



---

# MUSSER JAPANESE GARDEN

---

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

SEPTEMBER 1, 2021  
by Beth Cody

This paper is the eighth and final 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

Beth Cody is the author of *Iowa Gardens of the Past: Lost and Historic Gardens of Iowa, 1850-1980* (2020). She is interested in garden history and particularly Midwestern gardens.

She has degrees in Economics, and Asian Languages and Literature (Chinese) from The University of Iowa; a Master's Degree in International Finance and Economics from Brandeis University; and a degree in Music (Flute) Performance from The Cleveland Institute of Music.

Beth owns a small business in Coralville, Iowa, and is a volunteer with Project GREEN, an Iowa City charity that raises money to beautify local public areas. She is an avid amateur gardener on her five-acre rural property south of Iowa City, and can be reached through her website at [Iowagardens.com](http://Iowagardens.com).

## Table of Contents

Changing American Perception of Japan, 1930-1945.....	1
Japanese Aggression.....	1
Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor and Internment of Japanese-Americans.....	5
Attitude Toward and Removal of Japanese-Style Gardens During WWII .....	6
Modern Remaining Pre-WWII Japanese Gardens in the Midwest.....	16
Fabyan Japanese Garden, Geneva, Illinois (c.1910-1914).....	16
Cranbrook Japanese Garden, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (c.1915).....	18
Stan Hywet Gardens, Akron, Ohio (1916).....	20
French Lick Springs Hotel, French Lick, Indiana (c.1920).....	22
Terrace Park: Sioux Falls, South Dakota (1928).....	24
Jackson Park, Chicago, Illinois (1935) .....	26
Laura Musser McColm Japanese Garden, Muscatine, Iowa (1930) .....	28
Sources.....	31

## Changing American Perception of Japan, 1930-1945

Soon after Mrs. McColm commissioned her Japanese-style garden around 1930, Americans' perception of Japan and Japanese people and culture began to change in response to the Japanese government's increasingly aggressive foreign policy in the Pacific.

### Japanese Aggression

Japan's leaders believed that Japan needed to acquire colonies in the Pacific in order to compete with Europe and the United States. (US leaders had believed precisely the same thing, acquiring Hawaii, the Philippines and other islands in order to compete with European countries.)

In the 1870s, Japan had gained control of Hokkaido and the Ryukyu Islands; in 1895, the island of Taiwan was ceded by the Chinese government after being defeated by Japanese troops; Russia was defeated in 1904-05, leaving Japan in control of the Korean peninsula; after Japan's participation in WWI on the side of the Allies, Japan was awarded former German colonies in the South Pacific.

In the Manchurian Incident of 1931, radical Japanese army officers bombed a part of the Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railroad and, falsely attributing the attack to the Chinese, invaded and conquered Manchuria (the part of China north of Korea) in "response," and set up the puppet government of Manchukuo – all done without permission of the Japanese government. International criticism followed.

This was the turning point in Americans' perception of Japan and Japanese culture. Through the decade of the 1930s, interest in Japanese gardens steadily declined, as shown by the graph below.

