# Portland's Prestige Ecosystems and the Competition for World-City Status: A History of Three Gardens

Zachary A. Holz
Lewis & Clark College
Portland, Oregon

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, with honors

Environmental Studies Program

Concentration: Natural Aesthetics and Ethos in the Written Word

Spring 2012

# Table of Contents

**Abstract:**

In this essay, I try to tell the singular stories of three specialty gardens in Portland, Oregon in historical context as an attempt to see the intellectual, material, and political landscape of America in the last century with greater clarity. By situating my thesis work in Portland's three major ornamental gardens—the International Rose Test Garden, the Portland Japanese Garden and the Lan Su Chinese Garden—all of which were created during different eras of the last century of American history, I show how Portlanders sought to further the status of Portland as a cultured and competent world-city through the production and exchange of what I call "prestige ecosystems." Through a study of these gardens, I construct a larger history of Portland's changing position in the world-order, of Americans' perceptions of "nature" in urban spaces, and of Americans' shifting values surrounding "authenticity" in landscapes of tourism and cosmopolitan consumption. From a relatively isolated frontier outpost with very few global connections or markets for its goods in 1900 to a high-tech city home to large multinationals with strong international connections in 2012, a history of Portland's gardens helps to particularize certain aspects of the changes that have remade the city in the past one hundred years. The stories told about these gardens help give shape to the larger ideologies and concerns of the past, and also help to undermine false conceptual binaries like nature/culture, global/local, modern/premoden, and masculine/feminine.

**List of Figures:**

**Acknowledgements:**

Before I tell you all about these famous Portland gardens I have had no hand in creating, I would like mention the many people that have helped to cultivate my own personal garden along the way.

First, to my academic advisor Andrew Bernstein in the History Department who has spent countless hours tending to my intellectual development, encouraging projects I never would have considered, and trimming my stray (and often overly-enthusiastic) research ideas. For also being the most reliable, perceptive, and critical reader; for holding me to high standards and forcing me to do better work that I thought I was capable of; and for showing compassion and kindness every step of the way. I hope to one day be as caring of a professor to my future students as Andy has been to me.

To the faculty and staff of the Environmental Studies Program. To Jim Proctor for providing tireless support to beleaguered and stressed students like me, and for putting in many thankless hours to give students the incredible opportunities we have here. To Liz Safran for sustained enthusiasm and encouragement, comic relief, and the many days we spent thinking about cities together. And to Pamela Rooney for assuring me that it will all be okay out there in the big wide world.

To the kindness of strangers, the many living primary sources that sat down for an interview with me over the past year. To Cynthia Haruyama for her generosity and interest in my project; to Andrew Haruyama for an excellent conversation that made me feel like a real historian; to Phyllis Oster for providing me background documents on Lan Su; to Glin Varco for answering all my questions about plants big and small; to Tang Rong Long for fielding my questions from a peaceful retirement in Suzhou, China; to Erik Nelson for transporting me to the construction site at Lan Su; to Charold Baer of the Portland Rose Society for a brief chat about contemporary rose culture in Portland; and to Stephan Bloom for letting me in on the everyday workings of the Japanese Garden.

To Art Historian Kendall Brown at California State University, Long Beach for an inspirational and engaging conversation about Japanese-style and Chinese-style garden history in America, and on the meanings and contradictions of authenticity.

To Mary Hansen at the Portland City Archives for scouring the city records for any mention of "garden" with me, and to all the librarians at the Oregon Historical Society for bringing me obscure heavy boxes of old letters and maps and manuscripts with a smile.

To Environmental Studies peer and good friend Tara Brown for pretending to care way more than she probably did about gardens, for a sharp editing eye and a keen listening ear, and mutual encouragement along the way.

To Jocelyn Unzicker for being my most trusted confidant, inspiration, and caretaker of my garden.

And finally to my parents and family for cultivating my garden early on and encouraging me to sow everything and anything that caught my eye or my heart. I can never thank you enough.

# PROLOGUE

## Between Spaces: The Garden as Mediator

"Through the story of a garden we may explore the history of the world."
~Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government*

If we are "To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wild flower," as William Blake famously suggested in his poem *Auguries of Innocence,* I cannot imagine a better place to do so than in a garden.[1] And perhaps there is no better place to see these worlds than in Portland, Oregon, home to three first-rate gardens of distinctly different styles: the International Rose Test Garden, Portland Japanese Garden, and Lan Su Chinese Garden. In this essay, I try to tell the singular stories of these three gardens in historical context as an attempt to see the intellectual, material, and political landscape of America in the last century—the ideologies, concerns, anxieties and hopes of its people revealed—with greater clarity. By situating my thesis work in Portland's three major ornamental gardens, all of which were created during different eras of the last century of American history, I will show how Portlanders sought to further the status of Portland as a cultured and competent world-city through the production and exchange of what I call "prestige ecosystems."[2]

The idea of a "prestige ecosystem" is a composite term that draws on insights from world-systems theory and ecology. In world-systems theory, a "prestige good" is a luxury commodity that has far more value-added than bulk goods or other commodities. Additionally, it usually involves some form of coupled cultural, and not just material, exchange. An "ecosystem" can be thought of as an internally dynamic, spatially defined complex of biotic and abiotic relations. To combine the terms, a prestige ecosystem is a both a good that could be traded across national boundaries and a relatively bounded and continuous set of relationships between living and non-living things, be they human or non-human in origin. A prestige ecosystem can be conceived as on ongoing, bounded place where people can experience an idealized form of nature that brings together fauna, flora, and a rich set of cultural associations in conjunction with local climactic processes.

The term marries the theoretical ideas of a "prestige" good and an "ecosystem" as a way to suggest that an exceedingly high degree of wealth, cultural connection, and care went into the construction of the garden. Throughout time, peoples and cultures have built specialty gardens to

[1] William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence,* 1803. Thank you to Professor of Environmental Studies Jim Proctor for reminding me of this poem.
[2] This term grew out of a collaborative effort between advisor and academic mentor Professor Andrew Bernstein and the author on a summer project funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation via an Initiative by the Environmental Studies Department called "Situating the Global Environment." I credit Professor Bernstein for coining this composite term.

consolidate wealth, showcase empire, and make meaning.[3] From the tiny scholar-gardens of Suzhou in Ming-dynasty (1368–1644, CE) China to the exhaustively diverse Kew Botanical Garden of the British Empire to the Persian Gardens of the Mughal to the International Rose Test Garden of 1917 Portland, prestige ecosystems have been constructed by a variety of people for their own needs. Historically, prestige ecosystems were the purview of the royal and wealthy; presently, they are more a product of civic and public efforts on the city or state level. What distinguishes prestige ecosystems throughout time, however, is the degree of care that has gone into creating each garden, whether the garden was a product for a monarch of old empire or a product for a city of new cosmopolitan consumption.

Though some types of prestige ecosystems involve transnational trade between sister-cities, as the Portland Chinese and Japanese Gardens do, others can be homegrown like the Portland Rose Garden. Though the transnational trade of Japanese- and Chinese-style gardens is a more contemporary trend, the production of prestige ecosystems is not an exclusively 20th century phenomenon. Throughout this essay, I focus on Portland's three 20th century prestige ecosystems in historical context, and try to visualize these gardens as modern iterations in a long and diverse lineage of prestige ecosystems. While each garden has its own unique story, each is also a historical product with linkages that span the globe and reach back through history. I use the notion of Portland's gardens as prestige ecosystems to help connect each garden to a variety of economic, cultural and historical scales and networks. In particular, we can see how these gardens were used as a means of furthering Portland's own status as a world-city. And additionally, in a more general sense, I hope to create a small "history of the world" through the stories of these gardens.

In the 20th century, major cities in the West were engaged in an implicit competition for "global-" or "world-city" status. Though a definition of "world-city" tends to be amorphous, a useful start is to consider any city that occupies a position of power in the global economic system.[4] Though pioneer Portland hardly would have counted as a world-city by this metric in 1900, the fact is that it actively wanted to be considered as one, and throughout the century it would use a variety of tactics—including the creation of prestige ecosystems—to compete with cities around the world for cosmopolitan status.

For the last century, Portland has been what could be called an "aspirational world-city." That is, even today Portland remains at best a second-tier city with only some degree of name recognition or global economic power; Portland is far from the ranks of America's first-tier world-cities like New York, L.A. or Chicago. Occupying this subordinate position for much of the 20th century, Portlanders have paid particular attention to how stories about their city have been told to the world. In particular, their gardens—from the early Rose Garden of 1917 to the newest Chinese

[3] See Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government : Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
[4] Sakia Sassen, "The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier," *American Studies* 41 (2000): 2-3.

Garden of 2000—have been very carefully "storied" with examples of cosmopolitan connection and cultural prestige. From the tales of the legions of dignitaries that have visited to Rose Garden to the story of the 60 Chinese men that built the Lan Su Garden by hand, Portlanders have used signature stories to narrate a vision of their city that attempts to validate an idea of cultural and economic ascendancy. Because Portland has been, and still is, "aspirational," the garden creators who desired to make their city more competitive and cosmopolitan had to pay special attention to the types of stories that would be told about their gardens.

One of the chief ways that the creators of the Japanese and Chinese Gardens fulfilled this desire to help Portland seem like a world-city was through the rubric of authenticity. Publicly, in their promotional material and advertisements, the Chinese and Japanese Gardens often claimed to be the "most authentic" gardens outside of their host countries, a statement they still make today. Privately, however, both Cynthia Haruyama and Steve Bloom, the current executive heads of their respective gardens, have expressed skepticism about using too strict an idea of authenticity. For describing their gardens, each has suggested (implicitly or explicitly) alternatives to the problematic term of "authentic." Instead, they have turned using a vocabulary of "most complete" or "finest" to try and capture the elusive trait that visitors expect in an "authentic" garden.[5] Though the promotional materials for both gardens may continue to use authenticity as a way to suggest legitimacy, Haruyama and Bloom's personal language is revealing. Visitors may still claim that these gardens really feel like they could be in Japan or China; however, it is unlikely that any visitor ever forgets, even for a moment, that he or she is in a *North American* garden. To visitors, what "authentic" might really mean here is a combination of being carefully constructed, culturally rich, and high-quality. From international tourists to local regulars, visitors want to be reassured that they are paying to see the best possible, that these gardens will not try to deceive them with cheap imitation, poorly made structures, or exaggerated stories. Most of all, they simply want to know that *care* went into creating the garden. The assurance from the Japanese Garden that one is visiting "the most authentic garden outside of Japan"[6] serves as a legitimation of the experience, a sort of branding mechanism, and less as an absolute truth.

On a tour in the garden, for example, authenticity becomes a framework to tell stories in a process called "scripting."[7] Late historian of tourism Hal Rothman used this term to describe the practice of embedding a particular story in a landscape. This "script" could be the literal one that tour guides deliver to receptive tourists, or it could be a subtler one that impresses itself on visitors

---

[5] Cynthia Haruyama (Executive Director of Lan Su Chinese Garden), in discussion with the author, Portland, Oregon, July 2011. Haruyama suggested "completeness" as an alternative, and more accurate, word for "authentic" ; "Best of the City: Portland Japanese Garden," YouTube video, 3:01, posted by "PdxJapaneseGarden" on June 26, 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ekk8GSE_27U&feature=relmfu. In this YouTube video of Steve Bloom, he substituted the word "finest" when describing the quality of the Japanese Garden. 1:10.

[6] Japanesegarden.com, Main Page, Accessed February 29th, 2012. It also bears mentioning that Portland's Japanese Garden has rights to the Domain Name of "Japanesegarden.com"

[7] Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the 20th Century American West*. (Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1998).

through placards, text in a brochure, or through inference. In the case of the and Chinese gardens, individual prestige objects provide essential "lines" in the greater script of the place.

Through each of these individual stories, the idea of authenticity gets deployed as part of a larger rubric of value. For example, on a tour of the Japanese Garden a visitor might hear how Dr. Tono from Japan, one of the best Japanese-style garden designers in the world, chose where to place this rock; how the Japanese visitors saw their native Mt. Fuji in Mt. Hood; how this lantern is from Portland's sister-city Sapporo but these Japanese maples are from Oregon. The well-worn stories that tour guides tell to receptive visitors are not selected because they support an idea of pure authenticity; on the contrary, these stories usually highlight the connections between another city or country and Portland, or help to show the particular compromises that had to be made in construction. By paying attention to this process of highlighting particular stories and not others, we can see how the gardens have constructed a *feeling* of authenticity that serves varying purposes in different times and in different ways.

In an effort to move past debates about authenticity, historian Kendall Brown suggests that we consider these gardens "authentic North American Japanese and Chinese-style Gardens." By firmly asserting that these are not "Chinese" or "Japanese" or "European" gardens but *North American* gardens created for *North American people*, Brown suggests that it might just be possible to sidestep the entire discourse on authenticity. In his essay on *Japanese-style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast,* Brown writes, "the experience of gardens become richer when we begin to understand their often complex histories. We make these gardens multidimensional when we take into account the people who struggled for their creation and the people who have deployed them… And we give gardens real significance when we see them as part of the cultural context of North American attitudes toward [the gardens' host countries]."[8] This essay will investigate the process of telling stories in gardens. In so doing, I hope to show that in the Japanese and Chinese Gardens, the question of authenticity has been less about an absolute, and much more about showing value and care.

Carefully constructed prestige ecosystems are what philosopher Davis Cooper calls "between spaces," neither "nature" nor "culture" but something more tenuous and mixed.[9] As philosopher Mara Miller writes in her book *The Garden as an Art,* "the task of the garden is to mediate those tensions or polarities which are important to a culture—polarities such as living-dead, animate-inanimate, private-public, wild-domesticated, natural-artificial, inner-outer, personal-impersonal, communal-individual, orderly-chaotic, static-changing."[10]

---

[8] Kendall Brown, *Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1999), 10. In the original quote, Brown wrote exclusively about Japanese gardens. However, I believe his sentiment can be extended to each of these prestige ecosystems, as all three represent a different cultural and geographic garden form.
[9] David Cooper, *A Philosophy of Gardens* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press; Clarendon Press, 2006), 78.
[10] Mara Miller, *The Garden as an Art* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 25.

In this effort, I foreground my study of Portland's major three gardens as *mediators of polarities*, especially of the core polarities of nature-culture, global-local, modern-premodern, and masculine/feminine. Throughout this essay, I analyze how the proponents of these gardens favored certain nature/culture, global/local, modern/premodern, and masculine/feminine relationships at different times for their own needs and purposes. More critically, we will be able to examine some underlying American ideologies about authenticity, human-nonhuman relations, and the meaning of "nature" to an urban America in the 20th century through a study of gardens. Such a history of these gardens can help meaningfully complicate and undermine the conceptual binaries that limit our ability to see connections and hybrids.

There is a deeply rooted tendency, at least in the West, of equating the garden with "nature." My project seeks to show "nature" as discursive, not absolute. In Portland's gardens, the discourse of nature was used to attract American visitors eager to find their own ideas of nature in the city. In this essay, I hope to discredit the deceptive garden-as-"nature" ideological trope. By situating my project in Portland's Rose Garden, Japanese Garden, and Chinese Garden, I will show how these individual gardens confound categorical assumptions of nature/culture, instead inhabiting a much more tenuous "between" place.

This essay is structured chronologically in an attempt to show how an early pioneer city on the fringe of American civilization transformed itself into an aspiring world-city in part through the production and exchange of prestige ecosystems. This order is intentional, and is meant to suggest the cumulative impact of each successive garden, and to more appropriately show how the Japanese Garden in the 1960s built on the legacy of the Rose Garden from the early 1900s, and how the Chinese Garden in the 1990s followed an even richer tradition of gardens. By the end, the hope is that a history (certainly not *the* history) of Portland will be clearer, and include the contributions of each of these gardens and the people that created them. To begin this inquiry, let us turn first to Portland's original prestige garden.

# CHAPTER ONE

## "Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way": The Rose as Civilizer

*The Lewis & Clark Exposition of 1905 and the making of the Cosmopolitan Rose City*

The world came to Portland in the long summer of 1905. The visitors—nearly one and half million of them—brought cameras and suitcases, eager to see what Portland had most recently carved out of the forests. The visitors sent postcards, wrote letters; the journalists championed the elegance and the fun; the investors padded their wallets with the money of the masses. The spoils of American empire peppered the promenades and grand buildings: a group of Filipinos stood in a booth, scantily clad; thousands of new electric lights blazed through the night in a show of the technological sublime; finely landscaped formal gardens evoked a stately Europe of old.[11] The Lewis & Clark Exposition, Portland's answer to the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, announced the presence of a newly cultured and capable Northwest city, and over a million people from around the world came to see what Portland had created in Guild Lake.[12]

Portland's entry onto the world stage was steeped in the scent of roses. Recently named the Rose City, the varietals of roses cultivated by elite Portlanders made their public debut at the Expo. For the months of June to October 1905, streets of rose bushes along NW Thurman Street and nearby avenues welcomed Expo-goers to the fair.[13] Inside the Forestry Palace, fresh displays of roses impressed visitors daily. In an old pioneer city grasping for a new cosmopolitanism, the rose became an essential symbol and object of prestige. In time, Portland's roses would become a world-class commodity, judged and culled in a world-class Test Garden. By following the early and auspicious role of the rose in the Lewis & Clark Exposition, one can see the how a thorny transplant from Europe became reconfigured as a civilizer and an instrument of American imperialism.

