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Gardens Below the Watchtower: Gardens and Meaning in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps Part I

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In 1943, Ansel Adams was hired by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to photograph life at Manzanar Relocation Center, located in central California, where 10,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. One of his photographs featured a Japanese-style garden called Merritt Park, which contained glassy ponds, rustic structures, and thoughtfully placed plants and boulders (Figure 1). This image offers a glimpse into the camps that contradicts typical descriptions of them as dust blown, barren and oppressive places. Few discussions of the Japanese American internment and incarceration have gone further than describing the camp landscapes as cruel places comprised of tarpaper barracks

surrounded by barbed wire fences and watchtowers, and located in remote and desolate areas. While these descriptions are generally accurate, they do not represent the complexity of the camp landscapes as individual places set within their own geographic context, nor do they portray the human forces which created, maintained and actively transformed them into semi-livable places. These descriptions reflect scholarship on the incarceration that has been rooted in the social sciences, particularly ethnic studies, sociology, and history. Additionally, popular descriptions of the incarceration camps focus on elements of confinement, such as guard towers and fences, over *elements of agency*, such as the

camp gardens. This tendency simplifies the incarceration experience rather than exploring the complexities inherent in the historical events and physical landscapes.

In landscape architecture, scholarship has traditionally focused on Japanese garden design and theory. Japanese gardens typically are depicted as aesthetically sophisticated landscapes; common descriptions portray them as tranquil and serene places designed for strolling and meditation. Rarely are Japanese gardens politicized. The camp gardens, however, evoke complex sociological interactions and factions, conditions spawned by a community in turmoil. The camp

(Continued on page 2.)

Gardens Below the Watchtower (*continued*)

gardens exhibited tensions between camp authorities and inmates; between Japanese immigrants and their Japanese American descendents; between male and female gender roles; and between resisters of the incarceration, those who were compliant and those who remained staunchly patriotic. Kenneth Helphand, Lynne Horiuchi, Patricia Limerick, and Gary Okihiro have defined the camp gardens in terms of power, defiance, and resistance in their scholarly works. This study elaborates upon these earlier analyses by exploring garden meaning and power in terms of

motivation, process, and function. By bridging disciplines rooted in the built environment with social history, analysis becomes more holistic and sophisticated.

Literature on incarceration has traditionally depicted Japanese Americans in a victim model, highlighting the forced exclusion, bleak incarceration camps and absence of civil liberties. This type of depiction often sensationalized their victimization and did not provide an accurate picture of camp life. This study documents and analyzes Japanese Americans' extraordinary level of agency, which was exhibited in the

Japanese-style ornamental gardens created at all ten of the incarceration camps. This agency effectively transformed the camp landscapes, ameliorating and beautifying them through thousands of landscape and garden projects. The gardens successfully buffered the severity and monotony of the military-issued barracks, barbed wire and structured layouts of the camps. More importantly, the acts of creating and maintaining the ornamental gardens buffered the psychological and physical trauma of the incarceration experience.

Today, the gardens themselves have persevered; remnants of

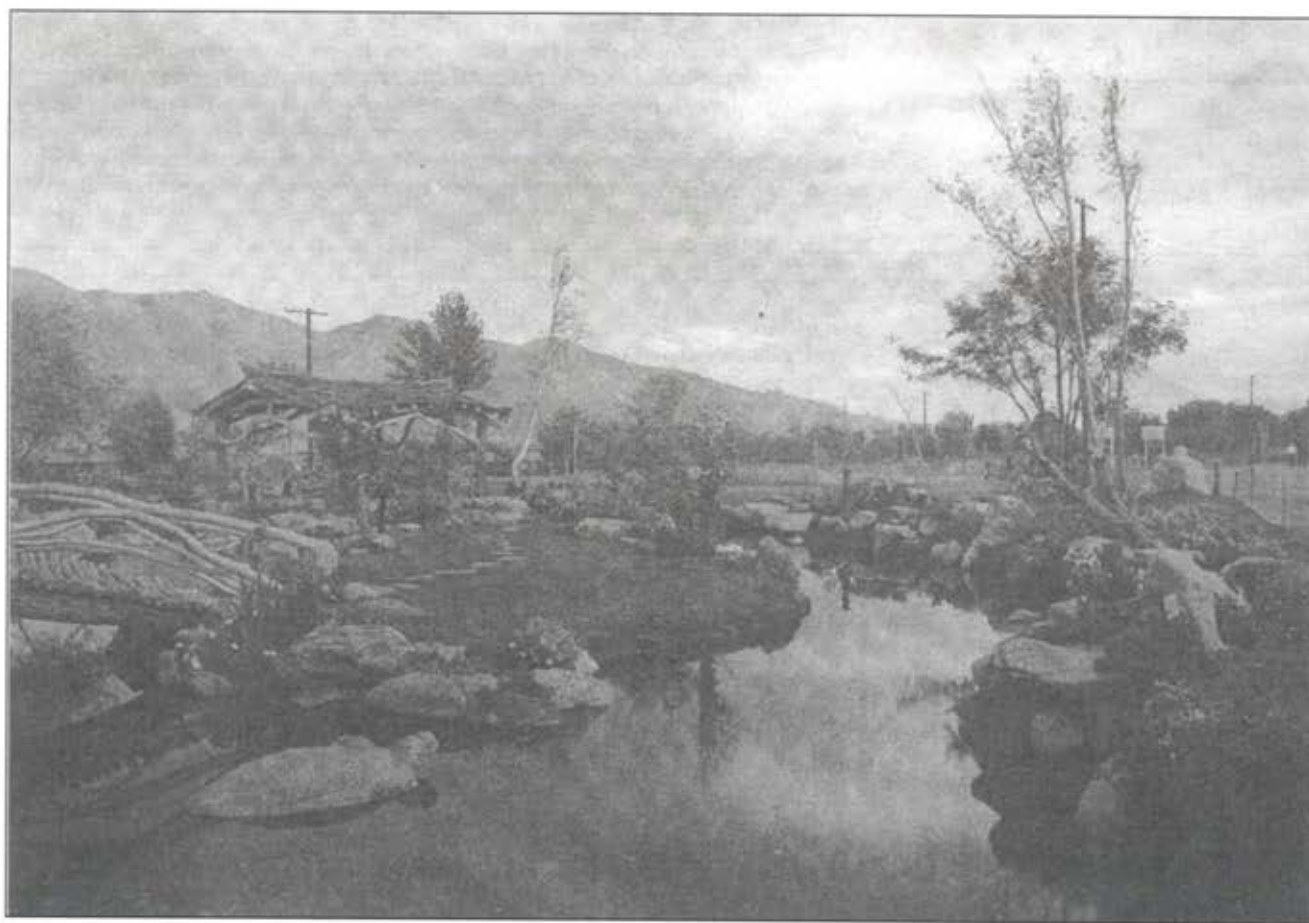


Figure 1. "Pool in Pleasure Park." Merritt Park, Manzanar Relocation Center, 1943. The War Relocation Authority sponsored the development of Merritt Park. It was designed, built, and maintained by incarcerated landscape professionals. Stylistically, the garden represents an early Japanese American ornamental garden with Japanese elements such as the tea house and turtle-shaped rock swimming beside the wooden bridge. In Japanese traditions, the turtle is a symbol of endurance, long life, and reflection. Photograph by Ansel Adams, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division [LC-DIG-ppprs-00371].

Gardens Below the Watchtower (continued)

hundreds of these gardens remain in situ since the camps were dismantled. At the end of World War II in 1946, nearly all of the barracks and structures were demolished for lumber or auctioned off to eager home buyers, yet the gardens were simply left to decay and wither, as they did not possess monetary value. Now, sixty years later, some of the larger gardens are recognizable by their rock and cement structures and aged trees, shrubs and succulents. Archaeological excavations have removed debris and sand from some of the once buried ponds, exposing their sophisticated

structures of high Japanese-style garden design (Figure 2). These gardens now are slowly being recognized as important cultural resources meriting preservation.

This paper analyzes the gardens of two of the ten original incarceration camps—Manzanar Relocation Camp in the Owens Valley of southeastern California and Minidoka in south central Idaho—using historic documents, oral histories, and contemporary writings of the camp gardens. Manzanar and Minidoka have recently become units of the National Park System.

After 50 years of neglect and invisibility, these sites are slowly re-entering our national consciousness through grass roots efforts in collaboration with the National Park Service. According to Kenneth E. Foote, these sites have been *rectified*; their injustices have been acknowledged, forgiven and memorialized (Foote 1997, 309). Now, the gardens at Minidoka and Manzanar are nationally significant cultural landscapes and cultural legacies; they are symbols of immeasurable fortitude within landscapes of shame and tragedy.

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Figure 2. Block 34 garden (San shi en). Manzanar National Historic Site, 2001. San shi en was one of many ornamental gardens built adjacent to the communal mess halls. Photograph by the author.

Challenges to Scholarship

Scholarship on the camp gardens has been extremely limited, which is surprising in light of the fact that camp gardens numbered in the thousands across seven states. In 1952, Allen Eaton published *Beauty Behind Barbed Wire*, a book documenting the works of art created by Japanese Americans during their incarceration. Eaton writes, "It would take several volumes to adequately record and describe the gardens of the ten Relocation Centers" (Eaton 1952, 24). Reasons for this absence of scholarship are likely based upon the dearth of historical records and research materials. Inmates were generally not allowed to possess cameras, and few outsiders ever sought permission to venture into the camps. The remoteness of the incarceration sites and difficulty in locating them has prevented most people from visiting them since they were abandoned in the autumn of 1945. In addition, once the camps are found, they are more akin to archaeological sites than recognizable incarceration camps. The final reason is that incarceration continues to be a sensitive issue, and cultural proscriptions and a deep sense of shame have prevented most former inmates from discussing incarceration until relatively recently. Today, nearly all the interned gardeners and landscape designers are deceased; their descendents and survivors are aged, yet many remember the gardens in their hearts and minds.

Archaeological studies conducted by the National Park Service between 1992 and 2002 have provided a baseline of information

about the physical and material features of the gardens at both Manzanar and Minidoka.¹ The only critical examination of the camp gardens is an unpublished research paper by Anna Noah that analyzed the archaeological structure of two block gardens at Manzanar and compared their stylistic elements to ornamental gardens in Japan.² These archaeological studies did not attempt to understand the significance of the camp gardens within the incarceration context nor within a social or historical context.

Four scholars reveal the importance and meaning of the camp gardens in works focused on American history, garden theory, and community planning. In his analysis of religion and resistance in the camps, Gary Okihiro was the first to politicize camp gardens as cultural expressions of resistance to the War Relocation Authority's *Americanization* program (Okihiro 1984). In "Disorientation and Reorientation: The American Landscape Discovered from the West," Patricia Limerick described the exclusion and forced removal of Japanese Americans as a process of forced discovery; the camps were essentially American landscapes where the built forms and nature itself combined to overpower the spirits and physical well-being of the inmates (Limerick 1992). The ornamental gardens evoked a strong cultural work ethic as well as "aesthetic and spiritual motivation derived directly from Japanese culture," according to Limerick (1992, 1042). Kenneth Helphand presented the most in-depth scholarly analysis of the camp gardens, defining them as *defiant* of their environmental and psycho-social conditions.

According to Helphand, the acts of garden-building were performances of resistance against acculturation, powerful contributions to psychological survival, and gestures of political defiance (Helphand 1997). Finally, in her article, "Dislocations," Lynne Horiuchi categorized the construction and alteration of the camps by Japanese Americans, including the camp gardens, as

auto-construction. She defined auto-construction as akin to community-building traditions, expressive of resistance to the government's military industry mode of camp construction (Horiuchi 2001). Together, these writings provide an introduction to the camp gardens as places of agency; however, their scope of analysis is limited. They neither evaluate the camp gardens in the context of pre-war garden-building traditions, nor make reference to the specific camp gardens, their garden-builders and how the camp gardens related to the complex social conditions that were a daily part of camp life.