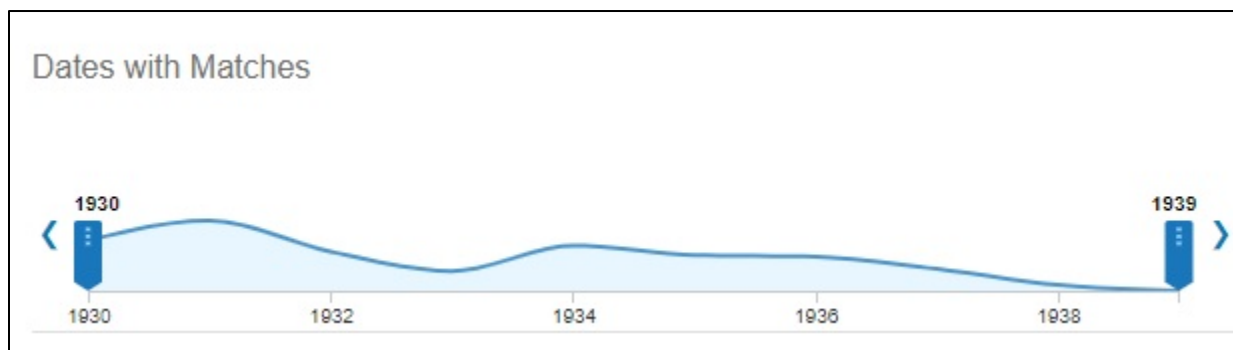
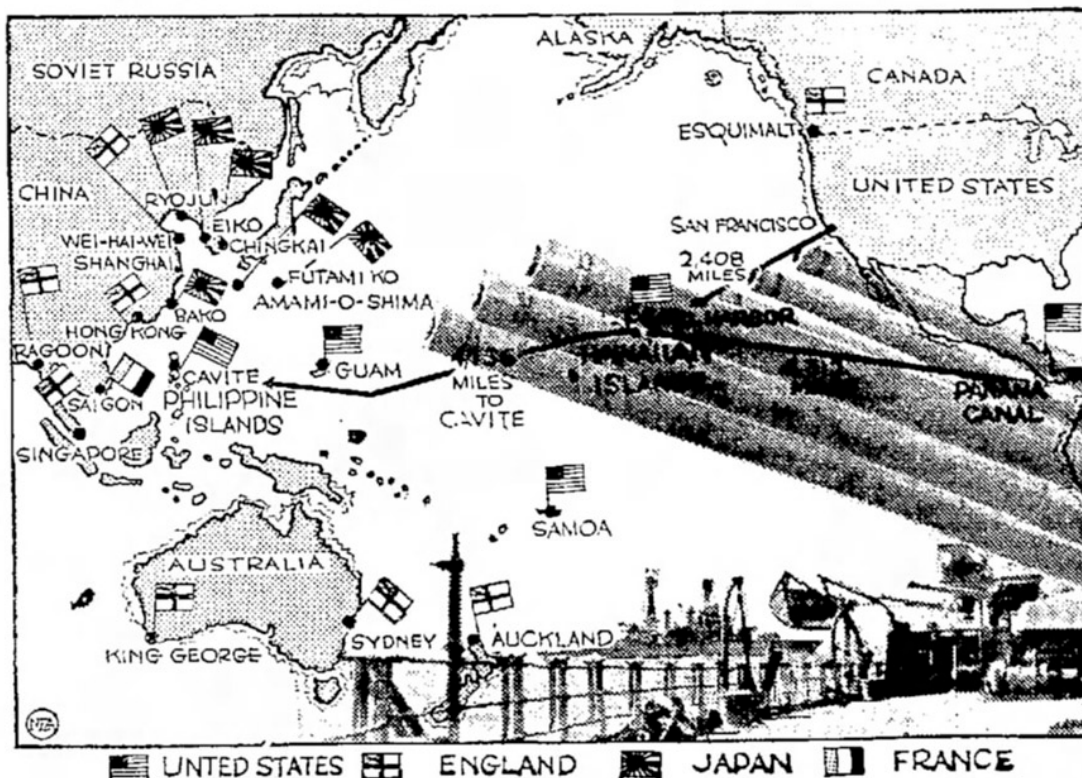


Figure 1: Newspapers.com search results for “Japanese gardens” in newspapers during the 1930s show a steady decline after 1931. A slight increase was seen during the 1933-1934 World’s Fair in Chicago, followed by a dropping off of interest in the topic by 1939. (*Newspapers.com*)



# Pacific Ocean? It's War-Like Now!



By NEA Service.

Naval bases of the four great naval powers in the Pacific are shown on the map above.

In view of the present situation in China, it is interesting to remember that the two great United States bases in the Pacific, at Cavite and Pearl Harbor, are each equipped to handle complete battle fleets. Guam is a fueling station, but has no drydocks for bat-

tle ships.

The Japanese bases are near the island empire itself and are easily defended.

Th numerous British bases are either too far from the scene of the trouble to have much bearing on the situation, or are not capable of handling a large fleet, with the exception of Hongkong and Singapore.

The French base at Saigon is

equipped to handle only small boats.

Of all the bases in the Pacific, Uncle Sam's Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, is perhaps the best equipped and the best defended.

In addition to the distant Pacific bases shown on this map, the United States has naval stations on its own west coast, including these at Seattle, San Francisco and San Pedro, Calif.

