, the sunken garden was located on the south end of the garden as was a lower level deck. Beyond the sunken garden Royston's paving pattern ended in a gravel area that included a vegetable garden and laundry drying area. The garden room and trellis functioned as a visually-permeable divider separating the open public and social spaces of the garden from more private areas and the vegetable beds. Two wood frame screens with solid concrete panels were staggered and offset

Above: The color mosaic of planting developed by Royston and Heath is visible in this photo. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Robert Royston Collection. Photo by Robert Royston.

Below: Heath garden plan 1951. This plan was developed from archival materials and period photographs. Collection of the author.





Clockwise: Heath garden looking north from top of embankment. The space defining trellis and garden room are visible in this photo. University of California Berkeley, College of Environmental Design Archives (CEDA) Robert Royston Collection. Photo by Robert Royston. Pages from ERW Furniture Brochure. Eckbo Royston and Williams offered a line of indoor/outdoor furniture designed by Robert Royston. Collection of the author.

LOUNGE (L-76)
has adjustable head and foot, rolls easily on hardwood wheels. Pad is supported by a bed of plastic rope which will not rot or mildew. Constructed of Redwood with hardwood dowels and rustproof hardware. Size: 76" long, 26" wide. Takes any standard pad or custom pad (P-74).

COFFEE TABLE (TT-42)
EDITH HEATH TILE-TOP TABLE is available in a choice of custom-glazed tiles. The tiles are glazed in rich, soft colors, and are permanently set in redwood frame for complete resistance to weather and use. Red terra cotta paving tile, mat-glazed in designs of four colors—aquamarine, chartreuse, tan, and eggplant. Abrasive-resistant. Set in mastic and cement. Size of table: 37" long, 25" wide, 12" high.

COFFEE TABLE (T-42), illustrated on first page, is same size and construction as Tile-top Table but with top of Redwood strips.

PLANTER (P-22)
is a portable unit designed to provide planting space indoors or outdoors where desired. Indoors it prevents contact of dampness with floors. Outdoors it can be used for shrubbery or seasonal bloom on decks or in patios. The standard terra cotta plant containers are removable, as are the metal drip pans underneath. Planters may be used singly or in groups. Made in two sizes: 18" square by 8 1/2" high including 10" pot; 22" square by 10 1/2" high including 14" pot.



Above: Standard Oil Rod and Gun Club screen.

from each other in this area. These screens stop the eye, block the wind, and create a vertical plane at the north edge of the property.

The combination of the up-slope screens at the carport and at the north end of the garden with dense planting reveal Royston's design intention to create a secluded space protected from view from the street and from the chilling breezes off the Bay. As the "sky plane" for the Wilson garden demonstrates, Royston was not hesitant to use built structures to achieve functional results in his gardens. Vertical picket screens similar to those seen in the Wilson and Heath gardens are found in many of the gardens he designed in the early 1950's. The first example of this structural approach to controlling breezes can be seen in his 1949 design of the Standard Oil Rod and Gun Club in Point Richmond, California. Similar to the situation of the Heath garden, the project was also on an east facing property at the Bay's edge.¹⁷ The wood and concrete screens in the Heath garden are set perpendicular to the adjacent hillside and die into it, a design device seen in other Royston gardens, including his Mill Valley home constructed four years earlier. The integration of architecture and landscape was always a fundamental goal for Royston and this device of anchoring walls into nearby slopes for visual effect was one way that he achieved it.

The center of the Heath garden is a generous open and level space paved in a mix of materials including concrete, turf, brick, and wood decking. Royston's plan cut slightly into the upslope bank of the hill and used the material generated to fill downslope, by this means expanding the area for concrete paving and turf. As a result of this cut, a seat-height retaining wall somewhat reminiscent of the perimeter seat wall in the Wilson garden defines the west and south sides of the terrace. Bordered on all sides by upslope embankment and retaining wall or structures, the central space of the garden is focused inward and protected. The property has a stunning, unimpeded view of the Bay looking north and east which was enjoyed from the vantage point of decks that the Heaths constructed on the north end and east side of the Dorothea. Given the decks and location of the home, Royston resisted the temptation to incorporate the view into this garden. There was an initial glimpse of the Bay from the top of the garden stairway that disappeared as the visitor descended into the garden.

The decking that runs the length of the terrace on its eastern side is in reality a wide bridge that spans the gap between the sloping ground and the building. Royston did not divide the open central space physically, but the paving pattern of the concrete terrace,

a combination of asymmetrical rectangular sections with contrasting colors and surface finishes, suggests sub-spaces that might be used for garden games or outdoor dining. A lawn panel with a complementary biomorphic shape further defines the ground plane. The strong legible surface pattern is characteristic of the gardens and public plazas that Royston designed during this period. He often mixed paving types - in this case concrete and brick - with irregularly shaped lawn panels and shadow from overhead structures to create large-scale abstract ground paintings. These were first and foremost functional spaces designed to respond to the needs of those who occupied them, but they were also large works of art. When looking at a Royston-drawn garden plan, the compositional strategies of fine art painting are unmistakable. Conversely, when looking at a painting by Robert Royston, the references to landscape design are obvious.

As was often the case with many of his Marin County gardens, groves of California coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) provide a dark evergreen frame for the Heath garden. Royston was an advocate of the Japanese idea of borrowed landscape and likely considered the hillside oaks visible from the interior of the garden as a part of the scheme.¹⁸ Within the bounds of the managed garden, Royston's approach to plant combinations was as painterly as his hardscape design. Unfortunately, no planting plan remains for reference, but close study of period photographs provides insights into the planting design. A great variety of colors and textures are evident in the garden and these are arranged for massing and contrast. By Royston's account, Edith Heath was enthusiastic about her garden, and it is certain she had a hand in plant selection.¹⁹

Apart from the fruit trees incorporated into the vegetable garden on the north end, there are few trees in the garden. A patio scale tree, likely a flowering plum (*Prunus spp*) is set across the path from the garden room and a small pomegranate tree (*Punica granatum*) is positioned above the low retaining wall at the west edge to provide afternoon shade on the center terrace.