Beyond these four analyses, numerous writings on incarceration mention the camp gardens in minimal detail, illustrating the social/historical rather than spatial focus of scholarship on incarceration. In addition, writings on Japanese American garden-builders and Japanese-style gardens in the United States have not probed into the complexity of these traditions in the difficult context of the camps. This situation reflects the challenges faced in the investigation and exploration of relating the historical, cultural, and physical context of incarceration to the meaning of camp gardens.

What Was the Incarceration?

Since yesterday we Japanese
have ceased to be human beings.
We are numbers; we are things.
We are no longer Egamis (family
name), but the number 23324. A
tag with that number is on every
trunk, suitcase, and bag. Tags
also, on our breasts. Again a
feeling of sadness grips my heart.

—Hatsuye Egami (1944, 35)

Though rationalized at the time as *military necessity*, the imprisonment of 120,000 people of Japanese descent was the result of “racial prejudice, wartime hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” (United States Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians 1997, 18). Two-thirds of those incarcerated were American citizens by birth; the other one-third were Japanese aliens ineligible for citizenship due to a Naturalization Act that allowed only Caucasians and Africans to become American citizens. The exclusion and confinement of Japanese immigrants (Issei) and their American-born children (Nisei), collectively known as Nikkei, were not simply isolated incidents of racial prejudice; rather they were the continuation and culmination of anti-Oriental prejudice dating from the 19th century (Kashima 2002).

The attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese warplanes on 7 December 1941 instigated and incited yellow journalism, wartime hysteria, and heated racism directed against all people of Japanese ancestry. During the spring of 1942, Nikkei living along the West Coast were ordered to abandon their homes and businesses. They were allowed to

bring only what they could carry without knowing where they were going or for how long. Most Nikkei were destined for temporary incarceration centers located at fairgrounds and racetracks, where families lived in hastily converted livestock stalls for nearly six months. As the ten incarceration camps neared completion, inmates were transported in guarded trains and automobile caravans out to the camps where most would live for the duration of the war. The camps contained residential barracks, communal facilities, schools, cooperatives, churches, administrative areas, and security. Eddie Sakamoto, an inmate at Manzanar, describes his early impressions of camp life:

At the beginning there, I felt like a prisoner because they had four watchtowers, and the soldiers with their guns, you know, were watching from on top of the tower. And anybody try to go out, they shoot you, without giving warning. In camp, the future is uncertain.
(Tateishi 1984, 17)

Sakamoto's description illustrates how the incarceration experience and camps spawned intense feelings of helplessness, fear, and anxiety.

During the three-year incarceration, the political climate within the camps was unstable at best. There were constant acts of overt and covert resistance directed at the WRA administration and camp facilities. During the incarceration period, dozens were either killed or injured in camp riots, beatings, and shootings by guards stationed in the watchtowers along fence lines. In 1943, the WRA

attempted to separate loyals from disloyals or those seeking repatriation or expatriation. This segregation program created divisive emotional and physical rifts between the inhabitants of the interned communities. Also in 1943, military service was opened up to American-born Japanese. Parents watched and often encouraged their sons and daughters to step out of their own imprisonment and fight for the country that had put them in the camps. By the war's end, the 442nd all Japanese-American combat unit received the highest casualty rates and became the most decorated military group of its size and tour in American military history. Regardless of the suspicion, not one person of Japanese ancestry was ever found committing espionage for Japan in the United States.

These acts of patriotism and perseverance illustrate the degree to which the incarceration was fraught with contradictions, emotional hardships, and grave decisions. The loyalty questions, segregation, and military registration were additional adversities that compounded the trauma of incarceration. These indescribable hardships must be understood as underlying the day-to-day motivations and accomplishments carried out by inmates throughout the incarceration period. After the camps were decommissioned, the stigma of incarceration continued for decades. With much hesitancy, survivors of the incarceration are now gradually confronting their past, recounting their experiences, soothing their anger, and releasing their shame.

(Continued on page 6.)

Interned Agriculturists and Landscape Professionals

Pre-war Japanese-style gardens attained popularity and appreciation beginning with their entry into the United States in the late 19th-century World Fairs.³ Beginning with Josiah Conder in 1893, books, articles and manuals were published about Japanese gardens for the Western world. These introductions initiated a vogue of Japanese style among the wealthy. Japanese-style gardens were often regarded as quaint, exotic and sophisticated in their aesthetics, and were appreciated by the American mainstream in the pre-World War II period.⁴ The role of Japanese-style gardens in the United States was focused on orientalism, garden appreciation, and economic gain. The majority of these gardens were designed and managed by Japanese and owned by wealthy Caucasians, illustrating the power relations inherent in the early history of Japanese-style gardens.⁵

First generation (Issei) immigrant gardeners ranged in experience from hobby gardeners and landscape laborers to formally educated nursery and landscape businessmen. For many Issei landscape gardening developed out of traditional Japanese landscape aesthetics and a cultural and spiritual affinity for nurturing plant life (Figure 3). However, for the vast majority of Issei gardeners, landscaping was a marketable, acceptable, and profitable profession learned in America.

Issei practiced urban landscape gardening in most metropolitan areas along the West Coast.⁶ In

Los Angeles, landscape and maintenance gardening developed into an ethnic niche beginning in the 1920s, composed one-third of the Japanese labor force in Los Angeles in 1934, and became an ethnic monopoly by World War II (Tsuchida 1984, Tsukashima 1991, Tsukashima 2000). California Issei formed organizations to strengthen their professionalism and to protect themselves against racial discrimination that threatened their hold on the profession (Hirahara 2000). For their Caucasian clients, employing a Japanese landscape gardener was a mark of superior social, economic and racial status. The paradox is clear: while Japanese gardens, art and architecture were appreciated by the American public, people of Japanese ancestry continued to be socially and economically marginalized.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed and exclusion followed, the mass removal of all West Coast Nikkei resulted in labor shortages in agriculture and urban landscaping businesses. For Issei with more extensive businesses, the exclusion proved catastrophic both economically and socially. For Kuichiro Nishi, who would eventually design Merritt Park at Manzanar, Pearl Harbor led to the demise of his nursery and landscaping business, followed by his immediate arrest and imprisonment at an enemy alien camp in Fort Missoula, Montana. Nishi owned a retail ornamental nursery as well as a very large wholesale rose nursery, and his wife owned a floral business. According to his son, Henry Nishi,

When the war broke out it was pretty hard to dispose of, so the nursery was leased on government property, part of the Veterans' Administration in West L.A. [Sawtelle]. So when we left we just donated all of the nursery to the Veterans' Administration, which they used for landscaping proposed on the Veterans' grounds. (Nishi 2002, 3)

Following his nine-month imprisonment at Fort Missoula, Nishi was allowed to join his family at Manzanar in the autumn of 1942. He then began the development of Merritt Park, which would become the most renowned garden throughout the ten camps.

Cultivating a Home in Camp

The War Department and WRA began the design, planning, and site selection for the ten incarceration camps during the spring of 1942. The camps were to be temporary installations, inexpensive, and quickly constructed. Site selection was based upon the following criteria: location on public lands so that any land improvements would benefit the public, tracts of land adequate for large projects, opportunities for the inmates to work year round, and remote locations away from strategic works (War Relocation Authority 1942). These criteria effectively located eight of the ten incarceration camps in remote, barren and inhospitable areas of the inland West (Figure 4).

The design of the centers was based upon military precedents for temporary installations and large scale encampments. Each camp housed 8,000 to 18,000 people and followed similar design guidelines

Gardens Below the Watchtower *(continued)*

(Figure 5). The inmates' residential area was divided into blocks of buildings, each with twelve to fourteen residential barracks, a laundry building, centrally located women's and men's bathroom buildings, a mess hall and a recreation hall. The building style was akin to an "efficient warehousing of people" (Horiuchi 2001, 260). Once the camps were established, the WRA began to make provisions for landscape beautification projects.

The living conditions were oppressive; accounts of this early period always feature dust, extreme heat, and lack of sanitary facilities. At Minidoka, a camp administrator wrote,

These people are living in the midst of a desert where they see nothing except tarpaper covered barracks, sagebrush, and rocks. No flowers, no trees, no shrubs, no grass. The impact of emotional disturbances as a result of the exclusion and removal procedures, plus this dull dreary existence in a desert region surely must give these people a feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair which we on the outside do not and will not ever fully understand. (Kleinkopf 1942, 3)

Thus, the early steps of appropriation and beautification of the camp indicated a deep-seated human and cultural need to transform the camp from stranger, symbol of betrayal and prison into a habitable environment.

The initial acts of garden building at Manzanar happened almost immediately and coincided with the completion of barracks construction during the late spring of 1942 (Ogami 2002). As barracks were



Figure 3. Mr. Yasusuke Kogita's garden in Seattle, Washington, 1933. The garden included a pond, miniature buildings, found sculptures, and a mountain constructed of recycled sidewalks and mortared volcanic rocks. Copy of photograph courtesy of Paul and Taka Kogita.

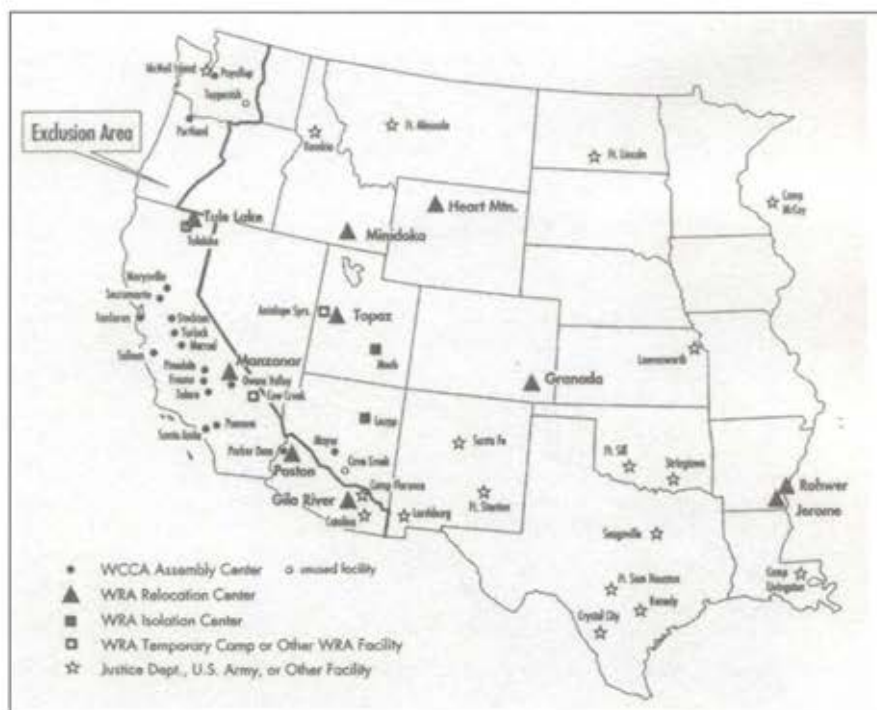


Figure 4. Sites associated with the incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II, 1999. Western Archeological Conservation Center.

