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# MUSSER JAPANESE GARDEN

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## 4. Pre-WWII Private Japanese-style Gardens in the Midwest

SEPTEMBER 1, 2021  
by Beth Cody

This paper is the fourth in a series of research papers written for the Muscatine Art Center in Summer 2021 by Beth Cody of Kalona, Iowa, through a grant from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs in conjunction with a planned project for restoring the circa-1930 Japanese-style garden on the Art Center grounds. That garden was built for Laura Musser McColm (1877-1964), whose heirs donated her Muscatine house to the City of Muscatine in 1965 for use as a museum.

This research is intended to place the construction of such a garden into context of the period from roughly 1890 until World War II: How did Japanese-style gardens become popular in the Midwestern United States during that period? What other Japanese-style public and private gardens were constructed during that time, particularly in the Midwest? How did Midwesterners regard such gardens, and how did their feelings change during WWII when the United States was at war with Japan? And what things might have prompted Laura Musser McColm to have such a garden constructed for her around 1930?

Paper 1: Introduction of Japanese-Style Gardens to the Midwest through World's Fairs, 1876-1934

Paper 2: Books, Magazine Articles and Iowa Newspaper Articles about Japanese Gardens, 1890-1935

Paper 3: Pre-WWII Public Japanese-style Gardens

Paper 4: Pre-WWII Private Japanese-style Gardens in the Midwest

Paper 5: Professor P.H. Elwood's 1929 Trip to Japan

Paper 6: Laura Musser McColm's Japanese-style Garden; Possible Designer-Builders

Paper 7: The Muscatine Garden Club

Paper 8: Changing Attitudes to Japan Before and During WWII; Surviving Pre-WWII Japanese-style Gardens in the Midwest

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## Table of Contents

Introduction: Early Private Japanese-Style Gardens in America and the Midwest .....	1
The First Private Japanese-Style Gardens.....	1
John Bradstreet Gardens: Minneapolis, Minnesota (c.1890-1910s) .....	3
Tootle Garden: Mackinac Island, Michigan (1905-1910).....	25
Bryan Garden: Chicago, Illinois (c. 1910) .....	31
Fabyan Japanese Garden, Geneva, Illinois (c.1910-1914) .....	35
Eastman Garden: Burlington, Iowa (c. 1912) .....	41
Wheeler Japanese Garden: Indianapolis, Indiana (c. 1912).....	47
Cranbrook Garden: Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (c. 1915) .....	48
Mrs. August Meyer Garden: Kansas City, Missouri (c. 1915) .....	49
Henry Hatashita.....	52
Other Kansas City Japanese-Style Gardens .....	54
Harlow Arden (H.D. Higgenbotham) Japanese Garden, Joliet, IL (c.1915) .....	55
1916: Stan Hywet Hall Japanese Garden, Akron, OH .....	59
Wyethwood: St. Joseph, Missouri (c. 1917) .....	64
Mayowood Gardens: Rochester, Minnesota (c.1918) .....	66
Thornhill, Morton Garden: Lisle, Illinois (c. 1920).....	68
Holcomb Garden: Indianapolis, Indiana (c. 1922) .....	70
W.E. Long Chinese Gardens and Museum: Lake Wawasee, Indiana (1936).....	74
Sources .....	75

## Introduction: Early Private Japanese-Style Gardens in America and the Midwest

The first Japanese-style gardens created for US private residences were made in the 1890s, and they were generally made either for wealthy people, or by artistic people – those with a strong artistic interest in Japan developed after traveling or living there.

Following a hiatus during the late 1910s (perhaps during WWI), enthusiasm for building Japanese gardens among the more general populace began to increase during the 1920s, and peaked around 1930. Interest fell off during the mid-1930s and many private gardens were likely removed during the 1940s due to wartime animus.

Interest in Japanese-style gardens rekindled in the 1950s, becoming quite widespread during the 1960s and 1970s and continuing unabated into the modern era.

I will focus on early Midwestern Japanese-style gardens in this section, only briefly mentioning eastern gardens.

### The First Private Japanese-Style Gardens

It's not certain who built the very first Japanese-style gardens for private enjoyment in the United States, as these were not always published, particularly those built on the west coast. Many Japanese immigrants lived on the west coast, so it's likely that some of them built gardens after the style of those in their homeland.

Private Japanese-style gardens built by Americans *not* of Japanese ancestry were more often documented because of their novelty. Those who built them were, as mentioned above, usually either creative, artistic types who had lived in Japan and wanted to share their gardens to publicize the style to others. Or they were wealthy, trendsetting people – often art collectors – who had their gardens documented just as they did their multiple homes and art purchases.

Documented Japanese-style gardens built in the 1890s were mostly located in the eastern states, and in Minnesota:

William Verbeck grew up in Japan and, likely in the 1890s, made a Japanese-style garden around the Japanese-style summer house he built for himself at the Manlius school in Syracuse, New York, where he was employed as headmaster from 1888. He told the story of how he did so in the 1901 book *How to Make a Flower Garden*, Wilhelm Miller editor (shown in Paper Number 2).

Wealthy Boston art collector Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) created a Japanese garden around 1897 for her Brookline, Massachusetts estate at Green Hill. She had spent a year traveling through Asia in 1883 and 1884, and almost certainly designed her garden herself, with her own estate gardeners building it.

Her Japanese garden, was a sunken water garden with water lilies, bamboo, papyrus and lotus plants grown in barrels that were sunk into the pond. A zig-zag bridge led to a rustic pavilion with a flared roof shape. (see following page)





Figure 1: The Japanese garden at Green Hill, Isabella Stewart Gardner's Brookline, Massachusetts estate. (*Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum*)

In 1901, Matthias Homer near Philadelphia had a garden built by Japanese immigrants around his home using the garden features from the defunct Atlantic City Japanese Tea Garden. His garden was written about in the March 1906 issue of *Country Life* magazine (shown in Figure X).



Lotus and water-lilies in a Japanese garden on a 95 x 205 village lot in Pennsylvania

Figure 2: The garden of Matthias Homer in Pennsylvania. (*Country Life*, March 1906, [archive.org](http://archive.org))

After the turn of the century, numerous Japanese-style gardens were built in the eastern and Atlantic states. Takeo Shiota (1881-1946) came to the US in 1907 and was active in New York and New Jersey, building many gardens for private clients during the 1910s.

But we'll now focus on Midwestern Japanese-style gardens.

## John Bradstreet Gardens: Minneapolis, Minnesota (c.1890-1910s)

The earliest Japanese-style gardens made in Midwestern states were likely those of John Bradstreet, who built two gardens for himself and either designed or influenced at least half a dozen other gardens near Minneapolis, Minnesota.

John Scott Bradstreet (1845-1914) was born in Rowley, Massachusetts, and in 1873 he moved to Minneapolis to work with a furniture manufacturer. He was not interested in the heavy Victorian styles that were popular though, and he soon started a series of arts & crafts furniture and art firms with several partners, and eventually one on his own in the 1890s.

Bradstreet traveled to Japan at least six times before 1900, and his furniture and art increasingly reflected his interest in the arts of that nation, both in his own creations and his imported fabrics and art. He modified a traditional Japanese technique, using charred wood to create furniture with pronounced wood grain patterns.

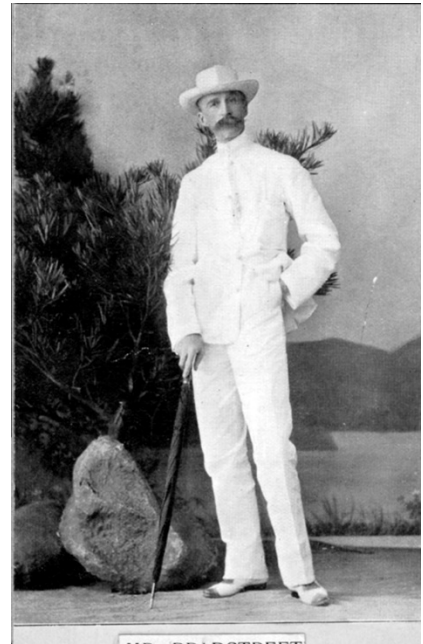
Bradstreet lectured about his travels numerous times to local groups and was instrumental in promoting Japanese style in the area. He also helped put on the city's first art exhibition in a local hotel in 1878 (Minneapolis was only incorporated as a city in 1867), and helped found the Minneapolis Fine Arts Society in 1883.

For at least fifteen years – possibly because he travelled so much, both to the Orient and within the United States – Bradstreet lived in an upscale boarding house called the Judd House (which was located 525 5<sup>th</sup> Street, at the current location of the Minneapolis Armory). As a tastemaker, he decorated his rented rooms in Oriental style, but he was also given permission to build a garden area on the property to suit his tastes.

He made his first Japanese-style garden area at Judd House, likely by 1890, according to a June 15, 1891 article in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* that states: “As Mr. Bradstreet lives at the Judd house, the arrangement of the thatched roofs, shrubbery, rocks, statuettes, bonzes, fountain spout etc., all show the ear marks of an oriental arrangement.”

This exceptionally early date, pre-1890, may mean that Bradstreet's Judd House garden was *one of the very first Japanese-style gardens constructed by an American in the United States*.

According to a March 1909 article in *Country Life in America*, on one of Bradstreet's visits to Japan around 1890, he had visited some of Japan's most celebrated gardens with English architect Josiah Conder, who had published a paper about Japanese gardens in 1886 and then in 1893 published the preeminent English-language book about Japanese gardens, *Landscape Gardening in*



**Figure 3: The debonair figure of John Bradstreet around the turn of the century.**

*(Forgottenminnesota.com)*

*Japan*. Bradstreet undoubtedly learned a great deal about the theory and design of Japanese gardens by touring them with Conder during the height of Conder's interest in them.



**Figure 4: John S. Bradstreet's first Japanese garden at his Minneapolis boarding house, Judd House, likely photographed in the 1890s. (Minneapolis Historical Society)**

Bradstreet's first Japanese garden at the Judd House was fairly small and was less elegantly designed than his later gardens, which will be summarized following. (Bradstreet was asked to remove the garden in 1905 due to mosquito issues with the water in it, despite the small fountain that sprayed water from the head of a dragon that can be seen in the photo of that garden.)

In 1903, Bradstreet moved his business, John S. Bradstreet and Company, into an Italianate-style villa at 327 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street (across from what is now Government Center Park) that he quickly transformed into swank new Arts & Crafts, Orientalist-inspired premises that he named the Minneapolis Crafhhouse. The Crafhhouse (according to a *Forgotten Minnesota* article) had studios, a large main hall and a huge showroom filled with Bradstreet's own furniture designs, Asian antiques (real and reproduction) and imported textiles – all decorated in his signature Japanese-Moorish-Arts & Crafts style.

The Crafhhouse soon became a tourist destination for artistically inclined visitors to Minneapolis and a cultural center for exhibitions and art lectures. Bradstreet expanded the Crafhhouse over the next decade to include workshops, offices, warehouses and showrooms for cabinetry, lighting fixtures, upholstery, painting and ceramics, and employed more than eighty craftsmen at the facility.

But as wonderful as his Crafhhouse interiors were, the gardens outside were every bit as beautiful. Visitors and employees enjoyed the gardens Bradstreet designed (located to the right of the house when viewed from the front).



**Figure 5: The front entrance to John S. Bradstreet's Minneapolis Craffthouse. (*Minneapolis Historical Society*)**



The pond in the Craffthouse garden, much larger than that at his Judd House garden, had a mountain of rocks constructed at one end, out of which a bronze dragon's head fountain (perhaps the same one recycled from his first garden) spouted water. Several stone lanterns, bronze cranes and a Buddha statue ornamented the garden.



**Figure 6: A photo of Bradstreet's Craffthouse Japanese-style garden, showing the ancient wooden zig-zag bridge. The MNHS tentatively dates it to around 1918, which would have been after Bradstreet's death in 1914. The background buildings are different than those shown in the 1909 *Country Life in America* article, following pages, so it could have been taken earlier or later than those. (*Minneapolis Historical Society*)**

Two zigzag bridges crossed the pond: a low one perhaps made of stone, and a wooden one that Bradstreet had purchased from the 1904 World's Fair Japanese Imperial Garden when the fair had finished. That bridge had been made of antique wood from an old junk or boat by the Japanese garden designers to lend an ancient feeling to such a hastily constructed temporary garden at the World's Fair.



**Figure 7: Two views of Bradstreet's Japanese-style pond garden area at the Minnesota Crafthouse. The top photo shows the thatched-roof "resting house" that Bradstreet built, along with a stone lantern and a Buddha statue. (*Country Life in America*, March 1909, [archive.org](http://archive.org))**



Figure 8: Two more views of Bradstreet's pond garden, including (bottom) the dragon's head fountain spraying water down an artificial hill of arranged stones. (*Country Life in America*, March 1909, [archive.org](https://archive.org))

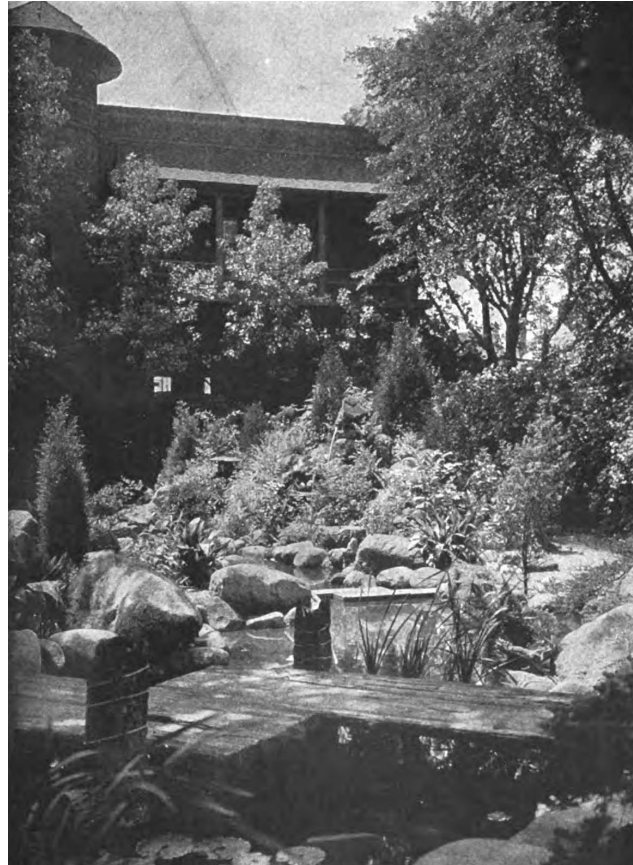




Figure 9: John Bradstreet pictured in his Japanese-style garden. (*Country Life in America*, March 1909, [archive.org](https://archive.org))



**Figure 10: A rendering of the Japanese-style garden on an island near Minneapolis that was proposed by Bradstreet around 1910, before his death. ([minneapolisparkhistory.com](http://minneapolisparkhistory.com))**

Around 1910, Bradstreet also proposed building, at his own expense as a gift to the city, a public Japanese-style garden on an island in the Lake of the Isles, southwest of downtown Minneapolis. However, that project never happened, likely because of Bradstreet's death from illness in 1914.

Bradstreet spent much of his last decade traveling, particularly to Japan, acquiring art for his business, leaving the running of the Crafhouse to his employees. After his death on August 10, 1914, John S. Bradstreet & Company couldn't continue without its driving force – for several more months Bradstreet's employees finished orders that had been placed, and then the Crafhouse doors were closed by his associates. In 1919, the entire group of buildings was razed and the garden removed. It's not known what happened to the Japanese stone lanterns and statuary from the garden.

### **Bradstreet-Designed or -Influenced Gardens in the Minneapolis Area**

John S. Bradstreet did such a good job impressing people with his lectures and his Crafhouse Japanese-style garden that soon he was asked to design such gardens for others (shown in following pages).

Bradstreet designed or influenced the design of at least half a dozen gardens in or near Minneapolis (as well as one along the Hudson River of New York, according to an April 9, 1903 article in the *Minneapolis Journal*).

Many thanks to Kathleen Kullberg of Minneapolis for the recent research she has done about Bradstreet's and other early Japanese-style gardens in the Minneapolis area.



### **Ferndale, Tuttle Garden, Wayzata, Minnesota (1902)**

James H. Tuttle (1824-1903) was born in New York, became a minister in the Universalist Church, moved to Chicago in 1859 and to Minneapolis in 1866. After retirement, he engaged Bradstreet to decorate his cottage, Ferndale, in Wayzata (northwest of Minneapolis), and also to build a Japanese-style garden area in the 13 acres he had purchased.



