



MUSSER JAPANESE GARDEN

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

SEPTEMBER 1, 2021
by Beth Cody

This paper is the sixth 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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Introduction

While searching for historic photos of Iowa gardens back in 2015, I ran across an online article in *The Muscatine Journal* written by Linda L. Meloy, a Muscatine County Master Gardener: “A Visit to Serenity: The Japanese Garden at Muscatine’s Musser Home,” (August 15, 2015).

I found myself intrigued by the beautiful 1930s photo, shown on the cover of this paper, of the Japanese-style garden of Laura Musser McColm (1877-1964). And I found myself even more intrigued by the *idea* of an Iowa resident making a Japanese-style garden nearly a century ago. Most of the numerous 1930s Iowa garden photos I found showed the usual white lattice fences, formal rose gardens and rock gardens that were popular in that period. But no others had Japanese-style stone lanterns, crane statues and bamboo bridges.

What prompted Mrs. McColm to make such an unusual garden? Was she a Japanophile, an enthusiast of all things Japanese? Did she design the garden herself by studying pictures of other Japanese-style gardens, or did she pay someone to design and build it for her – and who was that person?

As I looked into the garden’s background, I found a few historic newspaper articles online that mentioned her garden. And I visited the garden – her house and garden are now part of the Muscatine Art Center – where the staff were very helpful in telling me what they knew about the garden.

However, what they knew was not a great deal, as no records or personal correspondence regarding the Japanese garden seem to exist. They generously shared with me the few photos they had of the original garden, which of course has changed over time and now looks different from the way it did in the 1930s.

I made a point of walking around the garden while I was there, so that I would get a sense of the setting for the garden. This is something that wasn’t possible for me to do with most of the gardens – completely lost with time – that I included in the book I eventually finished and published in 2020: *Iowa Gardens of the Past: Lost & Historic Gardens of Iowa, 1850-1980*. As I stood there in the Japanese garden, it really did seem an extraordinary garden to have been made in the midsize Iowa river town of Muscatine around 1930. I wished I could have found out more about that most intriguing part of Mrs. McColm’s garden.

So I was delighted to be contacted by Melanie Alexander, Director of the Muscatine Art Center, with a request to look into the context and cultural background of Mrs. McColm’s Japanese-style garden, through a grant from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, in conjunction with a planned project for restoring the garden.

My research was to provide the context for why Americans built Japanese-style gardens before World War II: the factors that led to the rise in popularity in such gardens, such as the Japanese-style gardens created for the World’s Fairs, that were the way millions of Americans first saw such gardens; the books and magazine articles that had been published about them; the Japanese-inspired gardens that had been made by and for wealthy trend-setters and in public parks, which influenced others to make them too; the role of the garden club movement during the 1920s and 1930s in promoting different styles of gardens.

Also, the Art Center directors hoped I might be able to investigate the possibilities for *who* might have designed and built the garden. But I had scant hopes of being able to solve such a long-running mystery: that knowledge had been lost with the passing of Mrs. McColm in 1964 – nearly 60 years ago – and the lack of records or personal correspondence left no clues about this aspect of the garden. But I have been able to develop a theory about the most likely candidate to have designed and built the garden, and have included support for that likelihood.

My brief was for 4,000-7,000 words, but only eight weeks of research yielded a far longer result, which necessitated splitting my paper into eight separate research papers. Several areas of research – World's Fairs Japanese-style gardens, early public and private Japanese gardens, P.H. Elwood's Asia trip, the life and known projects of my candidate for designing Mrs. McColm's garden – have yielded rich results that merit standalone papers, and in the case of the World's Fair gardens, perhaps an entire book.

As I continued my research, one thing became clear to me: surviving Japanese-style gardens built before World War II are tremendously rare. Muscatine has a treasure that should be cared for and sensitively restored.

This has been such a fascinating project and I feel privileged to have been able to work on it. I hope my research will be helpful to the Muscatine community as Mrs. McColm's extraordinary garden undergoes restoration, to allow continued enjoyment of this treasure for another 90 years.



1. Laura Musser McColm (1877-1964)

A brief biography of Laura Musser McColm will be given here, in order to provide context to her decision to have a Japanese-style garden added to her property. This biographical material is largely derived from newspaper clippings and from the report prepared in 2016 by Jennifer A. Price of Price Preservation Research in Coralville, Iowa, for the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Musser House.

Family Background

Mrs. McColm was born to Peter C. Musser (1826-1910) and Tamson (Rhodes) Musser (1831-1896). Peter Musser was born in Pennsylvania, married in 1851, and moved to Iowa in 1853. After a stint of several years in California, he returned to Iowa and established the Musser Lumber Company in Muscatine in 1870, becoming affiliated with the Weyerhaeuser and Denkmann lumber companies, engaged in lumber production and timber land investment.

Laura Musser

Laura Musser was born November 23, 1877 in Muscatine, one of six children, three of whom reached adulthood. She was born and raised in her family home at 501 East Mississippi Drive, right along the Mississippi riverfront at the corner of Mulberry Avenue.

Laura's sister was Anne Elizabeth Musser (1862-1919), who in 1892 married C.H. Huttig, a banker from Muscatine. The Huttigs moved to St. Louis in the 1890s, where Huttig was a bank president and was instrumental in raising enough money to bring the 1904 World's Fair to St. Louis.

Her brother, Richard Drew Musser (1865-1958) formed a lumber company in Little Falls, Minnesota with his good friend Charles Weyerhaeuser, and married Sarah Walker of New York in 1903.

As a young woman, Laura Musser was musical, regularly singing at the local Methodist Episcopal church. From at least 1894, she attended the Grant Seminary in Chicago, a boarding and day school for artistic young ladies, where she had vocal instruction, developing a fine mezzo-soprano voice, and from where she graduated in 1896.

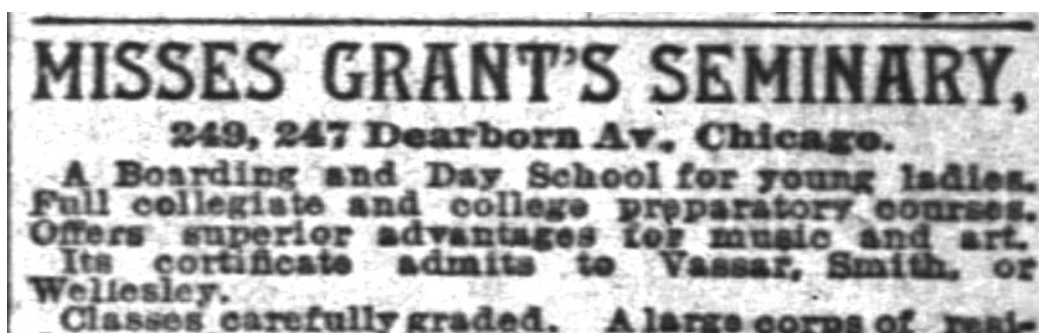


Figure 1: An advertisement for the Grant Seminary in Chicago. (*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, August 11, 1888)

Miss Laura Musser is fast becoming one of Muscatine's leading soprano, and she is sure to delight every one with her solo in the Y. M. C. A. concert, March 27th.

Figure 2: *Muscatine News Tribune*, March 2, 1894

Figure 3: *Muscatine Journal*, March 28, 1894

famous Paderewski "Minuet." Miss Laura Musser sang "The Last Rose of Summer" with a pathos and tenderness which evoked an enthusiastic encore. Her beautiful voice is possessed of that rare quality which we have no word for, but which we define as sympathetic, which touches all hearts. She was accompanied by her instructor, Prof. Grade.

Miss Laura Musser assisted at a Kelso concert in Chicago, Friday evening, Nov. 16th, given in Kimball Hall. She sang a double number on the program and received the heartiest congratulations of Mr. and Mrs. Kelso and her instructress, Madame Meyer. A Chicago paper notices the event and Miss Laura has every reason to feel gratified on the occasion of her debut into Chicago's musical circle.

Figure 4: *Muscatine Journal*, November 19, 1894

Cards of invitation to the commencement exercises of the Grant Collegiate Institute of Chicago have been received in this city by the friends of the Misses Stella Cohn and Laura Musser.

Figure 5: *Muscatine Journal*, May 22, 1896

Laura's mother passed away in June 1896, after an illness of nearly a year. After graduation, Laura traveled to Europe in 1897 for an "extended European tour," returning at the beginning of 1898. While in Paris, she studied voice with the Italian tenor and noted vocal teacher, Giovanni Sbrilia (1832-1916).

The friends of Miss Laura Musser were very happy to welcome her back from an extended European tour. Muscatine is proud to know that the highest encomiums were paid to Miss Musser's voice by her European instructors; also that it was tested in La Scala, the second in size (opera house) in the world. Miss Musser sang two delightful numbers, "A Gypsy Maiden," and a dainty French composition, "Come, My Well Beloved," by the celebrated "Chaminade." A hearty encore followed.

Figure 7: *Muscatine News-Tribune*, January 5, 1898

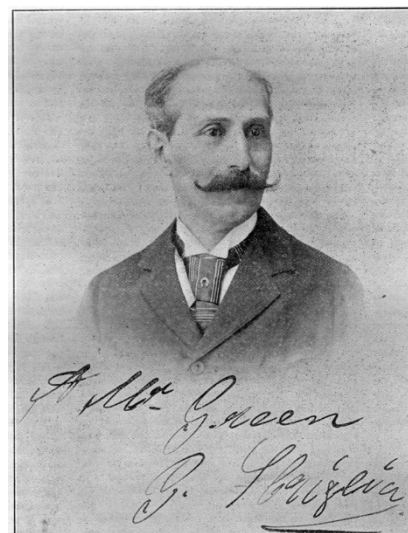


Figure 6: Giovanni Sbrilia (1832-1916). (Wikipedia)

After her return from Europe, Laura cared for her aging father at their home. On November 18, 1903, five days before her 26th birthday, Laura Musser married Edwin L. McColm.

Edwin McColm (1870-1933) was the son of James L. McColm, who in 1870 had started the McColm Dry Goods Store, selling clothing, housewares, carpets and window coverings. In 1890, Edwin joined his father's business, which was eventually renamed McColm & Company.

The newlyweds lived with Peter Musser in his home until 1908, when he built a 12-room, Colonial-style tan brick house for them. He resided with them in the new home until his death in 1910.

Figure 8: Laura Musser McColm in 1906. (MAC)





Figure 9: The McColm's new tan brick house on Mulberry Avenue, around 1909. Mrs. McColm later had her Japanese-style garden built to the left of her house, just outside the area shown by this photo. (MAC)

The McColms had one infant daughter who died soon after birth, and were unable to have any other children, a source of sadness to Mrs. McColm. She was an active participant in McColm & Company, and often traveled with her husband to Chicago and New York City to purchase wholesale goods for the store. She was also the prime mover behind the store's expansion to a new building in 1917 (named the Laurel Building, after "Laura" and "E.L." McColm).

Mrs. McColm assumed leadership roles in local charities, was an active member of her church, and performed musically (in 1922, she had a large Music Room with a pipe organ built onto her house).

Mrs. McColm joined several women's clubs, and these served to influence the things she took an interest in. The clubs included the Twentieth Century Club, an organization founded in 1900 to study literature, science and the arts. Membership was limited to 25 women; her mother-in-law, Mrs. J.L. McColm, was a founding member of the club, and Laura Musser McColm joined by 1919.

Mrs. McColm also joined the new Muscatine Garden Club shortly after its founding in late 1928. This was certainly the key factor in her decision to have a Japanese-style rock garden constructed on her property.

The McColms enjoyed entertaining and often had friends and relatives as houseguests before Edwin McColm's death in August 1933.

2. Mrs. McColm's Appreciation for Japanese Arts



Figure 10: This c. 1907 portrait of Laura Musser McColm was painted by Austrian painter Thomas Riss (1871-1959). He exhibited at the 1904 World's Fair and Mrs. McColm likely met him there. The clothing and background of the portrait both suggest a Japanese influence. (MAC)

Laura Musser McColm seems to have admired Japanese style from an early age. This is not altogether surprising, as she was from a family that appreciated art and she herself was a serious musician, a vocalist who had trained in Chicago and Paris. The late 19th century was a period when Japanese art influenced western art to a great degree, both among the great painters of the time, as well as in the decorative arts. Clay Lancaster's *The Japanese Influence in America* (1963) methodically documents this influence.

Laura Musser certainly attended the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago:

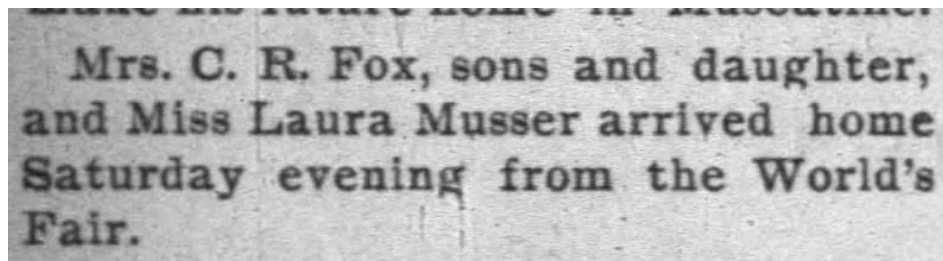
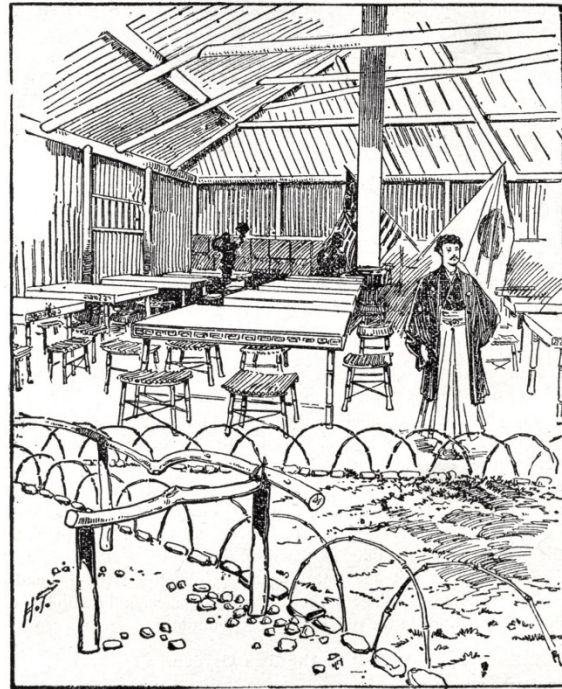


Figure 11: *The Muscatine Journal* of June 26, 1893 had this mention of Laura Musser's visit to the World's Fair in Chicago. (Newspapers.com)

While at the World's Fair, she and her traveling companions probably visited the both the *Ho-o-den*, the Japanese pavilion constructed on Wooded Island, as well as the Japanese Tea House, as that was a popular place to find refreshment during long days spent seeing all that the Fair had to offer.



JAPANESE TEA HOUSE.

Figure 12: An interior view of the Japanese Tea House at the 1893 World's Fair. (*The World's Fair as Seen in 100 Days* (1893) by Henry Davenport Northrup)

And Mrs. McColm attended the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. Her brother-in-law, C.H. Huttig (1863-1913), a bank president and resident of St. Louis, was one of the Fair commissioners, serving as Chairman of the Committee on State and Territorial Exhibits, and had been key in raising enough money locally to bring the World's Fair to St. Louis.

Both the Imperial Japanese Gardens and the Fair Japan concession gardens were popular locations at the 1904 World's Fair. Fair Japan was noted in newspapers as having been patronized by socialites as well as by ordinary middle-class visitors, so Mrs. McColm likely visited both Japanese-style gardens at least once.

It's not known how long the McColms spent in St. Louis visiting the Fair, but many people spent more than a month in St. Louis, because there were so many things in the 1,200 acres of fairgrounds to see and do that it was said that a person couldn't even glance at everything in only one week. They returned to Muscatine at the end of October, only a month before the close of the Fair.

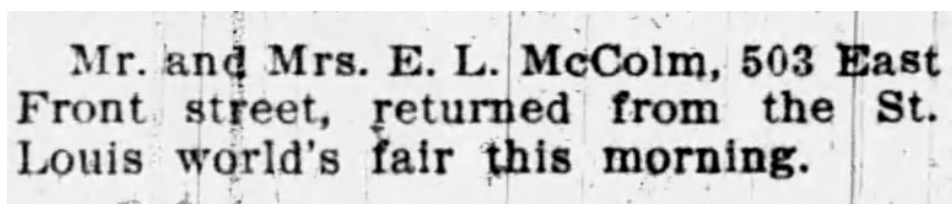


Figure 13: *The Muscatine Journal* October 29, 1904 (Newspapers.com)

YWCA Japanese Garden Fete (1912)

Mrs. McColm was involved in the local Young Women's Christian Association group from at least 1905, serving as treasurer and in other positions, and making a large gift of a new swimming pool to the organization in memory of her niece in 1924.

The group raised money through various charitable events, including a Japanese garden fete (party) in September 1912, which Mrs. McColm surely attended and may even suggested the theme for. The *Muscatine Journal* of September 28, 1912 had this long description of the event:

LARGE ATTENDANCE MARKS GARDEN FETE: Given Under Auspices of The Y. W. C. A. – Presented at Grand Opera House Friday Evening – Will Be Repeated This Evening.

A delightful evening was afforded the large number who braved: the inclement weather of Friday evening to witness the elaborate Japanese Garden Fete held at the Grand Opera, House under the auspices of the Young Women's Christian Association. The downstairs portion of the house was comfortably filled for the first evening's production and it is expected that this evening will witness a much larger number. The theatre was elaborately decorated with emblems of Japan, cherry blossoms, chrysanthemums, morning glories, lanterns, parasols and hand some Japanese and oriental costuming; giving the effect of a veritable oriental garden.

The entertainment was based upon a charming little playlet entitled "The Winning of Fuji", and performed by six clever characters. The part of the leading character, Fuji-san, daughter of General Matsu, played by Miss Ethelyn Salisbury, was clever and the part of her friend, Yuki-san, was presented by Miss Gertrude McNutt in a manner that elicited much favorable comment. The



Figure 14: A photo of Japanese Garden Fete, from a much later newspaper article about the event. (*Muscatine Journal*, April 15, 1981)

(continued) Japanese solo parts by Yuki-san gave Miss McNutt an opportunity to display a charming voice which seemed to be especially well adapted to that kind of singing. Mrs. Helene Block Bartlett as Madam Matsu filled her part exceptionally well as did also Clarence Hahn as Lieutenant Stewart, Ralph Reuling as General Matsu, and L. C. D. Orbach as Baron Omoto....

The affair opened with a Cherry Blossom drill.... A Japanese parasol drill formed one of the prettiest numbers of the evening....

"The Six Little Wives" was one of the most pleasing numbers of the entire evening. Charles Salisbury, Jr., as the Mandarin did especially good work in his solos and the six little wives. Misses Gertrude McNutt, Ethelyn Salisbury, Fern Nesper, Gertrude Wigim, Genevieve Ryan and Glyde Beach were well trained.

Little Miss Ruth- Johnson and Master Walter Lane, as two Chinese children presented a charming Chinese love song that resulted in prolonged applause on the part of the audience at its conclusion. Another graceful drill was the Madam Butterfly drill, in which Miss Gertrude McNutt was the soloist....

Mrs. Helene Block Bartlett, one of the most accomplished elocutionists of the city, was heard to fine advantage in a reading taken from Madame Butterfly, and a whistling solo by Miss Olive Strickler was so well received that she was compelled to respond.

In the ambassador's garden party, the entire cast of characters assembled, on the stage as guests of the Baron Omoto. This scene resulted in the introduction of a number of specialties. Some clever dancing was featured....

The event and performance were repeated the following night, to an even larger audience, according to this September 30, 1912 *Muscatine Journal* article:

JAPANESE RESTAURANT ATTRACTS ALMOST 200: Diners Entertained On Stage Of Grand Theatre. Final Performance of Japanese Garden Fete Successful; Tea Served After Matinee.

The second performance of the "Winning of Fuji," given by local amateur Thespians Saturday evening at the Grand theatre under the auspices of the Young Women's Christian Association, was attended with even better success than marked the initial presentation of the Japanese Garden Fete on the previous evening. The young people appeared more confident in their respective roles and performed correspondingly with more ease.

During the hours of 5:30 and 7:30 o'clock, a Japanese supper s was served, the repast marking a unique occasion in Muscatine. Tables had been set on the spacious stage of the playhouse and their popularity was attested by the presence of almost two hundred diners. The menu included some dainty dishes. The waitresses enhanced the beauty of the surroundings by appearing in kimonas (*sic*), the national attire of Japan. The scene was set in palms, cherry blooms, chrysanthemums and lanterns.

Tea was served upon the conclusion of the matinee performance of the "Kiddies Costume Koncert." The beverage was served by specially appointed committees of the Y. W. C. A. from the boxes. The cups were retained by those purchasing the tea as souvenirs.

Muscatine Performance of The Mikado (1916)

The Mikado was a musical by British duo Gilbert & Sullivan that premiered in 1885 in London and has since been one of the most performed and popular of stage musicals. As Stageagent.com describes it:

As with many of Gilbert and Sullivan's productions, the show satirizes aspects of Victorian Britain's politics and aristocracy; in *The Mikado*, however, the duo cleverly cloaked these criticisms behind a charming story set not in Britain, but in exotic Japan. Nanki-Poo, the son of the Mikado (the Japanese emperor), has fled in disguise to avoid marrying a much older suitor, and to find and marry his own beloved, the beautiful Yum-Yum. Yum-Yum, however, is the ward of Ko-Ko, the lord high executioner, and has become betrothed to him against her will.... As usual in Gilbert's imaginative plots, the tangled web unravels, and everyone lives happily ever after.

On May 9, 1916, according to the next day's *Muscatine Journal*: "The greatest musical success conducted in this city in recent years was enjoyed at the Grand Theatre last evening when the members of the Philharmonic club... assisted by the Muscatine Symphony Orchestra, presented the Gilbert-Sullivan comic opera, 'The Mikado.' Every seat in the house was taken, even the gallery being packed to the doors." The *Muscatine News-Tribune* had this article the same day (*next page*):



Figure 15: A photo of the beautiful, pink blossom-filled Japanese garden setting for the 1916 Muscatine production of *The Mikado*, taken by local photographer Oscar Grossheim. The peacock on his lofty perch can be seen in front of the painted sea background. (*Muscatine Public Library*)

The gorgeousness of the Japanese costumes and the beauty of the stage settings came as a surprise to even those who had been expecting great things, the setting of the second act being such as to vie with even the most pretentious of professional operas....