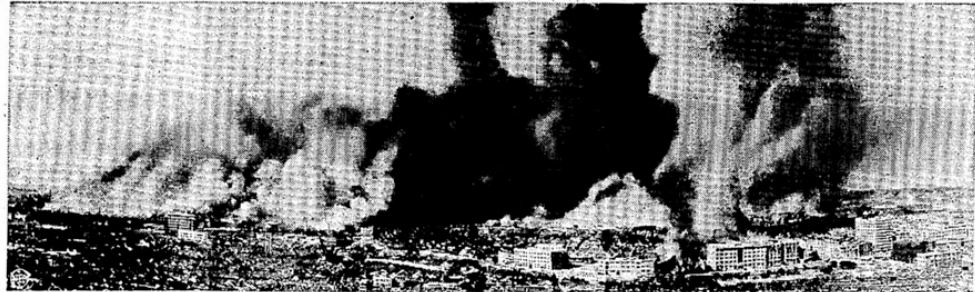
Figure 2: This early 1932 article and map illustrated the changing perception of the situation with Japan – and confidently boasted that U.S. bases at the Philippines and Pearl Harbor were both equipped to handle full fleets. (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, February 9, 1932)

# **“Surrender or Else” Japs Advise Nanking**

## **Plane Drops Warning for Besieged City**

**BY MORRIS J. HARRIS**  
Shanghai — (AP) — The Japanese command issued an ultimatum today demanding the surrender of China's abandoned capital, Nanking, by noon Friday (10 p. m. Thursday, CST) and threatening that otherwise the city "will become the scene of the horrors of war."  
The ultimatum was issued by Gen. Iwane Matsui, commander of the Japanese forces in the Shanghai-Nanking area, to the Chinese commander, Gen. Tang Seng-Chi. A Japanese warplane dropped a

## **Shanghai in Flames As Jap Conquerors Enter City**



Dark billowing clouds of smoke from hundreds of fires clouded the sky over Shanghai, the the panoramic picture above was taken, while conquering

green-clad warriors of the Rising Sun tramped through the streets of the once beautiful "Paris of the Orient." Not a district in Shanghai's sprawling

miles escaped the devastating ferocity of Japan's attack. Chapel, Footung and Nantao, native districts in which heaviest fighting was concentrated,

were in ruins after fire and artillery barrages had taken toll. Thousands of the 3,184,000 population were homeless, and starving. Refugees crowded

into the international settlement adding to the worries of international troop patrols and the Shanghai volunteer corps, guardians of the settlement.

Figure 3: (*Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune, December 9, 1937*)

This American perception of Japan as no longer a friendly, peaceful nation only worsened as Japanese troops invaded China in 1937, particularly after details filtered out about the systematic rapes, murders and atrocities committed against hundreds of thousands of Chinese residents during the Nanking Massacre.

The US and Allied countries began to impose economic sanctions against Japan in order to deprive that nation of the resources – particularly oil – needed to continue its war with China. In 1941, Japan invaded French Indochina (Vietnam), and in response the US, Britain and the Netherlands froze all Japanese assets.

Japan's response came at the end of 1941.





## Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor and Internment of Japanese-Americans

On December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes attacked without warning the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This act propelled the United States into the war with Japan that was perhaps inevitable.

The Pearl Harbor attack killed more than 3,000 US soldiers, and following it, many Americans began to resent the presence of Japanese people and anything Japanese here in the United States, even though many Japanese-born individuals were US citizens – born here in the US and some of them residing here for decades. Many had left Japan precisely to escape the radical nationalism that was responsible for Japan's imperial aggression.

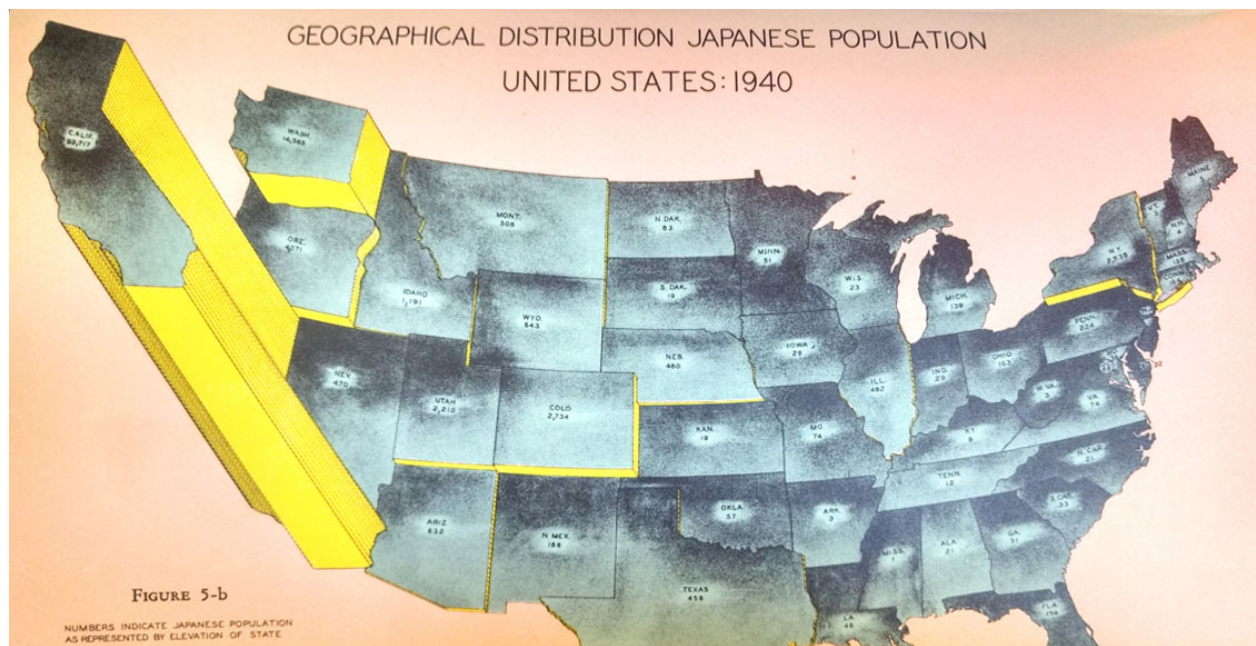
US government leaders feared that Japan was planning to attack the west coast of the United States, and they were concerned that “fifth-column” activity by Japanese residents would aid such an attack – even though there was little evidence of disloyalty among Japanese-Americans.