Supplementing the toyon introduced for screening on the upslope embankment, are medium and smaller scale shrubs that provide textured and colorful edges to the garden. These included pride of Madeira (*Echium fatuosum*), several varieties of New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax*), bush germander (*Teu-chrium fruiticans*), Australian bush cherry (*Syzygium paniculatum*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), Scotch broom, Australian tea tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*), calla lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*), hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), and cone bush (*Leucadendron spp*). The rich mosaic of planting continued to the ground plane with low-growing blue fescue (*Festuca ovina 'Glauca'*), California gray rush (*Juncus patens*), yellow-flowering Gazania, dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*), wooly lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*), and sunrose (*Helianthemum nummularium*). Plants in Royston-designed wooden tubs included Australian tea tree, citrus, juniper (*Juniperus chinensis torulosa*), oleander (*Nerium oleander*) and jade plant (*Crassula ovata*).

The Heath garden shares a number of important qualities with the Wilson and Nelson gardens. Each of these places was spatially adventurous. Rather than address the hillside locations with stepped terraces or decks cantilevered from the building, Royston found site-specific design alternatives

to address client need. These modern gardens were closely integrated with the architecture of the home, in many instances supplementing the relatively small interior spaces. There is an appealingly spare quality to these gardens created in the aftermath of wartime frugality. And finally, while each design was a response to a unique place and client, all were guided by an artistic vision that saw the suburban garden both as an important functional space equal to the building and as an opportunity for art. Together this trio of gardens typifies the innovative landscape modernism that Royston developed in his own backyard. ■

JC Miller, ASLA is a licensed landscape architect and writer with a deep interest in the post-war California landscape. A partner at Vallier Design Associates, a landscape architecture and planning practice located in historic Point Richmond, California, he is also the former Director for the Landscape Architecture Program at UC Berkeley Extension. He is the co-author, with Reuben M. Rainey, of the 2006 book "Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park," (William Stout Publishers). He is currently at work on an upcoming book about Royston's life and career for the Library of American Landscape History's "Masters of Modern Landscape Design" series, scheduled for 2019.

Endnotes

1. This collection publications is representative of the popular media attention that Royston's garden designs received in the immediate postwar period: Naify Garden, "Changing Levels Poses Few Problems," *Sunset, The Magazine for Western Living*, February 1948, 24-25. The Wilson Garden is illustrated in Joseph E. Howland, *The House Beautiful Book of Gardens and Outdoor Living* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1958), 56-57. The Chinn Garden is featured in "Color and Texture," *Sunset, The Magazine for Western Living*, August 1955, 44. The second Appert Garden appeared in several current journals and a newspaper column, including John Callender, "Six West Coast Houses, *Architectural Record* (November 1951), 124-125; Vance Bourjaily, "Serene and Livable Modern House," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 12, 1950; and "Seven Outdoor Rooms Double the Living Space," *House and Garden* (August 1951), 30-31. Plans and correspondence related

2. Recorded interview of Robert Royston by author, March 14, 2002.
3. The narrative description of the Wilson Garden is based on the authors' conversation with Royston July 16, 2006, plans and photographs in the Robert N. Royston Collection, EDA, UCB, and descriptions of the garden in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (1948 and 1950), Garrett Eckbo's *Landscape for Living* (1950), and *The House Beautiful Book of Gardens and Outdoor Living* (1958). Royston was the sole designer of the garden as head of Eckbo, Royston, and Williams' San Francisco office.
4. Author's recorded conversation with Royston July 16, 2006.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

7. See Derek Parmentier, "Landscape Comes of Age," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 20, 1948, p. 11; "Avant Garde Gardens," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sunday March 19, 1950, 3L; *Landscape Design*, San Francisco Museum of Art and Association of Landscape Architects, San Francisco Region, 1948 (San Francisco Museum of Art), 4; and "See How Much Living You Can Get in a Garden 12 x 30," *House Beautiful* (February, 1951), 86. The garden also appeared in Garrett Eckbo, *Landscape for Living* (F. W. Dodge Corporation,) 43. While the design was Royston's, Eckbo credited it to Eckbo, Royston, and Williams. It appeared under the title, "Hillside Garden in Marin County, California, 1948," and featured two photographs and a plan. The Wilson Garden was also included in Joseph E. Howland, *The House Beautiful Book of Gardens and Outdoor Living* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1958), 56-57. The garden appeared under the heading, "Gardens Work for Us" and "Tiny Scrap of Useless Land." It was not identified.

8. See, Stephen White, *Building in the Garden* (Oxford University Press, 1993) 65-84 "The Houses" and 81-83 "Ladera Co-operative Building in America". See also Reuben Rainey & JC Miller, *Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park* (William Stout Publishers, San Francisco, 2006) 82-85 "Ladera Cooperative Housing 1945-1949".
9. In 2016 the author visited the Nelson home and interviewed the current homeowner who had purchased the home from the Nelson estate. Based on conversations with the Nelson children it was her understanding that a bedroom addition was made to the house in the mid 1950s. Two bedrooms and a bath were added in the location planned by Stein, but the built structure, while following the concept proposed by Stein, was not of his design.
10. Recorded interview of Robert Royston by author, March 14, 2002.
11. Author's recorded conversation with Royston July 16, 2006.

12. See Mel Scott, *The San Francisco Bay Area: A Metropolis in Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 250-251.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Author's recorded conversation with Royston July 16, 2006.
16. "Edith Heath - A Handful of Clay". An Exhibition at the University of California Berkeley College of Environmental Design Library, 2016. Available online: <http://exhibits.ced.berkeley.edu/exhibits/show/edithheath/the-barge>
17. See Reuben Rainey & JC Miller, *Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park* (William Stout Publishers, San Francisco, 2006) 82-85 "The Standard Oil Rod and Gun Club, Point Richmond California 1950".
18. Author's recorded conversation with Royston July 16, 2006.
19. Ibid.

THE FATHER OF SOLAR CONTROL: ROBERT DEERING, PH.D, FASLA

BY MELISSA MOURKAS





INTRODUCTION

A pioneer of sustainable landscape design, Robert Deering had a broad and lasting effect on landscape architecture, not just in California, but worldwide. In a career spanning 60 years, Deering used Modernist design principles and an approach to site design based upon environmental factors to create landscapes for numerous private residential projects in and around the Sacramento Valley. In addition, he designed several college and university campuses, as well as commercial projects, collaborating with some of the finest architects of the day. Even more significant than his fine executed works was his role as an educator, transmitting his innovations in sustainable landscape design and influencing generations of students of landscape architecture.