The beauty of the second act, which caused the audience to applaud through sheer delight, showed a Japanese garden with the sea for a background. Trellises and arbors were hung with pink blossoms while birds were perched in trees and a handsome peacock trailed his plumage from a lofty perch. The twittering of the birds in the trees formed the prelude for this scene while the sea breeze wafted pink blossoms upon the heads of the chorus. Burning incense added reality to the scene.

Mrs. McColm would almost certainly have attended this performance if she was in town, as she was intensely interested in vocal singing and would have wanted to support a local musical organization.

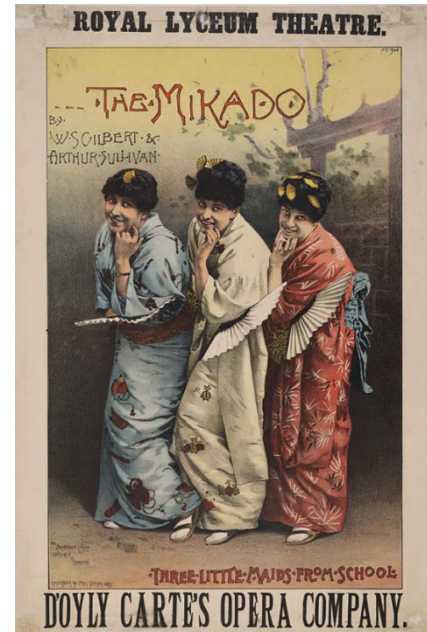


Figure 16: A poster from a D'Oyly Carte opera Company production of *The Mikado*. (National Library of Scotland)

Madame Butterfly

Mrs. McColm was also very familiar with Giacomo Puccini's opera, *Madame Butterfly*, which he published and premiered in several versions between 1904 and 1907. The opera was not performed in Muscatine before 1915, although it's likely that Mrs. McColm saw it in Chicago or another big city.

In 1915, a silent film version was released starring Mary Pickford, and filmed in the Plainfield, New Jersey Japanese-style garden of art dealer P.D. Saklatvala. The film showed in a local Muscatine theater in November 1915, and was glowingly reviewed in the Muscatine *News-Tribune*:

With the splendid settings which, have been produced as the background of Miss Pickford's unexcelled art, the photo-adaption ranks as one of the foremost productions that patrons of the A-Muse-U have ever been privileged to see.



Figure 17: A film still from *Madame Butterfly*, 1915. (imdb.com)

The well-known vocal solos from the *Madame butterfly* opera were performed numerous times in Muscatine venues, and Mrs. McColm herself performed numbers from it on more than one occasion. In perhaps the most prominent performance, Mrs. McColm performed multiple solo vocal works, including those from the opera, with the Muscatine Orchestra. The *Muscatine Journal* of March 22, 1917 had a long and appreciative article about that concert:

Capacity Crowd Hears Orchestra in Concert

Soloist Scores Triumph. Mrs. E. L. McColm as the soloist of the concert scored a distinct personal triumph. The appreciation of the immense audience at the close of her presentation of Leo Stern's "Spring" proved a veritable ovation. Her splendid tone quality and excellent interpretation proved her artistry and demonstrated that Muscatine has no need to seek outside her own borders for musical talent greatly above par....

Sings, "One Fine Day." "One Fine Day," from Puccini's "Madame Butterfly" was sung by Mrs. McColm following the overture. The selection is perhaps the most familiar of the numbers of Puccini's opera but its interpretation by the talented Muscatine soprano clothed it with new beauties. The varying moods of the heroine of the opera in the number gives the vocalist full opportunity for the display of versatility in portraying degrees of emotion. Mrs. McColm's interpretation was a remarkable one, plaintive, appealing and joyous by turn leading to the dramatic climax with a tonal power and melody which swept the audience.

McColm & Company New Store

Mrs. McColm was busy with a big project in 1916 and 1917, according to the *Muscatine News-Tribune* of May 1, 1916:

The building now occupied by the Ruthenberg store has been purchased by Mrs. E. L. McColm, who proposes to erect a magnificent, seven-story department store and office building.

Mrs. McColm's new building was indeed magnificent when it opened in October 1917. The McColms held a grand opening and "throngs attended" with "exclamations of awe and pleasure." An orchestra played on the mezzanine and a Chicago decorator made the store look magical for its opening.

The *Muscatine News-Tribune* of October 9, 1917 had a long description of the new store and its attractions, including this about the third floor:

A maze of Oriental beauty greets the eye when the third floor is reached, for after stepping from the elevator one is surrounded by all the delicate artistry of Japan. To enhance the effect, three real Japanese men in native costume conduct an informal reception and the visitor is guided about among the wonderful display of Oriental rugs, Japanese embroidered art panels, novelties of every sort, and everything is explained in true Jap(anese) fashion. Tables and chairs of hand-carved teakwood, rare tapestries and huge Japanese parasols are a delight to the eye, and after roaming about through the luxuries of this little bit of cherry-blossom land, one is brought back to real earth with a decided jolt. Much effort has been expended on the Japanese room and the effect leaves nothing to be desired.

Figure 18: An ad placed in *The Muscatine Journal*, October 10, 1917.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 10



McColm & Company
Where Fashion Reigns Supreme

**Our Grand
Formal Opening
Tonight-Thursday-Friday**

Afternoon and Evening
**Thousands of Enthusiastic People Vis-
ited Our New Home Yesterday**

"Oh: isn't it beautiful." The expression made by all as they wended their way from floor to floor, department to department, yesterday, our initial opening day.

The expression of gladness, the look of pride on their faces, their delight in having such a temple of merchandising, where they will have an unlimited selection from from which to realize their shopping desire.

We want you to come here, feel at home, make this store your store, feel that you are one of us, and that you are a part of and instrumental in our great success.

We desire at this time to express our deep gratitude to the many friends at home and abroad in social and mercantile pursuits, for the many beautiful floral tokens and well wishes expressed.

Opening Attraction

Japanese Reception--Third Floor--Japs in national costume--exploiting the arts of Japan. Living models. Misses Mae Burns, Ellen O'Connor and Adelyne Savik, Chicago Manufacturer's Association most popular Models here in talk fashion and costume impromptu.

APPAREL DISPLAYS--An exquisite showing of ultra fashionable ladies wearing apparel.

FLORAL TOKENS--Visit our Down Stairs Store and receive a beautiful floral token. 'A few steps down--a wonderful revelation.

Announcing
The
Grand Formal
OPENING
And Reception
of
McColm & Company's

beautiful new store, acknowledged the finest in Iowa. Enhanced by every new feature in equipment and system that twentieth century genius can devise.

Four Big Days of Welcome

TUESDAY

October Ninth—Afternoon and Evening

WEDNESDAY

October Tenth—Afternoon and Evening

THURSDAY

October Eleventh—Afternoon and Evening

FRIDAY October Twelfth—Afternoon and Evening

Living Models

The pronounced favorites from the Chicago Manufacturers' Association Style Show. In impromptu fashion displays.

Jap Reception

An attraction extraordinary. Natural Japanese in interesting reception, exploiting the art of Japan in natural costume. (Third Floor.)

**Grand
Musical**

By Large Concert Orchestra

All Artists

Apparel Displays

Exquisite displays of ultra-fashionable ladies' wearing apparel, equalled only in the exclusive style centers.

Floral Tokens

Choice floral tokens will be given each lady visiting our great "down stairs" store. "A few steps down"—a wonderful realization.

Rest Rooms (on the Mezzanine) Phones For Your Convenience. Parcels, Suit Cases, Etc., Checked Free.

Special Attractions On Every Floor During The Opening
Worth Coming Miles To See

**MCCOLM
& COMPANY**

"Where Fashion Reigns Supreme"

MUSCATINE, IOWA



Figure 19: McColm & Company took out a full-page ad in the *Muscatine News-Tribune* on Oct. 9, 1917.

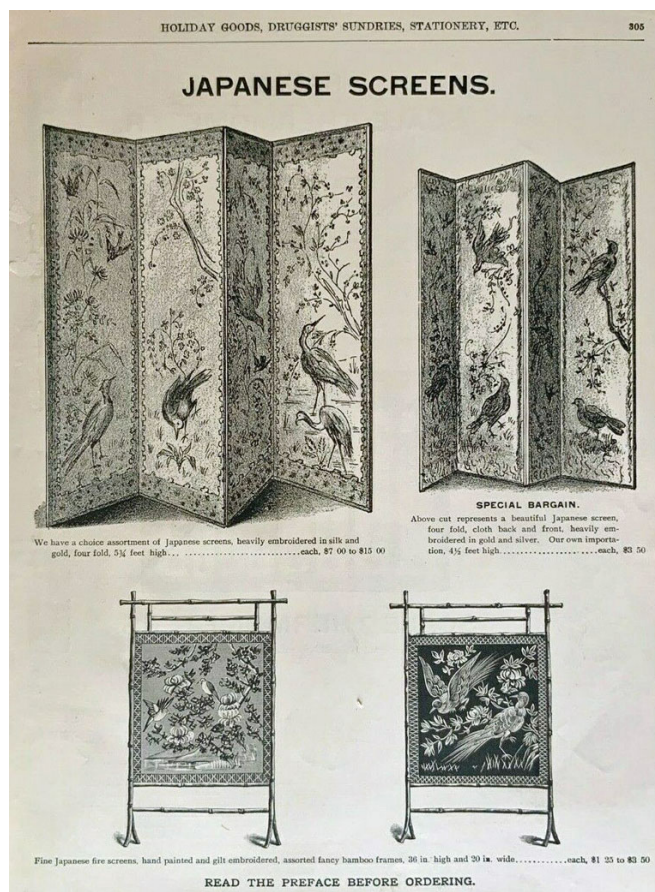
Mrs. McColm's Collection of Asian Decorative Items

Mrs. McColm collected numerous items imported from Japan, likely via the purchasing connections she and her husband had through McColm & Company.

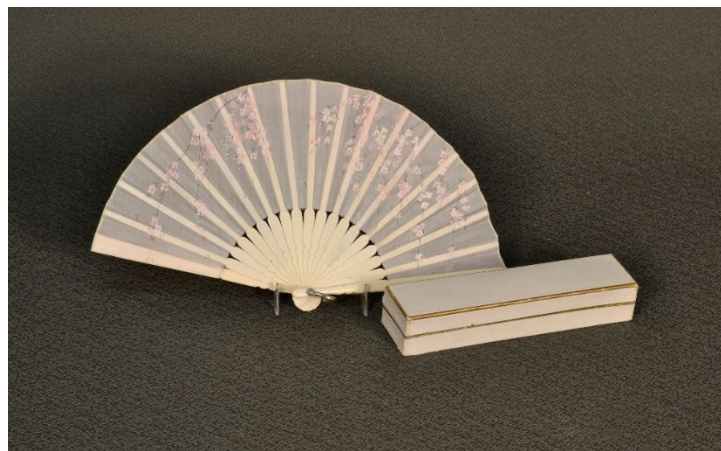
Figure 20: Mrs. McColm and her husband took numerous trips to Chicago to purchase goods for their department store, McColm & Company, often buying from the wholesale side of Marshall Field & Company. This drawing shows Marshal Field's Wholesale Building, where the McColms would have shopped. (*Glessner House Museum*)



Figure 21: A selection of Japanese decorative room screens from their 1893 catalog. (*Ebay.com*)



Below is a small selection from the many Japanese and “Oriental” decorative items and clothing among Mrs. McColm’s things now in the collection of the Muscatine Art Center:



Vantine's and Other Oriental Stores

Mrs. McColm could have purchased her Japanese art items through venues other than Marshall Field & Company. Asian items were sold nationwide through such catalogs as that of A.A. Vantine & Company. Vantine's purveyed, through its catalog and in its large shop in New York City, a wide selection of clothing, decorative items, toys, perfume, jewelry, China, fabrics, furnishings, and myriad other offerings from Japan, China, the Near East and other regions.

Figure 22 (this page and next page, top): Selections from the Vantine's catalog of 1917. (archive.org)

-A.A. VANTINE & CO. Inc.- 41



Perfumery and Toilet Requisites

THE subtle delicacy of Vantine's Oriental Perfumes, their languorous exotic fragrance and their exclusive quality—so different from the products of French or American perfumers—commend them to women of taste everywhere. They stand out from all others with the clear-cut distinctiveness of a cameo. They are unique, full of character and full of piquant novelty.

All boxes, wrappings and labels are designed in our own studios in Japan, by native artists, and are all made by native craftsmen. As gifts they are, therefore, distinctive and unique, reflecting the perfect taste and infinite patience that the Oriental bestows upon his work.

Any of the articles illustrated or described may be ordered from the following pages with the same assurance of satisfaction as though you made your selection in person. We prepay the transportation charges on all perfumery orders amounting to \$1 and over and offer for your choice the complete variety of our famous Oriental Perfumery and Toilet Requisites.

Oriental Extracts

LOTUS FLOWER. All the natural sweetness of one of the Orient's favorite flowers has been truthfully reproduced in this fragrant extract. For actual coloring of bottle see back (inside) cover.

No. 116, 1 ounce \$.75	No. 139, 4 ounces \$2.00
No. 138, 2 ounces 1.25	No. 140, 8 ounces 4.50
No. 141, 16 ounces 8.25	

KUTCH SANDALWOOD. A most distinctive fascinating perfume. Used in the Orient as far back as the fifteenth century.

No. 101, 1 ounce \$.75	No. 118, 8 ounces \$4.50
No. 102, 1 ounce \$.75	No. 121, 8 ounces \$4.50
No. 120, 2 1/2 ounces 1.50	No. 122, 16 ounces 8.25
No. 117, 2 1/2 ounces 1.50	No. 119, 16 ounces 8.25

GESHIA FLOWERS. A rich, lasting odor of honey and spice-like character.

No. 103, 1 ounce \$.75	No. 121, 8 ounces \$4.50
No. 120, 2 1/2 ounces 1.50	No. 122, 16 ounces 8.25

WISTARIA BLOSSOM. A most delightful odor to those who find pleasure in the sweetness of such flowers as the honeysuckle and carnation.

No. 111, 1 ounce \$1.25	No. 146, 8 ounces \$7.50
No. 145, 2 ounces 2.00	No. 147, 16 ounces 13.15

MIKADO. A bouquet odor which is one of the finest conceptions of the perfumer's art. It appeals to those who seek perfume of uncommon character. In artistic glass bottle, packed in hand-painted satin boxes.

No. 113, 1 1/2 ounces \$3.00	
No. 120, 8 ounces 9.00	
No. 151, 16 ounces 16.15	

TURKISH ROSE. The breath of fresh cut roses. This natural rose odor appeals to people of refined tastes.

No. 106, 1 ounce \$.75	
No. 122, 2 1/2 ounces 1.50	
No. 123, 8 ounces 4.50	
No. 134, 6 ounces 8.25	

FLOWERY KINGDOM. A combination of rare odors from Eastern blossoms in which the Oriental's art of blending has produced a perfect bouquet, delicate and fascinating.

No. 112, 2 ounces \$2.50	No. 148, 8 ounces \$8.25
No. 149, 16 ounces 14.65	

JAPANESE LILY. An odor particularly popular with women who like "perfume of personality."

No. 156, 1 ounce \$1.25	No. 157, 2 ounces \$2.00
No. 158, 8 ounces 7.50	
No. 159, 16 ounces 13.15	

We prepay all transportation charges on perfumery, etc., when the order amounts to \$1 and over

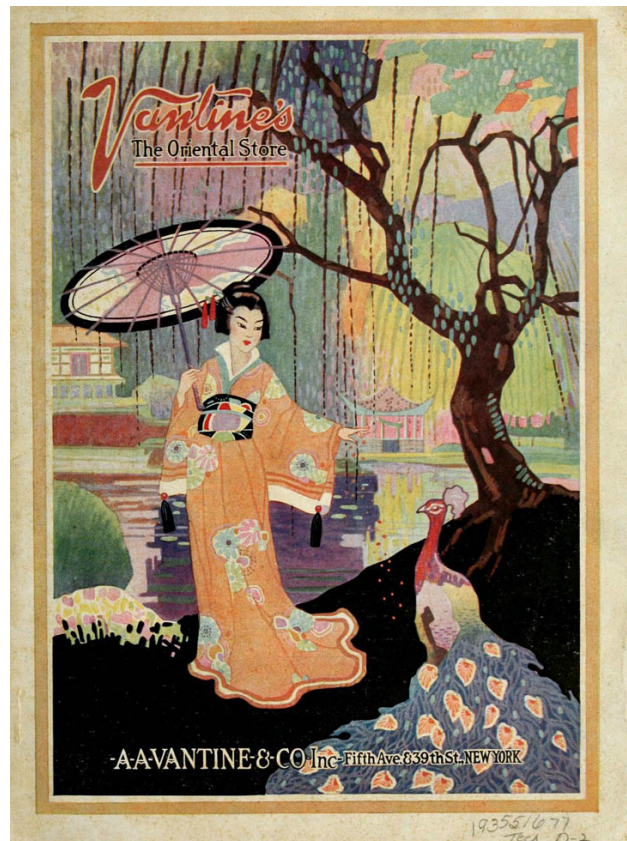


Figure 23 (next page, below): The Canton rattan furniture offered by Vantine's, from its 1917 catalog. (archive.org)

50 ·A·A·VANTINE & CO·Inc·



No. 225. Women's "Netsuke" Silk Dress. 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches; has eight light weight chains attached to ivory colored "netsuke" (button, 2 1/2 inches diameter) which is inset with embossed metal decoration, floral design, and embossed antimony metal snap clasp in a design to harmonize with material of pure; embossed design, four compartments silk lined (comes in gray, brown, old blue and dark green). Price prepaid, \$2.25



No. 216. Embossed Leather Purse 3 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches; has eight light weight chains attached to ivory colored "netsuke" (button, 2 1/2 inches diameter) which is inset with embossed metal decoration, dragon design, and embossed antimony metal snap clasp in a design to harmonize with material of pure. Oriental design, two compartments, stenciled silk lined. Price prepaid, \$1



No. 411. Chinese Hand-embroidered Canton Silk Crepe Shawl Cape with heavy silk fringe, cord and tassels, embroidered floral design. Price prepaid, \$18



No. 50. Chinese Canton Silk Crepe Embroidered Scarf. Made of heavy crepe of excellent quality, heavily embroidered in floral design. The silk fringe is 11 inches long. Size of scarf, not including fringe, 21 1/2 x 56 inches. Price prepaid, \$22.50



No. 117. Chinese Canton Silk Hand-embroidered Shawl, floral design, heavy double silk fringe. Color, cream white; size 54 x 54 inches. Price prepaid, \$30

Other size 36 inches at \$4.50 to \$6.50; 45 inches at \$12.50 to \$14.50; 54 inches at \$18 to \$20, and 69 inches at \$35 to \$70.

Vantine's—the place where the West and East meet

·A·A·VANTINE & CO·Inc· 51



Artistic Fans from China and Japan

No. 4. Chinese Open White Feather Fan, from Canton, China; with bone handle and silk tassels. Has a hand-painted floral design on feathers near top and pretty ossette at bottom. Size 9 x 13 1/2 inches. Price prepaid, \$1.25

No. 2. Chinese Carved Sandalwood Fan, geometrical design, silken cord and tassels; 7 1/2 inches long. Price each, 50c.

No. 1. Chinese Open White Feather Fan, from Canton, China. With bone handle; silk tassels and enameled butterfly ornament at bottom. Quills are covered front and back with down feathers. Size 10 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches. Price prepaid, \$1.75

No. 6. Black Silk Fan, with wistaria design embroidered in black, carved black bamboo sticks, silk tassels. Size 8 1/2 inches long. Price prepaid, \$3.75

No. 3. Child's Hand-painted Silk Fan, carved bamboo sticks, assorted floral designs on light blue, pink or white ground. Price each, 50c.

No. 5. Chinese Hand-painted Carved Sandalwood and Peacock Feather Folding Fan, length 13 1/2 inches; sticks of sandalwood, prettily carved, and feathers on which are painted characteristic Chinese decorations, finished with genuine peacock feathers in matched coloring. Price prepaid, \$1.50

No. 7. Chinese Open White Feather Fan with bone handle, beautifully decorated in hand-painted floral design, natural colorings, has silk tassels and enameled ornament. Size 10 1/2 x 15 1/2 inches. Price prepaid, \$1.75

No. 9. Chinese Open Feather Fan, of white feathers, finished at top and bottom with peacock feathers, beautifully matched. Has bone handle, silk tassels and enameled butterfly at top of handle. Made in Canton, China. Size 10 1/2 x 18 inches. Price prepaid, \$2.25

We forward all fans in pretty presentation boxes

90 ·A·A·VANTINE & CO·Inc·



Canton Furniture

FROM the luxury-loving Far East comes this artistic example of Oriental craftsmanship—Canton Rattan Furniture—suggesting in its every line fireside comfort and restful repose. Graceful in design, sanitary in construction and moderate in price, it is the ideal furniture for bedroom, sitting room, library or den.

Woven by hand, without a visible nail in its entire construction, chairs, stools and tables of this quaint Oriental product may be placed on a highly polished floor, rug or carpet without any fear of scratches or marking. It harmonizes wonderfully well with furniture of severer lines and because of its lightness may be frequently moved with only the slightest exertion. (Inverted, the tables may be used as laundry hampers, while the stools, when used in the manner suggested, make unique waste baskets.) Unlike any other furniture it is unaffected by the elements and in summer the chairs, tables and stools in the "hour-glass" designs may be placed on the lawn as satisfactorily as on the porch, as they have no legs to sink into the earth.

We do not prepay the transportation charges on Canton Furniture, but owing to its light weight it can be shipped at very little expense. Full information regarding express and freight charges will be promptly furnished if desired.