**Figure 11: The Japanese-style garden area designed by Bradstreet at Ferndale**  
*(Kathleen Kullberg)*

The July 17, 1902 *Star Tribune* had this piece:

Rev. Dr. Tuttle, who has been so critically ill at his home at Ferndale, is steadily improving. He goes every day to his new cottage recently completed by Mr. Bradstreet, and which is very cool and delightful with its cotton furnishings. Dr. Tuttle is superintending the grading of the thirteen acres of ground that he secured a few weeks ago, and will soon have it converted into a fine park.

Unfortunately, the Rev. Tuttle did not live to enjoy his garden for long, passing away in December 1903. His son sold Ferndale to businessman James Stroud Bell, who razed the house and removed the Japanese garden to build his mansion, named Belford (which still stands and which was inherited by his son, James Ford Bell, who founded General Mills in 1927).

## Birkholz Garden, Minnetonka, Minnesota (1905)



**Figure 12:** A postcard view of the Birkholz Japanese-style garden. (*Westonka Historical Society, via Kathy Kullberg*)

In 1905, Bradstreet built a Japanese-style garden for Mr. & Mrs. John Birkholz of Grand Forks, North Dakota, where Mr. Birkholz was a banker. They vacationed in Minnetonka Beach, Minnesota and bought land there to construct a house in 1904. The *Minneapolis Journal* of June 10 of that year had this announcement:

Mr. and Mrs. John Birkholz have laid out a charming bijou Japanese tea garden near their handsome summer home at the beach and the pleasures of a cup of tea served in the quaint little tea house at the foot of a lily pond and fountain will be enjoyed on many an afternoon and evening by their friends. The place is very attractive and the pond winding its way under a small rustic bridge and among dainty paths is outlined with quaint plants and trees and huge bronze birds contrast effectively with the branches of northern oak and pine.

Mr. and Mrs. Birkholz divorced before 1915 and their garden eventually became derelict, the tea house the ponds filled in with soil and grassed over. The current owner has discovered the outlines of the pond and the foundation of the teahouse, and is hoping to restore the garden.



## **George Partridge Garden, Minneapolis, Minnesota (1905)**

The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* of September 10, 1905 had an article about the plans of Mr. George H. Partridge (president of Wyman, Partridge & Co, a Minneapolis dry good manufacturer), to build a Japanese-style garden on his property at 1 Groveland Terrace:

...Something more elaborate in the way of residential landscape architecture than anything yet attempted in this part of the country, is now being carried out by George H. Partridge on the grounds at the rear of his home on Groveland avenue.

It is to be a Japanese garden, so perfect in every respect that if Baron Komura and his party should happen to drop in on Mr. Partridge on their way back to the Orient, they would believe that by some magic power they had suddenly been transported over the thousands of miles of land and sea separating them from the land of the mikado and were once more at home.

Mr. Partridge has had a crew of men at work on the construction of the garden for the past two months, and considerable progress has been made. No expense is being spared to make the garden a gem of its kind, and the total cost is estimated at about \$10,000.

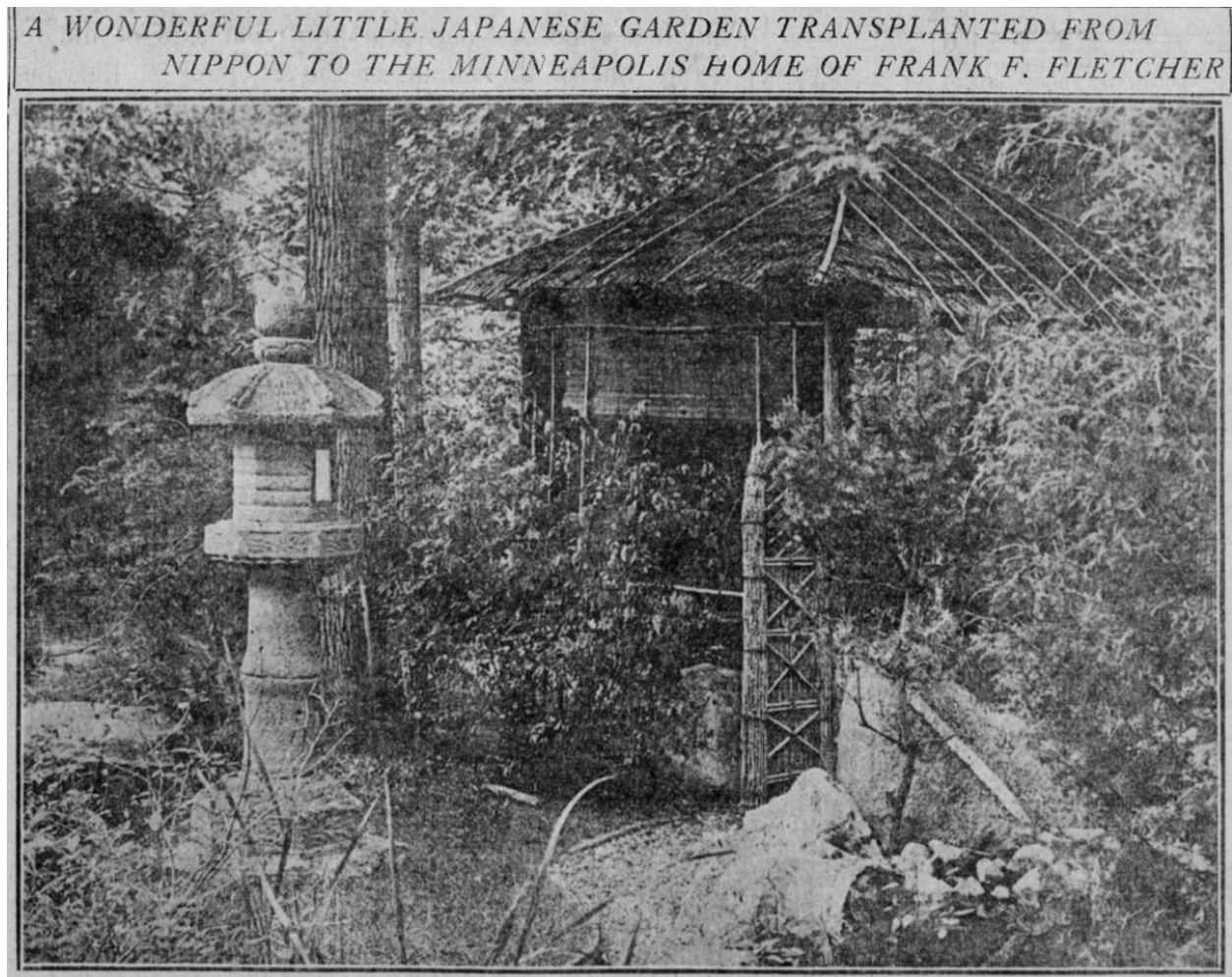
The garden will include the land between Edmund G. Walton's property and the residence on the corner of Douglas and Hennepin avenues. It has been enclosed by an artistically constructed wall about seven feet in height, built of a fine quality of pressed brick.

The garden will be laid out in an original way, though thoroughly Japanese in its general character. The artificial lake, the winding walks enclosed in shrubberies, the multi-colored Japanese lanterns in all forms and shapes, the rustic bridge, the Oriental arches, and the hundred other forms of beauty with which the visitor will be delighted at every turn, will make the place a paradise of esthetic delight, truly restful amid the strenuous rush and sternly practical business life of the middle West.

Some of the characteristics of a Japanese garden may be seen in the beautiful pond at Como Park, with its tropical plants, its rustic bridge and surrounding shrubberies. All of these will be among the attractions of Mr. Partridge's beautiful place. Many have also viewed the beautiful garden of John S. Bradstreet, in front of his home on Seventh street, to which he has devoted much time, labor and money, and has enriched with many varieties gathered on his visits to the Orient.

Unfortunately, no images of the Partridge Japanese -style garden have been located yet.

**Frank Fletcher Garden, Minneapolis, Minnesota (1905)**



**Figure 13:** The garden of artist Frank Fletcher in Minneapolis around 1913. (*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, August 17, 1913).

Frank F. Fletcher (c.1867-1949), who was employed in insurance and later as president of a piston manufacturing company, was also a great aficionado and collector of Asian art, and his wife, Ottalie, was a well-known local pianist.

Likely impressed with fellow Minneapolis art enthusiast John S. Bradstreet's gardens, Fletcher began building a Japanese-style garden around his house at 2816 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street starting around 1905. According to Minneapolis researcher Kathleen Kullberg, Bradstreet helped him design it, as well as the visiting Japanese artist, Yamado Baske, mentioned in the following article from the August 17, 1913 *Minneapolis Star Tribune*:



Figure 14: A photo of Fletcher's garden from an article about "Japanese Water gardens" that he wrote for the September 1911 *Minnesota Horticulturalist*. (*Minnesota Digital Library*)

**Art Lovers Obtain the True Atmosphere of Mysticism of the East.** Eight Years Spent in Actual Construction of Landscape Beauty Spot.

Like a spot that might have been lifted from the sunny island of Japan and transplanted by the hand of nature in the lake region of Minneapolis, a Nipponese garden of a Minneapolis art lover lies quiet and secluded in the wooded landscape near Upton avenue and West Forty-fourth Street.

Expressing the rugged harmony of the oriental art and symbolizing to an accurate degree the mystic legends of the Buddha creed, this "temple garden," hidden in occidental surroundings, is a miniature reproduction of acres of Japanese landscape. Every phase of topography is carried out, even to the rivulet, pond, hillside and mountain.

Little Japan Is Here. Frank F. Fletcher, 2816 West Forty-fourth street, is the Minneapolitan who has a transplanted little Japan back of his home. After years of study into the Japanese art of landscaping and its subtle connection with the religion of that country, and after eight years spent in the actual construction of the garden by the importation of the necessary accessories and the slow culture of the native constituents of the garden, Mr. Fletcher has accomplished the task and has realized his chief hobby.

Priceless monuments, shrines of stone, granite lamps, a mortuary, all of them centuries old, have been obtained by Mr. Fletcher by careful search throughout the Mikado's empire, and the garden itself was arranged by a Japanese painter and artist, Yamado Baske, who spent a year in Minneapolis.

The Japanese are the oldest landscape artists in the world, and in that country the art is best developed. Mr. Fletcher studied it for years, trying to get the native appreciation of it.



A Temple and Garden. The garden situated in the rear of his home has as its background, heavy foliage and wood which shuts off the outside world, and affords the conception of scope and entirety. It is that kind of a Japanese garden known as the temple garden and true to the idea, a real temple or shrine is situated in it.

An informal reception to friends, landscape painters, members of the Society of Fine Arts and others was held by Mr. Fletcher Thursday night. The garden was, dimly lighted with inscribed Japanese lanterns, the dimness of the light contributing to the mystic atmosphere, throwing faint glimmering shadows over the pond in which three or four white gulls glided from one shore to another, taking shelter in the rushes and weeping willows.

There is for one entering the garden a general view, showing the harmonious arrangement of the whole, in its uniformity and entirety, denoting a much broader scope of vision. A dozen individual compositions in the garden, each a complete scene in itself, do not detract from the harmony of the whole.

Tower from Tokio. One composition is centered around a statue of Buddha, and another is a five-leaf stone tower that serves as a background for the pond. This stone tower was taken from a garden in Tokio. Across the pond is a "moon bridge," so-called because the reflection from its curved form throws a moon-shaped shadow on the water. There is a little hill that forms the gradual approach to the mountain and the summit of this is adorned with the temple. It is built of cypress as a part of the Shinto creed and the inner shrine, once the place of worship in the orient, has all of the accessories, including the incense, jewel, key, and bronze mirror into which the religious celebrant gazes to read his own conscience. The shrine was dedicated to the rice goddess. On the approach to the mountain is a mortuary stone which for centuries stood over the grave of an ancient feudal chief, and is still marked with the customary symbols.

A miniature cascade, a bamboo tea house and a dozen stone lamps and other decorations are other features of the garden. Every stone and boulder has some hidden meaning significant of the mystic religion of the Japanese.

**Figure 15: The Buddha statue and a stone lantern in Fletcher's garden.**  
*(Minnesota Digital Library)*



During the past week alone she  
has been and largely subscribed to  
the cause, promoted in the name of the  
Day and night she works for the  
relief of the wives and  
children of men in English convict prisons.

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## Walter Bateman Garden (c. 1906)



Figure 17: The front garden of Walter Bateman. (*Kathleen Kullberg*)

Walter E. Bateman (c. 1867-1937), a restaurant owner, built at least two Japanese-style garden areas on his property at 2724 Irving Avenue in Minneapolis.

From the September 1, 1907 issue of the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*:

....Out of this almost virgin property, the amateur gardener has evolved a beautiful Japanese garden, which has become known in every corner of the city, and where visitors are numerous and welcome day after day, delighting in the shade of the trees and the glow of the blossoms, or wandering through the Oriental environment that has gradually replaced the Minnesota landscape. In this garden there are rustic bridges of the arched Japanese type, a waterway set with shining boulders, and margined by nodding grasses of many shapes and hues, while shiny pebbles form a bed for the waters, that mirror the swaying leaves and long-stemmed blossoms overhead.

Shady paths lead to queer little Japanese pagodas where one may sit to read, or pause to rest in the picturesque surroundings. In a secluded corner there is a tea bouse, built in true Japanese style, with an interior finished in a way to carry out the general effect. While the space is not large, such good judgment has been used that considerable magnitude appears to attach to the little retreat. But this is only the skeleton of the garden which owes its real beauty to the flowers that have been set out and cared for within the oriental park.

Japanese iris abounds, with its odd shapes and queer colorings, lilies that owe their origin to the chrysanthemum empire, ferns and mosses of queer shapes, potted Japanese conceits, resting in the waterway and looking as naturally at home as if they were rooted in the garden itself, but above all the wealth of roses of Japanese varieties, catch the eye in season and make one wonder if they are really in Minneapolis where cold winters make it difficult to care for such tender blossoms.

### **Other Minneapolis-Related Japanese-style Gardens**

In addition to the five gardens that Bradstreet designed or helped design, he likely designed at least two other pond gardens with Japanese influences: one for his former business partner, Edmund J. Phelps in Wayzata, and one for George Christian in Minnetonka, according to Minneapolis garden historian Kathleen Kullberg.

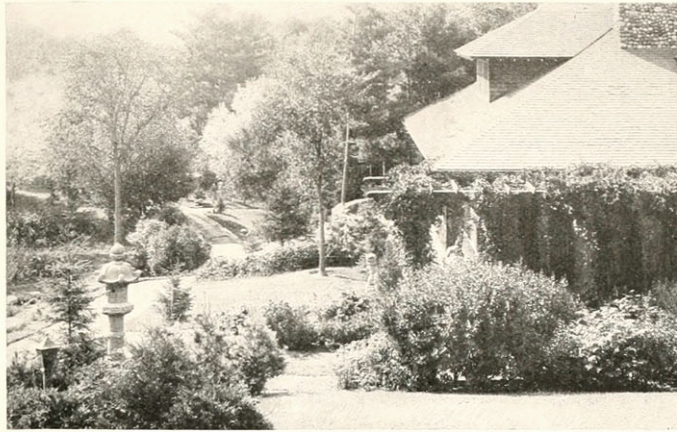
Also, I found an article about a “semi-Japanese” garden built for another Minneapolis resident around 1913, which may have been influenced by John Bradstreet’s work, and may even have contained elements sourced from him (shown on following pages):

## Beaver Lodge

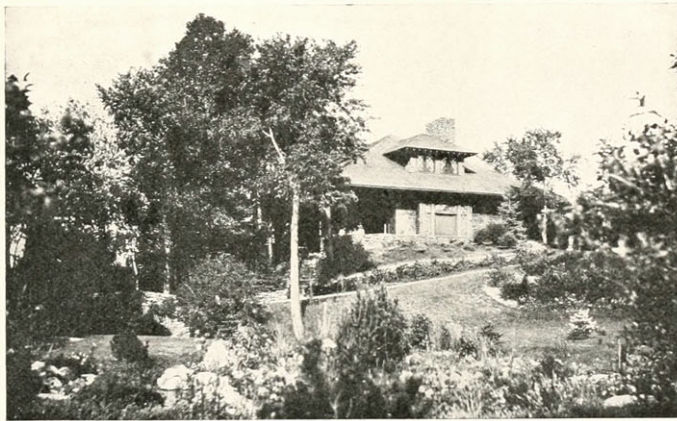
The Country Estate of H. E. Partridge  
Shell Lake, Wisconsin

THIS place was originally a spring invested swamp; much tiling and filling had to be done in order to gain a foothold. By taking advantage of the beautiful spring lake and its outlet several artificial pools were formed. As the soil below the surface is extremely cold, every specimen planted had to be carefully selected in order to be a success. Mostly native conifers from six to twenty feet high were used which were dug and transplanted with a frost ball, together with such conifers as will stand the trying conditions of twenty to forty degrees below zero.