Deering's impact on his profession was recognized in 1995 when he was named a Member of the Council of Fellows of the ASLA, due largely to the efforts of Donald Fox of the National Park Service. Fox summarized Deering's contributions to the field of landscape architecture as an educator, his pioneering research in solar control, and his career in public service with its legacy of protecting California's cultural and natural heritage for future generations.¹

Previous spread: Dahl house entryway.

Above: Dahl house private outdoor seating space.

Opposite: Deering in his garden.

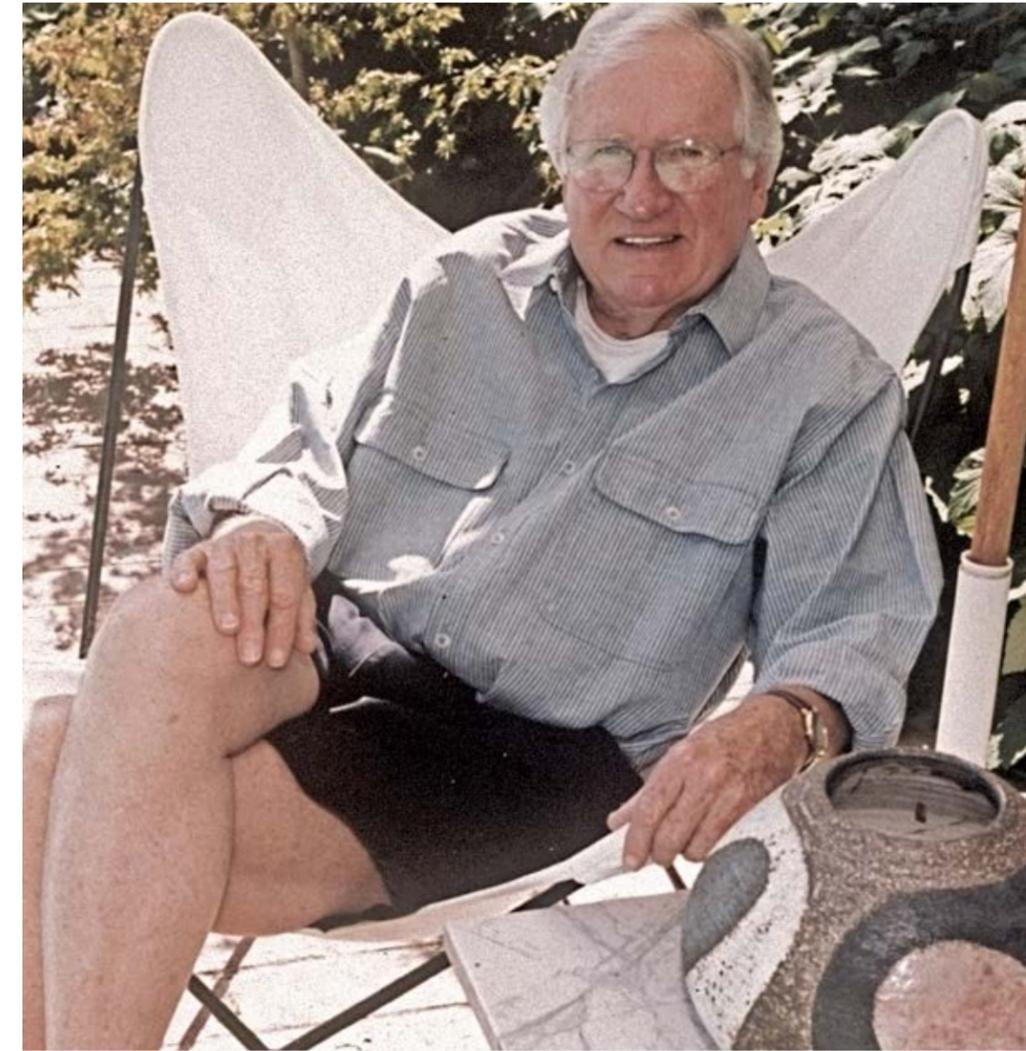
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born on July 25, 1920, Robert Bowman Deering grew up in Orono, Maine. He received a BS in Ornamental Horticulture-Landscape Design in 1942 from the University of Maine, where his love of plants, design, teaching, photography and travel was nurtured. During WWII, he enlisted in the United States Navy, first with the Seabees in California and later at Midshipman's School at Notre Dame. He shipped out from San Francisco to the Pacific as a Navigator on the USS Jaguar. Deering later recounted stories evoking the 1955 movie *Mr. Roberts*, including keeping plants in his cabin collected from Pacific islands while the ship off-loaded its cargo of aviation gasoline. After the war, he entered Cornell University, where he earned an MS in 1947 and a PhD in 1949 in landscape architecture. His doctoral thesis, *Organic Planning in Landscape Design*, "...dealt largely with plant materials in relation to landscape design."² While teaching a class on landscape architecture as a graduate teaching assistant at Cornell, he met and then married Alice Dake from Saratoga Springs, NY.³ The Deerings had three children: Carol, Paul and Roberta.

Deering began his career in 1949 as an academic, teaching at the University of California, Davis in the Landscape Gardening Department; the following year he was appointed chairman of the department. He received a Fulbright grant in 1955 to travel to the Netherlands, where he taught landscape architecture at Wageningen's Agricultural Institute and also presented a paper, "Horticulture and the Improvement of Hot-Climate Environments," at the 1955 International Horticultural Congress in The Hague. In travels throughout Europe he continued his studies of drought-resistant plants. Deering left UC Davis in 1957 to open his professional practice. In 1960 he began his twenty-year career with the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

THE TEACHING YEARS: COOLING THROUGH SITE DESIGN

In the 1950s, before air conditioning units were common-place, and long before cities like Sacramento in California's hot Central Valley enacted tree-shading ordinances for parking lots, Robert Deering was teaching his students about the cooling effects of strategic



planting and site design. His prescient theories evolved from scientific experimentation. Early in his role as assistant professor and department chair of the landscape architecture department at Davis, he and his students, along with other agriculture department faculty, constructed a simple cabin-style trailer, which could be moved around as needed for research purposes. The trailer had two rooms: a control room and a larger room where various sensors were placed to record temperature changes throughout the day. A weather microstation was sited near the trailer.