Though the Lewis & Clark Exposition felt like a celebration for the four and a half months it ran, the ultimate goal of the investors in the Expo was not simply to entertain the public, but to make money off of them. Compelled by the growth of industry in King County, Seattle, and the Puget Sound to the north, the Lewis & Clark Expo was principally a means of economic competition, a way for Portland's businessmen to ensure their city's place as a dominant center of

---

[11] Robert Allan Reid, *The Lewis & Clark Centennial Exhibition Illustrated,* (Portland, OR. 1905), Watzek Heritage Room, Lewis & Clark College Library. In this book produced for Exposition tourists, the photograph titled "The Exposition at Night" presents a vision of the technological sublime.

[12] Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair : Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 206. Guild Lake was a large seasonal swamp in NW Portland. The most visible legacy of the Expo, Rydell argues, is the fact that the Guild Lake Region became the heavy industrial area of the city. "Although the exposition buildings were generally destroyed or removed to other areas of the city, and though the natural marshland reclaimed the landscaped gardens after the fair closed, the gradual transformation of the exposition site into a hub of industrial activity represented less the destruction of Eden than the consummation of empire."

[13] Rose Hoyt to Henry Goode, Portland, Oregon, September 3, 1903. "Letter to President of L&C Expo: Regarding Thurman Street," in Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, MSS 1609, 10/9. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Ore.

trade in the Pacific Northwest for the next century.[14] The way to achieve this: assemble the most diverse exhibits from around the country and world and build great palaces to house the exhibitions. As previous World's Fairs had shown, cities had much to gain by trying to be cosmopolitan. By amassing snatches of nature and culture from every state, native "savages" from America's newly won Philippines, a Japanese "village" from Japan, and ever-fresh roses from Oregon, the Expo organizers were able to showcase not only the sophistication of their city, but also foreground the power of a new city that was able to assemble all of these items from around the world together in one place.[15]

*The Western Lady: Gendered Flowers and Ideologies of Progress*

The Oregon rose made its debut amidst this collection of other prestige items. In 1905, the rose was no simple crop; it was a stately plant reared by careful, cultured hands. Some of Portland's biggest names—the Pittocks, for example—were involved in an elite circle of rose enthusiasts who had the money and leisure time to cultivate specialty varietals of roses.[16] Oregon roses were steeped in tradition too—as legend has it, the "Pioneer Rose," Oregon's first rose, made it to the state in the 1830s as one of the few very dear possessions of a young woman from New York City. This woman, when faced with the decision of what last relic of her cultured life to bring with her to the wilderness of Oregon, chose a single rose bush and, as the story goes, tended it through thick and thin as the family sailed around the southern tip of South America en route to Oregon.[17] When she made it to Port Vancouver, she nursed the bush back to health, and allowed others to take clippings to grow elsewhere around the state. While this story has all the trapping of a Johnny Appleseed legend, it is notable that in following this tradition, *women* were the principal agents of rose culture in Portland, tending to their plants at home while their husbands worked in the nearly-exclusively male world outside. Additionally, the Pioneer Rose itself became an instrument of civilization wielded by the Anglo pioneer. An Oregonian article from 1952 on the Pioneer Rose claimed that by tending roses, women could help make the "shift from civilization to wilderness" more gracefully and could help to, in turn, to make civilization from the wilderness.[18]

Portland's Roses, like the fabled Pioneer Rose, have become nearly mythical.[19] Regrettably, my task in this research is not to reveal the history of Portland's obsession with the rose and all the rose-themed projects it has spawned—the Rose Parade, Rose Festival, the mythical "Realm of Rosaria" and the like—but rather to locate some of the more important ideological underpinnings that Portland's *symbolic identification* with the rose during turn-of-the-century America reveal. More importantly, how did the rose fulfill Portland's economic, political, and ideological desires? By

---

[14] William G. Robbins, *Oregon: This Storied Land* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005), 102-103.
[15] Robert Allan Reid, *The Lewis & Clark Centennial Exhibition Illustrated,* (Portland, OR, 1905) Watzek Heritage Room, Lewis & Clark College Library. Most exhibits from the non-Western world were housed in the "Oriental Exhibits Palace," with manufactured goods from countries like Persia, Turkey, India, and Egypt.
[16] Hoyt. 1903. "Letter to the President of the L&C Expo: Regarding Thurman Street."
[17] Anna Hegstrom, "How the Rose Came to Oregon: A Saga of the Pioneer Period," *The Oregonian*. 1952.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Charold Baer, "The Realm of Rosaria," *American Rose Annual*, (December 2006), 24-29.

branding itself as *the* Rose City, Portland now had an image that could be used to persuade Europeans, who were caught up in a rose craze of their own nearly at the same time, of the quality of their products and the civility of their people.

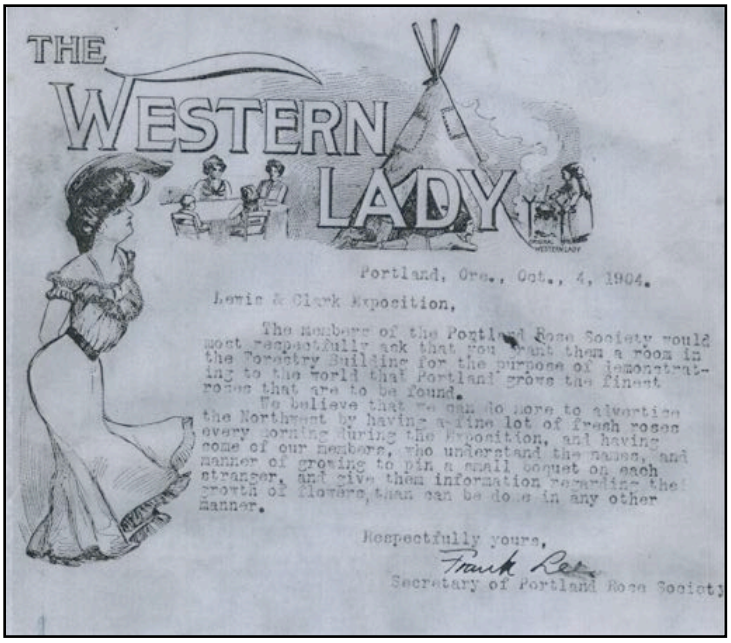


**Figure 1: Letterhead for the Portland Federation of Women's Clubs, 1904. Oregon Historical Society Archives.**

While the Expo propagated the narrative of American Progress, the groups of the Portland Federation of Women's Clubs—of which the Rose Society was a notable member—spun their own narrative of *woman's* role in Progress.[20] Although educated women of the elite had little leverage in the public sector, one woman in particular, the President of the Portland Rose Society in 1903-4, used the rose as a way to advocate for more female representation on the governing board of Portland's all-male L&C Expo. Oregon still had yet to approve women's suffrage at the time of the Expo (that would come in 1912), though many women were anxious for representation.[21] Mrs. Rose Hoyt, of the prominent Hoyt family, used her station as Rose Society president to write commanding and persuasive letters to a number of male members of the Expo Board. The illustration on the letterhead of the stationary that the Portland Federation of Women's Clubs used is even more revealing than the memo printed on it (Figure 1). In the image, there is an almost Turnerian progression[22]: moving from a "savage" woman, her child strapped to her back and slaving over a smoky pot of stew for her husband (who is relaxing by the teepee) on the right of the image to the prim and proper white women at the kitchen table, supervising their well-dressed and behaved children. Running down the side of the memo in profile is the embodiment of the modern "Western Lady": finely dressed, thin-waisted, and not a touch of labor or strain on her body. This Western Lady, equipped with her fine rose and cultivated tastes, civilized the West not by chopping

[20] See Figure 1, Portland Federation of Woman's Clubs Letterhead. Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, MSS 1609, 10/9. Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Ore. The small text on the right side of the memo, under the native American woman, reads: "Original Western Woman."

[21] Robbins, *Oregon: This Storied Land,* 78-80. By this time, notable Oregon feminist Abigail Scott Duniway had been campaigning for greater public equality between the sexes for a number of decades.

[22] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (Anne Arbor, MI, 1893). Turner's seminal work, known widely as the "Frontier Thesis," posits that American identity has been fundamentally shaped by the presence of a frontier.

down forests and killing Indians like her husband and sons but by beautifying the new cities and homes up and down the Pacific Northwest.

Though the Portland Rose Society would go on to have many male presidents, up until the time of the L&C Expo, the Society had only seen women.[23] In addition to Hoyt, Mrs. Henry Pittock served as president two years prior along with a number of other prominent women community members. When the Rose Society campaigned for a Rose Garden a decade later, it was led by a male president who was well connected with the male president of the American Rose Society and the male presidents of other rose societies. For those men, the Rose became more an object that could be scientifically tested and less an object solely of beauty. In this regard, the ways men and women could actually use the rose in society differed quite a bit. Where for men the rose was a locus of scientific inquiry first and object of beauty second, for women the rose was primarily about spreading and displaying beauty.

The legacy of gendered uses for flowers did not begin, nor end, with Oregon's rose: it stretches back, at least in the Europe, to the era of Louis XIV. Florist men in early modern France, seeking to establish a legitimate scientific field for themselves, had to overcome a deep-seated association and tradition of women and flowers. Elizabeth Hyde, in her monograph *Cultivated Power: Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis the XIV,* a history of floral culture in early modern France, postulates that scientific men had to problematize certain aspects of the relationship between women and flowers in order to appropriate a new space for their own desires of scientific inquiry.[24] If men claimed flowers for the sake of science, then women would be left with flowers for the sake of beauty. And though the Portland of 1905 scarcely resembled the France of the 1700s, the ideologies surrounding gender and the ways those ideologies have manifested themselves in rose culture give some sense of the continuity in Western conceptualization of flowers.

*"Roses Cannot be Hurried": Class and the Rose as an Agent of City Beautiful*

Rose Hoyt used her station as Rose Society president to ingratiate herself with prominent men and demand better female representation on city boards. In Hoyt's letters to Henry Goode, president of the Lewis & Clark Exposition, we can read the discontent of a high-powered and intelligent woman, unhappy with the role she has been given in a society dominated by men. In the era of World's Fairs, Hoyt knew that the L&C Exposition was Portland's chance for an entrance onto the world stage. In one of her early letters to Goode in 1903, during the planning stages of the Expo, she claimed that her reason for writing was to gain assistance to "induce the residents of Thurman Street [a street close to the location of the Expo in NW Portland] to set out roses along the

[23] Portland Rose Society, "Portland Rose Society: Past Presidents," Accessed February 27, 2012. http://www.portlandrosesociety.org/past_presidents.html.
[24] Elizabeth Hyde, *Cultivated Power : Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis XIV* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

curb, on both sides of the street, that there may be a continuous line of roses reaching to the exposition grounds, that by so doing we may live up to the name we have taken."[25]

That "name we have taken" of course was referring to "The Rose City," the epithet that Portland was just beginning to go by in certain social circles.[26] In Hoyt's vision of the Expo, as visitors walked or took trolleys to the fair they would pass by street after street of blooming, fragrant, and stately roses. This exposure would hopefully set the stage for the more grand displays of roses in the sunken gardens just inside the Expo grounds (Figure 2) or the daily-renewed arrangements of roses in the Forestry Palace (Figure 3). Hoyt's argument for planting roses along the streets of NW Portland was couched in terms of "beautification." She writes in one letter, "the pride latent in all hearts will come forth on this occasion, and all will do their fair part for 1905,"[27] and continues in another, "Mrs. ___ and others are very willing to follow the suggestions in regard to beautifying the street, the others are interested but will need help in doing so."[28]

**Figure 2: "Central Vista L&C Exposition," 1905. Oregon Historical Society.**

Likely because the staff of the L&C Expo was committed to the idea of a "rose city," Mr. Goode eventually agreed to fund Hoyt's idea of lining Thurman Street with Roses. The flower came to figure prominently in Portland's iteration of City Beautiful. In one of Hoyt's letters, she encourages Goode to give her a speedy reply of his intentions to fund or not fund the idea, as "roses

[25] Rose Hoyt, "Letter to President of L&C Expo: Regarding Thurman Street," September 3, 1903, Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition (1905, Portland, Or.), MSS 1609, 10/9, Oregon Historical Society.
[26] Portland City Archives, "City Flower: 'The City of Roses'," Accessed March 3, 2012. http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?a=284494&c=51811. The origins of the nickname "City of Roses" is murky, though most sources claim that it came from a 1888 meeting of the Portland Rose Society and was used informally by some until the L&C Expo. After the Fair, the nickname was more widely used and was published in countless tourist books. From the tone of her letter, Rose Hoyt is clearly invested in making this Portland's nickname.
[27] Rose Hoyt, "Letter to President of L&C Expo: Regarding Thurman Street," September 3, 1903, Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition (1905, Portland, Or.), MSS 1609, 10/9, Oregon Historical Society.
[28] Rose Hoyt to Henry Goode, Portland, Oregon, "Roses Cannot Be Hurried: Letter to Henry Goode, President of L&C Expo," September 24, 1903, Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, MSS 1609, Oregon Historical Society.


**Figure 3: "Rose Bower" at L&C Exposition, Robert Allan Reid, *The Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition Illustrated*, Portland, OR, 1905, Watzek Heritage Room, Lewis & Clark College. This is the oldest photo of roses at the Expo.**

cannot be hurried." The notion that good cultivation takes time, and that these roses, unlike the hasty construction of the temporary structures at the L&C Expo, [29] cannot just be put up a week before the Expo, speaks to the class dimensions of these flowers in Portland. With significant labor needed to care for quality roses, only the wealthier could indulge in hybridizing and caring for roses.

With her Thurman Street project completed, Hoyt does not stop there: she is determined to land her Society's roses in the Expo's premier building—the Forestry Palace. Along the way, she critiques the all-male Board that governs the Expo. In one of her letters, she airs a complaint she and her fellow women in the Rose Society feel is worth noting: the absence of any women on the executive board. She writes, with some nicely placed sarcasm, "However, [we] have all one grievance, have had it for a year or more, it may seem of small consequence to your "Board" — but I assure you it is not so." She continues, "There are things that women can do and will do if encouraged or allowed, but as they are nearly not Angels, but just humans with tempers and hurt-feelings you would better be a little good to us. Other Expositions have had "Lady Managers"—why not we?"[30] Hoyt proceeds by putting a lot more effort towards trying to get an all-male board of directors to let her and her "ladies" into the premiere venue of the L&C Expo, the Forestry Palace. The combative tone of the letter, and the number of demands she voices, show Mrs. Hoyt as a woman of class and education, but one who is also uncomfortable with the position she has been handed in the fate of the Expo. Tapping into the rhetoric of progress that so defined the boosters of these Expositions across the country, she writes, "The Rose Society will do any and everything in its power for the good of the Pacific Coast and our Exposition, but we will need a 'little helping hand.'"[31] In her notion of the woman's role in progress, all that she and the lady managers of the Rose Society need to ensure the success of the Expo is the chance to lead, to be part of the decision process.

---

[29] Most of the structures at the L&C Expo were built very quickly, and were certainly not meant to last. See Carl Abbott, *The Great Extravaganza : Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* (Portland, Ore, 1981), Oregon Historical Society.
[30] Rose Hoyt to Henry Goode, Portland, Oregon, August 14, 1904, "Letter Regarding the All-male 'Board," Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, MSS 1609, Oregon Historical Society.
[31] Rose Hoyt to Henry Goode, Portland, Oregon, January 4, 1905, "Letter Regarding 'a Little Helping Hand'," Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, MSS 1609, Oregon Historical Society.

It is due in no small part to Hoyt's work that the Portland Rose gained such prestige at the L&C Expo. Hoyt believed that her roses should be in the Forestry Palace with all the other exhibits "to show Oregon's other unsurpassable products."[32] Already, the rose is categorized as a product, a marketable fruit of nature that can be bought or sold. Though she may simply mean product in the sense of a "fruit of the land," her use of the word is also an indicator of the economic value of the rose as a product. Hoyt did not believe in showing the roses just for the sake of showing beauty or class, she (and the other rose boosters) believed in the rose as a marketable good that could aid Oregon's economy and place it on a commercial map. It was one of Oregon's few *prestige* goods at this time. In a state and region dominated by extractive natural resource economies, of boom and bust lumber industry and mining and fisheries, the rose emerged as a sellable object of both nature and culture — a fruit of the rich soil, abundant rain and nurturing climate of the Northwest but more so a fruit of the caring, careful, and cultivated hand of an newly elite class of refined citizens in Oregon's old Stumptown.

*Portland's Rose Test Garden: Science, Prestige, and Marketing the City*

The display of the rose at Portland's L&C Expo revealed some of the cosmopolitan aspirations of a newly made world city. While the Exposition was a celebration of progress through beauty and grandeur, the International Rose Test Garden, founded in 1917, was billed more in terms of ensuring Portland's *continued* progress by being the most competitive and attractive city in the Northwest.[33] Jesse A Currey, a Portland businessman and steel company manager, was the man most responsible for turning Portland's roses from simply symbolic to metonymic and marketable. During and around his time as president of the Rose Society, Jesse Currey tirelessly campaigned for establishing Portland as *the* official rose-test center of the Northwest. In achieving his goals, Currey mobilized the language of science and rational planning, channeling a much broader ideology of scientific optimism.

Currey's letters helped to reframe the rose as an object of beauty into more of an object of science. By winning the designation of "Official Rose Test Site" from the National Rose Society in February of 1917 for his city, Currey added a new dimension of prestige to Portland's roses. And while the Rose Test Garden was established true to its name as a *test* site, it was more importantly a way to transform Portland's roses into objects of world prestige through a rational and scientific judging system. By being able to confer awards on the city's roses under the aegis of the esteemed National Rose Society, Portland's Rose Test Garden became the envy of rose fanciers nationwide. Currey and others involved in creating the garden not only made their city proud by bringing visitors and tourist dollars to the local economy; more importantly, they created new markets nationally and internationally for a growing population of rose professionals and amateurs who desired a unique piece of Portland's prestige ecosystem.