Rocks and boulders played an im-



*The side view of Beaver Lodge.*



*The front view of Beaver Lodge.*

portant part in this semi-Japanese landscape. Placing them in a natural position, creating an aged appearance by sinking them nearly two-thirds and not omitting the

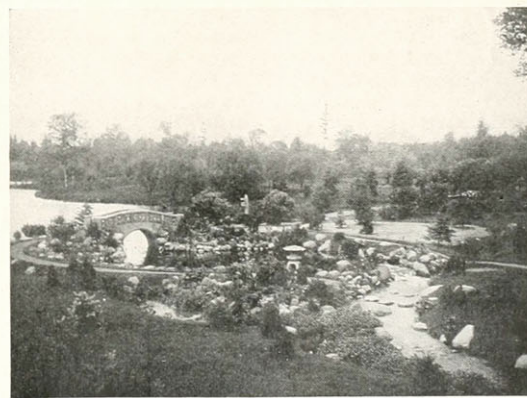
harmonious coloring of the rocks, a very unique effect was obtained. Mugho Swiss Mountain pines, the different sabinas, rock plants and hardy perennials were liberally employed.

The Japanese garden is not the only delightful feature of Beaver Lodge, but Mr. Partridge has followed the style now becoming very popular on American estates, of combining the vegetable and flower gardens which takes away the monotonous appearance of the straight rows of vegetables, and if properly arranged according to height, flowering season and color, adds attractiveness to the entire layout.

Theodore Wirth, the well known authority on landscape architecture, played a prominent part in the planning and laying out of the landscape and in 1914 turned it over to Charles Schroll, the present superintendent, who together with his genial and Nature-loving employer still plan further improvements now that labor is more easily available.



*Swamps and bogs have given way to velvety lawns and specimen conifers. The wooden bridge has given way to a beautiful scrolled concrete bridge. Paths surround the entire semi-Japanese plantation.*



*The same scene taken earlier in the season. Here the "stepping stones" across the creek are more distinct, which is a typical Japanese feature, as well as the arrangement of the rocks.*

**Figure 18: An article in the May 1922 issue of *Gardeners Chronicle* about the H.E. Partridge Japanese-style garden in Shell Lake, Wisconsin. ([archive.org](http://archive.org))**



### **Partridge Garden, Shell Lake, Wisconsin**

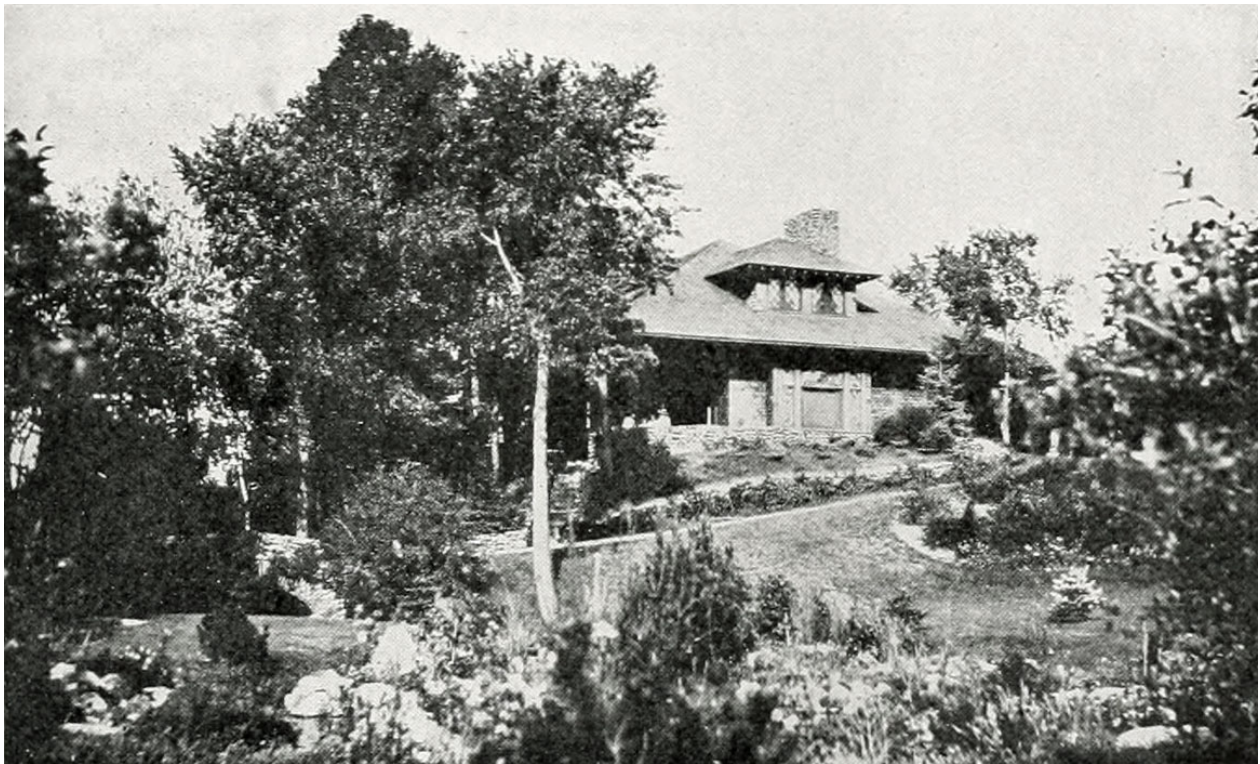
An article in the May 1922 issue of *Gardeners Chronicle* features the “semi-Japanese” garden made for H.E. Partridge at his summer residence on Beaver Lodge Road, about seven miles northwest of Shell Lake, Wisconsin.

Harvey E. Partridge was the brother and business partner of George H. Partridge (his plans for his own Japanese-style garden in Minneapolis are detailed on page X) in the Minneapolis dry goods manufacturer Wyman, Partridge & Company. He probably built his summer home around 1910 – but in an unlikely spot.

Beaver Lodge was constructed on the northeast edge of Beaver Lodge Pond, on a hill above swampy ground. The front windows of the house looked out across the pond, giving a beautiful view, but the swampy ground required extensive tiling and drainage efforts before the grounds could be landscaped.

The landscape was designed around 1913 by Theodore Wirth, the Swiss-born Superintendent of Parks for Minneapolis. (During his service from 1904 through the mid-1930s, Wirth planned and laid out nearly all of the parks in Minneapolis.)

The focal point of the landscape was a gracefully arched concrete bridge at the end of the grounds on the edge on Beaver Lodge Pond. Rock-edged paths led toward the bridge on both sides, winding through rock garden areas planted with conifers and ornamented with an occasional Japanese-style lantern.



**Figure 19:** Beaver Lodge, with views looking down a hillside across Beaver Lodge Pond. Extensive gardens were planted and maintained around the country residence. (*Gardeners Chronicle*, May 1922, [archive.org](https://www.archive.org))



Figure 20: The “semi-Japanese” area made from the formerly swampy grounds around Harvey E. Partridge’s summer residence at Beaver Lodge near Shell Lake, Wisconsin. A gracefully arched bridge at the edge of the pond was the focal point of the grounds. (*Gardeners Chronicle*, May 1922, [archive.org](https://www.archive.org))

The article mentions the daunting growing conditions at Beaver Lodge:

As the soil below the surface is extremely cold, every specimen planted had to be carefully selected in order to be a success. Mostly native conifers from six to twenty feet high were used which were dug and transplanted with a frost ball, together with such conifers as will stand the trying conditions of twenty to forty degrees below zero.

It's likely that Harvey E. Partridge was influenced to request the Japanese-style elements in his garden by seeing his brother's garden, and perhaps through seeing other Bradstreet gardens. Maybe Partridge originally requested Bradstreet to design his garden, but Bradstreet would likely have recognized the daunting site issues and recommended Wirth, who was an experienced landscape architect, not just a garden designer. Almost certainly the Japanese elements such as lanterns were sourced through Bradstreet, and he might have been consulted about the bridge design as well.

Partridge hired Austria-born Charles Shrall to manage his summer estate, the gardens as well as the surrounding farmland. He and his family lived in a large house on the estate.

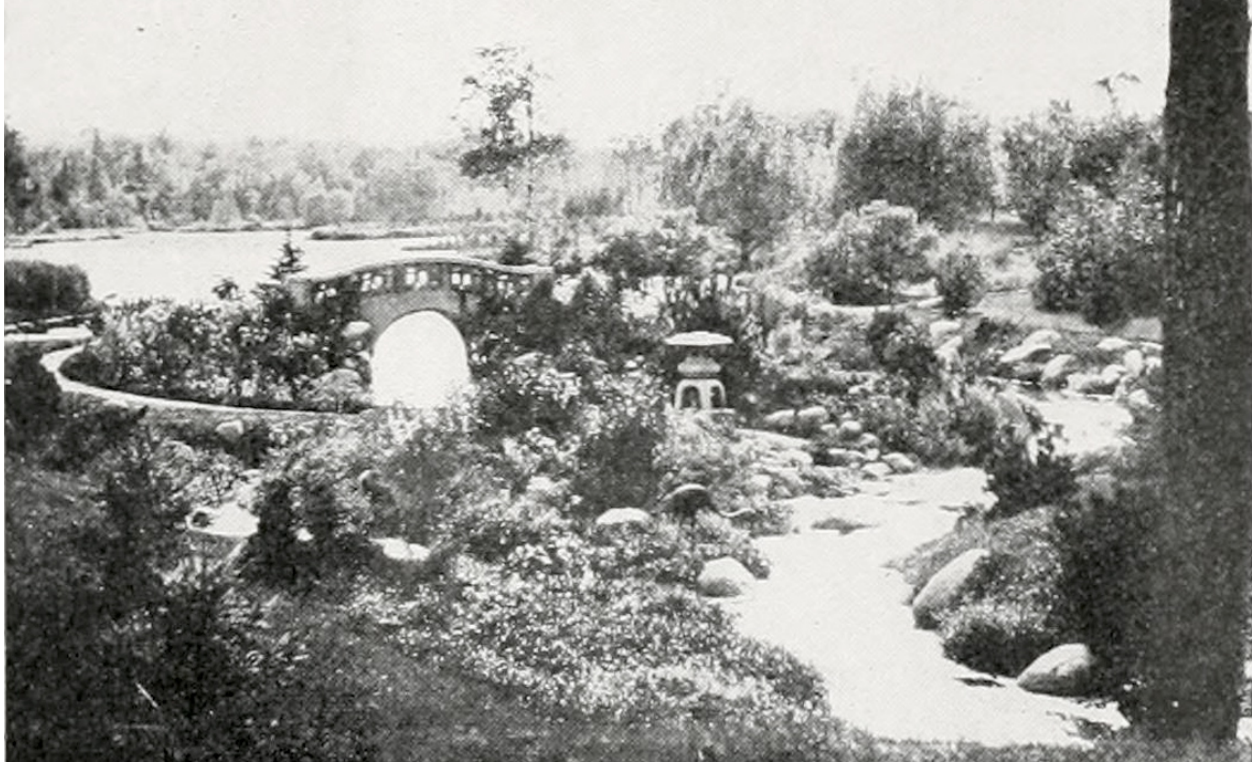


An article published in the December 14, 1983 issue of *The Country Today* of Eau Claire, Wisconsin had a long description written by Ida Cook, a woman who had grown up living on the farm next door to the estate. Her remembrances of the gardens, which she saw when she visited the daughters of Charles Shrall, were magical:

A fantastic display of a contrived beauty in a private fairyland surrounded the lodge. A pond and a stream were bridged with artistic design. This footbridge divided the wilderness-encircled pond from the carefully cultured lawn. Perfect spruce trees continued the delicate length of masonry. The water trickled through, sparkling and splashing over the boulders placed to create a series of small waterfalls. One would almost expect a beautiful lady to be on the walk of the little bridge, throwing flowers lightly to drift on the cascading waters, and a flotilla of swans to be floating about.



Figure 21: A taller Japanese-style lantern can be seen near Beaver Lodge, amid the winding paths that led through the grounds. (*Gardeners Chronicle*, May 1922, [archive.org](http://archive.org))



**Figure 22: Another view of the bridge and Japanese-style rock garden area along Beaver Lodge pond.**  
(*Gardeners Chronicle*, May 1922, [archive.org](http://archive.org))

However, the local residents of Shell Lake never got close enough to Mr. Partridge, who they speculated was a Chicago businessman, to know him personally:

Upon occasions of the owner's visits, the surrounding community was warned, with no one allowed to come across the wagon bridge to create even a ripple of disturbance to the soliloquy of this fairyland. It was said that he sat on a raised platform before the magnificent picture window in a great chair, gazing out at the scene so beautifully created and tended for his pleasure. Upon this kingly dais, he enjoyed long hours of meditation.

Beaver Lodge was sold after Harvey E. Partridge's death in 1932 to Tom Cassidy of Minneapolis. His family enjoyed the property for some years before tiring of mosquito bites and selling it. Beaver Lodge was transformed into a country tavern, perhaps during the 1940s, before burning down.

The property was eventually sold to the Department of Natural Resources, "and the created atmosphere of a serene beauty reverted back to its wilderness state, as if it had never been."





Figure 23: A torii gate in the Japanese-style garden of Milton Tootle, Jr. on Mackinac Island, Michigan (following section). (*Mackinac State Historic Parks*)



## Tootle Garden: Mackinac Island, Michigan (1905-1910)

Milton Tootle, Jr. (1872-1946), a St. Joseph's, MO businessman, had a Japanese garden made for him at his summer residence on the East Bluff of Mackinac Island (at the modern address of 6688 Huron Rd.). Mr. Tootle, who had bought and remodeled his "cottage" in 1900, was a gardening enthusiast with a particular interest in dwarf evergreen trees and shrubs.

Tootle engaged Chicago Japanese landscape architect T.R. Otsuka to design his Japanese garden for him around 1905 (according to the Mackinac Island National Historic Landmark Nomination report), and certainly before 1910, according to Craig Wilson of Mackinac State Historic Parks.

Milton Tootle's obituary in the *St. Joseph News-Press* of December 27, 1946 contained a paragraph about his garden:

### **His Summer Home**

Greatly interested in the growth of Japanese gardens, Mr. Tootle used his summer home on Mackinac Island in Lake Michigan for an experimental station in producing dwarfed trees. He had great success with native juniper, pine, cedar and spruce, and created one of the finest Japanese gardens in America over a period of 30 years. Surrounded by towering beeches and firs, the garden's stunted trees were given a more believable background with tiny lakes, small streams and miniature waterfalls.



**Figure 24: The entrance to the Japanese-style garden area behind Milton Tootle's Mackinac island house.**  
(Mackinaw State Historic Parks)

And the *St. Joseph Gazette* of March 1, 1931 had a long portrait of Tootle and his business and personal interests, which included this:

Almost everyone has read that Mr. Tootle has a summer home at Mackinac Island, Mich., but it is not so generally known that the northern estate is in reality an experimental laboratory in modeling nature to the will of the banker. He has one of the finest Japanese gardens in America, where stunted and gnarled trees and shrubs have developed under his hands during the last thirty years. A Japanese who viewed the garden went into raptures of delight as he singled out unusual examples of dictation to mother nature. "This tree," he told Mr. Tootle, "would easily bring \$750 on the Japanese market." Another shrub's value he set at \$600. Thirty years of joyful labor to triumph over unseen forces was therefore reduced to terms of dollar. Mr. Tootle laughed quietly. "One never completes a garden," the banker observed.



Figure 25: Garden paths in Mr. Tootle's garden. (*Mackinaw State Historic Parks*)





Figure 26: A stepping stone bridge led across a pond in the Tootle garden. A crane statue, potted topiary evergreens and a “valley-shape” lantern overhanging the water can be seen in this photo from around 1920. (*Mackinaw State Historic Parks*)





**Figure 27: A tea house located on an upper level of Mr. Tootle’s extensive Japanese-style garden area.**  
(*Mackinaw State Historic Parks*)

In 1936, the Michigan Horticultural Society awarded Mr. Tootle its annual Esther Longyear Murphy Medal “for his unusual Japanese garden,” according to a January 12, 1936 *Detroit Free Press* article. The award was given to “any amateur in the State of Michigan who has done outstanding work in some phase of horticulture such as hybridizing, research, horticultural education, horticultural writing, etc.”