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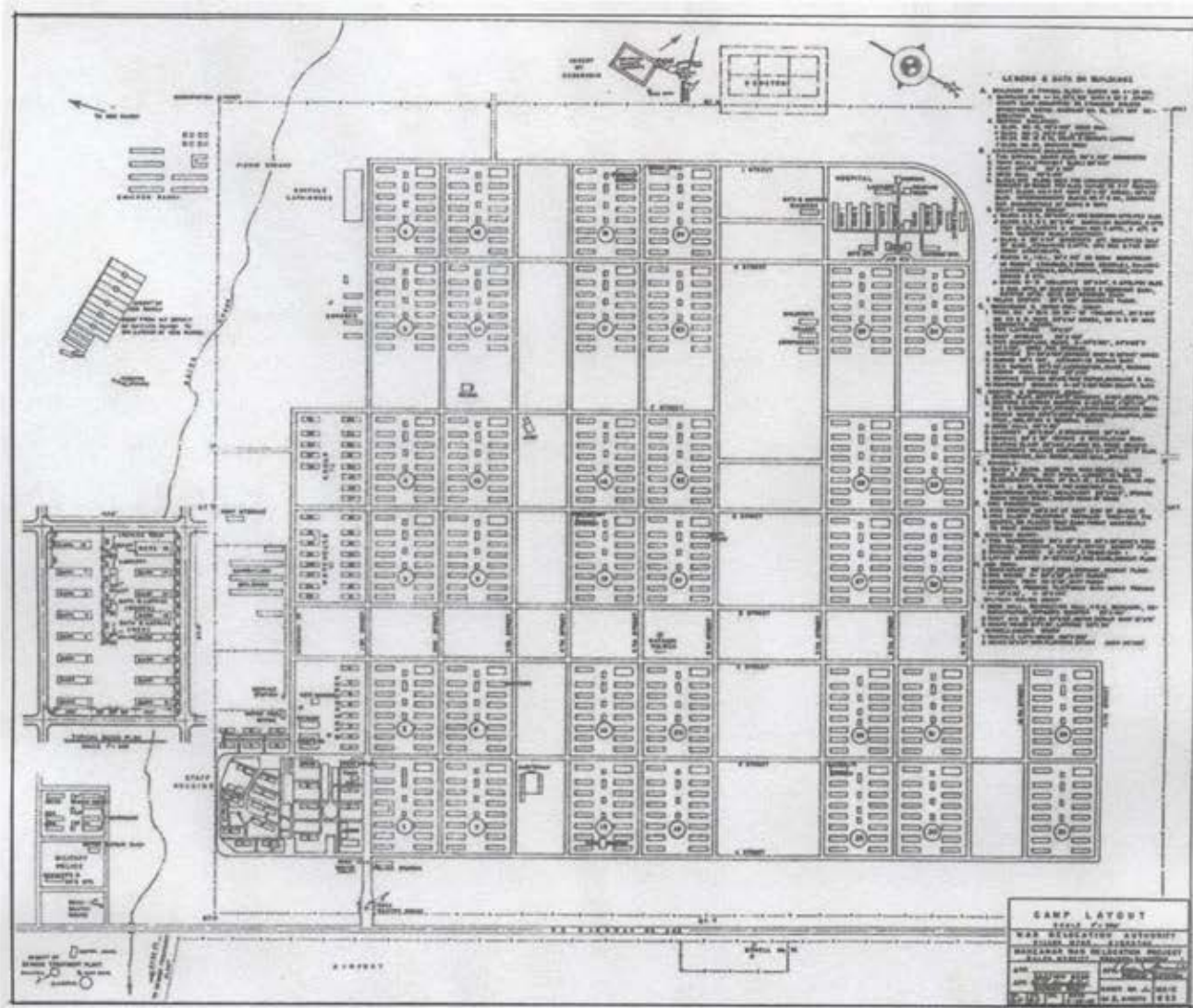


Figure 5. Manzanar Relocation Center, 1942. Manzanar's master plan was typical of the design and layout of the camps.

completed, the WRA encouraged the planting of lawns to stabilize the windswept soils. At Manzanar, irrigation water was readily available from the upcountry reservoir and canals constructed by inmates. Whereas the planting directives emanating from the camp administration were purely functional, the inmates' landscape projects exhibited an expressive quality. Additionally, land improvements such as gardens, parks and ball fields, improved the WRA's reputation for providing

humane living conditions while soothing the conscience of government officials and the concerned public.

Manzanar was situated in the Owens Valley, which provided an abundance of natural materials. The Sierra Nevadas offered large granite boulders and the Inyo Range offered meta-volcanic jagged stones. A diversity of vegetation could be transplanted from the hills, mountains and wetlands. Local pine trees and

scrap materials from crates could be used for small-scale construction. By June, the camp newspaper, *Manzanar Free Press*, featured an article about the first ornamental garden created by a former Bel Air landscaper, William Katsuki (Figure 6). In July of 1942, a group of residents convinced the WRA administration that a pond could cap the dusty soils and provide more of an amenity than the planned grassy lawns. Thus, ponds and eventually rock gardens became creative departures from

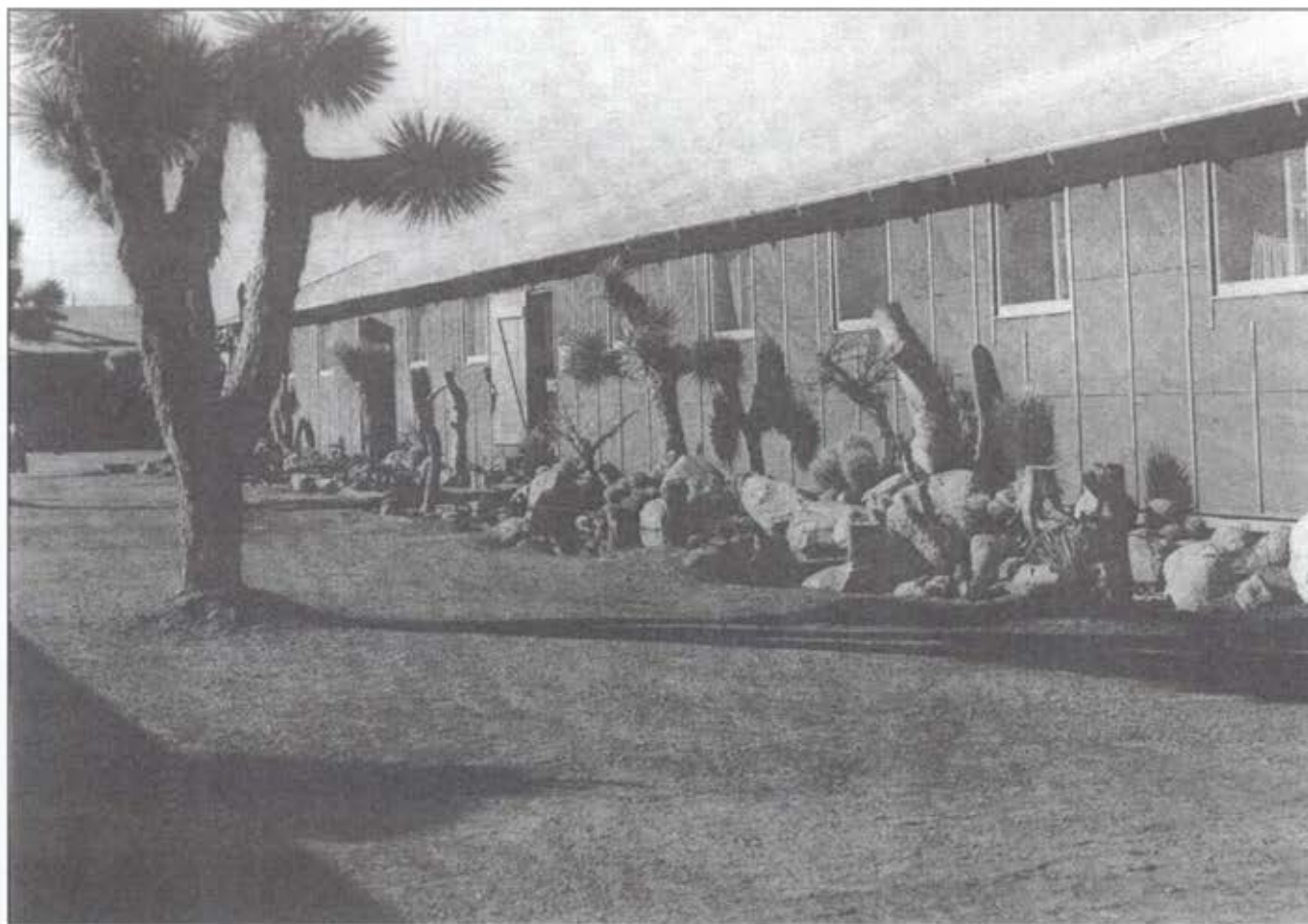


Figure 6. Katsuki garden, Manzanar Relocation Center, 1942. William Katsuki's garden was located between two barracks and contained four ponds, miniature bridges, and Joshua trees transplanted from Death Valley 70 miles away. Photograph by Dorothea Lange. [WRA no. CC-867, War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement, BANC PIC 1967.014, v. 23, The Bancroft Library, University of California,

the directives of the WRA—small and symbolic expressions of appropriating the camp landscapes. These early acts of garden-building were the beginnings of a broader movement to enrich the quality of life through improving and beautifying the camp landscape.

Throughout the ten camps, land development was divided between agricultural projects and ornamental and beautification projects. Theoretically, these two types of land development can be termed productive space and amenity/contemplative place. Camp agricultural projects were aimed at

providing food for inmates through large-scale, WRA-administered agricultural projects (Figure 7). These agricultural projects developed raw lands into cleared, irrigated and productive fields, fulfilling a WRA goal of improving land for public benefit. Land development and agriculture were the most prevalent work projects throughout all ten of the incarceration camps, suggesting that the inmates were active shapers of their environments.

Victory gardens were another method of food production prevalent in the camps. Initiated by

the government, vegetable gardens were nicknamed *victory gardens* to support self-reliance and to conserve resources on the home front. Consequently, raw food products could be shipped in greater quantities to support the troops. However, in the context of the incarceration camps, victory gardens were an ironic twist to the circumstances of forced confinement and wartime. Inmates were asked to garden for their captor's victory over their ancestors. Yet, inmates took on the victory gardening charge for their