No. 2A. Canton Rattan Stand or Stool; may also be used as a waste basket when inverted. Height 9 1/2 inches; diameter of top 11 1/2 inches; weight 1 1/2 pounds. May be sent by parcel post. Price, \$1.25



No. 2. Canton Rattan Stand or Stool; 18 inches high; top 12 1/2 inches in diameter; weight 3 pounds. May be sent by parcel post. Has four braces reinforcing top and bottom. May also be used as waste basket when inverted. Price, \$2.25

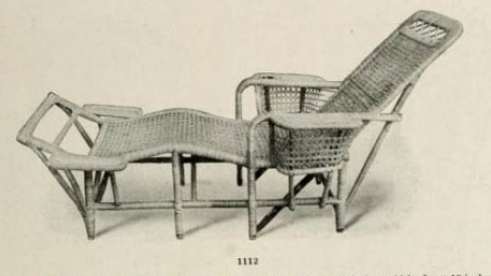


No. 3. Canton Rattan Table, (or Inverted) Laundry Hamper. Height 16 1/2 inches; diameter of top 16 1/2 inches; weight 8 pounds. Price, \$6

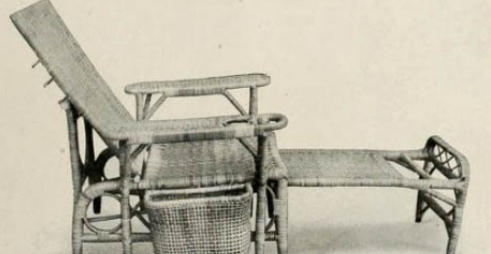
No. 7. Table as above but 24 inches high; diameter of top 19 1/2 inches; weight 15 pounds. Price, \$5

All furniture prices quoted are f. o. b. New York

·A·A·VANTINE & CO·Inc· 91



No. 1112. Height of back 35 inches; length of chair from back to foot rest 74 inches; width of seat 19 inches; weight 20 pounds. Price, \$16.50



No. 1294. Height of back 27 inches; width of seat 19 inches; extreme length with foot rest extended 74 inches; weight 24 pounds. Price, \$18

We do not prepay the transportation charges on furniture



A. A. VANTINE & CO.

Canton Summer Chairs at Vantine's

MADE in China for us of weatherproof rattan and shipped to New York for you—reflecting the luxurious Oriental idea of flexible Summer comfort. Featherweight but strong—without an angle to suggest restraint or an edge to scratch or mar.

Vantine's Canton Furniture offers an atmosphere for outdoor hospitality more inviting than pieces costing ten times as much. Hour Glass Chairs, \$4.50, \$5, \$6 and up to \$12, according to size and shape. Tea, Card and Lawn Tables, \$1.75 to \$5.50.

"Comfortable Summer Furniture"

Is the title of a beautiful little book printed in four colors—with scenic suggestions of the manifold uses of this artistic and expensive Summer luxury for Porch, Lawn, Country Club or Yacht. A copy of this Book will be mailed upon request.

The Unique Things from the Orient Come to Vantine's

Our collection of Bronze Lanterns, Buddhas, Storks and other figures, Kongs and Garden Lanterns is one which is beyond comparison in this country. In reproducing views of stone lanterns and figures in actual size and amidst their surroundings of cool greenery, babbling brooks and placid pools, the Vantine book

"Japanese Gardens in America"

aids even a well trained imagination with suggestions for garden and lawn decorations. An intensely interesting book—May we send a copy to you?

Japanese Screens
Table Porcelain
Oriental Rugs
Draperies and
Wall Fabrics
Dress Silks
Perfumes
Kimonos



The Oriental Store.

BROADWAY at 18th St., NEW YORK
Stores also at Boston and Philadelphia

You can shop by Mail at Vantine's with the same assurance of satisfaction as if you personally purchased in our store.



Figure 24: This Vantine's advertisement from *American Homes and Gardens*, May 1912 shows the company's Canton Furniture, illustrated in an outdoor garden setting, together with an illustration of a Japanese garden lantern. The ad offered a booklet published by Vantine's, "Japanese Gardens in America," which I have not been able to locate a copy of. (archive.org)



Japanese Stone Lantern and Dwarf Wistaria

(Photo Courtesy of Country Life of America)

In Japan the humblest home invariably possesses some sort of a garden, while the gardens of the well-to-do are often veritable places of enchantment. The typical Japanese garden is laid out with winding paths, miniature hills, streams or lakes, and frequently one or more waterfalls. Trees and shrubs are trimmed and trained in curious fashion, while color is an ever present contrasting beautifier in the shape of blooming bushes as well as those bearing only brilliant hued leaves and occasionally well arranged flower beds.

The special value of the Japanese garden in this country lies in the availability of small areas. Often the size of a piece of land precludes the possibility of an Italian garden or a naturalistic treatment of the American plan. But a Japanese garden may be had in all its completeness in a space where one would have said there was scarcely room for a flower bed. Other systems copy nature on only one set of terms, those of life size, but the Japanese method, while it can be and often is developed on a large scale, may also be reduced from natural size through all stages to a tiny miniature.

Aside from this great advantage, the Japanese garden has other qualities which make it valuable for adaptation by American gardeners. It furnishes a new note for those seeking original treatment of their places, while at the same time it has a beauty which grows upon acquaintance—and there is no kind of garden which has about it a richer amount of sentiment and tradition than the Japanese.

Recognizing the rapidly growing inclination on the part of owners of American homes to make their gardens more and more an out-of-door part of the home itself, Vantine's maintain a special Japanese gardening department which is prepared at all times to furnish Japanese garden ornaments, including such pieces as stone lanterns, stone animals (in the shape of frogs, cows, etc.), bronze lanterns, buddhas, kongs (large pottery jardinières) and various other ornaments.

To those wishing to beautify and create in the exterior environment of the home a refinement and artistic atmosphere which will outrival that to be found in the famous gardens of Italy, we offer the service of this department, and upon request will furnish gratis full information, suggestions, and where necessary photographs and sketches.

•A·A·VANTINE·&·CO·Inc·

Figure 25: The 1914 Vantine's catalog included this page about the company's Japanese gardening department, which offered stone lanterns and animals, bronze lanterns, Buddhas, etc., and even seems to have offered advice about the best placement of such items. (archive.org)

3. Nearby Japanese-Style Gardens

Before building her own Japanese-style garden, Mrs. McColm almost certainly visited a number of other Japanese-style gardens that had been constructed in the Midwest. These undoubtedly influenced her decision to have such a garden made, and may have been the way in which she found a designer to build her garden.

Following, I'll discuss the gardens that Mrs. McColm was most likely to have read about or to have visited (these and other Midwestern private Japanese-style gardens are covered in greater detail in Papers Numbers 4 and 9 in this series). These several gardens are listed in order of geographical closeness:

Quarters One Garden and Teahouse: Rock Island Arsenal (1919)



Figure 26: The Japanese-style tea house on the edge of the Mississippi River on Rock Island Arsenal, next to Quarters One. A naturalistic rock-edged pond was constructed nearby. (*Army Sustainment Command History Office, Rock Island, Illinois*)

In 1919, Mrs. Harry B. Jordan had a Japanese-style tea house and naturalistic rock-edged pond constructed at her residence at Quarters One of Rock Island Arsenal, in the Mississippi River next to Davenport. She was the wife of Colonel Jordan, Commandant of the Arsenal from 1919 to 1921. (See paper Number 9 in this series for more information about her garden.)

Numerous social events were held in the extensive Quarters One gardens and neighboring golf club during the 1920s, during both Col. Jordan's and his successor, Col. King's, time on Rock Island.

Notable was a late evening garden party held on June 10, 1921, following a concert given by a famous tenor during the convention of the National Federation of Musical Clubs in the Tri-Cities. Mrs. McColm was almost certainly part of the newly organized Muscatine Music Club when that event took place; she had given a vocal concert for the group only a month before. The Muscatine Music Club was a member club of the Federation, so it's likely that many Muscatine members attended the convention. Mrs. McColm and her husband would likely have heard the tenor's performance, and may have been among the 250 guests who attended the magical evening garden party afterward.

Even if Mrs. McColm didn't see the Arsenal garden and tea house that evening, it's highly likely that she would have seen it on another visit to the Tri-Cities, only 30 miles from Muscatine.



Figure 27: A view of the naturalistic pond garden constructed at Quarters One, with its beautiful stacked-limestone rockwork, waterfall and planting of evergreens and irises. (*Army Sustainment Command History Office, Rock Island, Illinois*)

Eastman Garden: Burlington, Iowa (c. 1912)

The Japanese-style garden of Millie and E.P. Eastman at 719 Columbia Street in Burlington was likely the first Japanese-style garden made in Iowa, probably built around 1912. Although two postcard images and several photos of parts of the Eastman garden have survived, none show any features of the Japanese-style part of their garden. Fortunately, a detailed description of it written by Helen M. Stevens was published in the March 1913 issue of *The House Beautiful* magazine.

It's likely that Mrs. McColm knew the Eastmans, as the Eastmans owned a large Burlington furniture showroom and factory, and the McColms owned a large Muscatine department store – and Burlington is only 50 miles from Muscatine. Mrs. McColm may even have visited Mrs. Eastman's garden, or at least have been aware of it.



Figure 28: A sketch of what the Japanese-style part of the Eastman garden might have looked like, based on the *House Beautiful* description. Included are the “miniature torrent” flowing down the hillside into a small pond; a house with a “thatched, umbrella-shaped roof” containing moveable bamboo seats; a “tall, twisted pine,” a Japanese-style lantern; a “path of smooth stones”; and a “high gateway with doors of carved wood.” (drawing by author)

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

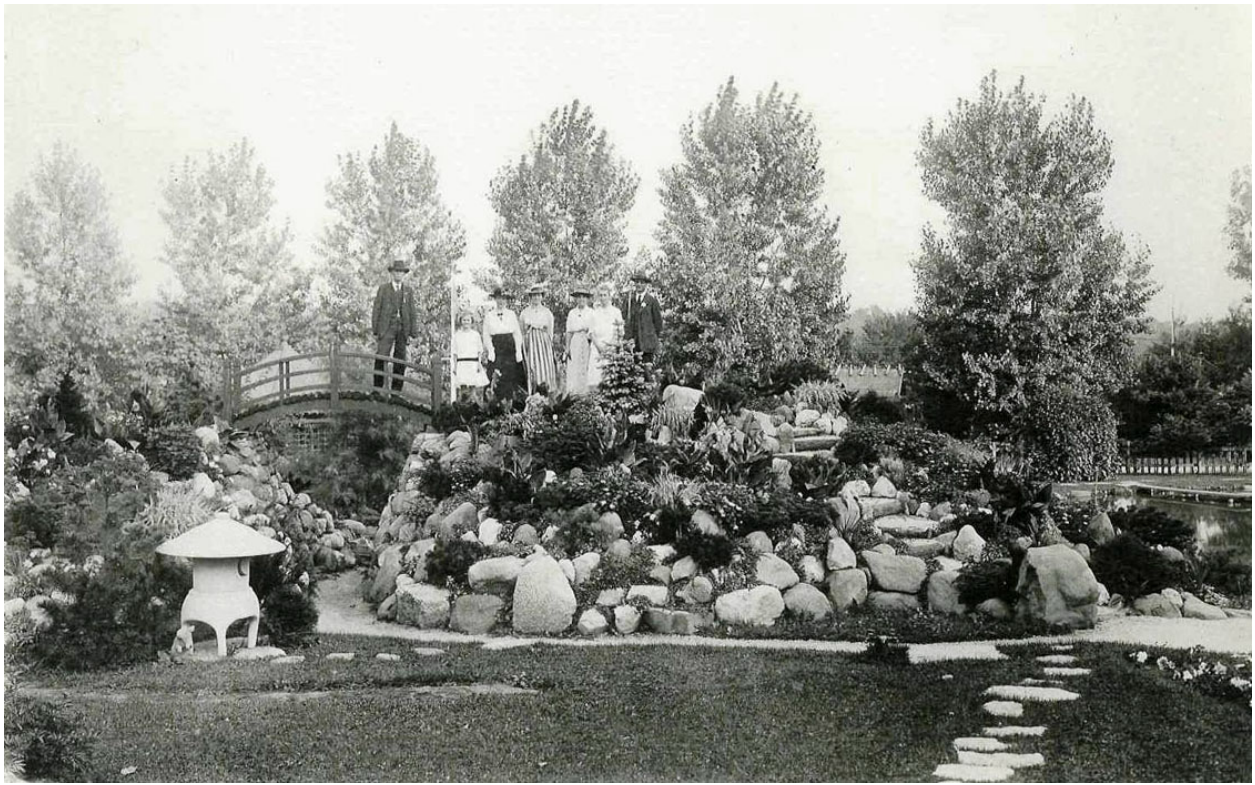


Figure 29: Visitors to the Japanese-style garden of George and Nelle Fabyan in Geneva, Illinois, perhaps around 1920. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)

Colonel George and Nelle Fabyan had a Japanese-style garden built at their estate in Geneva, Illinois between 1910 and 1914. Colonel Fabyan was a well-known person in Illinois, and numerous visitors stopped by his estate for tours of his famed Japanese-style garden.

It's unknown whether Mrs. McColm ever visited the Fabyan estate in Geneva, but it's certainly possible, as the towns are only 170 miles apart, and Mrs. McColm often traveled to Chicago – and a major railroad line to Chicago ran through Geneva.

John Bradstreet Crafhhouse Garden: Minneapolis, Minnesota (1903)



Figure 30: A photo of Bradstreet's Japanese-style garden at his Crafhhouse art studio in Minneapolis, taken around 1918. A pond, lanterns and an ancient wooden zig-zag bridge purchased from the 1904 World's Fair Imperial Japanese Garden in St. Louis can be seen in the photo. (*Minneapolis Historical Society*)

John S. Bradstreet, an interior design artist who had traveled to Japan numerous times before 1900, built a number of Japanese-style gardens for himself and for Minneapolis clients between around 1890 and his death in 1914 (his first garden was likely one of the earliest Japanese-style gardens built in the US).

Bradstreet's most visible garden was at his Crafhhouse, an art studio and artistic center of Minneapolis that he built around 1903. His garden was open to the public at his Crafhhouse studio, and influenced many Minneapolis residents, along with the educational lectures on Asian art and gardens that he gave locally.

Mrs. McCollm often traveled past Minneapolis to visit her brother, Drew, and his family in Little Falls, Minnesota, and she may well have visited Bradstreet's Crafhhouse, being clearly interested in Asian art and decorative items, which Bradstreet purveyed there. If so, she would have seen his well-known Japanese garden.

4. Mrs. McColm's Japanese Garden

By the late 1920s, Mrs. McColm had become enthusiastic about her gardens, likely due to the establishment of the Muscatine Garden Club in 1929, along with the growing popularity of gardening throughout the United States during the 1920s.

Her decision to add a Japanese-style garden to her property may not have been an impetuous one – she may have entertained the idea for years before her newfound enthusiasm for gardening arrived with the garden club, and prompted her to take action.

By 1929, around the age of 52, Mrs. McColm had decided to build a Japanese-style garden on her property. The probable dates of construction are analyzed in the following section:

Date of Construction

Mrs. McColm almost certainly had her garden constructed in 1929 or 1930, based on newspaper articles that appeared locally. Of course, something momentous happened at the end of 1929: the October 29 “Black Friday” stock market crash and the following onset of the Great Depression. Would she have made a new garden after the beginning of the economic downturn, which must have hurt McColm & Company as badly as it did other retail businesses of the era?

A close reading of newspaper articles that appeared in *The Muscatine Journal* during these two years may provide us with clues about when the garden was constructed:

September 13, 1929:

Garden Club to Visit M'colm Gardens Monday

The Muscatine Garden club will resume regular session at 2:30 Monday afternoon with a meeting at the Y.M.C.A. Following the presentation of the subject, "Fall Planting and Dahlias," the members will go to the E. L. McColm gardens.

The article of that date mentions nothing about a Japanese garden, only the dahlias that Mrs. McColm grew in her gardens (she won a prize for them in the club's September 1930 Flower Show).

October 5, 1929:

An announcement of the Twentieth Century Club's schedule of meetings for the following year announced that the final event of the club year would be: “June (1930), Mrs. E.L. McColm, hostess at garden party.”

June 11, 1930:

Garden Party Closes Year For Study Club

A garden party, the final meeting of the year for the members of the Twentieth Century study club, was held Tuesday afternoon at the home of Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue. Following the installation of officers and other business, a supper was served on the lawn.

A short playlet, *with the setting in a Japanese garden*, was offered at dusk by members of the club, under the direction of Mrs. Frank Giesler. (*emphasis added*)

This article did not specify that the playlet's "setting in a Japanese garden" was in an actual Japanese-style garden at Mrs. McColm's house, but it is probable that this is what the author meant.

October 21, 1930:

Moving Pictures of Foreign Gardens Shown

Moving pictures of gardens of different countries, taken by Mrs. G. R. Titus on her trip abroad, were shown at the meeting of the Muscatine Garden club held Monday afternoon at the home of Mrs. E. L. McColm, Mulberry avenue. The pictures were excellent illustrations of Mrs. Titus' topic, "Impressions of Foreign Gardens," and included examples of gardens in the Orient.

May 12, 1931:

This issue of *The Muscatine Journal* describes her Japanese-style garden in some detail, and also asserts that the garden was started in 1930 (*emphasis added*):

Garden Club Enjoys Tour of Jap(anese) Model

Members of the Garden club studied the model Japanese garden of Mrs. E. L. McColm, Mulberry avenue, at their meeting Monday afternoon at the home. An article in the March issue of *Country Life* was read by Mrs. George Hermann, which interpreted the idea of a Jap(anese) garden. In planting a garden, the Japanese bring out a motive, each flower representing an idea, so that when in bloom, both a picture and story are presented.

The Jap(anese) rock garden at the McColm home was carried out the true Jap(anese) motif. There are the four pools, three waterfalls, and a stream meandering for 75 feet.

The garden, started last year, is at its full glory now, with the iris in bloom, and the flowers and shrubbery grown among the rocks to make a woodland scene. Even the bridges crossing the waterfalls and stream are representative. The stone lanterns are of Jap(anese) make. The tour of the garden was highly interesting and pictorial, in view of the study of the club.

Analysis

Mrs. McColm undoubtedly already planned by October 1929 to have her new garden area installed by June 1930, the planned date for the garden party at her property.

The garden was almost certainly constructed between late September 1929 (after the mid-September Garden Club meeting at her house) and June 1930 (when the playlet was held in the setting of a Japanese garden). Garden work of this sort can be done as late as November (although in Iowa, evergreen trees will not always have time to establish themselves if planted so late in the year, immediately before the onset of winter), or as early as the beginning of March, as long as a late snowfall does not interfere with the work. The garden was most likely constructed in either October 1929 or April-May 1930.

The 1931 *Muscatine Journal* article stated that the garden was started “last year,” that is, in 1930. But could such a complex garden been built in such a short time, in Spring 1930, to be finished for the June 1930 garden party?

Advertisements for Japanese garden designers of the period (see below) often mentioned that they were able to build gardens with surprisingly quick results: likely taking no more than a few weeks.

April-May 1930 is probably the most likely construction period for the garden:

1. The 1931 *Muscatine Journal* article states that the garden was started in 1930.
2. Spring is a better time for planting trees in Iowa than fall.
3. Construction of the garden probably needed at most only a few weeks.

But what about the economic problems in the United States that had commenced in the previous autumn? Perhaps it was not clear in late 1929 how severe or long-lasting the Great Depression would prove to be, or perhaps Mrs. McColm’s financial interests in her father’s businesses were more immune to the downturn than her husband’s retail business, a sector that was hit particularly hard. Maybe once she had decided to have the garden made in anticipation of her garden party, she was determined to go through with it despite the economic situation. Perhaps she had already paid a deposit for materials to the garden builder before the stock market crash.

Despite the economic downturn, upon the balance of all the evidence, April-May 1930 is probably the most likely construction period for Mrs. McColm’s Japanese-style garden.

Garden Plan and Details

In order to closely analyze Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden, I'll provide a description of the garden's features, as well as early photos that are available at the Muscatine Art Center, mostly utilizing passages of technical description of the historical garden that were written by Iowa State University professor of landscape architecture Heidi Hohmann in her report: "Historic Landscape Preservation Plan for the Japanese Garden, Laura Musser McColm Atkins House," September 2020. I'll add historical background about garden features as discovered.



Figure 31: A photo of the upper level of Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden in the early 1930s. This is the best early image that exists of the garden. Note the porous limestone rock sitting just behind the rustic Torii gate, and others of that type surrounding the small pond and Buddhist temple steps at back. (MAC)

Garden Entrance

(Hohmann) The garden was built on three levels, connected by two slopes held back by large, irregularly shaped granite stones, leading down from Mulberry Avenue toward the back of the property. A Torii—or Japanese garden entrance gate—marked the entrance to the uppermost level of the garden. Circulation was defined by a stepping stone pathway laid in grass that led

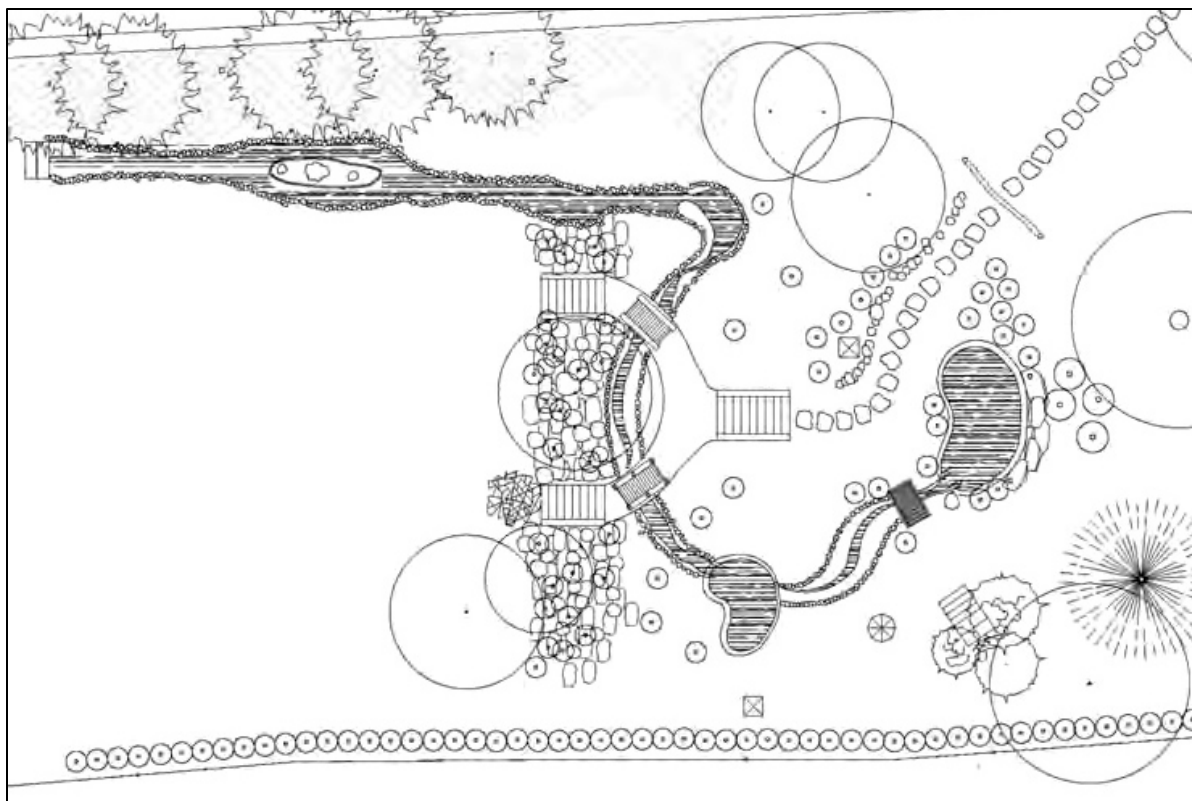


Figure 32: Detail of a historic garden plan drawn by H. Hohmann to represent the original garden design dating to 1929-1930. The plan does not indicate the descending changes in level from right to left, but the three stairways show where those level changes occur between the terraced levels that were created. Water flowed from the upper pond at right to the bottom of the stream, far left. (*Hohmann*)

through the Torii to the garden and thence down a set of three stairs to the lower levels. The path led from the front porch of the house to the garden. Photos show the Torii approximately 9 feet in height and made of irregularly-shaped tree trunks (or branches), and polished with a dark hue.”