Later that year, an August 21, 1936 *Lansing State Journal* article about Mackinac Island’s Old Mission Church mentioned Tootle’s garden:

To maintain this historic building, Milton Tootle of St. Joseph, Mo., an islander since 1889, opens his lovely Japanese garden to the public weekly. The opening wooden gate clangs the temple gong softly as you enter, the native evergreens within filtering and suffusing the light, much as do the stained glass windows of cathedrals, though here the light is green.

Prof. Paul Krone of the State college and secretary of the Michigan Horticultural Society, which last year awarded Mr. Tootle the Esther Longyear Murphy medal for his achievement of 36 years, can tell you much more about it, since the society recently spent a day here to visit this unusual garden.



After Milton Tootle, Jr.'s death in 1946, his beloved Japanese-style gardens became derelict. The current owner of his property has restored a small part of Mr. Tootle's extensive Japanese-style gardens.



Figure 28: A closeup of the ponds in the Tootle garden, showing a stone lantern and two crane statues, as well as a zig-zag bridge. (*Mackinaw State Historic Parks*)

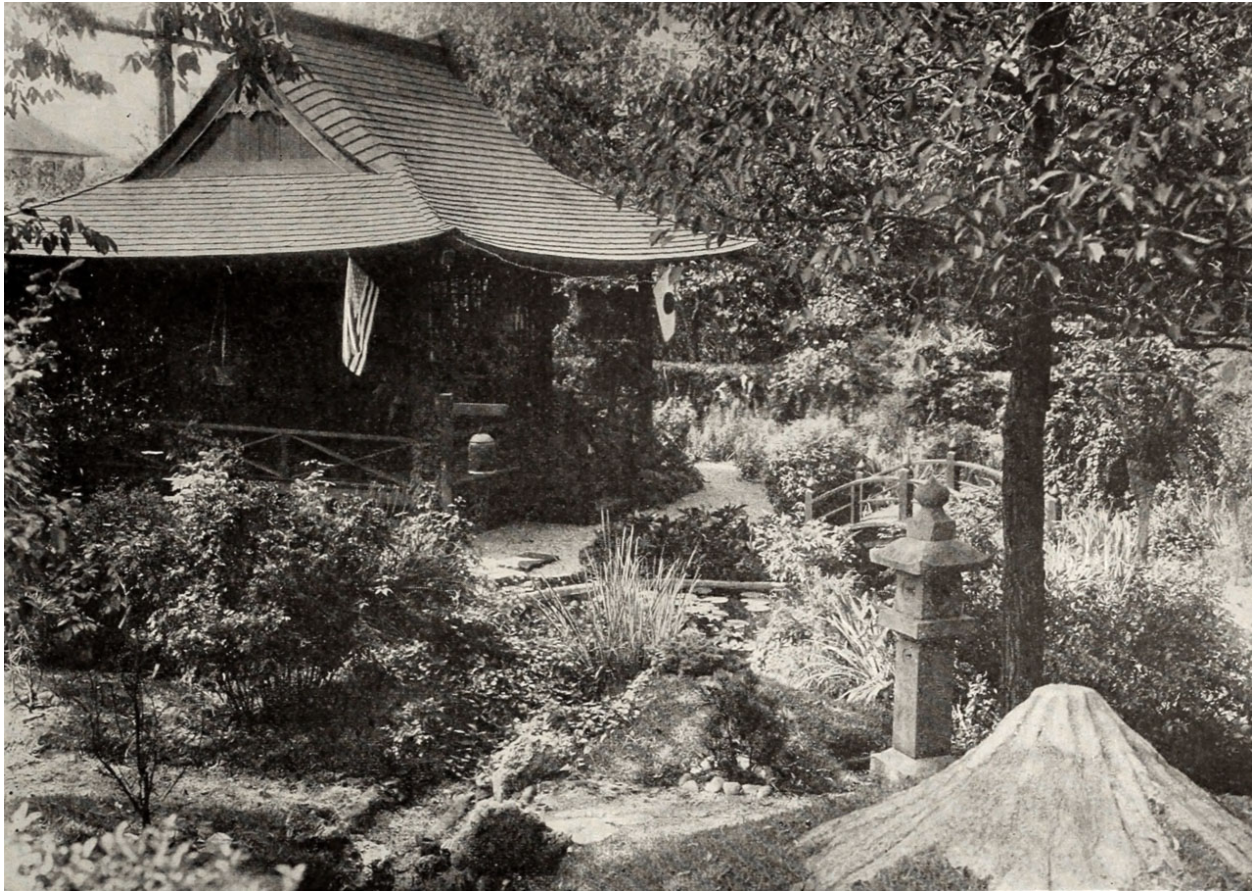




Figure 29: A stone stairway leaving Milton Tootle's Japanese-style garden.  
(Mackinaw State Historic Parks)



Bryan Garden: Chicago, Illinois (c. 1910)



**Figure 30: The Japanese-style garden of Frederick W. Bryan in Chicago, photographed probably around 1915. A miniature Mount Fuji and lantern are at forefront, and his well-built tea house is at back. (*The Garden Magazine*, June 1922, *Hathitrust*)**

The garden of Frederick Bryan at 1423 Kenilworth Avenue in Chicago may have been the first private Japanese-style garden in Chicago – Bryan at least was not aware of any other Japanese-style gardens in his city.

Frederick W. Bryan (1848-1917) was a “pioneer Chicago real estate dealer,” and a native of Chicago, according to his *Chicago Tribune* obituary of March 18, 1917. “Throughout his life he has been interested in horticulture and had one of the finest Japanese gardens in the country. He was a member of the Chicago Horticultural Society.”

His garden was probably built around 1910, after Mr. Bryan and his wife had traveled in Japan and been inspired to make a garden like the ones they had admired there.

The July 31, 1912 issue of the *Chicago Tribune* ran two photos of his garden, together with a short description of it:

## CHICAGO MAN'S JAPANESE GARDEN AND ITS SACRED MOUNTAIN

The only Japanese garden thus far reported in Chicago belongs to Frederick W. Bryan, 1423 Kenilworth avenue. It is being embellished more by a consignment of Japanese flowers. The flowers mostly are Japanese poppies, Japanese pinks and lilies.

The garden has been built by three Japanese carpenters and landscape workers. One of the features is a teahouse, built entirely without nails, after the manner of the natives dwellings. There is a pool in the center, with a Japanese bridge over it and with gold fish and lilies in it.

In one corner of the garden is a miniature of Fujiyama, the sacred mountain of Japan, similar to the ones contained in all Japanese gardens. This is shown in the lower picture. There are dwarfed ginko trees, dwarfed shrubs, and flowers.

The garden is about eighty feet square. A four foot hedge surrounds it. Mr. and Mrs. Bryan got the ideas for the garden while traveling in Japan. "There is a Japanese garden in Francisco and another in Pasadena," said Mr. Bryan yesterday. "I know of no others in this country."

It's not known who the "three Japanese carpenters and landscape workers" might have been. Japanese landscape architect T.R. Otsuka was active in Chicago before 1910, and he often included a miniature Mount Fuji in his garden designs (such as at Stan Hywet and Fabyan gardens), plus the Fabyan tea house looks similar in many ways to that of Mr. Bryan's.

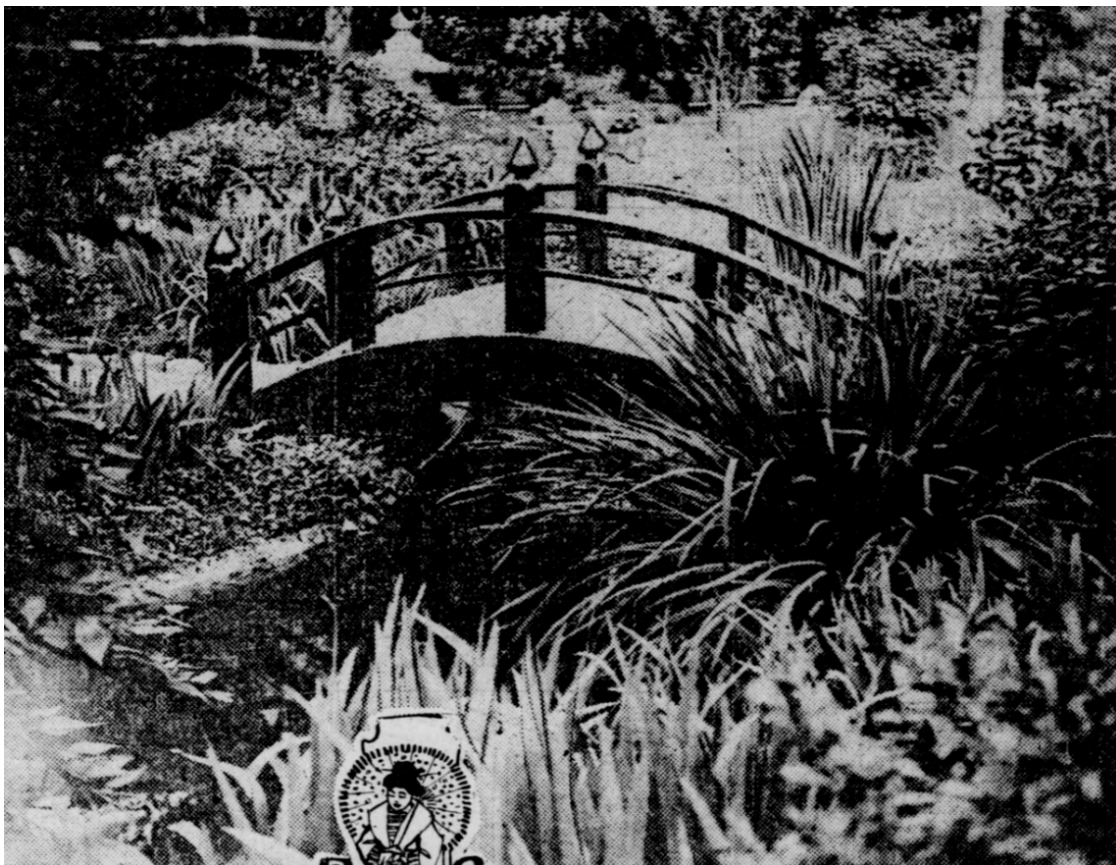


Figure 31: A view of the bridge in Frederick Bryan's Japanese-style garden. (*Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1912)



Another short description of Bryan's garden with several photos was published in *The Garden Magazine* of June 1922, five years after his death:

A Japanese Garden Under a Chicago Sky by Robert Moulton

A NOTABLE example of what can be accomplished in the way of garden of Mr. Frederick Bryan which measures only eighty feet square. So perfectly is everything proportioned and so artistically have the various features been laid out by the Japanese landscape architect that the garden seems in fact much larger. The high surrounding hedge gives it exclusiveness and, once inside, the visitor feels that he has stumbled into a corner of Japan itself.

Formerly a bit of unbroken green lawn, the garden of to-day is channeled by a winding stream and decked with all the variety characteristic of the perfectly Japanese. An ingeniously constructed little lake now teems with higo (golden carp of the Japanese variety); flowers, shrubs, plants, and trees are Japanese; and across the stream leading from the little lake is a Japanese bridge of quaint design.

The teahouse itself, measuring about sixteen feet square, was constructed by Japanese carpenters without nails. Lanterns are strung under the overhanging eaves, and many metal lanterns adorn different parts of the garden, while one of the most effective touches of all is a miniature of Fujiyama, the sacred mountain of Japan.

It's not known how long Bryan's garden survived after his death. A row of houses stands at his former address.



Figure 32: An image of Bryan's garden, showing a lantern and Mt. Fuji in the background. (*Chicago Tribune*, July 31, 1912)





Figure 33: An image of the Bryan garden in Chicago. (*The Garden Magazine*, June 1922, Hathitrust)



## Fabyan Japanese Garden, Geneva, Illinois (c.1910-1914)



**Figure 34: A view of the Japanese-style gardens built for George and Nelle Fabyan at their Illinois estate, Riverbank. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)**

In 1905, George and Nelle Fabyan bought a farmhouse on ten acres along the Fox River, located a mile south of Geneva, a town now on the western outskirts of Chicago. George Fabyan (1867-1936) ran the Chicago office of his father's Boston textile company, Bliss, Fabyan & Co., eventually inheriting the company.

The Fabyans gradually increased the size of their estate to 670 acres. They remodeled the farmhouse under Frank Lloyd Wright's design and eventually added an entire complex of buildings, a range of greenhouses and even a private research facility called Riverfront Laboratory, where Fabyan ran a think tank to develop ideas in plant genetics, animal husbandry – and during WWI, military strategies, acoustics and encryption. (Riverbank Laboratory is regarded as the birthplace of modern US cryptography.)

Around these buildings, the Fabyans indulged their country pursuit of gardens: productive, experimental and ornamental. One of the ornamental areas was an extensive Japanese-style garden.

George Fabyan served on the staff of advisors to Illinois Governor Richard Yates, Jr. from 1901 to 1905, and received a title as Colonel. As part of his duties, he represented the governor when Japanese dignitaries visited the city of Chicago.

The Fabyans may have traveled in Japan during the 1890s or early 1900s, as several newspapers in 1907 mentioned that a General Kuroki was staying in Geneva as a guest of Fabyan, whom he'd met in Japan. George Fabyan was decorated that year with the emblem of the Order of the Rising Sun by the Japanese government for his services during the Russo-Japanese peace negotiations (the Treaty of Portsmouth) held in Maine after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905.





**Figure 35:** A group of visitors were photographed next to a wooden arched bridge leading from one stone hill to another. Below, a four-legged stone snow-viewing lantern stood along the garden path in the Fabyan Japanese garden. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)

Perhaps because of their travel to Japan, or after seeing the World's Fairs Japanese gardens in Chicago or St. Louis, or perhaps due to having Japanese dignitaries visit their home, the Fabyans decided to add a Japanese-style garden to their grounds.

They engaged T.R. Otsuka, a Japanese landscape architect with an office in Chicago, to design and build their Japanese-style garden for them, probably between 1910 and 1914.

The Fabyans' Japanese-style garden was laid out at the center of their estate, between their house and the Fox River. It was enclosed by a fence, and contained a C-shaped pond crossed by a zigzag bridge and an arched bridge. Raised mounds were built using stones and planted with evergreens and rock garden plants.

A tea house, resting shed and umbrella-shaped shelter were all constructed from wood by Otsuka's Japanese carpenters. Gravel and stepping stone paths led throughout the garden area.



**Figure 36:** A photo greeting sent by the Otsukas to the Fabyans. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)





Figure 38: The Japanese tea house on the Fabyans' property. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)



Figure 37: This photo of the Fabyan garden was used to illustrate a magazine article about Japanese gardens. (*The Garden Magazine, July 1923, Hathitrust*)





**Figure 39:** A miniature Mt. Fuji can be seen above rising hills planted with groundcover plants and evergreen shrubs in the Fabyan garden. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)

Cathy Jean Maloney's book, *Chicago Gardens: The Early History* (2008) has this description of the Japanese-style garden built for the Fabyans:

Surrounded by a simple wooden fence, the garden then, as now, had four garden gates, one at each point of the compass. The western gate is a Shinto-inspired Torii gateway, the traditional symbol of a nearby shrine. Concrete lanterns were created for the garden by Silvio Silvestri. The garden includes plantings, an arched bridge, and water features characteristic of Japanese gardens.

In most of the gardens constructed by T.R. Otsuka, his own laborers cast, while on-site, the concrete lanterns that were placed into the garden. Perhaps Silvio Silvestri was an experienced concrete worker, and did the casting using Otsuka's lantern molds, to free up Otsuka's laborers to do other jobs constructing the large garden area.





**Figure 40: A romantic view of the willow-planted Fabyan garden. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)**

The Fabyans hired Japanese-born gardener Susumu Kobayashi (1892-1975) to maintain their Japanese-style garden area. Kobayashi had come to the US in 1914 to join the Japanese agricultural community formed in Yamato (near Palm Beach), Florida. Making a living there was hard, however, and Kobayashi came north to look for work and worked for the Fabyans for about a year around 1918. Using the money he had saved from this job, he returned to Yamato and farmed for some years, and was married.

Around 1925, Mr. Fabyan wanted to expand his greenhouse operations and remembered how expertly Kobayashi had grown greenhouse plants, and requested his return to head up his commercial greenhouse operations, a position he held until the Great Depression made that venture unprofitable. Fabyan was forced to downsize his operations, but kept on Kobayashi to maintain the Japanese-style gardens and do other horticultural work around the estate.

George Fabyan died in 1936, and Nelle Fabyan in 1939, following which the Kane County Forest Preserve District purchased 245 of the acres and maintains the grounds. However, the Japanese-style garden area was not well maintained, and in 1974 the Geneva Garden Club began the restoration of the garden. Two more renovations have taken place since then. Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley now maintains and operates Fabyan Villa and Japanese Gardens.