Once the US was at war with Japan, the United States moved to relocate and intern residents of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast – which comprised nearly all Japanese-Americans.

Surveys at the time showed that the majority of Americans supported this policy, even if reluctantly, and nearly all politicians did as well (the one politician who spoke out against the issue, the governor of Colorado, wasn't reelected).

Today, of course, we recognize that internment was egregiously unfair to individuals who had done nothing wrong. Hysteria has too often led to unfair restrictions on our American rights and freedoms – and war is horribly unfair in nearly every respect.

Numerous Japanese gardeners were among the 127,000 Japanese-Americans interned between March 1942 and the end of 1944.





## Attitude Toward and Removal of Japanese-Style Gardens During WWII

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that killed 3,000 Americans, it didn't take long for American park supervisors and citizens to begin renaming local Japanese-style gardens as "Oriental" or Chinese gardens. Even worse, some Japanese-style gardens were vandalized, destroyed or removed altogether.

Following are news articles about the removal, renaming or reconsidering of Japanese-style gardens in the United States. The articles speak of both the anger and the sadness over this issue when shown in their original print versions.



Figure 6: *The Times*, Munster, IN, May 15, 1942





# Memphis to Hurl Japan Gardens Out of the Park

By United Press

MEMPHIS, Jan. 3 — Memphis Park Commissioners today had ordered the Japanese gardens in Overton Park removed.

John Vesey, commission chairman, issued a statement in which he said:

"We don't want any of the Japanese culture around. We don't think it is good. All we want to do with the Japs is cut their throats."

The commission will meet Tuesday to decide what to do about Japanese prints and other art objects in the Brooks Art Gallery and the Memphis Museum of Natural History.

In an editorial today, The Memphis Commercial Appeal pointed out that Japanese and Chinese architecture is the same and suggested the Japanese gardens be changed to Chinese gardens, observing that "Chinese heroism deserves a monument."

"We hope the city government's war enthusiasm will eventually reach a pitch where it will undertake something along the line of civilian defense precautions," The Commercial Appeal added.

Figure 7: The Knoxville (TN) News-Sentinel, January 3, 1942

Figure 8: The *Austin American*  
Austin, TX, June 24, 1942

## San Antonio Japanese Garden Becomes Chinese

SAN ANTONIO, June 23.—(AP)—  
Signs of the times:

The city council Tuesday changed the name of the Japanese sunken garden here, second only to the Alamo in its photogenic attraction for tourists, to Chinese garden.

"It doesn't make much difference either way," Park Commr. Henry Hein explained. "The garden has an oriental setting and either name would be fitting."

At the same time the council changed the name of Lindbergh park to Douglas MacArthur park.

---

## Japanese Tea Garden Becomes Americanized

San Francisco — (AP) — War has made drastic changes in San Francisco's colorful (Japanese) tea garden in Golden Gate Park.

Instead of tea, served by girls in kimonos, you now get coffee and doughnuts from girls in strictly American garb, right down to high heels.

A new American flag has replaced the ornate Japanese sign.

The Park Commission ordered the changes "in view of the times."

Figure 9: The Bridgewater (NJ)  
*Courier-News*, February 5, 1942

## Owners Dismantle Japanese Garden

SAN FRANCISCO, May 16.—(AP)—The Japanese tea garden in Golden Gate Park was dismantled today because its original owners are to be evacuated.

