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Middlegate Japanese Gardens: preservation, private property and public memory

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MIDDLEGATE JAPANESE GARDENS: PRESERVATION, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND
PUBLIC MEMORY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Master of Arts

in

The School of Landscape Architecture

by

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B.S., University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg 1964
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For
Kristin McGarrity Pearson
1980-2001

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a preliminary history of Middlegate Japanese Gardens and to make public their significance as an example of the landscape architecture that was typical during the Country Place Era, and their significance within the community of Pass Christian and the City of New Orleans. As it now stands the story of Middlegate Japanese Gardens is not known in its own neighborhood.

Between 1923 and 1929 New Orleans residents Rudolf Hecht and Lynne Watkins Hecht developed Middlegate Japanese Gardens at their summer home in Pass Christian, Mississippi. The Hechts built Middlegate Japanese gardens to perpetuate their pleasant memories of their travels in Japan. In 1979 the Middlegate residence and gardens were listed as contributing element, number 88 in the Scenic Drive Historic District and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since 1923 when the Hechts established them, Middlegate Japanese Gardens have been private, residential gardens. Although the heirs subdivided the property in 1962, the family still owns the gardens.

Middlegate Japanese Gardens are furnished with Japanese antiquities that the Hechts collected in Japan between 1900 and 1929. Little documentation exists for the garden objects. Three garden statues were listed in the estate of Dorothy Cooper, a bronze Buddha and two bronze warriors. In his book, *Around the Face of the Globe*, Rudolf Hecht gave the origin of the Buddha as the Gardens of the Daibutsu in Kamakura Japan. One of the highlights of the garden is a large concrete swimming pool designed to look like a natural lagoon. A waterfall fed by an artesian well fills the pool and water overflows into a little river that meanders through the garden. Teahouses sit on top of hills that were created by fill from the pool.

New Orleans Architect Rathbone DeBuys, designed the Japanese style buildings in the

garden. Mississippi craftsmen used local building methods and local materials to construct the teahouses, guest house and pool house. Blue barrel tiles that cover the roofs of the Japanese style buildings are designed with an end cap for an embossed image.

There is no documentation of the gardens' history. No archives exist for Rudolf or Lynne Watkins Hecht. The thesis details the methods used to find existing information on Middlegate Japanese Gardens and its founders Rudolf Hecht and Lynne Watkins Hecht.

It places the gardens in the context of the national movements in landscape architecture, showing how they were influenced by the ideas of their time.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the historical significance of the Middlegate Japanese Gardens built in the early twentieth century in Pass Christian, Mississippi, by a wealthy New Orleans entrepreneur and traveler. The gardens attracted national attention and served as a place of display and celebration for the social elites of the time. Since the damage caused by Hurricane Camille in 1969, the gardens have been in decay and are no longer available to the public as the cultural museum and celebratory station of the past.

This work is a descriptive history designed to provide base-level data where little has existed and to position the gardens as significant historical artifact deserving of preservation. It is an attempt to identify their significance as an “isolated authenticity” and to determine their story and how it fits into the cultural milieu of the region. As argued by Roger Kennedy in *Preservation of What for Whom*, “Without a story nobody cares. Without a story, there will be no places kept” (Kennedy, 1999,25).

Middlegate Japanese Gardens as Tourist Destination

From its completion in the 1920s until its demise by Hurricane Camille in 1969, the garden was a major regional and national attraction. It was a regular feature on the Mississippi Gulf Coast Council of Garden Clubs’ annual spring garden tour (Figure 1). The private estate participated in the Pass Christian annual pilgrimage and pageant (*Pageant*). Throughout the year, the gardens were busy with family, civic and professional affairs. Children were often guests in the garden. On April 4, 1930, the *Daily Herald* reported a visit by two fifth grade classes: “Mr.

and Mrs. Dambrink, caretakers at the garden, showed the children through the garden and Mrs. Dambrink gave a talk to them explaining the plants, the figures of the gods,



Figure 1. Promotional brochure of the Pass Christian Garden Club.
Source: Pass Christian Garden Club, 1929.

the pagodas and calling attention to the Japanese cherry trees now in bloom” (*Daily Herald* 1930, 6A).

During those years the gardens were a popular setting for large and small social gatherings. Middlegate Japanese Gardens received visitors from the neighborhood as well as guests and dignitaries from all over the world. Travel Area newspapers gave accounts of festivities held at the gardens, including the spring pageant, parties for debutantes, and

receptions. On October 31, 1953, the *Tarpon Beacon* reported that “almost 500 people attended a luncheon at the R. S. Hecht Pass Christian West Beach home on October 18, as the Louisiana Purchase celebration was brought to a close”(*Tarpon Beacon* 1923, 8). *Country Life*, in March 1935, gave the gardens a national audience: “The Japanese gardens of Mr. and Mrs. Rudolf Hecht at Pass Christian, Mississippi are one of the most unique in America. Developed by the owners themselves in order to perpetuate the memory of many joyous trips to the Orient, they abound in beautiful vistas” (*Country Life* 1935, 20-25). Although private, the Hecht’s gardens were a popular tourist destination on the Mississippi Gulf Coast as well. *Mississippi the WPA Guide to the Magnolia State* in 1938 listed Middlegate Japanese Gardens as a popular attraction on the Coast. Gulf Coast Printing Company produced *Middlegate Japanese Gardens*, an undated fully illustrated promotional brochure (Figure 2). The *Gulf Coast of Mississippi* in describing coastal points of interest, designated “Middlegate Japanese Gardens, finest of their kind in America” (Oliver 1941).

Middlegate Gardens were identified as a point of interest Lu Morehead highlighted local points of interest in the *Old Spanish Trail; Along the Mississippi Gulf Coast* in 1958 and told readers that were open by appointment and that they would find there “one of the largest Buddha statues in the world”(Hartley 1959). A cartoon-captioned map, “Mississippi Gulf Coast Year-A-Round Vacationland,” listed tourist attractions, claims to fame and historical trivia in the centerfold of *Down South*, in August of 1959 (Figure 3). That map listed Middlegate Oriental Gardens as one the sights to see. “The great bronze Buddha, one of the largest in America, in the private, exotic Middlegate Japanese Gardens of Pass Christian, open only on rare occasions,” described the accompanying photograph in the May-June issue of 1960 *Down South*.

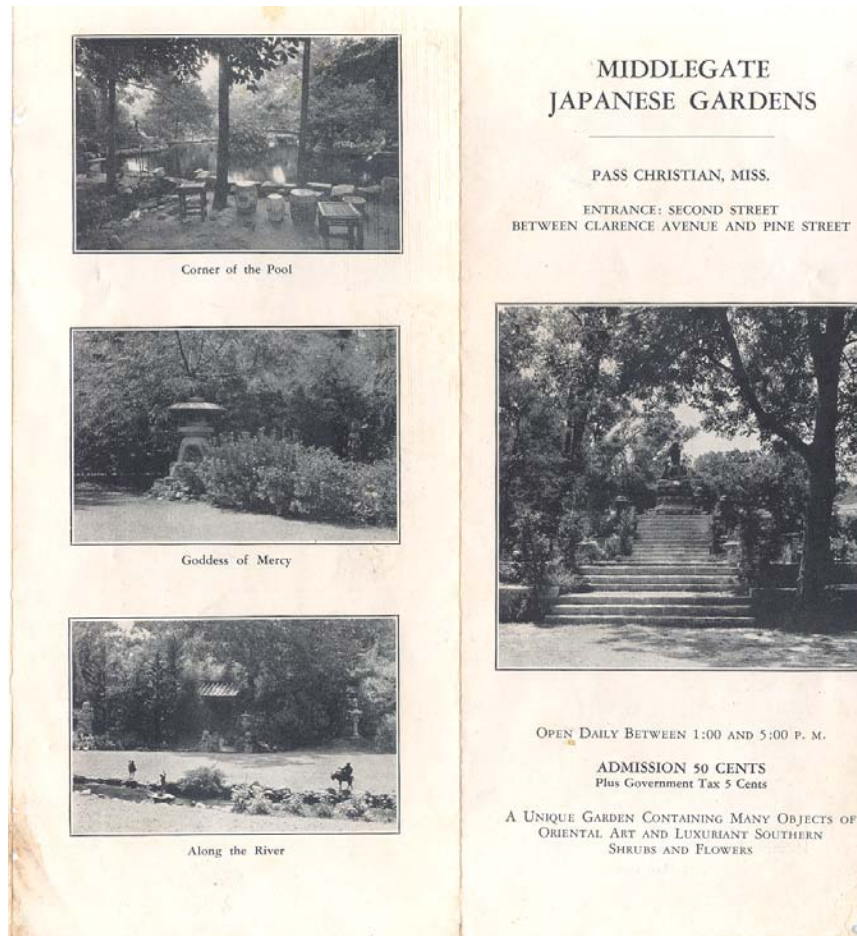


Figure 2. Promotional brochure. Source: Gulf Coast Printing Company.

Since 1969, however, the Middlegate Japanese Gardens' landscape has changed, the gardens have faded from public view, and are now vanishing from public memory.