Torii gates have traditionally been used to mark the entrance to Shinto (and occasionally, Buddhist) shrines: they delineate the transition from everyday mundane places to sacred spaces, and may have originated in India, with gates to Buddhist temples.

In Japan, torii gates are usually painted bright red, with only the top bar painted black. It is not possible to determine the original colors of Mrs. McColm’s Torii from the black and white photograph that exists.

Torii are used in gardens in Japan only to indicate the presence of a shrine behind it – which is the case in Mrs. McColm’s garden: hers is a Buddhist shrine. Early Japanese-American garden designers would often only build a torii gate for a client’s garden if they also included a small shrine behind it, in order to honor the torii’s spiritual meaning, according to Anika Ogusu of the Real Japanese Gardens blog. So, if Mrs. McColm requested a torii gate, she may have had to have the shrine built too.



Figure 33: Two photos of the upper pond in Mrs. McColm's garden. (MAC)



Upper Pond

(*Hohmann*) The pathway through the Torii was framed by a grouping of mixed shrubs and a stone lantern on the right and led past the garden's largest concrete pool, the source of the garden's central, important water feature—a stream connecting a series of small pools running through the garden. Kidney-shaped and approximately 13 x 7 feet, the pool was surrounded by stones, low and just above water level in the front, with creeping vegetation planted between them.

The “back” (or avenue side) of the pool was lined with large, horizontally shaped stones mounded into a low hill or grouping about 3 feet high.

Note: It's unknown whether a waterfall originally poured water from the higher rocks, splashing onto the lower rocks to flow into the upper pond. This was very common in Japanese-style ponds. None of the 1930s photos show running water, but a waterfall either might have stopped functioning before the photos were taken, or perhaps it was shut off to obtain better photos.

Not quite forming a wall, these stones were backed by a composition of mixed, varied evergreen shrubs of medium height. The current yews may or may not be shown in photographs of this time period; what is clear, however, is that at least three different species of evergreen can be seen located behind the pond. A few larger trees can also be seen behind these shrubs. Together these layers of vegetation served to enclose the pool and upper edge of the garden, separating it from the lawn along the Mulberry Avenue frontage, making it more private.

Two large, metal sculptures of cranes initially ornamented the pond, one located within the pond, one atop the mound, though other sculptures were added and subtracted in this area over the years. The upper level of the garden was primarily surfaced in lawn.



Figure 34: The concrete stream bed in Mrs. McColm's garden around 1935. (*MAC*)



Figure 35: A close-up of the steps leading to the Buddhist shrine in Mrs. McColm's garden, and the bridge and lantern on the upper level. (MAC)

Stream

(*Hohmann*) A concrete stream channel led from the far side of the kidney-shaped pool down the slope to the rest of the garden. Early photos depict a concrete edge to the stream; later, stones were added along its length on the upper level of the garden.

Shrine

(*Hohmann*) A low, arched bridge crossed the stream and led to a wooden "shrine." The size of a large dollhouse, the shrine was a small structure with a gable roof and was located atop a set of stone steps.

The Japanese shrine in Mrs. McColm's garden is a *Butsudan*, a Buddhist altar or shrine commonly found in temples and homes in Japanese Buddhist cultures. A butsudan is either an ornate platform or a wooden cabinet, often with doors that enclose and protect a *Gohonzon* or religious icon, such as a statue or painting of a Buddha or Bodhisattva.

A butsudan usually contains religious accessories, called *butsugu*, such as incense burners, bells, candlesticks and platforms for placing offerings like fruit, tea or rice. The *butsudan*, which is still found in the majority of Japanese homes, is the focus of spiritual faith in traditional Japanese

households, and is used for paying respects to the Buddha, and especially for honoring family members who have died.

Bridges

(*Hohmann*) The bridge leading to the shrine was made of thin twigs (or possibly bamboo), and was the one of three similar bridges crossing the stream. A composition of evergreen and deciduous shrubs formed a backdrop for the shrine; behind it, a privet hedge lined an iron fence atop a concrete wall that separated the McColm property from its neighbor.

Garden Levels

(*Hohmann*) The stream led down the upper slope into a another, smaller, slightly kidney shaped pool and from there across the width of the garden. This second, narrow level of the garden also contained a fork in the garden path, which led from a flight of stairs traversing the first slope to a set of two stairs traversing the second. These three sets of steps are an important circulation feature, and were originally lined with cheek walls. It seems that the path on the second level connecting the two steps has always been concrete, in contrast to the grass on levels above and below.

The other two bridges were located on this path and crossed the stream enroute to the two sets of steps. The stream, which appears on this level to be edged with rocks in most photographs, continued northwest to the other side of the garden where it filled another small pool. Then it tumbled down the second, lower slope to run at the base of a slope, lined with sumac, along the full length of the lower garden.

Figure 36: This photo shows the three levels of the Japanese garden. Boulders are arranged to anchor the changes in grade between the levels, with a different stacked limestone arrangement in the lower center section. (MAC)



5. Possible Designers of the Garden

Perhaps the most intriguing unanswered question concerning Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden, after determining *when* it was built, is: "*who* designed and built it?"

The design of the garden area suggests several things about the designer and builder:

- First, early photos of Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden taken during the 1930s show skilled rockwork: the arrangement of stones and evergreen plants was not awkward or fussy like that shown in photos of rock gardens constructed by amateur enthusiasts of the period. Even a local landscaping company would probably not have been able to arrange the stones and accompanying evergreen shrubs so artistically, as this natural style of rock gardening was still new to the Midwest in the late 1920s. Only someone experienced in constructing rock gardens would have been capable of this level of artistic arrangement.
- Second, the waterworks were complex in this garden, with several ponds and a concrete stream bed that meandered irregularly between the ponds downhill diagonally for nearly 100 feet. Water was then recirculated back up to the top-level main pond. This design required skill in waterworks to construct, in order to make the water flow correctly and the ponds and streams to hold water, as well look artistic and somewhat natural in design.
- Third, despite its design complexity, the Japanese-style part of Mrs. McColm's garden was constructed quickly, likely during the limited window of April or May 1930. This wasn't a gradually accomplished, learn-as-you-go project that stretched out over years of steady improvements. The speed with which this complex garden was entirely constructed indicates that whoever built the garden knew what they were doing: they were highly experienced and had made many gardens of similar complexity before.

With these factors in mind, I will investigate each possible candidate for having made the garden, to assess the likelihood of each.

1. Mrs. McColm herself

The first possibility is that Mrs. McColm designed her Japanese garden herself. She was known to enjoy growing dahlias and was a member of the Muscatine Garden Club from its establishment in early 1929. And her other garden areas before this period contained some decorative garden features that were common to the period of the 1920s and '30s.

However, it is unlikely that Mrs. McColm was the designer of her Japanese-style garden area, because she did not have a long history of interest in gardens and garden design. The local garden club had only just been established in 1929, and there is no record of Mrs. McColm participating in other garden-related activities before that year.



Figure 37: A section of Mrs. McColm's garden that likely predated her Japanese-style garden area. A lovely white-painted wood trellis and arbor – a very typical garden feature during the late 1920s and early 1930s – was the backdrop for an old-fashioned row of hollyhocks and ornamental vines. A garden bed at forefront was likely where Mrs. McColm grew rows of dahlias and other cutting flowers. (MAC)

A few garden design books were among the possessions in her home when it became a museum (Gertude Jekyll's *Gardens for Small Country Houses*, 1914; *Beautiful Gardens in America* by Louise Shelton 1928; *Garden Guide: the Amateur Gardener's Handbook*, 1934). However, a true gardening enthusiast – particularly a wealthy one – would have owned far more than these few standard gardening books of the period.

Most Japanese-style gardens in the United States were+ designed by Japanese immigrant gardeners (according to Japanese garden history authority Kendall H. Brown), by American artists, or by ardent longtime American gardeners. Mrs. McColm was not herself a visual artist (although she patronized artists' work), and had only recently shown any sign of interest in gardening when her Japanese-style garden was made around 1930. The garden club was simply another of her many interests, such as music performance, social clubs and charitable organizing.

Therefore, it seems extremely unlikely that Mrs. McColm had any hand in designing or building the Japanese-inspired part of her garden, beyond expressing preferences for the choices offered by the designer.

2. Drew Nagle, gardener

A second possibility is that the Japanese garden was designed and built by Mrs. McColm's gardener, Drew Nagel (or by Mrs. McColm and Drew Nagel working together).

In order to assess the likelihood of this possibility, I'll relate what is known about Nagel's life and career, before and after he worked for Mrs. McColm:

Drew Nagel's Early Life

Drew Richard Nagel was born May 22, 1898, according to his gravestone in Rock Island National Cemetery, pictured at Findagrave.com. The U.S. Census of 1900 shows him as a small child living with his parents and six siblings in Bloomington Township, just north of the city limits of Muscatine.

Drew's father, Peter Nagle (sic), was described as a 47-year-old with an occupation of "Farmer & Dairy" who had been born in Germany in September 1853 and immigrated to the United States eighteen years before in 1882. Drew's mother, Elizabeth, was 42 and had been born in Iowa to German parents.

Peter Nagel rented land, according to the census, and the 1899 Atlas of Muscatine County shows that Laura Musser McColm's father, Peter Musser, owned a dairy farm (the only dairy farm indicated in the Bloomington Township section of the atlas) in the northwest corner of Section 24 (approximately where the Muscatine County Sheriff's Department currently stands on Park Road West).

In 1910, Peter Nagel was shown renting land somewhere in Wilton Township, about 7 miles northeast of the city of Muscatine. In January 1920, Drew, then 21 years of age, is shown working as a farm laborer, still living with his parents, on his father's rented land in Farmington Township of Cedar County.

At age 25, Drew married 19-year-old Vera E. Phipps on March 15, 1924 in Burlington.

Drew Nagel's Employment by Mrs. McColm

Drew Nagel was hired by Mrs. McColm for yard maintenance work around 1925, and worked in that position until 1937, according to two entries in her 1937 diary:

Tuesday, July 20, 1937: "Drew Nagel told me he had a very good job offered him in Davenport and would be leaving very soon."

Saturday, July 24, 1937: "Drew Nagel leaves today. He has been here twelve years. I surely wish him well."

Drew's sister, Hattie Nagel, was living at 1314 Mulberry Avenue in 1912 when she was around 22 years old, according to a *Muscatine Journal* listing of Muscatine residents who attended the Wilton Fair on August 16 of that year. Presumably she was employed as a maid for the McColms. Hattie married in 1917 and moved to Burlington, but perhaps she kept in touch with someone in the household and knew when Mrs. McColm was looking to employ a new "house & yard man," and could have suggested to her newly-married brother to apply for the job.

Drew Nagel was shown living with his wife and two children, Mary (5) and James (2), at 1314 Mulberry Avenue in the 1930 Census. His occupation was listed as “Gardner.” His wife may have worked as a housekeeper for Mrs. McColm at some point, but was not listed as such in the Census that year.

Drew and Vera’s marriage must have been rocky: Drew Nagel filed for divorce from his wife in 1934. But they remarried to each other again on July 10, 1937 – although Vera must have married someone else in the interim, as her name was listed as Vera Sohsen on the marriage license.

The date of their remarriage was only 10 days before he gave notice to Mrs. McColm that he was leaving her employ for the job offered to him in Davenport. But Vera Nagel filed for divorce from Drew in 1939, and that time seems to have been final (and she evidently married Frank Sohsen again in 1988).



Figure 38: Drew Nagel in the Japanese garden, perhaps right before he was to leave Mrs. McColm’s employ in July 1937. (MAC)

Drew’s Life and Employment After Mrs. McColm

The “very good job” Drew Nagel was offered in 1937 was probably for maintaining the grounds of the house of Abraham W. Gellman, founder of the Gellman Manufacturing Company (whom he worked for at some point, according to Nagel’s July 4, 1979 obituary in the *Quad-City Times*). Mr. and Mrs. Gellman resided at their Rock Island estate named “Hawthorne Hills” on the corner of 38th Street and Old Black Hawk Road, currently more than seven wooded acres in size.

In November 1942, Drew Nagel registered for active duty with the U.S. Army and served as a private during the war. His civilian occupation was listed as “Gardeners and grounds keepers, parks, cemeteries, etc.” In April 1943, Mrs. Gellman advertised for an “Experienced Man: For garden and yard work,” to replace him as the springtime garden season arrived – probably not an easy position to fill in 1943 when millions of men were employed by Uncle Sam.

After the war, Drew was hired by Rock Island High School as a custodian and groundskeeper, a position he held for 20 years until his retirement in 1966. Nagel maintained the high school football field as part of his duties there, and befriended numerous high school players during that time. According to *The Rock Island Argus*, before his retirement, the football team presented him with a football signed by all the players, together with a tractor in the shape of a trophy, at their football banquet in November 1966.

Drew Nagel married one more time, in 1966 to Edna Burmeister, and spent his retirement as a member of Legion Post 1569 and of the Lend-a-Hand Senior Citizens Club of Davenport. He died

in his home at 4210 30th Street, Rock Island, on July 2, 1979, and is buried in Rock Island National Cemetery.

Likelihood of Drew Nagel Designing and Building the Japanese Garden

Drew Nagel undoubtedly enjoyed gardening – his granddaughter, Nancy Rogers (a realtor in Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri) related that:

“He had a garden, but it was your usual vegetable and flower garden. His house was tiny, probably less than 800 s.f. and the yard was ‘postage stamp’ size, but he had every sq. inch of it planted. I don’t think you could say it was ‘designed’ but it was a pleasant area.”

Unfortunately, because Drew and his wife were divorced when Nancy’s father, James Nagel, was very young, Nancy did not know much about her grandfather.

Could Drew Nagel have had a hand in designing and constructing Mrs. McColm’s Japanese garden?

It’s pretty unlikely that he had anything to do with the design of the garden. There is nothing to indicate that Drew Nagel was interested in the design of gardens, as opposed to professional-level garden maintenance and personal enjoyment in planting and growing things.

And he almost certainly lacked the advanced skills in rock placing and waterworks to design and build a garden so skilled in execution.

It’s possible that he helped with the manual labor of constructing the Japanese-style garden, under the direction of the designer. And he was more than capable of maintaining it and perhaps adding and replacing plants as the garden matured between 1930 and July 1937.

Photos show that plants may have been added during the 1930s, and Nagel may have done that work, either at the suggestion of Mrs. McColm or the original designer (if the designer returned to assess the growth and maintenance of the garden in the years after it was built). Or perhaps he made suggestions about what might grow well in the rock areas and other parts of the garden, since he almost certainly understood growing conditions better than Mrs. McColm.

3. Kenneth F. Jones, Landscape Architect

Mrs. McColm hired a young Davenport landscape architect, Kenneth F. Jones, to draw up plans for an imposing gate and planting plan for the burial plot containing the McColm and H.W. Huttig mausoleums in Muscatine's Greenwood Cemetery. These plans, dating from August 1929, are in the collections held by the Muscatine Art Center.

Since Jones did documented landscaping work for Mrs. McColm in 1929, could he also have had a hand in the design of her Japanese garden during this same period? As with Drew Nagel in the previous section of this paper, I'll relate what I could find about Jones' life and work to better assess this possibility:

Kenneth F. Jones

Kenneth Fred Jones was born December 28, 1901 in Redfield, Dallas County (west of Des Moines), according to records found at FamilySearch.com. His father, Curtis B. Jones, was a plumber from Pennsylvania, and his mother had been born in New York state.

By 1910, the Jones family was living in Ames, where Curtis Jones continued to work as a plumber. The Joneses had five children ranging in age from Kenneth, age 8, to Floyd, age 28 and working as a civil engineer for the government. By 1920, Curtis Jones indicated on the U.S. Census that he was employed as a plumber at a college, presumably Iowa State College (as Iowa State University was called from 1898 to 1959).

Kenneth F. Jones attended Iowa State College, studying Landscape Architecture in the department that had only recently been established, perhaps around 1920. While a student, Jones was an active member of the Visitonian Club, established in 1918 for Landscape Architecture



Figure 39: The Visitonian Club (for ISC Landscape Architecture students and faculty) picture from the 1925 Iowa State College student yearbook, *The Bomb*. Kenneth F. Jones is standing in the back row, third from left, next to Professor Philip H. Elwood, center. (Iowa State University Digital Library)

students and faculty to meet and discuss topics and bring in speakers. Jones graduated with a degree in Landscape Architecture in Spring 1925.

Kenneth Jones married Ada Dean Harner of Marengo on November 6, 1925 in Manhattan, New York. They may have lived in Story City for a time after their marriage.

Kenneth F. Jones' Career

By 1929, Jones was a practicing landscape architect in Davenport, working from an office in the Kahl Building, a stylish office building that had been constructed in 1920 at 326 West 3rd Street in downtown Davenport, and that also houses the Capitol Theatre.

Jones' office in the Kahl Building's Room 910 had been occupied by at least two other landscape architects in the firm of McKown & Kuehl, founded in 1928 by two other young practitioners: Russell L. McKown, a native of Davenport and graduate of the L.A. program at the University of Illinois, about five years older than Jones; and Alfred Carlton Kuehl, an ISC classmate who had graduated with Jones. In the 1930-31 Davenport directory, Jones was listed practicing alone there, as both McKown and Kuehl had joined the Civilian Conservation Corps; they both worked in the National Park Service for the rest of their careers.

It's not certain how Mrs. McColm found Kenneth F. Jones to engage his services for her cemetery project. Another landscape architect, W.S. Blades, by 1927 lived at 2007 Mulberry Avenue, only about four blocks away from her (he spoke to the Muscatine Garden Club about landscape gardening at least once, in June 1934). But perhaps he only worked on public civic projects, not private ones.

The early 1930s were a difficult time for many Americans, and for landscape architects too, especially ones who had not yet established themselves in private practice. New landscape projects were pretty thin on the ground because of the sharp economic downturn. The new federal programs initiated in response to the Depression, such as the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps, needed skilled landscape architects to design and oversee implementation of improvements to public parks and other public projects. Many joined these programs and spent the rest of their careers working on public projects in the employ of the federal government.

An announcement of the birth of the Jones' son in September 1932 gives their home address as 321 Forrest Road, Davenport, and mentions that Mr. Jones still had offices at 910 Kahl Building.

An article in the June 5, 1933 Ames *Tribune* states that Kenneth F. Jones had been hired to superintend work being done in Iowa and national parks, along with 16 other recent graduates and current seniors in the ISC Landscape Architecture program.

In 1934, Jones worked on plans for picnic shelters and a custodian's residence to be built by CCC workers in Lacey-Keosauqua state park near Des Moines. Later in 1934, he worked on improvements to a state park in Ponca, Nebraska. By 1935, he had been promoted to district inspector for the National Parks Service, and was working on CCC improvements to Custer State Park in the Dakota Black Hills.

Jones moved to California by 1940, and he registered for WWII military service in 1942 in San Mateo. But he likely did his wartime service in some land-planning capacity for some part of the government, perhaps even for military training camp design.

By 1948, he practiced as a land planning consultant in San Francisco, designing the grounds for new housing subdivisions, apartment complexes and shopping centers, during this midcentury period in which California experienced a huge expansion of projects.

Kenneth Jones died on December 8, 1974 in San Mateo, California.

Likelihood of Kenneth F. Jones Designing the Japanese Garden

Could Kenneth F. Jones have designed Mrs. McColm's Japanese garden around 1930? He had recently done landscape architecture work for her, and while starting out in his new practice, he almost certainly would have welcomed the fee for doing so.

However, three factors suggest that he did not:

First, there is no indication that he had any knowledge of Japanese garden design. This might be because we simply don't know much about his interests, but the rest of his career and the work he did for Mrs. McColm's cemetery plot suggest that his area of knowledge was in the general landscape design training he received at ISC.

His professor there, P.H. Elwood, almost certainly knew something about Asian garden design even before he took his trip in 1929, and ISC students may have received some training in the principles of comparative garden designs of different world regions. But it's hard to imagine that he would be very comfortable in designing a Japanese garden for Mrs. McColm. And he certainly lacked the advanced rock placement and waterworks construction skills required for such a job.

Second, no plans drawn up by him for her Japanese garden were retained by Mrs. McColm, unlike his plans for the cemetery work. He almost certainly would have drawn plans up as he was trained to do. It's possible she could have regarded such plans as less important than the cemetery plans and discarded them. But it's equally likely that she would simply have kept them with the other plans he drew for her and they would have survived.

And third, the May 1931 *Muscatine Journal* article describing her garden in detail did not mention any designer for the garden. Perhaps it would have seemed less authentically Japanese ("in the true Jap(anese) motif," as the article describes the garden) to mention that it had been designed by a Davenport landscape architect. It's possible that even if Mrs. McColm might have wanted to give him public credit for designing her garden to help his new practice grow, it was the sort of non-serious project that Jones might not have been eager to be credited with. But the omission of any mention of him as the designer is a factor against that possibility.

It's certainly possible that Jones might have recommended another landscape architect to her, or he might have recommended a Japanese landscape designer he knew of, had she asked him for a referral.