The garden, founded forty eight years ago, contained hundreds of dwarf trees, shrubs, miniature granite temples and other art objects.

Figure 10: The *Sacramento Bee*,  
May 16, 1942

Figure 11: Montreal *Gazette*, June 15, 1942

The "Japanese" Garden at the Ritz is no more—to divert your eye from the familiar (and slightly geographical) bamboo shades that still roof you, they have tossed in a bit of old Vermont atmosphere. Young ducks and other water fowl swim in endless circles in the pools where Imperial Water Lilies used to float—one habitue was heard objecting to the obvious growth and ageing of the waddling ducklings—apparently she was not "as one" with Nature's plans!

## GIRL ABOUT TOWN

War is, and don't give me an argument, war. Once a leading figure in our saloon society was an attractive belle nicknamed "Tokio" Payne, because of her carefully cultivated Japanezzy appearance. Obviously she is just "Mrs." now, since my drive to nickname her "Chunking" got nowhere. And the popular outdoor haunt of idle afternoon women at our Ritz Hotel was "The Japanese Gardens." What do you think they call it now? Just the outdoor garden, where the little flowered hats still congregate to stare and be stared at.

---

Figure 12: Miami *Herald*, June 26, 1943



Figure 13: St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 1942

## **JAPANESE GARDEN IS REMOVED FROM NEW YORK EXHIBIT**

**Bower in International Display Offensive to Chinese Consulate.**

NEW YORK, June 25 (AP).—On the eleventh floor terrace of the R. C. A. Building in Rockefeller Center, where visitors can see the flora of many lands on display in "The Gardens of the Nations" exhibit, there flourished until yesterday a speck of the Nipponese Empire.

Before the war this floral bower with its plants and trees, its wooden bridges and gates, was one of the chief sights in the exhibit.

But yesterday the exotic blooms were torn out by the roots and the entire Japanese garden ruthlessly destroyed.

The Rockefeller Center executives hadn't needed much prodding by the directors of United China Relief to order the elimination of this bit of Japan and the substitution of a Chinese garden.

The whole thing was decided when the staff of the Chinese consulate joined the China relief group in asking that the Japanese garden be destroyed. The garden was directly beneath the windows of the consulate offices.

## Casual Comment

By C. C. SEAT

One thing we can think of with peace in our hearts in this turgid war period is the establishment of a Chinese garden at Rockefeller Plaza, New York City. We uttered a few words of disapproval of cutting down the Japanese cherry tree in Washington, but somehow or other we don't disapprove of replacing a Japanese garden with a Chinese one in the heart of our greatest city because our hearts are increasingly sore at what the Japs have done to us, and their garden was a copy or a simulation of a Chinese garden, anyhow. So we lose nothing and gain a great deal in making the swap. Those cherry trees are permanent and have attained a beautiful and perfected growth and we are glad that the infuriated person hacked at only one and left many more to bloom along the Potomac in after years when we have whipped the Japs and gained the peace, which is no better symbolized than by blossoming trees transplanted from one country to another.

But gardens such as these are not permanent. They grow high up on roofs and terraces above a teeming city and must be watered and fertilized and coaxed and the plantings replaced as they wither and die from exposure, shallow soil and unnatural surroundings. So it's all right to pull up the Japanese garden and put in its place a Chinese one and we must try to enjoy it with malice toward none and charity toward all, which is one of the things gardens teach us to cultivate in the garden of our hearts even in times like this.

Mei-ling Garden is a beautiful name for this lovely spot on the eleventh floor of Rockefeller Center. Its name is self-explanatory. No more appropriate name could be given it than that of the exquisitely beautiful in spirit, mind and body Madame Chiang Kai-shek, who is perhaps the most universally admired woman of the

present day. Mei-ling means "beautiful years," which Madame Chiang Kai-shek has unquestionably proven herself to have lived and the name itself has the lilt and rhythm and music that belongs to a garden. May it blossom with the purity, grace and stability of Mei-ling's character and provide hours of peace for war-worn souls who sit on its heights and ponder on how to unscramble this world into the symmetry and simplicity of a Chinese garden.