Students and faculty recorded the changes in room temperature based on location, coverage by trees and foliage, and orientation relative to sun and sun angles. In one example, significant cooling effects were noted when the trailer was sited to the east of a grouping of eucalyptus trees which provided protective shade from the hot midday and afternoon sun, while also offering morning sunlight.

These experiments, carried out from approximately 1953 to 1956, formed the basis of much of Robert Deering's teachings and early design work. He published many papers, some in conjunction with his peers at Davis, and an instruction manual, *Planning the Garden*, for students as well as the general public, reflecting his research into heating and cooling through site design.⁴ *Planning the Garden* laid out the basics of site selection, sun and shade patterns, placement of outdoor living areas, public versus private spaces, play spaces, and the use of devices such as fencing, pergolas, water and tree cover to control the garden climate.⁵ This site design work was enhanced by his love of horticulture, including research into both the cooling effects of plants and drought tolerant plants, as well as his enthusiastic embrace of the "modern design" aesthetic of the time. E. Gregory McPherson described Robert Deering as the "Father of Solar Control" in his 1984 book, *Energy-Conserving Site Design*.⁶

EARLY RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPES

Robert Deering executed a number of residential site designs exemplifying the modern landscape design style of the mid-century period. The master site plan for the Loren Dahl house, designed in the late 1950s/early 1960s by architects Carter Sparks and Donald Thaden in Arden Oaks east of Sacramento, followed many of the guidelines in *Planning the Garden*. The plan featured separation of public and private spaces, using off-street parking leading to an entry walkway and directing the visitor through an opening in a freestanding wall into an intimate courtyard. Here, the path constructed of both concrete and raised wooden decking hop-scotched in 90-degree angles to the front door. The asymmetrical path was at some points flanked by pools of moving water and at other points constructed over the water. Private spaces were found in numerous places throughout the property, as were areas dedicated to active recreation (swimming pool, tennis court, picnic areas). The design included space for an orchard, vegetable garden, and service areas for family parking. The Dahl house was demolished in 1994.⁷

Partnering with Dreyfuss & Blackford Architects, Deering moved beyond residential garden design and site planning in his award-winning design for the Mansion Inn in Sacramento (1958-62) as well as his design for the Nut Tree, a road stop on the main highway from San Francisco to Sacramento in Vacaville. The Nut Tree project is significant in that it was where Deering first applied his tree-shading concept to a large parking lot.

As was becoming more commonplace, the design of the entire Nut Tree complex grew into a collaboration of multiple designers, made possible by owners who were keenly interested in the arts and design. Besides Deering and the architects Dreyfuss & Blackford, this team included graphic designer Don R. Birrell, who remained associated with the Nut Tree for 40 years and played a major role in tying together the graphic elements of the project, including wayfinding and restaurant design. Planning for the Nut Tree's major expansion began in the early 1950's, with construction beginning in 1953, producing a good example of mid-century modernism in a public commercial plaza. The Nut Tree began as a produce stand along the highway, developing into a roadside attraction that mixed California outdoor living concepts with

restaurants, shops, and amusement park-style entertainment. Most of the Nut Tree complex has been replaced by other retail and commercial enterprises. A central core "plaza" still remains, along with a few of the original site elements and furnishings.⁸

The Nut Tree landscape included play areas for children, a small-scale train ride, a carousel, an outdoor fireplace for social gatherings, and an airport. An interior highlight, the "Bird Cages," featured aviaries with plantings separated by glass walls from the diners inside the restaurant space. The bird cages brought landscape elements into the interior spaces of the pavilion.

CALIFORNIA STATE PARK PLANNING AND DESIGN

Following these innovative designs for private clients, Deering moved into larger-scale site and planning work when he began his twenty-year career with the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks). Driven by the post-war population boom in California, the state's parks and beaches were expanding at a rapid pace. Beginning in the 1930's, the state had embarked on a concerted effort to acquire land holdings along the southern coast of California, and coastal acquisitions were ramped up from the 1950's to the 1970's. Governor Edmund 'Pat' Brown's administration (1959-1967) provided significant funding for state parks as well as recreation facilities for state water projects and reservoirs.

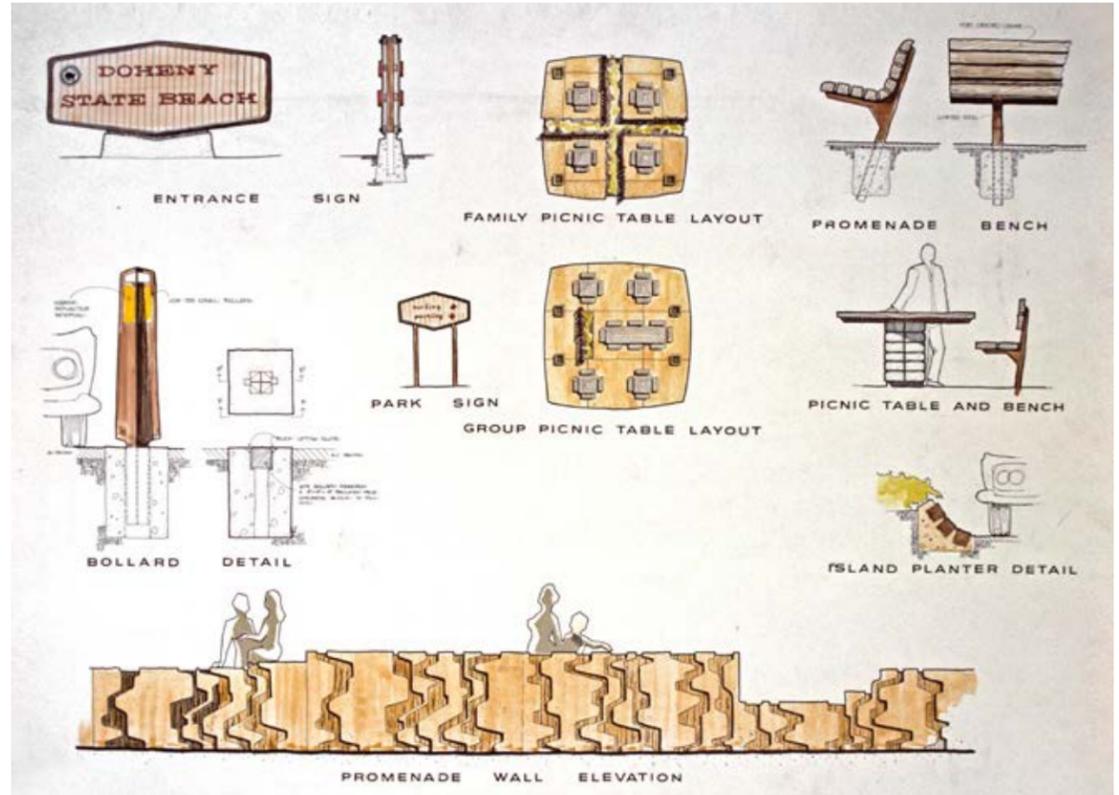
The regional Parks offices where Deering worked produced projects as varied as historic Angel Island State Park, located in the San Francisco Bay, which preserved Civil War-era sites and the Immigration Station, the gateway for many of California's early Chinese immigrants, and South Carlsbad State Beach, a recreational park which won the 1966 Governor's Design Award Certificate of Excellence in the Landscape Category.⁹