While Middlegate Japanese Gardens are still classed as a significant property within the Scenic Drive Historic District in Pass Christian, the gardens have ceased to be the “unique gardens containing many objects of oriental art and luxuriant southern shrubs and flowers” depicted in its promotional brochure (Oliver 1941). While the physical gardens are

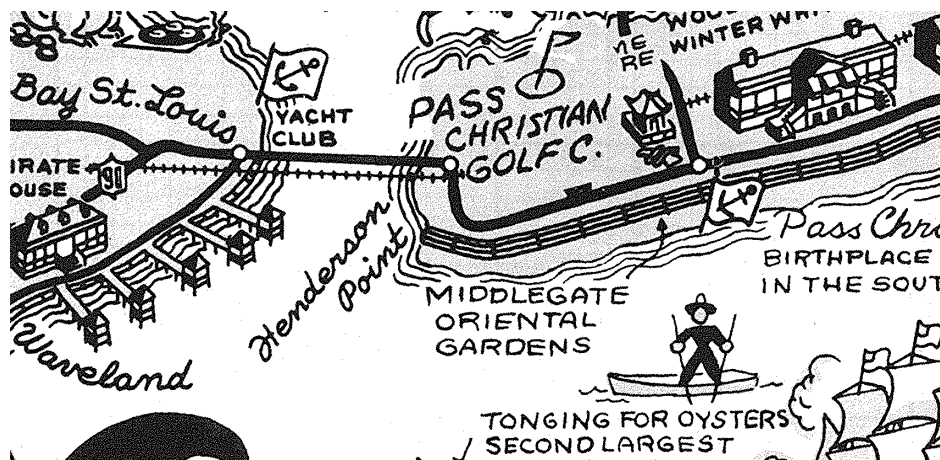
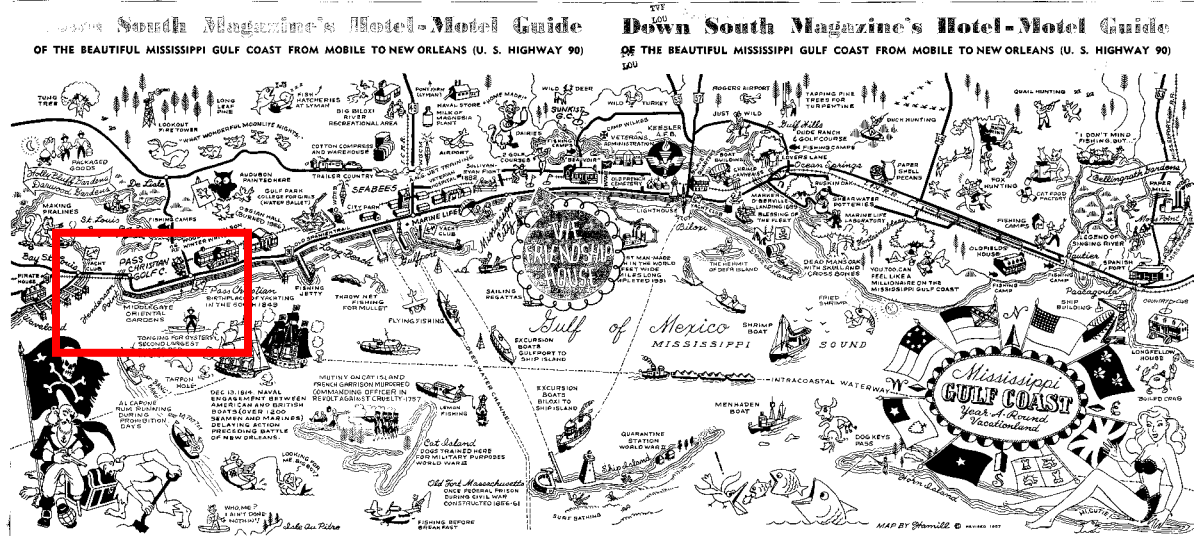


Figure 3. Hotel motel guide to the Gulf Coast. Source: *Down South*, 1959.

decaying, the history of Middlegate Japanese Gardens as a significant community resource is also fast disappearing.

Along with the gardens' decline is the dwindling knowledge of its importance within the surrounding community. Since the gardens are not visible from the street, many coast residents are not aware of their existence. Furthermore, since the gardens have not been featured on the

spring garden tour since Hurricane Camille in 1969, the public has no opportunity to visit.

School children no longer have an opportunity to see how a foreign culture can be interpreted in a local landscape. Although the gardens are still a gathering place for the immediate family and friends, the physical gardens are disappearing. This research can possibly contribute to renewed interest in the historic gardens and emergent efforts to restore them to their original glory for, as Halprin argues:

The best pieces of landscape art and design are important not just as contemporary places to live in but as part of our history and culture. We travel to iconic places all over the globe and use them as touchstones for our culture and our memories. The difficult question is not whether we should protect and preserve the best of these designs, but which ones are the best. What is worth preserving and why! Not everything from the immediate past is worthy of preservation. How do we decide which works deserve to be preserved in our cultural landscape? (Halprin 2004, 1).

Why Middlegate Gardens?

My interest in Middlegate Gardens has been lifelong. At the age of twelve I first passed through the bamboo gate and under the blue tile roof leading into Middlegate (Figure 4). Like Alice stepping through the looking glass I passed from the small gulf coast town of Pass Christian in the nineteen fifties into a Japanese dreamscape that was unlike anything I had ever imagined. With the property facing the beach road of Pass Christian (Highway 90), I could still hear the traffic and smell the sea breeze. Though seagulls called above all that was familiar in my world melted away. I had not traveled. The center of my universe was the Mississippi Gulf Coast and my travels limited to the Louisiana and Mississippi waters of the Gulf of Mexico. My tour of Middlegate – though but a few miles from my home – was my first visit to a foreign place.



Figure 4. The entrance to Middlegate Japanese Gardens.

Source: Harold Holdiay Costain.1935.

My past travels had not taken me beyond New Orleans or the Mississippi and Louisiana waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Tourists came to the Gulf Coast for the day, week, summer, or winter. My first experience as a tourist, though, began when I encountered the exotic landscape known as Middlegate Japanese Gardens, just a few miles away from my home in Mississippi City.

If my travel experience was limited, then my understanding of Japanese culture was even more so. My limited knowledge of Japanese people came from my neighborhood grocer who

helped me with my homework. He related painful accounts of his years as a Japanese prisoner of war in 1942. This, combined with the awareness that an uncle had seen brutal action in World War II off the coast of Japan, contrived to create in me an image of Japan as a country both brutal and uncivilized. As I walked in wonder through this serene and beautiful garden with its fantastic statues and wonderful Japan artifacts, I experienced conflicted emotions.

The woman escorting my Girl Scout troop was not only our troop leader was also my catechism teacher. This was the era of pre-Vatican II conservatism when wary Catholics felt it necessary to obtain permission from the parish priest for such activity as attending a Protestant wedding – one was not to engage in any activity that might put one in the “proximity of evil” thereby jeopardizing one’s immortal soul. There I stood, a devoted Catholic child, in an apparently sacred space, but one including foreign and strange statues that looked very much like “false gods” (Figure 5). While I was awestruck by my surroundings, I wondered if the adults I had invested with the trust of childhood had led me into an “occasion of sin.”



Figure 5. Foo dogs at the bridge to the teahouse.
Source: Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Decades later that magical day is still vivid in my memory. I can recall the image of Middlegate Japanese Gardens and the blue tile roofed entry gate, teahouses and guesthouse. I remember a sunken garden and a hill. Water cascading down a hill feeds a large lake and a small stream that meanders about the garden. A series of wooden and stone bridges crossed the lake and stream. I remember the bronze Buddha with outstretched hands that sat high on a pedestal (Figure 6). Even now when I drive along Highway 90 between Pine and Clarence Avenues or down St. Louis Street behind Middlegate property, I look for that garden gate, victim of the ravages of Hurricane Camille, a bamboo hedge or even a flash of blue tiles.



Figure 6. The Middlegate Japanese Gardens Buddha. Source: Harold Holiday Costain, 1935.

This nostalgia had drawn me to research the events and circumstances that culminated in the creation of such a grand and marvelously strange place in the otherwise European-style landscape of the US South, one that delighted and amazed visitors to a southern resort for four decades until an act of nature secured its demise.

My objective is not to publicize the gardens but to make public the significance of the gardens within the community of Pass Christian and illustrate how they relate to the history of gardening and landscape architecture in a broader context. Hopefully, this will contribute to an increased awareness of the historical importance of the gardens and raise local awareness of their significance. Currently the story of Middlegate Japanese Gardens is not known even in its immediate neighborhood.

My goal is to provide a preliminary history of the gardens and to illustrate their significance as an example of the landscape architecture that was typical during the Country Place Era, a time when the Mississippi Gulf Coast was a major coastal resort, when cheap labor was plentiful, when the New South was emerging but civil rights and equal rights were yet to come, when modern technology and scientific achievements dramatically changed everyone's lives, and when the United States and Japan both sought respect and struggled to become industrial and military powers.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODS

This research into the history of Middlegate Japanese Gardens was made more difficult because the creators of the garden – Rudolf S. Hecht and Lynne Watkins Hecht were deceased when this work was begun in 1999. (Rudolf Hecht died January 18, 1956 and his Lynne Hecht died June 15, 1961.) Their daughters, Dorothy (Dottee) Hecht Cooper and Lynne Hecht Farwell, inherited the garden (Succession of Lynne Hecht Farwell) and served as next-of-kin informants.

On July 29, 1999 I contacted daughter Dottee Cooper who was living at Middlegate. I shared memories of my long ago visit to her gardens, explained that I was a student in Landscape Architecture at Louisiana State University and that I would like to see the gardens again. She was very gracious but made it clear that the gardens were private, and that they were no longer open to the public. Dottee said that the gardens had been in disrepair since Hurricane Camille in 1969, and that she did not want them on display (Cooper 1999).

Since the owner wasn't willing to share any more of the gardens' history, I took another approach and looked to the community and the public record. First I visited the Pass Christian Historical Society. The Society's mission is to "research, collect, preserve, and display local history and to assist in the preservation and protection of noteworthy structures of historical significance in the city of Pass Christian" (*Pass Christian Historical Society* 1976).

The Society has an oral history collection, photographs, garden club scrapbooks, unpublished manuscripts and a series of publications on the Pass. Historical Society docents were excellent guides to the community as well as to their archives. Garden club scrapbooks and held clippings, garden club programs, rosters and photographs. Volunteers referred me to

Bourdin Brothers Plumbing and retired plumber Billy Bourdin, who maintains his own local history collection. “Musee Bourdin” shares office space with Bourdin Brothers Plumbing.

At the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in Jackson I spoke with archivist Richard Cawthorn and obtained copies of the Middlegate photographs that were part of the Historic Sites Survey for the National Register of Historic Places Scenic Drive Historic District in Pass Christian. Cawthorn explained that in 1979 when the Scenic Drive Historic District in Pass Christian was established it was the seventh Historic District in Mississippi and the first one in Harrison County. At the time that survey was done, documentation requirements for each property were minimal. Rathbone Weiss was listed as the possible architect but Richard Cathorn said that the name was probably “DeBuys” (Cathorn 2002).