Figure 41: Two of the children of the gardener hired by the Fabyans to maintain their garden, Susumu Kobayashi (1892-1975). (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)



## Eastman Garden: Burlington, Iowa (c. 1912)

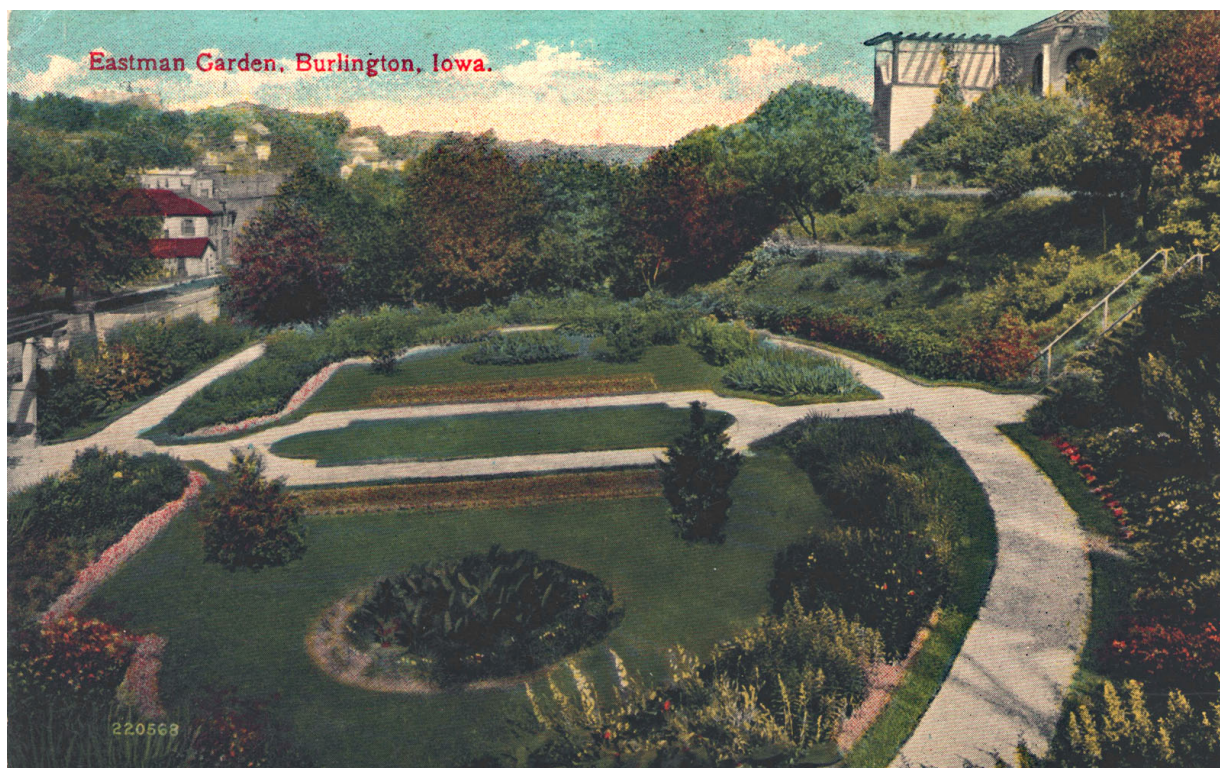


Figure 42: The garden of Millie and Edward P. Eastman was depicted in a colorized postcard likely made in the 1910s. The Japanese-style part of their garden was almost certainly located at the far end of the lower level, although (very unfortunately) no details can be made out at this distance. The “charming pagoda” referred to in the March 1913 *The House Beautiful* article is at upper right atop the steep hill. (author’s collection)

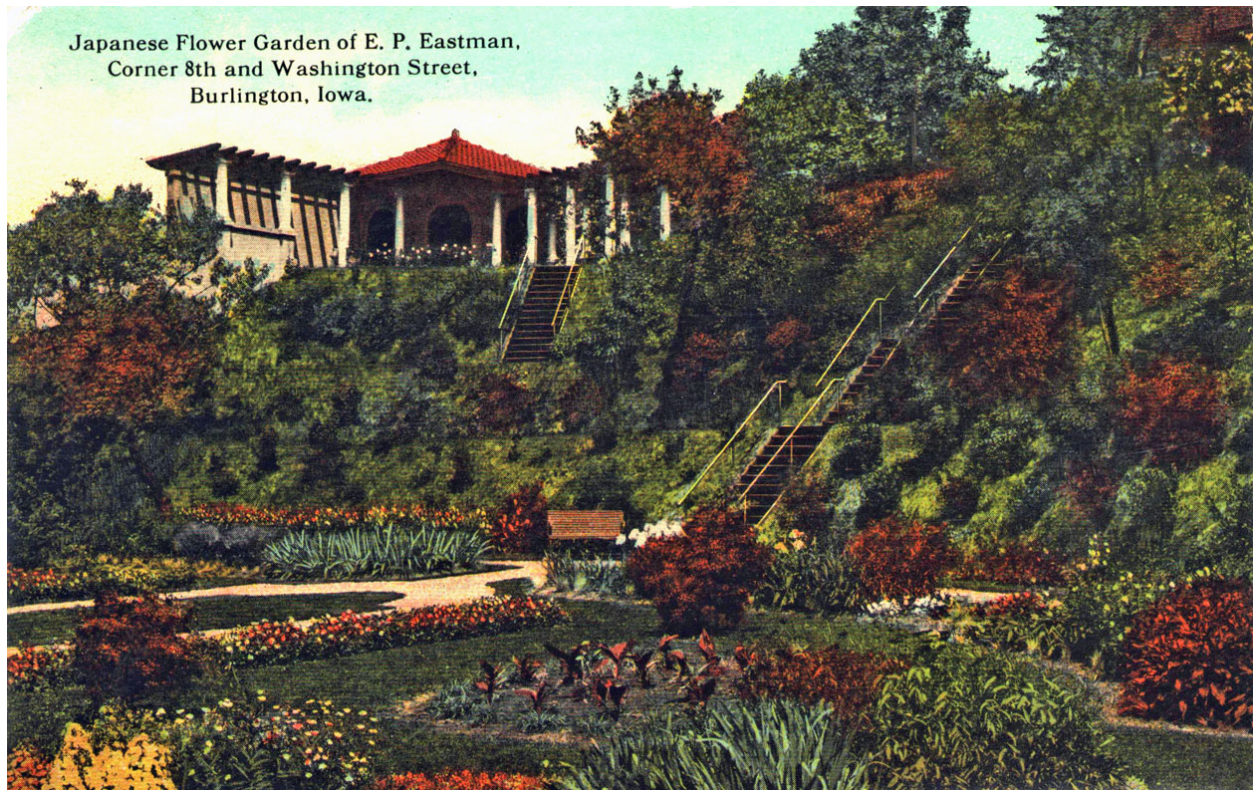
The Japanese-style garden of Millie and E.P. Eastman was likely the first Japanese-style garden made in Iowa, probably built around 1912 or 1913. Although two postcard images and several photos of the Eastman garden have survived, disappointingly, none of the images show any features of the Japanese-style part of their garden.

I have attempted to remedy this lack of images by drawing a sketch (shown on following pages) of what the Japanese-style part of the Eastman garden might have looked like, based on the detailed description of it that was published in the March 1913 issue of *The House Beautiful* magazine (quoted following).

E.P. Eastman had moved to Burlington from Ohio in 1877, became a partner in a furniture factory and in 1897 married Millie Smith, the daughter of a local cigar factory owner. They moved into an Italianate villa-style house that still stands at 719 Columbia Street.

Their backyard sloped down more than 60 feet from front to back, so in 1906, the Eastmans had a retaining wall built to level up the bottom of their back yard, and had a formal “sunken” garden laid out on this lower level, with steps leading up to their house.





**Figure 43:** Another color postcard view of the “Japanese Flower Garden of E.P. Eastman” in Burlington from the 1910s. The Japanese-style part of the garden was located at far left out of this picture, below the “pagoda” or tea house at the top of the hill. (*author’s collection*)

Probably around 1912, the Eastmans decided to have a Japanese-style garden area added in the lower level of their garden on the far west edge. They likely saw such a garden on another wealthy person’s property and liked it so much that they wanted one too: Mrs. Eastman’s mother, a Mrs. Arnold, lived in Moose Lake, Minnesota, according to the *Little Falls Herald* of June 5, 1914, which mentioned that she and her mother were visiting the town of Randall near Little Falls. They may have seen one or more of the Japanese-style gardens that had been built in the Minneapolis area.

(Also note the connection with the area of Little Falls, Minnesota, where Mrs. McColm often visited her brother, Drew Musser and his family, who resided there.)

Since none of the surviving photos of the Eastman garden show the Japanese-style part of it, we only know that it existed because of the caption on one postcard view of the garden (shown above), and from the beautifully detailed description of that part of their garden that was published in *The House Beautiful* magazine issue of March 1913, which will be quoted in full here:

#### **A Small Japanese Garden by Helen M. Stevens**

THE Japanese garden of Mr. E. P. Eastman of Burlington, Iowa, is laid in the heart of a busy city and yet the visitor entering its sacred precincts almost imagines that he is in Japan. (*continued*)



(continued) His eye is rested by the harmonizing colors of flower and foliage and his ear soothed by the music of trickling waters.

A Japanese garden is extremely difficult of imitation-witness the story of the Japanese nobleman who, after being shown by his host the most “perfect Japanese garden outside of Japan,” replied with eager politeness: “Ah, it is very beautiful; we have nothing like it in Japan!”

Mr. Eastman has caught much of the peculiar charm inherent in true Japanese gardens. The enclosure is shut off from the street by a wall, and is entered through a high gateway with doors of carved wood, the carvings representing quaint Japanese scenes with the sacred mountain always in the background.

Far across the garden a natural hill rising fifty feet above the level of the street forms the background, crowned with pines and evergreens and giving the impression of wooded hills beyond. Upon this hill at the left is a charming pagoda, its red-tiled roof adding a bit of color to that corner of the garden, its open door suggesting something mysterious in the darkened interior. Stone steps form its approach, and it rests in the shadow of a gnarled pine tree.

The hill descends in irregular terraces covered with shrubs and plants bearing many-hued flowers. A rustic stairway follows the terraces to the bottom.

The chief charm of the garden is the way in which water is utilized. The Japanese love water, and no true Japanese garden is without its tiny stream or lake. In Mr. Eastman's garden, a miniature torrent flows down the hillside over stones arranged naturally for its bed. It is cleverly supplied by water-works, and empties into a miniature lake, the water being carried away by pipes below the surface. The tiny lake is edged with rocks, with overhanging iris. The three great, moss-covered stones essential to a Japanese garden are in evidence - one near the lake, embedded in green moss, one jutting out into it, and the third in the lake itself forming an island.

The three great boulders are of granite, worn by water and suggestive of age. A series of smooth stepping stones forms a bridge, but instead of passing directly across the lake, it leads out into the middle of it. and then, turning, forms a path toward the farther end. A tall, twisted pine tree overhangs the water, and in its shadow is a carved stone lantern resting on a ledge of rock. A path of smooth stones leads around the lake and through the garden.

In the level garden, as well as on the hill, are flowers, most of them the true Japanese favorites-peonies, iris and chrysanthemums; and to the right of the garden is a cluster of fancy maples.

At the left is the inevitable tea-room with its thatched, umbrella-shaped roof and the Japanese morning-glory climbing over it. It is built entirely of wood, and is open on all sides to allow the breeze from any direction to pass through it, while the morning glory vines keep it cool and shaded. Movable bamboo seats afford a resting place within, and two carved iron lanterns hang on chains from the eaves.

The impression of the whole garden is one of rest and tranquility and old-world charm. The details are carefully worked out with a view to perspective and proportion, and this fact, though the observer is hardly aware of it, is the chief reason for its beauty.



Figure 44: My inartistic sketch with a No. 2 pencil of what I imagine the Japanese-style part of the Eastman garden to have looked like, based on the description in *The House Beautiful*. A “miniature torrent” flows down the hillside at right into a small pond edged with rocks, and across which stepping stones lead. A small “tea room” with a “thatched, umbrella-shaped roof,” containing moveable bamboo seats is pictured, along with a “tall, twisted pine,” (although the tea room might have been hidden behind the pine, perhaps why it isn’t visible in the postcard photos). A Japanese-style lantern and a “path of smooth stones leads around the lake and through the garden.” And a “high gateway with doors of carved wood” must have been located at the bottom corner of the garden, perhaps with wooden stairs leading to the street level below. The formal gravel path and flower beds are sketched in at forefront. (drawing by author)

### Helen M. Stevens

I looked into Helen M. Stevens and found that she was a native of Burlington who had graduated from the University of Iowa in 1910. She wrote a letter into the *Chicago Tribune* that was published on February 2, 1913 in response to solicitations for ways women could earn money at home. Her suggestion was Writing for Newspapers: “Any intelligent woman may enter the field of special correspondence and submit news to the big newspapers.” All that was necessary was to keep an eye on the local news for anything interesting: unusual weather, visits by well-known personages, news about historic sites, etc., and then write it up and submit it to big newspapers.

Miss Stevens’ letter gave her address as 1022 Jefferson Street in Burlington – only two blocks from the Eastman house at 719 Columbia Street. Miss Stevens was assuredly familiar with the



Eastmans' unusual Japanese-style garden and perhaps thought a magazine might be interested in a piece about it (it's too bad she wasn't photographer too).

Helen M. Stevens probably married soon after this article was published, but I wasn't able to discover her married name under which she likely wrote later articles.

### ***The House Beautiful* Japanese Garden Advertisements**

I looked through other issues of *The House Beautiful* magazine and discovered that in most of the issues from 1912 and 1913, ads were placed by T.R. Otsuka, a Japanese garden designer in Chicago:



Figure 45: Ad advertisement in the February 1912 issue of *The House Beautiful* magazine. T.R. Otsuka's ads appeared in most issues of that magazine in 1912 and 1913. (*Hathitrust*)

It is probable that Otsuka designed the Japanese-style part of the Eastman garden, based on both the similarities between the features of their garden as described and those of his known projects (rock-edged ponds with “cleverly supplied” waterworks were his specialty), and also because of his connection as a monthly advertiser with *The House Beautiful* publication.

It's possible that the magazine wanted to publish something about one of Otsuka's projects and commissioned Miss Stevens to write her article, rather than her submitting it unsolicited.

For more information about T.R. Otsuka and his work, see Paper Number 6 in this series.

### **Raisuke Yamamoto**

Another theory about the designer of the Eastman Japanese garden was proposed by Des Moines County Historical Society member Helen McKim in a *Burlington Hawkeye* article of August 20, 1989 about the (ultimately unsuccessful) efforts of Roger Sheagren to restore the formal gardens. McKim was interviewed about the history of the Eastman garden for the article, which stated that:

“Eastman employed a Japanese man, Moto Yamamoto, who was instrumental in the construction of the garden. ‘(He) designed, planned and cared for the garden. It really was lovely and quite elaborate.’”

I looked into Mr. Yamamoto, and discovered that he was employed by a Walter B. Eaton, not E.P. Eastman, according to census and other records. The June 5, 1980 *Burlington Hawkeye*

published an interview with his son, Toshi Yamamoto, who stated that his parents had been brought from Hawaii to Burlington by Mr. Eaton and spent four decades in his employ. The 1925 Iowa State Census states that Yamamoto came to Iowa around 1904. (He was likely the first or second Japanese person to reside in Burlington.)

In the 1920 Census, Yamamoto listed his occupation as a gardener for a private employer (Eaton), but his occupation was as a cook in 1910, and also later in his life. In 1921, the *Burlington Hawkeye* mentioned that Yamamoto had bought some land to be a market produce gardener, but that must not have been profitable, because he was a steward at the Crystal Lake Country Club in 1929, before returning to Eaton's employ and living at his address by 1940.

It is certainly *possible* that Raisuko Yamamoto designed and built the Eastman's Japanese-style garden area. But there is no record that he was ever employed by them. The Eastmans employed William R. Lemon (1894-1980) as their gardener for decades, likely from around 1915 – although that was after the Japanese-style part of their garden was built.

However, it's unlikely that Yamamoto did any garden work except maintaining Eaton's garden and growing fruits and vegetables, like most Japanese gardeners of the time. He likely had nothing to do with designing the Eastman garden. Would he have known how to install complex and "cleverly supplied" waterworks? Or pour a concrete pond, build a Japanese thatched umbrella shelter and place rocks artistically? Those tasks require skilled artisans, and there is no contemporary evidence of Yamamoto creating any Japanese-style gardens.