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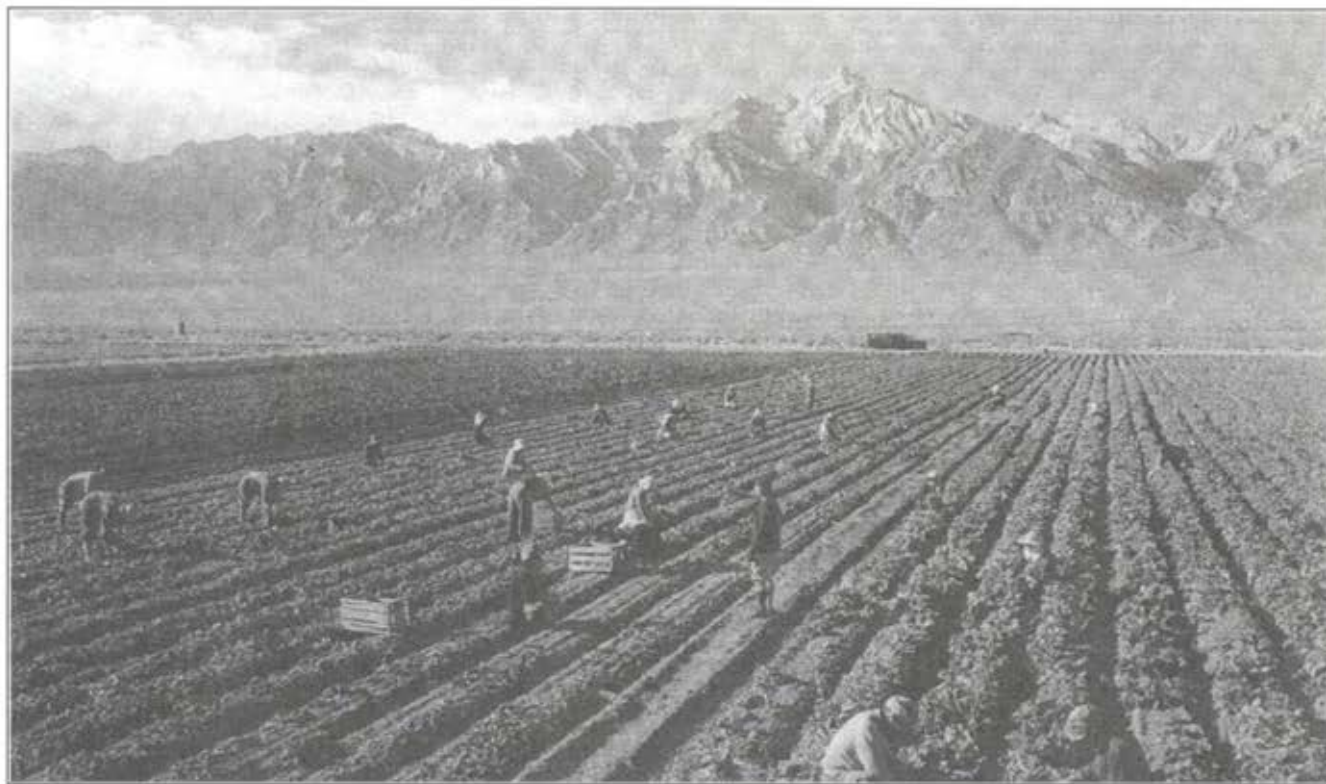


Figure 7. Manzanar Relocation Center, 1943. "Farm, farm works, Mt. Williamson in background." Photographed by Ansel Adams. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ppprs-00370].

own reasons. By raising fresh vegetables, including Japanese vegetables, inmates were able to modify the government-issued meal plans into a diet richer in fresh and familiar vegetables. For interned farmers the vegetable gardens were a continuation of their professions, offering fresh grown edibles reminiscent of home.

Inmates performed ornamental gardening as hobbyists, and a handful of highly skilled landscape professionals were hired by the WRA to beautify the camps. Three primary types of ornamental gardens were developed inside the camps. Parks were the largest type of ornamental gardens, attracting residents throughout the camp. Block or mess hall gardens were created by and for the individuals

of a respective block. Smaller personal gardens were individually inspired and reminiscent of residential front yards.

Among the numerous types of gardens were vegetable gardens, raked gravel dry gardens, cactus gardens, showy flower gardens and ornate rock gardens with stepping stones, fountains, waterfalls, ponds and structures. (Eaton 1952). The majority of these gardens were created in the spaces adjacent to the residential barracks or in nearby firebreaks.

Issei developed the majority of ornamental gardens since they were the most skilled and knowledgeable about Japanese garden traditions. Urban Nikkei created more elaborately styled gardens than did rural populations

in the camps, as urban Nikkei were experienced ornamental gardeners and landscape professionals. Because Manzanar interned the largest number of urban landscape professionals, it contained the largest number and most sophisticated ornamental gardens of the ten incarceration camps.

Garden building in the camps depended on the professional backgrounds of the inmates, availability of materials and relative degrees of support and regulation by the WRA. Equally important was a set of cultural values that fostered garden-building activities, including a cultural abhorrence of idleness, a cultural affinity with nature and aesthetics, and the practice of cooperative action for the betterment of the community.

Gardens Below the Watchtower (*continued*)

Henry Nishi described the Japanese ethic of staying active in the camps:

Japanese people don't just sit around because they're in camp. They want to be busy, and so everybody kept busy doing whatever. It was a situation where, the Isseis especially, they had to keep busy...I think [building gardens] was primarily for the people in camp, not for the outsiders to enjoy. At the same time it was creating something for the benefit of the camp and the people in camp. (Nishi 2002, 12)

Keeping busy was part of the larger Nikkei ethic, called *Gaman*, which was a determination to endure and persevere. Through a process of settling, discovery, experimentation and tenacity, these factors coalesced and led to the creation of gardens at all ten of the incarceration camps.

The War Relocation Authority and Landscaping

Garden-building provided a point of entry into negotiations with officials over the conditions of incarceration, an arena in which the presumed expertise of Japanese American gardeners was useful. Inmates' petitions to the WRA staff to create gardens and ponds were evidence of ongoing political negotiations and testing of boundaries. By staking claim to their surroundings and appropriating leftover spaces wherever possible, the inmates took control of what freedoms and rights they could within a total institution. Groups of inmates regularly requested to leave camp on excursions to collect materials for the gardens. In many cases, these excursions were the only way they could leave camp. During the formative summer of

1942 at Manzanar, collective action fueled the creation of the Manzanar Nursery as well as numerous parks and communal rock gardens inspired by Japanese garden traditions. Henry Nishi recalls how he and fellow friends, all Nisei, decided to develop the Manzanar Nursery for the camp (Nishi 2002). They requested the WRA administration's support, built a lath house with requisitioned building materials, acquired seeds and saplings and then maintained the nursery throughout the duration of the war. Later in the summer of 1942, Nishi's father, Kuichiro Nishi, led a group of landscape architects, nursery owners and gardeners in the design and construction of Merritt Park. Each member of the design and construction team was paid \$16.00-\$19.00 per month by the Public Works Department (Nishi 2002).

Merritt Park was the largest and most sophisticated landscaped area at Manzanar, complete with waterfalls, ponds, bridges, a teahouse and carefully manicured vegetation. Located on a natural spring-fed area within the camp, it was first named Rose Park, after the rose bushes that were transplanted from Kuichiro Nishi's rose nursery in the San Fernando Valley. Later it was renamed Pleasure Park and then finally Merritt Park after the well-respected WRA director of Manzanar, Ralph Merritt (Embrey 1972). When completed in the autumn of 1942, Merritt Park became an innovative fusion of Japanese garden traditions that was produced from local and imported materials and tempered by the conditions of confinement. The landscaping group was

(Continued on page 12.)



Figure 8. Merritt Park, Manzanar Relocation Center, 1942-1945. One of two memorial stones that acted as corner and entrance markers into the garden. The stela was painted with Japanese writing; it read, "To the memory of fellow Japanese immigrants who, although ushered to this place with the breaking of friendly relations between the two countries have come to enjoy this quiet, peaceful place." The park was dedicated "for the enjoyment of the people and to the memory of the time of our residence here." The stela inscription met with some controversy as it was thought that Japanese writing would be inappropriate to the Caucasian Owens Valley residents. Kuichiro Nishi, designer of Merritt Park, is on the far left. Copy of photograph courtesy of Edith Yamamoto (Nishi).

Gardens Below the Watchtower (continued)

allowed to travel in WRA trucks to outlying areas to collect rocks and plants, escorted by an armed military guard. Rocks and boulders with unique colors, shapes, and textures were carefully placed throughout the park (Figures 8 and 9). The individuality of each boulder was reminiscent of Japanese Shinto traditions of worshipping aged rocks, trees and places of spiritual power known as *kami*. An immense boulder in the shape of a turtle was placed at the top of the waterfall; the water cascaded over the back of the turtle, and its head divided the stream into two waterfalls.

Merritt Park was a destination point and refuge at Manzanar, eventually becoming the most

photographed place within the barbed wire fence. Young Nisei soldiers, groups of inmates, and even WRA staff were photographed on the bridges and in the teahouse at Merritt Park. Reflecting on Merritt Park's picturesque qualities, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston wrote in her memoir, "You could face away from the barracks, look past a tiny rapids toward the darkening mountains, and for a while not be a prisoner at all. You could hang suspended in some odd, almost lovely land you could not escape from yet almost didn't want to leave" (Houston and Houston 1973, 99). Merritt Park was one of the few places in camp where one could be photographed in a

beautiful setting without a backdrop of tarpapered barracks (Figure 10).⁷

Part II of this essay will appear in our Winter 2008 issue.

Notes

1. In 1991, Congress authorized the National Park Service to prepare a National Historic Landmark Theme Study on Japanese Americans during World War II as part of the enabling legislation for Manzanar National Historic Site. Archeologist Jeffrey Burton et al. surveyed thirty-seven properties associated with the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. See Jeffrey F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*, with a new foreword by Tetsuden Kashima (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).
2. See Anna Noah, "An Archaeological Study of the Japanese Gardens of Manzanar World War II Relocation Center" (unpublished paper, University of California, Los Angeles, 1999).
3. For a complete presentation of Japanese influence in architecture, art and gardening styles, see Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America* (New York City: Walton H. Rawls, 1963).
4. For a more complete exploration of pre-war Japanese-style gardens, see Kendall H. Brown, *Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific Coast* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1999).
5. Kendall Brown discusses the competing histories of George Turner Marsh and Makoto Hagiwara over credit for the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park. See Kendall H. Brown, "Rashomon: the Multiple Histories of the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 18:2 (1968).
6. In 1940, 43% of all *Nikkei* living along the West Coast were employed in agriculture. An additional 26% were employed in agriculture related activities such as the wholesale and retail produce business. Japanese in America turned to agriculture because of their agricultural background in Japan and widespread racism that prevented them from entering more lucrative and professional careers.
7. The War Relocation Authority requested Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange to photograph Manzanar, provided they depict the daily camp life in a positive light without images of the fences and watchtowers.

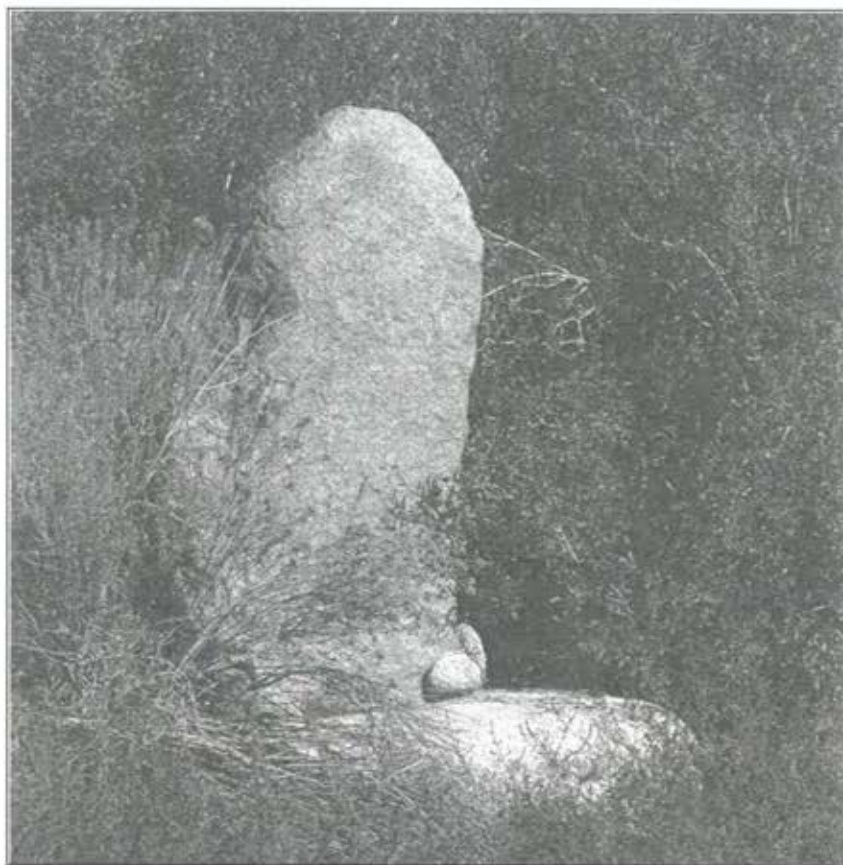


Figure 9. Merritt Park, Manzanar National Historic Site, 2001. The stela as it stands today. Photograph by author.