Now that I knew that the architect for the teahouses might be Rathbone DeBuys of New Orleans, I called Robbie Cangelosi with Koch and Wilson, a New Orleans architectural firm that has experience with historic preservation. DeBuys was the architect, and Cangelosi had a copy of a pictorial survey of DeBuys’ work: *Architectural Work Designed and Supervised by Rathbone DeBuys, Architect, New Orleans, La.* One of the works listed in the *Architectural Work* was the “Hecht Oriental Garden.” I talked to Danny Taylor, an architect with Koch and Wilson who did some restoration work at Middlegate. Taylor grew up in Pass Christian, and he became interested in historic preservation when a pre-civil war building, Sperier’s Bar, was demolished. Through a student internship with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Taylor conducted the *National Register of Historic Places Sites Survey* that led to the establishment of the Scenic Drive Historic District.

The City of Pass Christian Planning Office maintains records for the City Historic Preservation Commission. I contacted the Planning Office to see if any hearings had been held about changes or alterations to the Middlegate property, and director Peggy Johnson could find no such record (Johnson 2002).

At this point, I turned to libraries: Harrison County Mississippi Libraries – Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Long Beach, Gulfport and Biloxi Public Library. The Biloxi Public Library is the genealogical and historical research center for the Harrison County Library System. None of the Harrison County Libraries had any specific information on the garden, but the Biloxi library houses back issues of the coast newspaper, *Sun Herald* and its forerunner, *The Daily Herald*. The Biloxi Public Library also has the *M. James Stevens Collection*, one hundred and seventy seven notebooks comprised of newspaper articles and letters about the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The notebooks are organized by subject, but there was nothing on the Hecht garden or family.

There are many archival sources in New Orleans and the New Orleans Public Library, Louisiana Division, was an excellent place to start. The library's comprehensive Internet site <http://nutrias.org/> gave an overview of the library's special reference collections, online access to some of its offerings and links to repositories outside their system. The New Orleans Public Library had a copy of a Gulf Coast tourist map that ran in *Down South Magazine*, August 1959. One of the tourist attractions highlighted on the map was Middlegate Oriental Gardens, with a little cartoon teahouse marking the spot.

The Historic New Orleans Collection had one photograph of New Orleans officials at a function in the garden. The Southeastern Architectural Archives and the Town Gardeners Library at Tulane did not have anything specific to the garden. Tulane University Library did

have some of Rudolf Hecht's papers and books and also letters written by Lynne Watkins Hecht. Some of Rudolf Hecht's books and speeches are available at the Louisiana State University Libraries.

I searched civil and chancery court records in Harrison County, Mississippi and Orleans Parish for copies of deeds, wills, successions and estate inventories. The deeds establish who owned the garden and when they owned it. Wills, successions and estate inventories help establish the history of a home or garden and lists the names and addresses of heirs. In the *Succession of Rudolf S. Hecht*, Orleans District Court, January 1956, there was some information relevant to Middlegate. There was personal information about Hecht: his parents were named, his date of birth, place of birth, his home address, names and addresses of family members, date and place of death and burial place. In a list of his assets there was a note that stated: Envelope containing titles to Pass Christian, Mississippi property, marked "Property of Lynne Watkins Hecht." Hecht's Succession also included an inventory and contents appraisal for his home at 16 Audubon Place, his real estate holdings and the Act of Sale for 16 Audubon Place (*Succession of Rudolf S. Hecht*).

From the *Succession of Lynne Watkins Hecht, Widow of Rudolf S. Hecht* I determined that John Dambrink, the caretaker for Middlegate, retired after Mrs. Watkins' death on June 15, 1961 (*Succession of Lynne Watkins Hecht*). With money received from Mrs. Hecht's estate, John Dambrink bought a piece of property and built a retirement home for his family just a few doors east of the caretaker's cottage, on St. Louis Street. John Dambrink, his wife Anna, and their daughter Elizabeth died during Hurricane Camille in 1969. In the *Estate of Elizabeth Dambrink* filed at the Harrison County Courthouse I found her survivors and contacted John Dambrink's

grandson, Harry Stegenga and his wife Janice to learn more about the Dambrinks and the Japanese garden (*Estate of Elizabeth Dambrink*).

At the Harrison County Mississippi Courthouse, in the *Estate of Dorothy H. Cooper*, June 2000 there was some information relative to Middlegate. It listed the names of companies and individuals that did the appraisals and inventories of the contents of the residence and gardens:

- April 12, 2001 Konishi, Kamansky Oriental, evaluation of statues
- April 18, 2001 Ben C. Toledano, professional fees, contents evaluation
- June 04, 2001 Allen Purvis & Assoc., professional fees, appraisal 431
- Feb 22, 2001 Phone call from: Konishi, Kamansky, re. Buddha
- Mar 02, 2001 Documentation, photos on Buddha to Konishi enclosing data on Buddha
- Mar 24, 2001 Appraisal from Konishi
- May 24, 2001 to Konishi to solicit offer for statues
- Jan. 30, 2002 to Sotheby's follow up letter
- Jan. 30, 2002 research, certified appraisal services, specialty in Japanese antiquities,

On May 16, 2002, Asahel Cooper, III purchased from the other surviving children their interest in Middlegate as well as their interest in the bronze statues, Buddha, Lightning and Thunder. I requested that Riley Morse, attorney for the estate, put the photographs and documentation of the appraisals in the court record and he refused (*Estate of Dorothy H. Cooper*).

At the Harrison County Tax Assessor's office I obtained a map of the area where the garden is located and a corresponding list that shows the names of the individuals who pay the taxes on the property. At one time, Estella Paxton Watkins, mother of Lynne Watkins Hecht, had extensive real estate holdings in Pass Christian. The tax map established that Middlegate Japanese Gardens had been subdivided. From the G.I.S. division of the Assessor's office I acquired an aerial photograph with an outline of the houses superimposed on it. This became a base map for creating a conceptual drawing of Middlegate Japanese Gardens, based on personal interviews.

I surveyed Mississippi Gulf Coast newspapers – the *Daily Herald* a forerunner of the *Sun Herald*; *Tarpon Beacon* in Pass Christian and the *Sea Coast Echo* in Bay St. Louis. I looked at seasonal dates for local garden stories. The New Orleans Public Library biography card index to New Orleans newspapers had several references for the Hecht and Watkins families.

Local magazines, *Dixie Guide* and *Down South*, had brief mentions of the garden. Although national magazines such as *Architectural Forum*, *Architectural Record*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *House Beautiful* occasionally run regional stories, none appeared on the garden. However, *Country Life* did a story on the garden in 1935. Rudolf Hecht was briefly mentioned in *Time* magazine and two of his talks were in *Vital Speeches*. Hecht also published several books, one following each of his many international trips. Some of those books were available at the Louisiana State University and Tulane University libraries.

One problem remained. The present owner, Asahel Cooper, did not respond to my telephone calls or letters. New Orleans resident Lynne Hecht Farwell, Dottee's surviving sister did not respond either.

I compiled a list of people, ones who lived near the garden or who were involved with the garden club or historical society, and others who were interested in local history, or who were Watkins-Hecht-Cooper family friends. Some people chose to share their stories. Some interviews were done in an oral history format.

On October 9 and October 15, 2002, I interviewed Dorree Cooper, daughter of Dorothy Hecht Cooper and Asahel Cooper. In 1962, following her grandmother's death, Dorree and her family moved to Middlegate. She was very generous in sharing her memories and stories of the

Middlegate gardens. Dorree also sketched the layout of the garden on top of the aerial photograph, which helped me better understand how the garden was organized.

Thelma deMetz Miller, the daughter of Mary Katherine McDonald and Adolph Isadore deMetz talked to me on November 2, 2002. Miller was born in Pass Christian, Mississippi on October 8, 1916. Adolph deMetz owned and operated deMetz Contracting and he built many homes in Pass Christian. According to Miller her father was not involved in construction of the teahouses but she described what it looked like when his crew was putting in the swimming pool.

On February 10, 2003 I interviewed Horace Labat not because he worked in the garden but to learn about construction methods when everything was done with hand tools. Horace Labat was born in Pass Christian on September 23, 1920. His parents were Herbert and Mamie Labat. Labat was involved in construction on Scenic Drive in Pass Christian as well as New Orleans.

In an interview on October 6, 2004, Baton Rouge resident Sidney Arbour told me about when his friend took him to see Middlegate Japanese Gardens in 1935. He described the granite stone lanterns, a secluded bamboo path that sloped up a gradual rise, the bamboo arched overhead, and the path ended at a garden bench, an area his friend called the “snookin” room (Arbour 2004).

On April 29, 2003 I interviewed Kenny Wittmann, grandson of master-builder Frank Phillip Wittmann, Sr. Wittmann went through the catalogue of his grandfather’s work and did not find a reference to Middlegate Japanese Gardens. It is possible that Wittmann’s catalogue includes only the homes that Wittmann actually designed. New Orleans architect; Rathbone

DeBuys designed the garden structures at Middlegate. Although Frank Wittmann, Sr. could have been involved as a contractor, I did not verify who the building contractor was.

I am reminded of a conversation with Billy Bourdin, Pass Christian's resident plumber/historian. He worked for two years interviewing local families, gathering information on Pass Christian residents who died in the 1969 storm for a monument commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Hurricane Camille. Even in a small town like Pass Christian that appears unaltered by the years, a great deal of change occurs in twenty-five years – a generation. The landscape changes and people die or move away. Much is forgotten. Bourdin was shocked at the difficulty of what he thought would be a relatively simple task (Bourdin 2004).