Another theory is that John Bradstreet of Minneapolis could have designed the Eastmans' Japanese-style garden area. However, there is no record of him ever having set foot in Iowa. I checked Iowa newspapers for any mention of him, and discovered only one story about a funeral in Minneapolis that mentioned his name, which was reprinted in an Iowa newspaper.

Mrs. Eastman had the large gardens pictured below her house as well as a sunken tulip garden across the street that Burlington residents loved, and she enjoyed her gardens until her death in 1959 at age 94 (Mr. Eastman died in 1925). But her Japanese garden was likely gone long before WWII.

Curiously, Burlington newspapers never printed anything at all about that part of her garden, despite coverage of a garden party in 1913. Even more curiously, the phrase "Japanese garden" does not appear in any Burlington newspaper between 1905 (following the World's Fair) and 1919 – perhaps they were "too foreign" to be considered fit for print? But even in the 1920s and 1930s, when the phrase had become common and Japanese-style gardens were fashionable, there was no mention of Mrs. Eastman's Japanese garden area, so it's likely it no longer existed by the 1920s.

Perhaps that part of her garden was difficult to maintain, or maybe she didn't like it after Japanese-style gardens waned in fashion during WWI. Maybe Mr. Lemon didn't like caring for that area. Perhaps the waterworks stopped functioning or the pond leaked, so the garden area was removed. If not for Miss Stevens' description and that postcard caption, it would be a "ghost garden": never pictured, never mentioned.



## Wheeler Japanese Garden: Indianapolis, Indiana (c. 1912)

**Figure 46:** The Japanese-style garden at Frank Wheeler's estate, around 1914. (*Andrew Seager Archive of the Built Environment, Ball State University*)



Frank Wheeler (1869-1921), a native of Manchester, Iowa, made a fortune starting a carburetor company, and was one of the original investors in what became the Indianapolis 500 Speedway.

Wheeler built a mansion in 1911 and took great pleasure in supervising the installation of the 27-acre grounds, perhaps designed by local landscape architect A.W. Brayton. According to a November 27, 1928 *Indianapolis News* article about the property when it was sold by Wheeler's son:

...a massive water tower which overawes an artificial lake of an acre in extent. The walk borders the lake on the north and on the south a Japanese rock garden is partly hidden by oriental shrubs. A Japanese shelter overlooks the garden.

The Wheeler-Stokely Mansion is now part of Marion College, which replanted the gardens in 1965 and renovated them again in 2018.

**Figure 47:** An aerial view of Wheeler's Japanese garden and tea house. (*Andrew Seager Archive of the Built Environment, Ball State University*)



Cranbrook Garden: Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (c. 1915)



Figure 48: Cranbrook Japanese Garden, around 1932. (*Cranbrook.edu*)

George and Ellen Booth (publishers and philanthropists) began creating a one-acre Japanese-style garden around a pond about 1915, on their 300-acre property in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The garden, which was centered on their Lily Pond and its two small islands, featured a vermillion Japanese-style bridge, a Kasuga lantern purchased by the Booths in 1915, and a Lily Pond Cascade.

Around 1920, the Booths established Cranbrook, a private educational community consisting of the Cranbrook School for Boys, the Kingswood School (for girls) and the Bloomfield School. These schools are still operational, and the Japanese garden areas have recently been restored.



Mrs. August Meyer Garden: Kansas City, Missouri (c. 1915)



**Figure 49: The Japanese-style garden of Mrs. August Meyer in Kansas City, Missouri, photographed by Frank Lauder in 1934 after Mrs. Meyer's home had become the Kansas City Art Institute. (*Kansas City Public Library*)**

Mrs. August R. Meyer (née Emma J. Hixon) had a Japanese-style garden built on her property at Marburg, a three-story, Germanic-style castle on eight and one-half acres in Kansas City, Missouri (at the current address of 4415 Warwick Boulevard).

Mrs. Meyer was the widow of August R. Meyer (1851-1905) a mining engineer who made a fortune in Colorado silver. They married in 1878 and moved to Kansas City in 1881, where Mr. Meyer became inspired by the City Beautiful movement and pushed for a new park system in Kansas City. In 1892, he was appointed president of the city's first parks board, and hired landscape architect George E. Kessler to design an extensive and beautiful system of parks and boulevards throughout Kansas City.

In 1891, the Meyers built their home, and hired Kessler to landscape the grounds around it.



Mr. Meyer died in 1905, but Mrs. Meyer continued to live at Marburg for more than two decades after his death. It was probably after 1905 that the Japanese garden was built, as they were quite rare before then. But a *Kansas City Times* article of October 2, 1933 refers to their Japanese-style garden as a “little oriental retreat built so long ago by A.R. Meyers, when he was head of the Kansas City park board.”

It's possible that Kessler designed this garden for Mrs. Meyer. His list of projects does include one listing for a Japanese-style garden: one designed in 1907 for C.H. Huttig in St. Louis. However, if Kessler did design it, he also likely hired a Japanese immigrant landscaper to install it. A Japanese-born landscaper, Henry Hatashita (see following section) was working in Kansas City from around 1905 to 1918, and had a nursery very near the Meyer estate.

Mrs. Meyer sold her house at a discount to Howard Vanderslice and he donated it to be used as the Kansas City Art Institute. The Japanese-style garden on the Institute grounds was a popular place for art students to paint and take photographs at least through the mid-1930s. Vanderslice Hall is still used by the Institute, but the Japanese garden was likely removed during the 1940s.



Figure 50: A drawing of the Meyer Japanese-style garden. (*Kansas City Star*, September 2, 1921)



Figure 51: The Japanese-style garden at the Kansas City Art Institute, photographed by Frank Lauder in December 1934. (*Kansas City Public Library*)



Figure 52: A postcard view of the Japanese-style garden at the Kansas City Art Institute, likely published around 1930. (*hippostcard.com*)

## Henry Hatashita

Kansas City did have a Japanese-born landscape architect residing and working in that city between around 1905 and 1918: Henry Choichiro Hatashita (1883-after 1955).

Hatashita's story was an interesting one: according to stories in the *Kansas City Star* of December 3, 1899 and other dates, Choichiro Hatashita was born in Tahara, Japan. His ambition was to come to the United States to be educated, and his father, a ship owner, saved enough money to send him as far as San Francisco. He arrived in 1895 at age 13, alone, without any contacts and knowing no English.

He worked his way through restaurant work to Los Angeles, and eventually to farm work in Nebraska, arriving in Kansas City in May 1899, where he made a contact in H.L. Harmon, a railroad manager. He worked in the Harmon household at 3828 Warwick Boulevard and attended school at Westport High School – and despite his limitations with English, he graduated as valedictorian in 1902.

He attended the University of Kansas in Lawrence to study electrical engineering, but in 1903 he ran out of money and had to return to Kansas City to work. He eventually graduated through correspondence courses but by 1905 while still a student, he designed and planted the landscaping at the Kansas City's Elm Ridge racing club house.

In 1909 Hatashita returned to Japan to marry Umeno Mizuta, who joined him in the US two years later.

A 1913 article in the *Star* described his dwarf evergreen shop at 1305 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Street (only a mile away from the Meyer estate).

By 1917, he employed eight gardeners at his "Garden Japonica" landscaping business and nursery selling hardy perennials, which was located at 57<sup>th</sup> and Oak Streets.



Figure 53: Henry Hatashita at age 17. (*KC Star* Dec. 3, 1899)

**"Garden Japonica"**  
**The Nursery of Hardy Perennial Plants**

Plant Oriental Poppies now for spring flowers and every year thereafter.  
Few perennials are as hardy as the Oriental Poppies and few flowers equal the Oriental Poppies in beauty; their flowers are 5 or 6 inches to 10 inches in diameter. Don't confuse them with the annual poppies.  
We specialize in the Oriental Poppies, having 10,000 plants in more than a dozen varieties.  
The Princess Louis Victoria (salmon pink), the Orientale (orange), the Wurtembergia (very large red) and the Masterpiece (beautiful pink) Oriental Poppy Plants are only \$1.50 per dozen.  
Peonies, Iris and Phlox, etc., in large varieties.  
Visit here tomorrow, as H. C. Hatashita will be on ground every Sunday all day to answer any question in regard to planting. Use the phone in the evenings, Bell Hiland 981, or mail your orders.

**H. C. Hatashita**  
57th and Country Club Car Line.

Figure 54: An ad for Hatashita's Garden Japonica nursery and landscaping business. (*KC Star* September 3, 1917)



**Figure 55: Could Henry Hatashita have designed the Japanese-style garden at the Meyer residence?**



In a later 1951 interview in the *Ponca City (Oklahoma) News*, Hatashita mentioned that he had had contracts to maintain 35 Kansas City gardens thorough his landscaping company. It's possible that one of those could have been the nearby Meyer garden. It's also possible that he designed that garden and/or other Japanese-style gardens in Kansas City.

Hatashita mostly learned his landscaping skills here in the United States, although he traveled home at least twice to learn from Japanese gardens (including in 1923, when he was feared missing after the Great Kanto Earthquake). Because of this, his landscapes emphasized flowers and formal western designs to a much greater degree than those of many *issei* who learned to garden in Japan.

A June 1918 article in the *Star* described the gardens around his home at his nursery grounds at 57<sup>th</sup> and Oak Streets (at the present location of Brookside Hill):

Henry Hatashita is a Japanese gardener. All day he is busy with the lawns and gardens around Hyde Park. At dusk time Henry goes home to his quaint stone dwelling on the top of a flower painted hill at Fifty-seventh street and Country Club car line. His gate is guarded by two gray Japanese lamps.

Once past them he is back in Japan. It is as if a slice of his island home had been cut off the map and pasted, blossoms and all on this Western slope. There are four acres of throbbing, colored flowers. Toy bird houses on tall crooked sticks are stamped against the thick blue sky. Up the garden hill limps a lazy stone dappled path. A low stone dwelling sits on the very edge of the tip-top hill and leans one shoulder against the firm strong sky. This is Henry's home.

In 1918, Hatashita was lured to Ponca City, Oklahoma by wealthy oil man E.W. Marland to landscape his estate at The Marland Grand Home. Hatashita landscaped the local golf club, parks and public areas and has been remembered fondly by Ponca City residents for beautifying their town. He returned to Japan with his wife in 1932, but kept in touch with Ponca City residents until at least 1955.

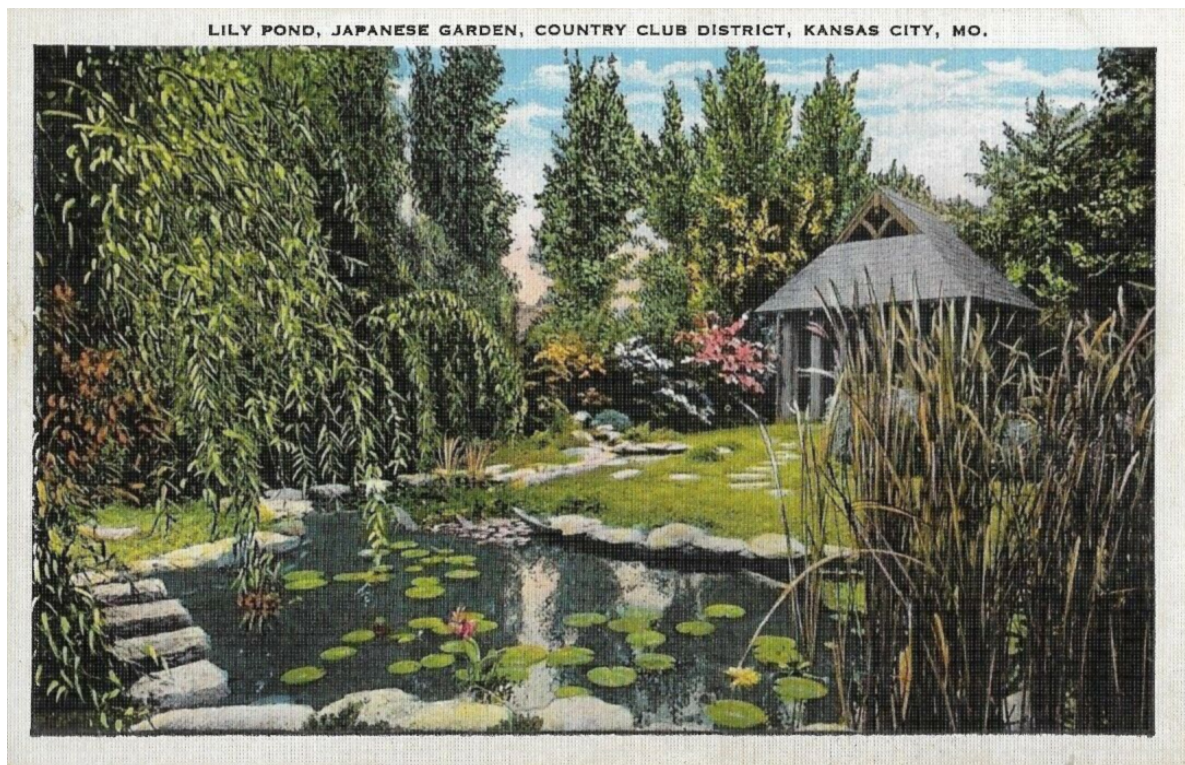
## Other Kansas City Japanese-Style Gardens

Kansas City seems to have had a number of Japanese-style gardens developed before the 1930s. A postcard photo (shown below) of an unidentified Japanese style garden with a teahouse and rock-edge lily pond was published around 1925, perhaps by the J.C. Nichols Company, which developed the Country Club District, including the semi-Japanese” sunken garden (shown in the public gardens research paper in this series).

Additionally, a newspaper notice in the *Kansas City Star* of June 25, 1922 had an announcement of the sale of a home at 1008 Valentine Road that had belonged to Llewellyn E. James (1854-1912) and his wife, Emma (the property is not located in the Country Club District, so it could not have been the Japanese-style garden in the postcard photograph shown below):

A large stone residence on a 512-acre tract extending from Valentine road to Roanoke boulevard at the turn in Valentine road west of Belleview was bought from Ward Neff last week by Dr J C Wilhoit, oil operator of Manhattan, Kas. and Kansas City. Dr Wilhoit paid \$65,000 for his new home.

The property, once the L.E. James home with a rather massive stone residence and picturesque grounds was one of the show places of the South Side in the early days of the Roanoke district. A lily pond and a Japanese garden are landscape features. The sale was negotiated by Max T. Stone with the J. C. Nichols Investment Company.



**Figure 56: An unidentified Japanese-style garden in the Country Club District of Kansas City**



## Harlow Arden (H.D. Higgenbotham) Japanese Garden, Joliet, IL (c.1915)

Harlow D. Higinbotham (1867-1948) had a Japanese-style garden made by Chicago landscape architect T.R. Otsuka next to his Joliet, Illinois house, on the land his grandfather acquired in 1834 on the eastern edge of Joliet, Illinois (30 miles southwest of Chicago).

His father, Harlow N. Higinbotham (1838-1919), was a partner in the Marshall Field & Company Chicago department store, and also served as President of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. (And he was also a horticultural enthusiast, building ten greenhouses next to his own house – now gone – on the family grounds, in which to grow prize-winning carnations.)

Harlow D., a photography enthusiast, was the official photographer for the 1893 Exposition, and according to the Joliet Herald article shown below, purchased two of the Japanese stone lanterns from the Exposition when it was finished.

According to the article, Higinbotham spent time in Japan, and his grandson confirmed by email that: "My grandfather did visit Japan a couple of times in the 1880s, once on a solo tour around the world ("in lieu of going to college") and the other in a trip with his family to Yokohama."

Higinbotham married Annie Smith in 1898 and built a new house on the Joliet family property around 1915, at the modern address of 1900 East Cass Street, which they named "Harlowarden."

The Higinbothams engaged T.R. Otsuka to build the Japanese part of their garden for them, perhaps around 1915. The 1929 article states that: "This garden has been developing for 15 years," although the author had been describing Mrs. Higinbotham's formal flower garden just before that. Their grandson confirmed: "The garden was built in 1915 just before the nearby house."

The article describes a pool with a waterfall and an island of volcanic rock, the two lanterns made of dark stone, a tea house, a torii gate guarded by two "devil dog" statues and dozens of other carved figures from the temples of Japan.

This extensive article published in the *Joliet Herald* of August 4, 1929, written by local artist Adele Fay Williams, who also contributed a pencil sketch of part of the Higinbotham Japanese Garden, describes the garden and its origins:

### BEAUTIFUL JAPANESE GARDEN By ADELE FAY WILLIAMS.

A first view of the Japanese garden of Harlow Arden, the beautiful estate of H. D. Higinbotham, comes with a shock of extreme delight, so unusual it is.