---

[32] Ibid.

[33] Robert Pyle to Jesse Currey, July 5, 1916, "Letter from Robert Pyle to Jesse Currey Regarding Portland as Official Rose-test Site," in Jesse A. Currey Papers, Mss 2803, Oregon Historical Society.

The current International Rose Test Garden is located in Washington Park in the hills directly west of downtown. Home to a number of Portland's other tourist attractions, including the Oregon Zoo and Japanese Garden, Washington Park has a long history serving as the retreat of wealthy urbanites. This history of leisure, however, is complicated by a number of lesser-known stories. Not only was some land in Washington Park leased to members of the Chinese immigrant community for vegetable gardens in the 1870s (these gardens, incidentally, were the first Chinese gardens in Portland), but from 1870 to 1910 another area of the park was also the site of what was known as the "Poor Farm."[34]

The story of Multnomah County's pauper farm not only complicates the social history of a space that is often viewed as leisure area, but may also help to explain why Currey and others found Washington Park to be the ideal site for their rose garden. In a brochure produced by the Portland Bureau of Parks in 1917, there are numerous reasons given for siting the garden in Washington Park. One is easy: "It is safe to say that no other public rose garden in the world offers such attractive scenic vista as does this garden."[35] Even today, the views from the Rose Garden are impressive. However, the second reason speaks less to the aestheticized impulse and more to the pragmatic. Since the soil of Washington Park is noted as less than ideal, it being clay-like and stiff, Currey writes, "as the garden is located in the same park with the stables and yards for the buffalo and elk there is assured to be an abundance of good, clean manure."[36] Though the connection between the poor farm and the manure that Currey cites is uncertain, it would be safe to wager that the manure did indeed come from the livestock that the poor people managed on the farm.

The use of manure links the rose garden to the larger history of Washington Park. Further on in the brochure from 1917, Currey writes, "The test garden is primarily designed and will be conducted for applying scientific culture and treatment to seedling roses and sports. Under the favorable climatic conditions roses so tested will exhibit their greatest beauty of form, color, growth and health, and at the same time will prove themselves worthy or not of general outdoor cultivation."[37] There are a number of implications in a statement like this. The primary desire is to test nature to see what "greatest beauty of form" can emerge. But the more intriguing desire is the one to make roses "prove themselves worthy or not" in some Darwinian test of fitness. This desire suggests that Currey believes the scientific manipulation of plants can yield something *better* than what nature could produce on its own, and his rose garden is set up for that end goal.

In this way, the Rose Garden essentially gets set up as a laboratory, its scientific purposes scripted into the design. Currey's experimental design looks like this:

---

[34] Jane Hoffman, *The Neighborhood in the Park: A History of Arlington Heights* (Portland, Oregon, 1979), Portland City Archives.

[35] Jesse Currey, "National Rose Test Garden (Brochure)," (Bureau of Parks, Portland: 1917), Portland City Archives, 3. Though the source does not mention Currey as the author of the text, the rough draft of the brochure is stored at the Oregon Historical Society Archives with his name attributed.

[36] Ibid. 3.

[37] Ibid. 5.

> "All roses submitted will be tested in threes. One will be placed in the natural soil of the garden, treated only with manure and another in soil especially treated with commercial fertilizer. These two tests are designed to prove the general relative values of the rose under ordinary and favorable cultivation and treatment. In both of these tests the plants will be *sprayed and treated in every manner necessary* to resist mildew, blackspot, and other diseases. They will also be carefully protected from insect pests. The third plant will be given an ordinary garden cultivation but will be unsprayed, the tests in this section being designed solely to ascertain the disease resisting qualities of the plant under test. This section of the garden will be sufficiently far removed from the other sections to prevent contamination of those plants which are being tested for other qualities."[38]

Currey certainly loved roses and appreciated the ornamental beauty they could produce; however, in his public persona, he trumpeted the values of scientific testing of roses to yield better forms and more desirable traits. All of the language here is the classic language of the laboratory: "treatment, general relative values, sprayed and treated in every manner necessary, qualities, contamination." The space of the garden itself, its "form," is designed in such a way as to make this scientific testing of roses possible. This garden, no doubt, was designed as a "test" garden: the values of experimental replication, cleanliness in the laboratory, and space for controls are all figured into the way this garden is laid out.

Once a rose made it through this scientific testing, was judged and either granted an award or denied, it could assume its respective place in a competitive market for specialty roses. A prize-winning rose, validated by Currey's meticulous tests, would command a high price on the market and, in turn, would reinforce Portland's prestige as rose grower and exporter. The changing dictates of *taste* determined what roses would look like and smell like, and consumer markets fueled the testing of roses. Not coincidentally, two decades later in a Bulletin from the Rose Garden management, the Society members trumpet the desirability of a new extension of intellectual property rights—patents—to rose hybridizers. The 1935 *Rose Garden Bulletin* says, "We suggest the desirability of sending roses to the gardens for testing so that awards will be made near the time of introduction of the rose for sale. A new rose receiving a gold, silver or bronze medal… near the date of its introduction certainly helps materially the sale of the rose."[39] With new patent protection, the garden has become a place that confers legitimacy onto the marketplace for roses.

The desire to create new roses for the market extends up to the present moment. In an interview with current Portland Rose Society member Charold Baer, who is now a retired doctor in Portland, she stated that it is still consumer desire that spurs rose cultivation and hybridization. She reflected, "In general, rose culture has not changed much, but roses certainly have… what drives rose culture is what consumers want."[40] In the case of roses, *consumer taste*, not necessity, is the mother of invention.

*Like Magic: Oregon's "Plant Wizard," Rose Hybridization, and the Miracles of Science*

[38] Ibid. 5. My emphasis.
[39] American Rose Society, "Bulletin from International Rose Test Garden," 1935, Oregon Historical Society.
[40] Charold Baer (current member of the Portland Rose Society), in discussion with the author, February 29, 2012.

As the manager of a successful steel company in Portland, Jesse Currey was well connected with the business community and other prominent members of Oregon public life.[41] He drew on a number of these connections in assembling the Rose Garden for both political and horticultural needs. One of the stranger and more illustrative connections that Currey maintained was with a priest named Father George Schoener, a man who spent most of his time hybridizing fruit trees and roses on a small farm outside of Salem, Oregon.[42] Schoener was well respected by the American Rose Society, and while it is unclear how much Currey and Schoener interacted, it is clear that they corresponded and shared a mutual interest in roses and rose hybridization. There are countless mentions of Schoener as the "plant wizard" who, as *the Oregonian* wrote in 1915, "is giving to his fruit trees and roses a care that brings response like magic."[43] An article that appeared the next year in *The Oregon Sunday Journal* continued in the same vein: "The Oregon plant wizard… is beginning to accomplish seeming miracles in the creation and adaptation of field crops, fruits, and garden flowers at [his] scientific garden."[44]

Though it is unlikely the "plant wizard" himself saw his rose work in such a mystical light,[45] what is more important is the cultural context that gave rise to statements like these. In a popular sense, the rose hybridization that Schoener was performing—and those rose hybrids of Schoener's that Currey's new rose garden in Portland would test—were seen as "miracles" and "magic." Though this language has a touch of sensationalism to it, the words seem to capture the respect, the near awe even, that men like Currey and Schoener commanded in Oregon for the work they performed on roses. By practicing science, conceived in this time by some as a sort of "magic," Schoener and Currey showcased their roses as evidence of the promises of a modern age. If you desired a rose that had small petals with hints of orange color and strong scent, Schoener and Currey and other rosarians could now create it for you through the relatively new process of artificial pollination.[46] Rather than scouring nature for the rose you desired, the plant wizards of rose culture could now simply create it for you.

---

[41] Jesse A. Currey Papers, MSS 2803, 1909, Oregon Historical Society Library, Portland, Oregon. In his obituary from 1927, Currey is remembered as one of "Oregon's most distinguished citizens" and as one of the most successful rose amateurs in the nation. He was deeply respected, and described in life as "one of the foremost flower authorities in the West, and a man to whom Portland owes much of its progress as a floral center."

[42] The Oregon Sunday Journal. "Father Schoener Makes Progress in New Gardens." *The Oregon Sunday Journal*, May 21, 1916.

[43] Marshall Dana, "Works Miracles in Plant Kingdom." *The Oregonian*, June 20, 1915.

[44] The Oregon Sunday Journal, "Father Schoener Makes Progress in New Gardens." *The Oregon Sunday Journal*, May 21, 1916.

[45] William A Grant, "Padre of the Roses." *Old Garden Roses and Beyond*, 1999. Accessed March 2, 2012. http://paulbardenroses.com/padre.html. Having researched Father Schoener's collected writings at the Santa Clara University archives, Grant wrote an insightful, short biography on Father Schoener, the only one that exists.

[46] Edwin Bechtel, "Our Rose Varieties and Their Malmaison Heritage," *The OGR and Shrub Journal* 7 (2010), 1. Accessed March 5, 2012. http://www.ars.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/OGR-Shrub-Journal-1-2010.pdf. The modern rose garden with hybridized roses is a relatively recent development. The practice of artificial hybridization on roses, whereby one uses an instrument to transmit pollen from one desirable rose to another, was first attempted in 1800 by Andre Dupont, the rose hybridizer hired by French Empress Josephine for her famous rose garden, Malmaison. Schoener and Currey worked in this tradition of rose hybridization.

In the first decades of the 20th century, rose hybridization of this degree of specificity was fairly cutting edge. Experimenting with roses in Portland not only yielded interesting new plants never witnessed before, but created a specialty market for designer roses that could fit the needs of any interested consumer. By 1920, *The Oregonian* warned of a desperate shortage of roses in Portland, and feared that the war-weary Europeans florists who desired Oregon roses would not find an adequate supply and would turn elsewhere. The paper wrote, "Labor conditions forbade rose and floral culture [in wartime Europe]… now the world is again turning to the beautiful and the demand is again in evidence."[47] In this line of thinking, the "beautiful," embodied in the form of the rose, could repair a broken Europe, and Portland's prestige rose industry would be the main supplier of such a product. The trade that Portland did with Europe is emblematic of the changing relationship of cultural power between America and Europe in the post-Great War world. The export of roses "back" to Europe from America signifies a new phase in the history of rose cultivation, and given that the rose came to America from Europe in previous centuries, the fact that Portland was now *exporting* award-winning roses back to cultured Europe symbolizes the changing balance of cultural power between the Old and New World.

*The Advertising Standpoint: "Rose Pilgrims" and Portland Rose Tourism*

In the month of February 1917, the American Rose Society officially designated Portland the "Official Rose Test Site" of the Pacific Northwest.[48] The press response was overwhelming, the sheer volume of which suggests the esteemed position the rose occupied at this time in Portland culture. The *Oregonian* celebrated the distinction as an event of "huge significance," writing, "from an advertising standpoint there is no limit to the value such a garden will be to the city."[49] The language of "the advertising standpoint" or "the advertising effect" appeared time and time again in both public newspaper articles and the private letters between Currey and the members of the American Rose Society. In a letter from Currey's cousin Robert Pyle, who was a member of the American Rose Society, Pyle warns of competitive encroachment from other Northwest cities. He writes, "There are other cities on the Pacific Coast besides Tacoma that are arousing themselves to the possibility of using the rose by way of advertising the advantages of their homes and communities, and I am very glad therefore that Portland is not going to be caught asleep."[50]

The official endorsement of the American Rose Society conferred competitive advantage on Portland, and endowed the city with a new ability to sell branded, prize-winning roses far and wide. The mark of the Rose Society could be used to "advertise" the city as both a place to buy prestige

[47] Harry DeWitt, "Portland Cannot Supply Demand for Rose Bushes: Flowers for Which This City Is Famed Are Grown in Fields Like Corn, but Enormous Shortage Develops in Markets and Local Growers and Others See Danger in Losing Essential Industry," *The Oregonian*, September 20, 1920.
[48] Oregon Historical Society, "Jesse A. Currey Papers MSS 2803," 1920, Portland, Oregon Historical Society.
[49] George L. Baker, "Portland's Choice as Official Rose City Is of Huge Significance," *The Oregonian*, February 25, 1917.
[50] Robert Pyle to Jesse Currey, June 19, 1916, "Letter from Robert Pyle to J.A. Currey Regarding 'Portland Being Caught Asleep'," Oregon Historical Society.

roses, as well as a nice place to establish your "home or community." In this way, the rose helped to draw not only money and investment to the city, but also drew new residents that would settle down and, in the process, work to bit-by-bit to civilize early Oregon.

By the 1940s, the hugely successful Rose Garden had drawn visitors from around the world. In a letter to a local radio host circa 1942, Portland Rose Garden Society member Fred Edwards wrote, "the long procession of world-known names would help our citizens realize what an asset this garden is to our City's prestige. Royalty, Ambassadors, Statesmen, Foreign Diplomats and world travelers would have helped to fill the pages of such a book."[51] Witnessing the beginnings of a culture of rose tourism, Edmund writes, "Many of the [thousands of visitors by way of the Greyhound Bus line] may readily be recognized as *rose pilgrims* from the questions they ask."[52] This moment, where Edmunds watched the countless visitors to Portland mulling about in the Rose Garden, marked the initial tide of "rose pilgrims," the culture of which would set the stage for a later transition to a larger culture of "garden pilgrims" as Portland continued to construct prestige ecosystems throughout the 20th century.

*"Stopping to Smell the Roses"*

Though Portland still crowns a Rose Queen and still hosts a Rose Parade, Jesse Currey's Rose Test Garden no longer has quite the renown and prestige of its heyday in the early to mid 20th century. Most visitors today have little idea of Jesse Currey and the competitive rose culture in which he established his scientific garden. The idea of the garden as a living laboratory to test roses seems far away. Though the Rose Garden may seem like the grandfather of Portland's gardens, eclipsed by the newer, flashier Asian-style gardens, an important continuity links the historical with the modern. In the middle of June in 2011, just as the middle of June in 1921, the garden overflows with thousands of beautiful, many-colored, and many-scented roses of all sizes and types. These aisles of roses showcase the breeding talent of Portland's rose amateurs and professionals, and thousands of modern day "rose pilgrims" come to see, smell, and revel in the grandeur of Portland's oldest prestige garden. As such, the garden still serves as a stage: for the power, yet grace, of a culturally ascendant pioneering city symbolically civilized by the pioneering rose.

[51] Fred Edmunds to [Mr. Hansen of KGW Radio], Portland, Oregon, c. 1942, "Letter from Fred Edmunds to Mr. Hansen of KGW Radio Regarding Rose Pilgrims and Dignitaries," Oregon Historical Society.
[52] Ibid. My emphasis.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Portland Japanese Garden in Historical Context

*Scene in Fair Japan*

Oregon's Rose Garden is not the only garden with its ancestry rooted in the Lewis & Clark Expo; arguably, the idea of a "Japanese" garden has its beginnings in the displays sponsored by the rising imperial power of Japan. In the era of World's Fairs, the Japanese government grounded its rising imperial identity, paradoxically, in the peaceful stasis of a garden. Japan sponsored two exhibits at Portland's L&C Expo: one in the trade-focused "Oriental Exhibits Palace," and the other in a softer "Scene in Fair Japan." The "Fair Japan" exhibit presented a scenic yet small garden-like landscape with the simple and symbolic objects of a Japanese lantern, a potted bonsai, and Tori gate. In this effort, the Japanese government sponsored a "garden" both rhetorical and real in an effort to construct a tame, feminine, and decidedly premodern Japanese identity to display at the L&C Expo.[53] Outspending all the other nations represented in the Oriental Exhibits Palace, and buying half of its floor space, Japan imported an impressive amount of handmade Japanese goods that wealthy Americans around the country bought for display in their homes.[54] The *japonaiserie* craze that became fashionable with Western elites in the early 20th century provided a market for goods like lanterns and silks.[55] While the "Fair Japan" scene promised to offer relief from the market-based exhibits in the Oriental Exhibits Palace, "Fair Japan's" mini-garden was in fact also part of a new market. These Fair Gardens represent the beginnings of a world market for Japanese-style gardens, and helped introduce Americans to a new garden form to purchase and have created for them. Throughout the early 20th century, interested American citizens would pay to have Japanese-style gardens constructed in their yards and public places.[56]

Of course, right at this time the actual Japan had just wowed the world by defeating Russia in a war, the success of which left little doubt that Japan had become a fully industrial, militarily powerful ascendant nation looking to claim its own empire in Asia. Thus, Japan became characterized by two interrelated, yet different, storylines in the American consciousness. Historian Kendall Brown describes this contrast well: "Whereas the front page headlines devoted to military and political battles suggest a Japan marked by turmoil, the pictures and descriptions of the Japanese

---

[53] Kendall Brown (Professor of Asian Art History at California State University, Long Beach), in discussion with author, phone, February 28th, 2012. Professor Brown encouraged me to consider the Japanese exhibits at World's Fairs as gardens that were both "rhetorical" and "real."

[54] Carl Abbott, "Starting a Second Century: The Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, 1905: Asia at the Fair." *The Oregon History Project*, 2004. Accessed March 7, 2012. http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/narratives/subtopic.cfm?subtopic_ID=340.

[55] Wybe Kuitert, "Japonaiserie in London and the Hague: A History of the Japanese Gardens at Shepherd's Bush (1910) and Clingendael (c. 1915)." *Garden History* 30:2 (December 1, 2002): 221–238.