Preservation Issues

Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

The debate continues between the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors/Historic Landmarks Advisory Commission regarding the proposed changes to the Meadow Terrace. The proposal intends to create three low terraces separated by 18-inch high native stone walls, new flagstone paving, and planting beds in which native California plants are to be exhibited.

Kellam de Forest, author of the "Preservation Watch" column in Santa Barbara's Pearl Chase Society newsletter says "...on May 19, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden filed suit in Superior Court against the County Board of Supervisors. The suit alleges that the Supervisors' decision to uphold the County Historic Landscape Commission's ruling that the Meadow Terrace project is incompatible with the 2002 Landmarks designation violates the property owner's rights..."

Additionally, Friends of the Mission Canyon, a group of nearby residents who are concerned about the garden expansion project, have engaged attorney Marc Chytilo to speak on their behalf. The botanic garden intends to ultimately submit plans for a larger expansion project; according to Mr. Chytilo, the county has told the botanic garden to submit their meadow plan project, currently under discussion, with the larger expansion project rather than before it as they are currently. The concern is that the botanic garden is trying to isolate the meadow project, "shortcut the process and avoid an environmental review," says Mr. Chytilo.

Oakland: Estates Drive Reservoir

The Cultural Landscape Foundation listed four sites from around the country on their website page, "Landslide/Landscapes at Risk." One is in California: Estates Drive Reservoir in Oakland. The article by Valerie Garry states:

"Completed in 1966, the Estates Drive Reservoir landscape feature, designed by Robert Royston, one of the most important and influential landscape architects of the 20th century, is threatened with demolition due to policy changes made by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) in northern California.

EBMUD serves water to over 1.2 million customers in the eastern portion of the San Francisco Bay Area. Citing concerns over water quality and seismic safety, EBMUD intends to replace the existing open cut reservoir, which is covered by Royston's landscape design, with a pair of 1.75 million gallon concrete storage tanks within the footprint of the original reservoir.

Residents of the Montclair neighborhood in Oakland, which surrounds Estates Drive Reservoir, oppose the plans and have mounted a vigorous campaign to preserve the landscape (see www.saveestatesfountains.org).

In the early 1960s, concerned about preserving the integrity of the district's water supply in the East Bay, EBMUD established a stringent policy requiring all open water storage reservoirs be

covered in order to prevent contaminants—everything from rats to seagulls, air-blown pollutants and botulism—from getting into the open reservoirs. The policy was adopted in accordance with recommendations from the State Department of Public Health and the American Water Works Association."

In a response to residents' concerns, "In a March 16, 1966 letter to local residents, EBMUD's general manager, John McFarland, sought to reassure residents that Robert Royston's design 'accomplishes both the primary objectives and at the same time creates a park-like setting that will complement the lovely neighborhood in the vicinity of the reservoir.' Shortly thereafter, residents withdrew their resistance, the City of Oakland Planning Commission unanimously approved Royston's design and construction began. Now, over forty years later, it is regarded as a beloved, peaceful and integral landscape feature of the hilly Oakland neighborhood."

Landscape architect Robert Royston "helped define and establish California Modernism in the postwar period. Royston first worked with Thomas Church while in college at University of California, Berkeley's landscape design program.

While not considered one of the most important examples of Royston's work, the Estates Drive

(Continued on page 14.)

Preservation Issues (continued)

Oakland:

Estates Drive Reservoir (cont'd.)

Reservoir nevertheless accomplished something technically innovative—a roof-top cover for an entire open-cut reservoir—while at the same time creating a decidedly un-engineered appearing, free-flowing modernist abstract design, one that could have been inspired by a Joan Miro painting. It has been described as ‘a composition of biomorphic ground planes juxtaposed against smaller rectilinear forms,’ a characteristic of Royston’s work. The landscape feature provides an undulating visual peacefulness, suggestive of lapping water, which compensates for the loss of open water views. The vertical elements, the two fountains, seem to energize the landscape design and add sensory stimulus to it...

EBMUD maintains that the Estates Fountain Reservoir is simply too large for the area it serves, that it creates operational and water quality issues, and is due for rehabilitation. The proposal is part of their Pressure Zone Improvements Project, which includes 13 planned improvements over the next 20 years for water distribution facilities in the Oakland hills.” EBMUD studies have concluded that replacing the Estates Drive Reservoir with smaller facilities—two concrete water storage tanks—is the most cost-effective means of improving water quality while meeting current seismic standards. Having two tanks, for example, would allow for the possibility of emptying one for periodic cleaning while still maintaining full service to residents. “Moreover, they argue, the two

fountains are too expensive to continue to operate and maintain (averaging about \$72,000 a year) and lose about a million gallons of water each year due to evaporation and wind losses—a statistic that is troubling in water-thirsty California. Although an uphill battle for concerned residents and preservationists, local supporters of Royston’s historic designed landscape believe the import and integrity of this rare, surviving post-World War II design should trump the exigencies of long-range concerns over safe water quality and the destructive force of the next big earthquake. Yet neighbors and preservationists still hold out hope that a suitable compromise may be found that will allow EBMUD to meet its functional objectives without having to sacrifice Royston’s landscape design which, ironically, was created to address similar water safety issues of over 40 years ago.

In what might be described as *déjà vu*, EBMUD has retained the architectural firm of Royston, Hanamoto, Alley and Abbey—the firm Robert Royston started in 1945—to come up with alternative designs that meet their functional objectives yet satisfy the aesthetic concerns of the neighbors seeking to stymie the potential loss of the Royston landscape. The firm is now soliciting ideas from the neighborhood.”

In the meantime, a Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) of the Estates Drive Reservoir property is in the works. If all else fails, at least this historic modern landscape would then be fully documented for posterity.

Oakland:

Highland Hospital

HALS is a relatively new federal program modeled on the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) which was started in the 1930s. HALS shares some elements with the National Register process but primarily focuses on documentation and recordation of historically significant landscapes. In 1985, the 1920s campus of Highland Hospital as a whole was deemed eligible by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places.

Significant changes are proposed at the hospital site that will impact the present landscape, a formal bilaterally symmetrical design that is approached by two flanking paths with flights of stairs to intermediate plazas, culminating at the ornate Spanish Colonial Revival building and its main plaza. The site design work by Howard Gilkey, landscape architect, and Henry Meyers, architect, deserves further study.

A precedent was set recently when the Alameda County Board of Supervisors voted to require HALS documentation as mitigation for changes at the site. While there are a small number of sites being documented to HALS standards in California, to my knowledge, this is the first time that a public agency has required HALS documentation for this kind of mitigation. HALS documentation will provide a national record of this cultural landscape. HABS and HAERS reports are filed in the Library of Congress and are accessible through their website, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/.

Preservation Issues (continued)

Novato (Marin):

Olompali's Mary Burdell Garden

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) has provided a grant in the amount of \$2500 to finance the HALS historic narrative of the Mary Burdell Garden at Olompali State Historic Park in Novato (Marin County). This site is one of three that is being documented by the northern California HALS chapter.

The Mary Burdell Garden is a four-acre site with two acres laid out as a late 19th century stroll garden. It is eligible for the National Register (under Criterion C) as an example of formal Victorian garden design. As stated by Carol Roland in her *Statement of Significance*, "It represents the distinctive characteristics and aesthetics advocated by garden designers and horticulturists of the period 1850-1890 such as Andrew Jackson Downing, and was one of the earlier gardens of this type to be designed in the Bay Area. The garden was developed under the direction of Mary Black Burdell, the owner of Rancho Olompali in Marin County, California. In the 19th century the garden and its adjacent residential complex lay at the heart of a 20,000 acre agricultural property which is now an expansive State Park. Olompali was representative of the Bay Area estates developed by many wealthy Californians in the late 19th century, which generally exhibited a residential 'core' with a main house, auxiliary buildings, a wide entry path, and formal landscaping." (Sept. 2007:1).

The Olompali People (TOP), the tireless not-for-profit supporters of the park, have been making incremental progress on their full

HALS documentation. The garden has been photographed, graphic documentation begun and now the historic narrative will be prepared. When completed these three pieces will constitute their full HALS documentation. This grant from the NTHP is a significant boost to the HALS efforts at Olompali and in northern California.

Mountain View:

Save Hangar One

In our last issue, we reported the threat by the U.S. Navy's proposal to remove the sheathing from the dirigible landmark known as Hangar One down along Highway 101 in Mountain View (San Mateo County). The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) will host a public meeting on this matter at 7:00 P.M. on 17 September at the Computer History Museum, Hahn Auditorium, 1401 North Shoreline Boulevard, Mountain View. If you are not able to attend the meeting in person but feel strongly about the preservation of this iconic landscape feature, you may email your comments in writing to kfanizzo@achp.gov no later than 22 September. We also sent out an email notice to all members for whom we have addresses containing a link for notifying Congressional representatives via email.

Laguna Beach:

Hortense Miller Garden

Hortense Miller, environmentalist, author and gardener died in August at the age of 99. An obituary notice by Janet Eastmand appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* on 7 August 2008. Miller's 2.5 acre property in Laguna Beach's Boat Canyon off the Coast Highway was given to the city in 1976, though Miller retained the right to continue living and gardening there until she was 93 and could no longer navigate the steep terrain. The garden was the focus of her book, *A Garden in Laguna*. Miller's land will be preserved as she left it and will remain open to free public tours through Laguna Beach's Community Services Department. Thea Gurns will have an article on Miller in our next issue.

Fresno:

Fulton Mall

The Downtown Fresno Coalition is seeking National Register status for the Fulton Mall, which was designed by Garrett Eckbo and completed in 1964. Eckbo's book, *Landscape for Living* (1950) is due to be republished in the near future as one of the ASLA's Centennial Reprint Series.

—Cathy Garrett, Assistant Editor



Book Reviews & News

Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America, Philip J. Pauly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), hardcover, 336 pp, including historic b&w illustrations and extensive endnotes, \$39.95.

The subtitle of the book tells it all: the horticultural transformation of America. The author records how the virgin American landscape was changed dramatically over the past 250 years by amateurs, scientists, and tradesmen in their attempts to introduce desirable trees and plants. His point of view is like no other writer's on this topic.

Pauly discusses at length the problems the pioneers had introducing mostly European plants and the difficulty in growing them in a different climate and soil. Battles with pests, such as the Hessian fly, debates over foresting the prairies, and the difficulty of growing plants in harsh climates receive his close attention.

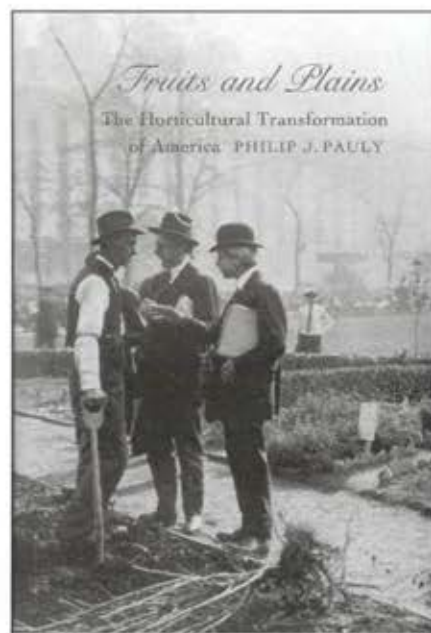
The opening chapter is a bit of a shock: "Failures in Jefferson's Garden." Previous writers had either ignored these stories or dismissed them as unimportant. "Visions of cosmopolitanism, rural happiness, and profitable transatlantic trade were entwined with grapevines, olives, and oranges being planted at Monticello..." yet these plants all withered and died.