4. P.H. Elwood, Landscape Architect

Among the four possible candidates for designer so far assessed, Philip. H. Elwood was the only one who knew very much about Japanese gardens. He almost certainly had an interest in Asian gardens even before he traveled to Japan and China in Summer 1929 (see Paper Number 5 in this series). And after his trip, he lectured around the state about his travels, wrote newspaper articles and published a research paper about the topic. In the March 2, 1930 *Des Moines Sunday Register* newspaper article that Elwood published about his travels, he stated that he owned a large collection of books about Asian gardens, some given to him as gifts by scholars in Japan and China.

However, in his presentations to garden groups, Elwood specifically cautioned gardeners against “bodily transplanting” garden designs and features from foreign or historical gardens into modern American yards. It is unlikely that he would have wished to have anything to do with the design of a Japanese-style garden here in the United States.

Moreover, knowing how a garden should look and being able to implement one are two completely different things. Even if Elwood had consented to design a Japanese-style garden for someone, he would have worked with a Japanese immigrant garden maker to construct it and to arrange the rocks, as skilled Japanese garden designers could do so artistically – just as the great landscape architect Warren H. Manning did when he designed the Japanese garden at Stan Hywet in Akron, Ohio. (Elwood certainly knew Manning’s work – he saved a portion of his design papers after Manning’s 1938 death when most of the rest were destroyed – and with his interest in Japanese gardens he was likely aware of Manning’s gardens at Stan Hywet.)

And if Elwood had designed Mrs. McColm’s Japanese-style garden for her, that fact would certainly have been mentioned in the newspaper articles about her garden. Having a garden designed by the head of the landscape architecture department at Iowa State College – a man who spoke to garden clubs across Iowa – would have been tremendously prestigious; much more so than one designed by a Japanese immigrant garden designer, particularly as relations cooled between Japan and the United States during the early 1930s.

There is no indication that Mrs. McColm knew Professor Elwood, although she could have obtained an introduction through Kenneth F. Jones, his former student, or perhaps travelled to hear one his lectures about his trip to Asia. Elwood might have recommended a Japanese landscape designer to her at her request – or perhaps at Kenneth F. Jones’ request for Mrs. McColm – but it seems unlikely that he would have done anything more than that.

5. Japanese immigrant garden designers

Most Japanese-style gardens built in the United States before WWII were designed and built by *issei*, first-generation Japanese immigrants living and working in the U.S., according to author Kendall H. Brown in his 2013 book *Quiet Beauty: The Japanese Gardens of North America*. Brown is Professor of Asian Art History at California State University Long Beach, and a leading figure in the study of Japanese gardens in North America.

Between 1886 and 1911, more than 400,000 men and women left Japan for the United States, most settling in Hawaii and on the Pacific Coast. Japan's population increased by 40% during the last three decades of the 19th century, and this increasing population density, together with a stagnating economy and high unemployment, caused numerous young Japanese men, usually younger sons who would not inherit their families' estates, to seek their fortunes abroad. Most Japanese immigrants were employed in manual labor, particularly carpentry and the agricultural and horticultural sectors of the West Coast economy.

Some immigrants had trained as apprentices in Japanese gardens before leaving Japan, and a few attempted to put their skills to work here in the United States, designing Japanese-style gardens for wealthy Americans and for city public parks. And a few who been brought to the U.S. to construct the Japanese gardens made for World's Fairs might have stayed when those Fairs were concluded.

Unfortunately, not much is known about the men who designed many of the Japanese-style gardens in the U.S. during the first forty years of the 20th century. Most were not identified by name in newspaper articles about Japanese gardens, and few details are known about those whose names were given.

But it is most likely, based on the skill of the design and construction of Mrs. McColm's garden, that a Japanese-born garden designer was responsible for it. *Which* Japanese garden designer is more difficult to determine, however.

I looked for references to Japanese garden designers in newspaper articles, advertisements placed in magazines, and also in online websites for Midwestern Japanese-style gardens built before 1940 that still exist and are open to the public.

Most Japanese garden designers lived and worked either on the west coast (where they were rarely identified by name) or on the east coast: New York, New Jersey and the New England states (where they were more often identified by name).

The most well-known Japanese garden designer working in the US in the first half of the 20th century was **Takeo Shiota** (1881-1943). Shiota designed the Japanese garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in New York in 1914-1915; the rooftop garden at the Astor Hotel; and numerous private gardens for clients in New York and New Jersey. He published an illustrated book about his work, *Japanese Gardens and Houses* (1916), and maintained an office at 254 Fifth Avenue, New York City, until his death in 1943. Shiota seems to have worked exclusively on the east coast, however, so it is unlikely that he designed Mrs. McColm's garden.

When searching through late-1920s issues of home and garden magazines held by the University of Iowa Libraries, I came upon this advertisement in the November 1928 issue of *Garden and Homebuilder*:

ROCK GARDENS

JAPANESE GARDENS and
ROCKERIES

Oriental Landscape Architect
H. S. FUKUHARA

P. O. H. Station, Box 372 Seattle, Wash.

I discovered through Familysearch.org that a Shigeo H. Fukuhara, age 45, was listed living in Seattle in the 1930 Census and listed his occupation as landscape gardener. But I was not able to find any Google references to gardens designed by him – except for one made in the mid-1930s by a Professor Shigeo Fukuhara for the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild on the peninsula of Cap-Ferrat, near the town of Nice on the south coast of France. If this was the same Shigeo Fukuhara, he did not leave the US permanently though, because a man of that name was listed among those interned during WWII. But Seattle, Washington is a long way from Iowa and there is no record of Fukuhara making any gardens in the Midwest.

I decided to look specifically for Midwestern Japanese garden designers. However, the number of Japanese people living in Midwestern states was surprisingly low until after WWII, as shown by this map prepared in 1942 by the US Western Defense Command after the evacuation of Japanese residents during war with Japan (Japanese populations of Midwestern states are listed on the following page):

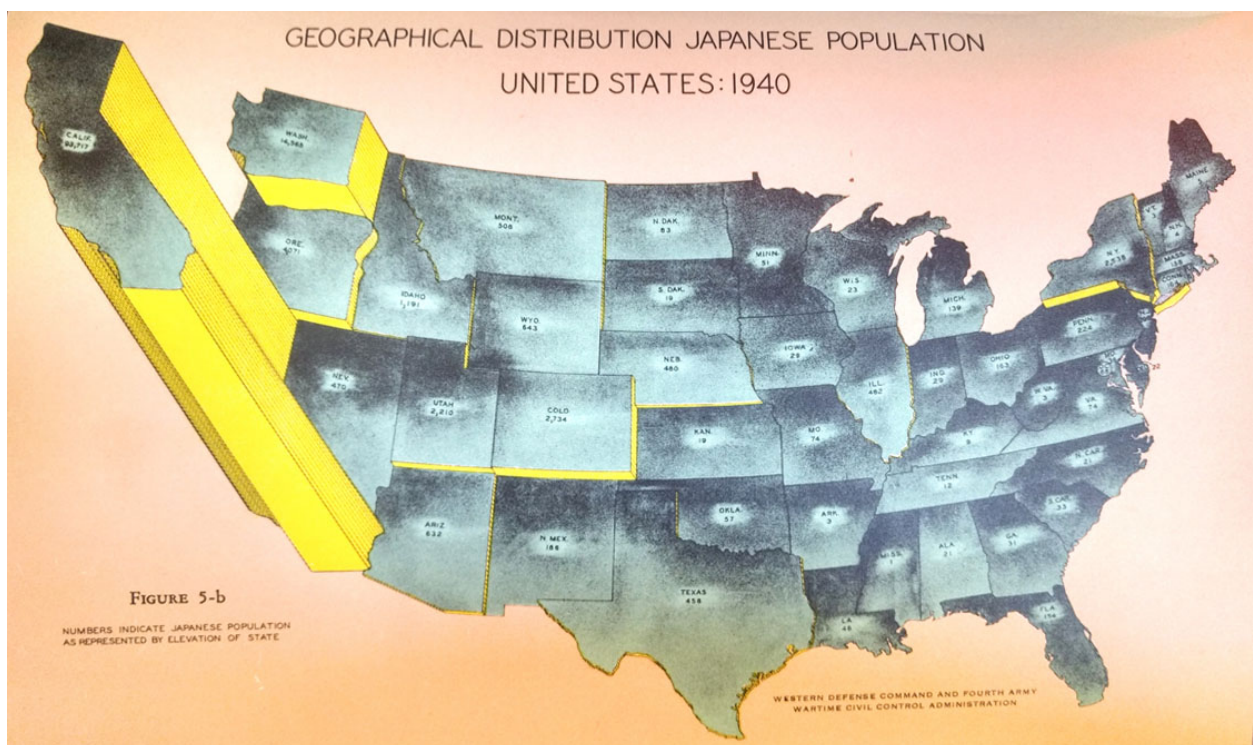


Figure 40: From "Final Report Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast 1942." (Wikipedia.com)

Most Japanese immigrants did not move away from the west coast: California's estimated Japanese population (including Japanese-born, as well as 2nd- and 3rd-generation citizens) in 1940 was nearly 100,000, with another 14,000 in Washington State. But even New York State had only around 2,500 Japanese people residing there in 1940. And the Midwestern states had very few Japanese residents (and these numbers would likely have been even lower in 1930):

State	Est. Japanese Population, 1940
Nebraska	480
Illinois	462
Ohio	163
Michigan	139
North Dakota	83
Missouri	74
Remaining Midwestern states	fewer than 50 each

If the entire state of Illinois had fewer than 500 Japanese residents, even if a fair percent were involved in horticulture like in the western states, far fewer would have been actual garden designers. There's a big difference between being a "gardener" – which most of time means either a market produce gardener, or else someone who maintains other people's gardens as Drew Nagel did – and being a garden *designer*, which involves aesthetic training, skill in managing a team to build new gardens, and promotion of a garden design practice, acquiring new clients all the time through advertising and word-of-mouth.

The three biggest Midwestern cities in 1920 were Chicago, Detroit and St. Louis. I thought perhaps a Midwestern Japanese garden designer would be most likely to have lived in Chicago, the Midwest's largest regional metropolis, one in which architects were open to Japanese architectural ideas due to the 1893 World's Fair, and the closest of the three cities to Muscatine too. Mrs. McColm visited Chicago regularly for business, and also travelled to St. Louis while her sister was still living (until 1919) and perhaps afterward too.

In searching for "Japanese Garden Chicago" in 1920s publications, Google Books showed me an advertisement that appeared in the January 1923 issue of *House and Garden* magazine:



Figure 41: Page 29 of *House & Garden*, January 1923
(Biodiversity Heritage Library)

Intrigued, I did *many* more Google and newspaper searches for Otsuka's name, and discovered that he advertised widely (I found close to 50 different ads placed by him) in numerous periodicals and papers between 1910 and 1937.

Otsuka is credited with designing and building several Japanese-style gardens for wealthy Midwestern families. Most prominent were the Japanese gardens at the Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens (in 1916 for the wealthy Seiberling family in Akron, Ohio) and the Fabyan Villa Museum & Japanese Garden (around 1912 for George and Nelle Fabyan in Geneva, Illinois, west of Chicago). Both gardens have been restored and are open to the public.

I was not able to find any mention in newspapers or census records of Japanese garden designers or even Japanese gardeners living in Omaha, Nebraska in 1930, nor any in St. Louis. Detroit had several Japanese gardeners living with and working for wealthy families in the 1930 census; this was also the case in Kansas City, Missouri.



Figure 42: Mrs. F.A. Seiberling, who was an accomplished singer and president of the National Federation of Musical Clubs in 1921 when the group's convention was held in the Tri-Cities. Mrs. Seiberling was photographed in her Japanese-style garden, built in 1916, at her Akron, Ohio property named Stan Hywet. Much of the planting, rock placement and construction was overseen by T.R. Otsuka, within Warren F. Manning's overall design for the garden area. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)

6. T.R. Otsuka

The person whom I believe was the most likely candidate to have designed Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden was **T.R. Otsuka** (c.1868-after 1945?) of Chicago. I'll relate here what I discovered about his life and work, and then outline why I think he designed Mrs. McColm's garden.

T.R. Otsuka

Taro Otsuka was born around 1868 in Japan and arrived in the Port of Seattle, Washington from Kobe, Japan in 1897. He was married around 1898 (age 29) to Yoneko Utaka, and was naturalized in 1902 in Washington State.

In February 1904, a short article in *The Anaconda Standard* of Anaconda, Montana mentions a "T.R. Otsuka, the local representative of the Oriental Trading company." This was an import-export company headquartered in Seattle that imported Japanese manufactured goods and art (likely including decorative gift items like paper fans, lanterns and umbrellas).

By 1910, Taro and Yoney had relocated to Chicago, Illinois, where Otsuka listed his occupation in the census as a self-employed "Vender of Art Goods". In the 1912 *Chicago Blue Book* and 1913 issues of *House Beautiful*, he placed listings for his Tōyō Art Shop.

It's uncertain when T. R. Otsuka began designing Japanese-style gardens for Americans, but certainly before 1910. He was active with offices and Japanese import shops in several cities from at



Figure 43: T.R. Otsuka and his wife, in a photo likely taken in the 1920s, and given to clients George and Nelle Fabyan of Geneva, Illinois.

(*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Gardens*)

least 1905 until the mid-1930s, and he advertised and published several articles about his work during his career.

In an undated (perhaps late 1910s) brochure about his design practice (shown later in this section) from the collection of the Fabyan Villa Museum & Japanese Garden, Otsuka had this to say about his experience:

My Experience in Japanese Gardens

I have engaged in the profession of landscape gardening for more than a quarter of a century, but my interest in it dates even farther back – to boyhood. It was then my favorite recreation and study. The years roll by with an ever-increasing love and interest in the ancient and endless art.

For many years I have practiced my specialty in the United States and Canada. I have met and solved the many problems of adapting the Japanese garden to American conditions. I know what can be done in each locality and how to accomplish quick results at lowest cost. I can help you to avoid unnecessary expense and costly errors.



Figure 44: An early photo of the George and Nelle Fabyan Garden in Geneva, Illinois, designed and built by T.R. Otsuka between 1910 and 1914. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Villa*)

T.R. Otsuka List of Projects

c.1905: Milton Tootle Garden, Mackinac Island, MI
c.1910-1914: Fabyan Japanese Garden, Geneva, IL
1912: Hinata, Mrs. Clarence LeBus Garden, Lexington, KY
c.1913: King Garden, Homer (Township?), IL
1915: Chicago Flower Show, Chicago, IL (November 9-14)
c.1915: Laura Bradley Park, Peoria, IL
c.1915: Harlow Arden (H.D. Higgenbotham) Japanese Garden, Joliet, IL
1916: Stan Hywet Hall Japanese Garden, Akron, OH
c.1920: (*probable*) French Lick Springs Hotel, IN
c.1922: Holcomb Garden, Indianapolis, IN
c.1922: (*probable*) Morton Residence (modern site of Morton Arboretum), Lisle, IL
1923: Woman's Benefit Association Summer Camp, Lake Huron, MI
1927: Henry County Memorial Park, New Castle, IN
1928: Chicago Garden and Flower Show, Hotel Sherman, Chicago, IL
1933: Century of Progress International Exhibition, Chicago, IL
1935: (*possible*) Jackson Park / Osaka / Garden of the Phoenix, Chicago, IL


Additionally, I believe that T.R. Otsuka also probably designed and built the Japanese garden of the Eastmans in Burlington (around 1912), as well as the Quarters One rock garden and tea house at Rock Island Arsenal (in 1919). My reasons for these suppositions are detailed in Papers Numbers 4 and 9, respectively.

I plan to issue another research paper this fall about T.R Otsuka, covering his life and works in detail.

Support for T.R. Otsuka as Designer of Mrs. McColm's Japanese Garden


1. Geographic proximity: Chicago is only 200 miles from Muscatine, and Otsuka traveled throughout the Midwestern states making gardens for wealthy property owners.
2. As discussed above, there just weren't that many Japanese people – let alone Japanese landscape designers – residing in the Midwest during the 1920s and 1930s, and Chicago was the most likely location for a Midwestern Japanese landscape design practice.
3. Otsuka advertised widely in numerous publications, probably more widely than any other Japanese landscape designer of the period anywhere in the U.S. These ads included both direct private ads in magazines and newspapers, but also referrals in the catalogs of the well-known evergreen specialist, D. Hill Nursery Company of Dundee, Illinois (40 miles west of Chicago). Even if Mrs. McColm hadn't seen these many advertisements and referrals, her landscape architect, Kenneth F. Jones, might have been aware of Otsuka's work.

Japanese Gardens and Rockeries



For the construction of Japanese Gardens, Rockeries, etc., we offer the services of Mr. T. R. Otsuka, Landscape Architect, to those of our customers desiring his assistance. Mr. T. R. Otsuka has had plenty of experience along this line, having built some of the most notable Japanese Gardens in this country and Europe. Write for complete information.

Figure 46: This recommendation appeared in the Spring 1918 D. Hill Nursery Company catalog. (archive.org)




Japanese Gardens

Unique and attractive
Skilfully and quickly
constructed by experienced
gardeners
T. R. OTSUKA
216 North Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Figure 45: *Country Life*, July 1922.

Figure 47: *Garden and Homebuilder*, September 1927.



Japanese Garden and ROCK GARDENS

artistically laid out
Skillful quick results
○○○
T. R. OTSUKA
721 K of P Building, Indianapolis, Ind.
○○○
611 Garland Building, Chicago, Ill.

4. Otsuka is the garden designer most often identified as having made Japanese-style gardens in the Midwest, particularly in the Chicago area. This may include both the Eastman garden in Burlington (c.1912) and the Quarters One garden and tea house on Rock Island Arsenal (1919).
5. Otsuka made a show garden for the Chicago Flower Show in 1928, which was visited by many Midwestern garden enthusiasts and covered in Chicago newspapers. It's unknown whether Mrs. McCollm attended that show, but it's not unlikely that someone she knew did so.



Figure 48: *Chicago Tribune*, March 28, 1928.

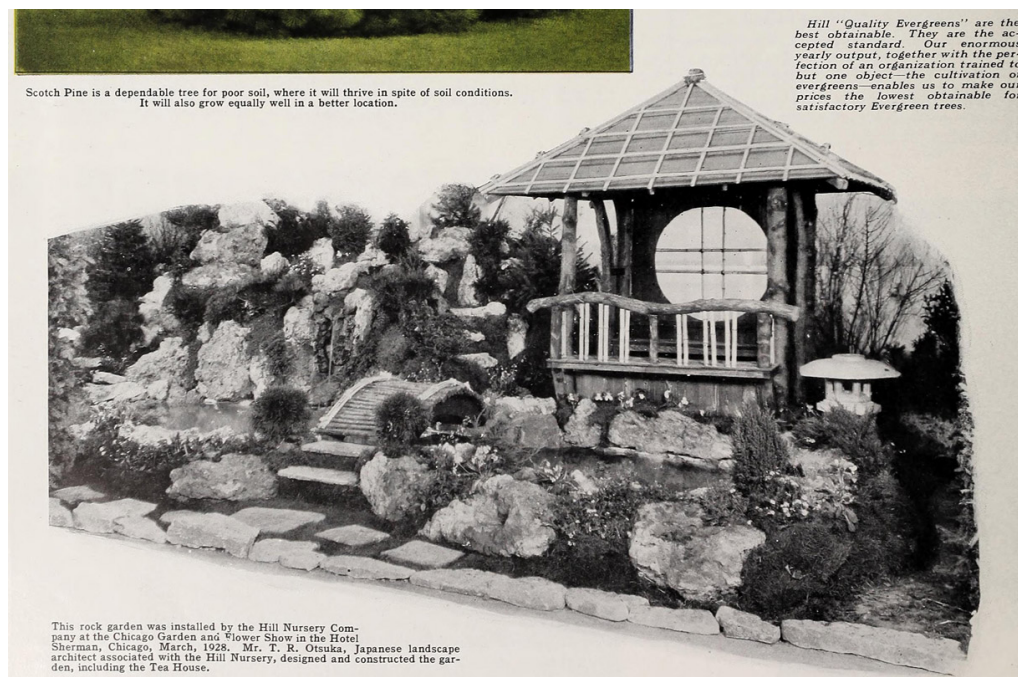


Figure 49: The show garden designed by Otsuka for the 1928 Chicago Flower Show. (D. Hill Nursery catalog, 1929, archive.org)

6. Common features: Most Japanese-style gardens made in the US exhibit many of the same general features (bridges, lanterns, ponds, etc.). However, even within each of these types of features there are similarities and dissimilarities.

In the following pages, I will identify in detail the similarities between garden features pictured in Otsuka's known works and the features that appeared in early photos of Mrs. McCollm's Japanese-style garden. (Any photos without captions are from the Muscatine Art Center collection):

Analysis of Similar Garden Features

a. Porous Rocks



Figure 50: Detail of the McColm Japanese garden showing several distinctive rocks at forefront and at back, containing numerous holes in them. These might have been porous limestone, tufa or manmade hypertufa, which is favored by rock gardeners.

One very distinctive feature in Mrs. McColm's garden that I noticed in magnified photos was the unusual porous rocks in her garden, which look like porous limestone, tufa or man-made hypertufa. These are certainly not common in gardens located in Japan, where the rocks used in gardens are nearly always harder granite or similar dense rock.

From my time living in China, I recognized that porous stones are common in Chinese gardens. The Chinese revere what they call Scholar stones (Gongshi; 供石), called this because, mounted on a small pedestal, they were traditionally displayed on a scholar's or poet's desk to provide the inspiration of nature during long hours working indoors. Scholar stones are also called Taihu stones, because they traditionally were found near Lake Tai in Jiangsu Province.

Larger versions of Taihu stones are used in traditional Chinese garden design. Many gardens open to the public in China contain prominently displayed Taihu stones, and smaller ones can be used around the edges of ponds.

Chinese Scholar Stones:



Figure 51: A Scholar stone from the Qing period (1644-1911) (*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)



Figure 52: A large Taihu stone is prominently placed in the Missouri Botanical Garden's Grigg Nanjing Friendship Chinese Garden, built in 1995 and featuring Taihu stones given as gifts from the St. Louis sister city of Nanjing, China. (*author photo*)

T.R. Otsuka's gardens often included small- to medium-sized examples of this type of porous limestone, although it can be difficult to see that level of detail in printed newspaper or postcard images.