[56] Kendall Brown, *Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1999).

pavilions and gardens at the expositions evoke a land of timeless tranquility."[57] The fact that these narratives of Japan were in told in tandem during the early 20th century, and continued to be told all the way up to WWII, is compelling evidence for the political work that these Japanese gardens were made to do. These two storylines were complementary, two sides of the same international Japanese narrative. This point can be easily overlooked, but it is essential: World's Fair Japanese gardens did political work by attempting to make Japan into a specific image—the tranquil, enduring and feminine garden—as a counterpoint to the more aggressive image of Japan at war building empire.

For visitors to the Lewis & Clark Exposition, though, the Japanese scene had been pitched as a respite from the grandiose, overwhelming displays of empire all around the Expo grounds. In an illustrated 1905 souvenir book, published by Portlander Robert Reid shortly after the close of the Expo, Reid describes the landscape at the "Scene in Fair Japan" in glowing terms. He writes, "the interior of Fair Japan is exceedingly attractive with its nooks and corners in Japanese scenic effects, its Japanese theater and tea and rice cake pavilions. The Japanese girls flutter about like creatures from out of a fairy book." The slightly exaggerated language aside (it was a souvenir book, after all), this text offers convincing evidence that the image of the Japanese garden, with its "scenic effects" and "girls out of a fairy book," had made a strong impression on visitors and would *continue* to make a strong impression on their memories of the event via the souvenir book long after the Expo closed.

Portland's Japanese Garden was established as a type of friendship garden between the US and Japan in the early 1960s. Seen in historical context, Portland's garden emerges in a post-war America that had just inflicted the destruction of an atomic bomb on Japan. This Japanese-style garden can be seen as an extension, and a reaffirmation, of the image of a docile, friendly, and naturally harmonious Japan. By making Japan anew on American soil in the form of a garden, Portlanders contributed to a re-creation of a postwar Japan metonymically as a garden: nonaggressive, feminine, traditional and eternal.[58] This very image, which the Japanese government used to compliment and make more palatable their modern aspirations of empire in the era of Fair Japan, became reinterpreted by Americans after the war to ease the pain of *their* own modern failures of atomic destruction. In short, a "Japanese Garden" is a discursive object for both Japan *and* America, reflecting Japan's prewar desire to represent itself as a peaceful and traditional country, while also representing America's postwar desire to make an aggressive and damaged Japan non-threatening and whole again.

*Constructing Authenticity Piece by Piece: Sand, Bamboo and Lanterns as Stories*

While the decision to build Portland's garden in Washington Park came out of a number of considerations, its location is emblematic of a larger ideology of land-use at this time in America.

[57] Kendall Brown, "Fair Japan: Japanese Gardens at American World's Fairs, 1876-1940," *Sitelines* 4 (Fall 2008): 13-16. In this article, Brown traces the history of Japanese exhibits at World's Fairs, and suggests that Japan actively created the idea of itself as almost literally a *garden*.
[58] Ibid.

Built on the site of the defunct Oregon Zoo,[59] the Japanese Garden repurposed a recreational site of a previous era in into a new landscape of leisure in nature. Quite unlike the location of the Chinese Garden in dense, urban Old Town/Chinatown, the site of the Japanese garden in the hills just outside of downtown reflects a desire to turn away from the city and spend time in simpler, less cluttered landscapes. While it would be incorrect to state that the Portland Japanese Garden was built in Washington Park as an extension of the suburban "turn from the city" mindset, its location is at the very least suggestive of a larger trend of placing leisure sites *just* outside of the city in the 1950s and 60s.[60] Across America at this time, cities were building a number of Japanese-style gardens, most of them situated like Portland's garden just a bit outside the urban core.[61] This trend will be important to remember in reference to the Chinese Garden movement in the 1980s, which was in part an effort to *reclaim* the city that had been hollowed out by interstates and the flight to the suburbs of a past generation.

The Portland Japanese Garden is a product of the legacy of U.S. and Japanese relations in the 20th century. In 1959, Portland began a sister-city relationship with Sapporo, Japan. Unlike Portland's later sister-city connection with Suzhou, China, which was *essential* for the creation of the Chinese Garden, the relationship with Sapporo was more *inspirational* than fundamental.[62] Though the Sapporo-Portland connection was honored in the garden, Portland's Japanese Garden was in consultation with a number of Japanese cities, not just Sapporo, during the construction of the garden. The American side employed renowned Japanese garden designer Professor Takuma Tono who provided the planning vision and design for the garden. Though Tono and the other garden designers in 1960s Portland were less concerned with a strict sense of authenticity in their communications with each other, they stressed an idea of near-perfect authenticity to the public as a way to legitimate their project. Letters sent by Japanese Garden Society President Philip Englehart while he was abroad to the Society secretary at home give us insight into the set of values that Portland's Japanese Garden Society sought to promote.

While on a trip around Japan in 1963 to procure materials for the Portland Japanese Garden, Philip Englehart wrote a particularly intriguing letter detailing what materials should come from Japan and which could be easily substituted at home. At the beginning of his letter, he writes, "I hope that at the present we don't settle for substitutes if they can be secured here at low cost and shipping arrangements can be made."[63] Though this language is not one of absolutes, Englehart strongly encourages the Society to consider using materials from Japan whenever possible. He

---

[59] William "Robbie" Robinson, "A History of the Japanese Garden: Highlights of the Events from the Twenty Five Year Report, 1962-1988," 1989, MSS 1859, Oregon Historical Society.

[60] For further reading on leisure sites in Western America in the post-war era, refer to John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

[61] Gregory Kenneth Missingham, "Japan 10±, China 1: A First Attempt at Explaining the Numerical Discrepancy Between Japanese-style Gardens Outside Japan and Chinese-style Gardens Outside China," *Landscape Research* 32:2, (April 2007): 117–146.

[62] Andrew Haruyama, in discussion with the author, phone, Portland, Oregon, April 24, 2012.

[63] Philip Englehart, "Letter from Philip Englehart in Tokyo to Board of Directors, Japanese Garden Society," Folder: Japanese Garden Society 1963, 1/17, #0279-01, Portland City Archives.

concludes his letter with a more forceful statement: "Our pond garden leading down to the waterfall can really present a beautiful picture that Seattle, San Francisco or Brooklyn can't match, if we build it carefully … Therefore, lets strain a little and help Professor Tono give us a real masterpiece."[64] By properly securing the best materials from Japan, and "straining a little" to get them, Englehart suggests that Portland can beat out other more prestigious cities, namely Portland's direct competition in the Bay Area and on the Puget Sound, but more indirectly—and more presumptuously—its competition on the East Coast. By gathering materials from the source in Japan, Englehart thinks that Portland can edge out other cities in a competition for tourist dollars and economic prestige.

Understandably perhaps, Englehart couches the discussion over where material should come from in terms of dollars and cents. Sand, teahouses, tatami mats and stone lanterns, in Englehart's eyes, all should come from the islands of Japan; tori gates, pebbles, larger rocks, and bridges though, all can be sourced and made in the United States. Though Englehart uses "authentic" as a legitimating word, he is also keen about the production of *stories* for the garden later. There is quite a bit of foresight in his comment about some fine white sand he found at a garden in Kyoto. He writes, "It is possible to get the same sand used in the Kyoto garden at a very low cost and providing we can arrange shipping and the tax problem can be met… the sand is good to have as a *conversation bit* if the cost is as low as getting it in the United States."[65] A number of factors determine Englehart's materials metric. First, the Garden Society must do a rudimentary cost analysis. If material straight from Japan is cheaper and can be imported inexpensively, then that material should be used. More importantly, though, is the ability to tell stories with the material once the garden is opened. Sand from a beach in Oregon would not tell the same sort of story, even if it looked nearly the same or performed the same function. The prestige of this garden is constructed piece by piece, through stories of connection between Portlanders and Japanese. Sand from Kyoto is not only more authentic, but tells a more compelling story of person-to-person contact between two cities.

The original sand in the garden, though, didn't end up coming from Kyoto as Englehart wished. Crushed rock from Ashland, Oregon, of a bright white color not dissimilar from the praised Kyoto sand, was shipped up and installed in the Flat Garden and the Sand & Stone Garden. Perhaps they should have listened to Englehart, though, as the Ashland sand was widely disliked. Robbie Robinson, the Garden Society's historian, described the sand this way: "the material was awful—so white it would blind one when the sun was out."[66] The presence of the "awful" sand, however, inspired the first visitors to the garden to donate funds to help purchase the superior sand from Kyoto. Two years after Englehart passed away, sacks of white granite sand arrived from the Shirakawa River in Kyoto to replace the gaudy material from Ashland.

---

[64] Ibid. Brooklyn's Japanese Garden is nowhere near the size nor complexity as Portland's. It is also older (1914) and in the "Hill and Pond" style, so the comparison is a little unfair. However, Brooklyn's was regarded as one of the best around at that time, so Portland's team decided to try and upset that claim with their new garden.

[65] Englehart, 1963. My emphasis.

[66] William C. Robinson, "A History of the Japanese Garden."

The Portland Japanese Garden draws its aesthetic reference points from far and wide. The garden itself is actually *five* different Japanese-style gardens from different times and eras in Japan condensed into one unified "garden." As was the case with the sand, some of the garden aesthetics were based off of gardens in Kyoto; with other objects, Portland's Japanese Garden looked elsewhere in Japan for its inspiration. It is important to recognize that garden styles in Japan are far from settled or timeless, and gardens were historically contingent landscapes. As such, we should take care to see the garden as garden historian Wybe Kuitert suggests: as a *product*, "something made by people to satisfy the needs of others."[67] By considering the Portland Japanese Garden as a historically contingent "product" made to satisfy the desires of Portlanders in the 1960s, we can more critically engage with the larger American ideologies surrounding landscape use and perceptions of "nature" that helped inspire the location and design of the garden.

The story of the Kyoto sand is not an exceptional one; many materials and structures in the finished Portland Japanese Garden have similar stories of world-trade. Englehart and others in the garden planning recognized the availability of substitutes, and used them when possible, but more importantly they knew that by making the garden as "Japanese" as possible, the landscape would be more meaningfully storied, could contain more "conversation bits" that would allow Portland's garden to stand out from the rest. By subscribing to a selective sense of authenticity, rather than requiring that all materials come directly from Japan, the Portland Japanese Garden was able to stock its five Japanese-style gardens with signature stories of prestige trade. This careful selection of material in the formative period of the garden would pay off in the next few decades as the garden quickly earned the title of the "most authentic Japanese garden outside of Japan."[68]

Strangely, one of the most Japanese of all structures in the garden, the Tori Gate, didn't need to come straight from Japan. Englehart suggested, "the small gates, bamboo structures can be fairly well copied in our own timber. Also a Tori Arch… the painting is not difficult. All we will need are the design plans." Oregon's plentiful timber, a commodity deeply tied to the state's identity, would serve just fine to copy the gate. Stone lanterns, however, "of an authentic rock can be purchased here [in Kyoto] in two or three places… these no doubt would be best and authentic."[69] Why is a "copy" of a Tori Gate sufficient while stone lanterns should be authentic? While bamboo fences and Tori gates are important pieces of a complete Japanese-style garden, they are not central, nor are they necessarily prestige components. Bamboo could and did grow in the United States, and with Oregon's plentiful timber, Englehart was likely correct that the garden builders could make suitable copies of fences and arches. These structures would be in the background, taken as part of the context of a Japanese-style garden. Stone lanterns, however, were considered quintessentially Japanese, had been part of a trade in prestige objects since the era of World Fairs, and most

[67] Wybe Kuitert, *Themes in the History of Japanese Garden Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005). My emphasis.
[68] There are countless mentions of this garden being the most authentic outside of Japan from Travel Magazines, newspaper articles, and the Japanese Garden website.
[69] Englehart, 1963.

**Figure 4: Stone Pagoda lantern from Sapporo. Source: The Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon. 1973.**

importantly, would be placed in prominent spots in the garden where visitors would take notice and could be told a story. Thus, these lanterns should come from Japan so that they may provide important lines in the greater script of the garden experience.

Each lantern in the garden came from a different city in Japan. Additionally, a few of the lanterns were donated via funding from prominent Portland and Japanese people and businesses, including the distinguished Morris and Mildred Schnitzer in Portland and the Honda Motor Corporation in Japan.[70] The garden's most noteworthy lantern, however, was meant to highlight Portland's intimate connection with Sapporo, Japan (Figure 4). In 1959, inspired in part by President Eisenhower's nationwide initiative of starting a "people-to-people program,"[71] Sapporo and Portland became sister-cities. Though this fact is not made explicit in any of the official documents, Portland and Sapporo have a natural affinity as outposts of Empire—Portland as a far west outpost on the trail of American Manifest Destiny, Sapporo as the frontier outpost of mainland imperial Japan's conquest of the northern island of Hokkaido. In a convenient sugar-coating of Hokkaido's imperial history, the *Japan Times* writes in 1962 on the new Portland-Sapporo sister-city connection, "Sapporo was nothing but a wild plain with only a few Japanese and Ainu families living there in 1869, when the Sapporo area development program was started."[72] Similar accounts, of course, abound about Oregon and the "few Native American families living there" during the State's early settlement by whites.

Both Oregon and Hokkaido were used as resource hinterlands for, respectively, the East Coast cities of the US and for Tokyo for much of their imperial history. However, both regions have made a gradual transition towards becoming industrial and cultural cores in their own right in the late 20th century. This history ties the Portland-Sapporo sister-city relationship in with the earlier story of the rose as a civilizer. The Ainu people on Hokkaido were not Japanese; a stone lantern from Sapporo, then, represents less an object of eternal "Japaneseness" and more an object of empire. Just

[70] William "Robbie" Robinson, "A History of the Japanese Garden."

[71] Rolf Cremer, Anne Bruin, and Ann Dupuis, "International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global-Local Divide," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 60:1 (January 2001): 377–401. The drive for American sister-city connections began, most agree, with President Eisenhower's 1956 national initiative to "involve individuals and organized groups… in citizen diplomacy with the hope that personal relationships, fostered through sister city, county, and state affiliations would lessen the chance of future world conflicts." 380.

[72] "Development Scoring: City of Sapporo, Hokkaido's Beautiful Capital," *The Japan Times*, June 4, 1962.

as Portlanders imported the rose from the East and made it into their own prestige commodity, the mainland Japanese newly moved to Hokkaido imported the stone lantern from Honshu and, by the time Portland and Sapporo became sister cities, had made the lantern into a prestige good as well.

The lantern from Sapporo that was installed in Portland's garden was one of a kind.[73] After a delegation of Portlanders (including Philip Englehart) visited Sapporo in 1963, the city purchased a lantern from the estate of Mr. Soichi Sugawara to send to Portland's new garden as a symbol of goodwill. The lantern was previously owned by a Japanese Viscount who, according to a letter from the American consulate in Sapporo, was "the supreme head of all the fisheries in Hokkaido."[74] Just as the Rose Garden features a statue of Jesse Currey, the champion of the rose who controlled a prominent steel company, the Japanese garden features objects and stories of other wealthy resource tycoons from both Japan and Portland.

The *Japan Times* article from 1962 wraps up its account on the Portland-Sapporo relationship by telling the reader, "Sapporo has now become known as one of the most beautiful modern cities in the world."[75] Though this article is clearly channeling the voice of Sapporo boosters, the sentiment was nearly the same in Portland. The Japanese Garden was constructed, in part, as a statement of Portland's worldliness, that its transformation from pioneer city with a few rose lined streets to world-city with a prestige ecosystem to its name, was well on its way. By foregrounding objects like lanterns (among a number of others) in the garden, the garden planners were able to condense a network of world trade in prestige goods, and the network of global capital and wealth that Portland could wield to acquire those goods, into a single emblematic object that could speak to Portland's status as a world city.

*Women in Kimonos: Photographing the Feminine*

Just as the Japanese featured women from "out of a fairy book" at the Scene in Fair Japan during the Lewis & Clark Exposition of 1905, Portland's Japanese Garden continued this significant tradition by highlighting the feminine well into the 1970s. In the Japanese Garden Society's first publication in 1973, the author mentions that, "On certain dates in August, Japanese models wearing kimonos make their appearance in the garden and will pose for photographers."[76] There are two practices worth paying attention to here: one, the act of photography endorsed by the garden and two, the performance of the Japanese or Japanese-American (it is unclear) "models" that were invited or hired for a day of posing in the garden. The practices done in tandem—photographing the performance of the kimono-clad women—no doubt achieved a sort of cultural work. The work was two-fold: through the photographing of posed Japanese women in a Japanese garden, the garden intimated some degree of authenticity for its visitors. But the presence of women in the garden also

[73] The Japanese Garden Society, *The Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon* (Portland: The Japanese Garden Society, 1973).
[74] John Sylvester to Terry Schrunk (Mayor of Portland), Sapporo, Japan, December 18, 1963, Folder: Japanese Garden Society 1963, 1/17, Portland City Archives.
[75] Japan Times, "Development Scoring," 1962.
[76] The Japanese Garden Society, *The Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon*, 1973.

tapped into the longer legacy of "feminizing Japan." The key difference in the Portland Japanese Garden, however, was that the performance of kimono-clad women was no longer *Japan* attempting to make itself feminine, as it did at the World's Fairs of a previous generation, but rather was now *America* attempting to recreate that image anew.