Weather made farming much more difficult in North America, and invasive species added to the problem. Pauly devotes a whole chapter to this issue. The naturalization of foreign plant material in the countryside first became a problem for the United States government in the 19th century. Programs creating laws for the introduction of plants from around the world attempted to control the scale of all imports. This led to plant quarantines, especially of flowers and fruit. As one who has legally imported roses from countries around the world and was required to keep them quarantined from all other plants in my garden for a two-year period, I had nevertheless failed to realize the complicated history of the quarantines. It is now so difficult to meet the requirements that I have given up importing roses, but I know many illegally bring plants into the United States. At an international conference I learned that the government is far from solving these problems today. Does a year ever pass when some pest or disease does not become a front page story in our newspapers? Pauly has explored in depth a history that no one else has considered before. His chapter on "Mixed Borders: A Political History of Plant Quarantine" addresses these problems.

Pauly also has a chapter on "Gardening American Landscapes," wherein he delineates the developing battle between landscaping with exotics versus native plants. "The gasoline-powered colonization of new suburbs" has created the cultural landscape which has become the American norm. Olmsted's training program at Harvard was in landscape architecture, not landscape gardening. However, the ordinary urban gardener was not interested in the architectural point of view. "Gardeners and their audiences want vegetation that is lush but not excessive, familiar but not ordinary, new but not odd, rare but also diversified, and characteristic of the locale, the region, the continent, and the climatic zone." To solve these differences is not easy. "Lasting public beauty comes more frequently from open rather than closed decision-making processes, but depends on designers who respond to public interests without merely capitulating to the powerful or the vocal."

This book is by no means an "easy read." Pauly is a professor of history at Rutgers University and the book is written in academic style. The quality of the historic photographs illustrating the work could be better. However, the California Garden & Landscape History Society is concerned with the preservation of gardens and landscapes created over the past 250 years in the United States, and a close reading of this book will arm us with ideas that will help in that mission.

—William Grant, Founder



Book Reviews & News (continued)

Austin Val Verde, A Montecito Masterpiece (Santa Barbara: Austin Val Verde Foundation, 2005), hardcover, 144 pp, color photographs by Berge Aran, \$50.

Austin Val Verde: Impressions of a Montecito Masterpiece (Santa Barbara: Austin Val Verde Foundation, 2007), hardcover, unpaginated, sepia photographs by Ann Mitchell, text by Gail Jansen, \$50.

A chronology of Val Verde (see at far right) explains the appearance of two photo-documentary books about Val Verde within the last two years. Even if one accepts that it is one of the extraordinary places in Santa Barbara, more particularly Montecito, some 120 full-page or overlapping double-page color photos in the 9"x12" *Masterpiece* and 80 in the follow-on 9 1/4"x12 1/2" *Impressions* is generous attention to lavish on this Bertram Goodhue house and Charles Gibbs Adams/Lockwood de Forest garden. Weapons in the Foundation's arsenal of fund-raising efforts, this published duopoly is one side of a defiant strategy to rise "above the legal limitations" denying access to "one of America's important historical sites." The modern component is ambiguously referred to as "a new, interactive and patented technology" for access.

Polar opposites, the two books complement each other. Aran's photo-documentation, all in color, is prosaic, but comprehensive. The uncertainty regarding the estate's future and a pending sense of mortality—fulfilled in the course of the undertaking by the deaths of both Dr. Austin and Berge Aran himself—give this project an uncommon sense of urgency. One is grateful that the documentation was done (cracks and chips in the garden walls and all) and excuses the frequently bland and repetitious images. Mitchell's imagery, all in sepia, makes it clear just how timely Aran's intervention was. In *Impressions*, rooms that were, in Aran's book, full of bric-a-brac, art, photos and furniture are bare, or in the process of being disassembled. Aran dutifully recorded an existing condition for posterity as well as a key section of the estate that was, sadly, sold off. Mitchell creates a mood from dramatically cropped and angled images. She shoots a remaining chair, a rug rolled up to be removed, a curtain about to be pulled down. Her images radiate loss and dramatic depths that are only hinted at in the accompanying narrative. A narrow, semi-opaque frame effect around the photo images reinforces the artistic aspect of her views.

The mystery continues into the garden. Mitchell shows Lockwood de Forest's iconic and somewhat overbearing colonnade bleached out and ghostly, a backdrop for the dark, sharp silhouette of a multi-branched pittosporum in the foreground. In a second image the focus is on the shadow pattern of the brick wall, the light suffused through the trees above, and on two large oak branches resting on top of one of the columns. By contrast, Aran has multiple views of the colonnade, usually in full, flat daylight and often from a distance. He optimizes his views with a wide angle. In her fragments, Mitchell, an associate professor at Long Beach Community College, heightens the landscape, drawing out its romantic possibilities.

The choice is between a comprehensive or a poetic interpretation of Val Verde. By perusing both books, the reader will be convinced that this is a place worth fighting for.

(Continued on page 18.)

Chronology:
Austin Val Verde Foundation

1994:
Dr. Warren R. Austin makes legal arrangements for creation of a foundation to run the Val Verde estate.

1997:
Gail Jansen, graduate student in architecture at UCLA, arranges for Berge Aran, lecturer and curator of the university's audiovisual collection, to photograph Val Verde.

1998:
In March, Eden summarizes the Garden Conservancy's report of the battle to create a public site of Val Verde (period of historical significance 1915-1937). Neighborhood opposition forces an environmental impact review. In December, Susan Chamberlin gives the history of the estate and reports that the Planning Commission has approved Val Verde's request for status as a limited access garden museum. Opponents appeal to the County Board of Supervisors.

1999:
In July 1999, the Board of Supervisors rejects the preservation effort. Dr. Austin dies in December.

2000:
The Austin Val Verde Foundation takes control of the estate, with Gail Jansen as director. Berge Aran, who has been photographing Val Verde for three years, dies in November.

Spring 2001:
The Board of Supervisors' decision is overruled.

Fall 2001:
Val Verde's status is uncertain. The county appears intent on appealing the approval of the museum concept.

2002:
In the fall, Val Verde hosts a week-long workshop with Charles Birnbaum of the Cultural Landscape Foundation as a featured speaker. It is announced that visitors may now make reservations to visit the garden. That winter, Eden announces that the State Appeals Court has reversed the Superior Court decision to allow museum status. The Foundation must now resubmit to the county for a more limited public access.

2004:
The Foundation releases a DVD about Lockwood de Forest, Jr.

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Book Reviews & News (continued)

Val Verde (cont'd.)

Gail Jansen's commentary and over-all direction are the driving force behind these books, along with the Austin Val Verde Foundation. In March 2001 the CGLHS Board was privileged, in connection with its winter meeting, to tour the estate with the Executive Director. Susan Chamberlin gave a similar tour to attendees of the 2006 CGLHS conference. In her tour Gail spoke of the commercial crop production and related research that was the original impetus for both Val Verde and the adjoining estate "El Fureides." She pointed out the reorientation of the entrance under Wright Ludington; the independent, foraging plantings of the family of Mexican gardeners in the stream area; and the effects of Ludington's homosexuality on the garden. Hopefully, a future publication will explore these more searching issues.

—Phoebe Cutler

Chronology (cont'd.)

2005:

Austin Val Verde: A Montecito Masterpiece is released, with introduction by Berge Aran and Gail Jansen, photographs by Berge Aran (Santa Barbara: Austin Val Verde Foundation, 2005). Balcony Press of Los Angeles is the distributor.

2005-06:

Ann Mitchell photographs Val Verde.

2007:

Austin Val Verde: Impressions of a Montecito Masterpiece is released, photographs by Ann Mitchell, text by Gail Jansen (Santa Barbara: Austin Val Verde Foundation, 2007). Balcony Press is again the distributor. In the winter of 2007, the Foundation conducts a high-stakes raffle as a means of fund-raising for Val Verde.

2008:

A spring mailing of appeals for contributions to Val Verde suggests that the raffle was not "a resounding success." Val Verde markets itself as a venue for fundraising events for other groups since local code forbids it holding its own money-raising events.

Journals

California History: The Journal of the California Historical Society, Number 3, 2008, contains an article which may interest many members. Christine Scriabine has written "Bruce Porter: San Francisco Society's Artful Player." She has been the research historian for Filoli and presents new information about one of its most important designers. Bruce Porter (1865-1953) was a dilettante in the best sense of the term, and Scriabine's account of his life and times is fascinating. A more fully illustrated version would be welcome.

Conference Reading

Arcadia Publishing continues its incredible production with 620 titles for California alone. One of the newest is *Manzanar* by Jane Wehrey, (Images of America Series, 2008), softcover, 128 pp, b&w photographs, \$19.99. This book records in photographs the varied history of Manzanar, originally settled by the Paiute, in 1910 a fruit colony named for its fragrant apple orchards, and lastly the first of ten "relocation centers" housing Japanese and Japanese Americans.

Part of the same series is *Sawtelle - West Los Angeles's Japantown* by Jack Fujimoto, the Japanese Institute of Sawtelle, and the Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California (2007), softcover, 128 pp, \$19.99. Sawtelle was an unincorporated section of L.A. County where a large number of Japanese Americans lived and worked. Many Japanese American owned nurseries were located in this area. Order directly from Arcadia at www.arcadiapublishing.com.

DVDs

Those who missed last year's conference on Japanese American gardens may still purchase the DVD of the Japanese American National Museum's exhibit on "Beyond the Japanese Garden - Stories of Japanese American Gardeners & Their Gardens." 70 minutes, \$19.95. Item # 230017. Visit the JANM website: www.janmstore.com or call toll-free: 888.769.5559.

"An Age of Gardeners: Mrs. Bancroft and Her Horticultural Contemporaries" was a two-day seminar held in Walnut Creek on July 18-19 to celebrate Mrs. Bancroft's 100th birthday. Modern-day luminaries such as Warren Roberts, Ted Kipping, Chris Rosmini, Roger Warner, Betsy Flack, Dick Turner, Dick Dunmire and Bob Hornback shared their memories of famous San Francisco Bay Area nurserymen and garden designers: Victor Reiter, Jr., Lester Hawkins and Marshall Olbrich, Gerda Isenberg, Ed Carman, Wayne Roderick, and Harland Hand. This stellar event, cosponsored by The Ruth Bancroft Garden and The Garden Conservancy, was recorded on film and will be made available as a set of DVDs. Details to follow.

Catalogues

The 2008-09 catalogue from Old House Gardens - Heirloom Bulb Specialists has arrived. To get your copy send \$2 to OHG, 536 Third Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Or visit their website: www.oldhousegardens.com.

—Margaretta J. Darnall,
Assistant Editor



Coming Events

15 September - 28 November:

"From Our Land, Nikkei Agricultural Experiences in California: 1800s - Present" is the title of a new exhibit in the lobby of the California State Library at 900 N Street, Sacramento. Its intent is to challenge the myth of the Oriental in California culture, then and now, through the display of photographs, artifacts and a videotaped narrative of personal experiences.

25-26 September:

American Public Gardens Association (APGA) design and planning symposium, "Digging In: Design Process Essentials," at Reiman Gardens in Ames, Iowa. Contact Sarah Maietta at smaietta@publicgardens.org or 302.655.7100 ext. 11. Website: www.publicgardens.org.

SAVE THE DATE:

26-28 September:

CGLHS Annual Conference at Lone Pine, "Spirit of Landscape: California's Lower Owens River Valley." Details on page 21.