Deering's tasks included property acquisition, planning and design, often requiring multi-jurisdictional collaboration involving recreation facilities, bike paths, trails, historic sites and natural areas. Beginning as Associate Landscape Architect at the Monterey Regional Office of Planning and Development, Deering learned early the value of bringing together stakeholders and representatives of private and public entities to engage in the park planning effort. This was exemplified in the Central Coast expansion of Big Sur State Park in 1960. Monterey County Planning



Clockwise from top: Outdoor seating space at the Nut Tree; Glass wall connects indoor and outdoor seating areas at the Nut Tree; A bird cage aviary at the Nut Tree.





Left to right: Doheny State Beach concession area 1970; Doheny State Beach (Dana Point); Designs for site furnishings at Doheny State Beach

Commissioners, Parks staff (including Deering), State Parks Commissioners and private landowners together crafted a plan to expand Big Sur by 5,000 acres. Culminating this effort was a helicopter tour and lunch for the decision-makers at Nathaniel Owings' (Skidmore, Owings and Merrill) recently completed cliff-side "Wild Bird" residence at Big Sur.¹⁰ Deering also was a key participant in the multi-disciplinary team for the design for the Monterey State Historic Monument and Custom House Plaza. Along with landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and architect Nathaniel Owings, the plan was a first attempt at integrating Parks-owned properties with private, city and urban renewal efforts.¹¹ The design combined historic preservation of significant properties, historic spatial relationships, and plazas with recreational amenities, such as a pedestrian-based "Path of History."

In the mid-1960s, Deering was appointed Senior Landscape Architect and Regional Supervisor at the Goleta regional office, near Santa Barbara. The Goleta regional office did much of the planning and design work for coastal parks from San Luis Obispo County to San Diego County, coordinating acquisitions and planning with the headquarters office in Sacramento. Parks headquarters generally managed the construction and bidding. According to Landscape Architect Dale Sutliff, who also worked in the Goleta office,

Parks had four design and planning satellite offices in the 1960's, located in Carmichael (Central Valley and Sierra Region projects); Sacramento (construction documents and special projects); Monterey (Northern California, Monterey County and north); and Goleta (Southern California, San Luis Obispo to Mexico, including the desert region). These satellite design offices were closed and consolidated to Sacramento in 1968-1969 under the Reagan administration.¹²

Doheny State Beach is a good example of the state beach design and mix of uses that Deering and his Goleta team incorporated into the coastal parks they designed. Intended for day use by the growing Southern California population, the park design featured a central concession area with seating, picnic areas for families or small groups, and, of course, beach access.

The picnic and concession areas at Doheny State Beach are largely intact. In the intervening years, the original shade trees in the concession area have been changed out to palms and the seats of the picnic tables have been updated. Otherwise, the park retains a good deal of integrity from the era in which it was built.

After Parks' regional planning offices were consolidated in Sacramento, Deering was appointed Project Manager for the Parks' Planning, Acquisition and Development Unit.

Projects included new land acquisitions along the Central Coast and, in the Southern California region, the Ventura County Coastal Recreation Plan. A project Deering found most challenging, but also most personally satisfying, was successfully negotiating the re-routing of California Highway 1 around, instead of through, Fort Ross State Historic Park, an early Russian outpost in northern California. Under Deering's direction, the Parks' Trails Planning, Acquisition and Development Unit prepared the first state-wide, integrated hiking, biking, and equestrian trail system plans and policies, where he "...crafted a plan and a policy which serves as a blueprint for work still in progress."¹³

FULL CIRCLE: A RETURN TO TEACHING

After retiring from State Parks in 1980, Deering traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he taught landscape architecture for five years at King Faisal University in Dammam and served as landscape architect for the university's \$1 million Passive Solar Cooling Project, and chaired the university's landscape development committee for the Dammam and Hoffuf campuses. While there, he explored and photographed Saudi Arabia, resulting in fourteen of his photographs of indigenous Saudi architecture being selected for an exhibition at King Faisal University Museum. The Saudi government chose three of these for an exhibit on Saudi Arabia in Sweden. Deering continued working and lecturing, at times