Leonard Bacon, a staff writer and photographer for the *Oregonian*, participated as a photographer at one of these Japanese-model days in the garden in the late 1960s. Though it is unclear if his work actually appeared in the newspaper, a small collection of his photos from the event is stored at the Portland City Archives. The work of an expert, Bacon's photographs capture what I imagine was the spirit of the event: elegance, tranquility, and a suggestion of the exotic (Figure 5). But just as these photographs seem almost natural—peaceful Japanese women in a peaceful Japanese garden—something is undeniably off. Though the women look happy, the viewer can tell that the whole thing is posed: they look uncomfortable in the traditional clothing, their smiles appear a little forced.[77]

**Figure 5: Japanese Woman Posing in Garden Model Event. Source: Leonard Bacon, 1968. Portland City Archives**

Of course, the whole photography event is planned to begin with, so it comes as no surprise that the photos look posed. More intriguing than the posed nature of the photographs however are the spots in the garden that the models were photographed in, next to, or near—the bridges, lanterns, and teahouse. Just as the lanterns act as lines in a script, condensing a network of connections into a single object, these photographs highlight certain signature elements of the garden. By virtue of the kimonoed women standing next to these objects, the objects are legitimated even more strongly than before. As a historical material, the photographs reveal the aspects of those original polarities of global/local, modern/traditional, and masculine/feminine that the garden wanted to foreground for its visitors. In this case, the garden sought to highlight the global, the traditional, and the feminine through its photography event.

Each one of Bacon's photos is intriguing in its own right, though a few stand out for the sentiments they suggest. A particularly illustrative one is of three Japanese models, seemingly in light conversation, posing in front of the teahouse (Figure 6). It almost appears candid; the women smile at each other while lounging gracefully. Without knowing the context, the viewer could reasonably guess on a first look that these women are in Japan. That impression of nativeness, naturally, is the

[77] Leonard Bacon, *Japanese Women in Japanese Garden photos*, 1968, Portland City Archives.

purpose of the whole photography event to begin with—to confer legitimacy on the prestige objects and spaces of the garden by making these things seem authentic. Though visitors to the garden no doubt saw the artifice of their experience—they knew they were in *Portland*, not Japan, and may have even spoken English with the models—there was likely something appealing about the play-acting. This complex performance of pretending, of photographing Japanese women in Portland's Japanese garden and trying to feel, for just a moment, like you were transported to Japan, points to the complicated process of constructing authenticity.

*Essentialized Notions of Nature*

The popularity of Japanese-style gardens in the West in the last century, and of certain elements of Japanese culture writ large, has spurred a somewhat stubborn and naïve idea of the "Japanese traditional love of nature."[78] Americans have used this simple narrative of Japanese human-nonhuman relation in the post-war era as a way of advertising pleasurable, leisurely landscapes to an American public looking for nature as an escape. In the founding days of the Portland Japanese Garden, the Society used this "love of nature" narrative in their initial advertisement materials on television and radio.

**Figure 6: Japanese Women and Teahouse. Source: Leonard Bacon, 1968. Portland City Archives**

Japanese gardens conform quite easily to Americans' sense of what a "garden" should be. Unlike a Chinese garden, which is dominated by cultural cues and architecture, a Japanese garden appears minimalist and unadorned—qualities that a suburban America in the 1950s looked for in its idea of nature. A visit to a Japanese garden in the 50s and 60s satisfied an American public's desire for a timeless nature, and Japanese garden advertisements actively catered to this want with intentionally specific language.

In 1964, the year the garden opened for a few months for the public, the garden purchased a KOIN television advertisement, the original script of which reveals some of the linguistic tropes used to capture the imagination of potential visitors. In this advertisement, the garden operationalized the rhetoric of "nature-loving Japan" to attract visitors for the first season of the new garden. The ad, titled the "Gardens of Japan," opened with these words:

> Superb natural beauty and the fascination of the changing seasons are characteristics of nature in Japan. Surrounded and inspired by this natural environment, the Japanese People over the centuries

[78] Yuriko Saito, "The Japanese Appreciation of Nature," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 25:3 (June 20, 1985): 239–251.

> have developed an innate sense of love for nature and from this have perfected one of their greatest arts — that of the landscape garden.[79]

Even up to the present moment, the Japanese Garden ads done by local KOIN TV tell of a garden "that celebrates the beauty and harmony of nature."[80] Just as the Portland Japanese Garden combined five different types of gardens styles into one "Japanese" whole, this language of a "Japanese People's innate love of nature" sought to simplify the nation's complicated human-nonhuman relationship into a harmonious and timeless package. While some videos and material disseminated by the garden today attempt to locate each of the five gardens in their own particular histories in Japan,[81] these mentions of historical facts are simply gestures—to the public, the individual history of each garden style matters less than the larger, and simpler, history of Japanese-American relations. And of that history, the one that really matters in this garden is the most recent story of friendship and mutual economic exchange.

Perhaps this most recent history is all that the visitors really need or want to know. After all, experiencing the garden may be less about an imagined trip to Japan and more just an imagined escape from whatever everyday worries a visitor has. What is important though is how the Japanese-style gardens of today represent a certain vision based on a narrow and recent history of Japan. The language of "perfect harmony"[82] with nature in garden marketing, and in popular Western writing about Japanese arts in general, has helped to obscure what is in reality a rather *imperfect* Japanese relationship with their environment. Japanese programs of imperial expansion and modernization have left an often toxic legacy: from the extinction of native wolves through poisoning and bounty hunting on the frontier of Hokkaido to the devastating diseases inflicted on people through industry and mining, Japan's recent environmental history is certainly a long way from Eden.[83] These ideas of "perfect harmony" are more ghost-like than real, and Portland's Japanese Garden represents more of an idealized past than a reflection of modern Japan.

Notably, it has not only been Americans constructing this image of a Japan in "perfect harmony." The present day government of Japan has *itself* been propagating the idea of Japan-as-garden. A recent issue of *The New Yorker* featured an advertisement sponsored by the Japanese Government's tourism bureau in which Japan was portrayed in four seasonal images—every single one of which was a photo of a garden.[84] In this respect, Japan's advertisement is consistent with a much larger recent history of tourism in post-industrial nations. By using its tourism agency to promote a peaceful and perennial landscape, Japan has attempted to convince Americans that its

---

[79] Japanese Garden Society, "'Gardens of Japan': Recorded Script for KOIN Radio," 1964, MSS 1859, Oregon Historical Society.

[80] "*Portland Japanese Garden*," YouTube video, 0:35, added by "PdxJapaneseGarden" on May 24, 2010. Accessed March 10, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5CMOgCAYM8&feature=youtube_gdata_player. :21.

[81] Both the YouTube video of Steve Bloom and the Japanese Garden website mention how each of these garden styles came from a different time and place.

[82] Japanese Garden Society, "Gardens of Japan," Oregon Historical Society, 1964.

[83] Brett Walker, *The Lost Wolves of Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005); Brett Walker, *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

[84] Japanese Tourism Agency. "Encounter a different Japan in every season," *The New Yorker*, February 27th, 2012, 20.

country has retained its essential character of timeless nature-lovers. Just as with the KOIN ad and the *New Yorker* one, Japanese-style gardens in American have aided this process of selective storytelling: the tales of environmental conflict are forgotten while the clean and tranquil garden is made eternal.

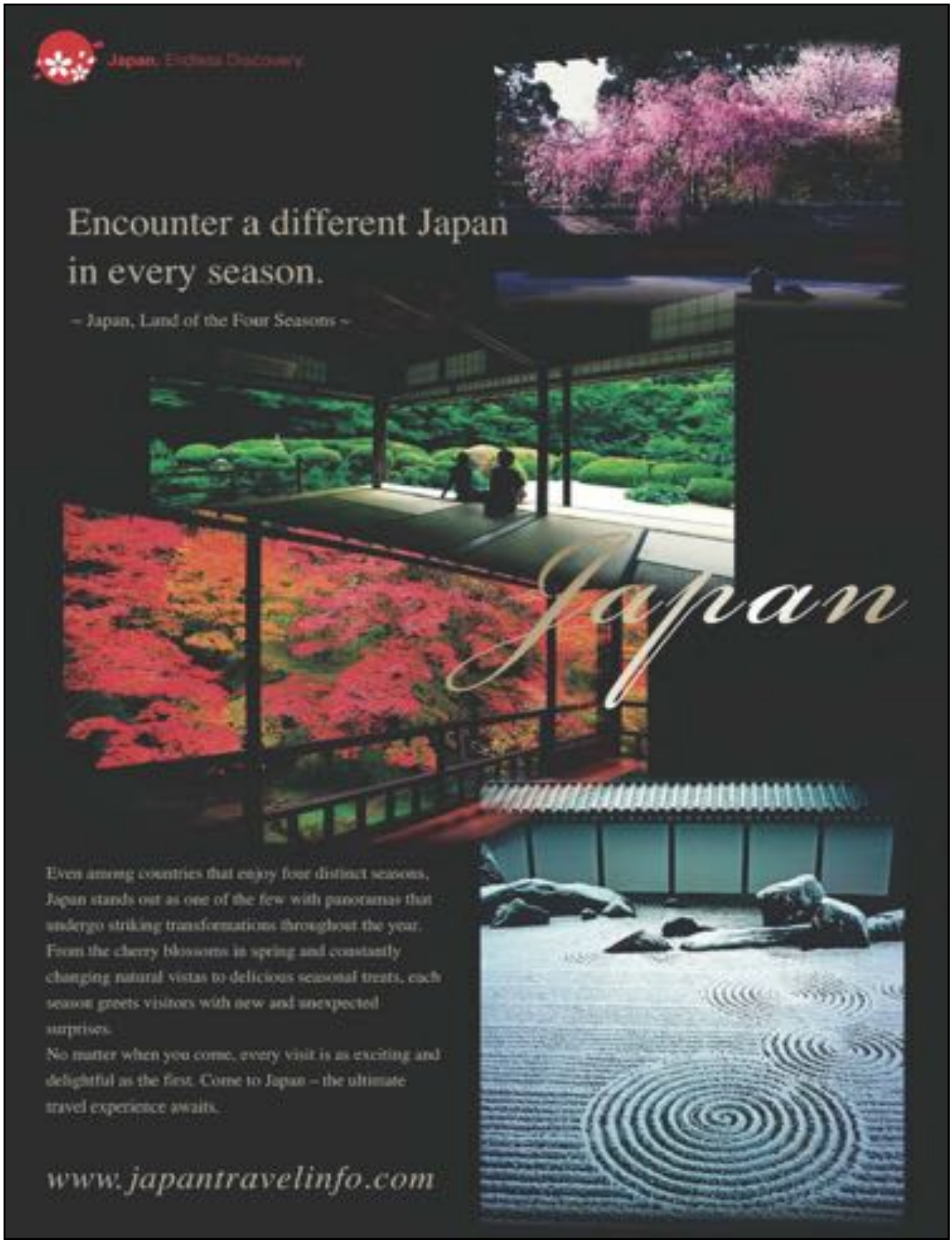


**Figure 7: Garden Advertisement Sponsored by Japanese Tourism Bureau, Source: *The New Yorker*, February 27th, 2012.**

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Lan Su Chinese Garden

*A Dense Landscape*

For some visitors, the idea of a garden literally in the middle of a city—surrounded by skyscrapers, the whoosh of traffic, the immediacy of police sirens—is difficult at first to understand. Aren't gardens supposed to be about tranquility?[85] Some Americans have had difficultly readily accepting Chinese-style gardens as "gardens." As I've led new visitors through Lan Su garden, I've often heard, "this doesn't even feel like a garden." It is my belief that Chinese gardens can challenge American ideas of what constitutes a "garden," and in the process can also reveal the categorical limitations of conceptual binaries like nature/culture. A travel writer for the *New York Times*, visiting Portland's gardens in 2006, smartly observed, "Unlike a Chinese garden, which to Western eyes is so crusted with architecture, pavement and poetry as to hardly resemble a garden at all, Japanese gardens are familiar to the point of cliché with their lanterns, arched bridges, koi ponds and cherry trees."[86] There is something significant about the Lan Su Chinese Garden as a "between place," a site of otherness that can challenge visitors in ways that the tranquil and minimalist Japanese Garden cannot. Even more than the Japanese Garden, the Lan Su Chinese Garden is particularly dense with world-city connections. Every corner within this single city square block is able to tell some sort of story about Portland's aspirationally cosmopolitan character.

Just like the Japanese Garden, the Chinese Garden stocks certain signature stories of prestige connection in the specialty objects gathered and displayed in the garden. Some of the stories told during the tours have taken on the proportions of city folklore: the fact that the all the structures were hand-built by a team of Chinese artisans, for example. Though these stories make for excellent talking points in tours or newspaper articles, I would like to use them and others as specific examples of larger ideologies surrounding authenticity and nature, the uses of urban space in a suburban America, and US relations with the rest of the world. Building on the reputations of Portland's other well-known prestige ecosystems (the Rose and Japanese gardens), the creators of the Lan Su Chinese garden sought to create a Chinese-style garden like no other in America. In the process, they worked intimately within the relatively new international framework of sister-city relationships, drawing on the garden-building expertise of Portland's newest sister-city of Suzhou, China.

Though the Sapporo-Portland sister-city relationship figured somewhat into the story of the Japanese garden, the Suzhou-Portland relationship was an absolutely essential one. These carefully sought-out relationships between cities were strategic, representing a city's desire to tap into larger economic and cultural networks. Unlike Sapporo, a newly-made frontier city with a imperial history,

[85] Steve Bloom (CEO of Portland Japanese Garden), in discussion with the author, Portland, Oregon, February 3, 2012. In the case of the Japanese Garden, Bloom states that his main task is to "maintain the tranquility" of the garden.

[86] David Laskin, "Visiting Asia Without Crossing the Pacific in Portland, Ore," *The Bulletin, New York Times*, December 17, 2006, sec: Travel.

Suzhou, according to Chinese historian Peter Carroll, "has long been viewed as the most purely Chinese of all cities."[87] Returning to Wybe Kuitert's idea of gardens as "products" that were made to "satisfy the needs of others,"[88] the Lan Su Chinese Garden represents the aspirations of an on-the-rise Portland that sought to foreground its cosmopolitan identity while *also* representing the desires of a newly "opened" Suzhou that was looking to export its major prestige good: a Chinese-style garden.[89] Portland's connection with a Chinese city already renowned for its long history of elite, luxury culture helped Portland compete in a competitive urban hierarchy.

*The "Garden Capitol of China": Linking Portland with Ming-dynasty Luxury*

It is surprising that a city like Suzhou, often cited as "the Venice of the East" by outsiders and cited as one of the most cultured of all Chinese cities by the Chinese national government, sought out a sister-city relationship with a rather peripheral American city like Portland.[90] Given the rich garden and horticultural legacies of both Suzhou *and* Portland, though, the sister-city organizations on both sides thought that the relationship was a good fit.[91] Historically, Suzhou has been referred to as "the garden capitol of China," and in making this connection to Suzhou, Portland was eager to become, in turn, the "garden capitol of America."[92]

The Portland-Suzhou connection represents a shift in Chinese prestige ecosystem trade from a country-to-country level to a city-to-city level. The Astor Court Garden, built in 1980 in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, was the first Suzhou-style garden built in America after Nixon's iconic 1972 visit to China. A reflection of the recent détente, the Astor Court was produced through a relationship between the *countries* of China and the United States, not between the cities of Suzhou and New York City.[93] After this flagship project, Suzhou eagerly sought other markets for its specific garden style, using the Suzhou Institute of Landscape Architectural Design (essentially Suzhou's version of Portland Parks and Recreation) to build and export their Chinese-style gardens to receptive cities across the Western world.[94]

---

[87] Peter J. Carroll, *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895-1937* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 7.
[88] Wybe Kuitert, *Themes in the History of Japanese Garden Art*.
[89] Remember, for a number of decades after World War II, communist mainland China was not recognized by the United States. Only after Nixon's "opening of China" in the mid 1970s could US cities make connections with the formerly closed People's Republic. In 1988, then, when the sister-city relationship was formalized, Suzhou was on the hunt for making connections.
[90] Michael Marmé, *Suzhou: Where the Gods of All the Provinces Converge* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).
[91] Andrew Haruyama [Portland Mayor's International Relations Director], in discussion with the author, phone, Portland, Oregon, April 24, 2012.
[92] The Classical Chinese Garden Trust, 1999.
[93] Gene Searchinger and Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Ming Garden*, VHS, Home Vision, (New York, N.Y, 1983).
[94] See Figure 8 of the global distribution of Chinese-style gardens around the Western world. For interactive version of map created by the author, see http://g.co/maps/tfh2a.