It contains all the features, ancient and modern, for which Chinese gardens are noted. Entrance is through a Moon Gate, a completely circular opening symbolizing unbrokenness and good luck, with the inscription Mei-ling set in the masonry. Pomegranates, symbolizing fecundity, are painted on the inside walls and one crosses a small stream to a Chinese pavilion accented in bright colors. There is no grass. The ground is covered with stone and gravel and great stones represent mountains, which in suggestive miniature bring high hills into Chinese garden enclosures. A picturesque feature is live crickets in wooden cages—another good luck sign dear to the Chinese, and the principal plantings are bamboo and cedar, lotus flower, standing for truth and purity, wisteria, lilies and ginko trees. Always bamboo in a Chinese garden for the older it grows the stronger it becomes, so is the symbol of long, healthy life.

China's First Lady cabled the christening committee in acceptance of the honor, "I am honored by the most delicate compliment that sensitive minds could possibly devise. A garden has spiritual significance—because it epitomizes life itself. Orderliness and symmetry are beauty's devoted hand-maidens just as truly as peace of heart and serenity of mind are the inseparable attendants of happiness. May all of you who find your way in this happy creation of nature aided by art attain 'beautiful years'."

Figure 14: Selma Times-Journal, July 22, 1942



Figure 15: *The Monitor*, McAllen,  
TX, March 3, 1944

**Another former Valley man** who is a lieutenant colonel is seeing a lot of England and meeting some of its best known people.

He is Lt. Col. S. M. (Billy) Hogan of Pharr, son of Mr. and Mrs. Dodge Hogan. The colonel commands a tank battalion somewhere in the south of England and among his social events has included a visit to the Mountbatten estate, where Lady Mountbatten asked his advice on whether she should destroy her elaborate Japanese gardens.

"Only barbarians ruin beautiful things," he said. "And you can't defeat the Japs by tearing up your own Japanese garden."

That seemed to fix things, for she forthwith told him she had decided to keep the gardens.

On one of his recent trips to

## WOULD REDEDICATE THE JAPANESE GARDENS.

Chicago, Aug. 3.—Out on a wooded island in Jackson park, the beautiful Japanese gardens and buildings are once more falling into ruin under attacks of the weather and vandals who think they are being patriotic. Over in Italy men of the Japanese race are fighting and dying in defense of our common country. I should like to suggest that these buildings be rededicated as a memorial to these men and that a suitable plaque be erected in their honor. I believe this would not be offensive to any one, particularly to those of us who have worn the uniform of our country and are always ready to recognize bravery in our country's defense.

MAURICE A. TRACY.

Figure 16: *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 1944

## Modern Remaining Pre-WWII Japanese Gardens in the Midwest

Not all Japanese-style gardens in the United States were removed during World War II – many were renamed, either temporarily or permanently, and some were simply referred to as “rock gardens” – such as Mrs. McColm’s Japanese-style garden was called in a local newspaper article as early as 1932.

It’s likely that more Japanese-style gardens were destroyed through neglect – the biggest and usual enemy of gardens – than through animus. Most gardens do not exist for more than a few decades.

But a few – around half a dozen – pre-WWII Midwestern Japanese-style gardens have been restored or re-made:

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



**Figure 17: A view of the Japanese-style garden area of George and Nelle Fabyan. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley.*)**

Between 1910 and 1914, George and Nelle Fabyan had a Japanese-style garden built by Chicago landscape architect T. R. Otsuka on their large property along the Fox River located a mile south of Geneva, a town now on the western outskirts of Chicago.

After the Fabyans’ deaths in the 1930s, the Kane County Forest Preserve District purchased most of the property. However, the Japanese-style garden was not well maintained. In 1974, the Geneva Garden Club began the restoration of the garden, and two more renovations have taken place since then. Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley now maintains and operates Fabyan Villa and Japanese Gardens.





Figure 18: Modern photographs of the Fabyan Japanese Garden. (*Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley.*)



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



**Figure 19: The Japanese-style pond garden at Cranbrook around 1932. (*Cranbrook.edu*)**

Cranbrook is a private educational community consisting of the Cranbrook School for Boys, the Kingswood School (for girls) and the Bloomfield School, all established around the 1920s by George and Ellen Booth (publishers and philanthropists) on their 300-acre property.

The Booths began creating a one-acre Japanese-style garden around a pond about 1915. The garden, which is centered on the Lily Pond and its two small islands, features a vermillion Japanese-style bridge, a Kasuga lantern purchased by the Booths in 1915, and a Lily Pond Cascade, recently restored, with a new Mountain Lantern.

The Japanese-style garden is still undergoing restoration: in 2019, Portland Japanese Garden curator Sadafumi Uchiyama completed a master plan for the rehabilitation of the entire garden, and Cranbrook is in the process of raising funding.