Related Literature

Among the numerous related materials I researched were American magazines and journals with articles on Japanese gardens. Edmund Buckley's article "Landscape Gardening in Japan," a piece based on Conder's book, ran in *House and Garden*, July 1908. A paper on "Japanese Landscape Gardening" read by K. Honda, a member of the Japanese Horticulture Society, on December 14, 1900 was reprinted in *The Inland Architect and News Record* on March 1901, and a year later it was included in the book, *European and Japanese Gardens*, edited by Glen Brown (Lancaster 191). *House and Garden* magazine featured several articles on Japanese gardens: "Japanese Temple Gardens," by Ralph Adams Cram, in February 1902; "The Iris Garden at Horikiki," by Anne H. Dyer, in January 1903; "Famous Gardens of Japan," by Anna C. Hartshorne in June 1903; and "The Art of Japanese Gardening," by T. Karasawa in May 1904 (Lancaster 1963,192). *House Beautiful* printed "Of Gardens in Japan," by Mrs. Hugh Frazer in November 1906 (Lancaster 1963,192). Advertisements for builders and supplies ran in

magazines. “In Country Life in America, October 1903, H. H. Berger and Company of New York City offered: ‘Bamboo for bridges, kiosks, stone lanterns, porcelain pots, dwarfed plants, etc. Japan lily bulbs, maples, paeonies [sic], iris, etc.’ The firm claimed to be ‘the first importers of Japanese plants in the United States’” (Lancaster 1963, 192).

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY OF THE JAPANESE GARDEN

“In primitive times, the people of Japan must have had their own kinds of gardens . . . because at the dawn of Japanese history, the word *niwa* was used to mean garden” (Itoh 1984, 25). In order to understand Japanese gardens one must understand the Japanese view of nature: “The Japanese cannot conceive of nature as hostile . . . nor can they idealize nature as something perfect in itself. Around their houses, they created a secondary, controlled nature in the form of an open space or *niwa*” (Itoh 1984, 33). Lu Zhou, in his thesis, *The Replication of Japanese Landscape Aesthetics in American Culture*, said that in Japan gardens “provide calm, tranquil and inspirational natural settings separated from the outside world” (9). In Japan a garden represents nature in balance (Zhou 1996, 9).

Japanese gardens developed out of Chinese and Buddhist elements (Itoh 1984, 25). Japan imported these garden cultures and according to Itoh, began ignoring the philosophical basis for the concepts and applying their own interpretations (Itoh 1984, 25). Fengshui was the system of criteria used to site palaces, residences and cemeteries. The rules are strict: “Geomantically the best site is one that has a river on the east, a pond on the south, a highway on the west, and a hill on the north because things correspond to certain divine creatures” (Itoh 26). According to Itoh, the Japanese decided that if all of those conditions could not be met, then substitutions were in order. “... one may substitute nine willow trees for the river, nine Judas trees for the pond, seven maple trees for the highway, and three cypress trees for the hill” (Itoh 1984).

In the *Language of Landscape* Anne Spirn explains that the Japanese “have integrated the traditional and the new. Shinto customs and shrines exist side by side with Buddhist temples,

often combined; papers inscribed with wishes and tied to trees, a Shinto custom, are a common sight in Buddhist temple precincts” (Spirn 1998, 163) (Figure 7). According to Itoh that some cultural influences in Japan were borrowed but the Asian mainland imposed some. Taoist and Buddhist influences on Japanese gardens came by way of Korea from China (Itoh 1984, 27). Instead of rebelling against imported ideas, or evolving an eclectic form, Itoh said that the Japanese “chose the way of misinterpretation” (Itoh 1984, 27).



Figure 7. Prayer papers at a temple in Japan. Photo by author.

During the Heian and Kamakura periods, “gardens were frequently created in what was called the Pure Land (or Paradise) style because they were supposed to be earthly representations

of Sukhavati, the Western Paradise of the Buddha Amitabha or (Amida) as he is known in Japan” (Itoh 1984, 27). These gardens were supposed to be religious, a place “to which the faithful dead are conducted by the Buddha Amida himself” (Itoh 1984, 28). Near Kyoto stands the temple Byodo-in and “its most famous attraction is the Amida chapel known as the Phoenix Hall” (Itoh 1984, 28). Again misinterpretations came in to play, for this Japanese paradise garden was not religious but an “attempt at an earthly paradise where human beings could submerge themselves in aesthetic pursuits” (Itoh 1984, 28).

Toshiro Inaji is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Design at Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. His field study of Japanese housing led him to a historical study of the relationship between architecture and people. He then revisited the study and examined the relationship between inside and outside the buildings. Japanese gardens are not an imitation of nature. Inaji, in *The Garden as Architecture* says however, that there is a conceptual model for Japanese gardens, an “ideal form” that takes precedence in design (viii). Within this framework then, the Japanese garden design process takes place (Inaji 1998, ix). It is a creative process that is based on site conditions, observations, and intended use. Over time, several solutions develop and prototypes are studied. As political and economic conditions changed changes in garden design led to “formation of period garden types” (Inaji 1998, ix). Inaji said that when “these interpretations outlived the periods in which they first appeared, they came to be termed characteristically Japanese garden-making techniques”(Inaji 1988, ix).

Inaji explains that the Japanese garden is not a place to stroll; it is “a living picture to be viewed by people sitting inside a building”(Inaji 1988, ix). According to Inaji, one should consider “the room from which the garden is viewed,” and the gardens should be a unified part

of that space (Inaji 1988, ix). The Japanese stroll garden is a recent development. Historically Japanese gardens “were intended purely for contemplation, to be viewed from a fixed vantage point seated at floor-level inside an adjoining building”(Inaji 1988, ix).

In the *Language of Landscape*, Anne Spirn pointed out that in Japan, houses

may be sited right on the street but most have shuttered doors and windows. The garden, if there is one, is walled, a private precinct, part of the interior world, and there is seldom any hint of these gardens from the street. But within a traditional Japanese house is an open, fluid space with no locked doors, only sliding paper screens, or shoji (Spirn 1988, 75-76).

In 1998, Anne Spirn recalled a visit to a temple garden in old Kyoto. There were no sidewalks, doors opened onto the street, buildings abutted one another, and she expressed her surprise to find that “tiny gardens are wedged between buildings mid-block, a luxury of use that is astonishing” (Spirn 1988, 135). She then related her experience at the Ryoanji garden of the local Zen Temple:

My *ryokan*, a small inn with three guest rooms, is crammed into the interior of a block in a dense maze of narrow streets in old Kyoto. Yet inside, one wall of my room looks into an enclosed garden, filled with shrubs, carefully pruned. Below the threshold is a large, round stone. Water fills a basin hollowed out of the rock, beside the water a bamboo dipper. A narrow gravel path leads between the shrubs to a shrine, and a small tree forms a canopy over the whole. The morning sun on the garden throws a yellow-green light into the room.

From humble urban garden to monastery and imperial estate, Japanese literature compresses and condenses features and ideas, concentrates meaning in miniature, paradox, and detail. Though the courtyard garden at Ryoanji is only twenty-five yards long and ten yards wide, on many levels it stands for Japan. Fifteen rocks in five groups, each group surrounded by an apron of green moss, rise out of a sea of raked gravel, a distillation of Japan’s deep landscape structure: the juxtaposition of mountain and sea, stone and water, with the narrow band of

settlement between. The garden is a once microcosm and cosmos, like so many Japanese landscapes, a landscape of paradox. The stillness of stone is felt more deeply through juxtaposition to moving, rustling trees beyond the wall. The sand is still, yet raked lines imply motion. The composition seems open; yet at least one rock is always hidden. The garden is both clear and obscure, a difficult simplicity derived from complex ideas, reduced, rather than from an easy, simplistic statement. It is difficult to experience Ryoanji with the receptive and reflective mind it deserves. Unresolved contradictions intrude, jarring the senses.

I enter Ryoanji through a huge parking lot filled with cars and tour buses. Large groups, including masses of uniformed schoolchildren, throng the path between the parking lot and the gate into the park. The mood of the crowd is of an outing or a festival. The path is lined with souvenir shops, ice cream stands, and teashops along one side, toilets on the other. The crowd fans out in the park beyond the gate, but converges again in the building adjoining the courtyard of stones. Inside the building, I pass a souvenir shop and then, unprepared, walk out onto a veranda overlooking the stone garden. I sit and try to absorb the garden. Though a few other visitors stand or sit alone, most are here in groups; a sign says, "Please be quiet," but a loudspeaker blares intermittently. Teenagers are jostling, joking, and chattering, the surge of their hormones at odds with the repose of the garden. I leave, disappointed.

A final paradox: I experience the garden more intensely in memory than I did in actuality. The image of rocks, moss, gravel, wall, and trees beyond is etched into my mind (Spirn 1988, 135) (Figure 8).

Influences of Chinese and Korean philosophies and religions are evident in Japanese culture and gardens. In Japan these imported traditions coexist along with the "older Japanese plans and forms" (Itoh 1984, 74). It is Itoh's opinion that by combining imported traditions without adopting the "philosophy behind the borrowed garden styles . . . the Japanese have been able to assimilate what was foreign while protecting the independence of what was their own" (Itoh 1984, 74).



Figure 8. Ryōanji Garden, Kyoto.

In each historical period, garden forms have undergone transitions:

The garden with artificial hill and pond of the Nara and Heian periods, 646-1185; the dry stone-and gravel garden of the Muromachi period, 1333-1568; and the spacious gardens for strolling planned for princes and feudal lords in the Edo period, 1615-1868; are cases in point. But in no instance were old forms and styles cast aside to make room for the new. Old and new, at a later date, Eastern and Western, have shared places in Japan . . . In the history of Japanese gardening, the ancient and the novel, the Oriental and the Occidental, stand like books on a shelf, to be consulted and used, or misinterpreted at any time (Itoh 19841, 74).

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Japanese gardens at Middlegate reflect the opulence of the period as expressed in national movements in landscape architecture representative of the lifestyle enjoyed by wealthy people during the Gilded Age in America (1865-1929). This was an era of national growth and personal wealth accumulation that was manifested in grand estates, opulent summer residences, and lavish gardens.

National Context: Residential Landscape Architecture in the United States, 1860-1930

Industrial expansion and rapid changes in the transportation industry dramatically changed every day life in America. A pattern of country and resort living developed as rural and coastal areas became popular for weekend and summer use. In all of these places garden making allowed the owners to display their newfound good fortunes (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14). It was also during this time that Japan came to the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia and introduced Japanese culture to the American public (Lancaster 1963, 51).