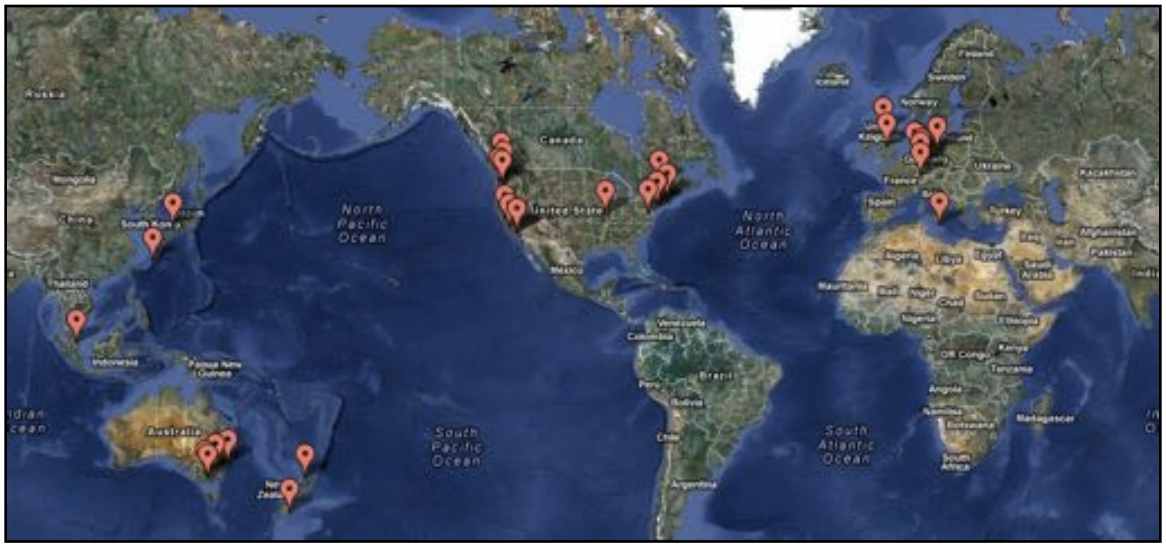

**Figure 8: Global Distribution of Suzhou-style Gardens outside of China. Source: Google Maps, 2012.**

Suzhou was the most sophisticated and wealthy city in China for most of the last millennium. It has been a prosperous hub of commerce and industry through much of China's history, and it continues to produce goods for a world market. Most prominent among these are its gardens. Originally the urban retreats of Shanghai's retired bureaucrat class, Suzhou's gardens emerged in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644, CE) as a product of the disposable income of a scholar-gentleman looking to create his own heaven on earth. Like Japanese gardens in Japan, Suzhou gardens were historically contingent landscapes. The specific "Chinese Garden" style that Suzhou exported in the 1980s and 90s to cities throughout the West is not at all a "timeless" or "ancient" style (as many of the newspaper articles surrounding the construction of Lan Su would suggest[95]), but rather was constructed through the elite tastes of an urban scholar-gentleman class looking to compete with each other for the most prestigious garden. Any study of Suzhou-style gardens outside of China should take account of the origin of these conspicuously consumptive spaces in Ming-dynasty Suzhou. For though the Lan Su garden boosters may have explained Chinese gardens as "a place for people to come back to nature, to come back to one's inner heart, to come back to ancient idealism… that transports the visitor far from reality,"[96] Chinese gardens in Suzhou were in fact always very close to "reality": the everyday reality of economic production and consumption.

In his monograph on the making of the Ming-Dynasty Chinese gardens, called *Fruitful Sites*, historian Craig Clunas traces how Suzhou gardens changed from places of agriculture *and* aesthetics in the early Ming (he calls these "productive" gardens) to "purified" spaces focusing exclusively on

[95] Randy Gragg, "Made in China; Master Artisans Continue a Tradition of Crafting Nature to Poetic Ends by Creating a Classical Chinese Garden in Portland; Emotional Visit to Sister City Inspires Project," *The Oregonian*, September 19, 1999, sec: Arts and Living. Gragg writes at one point, "Suzhou gardens are really an ancient form of virtual reality." References to the "ancient" nature of Suzhou-style gardens abound.
[96] The Classical Chinese Garden Trust, "Organizational Information," 1999.

aesthetics in the mid to late Ming.[97] In the early Ming denizens of Suzhou used gardens to grow fruit trees, vegetables, and rear fish for a market economy. Though these gardens were also objects of beauty, their identity was wrapped up in producing agricultural goods to sell. However, as Suzhou become a magnet for China's *nouveau riche* in the late Ming, and as the up and coming families built ever more extravagant gardens, the agricultural activities within the old gardens came to seen as crass—one no longer wanted to be seen as a "vegetable peddler."[98] In the eyes of a new elite class with disposable income, things like labor, agricultural work, and vegetable peddling were increasingly considered anachronistic for a place as urbane as Suzhou. The elite did not want to look out into their garden and think of the current market price of plums—they wanted to imagine the garden as an artful landscape painting, free from the tastelessness of the marketplace. A new dictate of *taste* came to determine what was and was not appropriate in a garden, and the garden itself, like so many other objects in late Ming Suzhou, quickly became a commodity.[99] Taste regulated

Once the scholar's garden as a whole became a product, and the former agricultural products of fruit trees and vegetables that once constituted the garden ceased to be grown for their market worth, could the newly rich use their gardens to achieve a place in the old social hierarchy. As Clunas writes, by the late Ming gardens were clearly "spaces of social competition, and fully involved in the search for status and power."[100] This transformation from a hybrid agro-aesthetic space into a purified space of elite prestige, one that was fully engaged in competition for status and power, is a crucial historical development for understanding how Suzhou-style gardens have been used in the modern age. In the 20th century global competition for world-city standing, the prestige ecosystem of the Suzhou-style garden became a way for cities around the world to broker new forms of power and status. Formerly a commodity only for Ming-dynasty scholar-gentlemen, in the present day the Suzhou-style garden has become a global good for cosmopolitan cities. As many cities that built a Suzhou-style garden in the late 20th century would realize, "the garden was a way of making money look natural."[101] By consolidating vast amounts of urban wealth—and the network of government officials, business leaders, and civic philanthropists that produced it—into a dense garden space, cities seeking to better their position in a global order could highlight their cultivated virtue through a garden that made their wealth look natural.

*The Sister-City World Order*

Though at their most pragmatic level sister-city relationships are centered on mutually beneficial economic exchange, an explicitly idealist desire for global cultural exchange runs through

[97] Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). In this sense, the word "purified" refers to Bruno Latour's notion of the cultural construction of binaries. In this case, the early-Ming garden of agriculture and aesthetics (a garden of hybrids, as plants were both economic objects and aesthetic objects) becomes made into a garden of purely aesthetics.
[98] Ibid. 79.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid. 102.

these relationships as well. This duality of commerce *and* culture, and the desire for the exchanges to be equal for both sides, is what separates the older, exploitative relationships between empires and colonies from the newer, neoliberal relationships between global cities. In a concise history of the rise of sister-cities, economists Rolf Cremer et al. argue that the competition of global cities in the current world order vis-à-vis sister-cities showcases "the multifold relationship between culture and commerce."[102] A key insight in Cremer et al.'s work is that "China takes a very long term view of its international relationships and takes time to develop friendships," and that an understanding of the recent global development of Chinese sister-city relationships must take into account both the immediate desires of "opened" Chinese cities for international investment and trade and the longer term desires for international "friendship."[103]

Representing a truly successful relationship, the Portland and Suzhou governments managed to synthesize the commercial *and* the cultural in the production and exchange of prestige ecosystems. City officials on both sides of the Pacific were explicit in their wishes for a garden. In 1985, at the urging of then-mayor Bud Clark, Portland sent a delegation led by City Commissioner Mike Lindberg on a tour of eastern Asia to find the "perfect sister-city for Portland."[104] As the story goes, when the delegation visited Suzhou Lindberg was so enamored by "the beauty of the city and its world-renowned gardens, as well as the warmth and spirit of its people," that he became determined to establish a Chinese garden in Portland.[105] Still, the sister-city relationship began as a way to foster a stronger *business* connection between the two cities. Quoted later in an *Oregonian* article, Lindberg asked, "If you had the [Chinese] garden, what better way to get a leg up on business?"[106]

The dream of a Chinese garden in Portland became a major component of the sister-city relationship, and a highly effective way to combine commerce and culture. The trade of gardens was not one-sided, though—by the time that Suzhou was looking around the world for new sister-city partners, Portland had a prestige ecosystem of its very own to contribute to the trade. While government officials worked to get the Lan Su project running in Portland, a "Friendship Garden of Roses" was designed for construction in Suzhou.[107] Jesse Currey's 1917 rose garden from a previous era of Portland had inspired its own international form. The Portland-Suzhou Sister City Association writes that in 1992, "discussions beg[an] on a *Portland-style* rose garden in the heart of

---

[102] Rolf Cremer, Anne Bruin, and Ann Dupuis, "International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global-Local Divide," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 60:1 (January 2001): 377–401.
[103] Ibid. 386.
[104] Suzhou Foreign Affairs Office, and PSSCA, "Portland-Suzhou Sister City Association History," 2001. This story of wanting to find the "perfect sister-city" was repeated in the many interviews I conducted with those involved in creating the Lan Su Chinese Garden.
[105] The Classical Chinese Garden Trust, "Organizational Information," 1999. (Provided to the author by Phyllis Oster, head fundraiser for the Garden Society in the late 1990s.)
[106] Randy Gragg, "Made in China; Master Artisans Continue a Tradition of Crafting Nature to Poetic Ends by Creating a Classical Chinese Garden in Portland; Emotional Visit to Sister City Inspires Project," *The Oregonian*, September 19, 1999, sec. Arts and Living.
[107] Suzhou Foreign Affairs Office, and PSSCA, "Portland - Suzhou Sister City Association History," 2001.

Suzhou."[108] Though this Friendship Garden was an admittedly small one, was is significant is that Portland's rose garden form was now praised enough to be considered its own "style." Beginning in the early 20th century as the pioneer object of a new prestige economy, the Portland rose assumed enough status in the world-city hierarchy by the 1990s to become its own prestige ecosystem, ready to be traded with potential new sister-cities.

The creators of the Lan Su Chinese Garden viewed their project as a continuation of Portland's garden heritage. In a document detailing their objectives for the garden, the Garden Trust states one of their goals as "creat[ing] an urban oasis in keeping with Portland's tradition of parks and gardens."[109] This "tradition" is undoubtedly the legacy of people like Jesse Currey, Rose Hoyt, and Philip Englehart; the Lan Su Chinese Garden, in fact, makes little sense outside of this context of Portland prestige gardens.[110]

*"Getting Back to [Urban] Nature": The Shift from Japanese to Chinese Gardens in the Late 20th Century*

In a way similar to the story of the Japanese Garden in America, the Chinese Garden has become a repository for American perceptions of the "Chinese relationship to nature." In order to understand how Westerners have sought out their own perceptions of nature through the lens of a Chinese Garden, we should first understand the larger historical shift of taste from Japanese gardens to Chinese gardens in the late 20th century. Just as examining the Portland Japanese Garden gave insight into the 1950s and 60s American desires for a minimalist nature "out there," the Lan Su Chinese Garden can give insight into some more recent ideas of nature in urban spaces.

Early accounts of Chinese gardens from Westerners tended to claim that Chinese "imitate" rather than create, that they study irregularity and make "monstrous" forms out of nature. For example, *Pan zai*, the original Chinese form of plant miniaturization that came to be popularized by the Japanese in the form of Bonsai, were labeled by certain Western visitors to China as "torture" to plants. *Pan zai* and Chinese gardens, according to these racialized explanations, revealed "the natural cruelty of the Chinese." A typical Orientalist trope claimed that the Chinese were wont to "exalt the complex and artificial over the simple and natural."[111] If Westerners increasingly were looking for a "simple and natural" nature in the mid 20th century, the popularity of minimalist Japanese-style gardens should come as no surprise. How then did Westerners come to appreciate, even adore, a Chinese garden style that previously had been seen as crass, artificial and overly complicated?

As of late, a number of aspects of Chinese culture have been popularized for an American audience. Ideas of *feng shui*, *yin* and *yang,* and the *Tao* have all enjoyed some degree of American

---

[108] Portland-Suzhou Sister City Association, "Recent History," http://www.portlandsuzhou.org/history/, Accessed March 20, 2012. My emphasis.

[109] The Classical Chinese Garden Trust, "Organizational Information," 1999. Objective #5.

[110] Suzhou Foreign Affairs Office, and PSSCA, "Portland - Suzhou Sister City Association History," 2001. Completed in 1994, the "Friendship Garden" was considered a "$200,000 achievement."

[111] Craig Clunas, "Nature and Ideology in Western Descriptions of the Chinese Garden," in *Nature and Ideology: Natural Garden Design in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997): 21–33.

attention. Most of the popular language uses idealized notions of "eternal harmony" or "Chinese ancient wisdom" to describe these ideas. A discussion of the Portland Chinese Garden, then, will necessarily have to pay attention to how Americans have tried to understand Chinese notions of nature though a garden. Craig Clunas, writing about how this Orientalist ideology has shaped our understanding of Chinese gardens in particular and Chinese culture in general, comments, "'Nature' in 'the Chinese garden' underwent a complete reversal in the hundred years from about 1850 to 1950, and how this reversal [happened] owes less to any supposedly increased understanding of constructions of the idea of the garden in China, than it does to changes in the construing of the idea of 'nature' purely within European and American discourse."[112] That is, Westerners' definition of "nature" has shifted in the past 150 years, and because of this change, Western perceptions of Chinese gardens and Chinese relationships with "nature" have shifted as well.

After the *Japonaiserie* of the late 19th to mid 20th century ran its course, and Japanese-style gardens had cropped up all over North America, Europe, and Australia/New Zealand, a new vogue for Chinese things took hold of the West.[113] By 2007, there were at least 690 public Japanese-style gardens in the West. Noticing a discrepancy between the number of Japanese-style gardens and Chinese-style gardens in the West, Landscape scholar Gregory Missingham investigated some of the underlying causes. He found that Japanese-style outnumbers Chinese-style by a whole order of magnitude: ten to one.[114] Missingham was skeptical of suggesting that any single reason could explain the 10:1 difference between these two garden styles. However, he offerd a few broad ideas, which include: 1) the sociopolitical context of US relations with Japan and China, 2) the "replication potential" of each style, and 3) the shift of tastes from "modernism" to "postmodernism."[115] Though Japan was once a wartime foe, for the last century it has more often been an economic and cultural ally. China, however, has had a shiftier legacy: from the "spheres of influence" age as a site for European colonial interests at the turn of the century, to a closed and communistic Red State under Mao, to a workhorse and sweatshop for peripheral industries after Nixon's opening, to a nation quickly rising as an ascendant political and economic power in the current age. Clearer US affinities with Japan for a longer time have made Japanese-garden styles easier to export; thus, Japanese-style gardens have had a bit of a running start in the West. Until the 1980s, unclear US-China relations had made a Chinese-style garden less politically palatable.

As far as replicating each style, Japanese Gardens are far cheaper to build. You could make one in your backyard—a Japanese maple, lantern, and few select stones or sand would be all you

[112] Craig Clunas, "Nature and Ideology in Western Descriptions of the Chinese Garden," 1997.
[113] Gregory Kenneth Missingham, "Japan 10±, China 1: A First Attempt at Explaining the Numerical Discrepancy Between Japanese-style Gardens Outside Japan and Chinese-style Gardens Outside China," *Landscape Research* 32:2, (April 2007): 117–146.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid. Missingham's points are less explicit in his actual essay. The distillation of the above three reasons represent some intellectual work between the author and Professor Andrew Bernstein during the summer of 2011.

need.[116] A Chinese Garden, with its ornate woodwork, large pavilions, hand-laid tile, and other architectural components requires far more money, material, and expertise. People are not simply building a Ming-dynasty scholar-garden in their backyards.[117] Just as Japanese gardens were easier to build, they also appealed to a larger percentage of Americans for much of the 20th century. The clean, straight lines of Japanese art and architecture inspired modernist artistic tastes (propagated by Western designers like Frank Lloyd Wright), and these minimalist tastes found their ideal expression in the Japanese garden. Later in the 20th century, however, Chinese style, art and architecture received a new degree of appreciation as changing popular and artistic tastes in the West began to revalue the contributions and aesthetics of Chinese art and culture.

Taking account of the larger histories of US relations with Asia and changing artistic tastes helps to explain the more proximate history of the Lan Su Chinese Garden. By the mid 1980s, after witnessing the success of its Japanese garden, Portland was ready to consider a Chinese garden.[118] With a staggering number of Western cities now having a Japanese garden to their name, cities looked to the Chinese-style garden as the "next new thing," a new type of prestige ecosystem to showcase the sophistication of their metropolis.

*Urban Renewal: Nature to the City*

Outside of a city, Suzhou-style gardens make little sense. They are undeniably urban spaces, geared to make "money look natural" in a cosmopolitan context of scholar gentlemen and excess wealth. One of Lan Su's signature poetic allusions, printed in its official brochure and quoted in numerous newspaper articles about the garden, is by Suzhou garden painter Wen Zhengming of the Ming dynasty. It reads, "Most cherished in this world is a place without traffic; truly in the midst of a city, there can be mountains and forest."[119] However, were this couplet to be updated for Lan Su's identity as an agent of urban renewal, it could also read like this: "Most cherished in this world is a place without crime; truly in the midst of the city, there can be prosperity and peace."

Though it may not be made publicly explicit on the tours, the Lan Su Garden was always an agent of urban renewal. The Classical Chinese Garden Trust's official document, which outlines the specific objectives for the Chinese Garden in Portland, states that Lan Su will "facilitate the continued economic revitalization of Portland's downtown." The document continues by iterating that Lan Su will do this by "contribut[ing] to increased tourists and residents to downtown…. [and

[116] Witness the profusion of do-it-yourself Japanese garden design books on the market. (A simple Amazon.com search yields a number of titles.) A few titles, for example: Robert Ketchell's "Japanese Gardens in a Weekend" (2006); Motomi Oguchi and Joseph Calli's "Create Your Own Japanese Garden: A Practical Guide." (2007)

[117] For those ambitious enough to try, however, see: Gao Yonggang, *The Essential Guide to Creating a Chinese-style Garden : Design a Landscape for the Soul in Your Own Backyard*, English-language ed. (Pleasantville N.Y.: Reader's Digest Association, 2010).

[118] Interviews between the author and Cynthia Haruyama, Phyllis Oster, and others closely involved in the garden project. July and August 2011.