Figure 20: Two modern views of the restored Japanese-style garden areas at Cranbrook.  
([Cranbrook.edu](http://Cranbrook.edu))



## Stan Hywet Gardens, Akron, Ohio (1916)



**Figure 21:** A historic photo of the Japanese-style garden at Stan Hywet, likely taken around 1920. (*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)

In 1916, Gertrude and Franklin Seiberling had a large Japanese-style garden area constructed on their property at Stan Hywet in Akron, Ohio. The garden was designed by Boston landscape architect Warren H. Manning, but was arranged, constructed and planted by T.R. Otsuka of Chicago.

Due to a reversal of fortune around 1920, Stan Hywet's gardens fell into disrepair beginning in the 1930s. The Japanese-style garden area was beautifully restored in 2009, and is open for the enjoyment of the public.





Figure 22: Two modern photographs of the restored Japanese-style garden area at Stan Hywet.  
(*Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens*)



French Lick Springs Hotel, French Lick, Indiana (c.1920)



Figure 23: The original Japanese-style garden at French Lick Springs Hotel, in a postcard view from around 1930. (*author's collection*)

The Japanese-style garden at French Lick Springs hotel was built around 1920, almost certainly designed by T.R. Otsuka, based on similarities to features in his other gardens. The garden declined by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was in need of repair by the time the hotel and grounds were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

The garden area has since been completely redesigned in a more modern (and less Japanese-style) manner, and remains a lovely garden spot for hotel visitors.





Figure 24: Two modern views of the garden area at French Lick Springs Hotel. ([frenchlick.com](http://frenchlick.com))



## Terrace Park: Sioux Falls, South Dakota (1928)



**Figure 25:** A late-1930s postcard view across Covel Lake in Sioux Falls, showing the terraced levels of the park, on which stood the features of the Japanese-style garden created by Joe Maddox from 1928 to 1936. (Ebay)

The Japanese-style garden at Terrace Park in Sioux Falls was designed and built by park caretaker Joseph F. Maddox and his park workers between 1928 and 1936. But during and after WWII, the area suffered from vandalism and neglect.

In 1986, a local organization named Shoto-Teien (Whispering Pines) was formed to restore the Terrace Park Japanese Garden, which worked with University of California Professor Koichi Kawana, who had designed the large Japanese garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden and Ben Chu, supervisor of that St. Louis garden.

Between 1988 and 1991, the organization added new stone lanterns, a waterfall and a pond to the garden. Two hundred trees and perennials were planted and large ornamental stones were brought in. Smaller improvements continue to be made up to the present, and the garden is now a lovely part of Sioux Falls.





Figure 26: Two modern views of the restored Terrace Park Japanese Garden in Sioux Falls.  
(siouxfalls.org)



## Jackson Park, Chicago, Illinois (1935)



Figure 27: Jackson Park in the late 1930s, after expanded gardens had been added around the original Ho-o-den buildings in 1935. (*Garden of the Phoenix Foundation*)

Wooded Island in Chicago's Jackson Park was the original site of the Japanese pavilion buildings built for the 1893 World's Fair. The *Ho-o-den* had nearly been demolished in the 1930s, but in 1935 it was restored, beautiful new gardens were installed around it, and a tea house added.

However, in 1946, the *Ho-o-den* and tea house were destroyed by fire, perhaps arson, and the gardens were abandoned.

In the 1960s, local groups began to advocate restoration of the garden, but it wasn't until 1980 that work commenced to build a new garden on Wooded Island, designed by Kaneji Domoto of New York. The small garden has a moon bridge, paths, a new waterfall and contains at least one of the original lanterns.

The garden was renamed the Osaka Garden in 1992 to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Osaka-Chicago Partner Cities, and a torii Osaka Gate was added in 1995. In 2013, over 100 cherry trees were planted for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the site, and residents can now enjoy *hanami* or flower-viewing in springtime. The Garden of the Phoenix Foundation now ensures that the site will be maintained for future generations to enjoy.





Figure 28: Two views of today's Japanese-style garden in Jackson Park. (*Garden of the Phoenix Foundation*)



Laura Musser McColm Japanese Garden, Muscatine, Iowa (1930)



Figure 29: A 1930s photo of Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden next to her house in Muscatine, Iowa. (*Muscatine Art Center*)

We mustn't forget to include Mrs. McColm's garden in the very short list of surviving pre-WWII Midwestern Japanese-style gardens.