9-10 October:

"Understanding Your Past to Ensure Your Future," a historic landscape symposium sponsored by APGA at Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park, Oyster Bay, New York. For details contact Sarah Maietta at smaietta@publicgardens.org or 302.655.7100 ext. 11. Website: www.publicgardens.org.

11 October:

Gardening Under Mediterranean Skies VI, a one-day seminar co-sponsored by the Mediterranean Plant Society (MPS) and *Pacific Horticulture* as a part of the former's annual conference in Monterey. The seminar is open to the general public as well as members of MPS, and will feature lectures (including **Russ Beatty** on the "History of California Gardens") and garden tours. Fee is \$150 for PH members. Registration being handled by Evans & Johnson, 831.655.9924, or register online at www.regonline.com/builder/site/Default.aspx?eventid=616039.

18 October - 5 January 2009

"The Architecture & Decorative Arts of Charles and Henry Greene," at the Huntington. Website: www.huntington.org.

23-25 October:

The California Council for the Promotion of History is holding its 28th annual conference at San Luis Obispo. This year's theme is "Many Californias, Many Histories," and will explore the diverse peoples, places and events that together make up the mosaic of California history. The conference will begin with a reception at the historic Dallidet Adobe and Gardens. Session 1 will feature CGLHS member **Ann Huston** (NPS) speaking about the history of Santa Cruz Island; session 8, "Legacies on the Land," will include talks by Mills College professor Bruce Pavlik on Califor-

nia deserts and CGLHS member

Peggy Beedle on "The Santa Margarita Cultural Landscape."

Session 11 will feature interpreting history through personal stories, with four speakers from State Parks, including Hearst Castle. Hearst historian and author Victoria Kastner will give the keynote address at the Friday night banquet held at San Simeon. For full details, Tel: 916.278.4246.

Email: ccph@csus.edu.

Website: www.csus.edu/org/ccph/.

November 2008

The California Preservation Foundation is offering a two-day workshop in San Francisco sometime this month. The first day's theme will be "Identifying Historical Integrity." Integrity is defined as the "ability of a property to convey its significance." Historic integrity is often cited as the most confusing aspect in the evaluation of historic resources and at times becomes the make-or-break factor in their evaluation. But what constitutes integrity varies not only with the historic context, but also with the criteria for evaluation associated with the resource. After exploring the terms and definitions of integrity used in historic resource evaluations, this workshop will dissect the concept of historic resource integrity into its component parts, examining local, state and national thresholds, how the condition of a resource factors into assessments, and individual

(Continued on page 20.)

Coming Events (continued)

versus district integrity. Case studies will illustrate how historic integrity relates to CEQA and case law, and how unique structures or landscapes have lost or gained integrity in the short span of a few years because of context changes. All presenters will be available for a panel Q&A. Day two of this workshop will feature "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties." The workshop will provide an overall and in depth examination of the Standards and their interpretations. Lectures and case studies will explore the topics of reversibility, contextual infill, and compatible alterations and additions, with time for Q&A with all of the speakers. Attendees may choose to participate in only one or both of these workshops. To keep apprised of details on exact dates, speakers, fees, etc., visit the CPF website, www.californiapreservation.org.

2009

March: The July issue of the magazine *Pacific Coast Nurseryman and Garden Supply Dealer* informed us that the so-called San Francisco Garden Show which was originally staged at Fort Mason as a way to raise funds for maintaining San Francisco parks, will be moving even further south to the San Mateo Event Center after 12 years at the Cow Palace in Brisbane. The dilapidated condition of the latter facility, owned by the California Department of Agriculture, is the reason given for the move to this new venue. For more information, visit www.gardenshow.com.

March: The Sixth National Forum on Historic Preservation Practice is to be held at Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland. Historic preservation practice in the United States has become complex, professional, and inclusive, while reflecting an increasingly mainstreamed and popular public ethos. This has, in turn, focused the attention of some preservationists far beyond traditional concerns for preserving individual historic buildings, landscapes and neighborhoods, to grappling with ways to integrate preservation with land use and transportation planning, smart growth and management of resources; in short, seeking ways to make historic preservation a central part of the growing discussion of developing sustainable practices. This series of National Forums, co-sponsored by a consortium of 11 graduate historic preservation programs, has focused on the changing perspectives of historic preservation practice in the United States. The Sixth Forum will explore the challenges that preservation faces in becoming a critical component of the national debate about sustainability.

Historic preservation of existing neighborhoods and commercial districts embodies the concept of a sustainable society. Preserving and continuing to use existing neighborhoods with their closely integrated network of houses, schools, parks, open spaces, streets, alleys and religious institutions provides residents with an environment that encourages human interaction. Preserving and continuing to use traditional commercial districts provides residents with a variety of locally oriented goods and services. Dave Ames, email: davames@udel.edu.

16-19 April: "The Culture of Leisure – Rethinking the California Dream" is the theme of next year's California Preservation Foundation annual conference, to be held at Palm Springs. For details, visit www.californiapreservation.org. Or contact them at California Preservation Foundation, 5 Third Street, Suite 424, San Francisco 94103. Tel: 415.495.0349.

10-13 June, 2009:

The Vernacular Architecture Forum (VAF) invites paper proposals for its Annual Meeting at Butte, Montana. The conference theme is "Mining Metropolis: An Island in a Stockman's Paradise?" Papers may address vernacular and everyday sites and cultural landscapes worldwide. Submissions are encouraged to explore topics related to the conference theme, such as industrial boomtowns in the American West, mining landscapes, cultural landscapes and architecture in farming, cattle ranching and livestock breeding, and company towns. Also encouraged are proposals for complete sessions, roundtable discussions, and any innovative means that facilitate scholarly discourse. VAF encourages paper and session proposals from graduate and undergraduate students and young professionals. **The deadline for submissions is 1 October 2008.** For full details visit their website: www.vafweb.org.

Owens Valley, Then and Now

Mary DeDecker

Mary DeDecker (1909-2000) was a self-taught botanist, more specifically a plant taxonomist, who lived in Independence from 1935 on. She was the author of several books and articles, and was a tireless defender of the natural values of the Owens Valley. This essay was originally published in the Inyo County Museum News Bulletin in August 1977 and is reproduced here in edited form with permission of the Eastern California Museum of Inyo County. As you read this, keep in mind that some the habitat DeDecker writes of here as being "lost" has since made a recovery with the rewatering of portions of the Owens River and Owens Lake. We will see the effects of this recovery during our conference at the end of the month.



Owens Valley, as it was first known, was occupied by Paiute Indians. They lived a relatively peaceful life which allowed development of a stable social structure. A newspaper correspondent on the 1859 expedition of Captain J.W. Davidson described them as both morally and physically superior to any of their race in California. They had developed a simple form of agriculture in the Bishop, Big Pine and Independence areas which was an ingenious way of using the natural resources to advantage. Although they lived on the land, harvesting both natural and their cultivated native foods, they were wise enough to allow for replenishment. No resource was exploited to the point of no return. Above all, they had a high respect for water. They realized that it must never be polluted by waste or dead animal matter. There must have been difficult times—extremely long, severe winters or parching periods of drought—but they knew they must adapt to what came. Their very survival depended upon living within the resources immediately available.

Then the white men arrived. Our first glimpses of the valley are found in accounts of various expeditions passing through. In those days of travel by horseback any new place was judged by its grass and available water. Owens Valley rated high. Its frequent meadows and plentiful bunch grasses impressed them as favorably as did the numerous springs and water courses. Up to that time, the valley had not been exploited in any way. Let us try to visualize what those first parties saw.

The alluvial slopes were probably much as they are today, although some deterioration has occurred. Along the base of the Sierra would have been the Great Basin sagebrush and the large shrubs associated with it. We can assume that deer browsed freely, but were kept under control by coyotes and cougars. Lower on the slopes lesser shrubs mixed with the sagebrush to form a low, grayish scrub cover. Ribbons of riparian growth bordered rushing streams, one from the mouth of each Sierra canyon. The major streamways could be traced by tall ponderosa pines, possibly relics of ages past. Some still survive. (Higher on the mountain slopes a close relative, the Jeffrey pine, is common.) Black poplar came down from the mountains to meet the bright green lance-leaf species and, lower down, the Fremont poplar with toothed leaves. Water birch and various willows filled in between the taller trees. Lush growth of red columbine, streamside paintbrush, rein orchid and tiger lily lined the moist banks. Woodsy places between the trees showed star flower, aspen onion, fritillaria, and other shade-loving flowers. The stream banks had not yet been trampled by fishermen and campers.

(Continued on page 22.)

Spirit of Landscape: California's Lower Owens River Valley

Annual Conference of the California Garden & Landscape History Society

September 26-28, 2008, Lone Pine, California

You may download a registration form and additional information from our website: www.cglhs.org.

Conference fees are \$240 and \$280 respectively. Partial day rates are also available. The Saturday dinner (see enclosed schedule) is optional at \$50 per person. Lodging is limited in Lone Pine. We recommend the Dow Villa. Call 800.824.9317 or visit their website: www.dowvillamotel.com.

Owens Valley, Then and Now (continued)

The major waterway, however, was the Owens River, meandering down the length of the valley to discharge its waters into the large, bitter lake at the lower end. The river was bordered by bottom lands of lush saltgrass meadows. Tree willows, along with shrubby species, marked its course. Here too was a riparian community, but it was composed of plants which could tolerate some alkali. Even though the river was a fresh-water stream, its banks, as it flowed through the valley, were alkaline to some degree.

Plants which thrived there included a small-flowered aster, burr marigold, desert buttercup, and a variety of reeds and rushes. Saltgrass was abundant on the river bottom lands. One showy flower which grew there in abundance was the Owens Valley or Coville mallow, *Sidalcea colvillei*. First found by Colville and Funston on the Death Valley Expedition of 20 June 1891, so much of its habitat has now been destroyed by drying that only remnants of former populations still exist, and it is now listed as a rare and endangered species. It requires as habitat a fairly wet meadow, more or less alkaline. In the wet year of 1952 it was reported from the river bottom land north of Lone Pine, where it covered several acres and resembled a large field of shooting stars as viewed from the highway. The plant is a perennial from fleshy roots, so probably was adapted to live through normal periods of drought. Its very limited distribution, however, and the gradual elimination of its moist habitats narrow its chances of survival. Haiwee

Meadows have been inundated by the reservoir, the river bottom lands no longer receive annual flooding, and the few remaining populations are gradually being eliminated by draining for roadways or building sites. There is little chance that this beautiful Owens Valley endemic will survive. Its story is symbolic of changing Owens Valley. Another species which may go with it is the lovely white-flowered alkali mariposa lily, *Calochortus excavatus*. It is the only mariposa which can tolerate alkaline places. Although it is hardy, it must have moisture near the surface. It too is an endemic of the area and often occurs with the Colville mallow.

Owens Lake was extremely alkaline so its moist borders supported species with a high tolerance for the concentration of salts occurring there. Plants known locally as alkali pink, sand spurry, stinkweed and arrowscale grew nearby, surrounded by an abundance of inkweed. Parry saltbush, with stemless heartshaped leaves, probably formed large rounded bushes toward the southeast curve of the shore just as they do today. Around the lake and extending the entire length of the valley on dry alkaline soils, the dominant shrub was greasewood, *Sarcobatus vermiculatus*. This is still the most extensive shrub on the valley floor. It is to be highly valued because it occupies a place which would not be filled by other species. It depends on groundwater, but can thrive where the depth to water is as much as 12 feet. It is highly alkali tolerant and it can penetrate layers of heavy clay. Where such conditions exist on the valley floor, it is the last in plant succession. If

the groundwater drops below the point of its endurance, the land would be barren of cover. There would be too little precipitation to support even a healthy crop of aggressive weeds, such as Russian thistle, which otherwise could exist there. Characteristic of the greasewood scrub plant community are frequent clay slicks where water ponds form when there is enough rain. These would have been part of that early landscape. The lush alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*), the attractive bunchgrass of that community which the early expeditions found in abundance, has been sadly depleted due to drier conditions and years of overgrazing. A variety of low shrubs were present on the valley floor, probably much the same as they are today.