[119] See Official Visitors Brochure.

by] help[ing to] reduce drug activity and crime through increased security patrols and visitor volume."[120]

On the macro level, urban renewal has a very mixed (and controversial) legacy. It has also meant many different things to many different people. In this case, I am not referring to the 1950s movement that brought the interstate to the city, often at the expense of whole neighborhoods that were razed in the process. Rather, I refer to the more optimistic, more people and community focused efforts that sought to uplift forgotten, post-industrial parts of American cities in the late 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Seen in this light, the Chinese Garden is part of a concerted and well-intentioned effort to economically revitalize and reinvigorate the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood of downtown Portland, a neighborhood that has a long legacy of intensive urban use, pollution, and marginalized communities. Whether or not the Chinese Garden has been successful in its goals of revitalization is in some ways a political question, and depends on your interpretation of the history; however, most seem to agree that, as an agent of urban renewal, the Lan Su Garden has been at best a mixed success.[121]

The garden rode in on high hopes, though. An editorial published by the staff in the *Oregonian* in 2005—five years after the garden had opened—seemed quite convinced that the garden was at least having some success in the renewal effort. Boldly titled "Garden recharges Chinatown," the editorial stated, "[the garden] was intended to be more than just another lovely place… this Ming-dynasty garden was meant to give a rundown part of Old Town/Chinatown a new heart."[122] The article goes on to cite a "new confidence in the area's business owners" and how the Portland Development Commission and private investors have committed over $68 million to Old Town/Chinatown since 2000 when the garden opened.

Of course, no one thought the garden would be a silver bullet for the complicated problems of an economically depressed neighborhood. In an interview with the author, Phyllis Oster, the head fundraiser for the garden, noted that the sheer concentration of social service institutions in Old Town would in some way spell out its fate for some time to come. All of this talk of renewal raises a larger question of "who is this neighborhood really for?" Don't let the name of "Chinatown" fool you—this is a Chinese Garden in an *historic* Chinatown. Much of the Chinese-American population now lives east of 82nd Avenue in Portland, where many of the city's minority populations have either chosen to live or have been pushed out by high rents. Though explaining these demographic trends exceed the scope of my essay, when considering the Garden as a renewal project we should pay attention to who the garden is being built for, and why.

*Legacies of Use: From Parking Lot to Paradise*

[120] The Classical Chinese Garden Trust, "Organizational Information," 1999.
[121] Interviews with Phyllis Oster, Erik Nelson, Cynthia Haruyama. Summer 2011.
[122] Oregon Editorial Board, "Garden Recharges Chinatown - It's Too Early to Quantify the Effect, but the Classical Chinese Garden Is Inspiring Confidence," *The Oregonian*, September 24, 2005.

The Garden has been but one project in a suite of others, both public and private, to give Old Town/Chinatown a "new heart." What exactly was Chinatown's "old heart," then? Historically, Portland's "Chinatown" has shifted, originally being south of Burnside and on the banks of the river, later being relocated to north of Burnside in its current day location. Current day Chinatown has a legacy of intense urban, industrial use. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps and the Polk Directories for Portland show that the city block that Lan Su now occupies has been home to boarding houses, hotels, Chinese laundries, Missions, and industrial garages. From a swamp in the original 1850 Oregon Land Survey Map to a dense block of Japanese and Chinese lodging houses in 1901 to a property dominated by a gas company's garages in the 1950s to a derelict, barren parking lot by 1980, the city block at NW 3rd and Everett has been intensively used by a variety of people for a variety of purposes in Portland's history.[123] By considering the microcosm of that single square block, we can see the past 150 years of urban history in Portland. By the 1950s, when Portland's major gas company NW Natural owned much of the land in that section of Old Town, a new freeway was being built that bypassed downtown. The presence of the garage on a block that now had little else reveals how the age of auto-dependence and suburbanization had emptied out parts of Portland's urban core. By the late 1980s, when the Chinese Garden Society was looking for a suitable spot for its garden, the property at NW 3rd and Everett, with such an intensive history, was now simply a parking lot.

As an agent of urban renewal, Lan Su repurposed an underused parking lot in a post-industrial part of town where the actual people had long since left. If we imagine the recent history of that landscape though, we can see that Joni Mitchell got it wrong—we started with a parking lot, and now we've got a paradise. Lan Su, built on a sealed concrete platform, sits atop ground heavily polluted by benzene and other petrochemicals from its days as a NW Natural Garage. When NW Natural donated the land to the Garden, as part of the agreements of the 99-year, $1 lease, the Garden had to sign that they would never have an environmental audit done on the property.[124] A year after the garden opened, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) realizing that the garden property was not "closed" in their books (meaning, it had not received a passing environmental quality audit), pursued NW Natural to make the final steps to close the case. A soil sample from under the property would have been required. However, in a letter to the DEQ, Mike Hayward, an official for NW Natural, claimed that to do any addition excavation on the site could seriously damage the Chinese Garden.[125] Implicit in these letters is the fact that the Chinese Garden was used to *hide* a history of pollution that a major Portland energy company did not want to pay to clean up. Given how many industries and laundries and boarding houses that had occupied the property in the last century, it is unlikely that NW Natural even knew the extent to which the

[123] Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map - Portland, Oregon," 1889. Portland City Archives.
[124] Cynthia Haruyama, in discussion with the author, Portland, Oregon, July 2011.
[125] Mike Hayward (NW Natural Gas) to Robert Williams (UST Cleanup Specialist for the Oregon DEQ), Portland, Oregon, June 22, 2001, Chinese Gardens Box B/007127, Portland City Archives.

property was polluted. In this respect, Lan Su essentially floats above a legacy of urban use and contamination, a hovering paradise above a polluted parking lot.

In more fully investigating the conflicted landscape histories of these gardens, we can better see the ways that people and cities have used prestige ecosystems to tell a selective history of their place. A history of Lan Su is not complete without the letters from the DEQ, even though their story would never be told on tours or in advertisements. In competing for world-city status, Portland has chosen particular stories, scripted its gardens with certain prestige objects, while deselecting other more complicated legacies.

*Heterotopias: Undoing Binaries in the Space of a Garden*

In his essay *Of Other Spaces*, Michel Foucault considers the garden as a heterotopia: a space both real and imagined, a place of "otherness" and "betweeness." Considering the "Oriental" garden, he writes, "The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world."[126] The Lan Su Garden in particular exemplifies this characteristic by showcasing a number of powerful global/local, modern/premodern, nature/culture, and masculine/feminine connections through the stories its objects and artifacts tell. Like the stories of the lanterns and sand in the Japanese Garden, the Chinese Garden foregrounds certain signature stories in an effort to convince visitors that it is the most authentic urban garden outside of China. Also like the Japanese Garden, the Chinese Garden constructs authenticity through stories as a way to legitimate its product. Unlike the Japanese Garden, though, the standards for authenticity in a Chinese-style garden are significantly higher. Japanese Gardens are open to a freer type of translation; Suzhou-style gardens require very specific training and a high degree of skill and expertise to construct. In this attempt at authenticity, the Chinese Garden creates a heterotopia, a between place that reveals its betweenness through a variety of objects in the garden.

*Seismic Code and the Americans with Disabilities Act Translations: Material Histories*

One of the stories that the garden foregrounds is the tale of the 60 Chinese artisans from Suzhou coming over to Portland for a year to build Lan Su. Part of the Suzhou Institute of Landscape Design, these artisans stayed in Portland for most of 2000 working to construct the garden. In an effort to make this the best Chinese-style garden outside of China, the garden had to be painstakingly constructed, piece-by-piece, by *Chinese* men with *Chinese* materials and tools. All of the non-living material used in the garden (except the concrete) was hand-carved or collected in China and then shipped across the Pacific to be assembled on-site by the Chinese team. In this way, nearly every object in the garden has at least one story associated with it.[127]

---

[126] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," Trans. Jay Miskoweic, *Architecture-Movement-Continuité*, 1984.

[127] A documentary produced by Lan Su gives an excellent look into the construction of the garden, showing footage of the Chinese and American teams working to accommodate the everyday issues that come up on a construction site. See Raymond Olson, *The Creation of Portland's Classical Chinese Garden*, DVD, (Portland: Sacred Mountain Productions, 2010).

Chinese building knowledge would be called into question a number of times when the garden designers had to wrestle with Western seismic codes and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As an employee of the American architecture firm contracted to work with the Suzhou team wrote of the Chinese pavilions, "these essentially medieval structures do not meet modern requirements without serious modification."[128] In order for the wooden pillars that supported the heavy terra-cotta roofs of the pavilions to meet seismic code, they would have to be modified with expensive carbon-fiber rods. Raised marble thresholds that separated outside walkways from the interiors of buildings would have to be made removable to accommodate wheelchairs. Tang Rong Long, Suzhou's sister-city ambassador to Portland, wrote to me about the difficulties of the Lan Su construction site. He said, "[One of the more challenging parts was] the cultural difference and construction code. We in China did not have the strict code on handicapped pass etc., which created the issues on how to strike a proper balance between Chinese authenticity and US construction code."[129]

A number of compromises had to be made, all of which illustrate the garden's modern/premodern interface. Erik Nelson, one of the foreman for the American construction team, recalled in an email interview that working with the Chinese team was "always interesting… [it was sometimes] frustrating for some how slow it was to get clear on planning and scheduling, phasing, code issues (roof tile), sleeping on planks in rafters, wearing hard hats. [It was] organized chaos. But [it] felt like working on job site in China."[130] In creating the Chinese Garden, two different "locals" had to come in contact—the "job site in China" had to be brought to America, but also had to built to American standards. By considering the compromises that had to be made in the material landscape of the actual garden, we can see Lan Su as a mediator between the "modern" and the "premodern." The "medieval" (premodern) design of the pavilions and buildings had to be adjusted for the "modern" sensibilities of seismic and disabilities codes.

*Gendered Garden: The Male Chinese Scholar and the all-male Artisan Team*

It is significant to note that all the classic Suzhou gardens, including the major ones designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, are gardens built for a class of scholar-gentlemen. These gardens have always been for an elite, *male* class. Indeed, there are scant references to any women in these gardens of Suzhou in all of the Chinese literature and art that I have encountered, including all that Craig Clunas used for his book on garden culture in Ming China.[131] In Ming China, the Lan Su Garden official brochure states, "the study was a refuge, a place of comfort where

[128] Robertson, Merryman and Barnes Architects, "Comparison of Portland Chinese Garden to Other North American Chinese Gardens," 1998, Chinese Gardens Box B/007127, Folder "Other Gardens." Portland City Archives.
[129] Tang Rong Long (汤荣龙), in discussion with the author, email, July 23, 2011.
[130] Erik Nelson, in discussion with the author, email, August 4, 2011.
[131] Clunas, *Fruitful Sites.*

the *men* of the family wrote poetry, practiced calligraphy, read, admired collection, entertained fellow scholars and took naps."[132]

Though the Lan Su Garden is not a male space in the same way that it would have been in Ming-dynasty Suzhou, it was still built exclusively by Chinese men, and scripted with the same male cultural cues that one would find in Suzhou. In Ming China, the male bureaucrat built a garden to showcase his wealth, but also to serve as a scholarly retreat. Chinese bureaucrat culture is a deeply male one, and one that required quite a bit of education. Significantly, all of the artisans building the Lan Su Garden were men. In Lan Su, one can see the study where the gentleman scholar would write poetry, the court where he would find quiet inspiration, the entrance hall where he would entertain guests. The maleness of the garden is foregrounded in the brochures the garden produces, the tours it gives, and the historical cues that it is steeped in.

Recall the letter that a frustrated Rose Hoyt wrote to the all-male board of the Lewis & Clark Exposition in 1904, petitioning for the inclusion of at least one "Lady Manager" on the board. Women still didn't have the right to vote then (that wouldn't come until 1919, with the 14th amendment), and the image of the slender, dignified "Western Woman" contained women to a servile, domestic and apolitical sphere. By the time the Chinese Garden Society assembled a board in the early 1990s though, the US had already experienced second wave feminism, many women were in political office, and Portland had a female mayor. Interestingly, in a tidy sort of reversal of the gentleman's club of the L&C Expo, the Chinese Garden Society Board made an explicit "commitment to diversity," claiming that 40% of the board were women and 40% were also ethnic minorities. Additionally, after citing the importance of having women and minorities in on the decision making process, the board estimated that approximately 60% of visitors to the garden would either be women or minorities, or both.[133]

In contrast to the Japanese Garden, a space that was particularly feminized, and to the Rose garden, which displays a curious duality of the masculine scientist and the feminine beautifier, the Chinese Garden is a particularly male space, gendered both by the more distant history of men in the Ming dynasty but also by the more proximate history of the group of 60 artisan men that created it. The Suzhou-style garden has been significantly repurposed from its historical iteration as a scholar's retreat into the present day public space; however, its historical legacy is still distinctly male, and the sense of Chinese culture that it imparts to its visitors is a decidedly male version.

The granular level of the Society Board helps to complicate the distinctly masculine identity that a Suzhou-style garden carries. The make-up of the board with women and minority members is a testament to the composite North-American-ness of the garden itself. The design principles and scholarly allusions may represent a male China of five centuries ago, but the actual people that made the garden a reality, that visit it now, that manage it daily, all make this male "scholar's garden" much less categorically male, and much more something that is "between."

---

[132] Official Brochure: Lan Su Chinese Garden, Portland, Or, 2011. My emphasis.
[133] The Classical Chinese Garden Trust, "Organizational Information," 1999.

*Lake Zither, Borrowed Views, and the story of the Lan Su's Prestige Plants*

In the gardens of Suzhou, the Chinese prize the emerald color of the lake. This nice green tone is the product of algae and other organisms that grow and live in an unfiltered lake. Lake Zither, the large lake in the center of Lan Su, is also perfectly green, but its greenness is a *calculated* one, not organic like Suzhou's. Since Lake Zither is connected to the modern Portland plumbing system, the water is clear and clean. In order to get that green patina on the rocks and in the water, the filters on the lake filtration system had to be precisely set to allow for a certain amount of organic growth. While someone may look into the serene green lake and think "nature," nothing in the garden is so simple or pure, and the challenge of analyzing a place like the Lan Su Chinese Garden is to sort out how every bit of it is some sort of hybrid object.[134]

One of the more notable Chinese design principles that garden tours include is the idea of a "borrowed view." (The Japanese have a similar concept in their gardens as well, though it was originally a Chinese notion.) A borrowed view integrates something picturesque, scenic, or otherwise significant *outside of* the garden with the experience of what is inside already. Traditionally, Suzhou gardens have borrowed views of neighboring mountain ranges, tall pagodas, or of a significant tree; however, in a modern American city, skyscrapers dominate the outside surroundings, and the garden designers simply could not ignore them. Nor did they want to. Liu Dunzhen, a contemporary scholar of architecture and gardens in China, writes, "The most important place in a garden is often where views are obtained from all sides." At the Moon Locking Pavilion in the center of the garden next to Lake Zither, the garden "borrows" a view of the skyscraper known as "Big Pink" (the US Bancorp Tower), along with other buildings in all directions. One might imagine that the Chinese designers of the garden would dislike the sheer, modern skyscrapers surrounding the garden; however, their reaction was quite the contrary. Kuang Zhen Yan, Lan Su's seasoned head designer from the Suzhou Institute of Landscape and Architecture Design, claimed that he really "like[d] the distant bank tower… for its crisp modernity and the dynamic contrast between it and the garden."[135] Framed by the pillars of the pavilion, this borrowed view highlights the modern/premodern interface.

While the Garden trumpets the story of the authentic Chinese materials and Chinese labor that went into the construction of the garden, the plants that fill in the rest of the garden have an entirely different—and much less *Chinese*—story. When the garden designers went looking for Chinese plant varietals for Lan Su, they didn't have to import a single one from China: all of the ostensibly "Chinese" plants had already been growing here in Oregon for some time.[136] Though some of the over one hundred species of plants in the garden likely came directly across the Pacific to the West Coast at some recent point in time, many of the originally-Chinese plants arrived in

[134] The Oregonian, "Mysterious Leak Not Just Drip in Bucket — Despite Efforts to Stem the Water Loss, 37,000 Gallons a Day Vanish from the Artificial Lake at Chinese Garden," *The Oregonian*, 2003.
[135] Randy Gragg, "Outside the Garden Walls," *The Oregonian*, December 10, 2000, sec. Arts and Living.
[136] Kym Pokorny, "A Many-splendored Thing," *The Oregonian (Portland, OR)*, September 7, 2000. Sunrise edition.

Oregon through a more complex, historical prestige trade in botanicals that stretches all the way back to the imperial collection expeditions of 16th and 17th century Europe. The prized Chinese plant varieties arrived in New York and other East Coast harbors in the 18th and 19th centuries, gradually making their way across the country to finally settle in Oregon's very hospitable climate and be tended by a well-established horticultural tradition.[137] When the garden designers needed black pines, they found them on the side of Oregon Highway 26. When they needed rarer plants, nurseries across the state came forward and donated some of their most valuable specimens. As Lan Su horticulturalist Glin Varco told me, Lan Su is in some ways like a botanical garden collection: it contains some of the best and most prized Chinese plants collected from all over the state.[138] These special plants, beautiful and elegant in their own right, yet also surely a legacy of European and American empire, stock the garden with layers of prestige. In the process, these plants also confound categorical senses of "global" and "local," "nature" and "culture" by illuminating stories of connection between empires and nations, between plants and the people who cultivate them.

Every bit of Lan Su is dense with potential meanings. Whether the stories are foregrounded, via, for instance, through commemorative plaques in certain courtyards that acknowledge prestigious benefactors,[139] or are much more backstaged, like the story of Lake Zither or the imperial history of Lan Su's plants, each of these stories illustrate the often complicated histories that went into making a prestige ecosystem as complete as Lan Su. By studying these stories, my hope is that we can begin to transcend the conceptual binaries that ideas like "authentic," "modern," and "natural" all create. A way of seeing that acknowledges polarities rather that fixed binaries not only enriches the experience of gardens like Lan Su, but also encourages a more careful telling of our own history.