Mrs. McColm enjoyed her garden for only a few years before her husband, Edwin L. McColm, died in 1933, which was followed by a period of several years of her grief. In 1938, she married businessman William T. Atkins and moved to his home in Kansas City, Missouri, but she kept ownership of her house in Muscatine. Atkins died only two years later in 1940, but Mrs. McColm remained in Kansas City for the rest of her life, stopping in Muscatine only on trips to Minnesota to see family, or on her way to Chicago for business. After her death in 1964, her Muscatine house and furnishings were left by her heirs to the City of Muscatine for use as an art museum.

Because Mrs. McColm did not reside in Muscatine, her gardens were simply preserved by caretakers during her lifetime, and did not undergo the periodic updates and changes that owner-occupied gardens usually do. Nor was the Japanese-style garden removed during WWII.

After the garden became a public one, the concrete steps in the Japanese garden were replaced, the stepping stones were replaced by concrete paver paths, railings were added for public safety, the bridges were replaced by sturdier ones, and a concrete patio and pergola were installed at the bottom of the lawn for weddings. In 1990, a number of trees were replaced and the perennial borders were completely replanted.

At some point, the original waterworks stopped working, and the upper pond was redesigned, with rocks stacked far less high and artistically as originally. Two of the original crane statues were





Figure 30: Two modern views of Mrs. McColm's Japanese-style garden. (*author's photos*)



moved inside the art museum after acts of vandalism, and the shrine house and pump house at the bottom of the stream were both rebuilt. The torii gate was rebuilt as well.

The rockwork on the terraced levels has slowly sunk into the earth or been covered by organic debris as the years have passed, so that far fewer rocks can be seen on the slopes. The original evergreen trees have either been replaced or have grown so large that the garden is now deeply shaded.

The Muscatine Art Center has obtained a grant from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs to renovate the Japanese garden, and the work is planned for 2021 and 2022. The project, based on historic research, will repair the garden's water system, replace vegetation and provide better access and interpretation.

Mrs. McColm's lovely Japanese-style garden will be refreshed and rejuvenated, and Muscatine residents will be able to enjoy their unusual – and rare – treasure for another 90 years.





## Sources

“Casual Comment.” Selma *Times-Journal*, July 22, 1942.

“City of Palms.” *The Monitor*, McAllen, TX, March 3, 1944.

“Cranbrook Japanese Garden Historic Landscape Study.” Quinn Evans Architects and Cranbrook Educational Community (center.cranbrook.edu), 2018.

“Fabyan Japanese Garden.” Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley (ppfv.org).

“Federal Undertakings in and Adjacent to Jackson Park, Cook County, Illinois (Section 106: Historic Properties identification Report).” Prepared for Federal Highway Administration, National Park Service (chicago.gov), May 17, 2018.

“Geographical Distribution Japanese Population: 1940 graph-map.” United States Army. (Wikipedia).

“Girl About Town.” Miami *Herald*, June 26, 1943.

“History of Japan.” Wikipedia. (Wikipedia.org)

Hohmann, Heidi. “Historic Landscape Preservation Plan for the Japanese Garden: Laura Musser McColm Atkins House.” Muscatine Art Center, September 2020.

“Japanese Garden at Stan Hywet Hall.” Doell & Doell Landscape Historians and Landscape Preservation Planners (Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens), 1993.

“The Japanese garden at the Ritz is no more.” Montreal *Gazette*, June 15, 1942.

“Japanese Garden is Removed From Exhibit.” St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, June 25, 1942.

“Japanese Tea Garden Becomes Americanized.” Bridgewater (NJ) *Courier-News*, February 5, 1942.

Maloney, Cathy Jean. *Chicago Gardens: The Early History*. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

“Memphis to Hurl Japan Gardens Out of the Park.” Knoxville (TN) *News-Sentinel*, January 3, 1942.

“Owners Dismantle Japanese Garden.” *Sacramento Bee*, May 16, 1942.

“Pacific Ocean? It’s War-Like Now!” *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, February 9, 1932.

“Rename Japanese Gardens.” *The Times*, Munster, IN, May 15, 1942.

“San Antonio Japanese Garden Becomes Chinese.” *Austin American*, June 24, 1942

Steelwater, Eliza. “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: French Lick Springs Hotel.” National Park Service (npsgallery.nps.gov), 2003.

“Surrender or Else!” *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*, December 9, 1937.

“Terrace Park and Japanese Gardens; National Registration of Historic Places Registration Form.” National Park Service, 2015. (npsgallery.nps.gov)

“War!” *Muscatine Journal Extra Edition*, December 7, 1941.

“Will Take the Movies.” *Des Moines Register*, September, 1941.

“Would Rededicate The Japanese Gardens.” *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 1944.