Most beautiful to behold would have been the saltgrass meadows, vast areas of green in the spring and summer, turning golden through the fall and winter. These occurred where groundwater came to within eight feet or less from the surface, or where water spread from streams or springs. On the wetter areas, darker green patches of *Juncus* would have shown up in the meadows. Clumps of alkali sacaton would have entered their drier borders. The meadow acreage has been greatly reduced, mostly due to altering the flow of water or by lowering the groundwater level. As the meadows deteriorate, rabbitbrush moves in to replace the grass.

Among the most valuable of the early habitats were the marshes and sloughs. Some of these existed on the old oxbows of the river. Others were formed by the flow

Owens Valley, Then and Now (continued)

from springs and in depressions filled by high groundwater. Ponds of open water were often present. A variety of reeds, rushes and cattails grew in these wet places, bordered by others which required less moisture. These were rich natural ecosystems, important units in the biological chain of life.

Lesser forms of life were nurtured here and these in turn became food for the higher forms. The dense growth furnished cover and provided nesting places for birds. Flora and fauna were abundant. Of these habitats only traces remain, so few that their function as part of the valley system has been lost. It is considered a waste of water to maintain these basic cradles of the Owens Valley environment.

Early expeditions looking for sites with adequate grass and water for their horses were not too impressed with that part of the valley showing the Mojave Desert influence. It does, however, contribute to the rich variety of species found here. Creosote bush extends northward as far as Mazourka Canyon, east of Independence. It is the dominant shrub over much of the Mojave Desert, but it cannot take alkali. In Owens Valley it stays well away from the lake and skirts the alkali flats north of it, following the dry slopes and extending into the Inyo Mountain canyons as high as 5400 feet in elevation. Its northerly limit is governed by temperature. Joshua trees too are desert plants, but they require more precipitation than creosote bush. In Owens Valley they occur on non-alkali flats and slopes about the southern end.

Interspersed with the most obvious plant communities would have been transitional areas of varying

composition. Species of *Atriplex* (saltbush) would have been well represented then as they are today, but the pattern would have been quite different. Each has a different moisture requirement and a different degree of tolerance to alkali.

The plants of the Owens Valley cannot be discussed without mentioning the ever present rabbitbrush. The early explorers would not have seen the yellow fields of rabbitbrush that exist today. The species is a part of many plant communities, but under natural conditions it does not get out of control. It is an extremely aggressive shrub which moves into any situation where the existing vegetation is weakened or removed. This broomlike bush is *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*, and is divided into several common subspecies. Other species of *Chrysothamnus* are less aggressive.

The gradual change in the environment scene can be attributed to man and his activities since the first expeditions. Mining was the impetus which started it all. There was little actual mining on the floor of Owens Valley, but people living in the valley were involved in mining, directly or indirectly. The first settlers worked in the mines or grew produce and raised livestock to support the mining camps. Exploitation was the way of life. The abundant natural resources were here for the taking. Waterfowl on Owens Lake were slaughtered in great numbers, cleaned and packed in barrels, then carried to market in the booming mining towns. Gull eggs were gathered on the islands of Mono Lake to satisfy an eager demand. Fortunately the mining camps did not last long enough to wipe out the gull population then. Its destruction is imminent now, however. Mining activity slowed down and the

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Fruit farm, Owens Valley c. 1920.
Photograph courtesy www.owensvalleyhistory.com.

Owens Valley, Then and Now (*continued*)

emphasis changed, but concern for the environmental values was slow to come.

The most prolonged activity affecting the land has been grazing by cattle and sheep. Horses and burros have had a lesser influence because their numbers have been fewer. The need for good grazing practices was not felt by the pioneers. The concept of limiting grazing to the capacity of the land was to come much later. Impact from grazing is not limited to the use of plants for food. In areas of animal concentration trampling alone does extensive damage, and any accessible springs and shady spots are subject to trampling and pollution. As a result, the native bunch grasses have been greatly reduced or replaced by shrubs in the most heavily impacted areas. There is little trace of the northern grassland which once occupied much of the present sagebrush land in Mono County and extended into Owens Valley.

The clearing of the land and diversion of water for agricultural activities produced changes where they occurred. Land which had supported healthy stands of sagebrush and land which had been used by Indians for croplands became prime farming communities. Many attempts at farming were made on land too alkaline and perhaps too heavy for raising successful crops. All efforts at agriculture were subject to the unpredictable and extreme weather conditions of Owens Valley. The lack of adequate water distribution systems was a handicap too, especially in the southern portion of the valley. Most of the farmlands are abandoned now. Most of those which are not too dry have become fields of rabbitbrush. The drier ones are barren wastes.

By far the greatest impact resulted from the acquisition of water by the City of Los Angeles. The diversion of the Owens River near Aberdeen left the river channel dry below that point, and reduced Owens Lake to

a dry alkali sink. Purchase of farmlands by Los Angeles to protect its water program resulted in the changes described above. The undeveloped lands acquired remained in a relatively natural state until the last decade. The fact that they were not available for development and were kept open to public access has preserved Owens Valley as a unique recreational area. While there was reason for concern during periods of drought when groundwater was pumped to maintain the supply to Los Angeles, those periods were of limited duration. Extensive environmental damage also occurred during the wet years of the late 1960s when water spreading activities disturbed much of the valley floor south of Tinnemaha. It was after the City of Los Angeles built its second aqueduct and initiated its export plan for that aqueduct in 1970 that the threat of increasing and permanent environmental damage raised fears in the residents of Owens Valley. The purpose of that second aqueduct, it was said, was to take only surplus water, but what was surplus, and by whose definition? Was underground water surplus? Were the flowing springs and wells expendable? Were the marshes and sloughs being maintained by surplus water? What would be the ultimate impact on the native plant communities, and on the ground surface? How would such changes in the natural processes affect the way of life of the people of Owens Valley? In this enlightened age, could arbitrary decisions at the expense of environmental sacrifice be justified? These and many other questions are yet to be answered.



A portion of the re-watered Owens River as it looks today. The recovery of native plants and wildlife habitat has been remarkable. Photo © 2008 J.M. Horton.



Members in the News

On 23 September the Environmental Design Archives and Environmental Design Library will host a lecture by CGLHS member **Professor Emeritus Marc Treib** for his new book, *Appropriate: The Houses of Joseph Esherick*. The book is the latest in the Berkeley Design Books series. It is the first major publication to address Esherick's life and work. Although he began by studying in the Beaux-Arts tradition, Esherick went on to become one of the leading modern designers on the West Coast. He taught at the College of Environmental Design at U.C. Berkeley from the 1950s until the 1970s, while maintaining a private practice. The lecture and book signing will take place from 7:30 to 9:00 P.M. in Room 112 at Wurster Hall on the U.C. Berkeley campus. Copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Pam-Anela Messenger advised us that she has left her position with the firm of Suzman & Cole as of July in order to devote more time to her work on Thomas Church and other projects.

Directory Changes

Change of Address

Peggy Beedle, 132 North Avenue, Orcutt 93455. Email: pbeedle@umail.ucsb.edu.
The Garden Conservancy, West Coast offices, 38 Keyes Avenue, Suite 116, The Presidio, San Francisco 94129.
Tel: 415.441.4300. Email: wcprog@gardenconservancy.org.

Returning Members

Elizabeth Krase, 2520 Chester Street, Alameda 94501.
Christy Edstrom O'Hara, Founding Member 1997, 11730 San Marcos Rd, Atascadero 93422.
Robin & Bill Parer, (Geraniaceae), Founding Member 1996, 122 Hillcrest Avenue, Kentfield 94904.

New Members

Jeanette & Bill Davis, 206 Monroe Street, Pomona 91767.
Mary Donovan, 46 Clipper Street, San Francisco 94114.
Susan Feller, 4396 Briar Cliff Road, Oakland 94605
Sandy Gillis, 1948 Braeburn Road, Altadena 91001
Jack Kohr & Lillie Tallman, 3545 Mont Blanc Ct, Carson City, NV 89705
Christy McAvoy, Historic Resources Group, 1728 Whitley Ave., Hollywood 90028-4809.
Elizabeth McKee, California.
Juliet Wong, PO Box 862368, Los Angeles 90086.

The San Diego Floral Association, founded to promote the knowledge and appreciation of horticulture and floriculture in the San Diego region, celebrated its centennial year in 2007. In 2009, the organization will mark one century of publishing its journal, *California Garden*. **Nancy Carol Carter** has written to say that we can soon expect to receive an announcement of the publication of a history book with selections from the magazine. CGLHS **Immediate Past President Thea Gurns** is editing the volume.

In the meantime, the Floral Association believes that *California Garden* may be the oldest continuously published garden and horticulture journal in California and the entire United States, but wants to test this claim before broadcasting it more widely. Does anyone know of a garden or horticulture magazine started before 1909 and published continuously since that year – with no breaks due to war shortages or other reasons?

The Association will do the research on exact publication dates if anyone has titles to suggest. Thanks for your assistance. Please reply to Nancy Carol Carter at ncc@sandiego.edu or 619.260.4603.

Enclosed within this issue is your official ballot for CGLHS elections of officers and board members for the term 2009-2010. We regret to announce one change to the slate published in our Summer issue: **Carola Ashford** was forced to withdraw her candidacy as a Member at Large due to health issues. Please return your completed ballot no later than September 20th. Election results will be announced at our annual conference at Lone Pine at the end of this month and in the Winter issue of *Eden*.



Eden: Call for Content

Eden solicits your submissions of scholarly papers, shorter articles, book reviews, information about coming events, news about members' activities and honors, interesting archives or websites you have discovered. In short, send us anything pertaining to California's landscape history that may be of interest to our members. We are particularly interested in hearing from our Southern California members:

For book reviews, notices of interesting magazine articles, museum exhibits and the like, write to Assistant Editor Margaretta J. Darnall, 1154 Sunnyside Road, Oakland, CA 94610.

For items pertaining to preservation issues, contact Assistant Editor Cathy Garrett at Garrett@PGAdesign.com or care of 444-17th Street, Oakland, CA 94612.

All other submissions should be sent to Editor Marlea Graham, 100 Bear Oaks Drive, Briones, CA 94553-9754. Telephone: 925.335.9182. Email: maggie94553@earthlink.net.

Deadlines for all submissions are the first days of March, June, September and December.

Back Issues of *Eden*

All issues of *Eden*, beginning with Volume 1, No. 1 (May 1996) onward, are available for purchase. Prices range from \$2.50 for single issues (under 20 pages) to \$5.00 for double issues (up to 36 pages). To order, write or email Editor Marlea Graham (contact information above).

Eden

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California Garden and Landscape History Society

Aims and Purposes

- To celebrate the beauty, wealth, and diversity of California gardens and landscapes.
- To aid and promote interest in, study of, and education about California garden and landscape history.
- To collect and/or coordinate resources and expertise about the history of California's gardens and landscapes.
- To visit on occasion historical gardens, landscapes, archives and libraries in different parts of the state.
- To enjoy one another's company at meetings, garden visits, and other get-togethers.

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Our heartfelt thanks to those members who have helped to put us on solid financial ground by becoming Sustaining Members at \$60 and up.

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Figure 10. Merritt Park, Manzanar Relocation Center, 1943. "Mrs. Nakamura and family in park, Manzanar Relocation Center, California." Photograph by Ansel Adams. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ppprs-00138].



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