Examples given of clearer photographs of this type of stone:

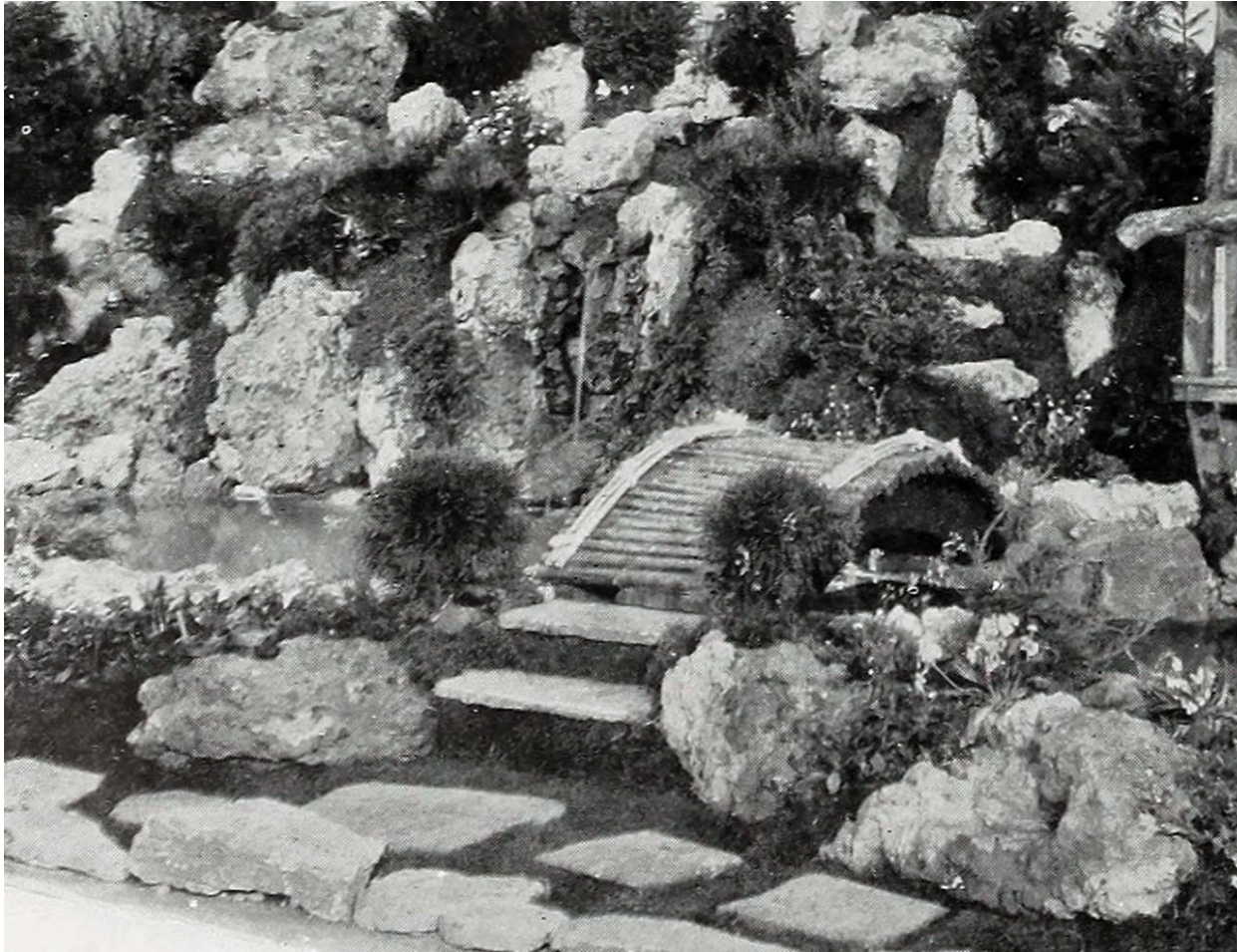


Figure 53: Otsuka used numerous porous limestone rocks in this display garden he built for the D. Hill Nursery Company at the Chicago Flower Show in April 1928. (*D. Hill 1929 catalog, archive.org*)

However, just because Otsuka often used porous rocks in his gardens doesn't mean that other Japanese garden makers didn't use them in American gardens too. I attempted to look at other photos of Midwestern gardens made during this period, and did find some examples of porous rocks.

The most prominent and earliest example was in the Japanese garden built for the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. This was a highly visible and influential garden, one viewed by nearly 20 million Fair visitors, and likely the first example of a Hill and Pond type of Japanese garden that most Americans had seen.

The 1904 World's Fair Japanese Imperial Garden design is credited to Yukio Ishikawa, the garden architect for the imperial Japanese commission at the St. Louis Exposition. However, Ishikawa returned to Japan after the fair, and there is no record of him residing in the U.S. later.



Figure 55: This photo of the Japanese garden of George and Nelle Fabyan in Geneva, IL shows that a number of the stones along the edge of the pond are porous looking. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Garden*)



Figure 54: The Milton Tootle garden on Mackinac Island, MI, built by Otsuka before 1910 and pictured here around 1920, contained numerous porous rocks. (*Mackinac State Historic Parks*)

Porous rocks are also seen in the 1904 “Fair Japan” concession garden designed by Japanese fair empresario Yumindo Kushibiki and his partner Saburo Arai, as well as in their numerous other World’s Fair gardens (along with the Atlantic City Japanese Tea Gardens). Kushibiki likely sourced the rocks for the 1904 Imperial Japanese Garden, along with those for his “Fair Japan” garden.

Texas Holey Rocks

Those 1904 World’s Fair garden porous rocks came from Texas, according to an article in *The St. Paul Globe* of August 19, 1904. (The rocks and Japanese plants were taken to St. Paul after the fair to make a Japanese garden in Como Park). Another article in that paper of December 10, 1904 mentioned that additional porous rocks would be sourced from the southern part of Minnesota.

The porous limestone rocks from Texas – often called “Texas holey rocks,” or “honeycomb limestone” – are found in central Texas “Hill Country” near Austin and New Braunfels, and are popular for use in fish tanks. The southern Minnesota porous rocks were likely sourced from thin deposits of tufa (porous limestone) in the Redwood Falls-Morton area, according to SP-10 *Clay Mineralogy and Geology of Minnesota’s Kaolin Clays* (1970) by Walter E. Parnham.

Kushibiki returned to Japan in 1916 and died there in 1924, so he could not have designed Mrs. McCole’s garden. His partner, Saburo Arai, moved to Texas in 1904 and became a plant nursery owner. Although it’s possible he designed gardens before his death in Houston in 1951, he did not advertise his skills in garden design, only his nursery business – and Houston is pretty far from Iowa.

I believe that Otsuka was influenced by the rocks in the 1904 World’s Fair garden. He either liked the porous rocks himself, or his early clients requested such rocks after seeing that 1904 garden, so Otsuka thereafter included them in many of his gardens to appeal to American clients. Whether he got his rocks from Texas or elsewhere could likely be determined through chemical testing of the remaining porous rocks located in Mrs. McCole’s garden.



Figure 56: This picture of an adorable Japanese child was taken at the St. Louis World’s Fair Japanese garden in 1904. This photo (and others taken there too) show that porous rocks were used extensively in the Fair garden. (*St. Louis Public Library*)

b. Concrete Stream Channels

Several early photos of Mrs. McColm's garden show the concrete channels for the stream that meanders through the garden and descends from the top level of the garden to the bottom level.:



Figure 57: In this earlier photo, the edges of the stream bed have not yet been edged with natural stones. (MAC)



Figure 58: This photo, likely taken after the one above, shows that the edges of the stream have been partly covered by natural pieces of flat stone. It's possible that this photo was taken not long after (perhaps within a year of) the previous one, and Otsuka had returned to the garden to make modifications to the original installation, as he was known to do. (MAC)



A view of the King Garden, Homer, Ill. Designed by T. R. Otsuka, Japanese landscape architect.

Figure 59: This photo of a garden made by Otsuka near Chicago shows a bridge crossing a concrete stream bed that is similar to the one in Mrs. McCalm's garden, as well as porous rocks edging the stream. (*Keith's Magazine*, December 1914)



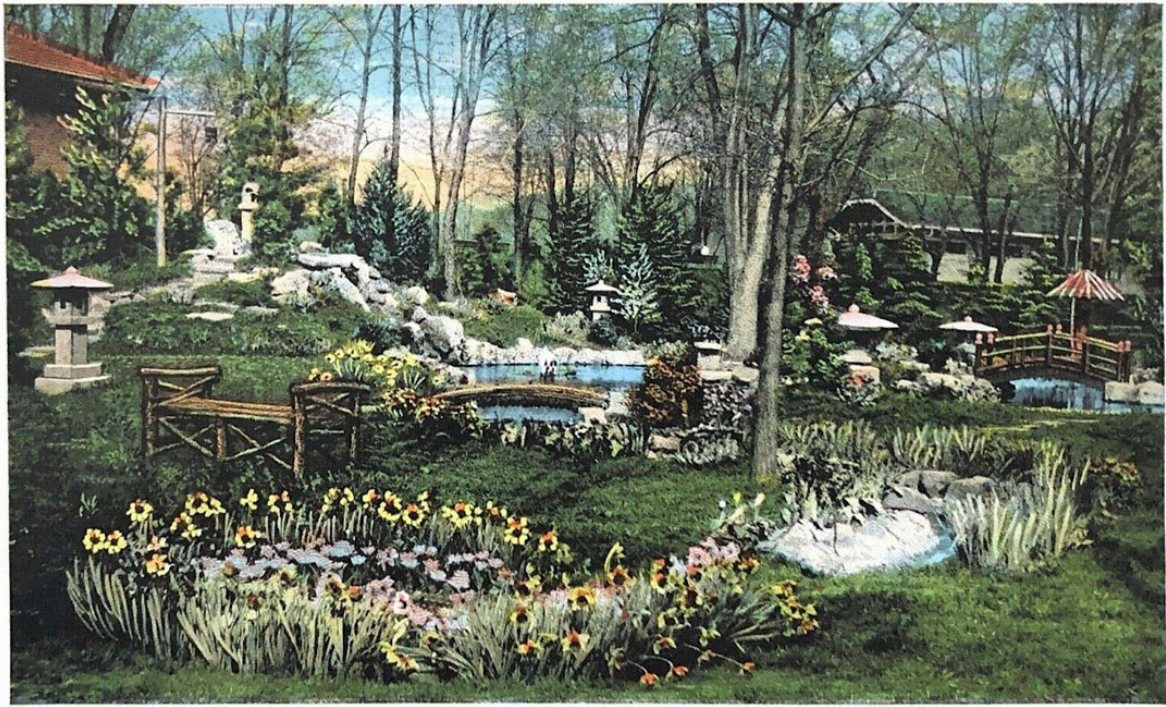
Figure 60: In this garden likely made by Otsuka (perhaps at the house of A.S. Hill) some of the pond edges were left exposed. (*D. Hill Nursery 1943 catalog*)



Figure 61: This modern photo shows the ending portion of the stream in the lower part of Mrs. McColm's garden. (*author's photo*)



Figure 62: This photo of the teahouse and garden built by Otsuka around 1913 at Hinata (Lexington, Kentucky) also shows a rock-lined meandering concrete channel. (*Historical and Pictorial Review of the City of Lexington and Police and Fire Departments, R.J. Mahoney,*



The Japanese Garden, French Lick Springs Hotel, French Lick, Indiana. "The Home of Pluto"

Figure 63: The Japanese garden at French Lick Springs Hotel in Indiana (c. 1920) was almost certainly designed by Otsuka (based on other similarities), although it is not credited to him. A concrete stream winds through the garden. Also note what might have been irises planted along the edges of the streams, similar to those in Mrs. McCole's garden. (*Ebay.com*)

c. Stepping Stone Paths in Clipped Grass

Another similarity between Otsuka's known garden projects and Mrs. McColm's garden is the placement of irregular rectangular stepping stones in closely clipped grass.



Figure 64: Otsuka's garden at the 1928 Chicago Flower Show has irregularly shaped rectangular stepping stones set into sod. (*D. Hill 1929 catalog, archive.org*)

Figure 65: This postcard image of the Japanese-style garden at French Link Springs Hotel in Indiana shows the stepping stone paths created with irregularly-shaped rectangular stones or cast concrete. (*author collection*)



c. Bamboo Bridges

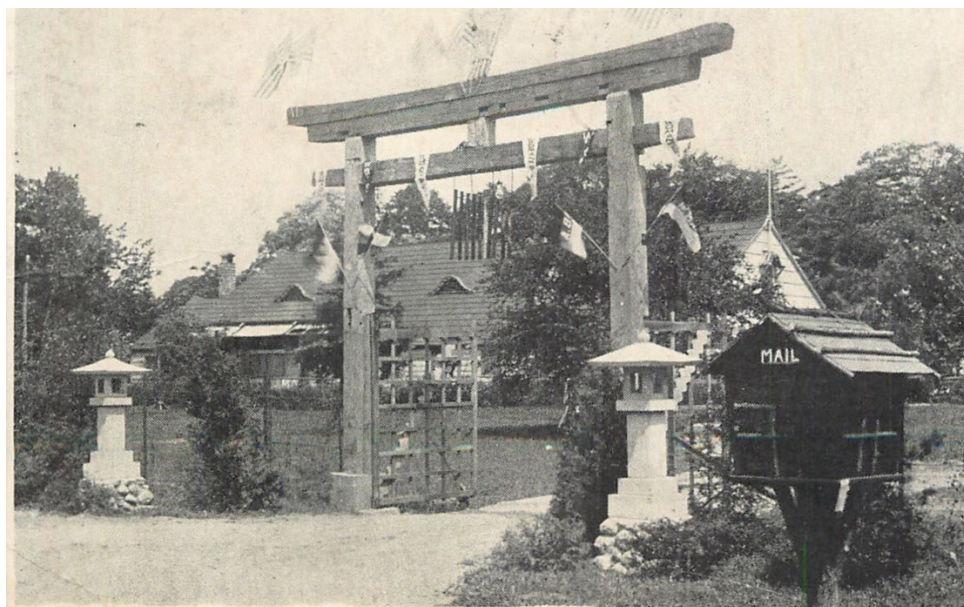
The original bridges leading over the streams in Mrs. McColm's garden were constructed of bamboo in a tightly placed design, with largely ornamental bamboo rails on the sides. These look very similar to the bamboo bridge Otsuka used in his show garden at the 1928 Chicago Flower Show, particularly in the tight placement of the bamboo pieces.



Figure 66: The 1928 Chicago Flower Show Japanese-style garden designed by Otsuka has a bridge of similar construction (although different railings – not needed, even symbolically, in a show garden). (*D. Hill 1929 catalog, archive.org*)

d. Japanese-Style Lantern Design

T.R. Otsuka likely carried a variety of concrete molds that could be used to cast different lantern components (base, stem, light box and top) in varying shapes, and he may have bought concrete locally to avoid transporting heavy, readily available materials. This on-site casting would have allowed him to make garden lanterns inexpensively and quickly to the specified desires of the client.



GATE ENTRANCE TO W. B. A. LAKE HURON CAMP

Figure 67: This postcard photo of the Torii gate at the entrance to the Woman's Benefit Association Summer Camp in Lake Huron, MI (constructed by Otsuka in 1923) shows similarities between the lanterns and those in Mrs. McCollm's garden, particularly in the lantern bases. (*author's collection*)



Figure 68: This postcard image of the Japanese-style garden at French Lick Springs in Indiana also shows a lantern very similar in design to Mrs. McCole's taller lanterns. (*Ebay*)

e. Use of Rustic Lumber in Garden Design

Another – more subtle – similarity between Mrs. McColm's garden and the gardens constructed by T.R. Otsuka was the use of rustic timber to construct garden features. Of course, many gardens made in the period of 1890 to 1920 used rustic timber in their structures; this is simply one more similarity.

Note the similar knobby texture, and use of natural curved timbers, in both Mrs. McColm's original Torii gate and the timber top rail of the tea house in Otsuka's show garden at the 1928 Chicago Flower Show. (And also compare to the rustic wooden bench in the French Lick Springs Hotel garden postcard photo, above.)

It is possible that the same Japanese carpenter made both of these rustic wood garden features, only two year apart.



Figure 69: Mrs. McColm's garden had a Torii gate constructed of knobby bent wood, and painted with lacquer to resist the elements.

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Figure 70: Compare the use of natural double-curved timber in the railing of the tea house in Otsuka's show garden at the 1928 Chicago Flower Show, to the naturally curved top bar of the Torii gate in Mrs. McColm's garden on previous page. (*D. Hill 1929 catalog, archive.org*)

f. Rock-Edged Ponds and Waterfalls

Most pre-WWII Japanese-style gardens undoubtedly incorporated rock-edged ponds into them, because rock gardens around naturalistically shaped rock-edged ponds were tremendously popular in the late 1920s and early 1930s – even without any Japanese-style elements in them.

But it is still useful to examine the rock-edged ponds that T.R. Otsuka made – and even seemed to specialize in – in order to compare them to the rock-edged upper pond in Mrs. McColm’s Japanese-style garden.

Additionally, if Otsuka did design Mrs. McColm’s garden, it’s possible that the upper pond originally had a waterfall feature in it, as he included those in most of his gardens in order to lend sound and water flow to the garden, so that the water did not become stagnant.



Figure 71: A photo from the 1930s of the upper pond in Mrs. McColm’s garden, showing the use of porous rocks throughout, four standing crane statues, and backed with evergreen trees and shrubs. No waterfall is visible in this photo, although it seems probable that one would have been designed with water falling from the one of the higher stones onto the pile of small “splash rocks” below. Perhaps the waterworks had already stopped functioning by the time this photo was taken, or perhaps the pump was turned off at the photographer’s request in order to obtain a better picture. (MAC)



Sweeping Pines, Spruces and Firs, mirrored in the rock garden's pool, bring the quiet of the woods to your garden. Trailing rock plants and dwarf evergreens complete the scene.
This garden installed on grounds of Mr. D. Hill by T. R. Otsuka

Figure 72: A photo of a rock garden created by Otsuka for D. Hill's home. Compare the creeping rock plants interspersed between stones at forefront with those in Mrs. McCollm's garden, the porous rocks used near the waterfall, and the evergreen backing the pond. (*D. Hill 1925 catalog, archive.org*)



Who has not stood in rapture in a woodland dell where the shadows lie so deep and where a babbling brook rests for a moment in a rock-edged pool, before it goes chattering on again? "But miles nor years, howe'er they intervene, from memory shall erase that fairest scene." The modern rock garden or pool or Japanese Garden, or whatever you may choose to make, satisfies the desire that most of us have for "a garden," a place to watch and develop and grow to love. There is no model for gardens. You must make it to please yourself.

Figure 73: Another photo of the D. Hill rock garden. (*D. Hill 1929 catalog, archive.org*)



Figure 74: A postcard photo likely from the late 1920s showing the rock waterfall at left, in the Japanese Garden at the French Lick Springs Hotel in Indiana. (*Ebay*)

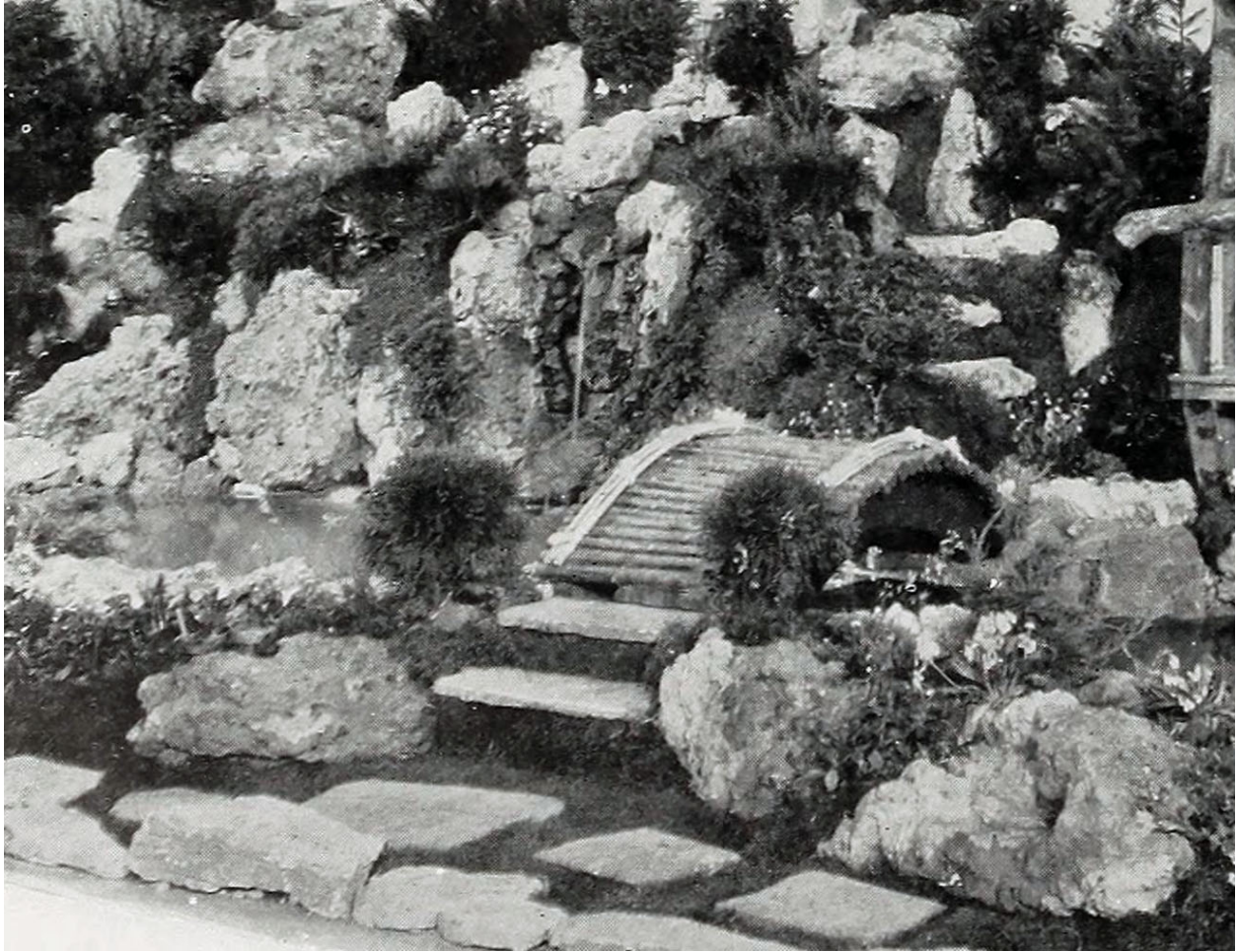


Figure 75: A waterfall is visible to the left of the bamboo bridge in the photo of the show garden at the 1928 Chicago Flower Show. The water drops from the upper part of the mountain onto a “splash rock” and into the pond at bottom. (*D. Hill 1929 catalog, archive.org*)

g. Stacked Limestone Rockwork

Mrs. McColm's garden had two areas in it that contained stacked flat limestone rockwork: the steps leading up to the shrine (Figure 75), and the center section of the bottom terrace slope (Figure 76).