Here is no appeal to astonish the groundlings, but the most consummate artistry used in the sincere effort to build up beauty, somewhat after the manner of nature herself. For here is the immense patience and expert knowledge in handling details of design, incalculably lavish and apparently spendthrift. And at the same time there is the beauty of the big design of the garden to which the minor patterns lend themselves devoutly. And all the time you are pondering over this unusual arrangement in a garden, you feel the influence of something foreign, an alien, fantastic, but attractive spirit that rules this very odd but charming sort of plant decoration.

**Beauty of Design.** The Japanese garden is truly 'decorative' from its beginning to its finish. It is not at all after the manner of the western, the occidental or the Caucasian style of (*continued*)



Figure 57: An original drawing of a corner of the Japanese Garden at Harlow Arden, the estate of Harlan D. Higginbotham, drawn by artist Adele Fay Williams in 1929, for an August 4, 1929 *Joliet Herald* article about his garden.



gardening. It is more abstract, since it seeks beauty thru its complete detachment its design rather than thru the throwing together of masses of colorful flowers, or by planting them in rows, feeding them nourishment and water, seeing that they are well taken care of until they develop beautiful flowers, as is mainly the caucasian way. Both methods are interesting and produce excellent results. But they are radically different. One is all thought with one definite purpose behind it, while the other is satisfied with beautiful blooms alone. Or so it seems in the large glance.

**Cool Green Tones.** This charming Japanese garden is pictured in the accompanying sketch without the charm of its cool, green tones, so marvelous in the original. But it does show a little the work of the famous Japanese landscape architect in planting his patterns thru the use of different plants with different sizes and shapes of leaves.

The famous Japanese artist in gardens who built and cultivated and arranged the Higinbotham Japanese garden so artistically is T. R. Otsuka, a native Japanese, who has been the creator of several other typically Japanese gardens thruout the country. One of these interesting gardens is the Colonial Fabian garden in Geneva.

Two dark stone Japanese lanterns to be seen in this graceful garden were brought from Japan from the Chinese World's Columbian exposition, and were bought by Mr. Higinbotham at the close of the exposition.

**Frame of Waterfall.** In the center of the sketch is a group of dark brownish boulders that furnish a part of a frame for a little waterfall, over which grow two trained and dwarfed mulberry trees, like inverted umbrellas, to keep it from getting wet when it rains.

In front of these stones is the great variety of low-growing plants, each one chosen carefully for the pattern its foliage will make in the entire design. The multiplicity and variety of these patterns is one of the fascinating things of this lovely garden. Not because they are flowers you observe, but because they are fundamental parts of the design. In the background are numerous types of evergreen trees, coniferous and deciduous, both with all sorts and sizes of rare dwarfed, creeping and reaching little evergreens fitted in naturally where they help the decorative effect.

The crowling, creeping evergreen at the right, in the foreground below the bulbous lanterns, is a "sabina prostrata," if you please.

**Trees of Many Varieties.** Fred Story, the superintendent of the gardens for many years, knows each one by its real name. The big dark tree in the rear is a black hills spruce, just beside a number of fairy like blue spruces of different sizes. And there are Colorado blue needles, mugo pines from Japan, many varieties of Junipers, dark green Japanese yew, Canadian yew, arbor vitae of several kinds, and above all, little bits of stone plants, that will grow in the hollows and cracks of stones as pert and cunning as you please.

There is really no end to the fascination of details in this garden. The pool is lovely in itself. And there is a little island of volcanic rock, all wrought by nature into beautiful decorative shapes. A path runs up behind the water fall, from the little steps seen at the left.

**Guarded By Stone Dogs.** But there are dozens of other important features, in this garden of great extent. Over to the right is a rock garden with a Japanese influence. At the left toward the front is a mysterious path, almost hidden at times leading to the 'Toru' or characteristic shaped gate, guarded by two robust 'devil dogs' one smiling sardonically, the other threatening.

There are dozens of these most artistic figures, grotesques and figurines, carved long ago by skillful Japanese hands. All came originally from temples of Japan. (*continued*)

Mr. Higinbotham spent some years in Japan where he learned to understand and to like Japanese art.

**Keep Up Color Interest** (Next to the?... ) home, which is simple and beautiful both without and within, is the formal flower garden, a thing of beauty at all times. It is so arranged that different flowers blooming at different times keep up the color interest of the garden.

Here are blue torinias, heliotropes, delphiniums with the anchusa Italica at the rear row, making a delightful harmony. The ‘morning bride’ in the loveliest of colors, and some royal blue velvet petunias that came from England, are Mrs. Higinbotham’s particular favorites. They are like rich plush, while the Salpiglossis are like brocade. There are endless richnesses of flowers, and Mrs. Higinbotham knows each one by name.

This garden has been developing for 15 years, she says, and is still in process of development. Mr. Story has been in charge of the gardens for 31 years, and the results of his management show beautifully.

Japanese Tea House. Mr. Otsuka comes yearly to see that the Japanese garden grows as it should. Besides all this, decoratively placed, there is a Japanese tea house where real Japanese tea may be served.

A beautiful feature of the mansion is a tower at the south, overgrown with ivy. It is most artistic and suggests thoughts of art. So it is most natural that Miss Florence Higinbotham, who continues her studies of art in design and sculpture both in the east and in the Art Institute, who has just returned home—it is quite natural that she should choose this for her studio.

Miss Higinbotham—who is very modest about her work, was persuaded to show some of the results of her years of artistic toil. Pen and pencil drawings and designs, block prints, wood engravings, color prints, color sketches and various other media of expression showed fine training versatility. Some animal and human anatomical studies were replete with vitality as well as knowledge. Her work is entirely sincere and promises much.

The Higinbotham estate still remains in that family, and Harlow D. Higinbotham’s grandson resides there in the same 1915 house, still surrounded by formal gardens and a naturalistic grove of trees with winding paths leading through it, the site of the Japanese-style garden area. Higinbotham’s grandson confirmed in an email that:

...the garden still exists, largely intact but of course vastly changed due to the growth of the many trees that were planted when it was built in 1915.... It’s a tea garden with an outer path leading from a torii entrance by a 30-foot Mount Fuji to a resting area and iris pond, before climbing up over a small hill by a waterfall and “devil’s “bridge to an inner area with a now missing tea house looking back at the waterfall and Mount Fuji.

...The garden view (*in the drawing*) is from the tea house looking north with the yukimigata snow lantern on the right and the devil’s bridge in front. Fuji is missing and another Japanese tower is placed where there should be a second lantern. Probably differences due to artistic choice.



1916: Stan Hywet Hall Japanese Garden, Akron, OH



**Figure 58: A view across the sunken Japanese Garden at Stan Hywet, looking toward the cascade and Mount Fuji at left. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)**

In 1912, Franklin A. Seiberling (1859-1955), co-founder of the Goodyear Tire Company, began constructing an estate befitting his huge fortune: a 65,000 square-foot house on 1,500 acres. The Seiberlings named their estate Stan Hywet, which in old English meant stone hewed or cut, a name inspired by the stone quarries on the property.

The Seiberlings hired Boston landscape designer Warren H. Manning (1860-1938) to lay out the grounds for the estate, and he proceeded to design vistas from the house (including a noted Birch Allee), together with multiple separate garden areas: a formal English garden (later re-designed by Ellen Shipman), a large terrace, a Great Garden, a rose garden, a lagoon in a former quarry.

It was Gertrude Seiberling (1866-1946) who wanted a Japanese Garden. According to a 1992 interview with her daughter, Irene, Gertrude became enamored of Japanese gardens after visiting:

“a private garden on Mackinac Island which she visited frequently on her way to and from her summer place at Hessel, Michigan. The creator of the Japanese garden instructed Mrs. Seiberling on the symbolism and meaning of all the garden elements, and allowed her to spend hours meditating in the garden.”



The Mackinac Island garden that inspired Gertrude Seiberling to want her own Japanese garden was almost certainly Milton Tootle's Japanese-style garden shown earlier in this section. Tootle would have recommended to Mrs. Seiberling the Japanese landscape architect that had designed his own garden: T.R. Otsuka.

Manning agreed that a Japanese garden would be feasible, although he wasn't certain the best place to put it on the property, because he did not want to block his carefully planned vistas from the house. Mrs. Seiberling suggested putting it in a sunken quarry atop the large cisterns of 200,000 gallons at the bottom that had been covered over with earth. Manning had thought that would be a good, level spot for a tennis court, but Mrs. Seiberling's suggestion was a good one and Manning agreed. He wrote to Mr. Seiberling in June 1914:

I have been very much interested in Japanese Gardens, have studied quite a number of the ones which have been developed in this country, and have brought together quite a large number of books, which I bought in this country and imported from Japan, in there are very full illustrations of such gardens, their details, the methods of construction, and the significance of the various features in the garden.

Manning went on in his letter to explain some of the philosophies of Japanese-style gardens, but warned that it was "impracticable or undesirable to attempt to copy a Japanese Garden in all its details." He suggested instead a "New England-style Japanese garden."

By the following May, Manning had sketched out an overall plan for the Japanese-style garden area in a hand written letter to Mrs. Seiberling:



Figure 59: Warren H. Manning's initial sketched plan for the Japanese Garden at Stan Hywet. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)



In his letter to Mrs. Seiberling, Manning mentioned that he had talked to Hughes Elliot, director of the school of art at the Boston Art Museum to get advice about Japanese-style lanterns, at Mr. Seiberling's request.

However, in the following months Mrs. Seiberling seems to have gotten impatient with Manning's lack of speed in making her Japanese-style garden area and she engaged T.R. Otsuka directly, to make not a New-England-style Japanese garden, but one made by a Japanese builder.

In a memorandum recording what had been done in May 1916, Manning wrote:

All the plants were put in place with Mr. Otsuka directing the placement of plants. This was done with the understanding that some of these plants would be changed when we came to work up the arrangement of boulders and lanterns in more detail.

Mr. Otsuka expressed himself as being much pleased with the plan of this garden.

....Mr. Palmer also made a list of the lumber that will be required to make the two lagoon bridges and the umbrella house that Mr. Otsuka has in view for the Japanese Garden.

Mr. Dennis... is also to secure round sticks of locust, cherry and oak, 2 to 4 inches in diameter and about 18 inches long, for edging certain bed *a la Japanese*.

.... The stepping stones for the walk are to be broken from existing material on the ground that Mr. Otsuka examined. Mr. Otsuka, Mr. Dennis and I visited a place I had located on the Fairlawn Heights property, where a large amount of suitable moss can be secured for the garden, and another place where fine, mossy boulders are to be secured.



Figure 60: The man wearing a suit at left may have been T.R. Otsuka, working on the cascade in the Japanese-style garden at Stan Hywet, likely around 1916. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)





Figure 61: Mrs. Seiberling in her Japanese-style garden at Stan Hywet next to a large stone or concrete lantern, with the cascade in the background. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)



Figure 62: A view of the Stan Hywet Japanese Garden looking toward the house. The “umbrella house” that Otsuka designed can be seen at right. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)



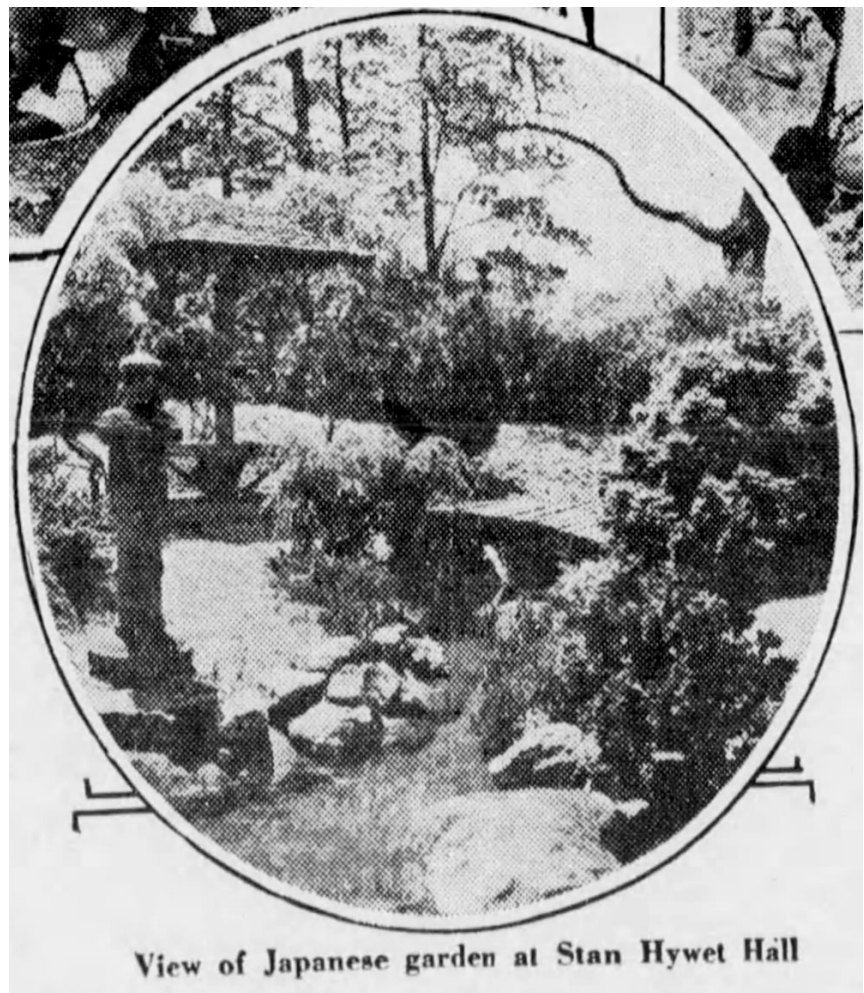
*The American Florist* issue of June 3, 1916 included this: “T.R. Otsuka, the well-known landscape gardener of 300 South Michigan Avenue, is engaged on a very extensive Japanese garden for F.A. Seiberling, of Akron, O., with a large force of men.”

The Japanese Garden at Stan Hywet was finished in 1916. But at the end of WWI, the American economy went into recession and F.A. Seiberling lost his rubber manufacturing company. The Seiberlings had to sell off several hundred acres of his estate, but were able to keep their house.

Unfortunately, after that, the family never had the money to properly maintain their garden areas, despite Mrs. Seiberling’s love of gardening (she was a founding member of the Akron Garden Club in 1924).

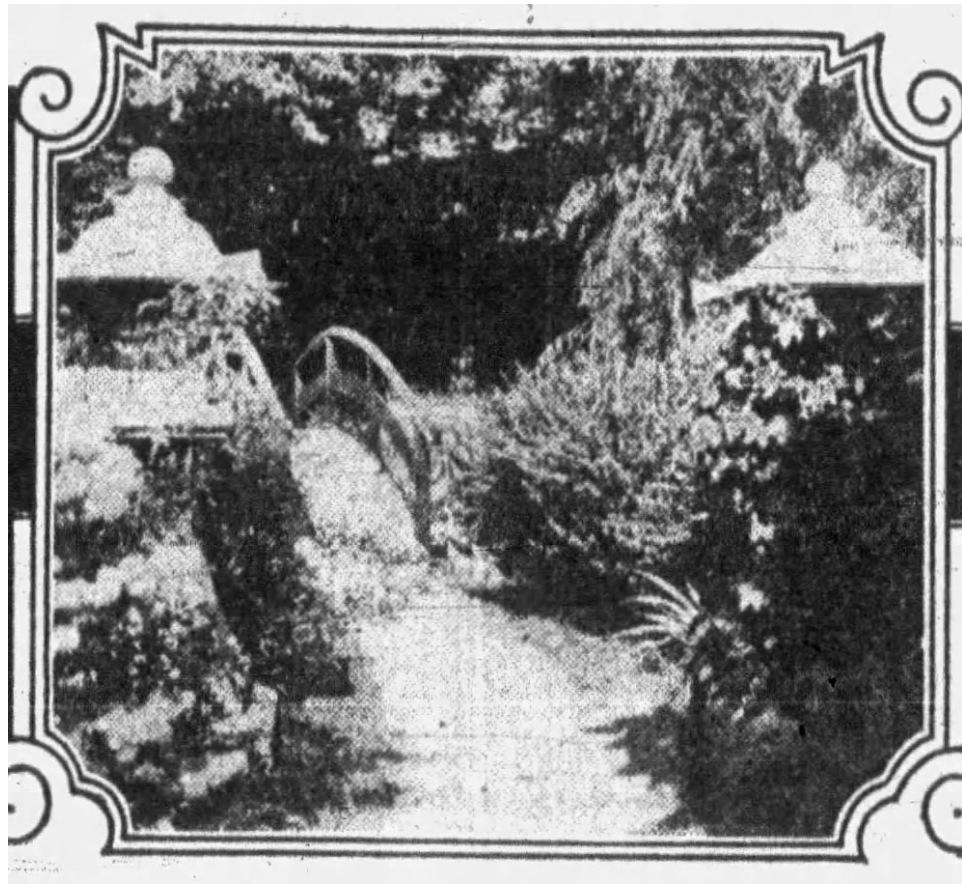
Gertrude Seiberling passed away in 1946, and after F.A. Seiberling’s death in 1955, the house and 70 acres of the estate were donated by their six surviving children to a preservation group, the Stan Hywet Hall Foundation.