America was striving to establish an international reputation as an industrial and military power, and held a “series of great exhibitions in which nations displayed their industrial and artistic achievements. It is in these events, more than any others in the nineteenth century, that the confidence and power of the industrialized countries are clearly articulated” (Jackson 1992, 246).

Before the 1876 exposition, trends in architecture and decorative arts came to America by way of Europe, through travelers and publications. The Japanese exhibit at the 1876 exposition awakened in America a desire “for all things Japanese, Japanese prints and porcelain, judo,

Buddhism, geisha and samurai” (Benfey 2003, xi). To the Western world the Japanese seemed to be a nation of “lucid designers, facile craftsmen, brilliant painters and well-rounded artists” (Lancaster 23). Prior to the Centennial Exposition, however, the only way to actually see Japanese architecture and gardens was to visit Japan (Conder 2002, 7).

Styles of the Far East were not unknown to Americans. Chinese taste style, in architecture and decorative arts – *chinoiserie* – had been known since colonial days as evidenced by a 1757 publication of Sir William Chambers *Designs of Chinese Buildings*. In Charleston, South Carolina within the same year, the James Reid house was described as built “after the Chinese taste” (Lancaster 1963, 37). In Philadelphia, the Pagoda and Labyrinth Garden designed by architect John Haviland opened in 1827. It was inspired by the elevation of a “Tower near Canton” featured in Chambers’ *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (Lancaster 1963, 42).

The Era of International Expositions

The international exposition was the venue through which the Western world first viewed Japanese culture. During the two hundred and fifty year Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868), Japan was closed to foreigners and foreign trade and contact between Japanese culture and the West was extremely limited. Japan was perceived as a mysterious country where “learned reading, writing, Chinese literature, art, architecture and the peaceful way of the Buddha from early contacts with continental Asia.” (Lancaster 1963, 4). During the years of seclusion the Japan honed its culture. Following the 1854 Treaty of Kanagawa, Japan invited foreign advisors in and began the process of reinventing herself as a major military and industrial power. She found the emergent international expositions to be an effective method to showcase Japanese culture and achievements (Benfey 2003, xv).

The first Japanese garden in America was at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876, in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia (Lancaster 1963, 190). Japan had already participated in the London International Exhibition of 1862, the Paris Exposition of 1867 and the Vienna Exposition of 1873 (Brown 1999, 16). The expositions “were major forces in introducing Japanese art, architecture, interior decoration, and landscape design to the United States” (Balch 2004) and of undermining notions of Japan as a closed society. It was argued that they also served as propaganda in presenting a strong element of Japanese culture – the tranquil garden – as representative of the current spirit of the nation. Brown (2004, 114) maintains “Indeed, the first construction of Japanese gardens outside Japan was based on these gardens’ utility in camouflaging political realities; the government’s building of gardens at foreign expositions helped position Japan’s image abroad as a traditional, agrarian, peace-loving nation at precisely the time when she was striving to become a modern, industrial, military power.”

While the West knew very little about contemporary Japan of 1876, Western writers for newspapers and magazines frequently portrayed an older Japan unchanged by the modern events that were upon it. No one thought Japan could have changed very much during the years the country was cut off from the West. Meanwhile, however, Japan was making huge efforts to update itself and become an active participant in world affairs. It began by taking part in every major international exhibition promoting their artistic achievements, all the while, Jackson (1992,252) maintains, it was methodically “gathering information on all the latest Western technical achievements.”

Philadelphia was designated as the site for the Centennial International Exposition to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Japan accepted the invitation and shipped everything for their exhibit, including men and materials to Philadelphia:

The fifty carloads of materials were unloaded in Philadelphia, and the building crew set to work putting up two buildings at the centennial grounds in Fairmount Park. A crowd of curious bystanders gathered daily to witness the strange building operations used by the Nipponese workmen, and supercilious spectators compared the rising buildings to corncribs because the framework rested on posts rather than on masonry foundations. The posts were driven into the earth by means of a 300 pound hammer mounted on a tripod. Once the buildings began to take shape the critics became silent, and upon completion scorn had changed to praise...(Lancaster 48).

One of the buildings was a Japanese dwelling, the other a bazaar and teahouse. The dwelling was described as “the best built structure on the Centennial grounds . . . as nicely put together as a piece of cabinet work” (Thompson 22). The *Centennial Portfolio* described the garden:

The little piece of ground which surrounds this building has been enclosed and fixed up in Japanese garden style. The flower-beds are laid out neatly and fenced in with bamboo. Screens of matting and dried grass divide the parterres. There is a fountain guiltless of *jet-d'eau*, from which the water trickles. At the southern entrance a queer-shaped urn of granite on a pedestal, shows marks of great age, being weather-worn and dilapidated. It must have done garden service years before Perry opened Japan to the Western nations....The garden statuary is peculiar. Bronze figures of storks 6 to 8 feet high stand in groups at certain places, and a few bronze pigs are disposed in easy comfort in shady places (Thompson, Westcott 50).

The American audience was not familiar with the Japanese treatment of the garden landscape but once exposed, it responded to the Japanese exhibit with admiration as well as imitation. In July 1876 the *Atlantic Monthly* reported that “Japan outshines the most cultivated nations of Europe in arts” (*Characteristics of the International Fair* 1876, 30) . . . and after experiencing the Japanese collection everything looks “in a measure commonplace, almost vulgar” (McCabe 1876, 446). Soon Japanese decorative features moved into American living

areas. Henry Gordon Marquand and William H. Vanderbilt both installed “Japanese Rooms” in their New York homes, featuring lacquered door panels, split bamboo wall coverings, black lacquered beams, imported cabinet work, silk embroidery, and collections of Japanese art objects (Lancaster 1963 52).

The ultra-wealthy, however, were not strangers to the Japanese art form. Even during the Tokogawa Shogunate when Japan was essentially closed to foreign trade, the Chinese and Dutch had limited access to the port of Nagasaki where Japanese artifacts were moved out of the country. Sometimes an American ship would substitute for the Dutch (Lancaster 1963, 17). As a result “large quantities of ceramics, made specifically for the export market, were shipped to Europe and enjoyed great popularity in aristocratic circles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (Jackson 1992, 245).

During the early years of the Meiji Era, one third of the Imperial budget went to the Ministry of Education, or Mombusho. The Mombusho developed a sophisticated strategy whereby foreign advisors would be imported to Japan for a limited period of time to help set up institutions and train Japanese experts...At the same time, many of the most gifted Japanese young men were sent abroad, also for a limited period of time, to learn the ways of the West (Benfey 2003, 57).

Once Japanese-style gardening was introduced oriental gardens surged in popularity. Many such gardens were faithful Japanese renderings, occasionally even built by an imported Japanese crew, and often staffed by Japanese gardeners and tea masters” (Benfey 2003, 35). In *The Japanese Influence in America*, Clay Lancaster made this observation, “The Far East, by virtue of its geographic remoteness, was...a sort of Never-never Land, from which first came diaphanous silks, and later dazzling ceramics, lacquer, and fireworks, delicious teas, and exotic paintings, furnishings and gardens” (Benfey 2003, 15).

In addition to introducing Japanese gardens to America, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 also “spurred the development of a style of architecture and the decorative arts, and of gardening known as Colonial Revival (Griswold and Weller 1991, 38).” The Colonial Revival style, according to Griswold was “a nostalgic re-evaluation of the American past” that she saw as the “slow ripening fruit of the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia,” and it was “the sole surviving revival style of any importance” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14). The gardens of the Colonial Revival style returned to “straight lines, box borders, old perennials and roses, and a final abandonment of exotic bedding-out plants in island beds, squiggly paths and any other Victorian flourishes” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 38). Americans turned away from the “gardenesque” Victorian garden style, which displayed little unity of style elements, in favor of designs that echoed “the symmetrical shapes and plans of the houses they joined...and moved in the direction of simplicity” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14).

American architecture in the late 1880s turned to the “stylistic canons of Renaissance classicism as taught at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. . . . Although still eclectic in taste, this mode of design emphasized ‘correct’ reproduction of historical styles, axial symmetry in massing and composition, and located the highest architectural values in the ceremonial grandeur, monumentality, and formal discipline of the classical orders” (Brain 1989, 807).

“The widely publicized ‘White City’ at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago . . . launched a national vogue for classical architecture in the Beaux-Arts tradition and focused attention on the possibilities of city planning and urban design (Brain 1989, 808). Prior to the Chicago Fair, Romanesque and Picturesque styles dominated the pages of major architectural magazines (Brain,1989). “In the decade following the Chicago Fair, Beaux-Arts

classicism was rapidly installed as the orthodoxy in American design . . . and lasted until the reconstruction of the discipline of design under the influence of European modernism in the 1930s” (Brain 1989, 808). The Fair sparked renewed interest in public art, park development and civic improvement and the “White City became the formal expression of the City Beautiful movement” (Brain 1989, 832).

The Japanese used a combination of architectural features from three historical periods of pre-modern Japan to construct its national pavilion for the Chicago fair. The eleventh century Hoo-do (Phoenix Hall) of the Byodo-in temple near Kyoto provided the basis of the design (Figure 9). The Hoo-do, or Phoenix Hall, was exhibit designer Masamichi Kuru’s inspiration for previous Japanese temples and monuments had been influenced by structures in China or Korea. The setting for the Japanese exhibit in Chicago was the Wooded Island. The Hoo-do in Japan was also:

built on a diminutive island and was in the form of the legendary phoenix bird with outstretched wings and a long tail that bridged the narrow channel to the mainland. The placid water of the lake in front reflected clouds, thus creating the illusion that the building was the actual bird in flight. The phoenix was believed to transport souls to the Western Paradise of Amida Buddha, whose image, carved by the sculptor Jocho was given the place of honor in the main shrine (Lancaster 1963, 76).