Using the natural limestone that occurs in the Midwest along the upper Mississippi River to construct walls and steps is very common now, especially here in the Midwest. But this use and style of rockwork actually did not become popular here until the period of the 1930s through the 1950s.

The Quarters One pond garden area, built in 1919, was largely constructed using this style of rockwork (see Figure 78), and looks very similar to the rockwork shown in the D. Hill Nursery Company's Spring 1918 catalog (Figure 77), which is virtually certain to have been constructed by T.R. Otsuka, as that photo appeared next to a recommendation for his services in both the Spring 1918 and the 1920 D. Hill catalogs.



Figure 76: The steps leading up to the shrine can be seen in this closeup of an early photo of the garden. Note the irregular edges and stacked pattern of the miniature steps. Compare to the next photo on the following page. (MAC)



Figure 77: The center section of the bottom slope of Mrs. McColm's garden was constructed with a stacked horizontal pattern (unlike the other sloping sections of rounded rocks and boulders – maybe Mrs. McColm liked the look of both the stacked pattern and the more natural boulders and wanted both). The center rocks were not as uniformly flat as those used for the shrine steps, perhaps because thicker stones were deliberately used at the bottom for visual weight. (MAC)

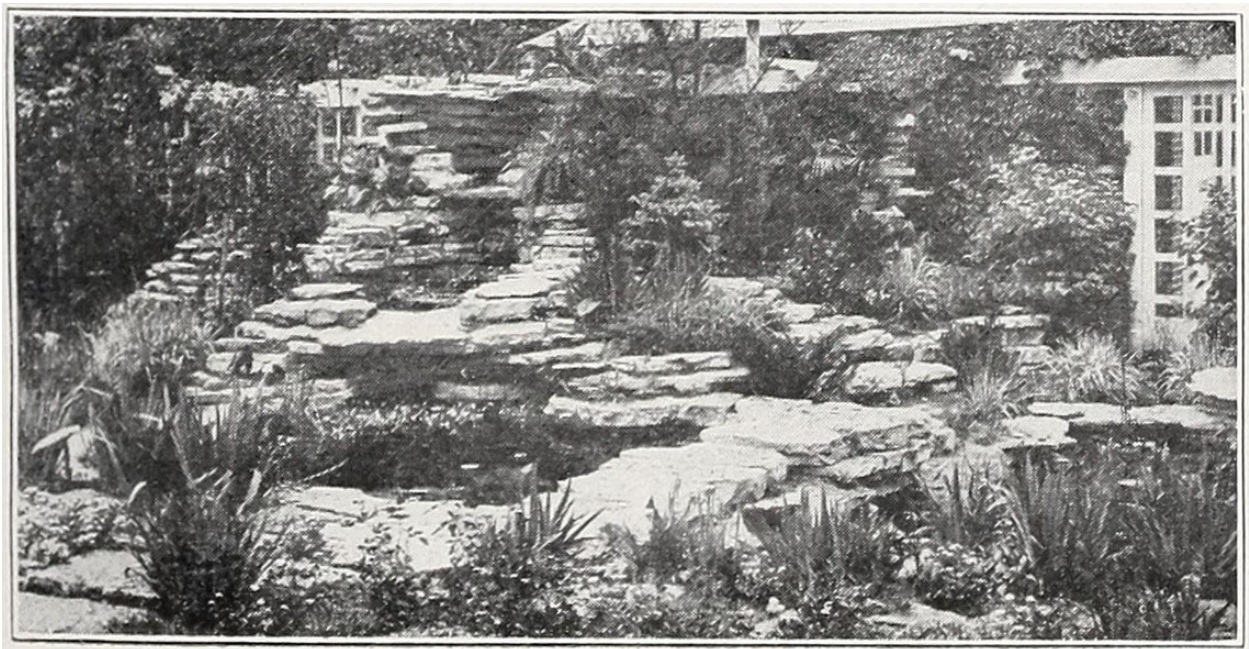


Figure 78: Compare the shrine steps in the previous photo with the stacked limestone slabs in this garden that was virtually certain to have been built by T.R. Otsuka, and which was likely located in the Chicago area. (D. Hill Nursery Company Spring 1918 Catalog, archive.org)



Figure 79: The naturalistic pond garden built at Quarters One at Rock Island Arsenal in 1919 was constructed using a very similar stacked limestone rockwork pattern to that shown in the Spring 1918 D. Hill Nursery catalog. The use of numerous evergreens also lends credence to the theory that the D. Hill Nursery, an evergreen specialist since its founding in 1855, had a hand in this garden as Otsuka's supplier. (*Army Sustainment Command History Office, Rock Island, Illinois*)

Conclusion

Each similarity shown in parts a. through g. does not each by itself weigh heavily in showing that Otsuka designed and constructed Mrs. McColm's garden. However, all together they add to the likelihood of this being the case, when taken together with the other factors of likelihood discussed above, such as widespread advertising by Otsuka and limited number of Midwestern Japanese residents.

It may be impossible to ever prove or disprove whether T.R. Otsuka was the designer and builder of Mrs. McColm's garden, due to the total lack of any records. Perhaps chemical testing of original porous rocks in her garden to compare them to the composition of original rocks in a known Otsuka project could show that they originated in the same area of the country, thereby greatly increasing the chance that they were used by the same designer.

Possible Design Scenario for Mrs. McColm's Garden

Suppose T.R. Otsuka *was* the designer and builder of Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden: How might this have come about, and how might it have been accomplished?

Mrs. McColm would somehow have found out about Otsuka's services: she might have had access to a catalog from the D. Hill Nursery Company, in which Otsuka was recommended. Or perhaps she asked someone she knew for a recommendation for a Japanese garden designer, or she came across a designer herself: through an advertisement, or through word-of-mouth from someone else who had seen an advertisement, or at the 1928 Chicago Flower Show, or perhaps through another wealthy person who had used Otsuka's design-build services themselves.

It's more than likely, for instance, that the Eastman Japanese garden in Burlington, built around 1912, was the work of Otsuka, based on the description of the garden's features and on the fact that he advertised in the same March 1913 issue of *The House Beautiful* that the garden description in Helen M. Stevens' article appeared in and every other issue that year (see the analysis of that garden in Paper Number 4 in this series). And as discussed above, it's likely that Mrs. McColm knew the Eastmans.

And the Japanese tea house and rock garden pond at Quarters One at Rock Island Arsenal, built in 1919, was also likely the work of Otsuka, as discussed in Part g, above. Mrs. McColm would almost certainly have seen this garden, located only 30 miles from Muscatine.

Or Mrs. McColm may have encountered Otsuka or his advertisements while visiting Chicago – Otsuka operated a Japanese art shop there for years (Frank Lloyd Wright was a client of his, as shown in Julia Meech's *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Art of Japan*, 2001), and Mrs. Eastman was fond of Asian items.



Initial Contact

However it was that Mrs. McColm became aware of T.R. Otsuka's Japanese garden design-build services, she likely contacted him and was probably sent or given a brochure similar to the one pictured on the next two pages.

Otsuka would have traveled by train from Chicago to visit her property to assess "the lay of the land" and to talk with her about what she wanted, a service for which he charged \$25 per day plus expenses (according to the D. Hill Nursery 1926 catalog). He would look at the site and describe to her the features that were available, and then determine which features she was interested in having in her garden. Then he likely would draw a sketch of what he intended to build in her garden and walk her through what it would look like, and how much it would cost. This likely occurred in Summer or Autumn 1929.

Once Mrs. McColm approved his design, he probably asked her to pay a deposit or down payment with which he would buy materials, and returned the following spring with several men,

and also availed himself of whatever labor could be provided by Mrs. McColm's employees (such as Drew Nagel).



Japanese Landscape Gardening

BY

T. R. OTSUKA

POETRY IN JAPANESE GARDEN.

In Japan gardening is generally understood to be as closely allied with art as it is with horticulture. Like the painter with his brush, the first idea of the Japanese gardener is to reproduce in miniature a general landscape. He must portray on a small scale all of the natural beauty and original charm which nature possesses on a large scale.

Not unlike other worth-while arts, the Japanese garden must give full satisfaction all the year round. Whether dressed in the green foliage of Summer or the white mantle of Winter, it should be an ever-changing canvas interpreting the moods of the season, and complete in itself, and so inspiring and charming that it awakens one's soul to the sentiment of the old Japanese saying: "A good garden is in itself a religion."

HISTORY OF JAPANESE GARDEN.

The Japanese have long recognized the making of the garden as one of the noblest arts. The history of the Japanese people

is entwined with the romantic story of the garden. For centuries they have developed a class of horticulturists, especially trained to select and arrange materials so as to faithfully reproduce rustic nature in the limited space of the individual garden.

The present artistic principle of the Japanese garden was probably first recognized as a fine art during the reign of Emperor Buntoku in the Ninth Century. Shortly after a Chinese priest added much to its development by the introduction of Chinese garden art. The end of the Fourteenth Century marked another epoch-making era. The artist Soami was then the most famous exponent. Also at that time Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (Chief of Lords of then feudal Japan), and his son were ardent admirers and patrons. They were followed by a chain of famous artists and patrons who kept the art alive and helped it to attain its present state of high development.

INDIVIDUALITY OF JAPANESE GARDEN

The ideas and principles of the Japanese garden may be adapted to large or small areas just as readily as English gardening. One garden may be awe inspiring with its gigantic proportions and mystic grandeur. The other may be small, quaint and sublime to the finest degree. Regardless of size, it should possess strong individuality. If it lacks specific design, it undoubtedly will lack harmony and beauty. The garden should always be clean and neat because those characteristics always suggest the charm and beauty of nature.

ADAPTABILITY OF JAPANESE GARDEN

Of course, the Japanese garden is most suitable for plots and estates with natural hills, streams, houses, trees, rocks, etc., but it is surprising what can be done with land that has no particular convex or other natural advantages. Sometimes the removal of but very little soil will trans-

Figure 80: The inside pages of T.R. Otsuka's informational brochure about his services. This brochure likely dated from the late 1910s, and was in the possession of George and Nelle Fabyan of Geneva, IL, for whom Otsuka built a garden around 1910 to 1914. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Garden*)

form such places into a rolling landscape, into which pools, lanterns, bridges, stepping stones, waterfalls, rocks, trees and plants and a house might be fitted with such precision as to copy nature perfectly.

CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE GARDEN

When one steps into the garden so constructed, one can give one's self up to the quaint atmosphere presented by the petite house in the nook, or the little bridge over the brooklet where the gold fish disport under the mystic waterfalls. The antiquated stone lantern comes to sight here and there; the murmuring rivulet skirts the hill and washes its way among the moss covered rocks of the ages. Thus surrounded one may easily forget the cares of the work-a-day world and awaken the spirit to the wondrous glories of rustic nature just as did Daimyo and Bushi, the ancient Lords and Warriors (1600-1867). These great leaders of their time were ardent devotees to the Japanese garden. They gave much time, thought and money to its development. In spite of their warlike traditions, they looked upon it as the greatest medium of spiritual culture—the art of arts that elevated the mind and purified the soul.

It is interesting to note that this devotion of the medieval War Lords to the peaceful art of gardening was followed by what is known as the Tokugawa regime—a glorious era of nearly three hundred years of peace—the longest period of uninterrupted happiness and contentment in the history of Japan.

MY EXPERIENCE IN JAPANESE GARDENING

I have engaged in the profession of landscape gardening for more than a quarter of a century, but my interest in it dates ever farther back—to boyhood. It was then my favorite recreation and study. The years roll by with an ever-increasing love and interest in the ancient and endless art.

For many years I have practiced my speciality in the United States and Can-

ada. I have met and solved the many problems of adapting the Japanese garden to American conditions. I know what can be done in each locality and how to accomplish quick results at lowest cost. I can help you to avoid unnecessary expense and costly errors.

Much of the necessary materials, such as rocks, stones, logs, trees, plants, sod, etc., can usually be secured from local sources, and all such equipment as stone lanterns, water basins, bridges, tea houses, etc., are made in the ground.

I, personally, supervise all my work, employing local labor. Any competent gardener can easily take charge after the construction is completed.



Any information desired,

ADDRESS:

T. R. OTSUKA

JAPANESE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

300 SO. MICHIGAN AVENUE

CHICAGO, ILL.



Illustrations of the Parts of My Latest Work of Japanese Gardens



"Upper Pool"

MR. MILTON TOOTLE'S Summer House,
Mackinac Island, Mich.

Figure 81: The outside pages of the Otsuka's c.1910 trifold brochure. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley, Fabyan Garden*)

The Japanese crew might include unskilled laborers for digging, etc., if that kind of labor wasn't available from the client's employees; and would definitely include at least one skilled carpenter for building structures such as bridges, tea houses, torii gates and other wooden structures. Otsuka likely had an apprentice or assistant as well.

Otsuka would probably either ask his clients if they had room to house him and his laborers on site (likely him in a guest bedroom in the main house, and the laborers in the servants' quarters) – or he would bill the clients for the expense of overnight accommodations elsewhere.



Figure 82: This photo was taken around 1916 during the building of the Japanese-style garden at Stan Hywet in Akron, Ohio. The man standing at left wearing a suit may have been T.R. Otsuka. He was holding rolled-up garden plans, and was likely directing the estate workers who did the work of placing the rocks around the waterfall at Stan Hywet. Otsuka was documented in landscape architect Warren H. Manning's letters to have supervised this work. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)

Construction

The construction of Mrs. McColm's garden likely took no longer than two or three weeks – and perhaps even less time than that. Otsuka's advertisements often mentioned quick results. His brochure (see above) had this to say about construction:

Much of the necessary materials, such as rocks, stones, logs, trees, plants, sod, etc., can usually be secured from local sources, and all such equipment such as stone lanterns, water basins, bridges, tea houses, etc., are made in the ground. I, personally, supervise all my work, employing local labor. Any competent gardener can easily take charge after the construction is completed.

Construction involved a number of steps, with Mr. Otsuka overseeing each aspect of construction, and perhaps consulting Mrs. McColm at key points:

1. The first step would be marking out where the garden features would be placed.
2. Then, any land moving would be done: Mrs. McColm's sloping lot would be terraced into three levels.



Figure 83: This early photo, likely from the 1930s, shows the three terrace levels in Mrs. McColm's garden. Note the difference between the use of stone boulders in most of the declining sloped areas, and the use of flatter stones on the middle bottom slope. (MAC)

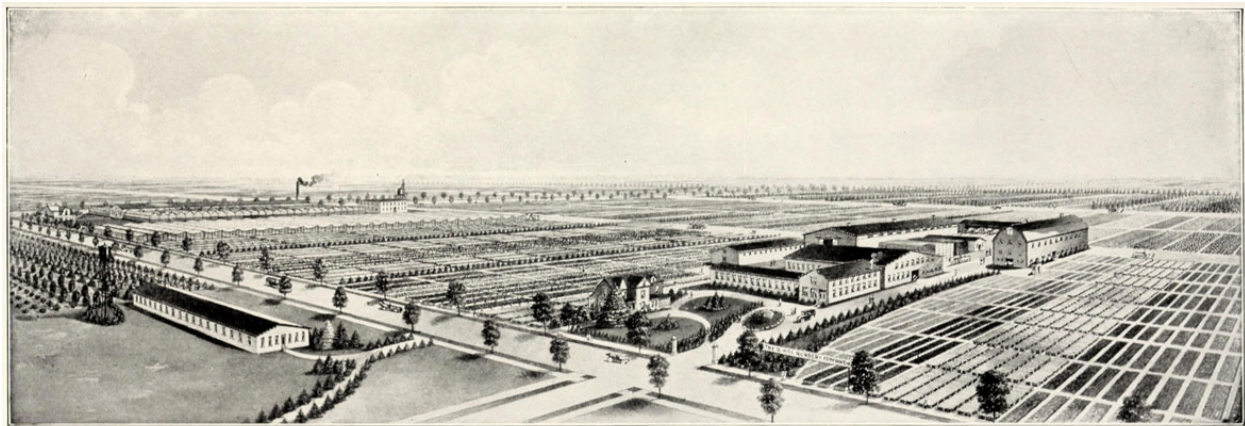
3. Waterworks would be installed and tested, with pipes bringing water from the lowest level back up to the top, and a pump disguised at the bottom of the garden.
4. The three concrete staircases and middle-level sidewalks would be installed, poured into concrete forms.
5. Rocks would be placed on the two slopes between the levels to shore up the terraces. It is interesting that flat stones were used in the center-lower slope, but rounded boulders and rocks were used on the other slopes.
6. The upper pond and concrete streams would be poured.
7. Rocks would be placed around the pond and a waterfall would be built up and created.
8. The hill upon which the shrine was placed would be built up with earth, rocks and concrete.
9. Stepping stones would be placed in the grass (perhaps after having been made from concrete, or perhaps natural flat stones).
10. The lantern components would be cast from concrete in molds.
11. The wood features: bamboo bridges, rustic torii gate and wooden shrine would be made and installed by the skilled Japanese carpenter(s).
12. The lantern components would be assembled and placed on poured concrete foundations.
13. The major evergreen trees and shrubs would be planted.
14. The pond and streams would be filled with water and the waterworks system re-tested.
15. Finally, minor plants such as the irises that Mrs. McColm likely requested would be planted.

Plant Materials

T.R. Otsuka had a long-standing relationship (from before 1915 through 1930) with the D. Hill Nursery Company in Dundee, Illinois (about 40 miles northwest of Chicago, and around 200 miles from Muscatine). For his gardens, Otsuka sourced evergreen shrubs and trees – which the company had specialized in growing since its founding in 1855 – from that nursery, which was located conveniently close to his Chicago office.

And the D. Hill Nursery's catalogs during the 1920s often contained a recommendation for Otsuka's services in building rock gardens and Japanese-style gardens. Both were fashionable garden styles in which to plant evergreen trees and shrubs during the 1920s.

Mrs. McColm might even have become aware of Otsuka's services through the D. Hill Nursery Company catalog.



The Home of Hill's Evergreens

Here is shown our complete nursery establishment, consisting of nurseries, office, packing-sheds, stables, box-making plant, storage, boarding-house, greenhouses, and tree seed-cleaning establishment, all modernly equipped and maintained for the handling of your orders in the most prompt and efficient manner. The fields of growing stock contain the most complete line of Choice Specimen Evergreens in America. Sixty years' experience, and more, in the digging, packing, and shipping of Evergreens is your guarantee of complete satisfaction and a square deal.

THE D. HILL NURSERY CO., INC.

Evergreen Specialists—Largest Growers in America

DUNDEE, ILLINOIS

Figure 84: This illustration of the D. Hill Nursery Company's extensive grounds appeared in the company's 1925 catalog. ([archive.org](https://www.archive.org))

If Otsuka was indeed the designer and builder of Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden, then the original evergreen trees and shrubs in her garden were almost certainly from the D. Hill Nursery.

The herbaceous plants, and the bulbs and corms such as the Japanese irises that were planted in Mrs. McColm's garden would have been ordered, either by Otsuka or by Mrs. McColm, from a different nursery, perhaps one near to Chicago, or one elsewhere specializing in Japanese irises.

Follow-Up Visits

According to a 1929 article by Adele Fay Williams in the *Joliet Herald* (about the Japanese-style garden, c.1915, of Harlow D. Higginbotham in Joliet, Illinois), Otsuka was known to revisit his clients' gardens in the years – perhaps annually – following his initial installations. He used these follow-up visits to check on the how the garden features were holding up and to make any improvements or changes requested by the clients or recommended by Otsuka and approved by the clients.

The stones that were later added around the concrete stream edges in Mrs. McColm's garden were likely such an improvement, and Otsuka may have given advice for planting the rock garden plants in the slopes between the garden levels, which Drew Nagel could have carried out.

Also, the replacement of the fragile bamboo bridges in Mrs. McColm's garden was done before Drew Nagel left her employ, as shown by the photo of him next to a newer wood bridge, which was likely taken right before he left in July 1937. Otsuka may have done this work too.



Figure 85: Drew Nagel in Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden, likely taken right before he left her employ in July 1937. The original bamboo bridges in her garden had already been replaced by sturdier wooden ones. (MAC)

7. Events Held in Mrs. McColm's Garden; Other Muscatine Rock Gardens

Garden Events and Mentions of Mrs. McColm's Garden

September 13, 1929:

GARDEN CLUB TO VISIT M'COLM GARDENS MONDAY

The Muscatine Garden club will resume regular session at 2:30 Monday afternoon with a meeting at the Y.M.C.A. Following the presentation of the subject, "Fall Planting and Dahlias," the members will go to the E. L. McColm gardens.

The article of that date mentions nothing about a Japanese garden, only the dahlias that Mrs. McColm was known to grow.

October 5, 1929:

An announcement of the Twentieth Century Club's schedule of meetings for the following year announced that the final event of the club year would be: "June (1930), Mrs. E.L. McColm, hostess at garden party."

June 11, 1930:

Garden Party Closes Year For Study Club

A garden party, the final meeting of the year for the members of the Twentieth Century study club, was held Tuesday afternoon at the home of Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue. Following the installation of officers and other business, a supper was served on the lawn.

A short playlet, with the setting in a Japanese garden, was offered at dusk by members of the club, under the direction of Mrs. Frank Giesler.

This article did not specify that the playlet's "setting in a Japanese garden" (emphasis added) was in an actual Japanese-style garden at Mrs. McColm's house, but it is probable that this is what the article meant.

October 21, 1930:

Moving Pictures Of Foreign Gardens Shown

Moving pictures of gardens of different countries, taken by Mrs. G. R. Titus on her trip abroad, were shown at the meeting of the Muscatine Garden club held Monday afternoon at the home of Mrs. E. L. McColm, Mulberry avenue. The pictures were excellent illustrations of Mrs. Titus' topic, "Impressions of Foreign Gardens," and included examples of gardens in the Orient.

May 12, 1931:

Garden Club Enjoys Tour of Jap(anese) Model

Members of the Garden club studied the model Japanese garden of Mrs. E. L. McColm, Mulberry avenue, at their meeting Monday afternoon at the home. An article in the March issue of Country Life was read by Mrs. George Hermann, which interpreted the idea of a Jap(anese) garden. In planting a garden, the Japanese bring out a motive, each flower representing an idea, so that when in bloom, both a picture and story are presented.