[137] Peter Valder, *The Garden Plants of China*, (Portland, Or.: Timber Press, 1999), 63-69.
[138] Glin Varco, in discussion with the author, Portland, Oregon, August 2011.
[139] For example, in the Fragrance Courtyard, the Garden acknowledges the Jordan and Mina Schnitzer Foundation for their donation. It is significant to note that a member of the Schnitzer family, as close to "old money" as Portland gets, has had a role in *all three* of these gardens.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Story of an Aspiring World-City

Through the histories of these small prestige ecosystems, a piece of the larger story of 20th century Portland emerges. For an aspirational world-city, specialty gardens have been but one of many ways of competing for status. For the interested observer, the historian, or the reader of this essay, however, the histories of these gardens tell something more. These stories of the Rose Garden, the Japanese Garden and the Chinese Garden help give shape to the larger ideologies and concerns of the past. By using these three gardens from different eras of Portland's history, we can construct a larger history of Portland's changing position in the world order, of Americans' perceptions of "nature" in urban spaces, and of Americans' shifting values surrounding "authenticity" in landscapes of tourism and cosmopolitan consumption. From a relatively isolated frontier outpost with very few global connections or markets for its goods in 1900 to a high-tech city home to large multinationals with strong international connections in 2012, a history of Portland's gardens helps to particularize certain aspects of the changes that have remade the city in the past one hundred years. In a city that mainly sold wheat and timber and fish in 1900, rose boosters created the city's first prestige good, helping to put Portland on a global commercial map. Later, as a leader in sister-city relationships, Portland championed its sister-city connections with Japan and China, relationships that were instrumental for the development of the Japanese and Chinese gardens. Stories from these gardens help to make sense of Portland's worldly aspirations throughout the last century, and provide rich entrance points for trying to understand the complicated history of America (and even the world) in the modern era.

*Practices and Performances in the Gardens*

In his essay, *Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism* anthropologist Edward Bruner investigates a curious "Lincoln Village" in Illinois. The place bills itself as an "authentic reproduction" of the village that Abraham Lincoln spent his formative years living and working in. Bruner finds this term of "authentic reproduction" strange, even a bit of a paradox, and in his essay he explores how Americans have made possible such an idea of "authentic reproduction." Writing in 1994, Bruner was reacting to a strong intellectual current of postmoderism that sought to reduce American tourism experience to a vague "hyperreality."[140] Bruner challenged this trend, and stated that he would like to find a more nuanced way of interpreting American's relationship with historical authenticity, one that was rooted in "practice and performance" rather than "grand theorizing about the postmodern condition." His aim was to "develop a view of historical reproduction based on a constructivist position that sees all culture as

[140] A "hyperreality" is an America saturated in images where the *real* ceases to matter and the simulacra, the imitation, the image becomes the new reality.

continually invented and reinvented; and to argue for transcending such dichotomies as original/copy and authentic/inauthentic."[141]

Though Bruner's attempt at a "post-postmodernist" approach (if one could call it such) to authenticity is promising, discourses around things like "nature" and "authenticity" still inform the present-day garden visitor, and any garden historian should take this into account. The Chinese and Japanese Garden's claims of authenticity, and the visitors' interest in such claims, are *responses* to greater American values of care and greater American concerns about the inevitability of change.[142] The rubric of authenticity has been deployed in a variety of contexts in American history, from stories in specialty gardens to concerns about changes in historic neighborhoods. Concerns over authenticity have taken similar forms, regardless of where or in what circumstances they have been expressed. In Sharon Zukin's *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, a monograph on gentrification in New York City, she writes:

> Though we think authenticity refers to a neighborhood's innate qualities, it really expresses our own anxieties about how places change. The idea of authenticity is important because it connects our individual yearning to root ourselves in a singular time and place to a cosmic grasp of larger social forces that remake our world from many small and often invisible actions. To speak of authenticity means that we are aware of a changing technology of power that erodes one landscape of meaning and feeling and replaces it with another.[143]

In this regard, some stories of authenticity from the Japanese and Chinese gardens are meant to provide the visitor a reprieve from "a changing technology of power" that disturbs our sense of what our cities and spaces should look like. These gardens do not pretend to be unchanging—in fact, the stories given on tours often highlight significant aspects of compromise between historical fidelity and modern sensibility. Instead, the careful construction of these gardens, and the networks of prestige they contain, are small attempts to confer some sort of enduring, almost timeless, quality of status or legitimacy to a specific place in time. But just like neighborhoods in New York City, gardens are built for and by people of a certain historical moment, and are frequently remade as time goes on to suit the needs of successive generations. As such, authenticity is a part of a *dialectic process* where individual stories of Japanese lanterns or Chinese workers from each garden can be seen as particular responses to a larger cultural rubric of value. In historic neighborhoods and prestige ecosystems alike, authenticity is constantly being constructed and reconstructed as a framework to contain our values and anxieties about place.

If I continue to study gardens in the future, I would like to more fully consider Bruner's idea of *practices and performances* in the space of prestige ecosystems or Zukin's ideas about

---

[141] Edward Bruner, "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism," *American Anthropologist* 96:2, New Series (June 1, 1994): 397-8.

[142] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City : the Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[143] Ibid. 220. Thank you to fellow Environmental Studies peer, and friend, Tara Brown for suggesting this section of Zukin's book to me.

individual responses to a "changing technology of power" in our landscapes.[144] Given that few visitors to the Rose Garden today may notice the scientific scripting from the original 1917 garden design, how should a scholar interpret their experiences today? Can focusing on the what-people-do in gardens rather than the what-people-think about gardens give more productive insight into what these gardens mean for the people that visit them? Since this essay has focused primarily on the material and ideological histories of each garden in larger contexts, with short and selective attention to the meaning of each garden to the visitors of 2012, an intellectual direction focused on *practices* seems appropriate and promising, and I hope that my essay can inform a future effort toward this end.

*A Rose is a rose is a rose—or is it?*

Which brings me finally to consider Gertrude Stein's famous tautology: "a rose is a rose is a rose." In light of this essay, I'm not so sure. I reference Stein's quote to show that when we look at gardens, we don't necessarily see the histories and ideologies that helped to create them. Unlike the rose Stein is talking about, the rose of romantic poetry with its associations and symbolism, the rose I am thinking of is something a little different. A rose really isn't just a rose—for Portlanders, the rose was a way to civilize the frontier, to mark prestige in a world-system, to make new markets for new consumer goods, to beautify a city.

Following this logic, the Japanese Garden is not just a Japanese Garden; it is a product of historical and current US-American relations, it is an expression of American perceptions of Japan and of Japanese relation to "nature," it is a place to condense a network of powerful connections and capital into single objects to put on display.

And going one step further, the Chinese Garden is not just a Chinese Garden; it is an agent of urban renewal, a statement of faith in a world-order based on sister-cities, a place that tells stories about Chinese workers, Chinese ideas about nature, and complicates American ideas about what a "garden" can be.

Finally—to unfairly abuse Stein's idea once more—not all gardens are just gardens: these are "prestige ecosystems," a term I've really been using to capture the many things gardens have meant for cities and people. What I hope to suggest with this research is that gardens, especially these ones, are always more than they appear to be.

144 In fact, there is already a whole volume that attempts to do just this. See Michel Conan, ed, *Performance and Appropriation : Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007).

Bibliography


Abbott, Carl. "Starting a Second Century: The Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition, 1905: Asia at the Fair." *The Oregon History Project*, 2004. http://www.ohs.org/education/oregonhistory/narratives/subtopic.cfm?subtopic_ID=340.

———. *The Great Extravaganza : Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition*. Portland Or.: Oregon Historical Society, 1981.

Baer, Charold. "The Realm of Rosaria." *American Rose Annual* (December 2006): 24–29.

Baker, George L. "Portland's Choice as Official Rose City Is of Huge Significance." *The Oregonian*. Portland, Or., February 25, 1917.

Bechtel, Edwin. "Our Rose Varieties and Their Malmaison Heritage." *The OGR and Shrub Journal* 7, no. 1 (2010). http://www.ars.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/OGR-Shrub-Journal-1-2010.pdf.

Brown, Kendall. "Fair Japan: Japanese Gardens at American World's Fairs, 1876-1940." *Sitelines* 4, no. Fall 2008 - Japanese Gardens (2008): 13 – 16.

———. *Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1999.

Bruner, Edward M. "Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism." *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2. New Series (June 1, 1994): 397–415.

Carroll, Peter J. *Between Heaven and Modernity: Reconstructing Suzhou, 1895-1937*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Charles Wu. *Listen to the Fragrance: Literary Inscriptions in Lan Su Yuan*. Portland, Oregon: Portland Classical Chinese Garden, 2006.

"Chinese Garden Photography Membership Page", n.d. http://www.lansugarden.org/members_partners/photography_membership.

Conan, Michel, ed. *Performance and Appropriation : Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007.

Craig Clunas. *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Cremer, Rolf, Anne Bruin, and Ann Dupuis. "International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global-Local Divide." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 60, no. 1 (January 2001): 377–401.

Currey, Jesse. "National Rose Test Garden (Brochure)". Bureau of Parks, Portland, n.d. Portland City Archives.

Dana, Marshall. "Works Miracles in Plant Kingdom." *The Oregonian*, June 20, 1915.

David Cooper. *A Philosophy of Gardens*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2006.

DeWitt, Harry. "Portland Cannot Supply Demand for Rose Bushes: Flowers for Which This City Is Famed Are Grown in Fields Like Corn, but Enormous Shortage Develops in Markets and Local Growers and Others See Danger in Losing Essential Industry." *The Oregonian*. Portland, September 20, 1920.

Drayton, Richard. *Nature's Government : Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Edmunds, Fred. "Letter from Fred Edmunds to Mr. Hansen of KGW Radio Regarding Rose Pilgrims and Dignitaries", c 1942. Oregon Historical Society.

Elizabeth Hyde. *Cultivated Power : Flowers, Culture, and Politics in the Reign of Louis XIV*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Englehart, Philip. "Letter from Philip Englehart in Tokyo to Board of Directors, Japanese Garden Society", November 11, 1963. Folder: Japanese Garden Society 1963, 1/17, #0279-01. Portland City Archives.

Findlay, John. *Magic Lands : Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Translated by Jay Miskoweic. *Architecture-Movement-Continuité* (1984). http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0300-7162%281986%2916%3A1%3C22%3AOOS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B&

Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Standford University Press, 1990.

Gragg, Randy. "Outside the Garden Walls." *The Oregonian*. Portland, Or., December 10, 2000, sec. Arts and Living.
Grant, William A. "Padre of the Roses." *Old Garden Roses and Beyond*, 1999. http://paulbardenroses.com/padre.html.
Harrison, Robert Pogue. *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
Hayward, Mike. "Correspondence Between Robert Williams, UST Cleanup Specialist for the Oregon DEQ and Mike Hayward of NW Natural Gas", June 22, 2001. Chinese Gardens Box B/007127. Portland City Archives.
Hegstrom, Anna. "How the Rose Came to Oregon: A Saga of the Pioneer Period." *The Oregonian*. Portland, 1952.
Hoffman, Jane. *The Neighborhood in the Park: A History of Arlington Heights*. Portland, Oregon, May 7, 1979. Portland City Archives.
Horton, Judy M. "California Japanese-Style Gardens: Tradition and Practice." *Pacific Horticulture*, no. Jul/Aug/Sep 2007 (2007): 22–29.
Hoyt, Rose. "Letter Regarding 'a Little Helping Hand,' to Mr. Henry Goode", January 4, 1905. Oregon Historical Society.
———. "Letter Regarding the All-male 'Board,' to Mr. Henry Goode", August 14, 1904. Oregon Historical Society.
———. "Letter to President of L&C Expo: Regarding Thurman Street", September 3, 1903. Lewis & Clark Centennial Exposition (1905, Portland, Or.), MSS 1609, 10/9. Oregon Historical Society.
———. "Roses Cannot Be Hurried: Letter to Henry Goode, President of L&C Expo", September 24, 1903. Oregon Historical Society.
"Japanese Garden Photography: Featured Gallery", n.d. http://japanesegarden.com/visiting/photography/gallery/.
Japanese Garden Society. "'Gardens of Japan': Recorded Script for KOIN Radio", May 23, 1964. MSS 1859. Oregon Historical Society.
Ji Cheng. *The Craft of Gardens*. Translated by Alison Hardie. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
Kuitert, Wybe. "Japonaiserie in London and the Hague: A History of the Japanese Gardens at Shepherd's Bush (1910) and Clingendael (c. 1915)." *Garden History* 30, no. 2 (December 1, 2002): 221–238.
———. *Themes in the History of Japanese Garden Art*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.
"Landscaping America: Beyond the Japanese Garden - Timeline." *DiscoverNikkei.org*, n.d. http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/nikkeialbum/albums/142/.
Laskin, David. "Visiting Asia Without Crossing the Pacific in Portland, Ore." *The Bulletin, New York Times*. New York, December 17, 2006, sec. Travel.
Marmé, Michael. *Suzhou: Where the Gods of All the Provinces Converge*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.
Miller, Mara. *The Garden as an Art*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.
Missingham, Gregory Kenneth. "Japan 10±, China 1: A First Attempt at Explaining the Numerical Discrepancy Between Japanese-style Gardens Outside Japan and Chinese-style Gardens Outside China." *Landscape Research* 32, no. 2 (April 2007): 117–146.
Nance, Florence Rush. *Soochow: The Garden City*. Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1936.
Olson, Raymond. *The Creation of Portland's Classical Chinese Garden*. DVD. Portland: Sacred Mountain Productions, 2010.
Oregon Editorial Board. "Garden Recharges Chinatown - It's Too Early to Quantify the Effect, but the Classical Chinese Garden Is Inspiring Confidence." *The Oregonian*. Portland, September 24, 2005.
Oregon Historical Society. "Jesse A. Currey Papers MSS 2803". Portland, 1922 1909. Oregon Historical Society.
*Parallel Worlds: Art of the Ainu of Hokkaido and Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest*, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzFmg87WnDc&feature=youtube_gdata_player.
PdxJapaneseGarden. *Portland Japanese Garden*, 2010. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5CMOgCAYM8&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

Portland City Archives. “City Flower: ‘The City of Roses’”, n.d. http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?a=284494&c=51811.
Portland Rose Society. “Bulletin from International Rose Test Garden”, 1935. Oregon Historical Society.
———. “Portland Rose Society: Past Presidents”, February 21, 2012. http://www.portlandrosesociety.org/past_presidents.html.
Portland-Suzhou Sister City Association. “Recent History”, 2012. http://www.portlandsuzhou.org/history/.
Pyle, Robert. “Letter from Robert Pyle to J.A. Currey Regarding ‘Portland Being Caught Asleep’”, June 19, 1916. Oregon Historical Society.
———. “Letter from Robert Pyle to Jesse Currey Regarding Portland as Official Rose-test Site”, July 5, 1916. Oregon Historical Society.
Reid, Robert Allan. *The Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition Illustrated*. Portland, OR: Robert Reid, 1905.
Robbins, William G. *Oregon: This Storied Land*. Portland: Oregon Historical Society Press, 2005.
Robertson, Merryman and Barnes Architects. “Comparison of Portland Chinese Garden to Other North American Chinese Gardens”, November 19, 1998. Chinese Gardens Box B/007127, Folder “Other Gardens.” Portland City Archives.
Robinson, William C. “A History of the Japanese Garden: Highlights of the Events from the Twenty Five Year Report, 1962-1988.”, 1989. MSS 1859. Oregon Historical Society.
Ross, Stephanie. *What Gardens Mean*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
Rothman, Hal. *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the 20th Century American West*. Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas Press, 1998.
Rydell, Robert. *All the World’s a Fair : Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
Saito, Yuriko. “The Japanese Appreciation of Nature.” *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 25, no. 3 (June 20, 1985): 239–251.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. “Sanborn Fire Insurance Map - Portland, Oregon.”, 1901, 1909, 1924, 1950 1889.
Sassen, Sakia. “The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier.” *American Studies* 41, no. 2–3 (Summer/Fall 2000).
Suzhou Foreign Affairs Office, and PSSCA. “Portland - Suzhou Sister City Association History”, 2001.
Sylvester, John. “Letter from John Sylvester of the American Consulate in Sapporo, Japan to Mayor Terry Schrunk”, December 18, 1963. Folder: Japanese Garden Society 1963, 1/17. Portland City Archives.
The Classical Chinese Garden Trust. “Organizational Information”, 1999.
The Japan Times. “Development Scoring: City of Sapporo, Hokkaido’s Beautiful Capital.” *The Japan Times*, June 4, 1962.
The Japanese Garden Society. *The Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon*. Portland: The Japanese Garden Society, 1973.
The Oregon Sunday Journal. “Father Schoener Makes Progress in New Gardens.” *The Oregon Sunday Journal*. Portland, May 21, 1916.
The Oregonian. “Mysterious Leak Not Just Drip in Bucket — Despite Efforts to Stem the Water Loss, 37,000 Gallons a Day Vanish from the Artificial”, n.d.
Valder, Peter. *The Garden Plants of China*. Portland, Or.: Timber Press, 1999.
———. *The Garden Plants of China*. Portland Or.: Timber Press, 1999.
Walker, Brett. *The Lost Wolves of Japan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005.
———. *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011.
Wong, Marie Rose. *Sweet Cakes, Long Journey: The Chinatowns of Portland, Oregon*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.
Yonggang, Gao. *The Essential Guide to Creating a Chinese-style Garden : Design a Landscape for the Soul in Your Own Backyard*. English-language ed. Pleasantville N.Y.: Reader’s Digest Association, 2010.
Zukin, Sharon. *Naked City : the Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.