The Japanese exhibit structure in Chicago was called the Hoo-den or Phoenix Villa because it was a modification of a sacred building put to secular use. Lancaster said that “The three units had elevated floors with encompassing platforms sheltered on the outside by the deep eaves of *irimoya* roofs (combination of roof form of gable over hip). Railings protected the platforms. . . Timber framework and wall areas filled in with plaster were left unpainted, and the roofs were covered with sheet copper. It was a harmonious composition. . . Each of the three pavilions was treated in the style of a different period of Japanese history” (Lancaster 1963, 78).



Figure 9. Phoenix Hall of the Byodo-in temple near Kyoto. Source: www1.bpkpenabur.or.id/.../ukk/byodo/homepage.htm.

At the close of the fair, the Hoo-den was given to the City of Chicago and the building was the beginning of Chicago's Osaka Garden (Figure 10). The Hoo-den "remained standing after the fair for half a century, and during this interim exerted an influence upon several generations of American Architects and designers" (Lancaster 1963, 83).

The Hoo-den at the World's Columbian Exposition was a more significant and elegant specimen of architecture than the Japanese buildings at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition...representing almost a thousand years of Japanese development in design...The Japanese Phoenix Villa demonstrated that a building could be unmasked and beautiful, human in scale and appealing, that good workmanship showed to better advantage on the actualized building than on the drawing board, and that architecture...need make no apologies for its use of simple everyday materials (Lancaster 1963, 83).



Figure 10. Osaka garden today. Source: [community.webshots.com/ album/51359768EILXLw](https://community.webshots.com/album/51359768EILXLw).

Joseph Conder (1852-1920) was a westerner who was fascinated with Japanese design and whose writings were instrumental in translating the aesthetic to Americans. Conder was a British architect, urban planner, and teacher who worked as a professor of architecture and consultant to the Ministry of Engineering in Japan, where he practiced architecture and helped train the first generation of Japanese architects (Lancaster 1963, 190). Conder taught the “English-speaking world the principles of Japanese gardens” with his books, *The Flowers of Japan and the Art of Floral Arrangement* and *Landscape Gardening in Japan* published in 1893 (Lancaster 1891, 190).

In the foreword of the 2002 edition of Conder's *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, Brown said that there had been some written accounts on Japanese buildings and gardens before Japan opened to the West in 1868. "Marco Polo...described Japanese cities as being filled with buildings made of gold, and a handful of Dutch and Portuguese accounts from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, often published and fancifully illustrated years later in Europe, mention, usually disparagingly, the buildings and gardens encountered" (Brown 2002, 8). But once Westerners saw the gardens at the world expositions and wanted to know more about authentic Japanese gardens, there was very little specific information to be found (Brown, 2002, 8,9).

Conder had "written about flowers and flower arranging and contributed articles on Japanese building practice to scholarly journals...his colleague at the Imperial College, the American zoologist Edwin S. Morse, had published a wonderfully evocative and detailed book entitled *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* in 1886 (Brown 2002, 8). Brown goes on to say that although Conder was qualified to write about Japanese architecture he chose instead to concentrate on "comprehensively cataloguing the types of plants, rocks, lanterns, gates, fences, and other features used in gardens proper, and provides a similarly detailed resume of historical and poetic allusion, and of design principles and theory.... the photographs by K. Ogawa included in the supplement to the original edition form an invaluable record of the appearance and condition of important gardens at the turn of the century" (Brown 2002, 8). Brown says that Conder's book could serve as a gardening manual for its original audience:

The illustrations dealing with layout...are schematic enough that the compositional principles outlined in the text can be easily grasped. And the depictions of arbors...bridges...fences...and lanterns...and other items are clear and detailed enough to serve as the basis for reproduction. When coupled with the included photographs, and

perhaps bolstered by other visual sources, *Landscape Gardening in Japan* contained enough information to enable a garden designer in the West to create a respectable replica, and undoubtedly it has been used in this fashion time and again (Azby Brown 8).

According to Azby Brown *Landscape Gardening in Japan* is very much a product of its time:

Conder is an Orientalist, interpreting an Asian culture, even packaging for consumption, on behalf of Westerners who might like to partake of its perceived exoticism without directly engaging its people or even fully accepting the culture as equal. Though his careful, detached description of gardens reveals a profound interest in the subject, he rarely actually praises them, and never says directly that he has found a particular garden, or idea, or stone, to be beautiful. For this and other reasons, Conder's chosen manner of representation, both in text and in illustration, provides a vivid glimpse of a Western way of viewing Japanese culture at this particular time (Azby Brown 9).

Brown argues that throughout *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, Conder implied that the "Japanese garden had entered a period of decline," and that he referred "to 'surviving examples' of particular style and configurations" (Brown 2002, 9). But, Brown concluded, "Japanese garden design, for all its consistency and classicism, has always been subject to changing taste and fashion" (Brown 2002, 9).

The California Midwinter International Exposition of 1894 was held in what is now Golden Gate Park in San Francisco during a period of strong anti-Japanese sentiment. There was no official Japanese sponsored exhibit because Japan was at war with Korea. Instead the exhibit was entirely constructed through the combined efforts of M. H. deYoung, the exposition's director; George Turner Marsh, a local importer of Japanese art goods, John McLaren, the exposition's landscape engineer and Makato Hagiwara, a wealthy local Japanese landscape designer (Lancaster 1963,97).

Preparation of the exhibit was marked by bitter conflict between Caucasians and Japanese over who would build the gardens. Once Marsh was awarded the official exhibit, local Japanese businessmen set up a rival Japanese tea garden just off the Midway. There was further controversy over “Marsh’s plan to hire Japanese men to pull rickshas around the fair,” so Caucasians were hired to do the work (Brown 2002, 96). Kendall Brown says it is difficult to sift through the “historical fiction” surrounding the Japanese exhibit and reveal “a single accurate history” (Brown 2002, 93).

The Japanese Village had five buildings – a bazaar, a frame building that held a small theater, a thatched roof open tea shelter, a two-storied dwelling and the main entrance, “a two storied *romon* (tower gateway with an upper story) covered by a heavy tile roof” (Lancaster 1963, 103). George Marsh designed a hill and water garden on a one-acre site that included stone lanterns and a wooden drum bridge. At the end of the exposition “Marsh donated or sold most of the Village to the city and the city hired Makota Hagiwara to run it as a commercial tea garden” (Brown 2002, 32).

The Japanese Tea Garden continues today as the “oldest extant Japanese garden open to the public outside of Japan” (Brown 2002, 32). Kendall H. Brown thinks that the Japanese Tea Garden is about people:

Originally built as a village, the garden is still almost always full of visitors who sip tea at the teahouse, browse at the gift shop, climb the drum bridge and stroll the paths...Beyond merely translating Japanese design principles and cultural values, this garden’s most compelling story involves the many persons who built it, worked in it, and sought to interpret it.... Far more than the arrangement of plants, water, rocks and structures, the Japanese Tea Garden is the fluid product of American and Japanese ideas about how the image of Japan may function in North America (Brown 2002,41).

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904 celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase was held in Saint Louis on the 1240-acre Forest Park site. “This was close to twice the size of the area occupied by the World’s Columbian Exposition and over five times that of the Philadelphia Centennial” (Lancaster 1963, 137). Japan’s war with Russia did not prevent its participation in this fair. The Japanese exhibit covered 175,000 square feet and included six traditional structures:

The Formosa Tea Pavilion, the Bellevue Teahouse, the Bazaar, Main Pavilion, Commissioner’s Residence and a “replica” of the famous late-fifteenth century Golden Pavilion in Kyoto, the Kinkaku. In the Center was the Imperial Japanese Garden also called the “Enchanted Garden” which included an island, arched bridge, iron and stone lanterns, bronze cranes, a variety of blooming plants, and a small teahouse where women served tea (Brown 2002, 16).

The Kinkaku, the Golden Pavilion that was the model for the 1904 exposition building, was built in 1395 near Kyoto for the Shogun Yoshimitsu:

It was a square building encircled by open galleries, which were supported by slender posts, and sheltered by dipping hipped roofs with deep eaves. The first story represented the type of architecture known in Japan as *shinden-zukuri*, in which the whole interior was without permanent partitions and could be divided into rooms by sliding screens. The floor was laid with *tatami* (floor mats). This was the living space (Lancaster 1963, 138).

Yoshimitsu used the middle story for entertaining. “The superstructure was set back; its single room was finished in the restrained Zen manner, for an oratory, and entirely surfaced with gold leaf, which gave the building its title” (Lancaster 1963, 141).

In 1915 two competing fairs were held in California celebrating the completion of the Panama Canal and the “400th anniversary of the discovering of the Pacific Ocean by the explorer, Balboa” (Panama Pacific). The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was staged in San Francisco, and the Panama-California Exposition was held in San Diego.

San Francisco won out over New Orleans to host the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and chose a 635-acre site that was located between Van Ness and the Presidio. The southern border of the fair was Chestnut Street and its northern edge bordered the bay (Panama Pacific). The Japanese government weathered the hostile anti-Japanese atmosphere and tolerated California's passage of the Alien Land Act that discriminated against Japanese citizens and chose to participate in the California fair (Brown 2002, 16).

The Japanese exhibit was the largest sponsored by a foreign country. There were five main buildings, nine summer houses, a lagoon, a stream crossed by tiny bridges, a small mountain down which plunged a cascade and thousands of trees and plants. A reception building copied the Kinkaku, or Golden Pavilion, at Rukonji, Kyoto, without the third story. A small lagoon near the pavilion reflected its slender pillars and graceful curves. The Golden Pavilion is the most reproduced of Japanese buildings. A more accurate facsimile had been put up in St. Louis for the 1903-04 Louisiana Purchase Exposition (Panama-California).

The 1906 earthquake had almost destroyed San Francisco and the economic success of the fair helped the city's recovery. The tense political climate did not undermine the Japanese exhibit's popularity and Kendall Brown said that "most visitors were charmed by the 'fairy garden' inhabited by winsome Japanese maidens" (Brown 2002, 16).