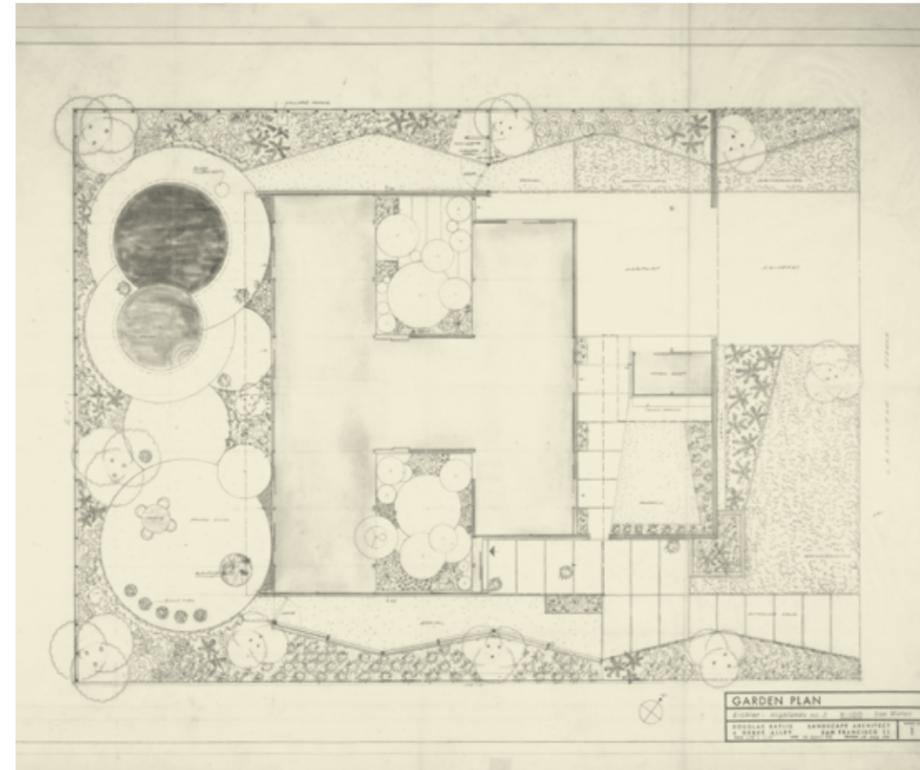
in such faraway places as India, Egypt, and Australia. Deering died at home December 1, 2010, during his afternoon nap, after a walk with a caregiver, which included identifying the plants along their route. Deering was 90 years old. ■

The author would like to extend her gratitude and thanks to Robert Deering's daughter, Roberta Deering, for her assistance with this article. Robert Deering's widow, Alice Deering, provided much of the primary source material and the photographic images for this article.

Melissa Mourkas is a licensed landscape architect and architectural historian. She has spent much of her career studying the built environment in all its forms.

Endnotes

1. Donald Fox. "Robert Deering Fellows Nomination Entry Form," ASLA Sierra Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects, 1995.
2. Roberta Deering, "Robert Deering 1920-2010," Draft Essay for *Pioneers in Landscape Architecture*. Date unknown.
3. Ibid.
4. Robert Deering, G.J. Everson and L.W. Neubauer. "Environmental Influence on Orientation and House Design to Improve Living Comfort." *Journal of Home Economics*. March 1956.
5. Robert B. Deering, *Planning the Garden*, Manual 10. University of California College of Agriculture. Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service. October 1953. (A scan of Robert Deering's 1953 book, *Planning the Garden*, can be accessed here: <https://ia600705.us.archive.org/6/items/planninggarden10deer/planning-garden10deer.pdf>)
6. E. Gregory McPherson, *Energy-Conserving Site Design*. Washington D.C. American Society of Landscape Architects, 1984), 148.
7. Carter Sparks Online Archive. <http://cartersparks.org/ongoing/x-dahl-1958-x/> accessed May 2018.
8. Melissa Mourkas, "Nut Tree," Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) Short Form. July 17, 2015.
9. Roberta Deering, "Robert Deering". *Pioneers in Landscape Architecture*. The Cultural Landscape Foundation. <https://tclf.org/pioneer/robert-deering/biography-robert-deering>. Accessed April 2015.
10. Earl Hofeldt, "Expansion of Big Sur Park Voted," *Monterey Peninsula Herald*, November 18, 1960.
11. Fox, "Nomination."
12. Dale Sutliff. Email correspondence between Dale Sutliff and Melissa Mourkas, October 2015.
13. Fox, "Nomination."

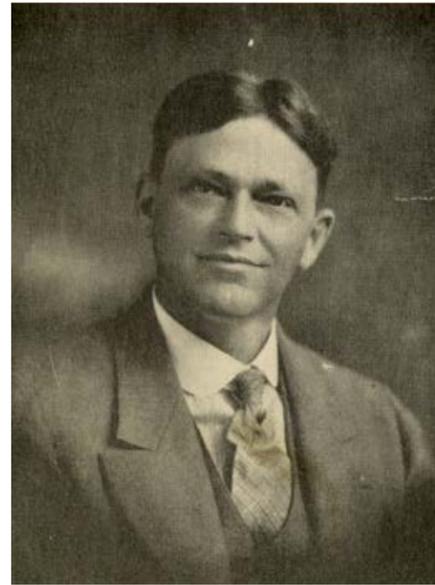


Resources for the Uncovering at the Environmental Design Archive, UC Berkeley

BY PHOEBE CUTLER

Tucked discretely into one corner of the second floor of Wurster Hall, the 1960s concrete edifice that is the home of architecture, city planning, and landscape architecture at UC Berkeley, the Environmental Design Archives (EDA) is the principal resource for research in landscape history in the Bay Area. During *Eden's* twenty-two-year span, the EDA's resources have contributed to articles on Oakland's founding park designer (and deported "spy") Oskar Prager; 20s and 30s San Francisco practitioner Emerson Knight, and two outstanding members of the generation that followed him, Thomas Church and Garrett Eckbo. Currently, CGLHS Board member and author Libby Simon is doing research at the EDA on Eckbo's Wonderland Park development in Los Angeles for an upcoming article for *Eden*.

Left to right: After apprenticing with more than one of the landscape luminaries of the Bay Area, Casey Kawamoto (1919–2010) opened his own successful practice that included the plans for Humboldt State and Robert Louis Stevenson School in Pebble Beach. His hundreds of residences included, as shown here, the Mill Valley residence for the philanthropist Bernard Osher; Eichler Highlands No.3: Garden Plan (Douglas and Maggie Baylis Collection); Sacramento City Plaza Park, (Robert N. Royston Collection). All images from the Environmental Design Archives, College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley.