The Jap(anese) rock garden at the McColm home was carried out the true Jap(anese) motif. There are the four pools, three waterfalls, and a stream meandering for 75 feet.

The garden, started last year, is at its full glory now, with the iris in bloom, and the flowers and shrubbery grown among the rocks to make a woodland scene. Even the bridges crossing the waterfalls and stream are representative. The stone lanterns are of Jap(anese) make. The tour of the garden was highly interesting and pictorial, in view of the study of the club.

September 13, 1931 (*Mid-West Progressive*):

Sixty Guests At Reception: Wives of Delegates Here Entertained By Mrs. McColm

...After the showing of the pictures Mrs. McColm and representatives of the Aid society of the Methodist Episcopal church served refreshments. The guests were also conducted on a tour of the grounds of the home and found the rock garden, with its winding stream and mirroring pools especially attractive.

May 17, 1932: (note that Mrs. McColm's garden was already referred to as a "rock garden," rather than as a Japanese-style garden)

Mrs. McColm Hostess to Club Women

Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue, had as guests in her home Monday afternoon 25 members of the Fortnightly literary club of West Liberty.

The women were taken through her rock garden, and then into the music room where the hostess sang a group of songs accompanied by Mrs. Gibson at the piano. Mrs. Frank Giesler contributed a group of readings. Both the music and readings pertained to flowers and gardens.

A tea was enjoyed at the conclusion of the afternoon, with Mrs. McColm and Mrs. F. H. Little pouring.

June 11, 1932:

Garden Music Is Enjoyed at McColm Home

The beautiful music room and gardens of Mr. E. L. McColm home, 1314 Mulberry avenue, offered a lovely setting for a Garden club program, "The Garden in Song," an event of Friday afternoon.

An organ and piano duet entitled "Rhapsody," played by Mrs. Wanda Schwarts at the organ and Mrs. J. R. Gibson at the piano was the opening number. Miss Elsa Fack, accompanied by Miss Eda Critz at the piano, sang a group of four appropriate selections, "Rose in the Bud," "Garden of Your Heart," "Violet," and "Thank God for the Garden."

Two little fairies in the persons of Mary Ann Block and Margaret Roach entertained the guests with toe dances, Mrs. Gibson playing the piano accompaniment.

Mrs. McColm's singing of "Do You Know My Garden?" "Little Rose of May," and "Trees," accompanied by Mrs. Schwarts on the organ, was one of the outstanding features of the afternoon program.

Mrs. Schwarts and Mrs. Gibson played "Fantasy" as an organ and piano duet for the final number. The guests were then invited into the garden where the remaining hours were spent.

Although the event described in this article of October 12, 1932 was not held at Mrs. McColm's house, it does mention that Mrs. Kellog, chairman of the national Federation of Garden Clubs, was staying at her home:

Forty Women at Tea for Mrs. Kellog

Forty women extended greetings to Mrs. Frederick Kellog of Norristown, N. J., chairman of the national council of Federated Garden clubs who is visiting in this city, when they were guests at a pretty afternoon tea given Tuesday by Mrs. S. G. Stein in her home, 503 West Second street.

Mrs. Kellog came to Muscatine from Kansas City where she was speaking in the interest of federated club work, to be the guest of her friend, Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue. She was also at Des Moines presiding over the national council meeting, thus making her visit here of special significance.

Mrs. McColm sang two solos at the tea, accompanied at the piano by Mrs. J. R. Gibson. A short talk on the advantages of Garden Clubs being federated was given by Mrs. Kellog. The Muscatine club expects to become a part of the national federation soon. A sketch of the work which has been accomplished by the local club during its four years of existence was also a part of the program.

Tea was served in the late afternoon at a table centered by a low bowl of delphiniums and dahlias. Mrs. W. H. Crozer and Mrs. A. C. Eschbach poured.

This short *Muscatine Journal* article of May 27, 1933 identifies that a group will be entertained at Mrs. McColm's home, and since the event took place in May, it is likely that a group of women interested in foreign missionary work would be interested in seeing Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden:

Mrs. McColm Will Be Hostess To W. F. M. S.:

Mrs. E. L. McColm will entertain members of the Women's Foreign Missionary society of the First Methodist Episcopal church at her home, 1314 Mulberry avenue, Friday afternoon at 2:30.

Mrs. McColm's husband, E.L. McColm, died August 12, 1933, so she did not host any programs in her home for the rest of 1933 – announcements of several events that were postponed or moved to other locations appeared in the *Muscatine Journal* during the rest of that year, and she resigned from her position in at least one charity.

In February 1934, Mrs. McColm resumed hosting events in her home with a Twentieth Century Club meeting. However, events at her home that year were nearly all held in early spring, autumn or winter months, and likely did not include visits to her gardens.

That changed in June 1935. The June 29, 1935 issue of the *Muscatine Journal* had a long article about a garden tour that was held for the Muscatine Garden Club:

Private Gardens of City Thrown Open to 200 Women for Interesting Tour

It was a day of sheer pleasure tramping down woodland aisles and tarrying beside crystal clear pools where floated delicately tinted water lilies – when 200 women of the city and surrounding communities invaded some of the city's most prominent private garden spots, as guests of the Muscatine Garden club Friday....

Japanese Gardens The formal Japanese gardens of Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue, were among the most outstanding on the tour. Two black waterfowl guard the entrance to the series of gardens, each garden being on a different level.

A Japanese shrine, which is lighted at night, is reached by crossing a tiny wooden bridge over a rushing waterfall. Wooden Japanese pergolas and smaller shrines dominate the lower garden, which is lined with canals formed by the water from two waterfalls on either side.

In the garden below one may enjoy hearty game of baby golf, while onlookers rest comfortably on garden benches placed about. It is an inspiring sight to look up from the lower level to the high-banked temple shrine of the topmost garden.

And only six weeks later, the August 8, 1935 *Muscatine Journal* had another announcement of a garden tour in which Mrs. McColm's garden was included:

Garden Club Plays Hostess to Women From West Chester

The Muscatine Garden club played hostess to 16 West Chester women who came Wednesday for a picnic lunch at Weed park and then enjoyed a tour of several gardens in the city.

At the conclusion of the tour Miss Minnetta Headley served refreshments in the garden of her home, 414 Parham street.

Gardens visited in the tour were those of Mrs. Raymond Korschot, 1326 Park drive; Mrs. L. C. Kautz, 116 Lord avenue; Mrs. Fay Hankons, 117 Lord avenue; Mrs. William Umlandt, 201 Maple avenue. Mrs. Lee Richards, 2505 Mulberry avenue; **Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue**; Mrs. C. B. Fuller, 1019 Mulberry avenue; Mrs. Fred Ziegler, 811 Cedar street; Mrs. Frank Drake, 1023 Iowa avenue; and Mrs. G. Krieger, 203 West Eleventh street.

On September 20, 1935, the *Muscatine Journal* had another announcement of a musical event held in Mrs. McColm's home for the Garden Club, and the following month, a 20th Century Club meeting was held there, focusing on Italy, with Italian music – including the song, “One Fine Day,” from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.

Influence of Mrs. McColm's Garden on Other Muscatine Gardens

Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden was built relatively late in the period of enthusiasm for Japanese-style gardens as measured on the nationwide level. But it was still one of the very first Japanese-style gardens built in Iowa, where the trend never really caught on like it did in Minneapolis, on the east coast or in California.

Even when regarded as a “rock garden” instead of a Japanese-style garden, Mrs. McColm's garden was still a fairly early example of that type of garden, particularly in Muscatine. As such, it may have influenced Muscatine residents to build rock gardens in their own gardens, although the popularity of rock gardens was already growing throughout Iowa from the late 1920s through the early 1930s:

The Popularity of Rock Gardens

The idea of rock gardens planted with alpine plants appears to have originated in England (like so many other garden trends) around the turn of the century. British newspapers mentioned them increasingly during the late 1910s and then throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Rock gardens did not become popular in the United States until later than that; American newspapers contained very few references to them until after 1925, except in California, where they seemed to become popular a few years sooner. This could be due to the Japanese influence in that state, rather than the British influence. (Japan had its own tradition of rock gardens, albeit one that did not emphasize the planting of spreading rock garden plants between stones to the same degree as the British Alpine rock garden style.)

Rock gardens took a lot longer to catch on in Iowa. Iowa newspapers contained only a single reference to them during the 1910s: a mention of a book by an English author, Gertrude Jekyll. Even Illinois newspapers contained only around 50 references to them between 1915 and 1920.

In June 1923, the Davenport *Democrat and Leader* had a story about the professionally designed garden of J.W. Bettendorf, which singled out “the unusual rock garden of the grounds.”

The Des Moines Garden Club discussed them in an early 1923 meeting, and at least one member, Miss Izanne Chamberlain, had one on her property.

By 1925, there were several rock gardens in the Tri-Cities area: That of Mrs. D.M. King at Rock Island Arsenal (built at Quarters One for Mrs. Harry B. Jordan in 1919, and shown above); that of Mrs. F.B. James in Bettendorf (members of the Muscatine Garden Club visited this garden on more than one occasion); those of Mrs. James S. Dow and Mrs. G.H. Sharpley. The Davenport Country Club had a rock garden by 1926.

A few adventurous gardeners in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City had made rock gardens by the late 1920s.

The topic of rock gardens became a popular one for lectures among garden clubs in Des Moines, the Tri-Cities and Cedar Rapids by the late 1920s. Muscatine did not organize its garden club until late 1928, but lectures on the topic were given in May 1931 (by Mrs. L.E. Edmondson); July 1931 (by Father Stanley B. Jones); May 1933 (by Muscatine florist Rex Fessler); and September 10, 1934 (by Mrs. Fred M. Ziegler, at her home and in her own rock garden).

Garden club members made trips to visit rock gardens in the Tri-Cities area in 1929, 1935

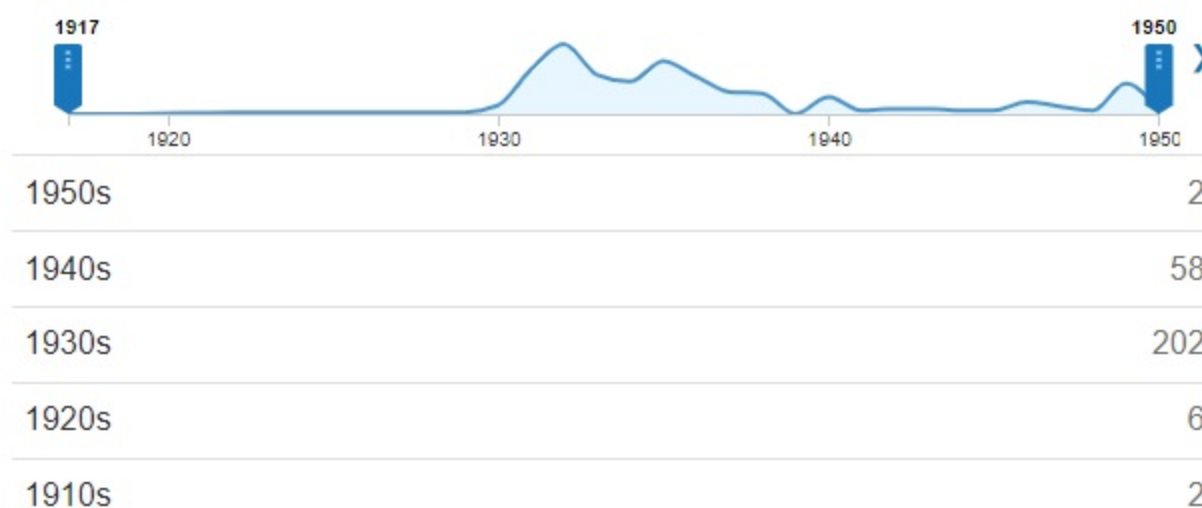


Figure 86: A graph showing the incidence of mentions of “rock garden” in Muscatine newspapers between 1910 and 1950. Interest in the topic peaked in 1932 and again in 1935. (*Newspapers.com*)

In 1932, the major activity of the Muscatine Garden Club was the planning, construction and planting of a rock garden and wildflower area in Weed Park. The *Muscatine Journal* of November 15, 1932 had a long article about that project:

Fifty tons of rock have already been used in the construction of the garden.... There are four waterfalls leading down the hillside into the ravine. Water from the fall is supplied from the swimming pool. Pipes have been constructed under the park road leading into the ravine, with shut-offs in the park pool house and adjoining.

The rock garden and the general planting were laid out by George Hermann, who has given his services gratis. Work of laying the rock was done by Herman Muchow, park custodian, with other park employees and men of the community, who also donated their services. City trucks were loaded for hauling of the rock to the park. Cement used in construction was paid for by the club.

So far 63 different varieties of wild flowers and seven species of ferns have been planted. Some of the plants came from the garden of the members. Others were procured from their natural settings, with permission of the property owners. In no case did the club deplete the supply in any one place, taking only a limited number of plants. The members themselves gathered the plants. As many as 40 women were at work in one day gathering, planting or caring for the plants.



Figure 87: A 1936 photo of Muscatine Garden Club women in the Weed Park rock garden and wildflower preserve, identified as follows: "Mrs. Charles Opel, chairman of the wild-flower preserve committee for the coming year, Mrs. Elmus Richard, chairman of the civic committee, Mrs. Fred M. Ziegler, Garden club president, Mrs. Archie Adams; who served as chairman of the preserve committee last year, Mrs. Roy Kuebler and Mrs. Louis Kautz." (*Muscatine Journal*, December 30, 1936)

The Garden Club's Flower Show in early June 1933 had a display of a model home surrounded with real sod and "with a rock garden at one side, and a flag stone path; a lovely formal garden and bird bath, an elaborate rock garden and pool."

By November 1934, the *Muscatine Journal* ran an article about local women and their interest in their rock gardens (at least nine local rock gardens were mentioned):

Hobby For Rock Gardens Gives Greater Appreciation Of Beauty

Muscatine, with its many vantage points overlooking the Mississippi, affords delightful settings for numerable rock gardens. Mrs. Louis Kautz has enhanced the lovely setting of her side lawn, which looks down on a wide sweep of the river, with artistic arrangement of rocks and flowers.

Oriental Garden. Especially lovely is the Japanese garden of Mrs. E. L. McColm, 1314 Mulberry avenue, with its terraces and waterfalls.

The Rev. and Mrs. Stanley P. Jones, 1214 Mulberry avenue, have had beautiful deep red pond lilies in their pool all summer long.

Mrs. Fred Ziegler, 811 Cedar street, has a new pool on a high bank at her home. Mrs. Ziegler is especially interested in rock gardens and flowers through her chairmanship of the civic committee of the Muscatine Garden club. This committee has added many artistic touches throughout the city, and plans a highway beautification project on the river road just outside of town in the near future.

Dr. A. B. Clapp has some unusual features in the garden at his home, 1122 Mulberry avenue....

Mrs. Lee Richards has a lovely rock garden at her home, 2505 Mulberry avenue, as has Mrs. Frank Drake, 1023 Iowa avenue, and Mrs. Harry Huttig, 317 West Third street. Miss Ida Hutchinson has some dainty anemones growing in her garden....

That article must have missed some local rock gardeners, because a follow-up article in January 1935 included these mentions:

Mrs. F. W. Englund has a hobby that adds charm to her lovely home on Park avenue, overlooking the Mississippi. Each spring, summer and fall she spends much time in the large rock garden and pool which is her special pet. Every two or three years she changes the whole plan of the pool and garden, for the sake of variety....

Mrs. Frank Drake spends much time (in different temperatures from these) improving the already lovely rock garden and pool at her home, 1023 Iowa avenue. Lots of trees feature in the garden, while the pool is eight or ten feet long and about five feet wide. She is planning another pool in the spring.

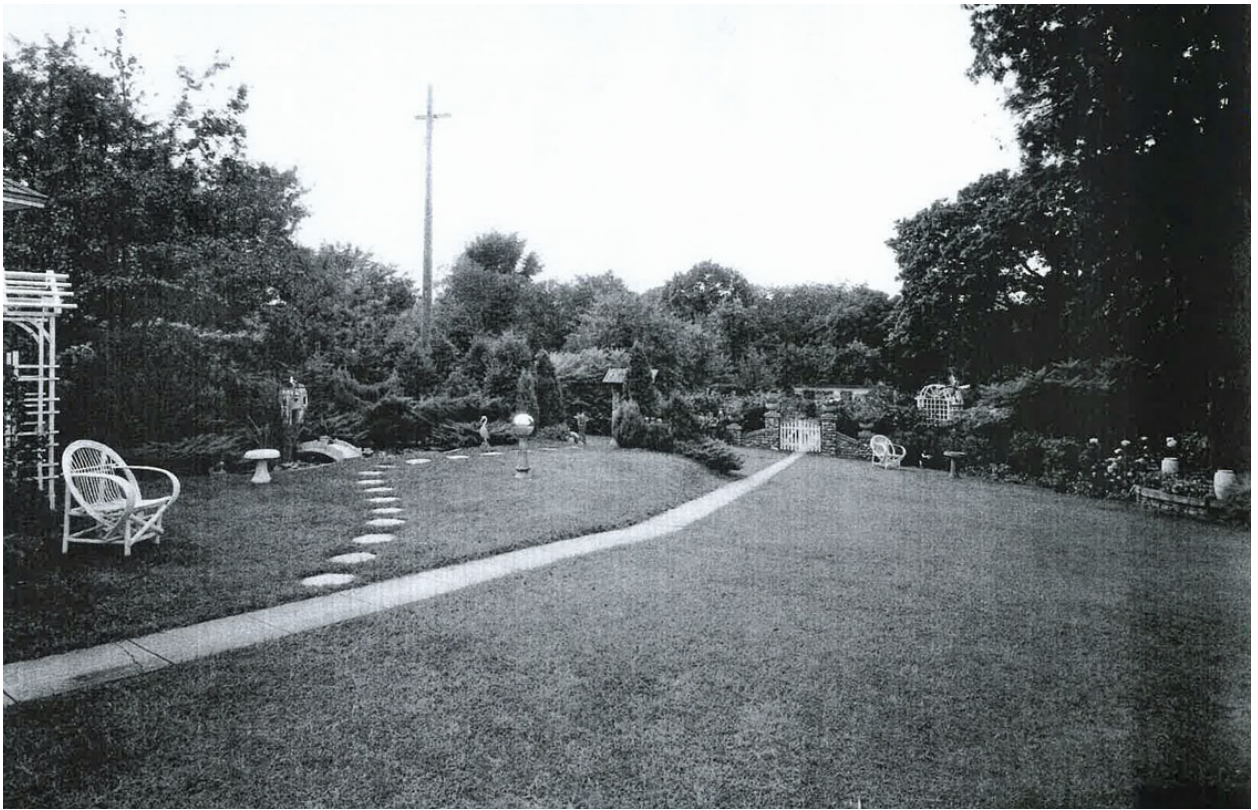


Figure 88: Two photos of the rock garden and pond of Mrs. Fred Ziegler, 811 Cedar Street, likely from the late 1930s. (MAC)

Another local garden that received attention was that of Miss Harriet Smeenck at 415 Parham Street. The *Muscatine Journal* of May 11, 1935 had a substantial article about it:

Garden Is Attracting Attention

A charming outdoor parlor, where the fragrance of a hundred lovely flowers blend with their dainty coloring, is attracting a great deal of attention, at the residence of Miss Harriet Smeenck, 415 Parham street. The garden is considered one of the outstanding ones of the city, and already has had a large number of visitors to view its unusual beauty. Several from out-of-town have even come for a peep at its colorful beauty....

There are symmetrical flower beds on either side of the lawn and at the back....

A terraced rock garden at the side of the home, with rough stone steps leading down a path to another flower garden, is in striking contrast. On the lower level one may sit on a rough-hewn "love seat" and view the setting. The rock garden is in the process of completion, and when finished will be set off with more flowers.

Miss Smeenck takes special pride and interest in her garden, as she was chairman of the wildflower preserve of the Muscatine Garden club at Weed park one year....



Figure 89: This photo of Miss Smeenck's garden was printed in the local newspaper. (*Muscatine Journal*, May 11, 1936)

The 1935 article shown above that described the Garden Club garden tour of numerous Muscatine gardens (including Mrs. McColm's described above) also had descriptions of other gardens, including these:

Private Gardens of City Thrown Open to 200 Women for Interesting Tour

While the guests waited they trolled around by the clever rock garden and pool on the Eversmeyer grounds. Many were interested in the wide spreading prune tree which shaded the pool....

The water lilies in Mrs. Kautz's pool were of unusual beauty, most of them being in full bloom. The rock garden and oval pool of Mrs. H. Fay Hankins, 117 Lord avenue, was another attraction in this vicinity. A colony of little animals sat pertly, around the edge of the pool, which was lined with shrubs....

The natural setting is what impresses one in the garden of D. A.B. Clapp, 1122 Mulberry avenue. Stepping stones lead through aisles of flowers where the fragrance of tall stately Madonna lilies vie with the beauty of blaze roses, Oriental roses, white, yellow and red roses riot of color. Dr. Clapp planned the garden himself, placing the stepping stones and constructed the rock walls.

A Buddha a-top a waterfall is the keynote of Mrs. A. L. Bryan's garden, 1124 Mulberry avenue. A rock bird bath is set in a pool of water lilies. Flowers bloom gayly around the water's edge.

An article in August 20, 1935 *Muscatine Journal* announced this:

The attractive lawn at the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. B. Fuller, 1019 Mulberry avenue, formed the setting for a dinner party Monday night when their daughter, Barbara, entertained 24 guests. Colored lights illuminated the lovely rock garden and pools which line the lawn, and provided light for the dinner hour.

There were fewer mentions of rock gardens in Muscatine newspapers after 1935. Perhaps it was the natural end of a trend – or perhaps it had something to do with this alarming article that appeared in the *Muscatine Journal* of October 10, 1935:

Rock Gardens Aid Malaria's Spread

Milwaukee (AP): Rock gardens, in addition to making the home beautiful, the American Public Health association was told today, may make it unhealthy. "The craze for these gardens is causing an increase in malaria." said Dr. M. Fernan-Nunez of the Marquette University medical school.

After 1935, mentions of "rock garden" declined each year through the end of the decade, although the Garden Club occasionally included a lecture about the topic among its presentations to club members. Additionally, another public rock garden was installed in 1935 in a park near the levee at the bottom of Mulberry Street.

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