The Panama-California Exposition, the smaller and more regional fair was held in Balboa Park in San Diego. But people did take notice of the Japanese exhibit that was designed by the San Francisco firm of Watanabe and Shibada. "The Teahouse was situated in a small garden through which flowed a stream forming a pond to one side. A low-arched bridge crossed the stream on an axis with the main entrance to the building, and a drum bridge connected to an island in the pond"(Lancaster 1963, 178). "The details were carefully executed and placed by gardeners aware of the techniques of bonsai and ikebana" (Panama California 2004).

The Garden Club of America was organized in Philadelphia in 1913, and according to Hood, “the clubs provided not only a forum for discussion of gardening, but also an organizational framework for the promotion of gardening and garden history research . . . They also sponsored projects for civic improvements, including landscaping for public parks and the newly built motorways”(Hood 1996, 132). Griswold noted the impact garden clubs had on the lives of women:

Most of these sheltered upper-class women did not think of going to college, and their formal education finished at sixteen or seventeen if they were lucky, they learned from the world around them, from extensive travel, from reading, and from each other. Gardens and the making of gardens they learned from books and magazines and through their garden clubs; most of the good amateur women gardeners in this book were garden club members (Hood 1996, 106).

In *The Golden Age of American Gardens* Griswold and Weller described the pattern of country and resort living that developed as rural and coastal areas became popular for weekend and summer use (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14). In *Beautiful Gardens in America*, Louise Shelton said that, “Newport by the sea, more famous than any other American summer resort, naturally possesses the greatest number of gardens on an elaborate scale. “The coast at this point is somewhat sheltered, the air is mild, and there is sea moisture so beneficial to flowers” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 70). May King Van Rensselaer, in *The Social Ladder*, reported that “The Chief Industry of Newport, Rhode Island, is the examination and appraisal of qualifications for society” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 219). In *Newport: Our Social Capital* Mrs. Van Rensselaer said that during the Gilded Age, Newport “only came alive in the summer” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 44).

Regional Context: Residential Landscape Architecture in New Orleans, 1850-1930

The Port of New Orleans provided access to all of the North American interior as well as the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, Atlantic Ocean and all the continents beyond (Lewis 2003, 9). Located close to the mouth of the Mississippi River, New Orleans made use of a shortcut through Bayou St. John, an old Indian portage that connects Lake Pontchartrain, via the Rigolets or Chef Menteur Pass and Lake Borgne. A deep-water channel connected Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River, and the navigation route became known as the Intracoastal Waterway, which eventually provided a water route for barge traffic from the Rio Grande to the Florida coast (Lewis 2003, 55).

In the *Gardens of New Orleans, Exquisite Excess*, Douglas suggests that New Orleans gardening traditions evolved out of the city's blend of cultures, Native American, French, Spanish and African applied with German horticultural know how, and tempered by English style (Hardy and Douglas 2001, 8). Douglas explained the extent of gardening in the city:

Regardless of location, mid-century gardens often featured purely ornamental planting beds, complex and crowded with contrasting textures, colors, and shapes and embellished with cast-iron fences, benches, planters, and fountains, many from local suppliers. Plants included both natives and exotics introduced from Central America and the Orient. Crape myrtle, azalea, camellia, althea and other members of the hibiscus family were common as were rose, oleander, and jasmine (Hardy and Douglas 2001, 25).

In contrast to the new suburbs the New Orleans urban setting was not a pretty sight. Although trees were planted along some streets, many streets would not be paved until the end of the century. "Sidewalks were often dirt, covered with wooden planks; sometimes they were paved with brick or flagstone. Property drained directly into open ditches bordering the streets causing frequent flooding. Residents continued to leave the city in the summer to avoid the heat and disagreeable conditions" (Hardy and Douglas 2001, 25).

Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904) was an Anglo-Irish-Greek immigrant who learned news writing in Cincinnati and was sent to New Orleans to cover the political scene and the transition from Reconstruction government in 1877 (Benfey 2003, 219). “Hearn was a colorful, imaginative, but morbidly discontented man, who was most admired for his sensitive use of language in writing about the macabre and in creating strange exotic moods” (Columbia). During his ten years in New Orleans he did literary translations, wrote for the *Item*, and was literary editor of the *Times-Democrat* and published *Chita*, one of his best novels (Benfey 2003, 214, 217).

“The big event of the decade, sponsored and promoted by the *Times-Democrat*, was the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, which opened on December 16, 1884. With this fair, “New Orleans known for her languid pace, meant to announce her entrance into the bustling modern world” (Benfey 2003, 214). “When Lafcadio Hearn saw the electric lights go on over the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, like a million moons dawning slowly at once... ‘forty miles of electric wire bursting simultaneously into flame,’ he said that “Never did the might of machinery seem to me so awful” (Benfey 2003, 214). Hearn “found temporary refuge of silence and shadow in the extensive displays contributed by the young nation of Japan” (Benfey 2003, 214). Japan did not send a large exhibit of buildings and gardens to the New Orleans fair, instead “the main effort of the Japanese exhibits was to demonstrate the extraordinary success of Japanese educational and industrial programs during the early Meiji Era (1868-1912).” But Hearn was drawn to the Japanese exhibit and wrote that “The attention of the visitor to the Main Building is apt to be especially attracted at the present time by the Japanese exhibit” (Benfey 2003, 214). Hearn studied the antique porcelains and said

that they “have none of that conventional frankness of composition in design nor the flaring color which distinguishes many of the best new pieces. They are sober tinted; they affect no accepted pattern; their figures are strangely puzzling to the eye at first glance, but when the puzzle is read, what marvelous movement” (Benfey 215).

Lafcadio Hearn was fascinated with old Japan and he told a colleague that he was “trying to find the Orient at home” (Benfey 2003, 221). It started with the Japanese exhibit at the fair. He studied Buddhism, then read Percival Lowell’s *Soul of the Far East* and was convinced that he must go to Japan, which he did after a writing assignment in the West Indies for Harper Publishing Company (Benfey 2003, 221). Hearn fell in love with the Japanese culture, married, became a citizen, taught English, worked as a journalist, lectured and wrote several books. Through his writings Hearn gained a reputation as “a major interpreter of Japan to the West” (Monroe Library Special Collection).

In July 1892 Lafcadio Hearn’s “In a Japanese Garden” appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*. He had recently changed residences and he missed the lake view of his previous house but he felt compensated because his new home had a garden:

“or rather a series of garden spaces, which surround the dwelling on three sides. Broad verandas overlook these, and from a certain veranda angle I can enjoy the sight of two gardens at once. Screens of bamboos and woven rushes, with wide gateless openings in their midst, mark the boundaries of the three divisions of the pleasure grounds. But these structures are not intended to serve as true fences; they are ornamental, and only indicate where one style of landscape gardening ends and another begins (Hearn 1,2).

Hearn goes on to explain that “a Japanese garden is not a flower garden; neither is it made for the purpose of cultivating plants. In nine cases out of ten there is nothing in it resembling a flower bed...As a rule a Japanese garden is a landscape garden” (Hearne 2004, 2). The size of

the garden doesn't matter, it could cover acres or be small enough to put in a *tokonoma*, a small fruit bowl. But he said in order to appreciate the beauty of a Japanese garden one must "understand, or at least ... learn to understand, the beauty of stones...not...quarried...but of stones shaped by nature only" (Hearn 2004, 3).

And Hearn says that the only way to learn about stones is to see them used by Japanese in the Japanese landscape. Walking through a town, there are examples everywhere: at the approaches to temples, beside the road, in parks and at cemeteries. Hearn advises that after observing stones in the landscape one will become sensitive to the "moods" suggested by the stones. "Japan is...a land of suggestive shapes in stone, as high volcanic lands are apt to be; and such shapes doubtless addressed themselves to the imagination of the race at a time long prior to the date of that archaic text which tells of demons in Izumo who made rocks, and the roots of trees, and leaves, and the foam of the green waters speak" (Hearn 2004, 4). Shape and form are important. But also there is much folklore associated with stones and Hearn suggests further study in *Landscape Gardening in Japan* by Josiah Conder (Hearn 2004, 4).

Japanese gardens aren't attempts to duplicate an ideal landscape, but "Its artistic purpose is to copy faithfully the attractions of a veritable landscape and to convey the real impression that a real landscape communicates" (Hearn 2004, 5). People have emotional responses to nature's scenery and therefore it is the gardener's responsibility to "create not merely an impression of beauty, but a mood in the soul" (Hearn, 2004 5).

Hearn says that he doesn't know the history of his garden and isn't sure what sentiment it should communicate, "But as a poem of nature it requires no interpreter"

(Hearn 2004, 5). The article continues with details about his garden, and it closes with Hearn's thoughts on change:

For impermanency is the nature of all, more particularly in Japan, and the changes and the changers shall also be changed until there is found no place for them, and regret is vanity. The dead art that made the beauty of this place was the art also, of that faith to which belongs the all-consoling text, 'Verily, even plants and trees, rocks and stones, all shall enter into Nirvana' (Hearn 2004, 27).

Another Japanese exhibit at a world's fair attracted attention in New Orleans. According to Samuel Wilson Jr. in *New Orleans Architecture, Volume IV, The Creole Faubourgs*, the "replica" of the famous late-fifteenth century Golden Pavilion in Kyoto at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, the Kinkaku, shared features with a type of architecture that was common in the Lower Mississippi River region. The French colonial plantation house was raised with a high basement. It had front and rear or surrounding galleries. "Enormous visual importance was imparted by the steep hip roof which was double pitched or canted, "turned up sharply" at the eaves, where it extended to cover the galleries" (Wilson 37). "Kinkaku seemed a return to the functional purity of the original form. Though a foreigner the Kinkaku was not a stranger in this architectural society" (Lancaster 1963, 143). In 1905 steamboat Captain Paul Doullut had two identical houses built at the Mississippi River near Egan and Douglas streets in New Orleans. Steamboats and the Japanese exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair inspired the architecture. "Green tile concave roofs at the second levels and above the pilothouse recall the pavilion at the fair. The use of glazed tile to cover the Ionic columns of the raised basement, and the bricks at the basement level are also from Japanese influence." (Wilson 129)

Even for people who owned more than one home gardening was an important pastime at each of them and special emphasis was given to seasonal design (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14).