Left to right: In the midst of San Francisco's Chinatown the core of Eckbo, Royston and Williams' 1952 St. Mary's Square still guards its biomorphic forms that emanate from the central bronze statue of Sun Yat Sen. Collection of Robert N. Royston; the cover of the Landscape Department's 1947 newsletter *The Landscape Axis* honored the retirement after 34 years of John Gregg, the department's chair and founder. Collection of John Gregg.

Impressed, at the occasion of the dedication of UC Santa Barbara in 1955, by UC Berkeley President Gordon Sproul, Beatrix Farrand bequeathed her papers and her collection to the University of California at Berkeley.¹ It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that one early biography of Beatrix Farrand that mined those documents contributed to the revival of the formal European garden in this country.² As British garden historians are all too conscious, the well-connected, New York Society landscape pioneer's papers include the plans and drawings of the celebrated English artist Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932). Jekyll's carefully crafted gardens, with their applied theory of color harmonies and the softening effect of "cottage"-style flower borders, have an international following. Her books, *Wood and Garden* (1899), *Gardens for Small Country Houses* and more, joined with frequent articles in the journal *Country Life*, were widely consumed in this country, as well as abroad. Co-written with Lawrence Weaver, *Country Houses* was republished three times between 1912 and 1920. (Thomas Church acquired his shop-worn copy at the very outset of his career.) Most recently historian Kristine Miller used the collection to produce the monograph *Almost Home: The Public Landscapes of Gertrude Jekyll*.

Also a geographic anomaly, although not such an obvious one, Santa Barbara's Lockwood de Forest's plans were, until recently swapped for two northern California collections, a valued holding of the EDA. The presence of the de Forest papers in Northern California did not detract from their

importance to the long fight, waged in large part in the pages of *Eden*, that resulted in the partial preservation of the Val Verde estate, an outstanding example of that landscape architect's work.

The list of individual holdings in landscape architecture numbers forty-two. Thirty-seven of this sum represents practitioners. The five exceptions are two residences, a competition, an organization (the California Association of Landscape Architects), and a horticulturist (Maunsell Van Rensselaer of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden). Many of the collections from practitioners held by the EDA are ripe for attention by researchers. Happily, CGLHS member and former faculty curator of the collection Marc Treib has mined both the Garrett Eckbo and Thomas Church archives to produce *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living*; *Thomas Church, Landscape Architect: Designing a Modern California Landscape* (2004) and numerous related articles. For the 2006 study "Modern Public Gardens: Robert Royston and the Suburban Park," member JC Miller, allied with historian Reuben Rainey, made full use of the collection. Currently, again with the help of the EDA's resources, Miller is completing a study of Royston's home in the San Francisco suburb of Mill Valley and made use of the Archives for his articles in the current issue of *Eden*. Opportunity beckons for research on the founder of UCB's landscape architecture program, John Gregg (1880-1969), influential as a teacher, but also as a frequent advisor on early state-wide projects. Another interesting subject is the work of the talented Bay Area modernist Douglas Baylis (1918-1971),

who exerted considerable influence on the post-war direction of landscape architecture with his work on promotional material for the redwood and fertilizer industries. Early on the Archives made a considered decision to collect the next generation of landscape designers who worked for Church or Halprin including Casey Kawamoto, Jack Stafford, Walt Guthrie, and Richard Vignolo.

The recipient of limited support from UC Berkeley, EDA is forced to charge a research fee, which is, however, subject to negotiation. As is the case with many libraries and archives, the bulk of the EDA's holdings is off-site, in this instance in the neighboring city of Richmond. Requested material located off-site is brought to Wurster Hall for review. The Online Archive of California (<http://www.oac.cdlib.org>) lists many of the EDA's holdings, including full finding aids. The web site <http://archives.ced.berkeley.edu/> offers individual biographies and often a detailed description of the associated material.

After nearly twenty years directing the collection, Waverly Lowell will be succeeded in July by her chief assistant Chris Marino. ■

Endnotes

1. Beatrix Farrand to Robert Sproul, 30 September 1955 (Folder 301 Arch, Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley).

2. The publication by Dianne Balmori, Diane Kostial McGuire, and Eleanor McPeck, *Beatrix Farrand's American Landscapes: Her Gardens and Campuses* (Sagaponick, New York: Sagapress, Inc., 1985) initiated the revival and Jane Brown's *Beatrix: The Gardening Life of Beatrix Jones Farrand, 1872-1959* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995) helped to sustain it.

Tour and Talk Showcases Two Important Pasadena Gardens



INTRODUCTION

Christy O'Hara, CGLHS President

Tour & Talk events are special opportunities that offer access to historic gardens with attendant expert lectures. In addition to education, Tours & Talks allow lively interchange among attendees. Saturday, May 19th, was a special Tour & Talk as CGLHS members and their guests were able to visit two important private gardens in Pasadena, the Winifred Starr Dobyms Estate and the Mrs. Harry Gray Estate. These gardens were a rare view into two 1920s and '30s landscapes only previously seen in historic photographs. CGLHS would like to thank Matthew Berkley of Berkley, Lander & Lamprecht, realtors for making these unique gardens available to our members.

The Winifred Dobyms Garden

Ann Scheid

The recent discovery of the house and garden of Winifred Dobyms (1886-1963), author of the 1931 classic *California Gardens*, has brought to light not only a beautiful, nearly intact relic of Pasadena's past, but also awakened interest in Dobyms herself. Myron Hunt noted in his introduction to the book that "the profession of landscape architecture is fortunately attracting an increasing number of highly-trained, much-travelled and experienced women." Dobyms certainly must have concurred, for her book features many gardens designed by women. She organized the book to illustrate the various elements popular in California garden design: water features, axes and vistas, paths and paving, courtyards, entrances, loggias, trees in groves and in allees, pergolas, outdoor rooms, walls and hedges, gates, stairways and sculpture. Nearly all of these appear in her own garden. Hunt notes that many women are designing their own gardens, and this may have been the case with Dobyms. Although somewhat altered and reduced in size, the garden betrays a skillful and artistic designer.

Winifred Starr Dobyms grew up in the Chicago suburb of Winnetka, attended college in the east and then spent two years in Paris studying music and training as a



singer. Despite her privileged background, Dobyms took an early interest in the plight of women, especially impoverished immigrants in Chicago. Her marriage in 1909 to Fletcher Dobyms, a prominent attorney, was a sensation, for her husband-to-be had courted her while at the same time opposing her father, defense attorney Merritt Starr, in a highly-publicized court case. At the conclusion of the trial, won by Mr. Dobyms, the couple announced their engagement.