A restoration report and plan were done in 1993 by Doell & Doell of Syracuse, New York, but it wasn’t until 2009 that the restorations began, the garden reopening in 2010.



**Figure 63:** A rare newspaper photo of the Japanese Garden at Stan Hywet. (*Akron Beacon Journal*, May 30, 1931)

Wyethwood: St. Joseph, Missouri (c. 1917)



**Figure 64:** A newspaper photo of the Japanese-style part of the gardens at Wyethwood in St. Joseph, Missouri. (*St. Joseph Gazette* July 15, 1928)

In 1917, Mr. and Mrs. Huston Wyeth (1863-1925, a hardware manufacturer; née Leila Ballinger, 1865-1955) built a magnificent country house on 40 acres on the northeast edge of St. Joseph (at the present address of 1017 West St. Maartins Drive). The Italian Renaissance mansion named Wyethwood was designed by Eckel & Aldrich, the preeminent St. Joseph architectural firm. But it's unknown whether that firm did the landscape planning as well.

The Japanese-style garden seems to already have been in place when the house was built: A *St. Joseph News-Press* article of June 8, 1917 relating that excavation had just begun for the house stated also that "The splendid grounds have already been improved. A late improvement is a Japanese tea garden and tea house in the southeast corner of the grounds. Some Japanese fowls and birds lend realism to the scene."

In the *St. Joseph Gazette* of July 15, 1928, a lengthy article about Mrs. Wyeth's extensive gardens was published, which included these excerpts:



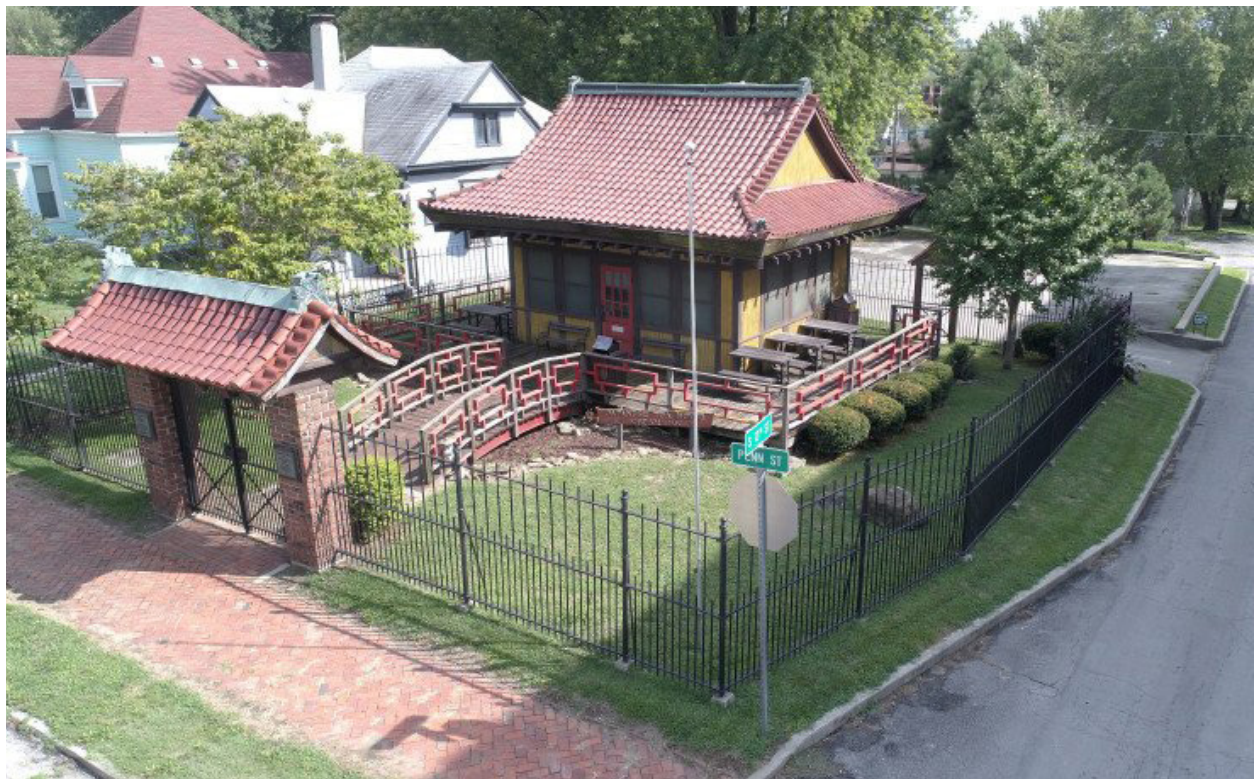
...we come upon an attractive arched Japanese bridge. The bridge is guarded at either side by large square ivy-covered posts topped with lanterns, which at night emit light from the little square windows on four sides and cast fantastic shadows among the shrubs.

...As we walk across the bridge we see beyond, set among tall trees so that no sun strikes it, a lovely Japanese tea house. It is made of bamboo and has a red tile roof. The ends of the stained wooden railing across the porch curve upward, as do the corners of the roof, and a metal lantern hangs in the front entrance. We try the front door, but it is locked. We peek through through the windows and in the dim light we faintly distinguish a fireplace, lovely pieces of carved Japanese furniture and bric-a-brac.

...in the middle of the deep little stream, over which the bridge is built, is an island...long-legged birds on the island... a statue of Buddha....

...we realize that we were not in Japan at all, but are at Wyethwood, the estate of Mrs. Huston Wyeth on Frederick Boulevard.

After Mr. Wyeth's death in 1925, Mrs. Wyeth lived another 30 years until her death in 1955 just before her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, and her son's family resided at Wyethwood until 1982. It's not known how long their Japanese-style garden endured, but the tea house was donated in 1984 by the Wyeth estate and moved to a site next to the Patee House Pony Express Museum, where it has been used for an ice cream shop.



**Figure 65: The Wyethwood Japanese Tea House in its new location at 1302 Penn Street in St. Joseph. (Patee House Museum)**

Mayowood Gardens: Rochester, Minnesota (c.1918)



Figure 66: The Japanese-inspired water garden of Dr. Charles and Edith Mayo at their country estate of Mayowood, near Rochester, Minnesota. (*Author's collection*)

In 1911, Dr. Charles Mayo (1865-1939), one of the founders with his brother of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, built a 38-room mansion on a 3,300-acre country estate four miles southwest of Rochester. He and his wife, Edith (Graham), a nurse, named their estate Mayowood.

The Mayos built their mansion overlooking Mayowood Lake, and Dr. Mayo designed formal garden areas around their house, as well as water gardens on the edge of the lake, and an island garden with Japanese elements around 1916.

In an article from the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* of June 7, 2002, Carole Zellie of Landscape Research, a St. Paul firm that did a report about the Mayowood gardens for the Olmstead County Historical Society that year, was interviewed and stated:

From the lake (Mayo) created by damming the river, he shaped islands and carved out a picturesque lagoon. A suspension bridge led to one island, where a Japanese tori gate, bathhouse and pergola punctuated an Oriental landscape of conifers, weeping trees and irises. A 1920s photo shows his wife, Edith, standing on the swinging bridge holding a Japanese parasol.





**Figure 67:** A photo from around 1920 of the Japanese-style elements in the Mayowood water garden. (*Olmstead County Historical Society*)

The Mayos may have been inspired to make their Japanese-style garden after attending the World's Fairs of 1893 in Chicago and 1916 in San Diego.

The Mayowood mansion and fourteen acres of the surrounding land were given to the Olmstead County Historical Society in 1965, and the house and grounds are open to the public. The gardens close to the house have been well maintained, but those near the lake and on the islands became overgrown by 2002, when the historic restoration report was done, and the Japanese-inspired elements on the island have all been lost.

Thornhill, Morton Garden: Lisle, Illinois (c. 1920)



**Figure 68: The Japanese-style garden at Thornhill, the estate of Joy Morton, probably in the 1920s.**  
(*Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum*)

Joy Morton (1855-1934), founder of the Morton Salt Company, had a Japanese-style garden area and a rock garden installed around 1920 near his mansion on his 1,250-acre estate on the north edge of Lisle, Illinois (about 20 miles west of Chicago). It

In 1917, Morton remarried after his first wife's death two years before, and the newlyweds took a four-and-a-half month trip to China, via the Philippines, Japan and Korea. While the Mortons spent most of their time in China, Joy Morton had been impressed by the tree planting skills of Japanese arborists while visiting Japan. It was likely after that trip that he decided to have a Japanese garden installed on his property.

Chicago landscape architect T.R. Otsuka probably designed and built both the Japanese-style garden and the rock garden at Thornhill. Examination of the garden features in those areas shows similarities with his known projects, such as porous rocks used in both areas, and an umbrella resting house.

Joy Morton established the Morton Arboretum on his land in 1922, and after his wife's death, the Thornhill Mansion was removed in order to build the Thornhill Education Center, and the ornamental gardens around the house were removed too.





Figure 69: The Thornhill Japanese-style garden lay along the entrance drive to the house. The thatched umbrella-shaped resting house, lanterns and rock-edged stream can be seen. (*Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum*)



Figure 70: The porous rocks used to build the Thornhill rock garden can be seen in this photo from June 1932. (*Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum*)



Holcomb Garden: Indianapolis, Indiana (c. 1922)



Figure 71: A view of the Japanese-style ravine garden constructed for J.I. Holcomb. (*Indianapolis News*, June 27, 1940)

James Irving Holcomb (1876-1962) started several Indianapolis manufacturing businesses, and in 1926 with his wife, Musetta, built a large house on forty wooded acres (at the modern address of 1705 Glencary Crest) they named Woodvale. Behind their house was a ravine in which they constructed a Japanese-style garden, probably around 1922 (a photo of it was included in the July 20, 1924 issue of the *Indianapolis Star*).

Holcomb and his wife were active in numerous local civic, arts and charitable organizations, and they traveled around the world collecting art, architectural features and rocks from every continent, with a particular interest in Asia. The *Indianapolis Star* of April 27, 1958 briefly described the Japanese part of their garden:

Near the entrance is the lovely Japanese Garden, a delightful spot with a Japanese teahouse, an ancient marble Buddha, a bronze bell pagoda, a stone pagoda and other statues and art objects. All were collected by Holcomb during a trip to Japan many years ago.





Figure 72: A newspaper photo of the entrance steps leading down into the Holcomb Japanese-style garden, shown at upper left. (*Indianapolis Star*, March 30, 1930)

The Holcombs hired T.R. Otsuka to construct many of the features of their Japanese-style garden. He undoubtedly built the tea house and bridges for them, but the Holcombs contributed many of the statues and perhaps the lanterns too. The *Indianapolis News* of June 27, 1940 included this description:

Many of the most interesting ornaments have been brought from the oriental countries. A pair of carved horse blocks flank the entrance to the swimming pool. These are more than 500 years old and came from the old summer palace of the Forbidden City in Pekin. In the Japanese garden, near the entrance of the estate, are idols, lanterns, pagodas, and quarter moon bridges typical of and significant to the oriental spirit. The round "Window of the Heavenly View" in the Japanese tea house overlooks an ancient white marble Buddha to the outline of a miniature Mt. Fuji. The lower part of this garden ends in a small lake dotted with lilies and overflowing into a boulder canyon running under the large bridge of the driveway.

Mr. Holcomb was interviewed for a short article in the January 5, 1930 *Indianapolis Star*, and mentioned this about the design process for his garden:

"And by the way, take along a word of appreciation to the public library. When I was setting out my Japanese garden, I had a native Japanese landscape gardener advise me. I wanted some of the fun myself, so I got quite a lot of books and pictures of Japanese gardens out of the public library. We went to work along the lines indicated in the books. Later the Japanese gardener approved the plans and praised highly the results."

The *Indianapolis Star* of March 30, 1930 ran a long article about the garden that also included two photographs, and, crucially, mentioned Otsuka's name:

**A Glimpse of Japan Prevails in Garden At J. I. Holcomb Home, Cold Spring Road** by Zila Robbins: The naturalistic style of gardening, which portrays scenes that both are exotic and true to nature, is exemplified in the estate of Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Holcomb, Cold Spring road. It is first suggested near the entrance drive in the Japanese garden constructed several years ago by a Japanese landscape artist, Tora (*sic*) Otsuka.

Recently near the house, on the side of a cliff looking toward White river, this style has been further developed in a bit of Kentucky with pools, waterfalls and even a cave. The elaborate construction, which has involved the transfer of massive stone from great distances and the diversion of the cold springs, under the supervision of Ernest Bennett, superintendent. A Kentuckian and a close student of the action of water on rocks in his native state, he has produced an illusion of a natural hillside.

This particular naturalistic style that seeks to carry one away from the prosaic scenes of everyday life has been developed for more than a thousand years in Japan.... Jiro Harada of the Imperial Household Museum, Tokyo, says in his book, "The Gardens of Japan," "We strive to be natural with our gardens and to satisfy our yearning for nature." This may be accomplished in Japan by producing a landscape of vast extent in a miniature garden just as in the West it may be represented on the canvas of a painter. This convention is difficult for uninitiated Westerners and seems artificial to them, but it has much in its favor.

**Torii Gate With Dragons:** The main entrance to the Japanese garden at Holcomb is indicated somewhat formally by the Torii gate with its dragons. Other entrances from the house and drive are informal. All of them lead down into a wonderland. A Japanese teahouse, pools, bridges, lanterns, pagoda, volcano, island and tiny paths with stepping stones have been set in a ravine overhung by elm, oak, honeylocust, sugar maple, walnut and beech. Numerous evergreens, constant in their loveliness, give a background against which the seasonal changes of willows, Japanese maple, Japanese cherry and Alpine plants offer variations....

The teahouse, comfortable and picturesque, makes possible many beautiful hours in the garden. It is surrounded by pictures. A pool below reflects the curves of the bridge that crosses it. There are glimpses of other pools and pleasant sounds of water falls. Among evergreens a lovely old stone lantern in lotus leaf design represents light dispelling darkness. Antique carved stone



tablets here and there, an ancient Buddha and a stone pagoda that also is very old, remind one of the Buddhist influence on the garden. A miniature mountain rises on an edge of the ravine.

**Partially Concealed:** This garden, true to Japanese art, is lovely in partial concealment and surprise. Along the path from the teahouse the stream divides to form an island. There is pool after pool, each with its separate picture. An arbor overhung with wisteria crosses the stream at one place. A tiny bamboo fence suggests the separation of this garden from the work-a-day world. A stone water basin, honored with a canopy, for it, offers delicious spring water. A miniature garden, which Mr. Holcomb designed after his recent visit, with Mrs. Holcomb, to Japan, contains many Japanese conventions.

Infinite care has been taken with details. Tiny posts guide the bed of the stream and protect the island. Steps are spaced with precision, each plant is given close attention. Sinuous roots of an old tree are swept clean of leaves and dust, yet moss is treasured. The owners of this garden have had much delight in working out the design and bringing its ornaments from distant places they have enjoyed.



Figure 73: (*Indianapolis Star*, March 30, 1930)

## W.E. Long Chinese Gardens and Museum: Lake Wawasee, Indiana (1936)

Chicago businessman William Edward Long was an ardent collector of Chinese art. He built a summer home in Syracuse, IN along Lake Wawasee after 1927, and realized his longtime dream of constructing a Chinese garden and museum.

Long purchased one of the smaller Chinese exhibition buildings constructed for the 1933-34 Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago, and had it moved to his Indiana lake property, where he placed it on an island and made it into a Chinese museum, open to the public.

The pond gardens around it were a source of beauty and pleasure to residents and visitors for years, but after Long's death in 1961, the property fell into disrepair and was torn down in 1975.



**Figure 74:** A postcard picture from the late 1930s of the Chinese Pavilion building that W.E. Long purchased after the 1933-34 World's Fair in Chicago, and moved to his estate in Syracuse, Indiana. *(author's collection.)*



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