Following her marriage Dobyms became a prominent activist working in the cause of women's suffrage in Chicago. She served on the boards and as head of several organizations in the suffrage movement.

The Dobyms' moved to Pasadena in 1925, where they settled in the Linda Vista neighborhood, building their house in 1932 in the Chula Vista tract, a small tract designed by Ralph Cornell featuring large lots overlooking the Arroyo Seco. Architect Joseph Kucera designed the California Mediterranean-style house with generously-sized rooms, a charming entry courtyard and a loggia facing the garden. Located on the Arroyo's west rim, house and garden look out over the Arroyo and enjoy a spectacular view of the San Gabriel mountains. The main garden "room" is a simple rectangular grass panel, bordered by decomposed granite paths and flower beds. A second "room" to the south is at a lower grade and contains a central fountain/pool and a pergola supported by classical columns. A walled kitchen garden/drying yard and a walled driveway garage entrance complete the ensemble. The garden once extended further south, where a 1950s house now stands.

While living in Pasadena, Dobyms remained active in women's issues, especially the newly-formed League of Women Voters—she was an officer of the Los Angeles League. Later she became interested in gardens, and organized a series of talks in Pasadena by garden experts such as Lockwood de Forest, Charles Gibbs Adams and Myron Hunt.

Long-time CGLHS member Virginia Gardner had Dobyms' book *California Gardens* reprinted several years ago, and we were fortunate to have her present with copies of the book available for purchase.



The Mrs. Harry Gray Garden

Steven Keylon

After six months touring Europe in 1924, landscape architect Katherine Bashford returned full of inspiration. Writing about her impressions in *California Southland*, Bashford described some of what she saw: "The gardens of Italy are characterized by a strong underlying design which, while it unites the garden as a whole, also breaks up the area into separate parts. The main axis leads up or down, as the case may be, to other levels, and cross axes open up charming smaller gardens or lovely vistas. The garden is seldom seen as a whole."

For one of her first large-scale commissions upon her return from Europe, the garden for Mrs. Harry Gray was done in collaboration with architect Reginald D. Johnson. To complement the stately Italian Revival-style house, and inspired by what she experienced in Italy, Bashford made the large rear garden more intimate by creating an enclosure of high stucco walls with arched openings. These opened onto smaller garden rooms -one a cutting garden, the other a kitchen garden and service yard. These arched openings mirrored the arches of the house itself, creating a satisfying rhythm. From the rear of the house, the main axis crossed a broad panel of turf, bordered by broad beds of flowering annuals, and terminated at a trellis-covered outdoor room, graced with a large oil jar serving as the basin for a wall fountain. At the end of a cross axis was another fountain, this one featuring artist Maud Daggett's whimsical sculpture of the "Goose Girl."

Bashford and architect Johnson would continue to collaborate through the 1920s and 30s, including the landscape of his own home in San Marino. Having studied the Gray garden when researching Bashford for my article in the Fall 2013 issue of *Eden*, I was astonished to see all these landscape features intact, considering the garden is approaching a hundred years old. Programs like CGLHS's Tours and Talks offer rare opportunities to see special gardens such as these, so seldom open to the public. ■

CGLHS ANNUAL REPORT 2017

DEAR CGLHS MEMBERS,

After numerous years on the board, on January 1st I became the new president of CGLHS. As a professor of landscape architecture at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, education is my passion. Our activities focus in large part on promoting wider knowledge of California's historic gardens and landscapes and our successes this past year speak to this core mission. Thanks to your support, the California Garden & Landscape History Society had another robust year of accomplishments in 2017. These include:

EDUCATION THROUGH EVENTS

The annual conference held in Palm Springs quickly sold out. Focused on the landscapes of the Spanish-Colonial Revival and mid-20th century modernist homes and resorts that made this desert destination known around the world, "Palm Springs: Playground of the Stars" included tours of both public and private gardens, with its cocktail reception and dinner at the Historic Palm Springs Tennis Club designed by Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones. Thank you to Steven Keylon as the conference convener for his excellent work. In addition to the conference, during 2017 CGLHS members had the opportunity to attend five educational lectures discussing the work of Ernest Batchelder, Kate Sessions, Ruth Shellhorn, Ralph Cornell and Francis Dean.

EDUCATION THROUGH PUBLICATION

This past year *Eden* had a substantial redesign with more color imagery and bolder graphics to help showcase the essays. We would like to thank guest editor Steven Keylon and the *Eden* Editorial Board as well as Bill Smith and Dave Shulman from DesignSimple who graciously worked pro bono on *Eden's* update. We would also like to thank the Palm Springs Historical Society which waived its substantial scanning and reproduction fees for the two Palm Springs issues of *Eden*.

CELEBRATION OF HISTORIC LANDSCAPES THROUGH OUR WEBSITE

Last year a major accomplishment was updating our website and converting much of our membership management to a new software platform called Wild Apricot. Thank you to our board members David Laws, Brandy Kuhl and Judy Horton who spent a significant amount of time in this endeavor. If you have not yet had a chance, please visit www.cglhs.org, especially the Events page, where we continue to provide announcements of educational lectures, historic garden tours, and of course our annual conference.

We are grateful for the many volunteers who run this organization, from the writers, speakers and those who host events to those who serve on our Board of Directors and Editorial Board. Thank you, too, to our members who continue to support CGLHS above the basic membership level which allows us to continue our collective mission.

—Christine O'Hara, President, CGLHS



Top three photos: scenes from the Palm Springs Conference; Bottom left: the cover of the newly redesigned Fall 2017 *Eden*; Bottom right: Dr. Robert Winter holds court in the living room of Ernest Batchelder's house.

Eden

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Address Correction and Forwarding Requested

Front Cover: Wilson garden view of patio from living room. Royston partially enclosed the patio to make it a comfortable and useful space. Collection of the author.

Back cover: Wilson garden model. Typically, Eckbo Royston and Williams made models only for larger commercial or public commissions, but the complex design of the Wilson garden was best explained by a three-dimensional model. Collection of the author.