In *Notes on Gardening* published by the New Orleans Garden society in 1921, Mrs. Andrew Stewart stressed the importance of a colorful winter landscape. “ Since so many of us go away from New Orleans for many months in the summer and therefore miss the glory of crepe myrtles and Oleanders and other summer flowering trees, shrubs and plants, I think we should make a special effort to grow evergreens and winter and spring flowering things” (New Orleans Garden Society 1921, 3).

From the following remarks by Mrs. Andrew Stewart on garden design in 1921 it appears that New Orleans homes and gardens were tracking national trends, looking to European styles but opting for simplicity and informal arrangements rather than geometric layouts:

Our house is an old fashioned Colonial story and a half cottage so typical of New Orleans and well suited to the climate. Two kinds of garden would be appropriate – the old fashioned formal garden with walks, arbor and borders...or a combination of old and new, treated very informally as I have chosen. It might just as well be called the picturesque or naturalesque garden. The same character of work is known in France as a *Jardin Angelais*. The idea is distinctly English and means that the place should look as if it grew of itself without the interference, but perhaps the tender care of man. . . . I wanted my house to appear as if it were carefully set in a beautiful scene and now it looks as if it had grown here, and the relation between it and the garden is so intimate that they seem a part of each other. An appreciative visitor once said, ‘I have never seen a garden come so lovingly into the house as yours’ (New Orleans Garden Society 1921, 4).

Local Context: Residential Landscape Architecture in Pass Christian, Mississippi 1860-1930

Pass Christian, located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast about seventy miles from New Orleans was a popular resort for people from New Orleans, St. Louis, Chicago and other parts of the country (Caire 1976, 101) (Figure 11). In 1830, the “population of Pass Christian was 1,962, including whites, free men of color, and slaves” (Wiegand 1962, 24). “During this time the Pass was a midway scheduled stop on the steamboat run between New Orleans and Mobile, being

situated seven hours from each city. Travelers alighted, if only for a few hours, to walk the shady lanes and hear stories of the region” (Wiegand 1962, 24). Zachary Taylor, United States President, 1849-1850, visited Pass Christian in the summer of 1848. “Taylor’s arrival in Pass Christian was marked by flags, shouts, and cheers when he stepped to the pier, just about the entire population being present to welcome the hero of the Mexican War” (Wiegand 1962, 26).

In the 1850s Pass Christian experienced a building boom “when people wanted to get out of the hotels and into their own homes. Workers here were kept busy during the winter,



Figure 11. Pass Christian in relation to surrounding area. Source: [www.city-data.com/city/ Pass-Christian-Mississ...](http://www.city-data.com/city/Pass-Christian-Mississ...)

the ‘off’ season it was called, to build these homes (Stevens Lecture 1978). M. James Stevens felt that the Pass Christian Hotel, later known as the Montgomery Hotel, which was built in 1838

was responsible for this construction boom and said that “this why the Pass has so many buildings dating from the 1840s. The hotel brought people here to start with” (Stevens Lecture 1978). “Summer places were in vogue and a beautiful garden had the same social utility as good horses, a box at the opera, or magnificent dinner parties” (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14).

The Sunny South; or, The Southerner at Home, Embracing Five Years' Experience of a Northern Governess in the Land of the Sugar and the Cotton by J.H. Ingraham was published in 1860. The book takes the form of letters written by Kate Conyngham, a pseudonym of Reverend Joseph Holt Ingraham. The writer describes Pass Christian saying it is “celebrated for its pure salubrious air, the beauty of its site, the elegance of its private mansions, the refinement and wealth of its citizens . . . t is the famous summer resort . . . of many who have built tasteful abodes along the shore . . . where gardens and lawns, porticos and verandahs, enchant the eye” (Wiegand 1962, 33). Ingraham described Pass Christian saying in the 1850s the town “was but one street four miles long with a steamboat landing about in the middle of town. One side of the street was open to the breezes of the gulf, and the other bordered by handsome villas, most of its length” (Wiegand 1962, 37)

Ingraham then tells about the beach. “Every house on the shore has its private bath house... They are erected at the end of a wharf projecting sometimes 1000 feet out into the lake. Thus when one looks upon and down the shore in front of the town, the eye is filled with the spectacle of 100 or 200 narrow bridges and bathing houses built on the water” (Wiegand 1962, 37). Ingraham listed Pass Christian’s other hotels, “the Mansion House, the St. Nicholas House, the Napoleon Hotel, and the Sans Souci. The Nicholas House was for bachelors only and has

been described as the origin of quarrels that sometimes ended in the dueling field” (Wiegand 1962, 37).

On the Gulf Coast before modern roads, the only east-west route evolved from an old Indian trail that ran along the high ground between the Bay of St. Louis and Biloxi Bay. It became known as the Biloxi and Pass Christian Road or Pass Road. There was no road along the Mississippi Sound where Highway 90 is today. Residences that fronted the beach had long piers and people found that “sailing was faster and cheaper than traveling by horse or mule” (Stevens 1974, 37). M. James Stevens said that there were “seven steamboats serving the Pass... They also had regular ice delivery at that time which was very important because the Pass had always been a social town” (Stevens 1978). According to Stevens schooners were used for passengers and freight until around 1930 when the steamers took over (Stevens 1978).

A steamboat trip to the “watering places” on the Mississippi coast described by the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* May 8, 1866, just after the Civil War, helps establish the long standing relationship between New Orleans and Pass Christian that existed well before the running of commuter trains in 1880 (Caire 1976, 28). It sets the context for the coastal resort area known as “the six sisters”(Sullivan 41). The trip began at four p.m. in the French Quarter with a ride on the Lake Pontchartrain Railroad, the next to the oldest railroad in the United States, out to the Elysian Fields or Milneburg station. Passengers gathered at the lakeshore to board boats headed to various destinations. This particular voyage crossed Lake Pontchartrain and continued through the Rigolets into Lake Borgne and then to Mississippi. There was a festive atmosphere on board and the lake landscape of virgin cypress faded into a monotonous, flat, unoccupied shoreline. (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* May 8, 1866)

Bay St. Louis (also known as Shieldsboro), Pass Christian and Mississippi City were passed in the night, and Biloxi, the first French settlement on the Coast, was reached the next morning. The passengers could see “a succession of delightful residences, white and red, peeping through the green foliage.” But a closer look showed that the place was so overgrown that:

you could have sworn there was not a street, road or cow path in it. The landings which had been built out into the water had been watched with a jealous eye by the water gods, and had a dilapidated and abandoned appearance generally... For quiet citizens, who wish to escape from the exactions of fashion as well as the heat of the weather, and to whom a good market and cheap rent are essential requisites, we presume that the ancient town will still remain a favorite haunt (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* 1866).

At ten that morning the steamer arrived at Pascagoula, which “derives its poetic name from a tribe of Indians who have long since disappeared, and who, from the general appearance of the place, are likely soon to be followed by its modern inhabitants” (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* 1866).

Heading back to New Orleans, Ocean Springs made a more favorable impression. “The town has not, we imagine, the same attractions in the way of scenery that Pascagoula and some other of the older resorts have but it has the advantage of a couple of mineral springs, and two hotels which are already open to the public” (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* 1866). Mississippi City presented a picturesque view and showed promise that “the place will rank for fashion and attraction next to Pass Christian” (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* May 8, 1866). On the trip, coming and going, Pass Christian and Bay St. Louis are passed during the night, but they are impressive even in the dark. (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* 1866).

Pass Christian will, doubtless, retain its supremacy among the wealthier classes of our community. Before the war its carriages, fast horses and fine villas were unsurpassed, and were the theme of comment among watering-place *habitués*. Its population has sometimes been swollen to from eight to ten thousand persons... A bright light had been

kindled at the foot of the landing which threw a lurid glare over a large building standing in the background, and which from its proportions might have been a castle or medieval manor. Above was the frequent play of lightning, while in the foreground stood a mixed multitude awaiting the arrival of the boat... Everyone continued to gaze at it until the crowd, building and light was gradually lost in the gloom of the night (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* 1866).

Bay St. Louis is described as being about the same size in winter as Pass Christian, about fifteen hundred people, but “it’s principal drawback is the mosquitoes, a peculiarity of the place of which we still retain a feeling remembrance.” The round trip took approximately thirty-six hours, the fare was three dollars and the writer remarked that “the table fare alone is worth the price” (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* 1866).

By the early twentieth century Pass Christian was a favorite destination of planters from the Mississippi Valley and businessmen from New Orleans as well as visitors from Chicago and the Midwest. The popular coast resort had earned a reputation as the ‘Newport’ of the South because of its wealthy residents and guests who produced a “social life unequaled anywhere else in the South” (Caire 1976, 33) (Hayden 1950, 110). *The Daily Herald* 1923 remarked on the concentration of wealth, “there is probably no city of its size in the United States and certainly no city in the South which has as many fine homes in it as has Pass Christian. According to the statement of one of its prominent citizens there are thirty millionaires who have homes in Pass Christian. Many of them are from New Orleans but quite a number of them come from northern points” (*Daily Herald* 1923).

Eugene Aschaffenburg, a New Orleans resident, “started coming over here in 1905 and there were no automobiles that I do remember... We used to ship our cars by flatcar from New Orleans to Pass Christian” (Aschaffenburg). Emily Cook Audley lived in Pass Christian 1908-10 and spent summers there until 1924. She said that “There were very few cars over here then and

we drove everywhere by horses...every morning we drove all the men to the station where they would catch the train in Pass Christian and go to New Orleans to work” (Audley 1986).

John M. Parker, Jr. was born in 1893, and he spent that first summer and every summer since in Pass Christian. When asked about the commuter train he explained:

Most of the beach (Scenic Drive) was owned by people who lived in New Orleans or out of Pass Christian. They would come over and spend the summer months and sometimes weekends... We had transportation on the L & N Railroad and they sold thirty trip tickets for twenty eight dollars and seventy five cents, but an individual could buy a ticket for one hundred five dollars and they could travel as many times as they wanted to on any train between New Orleans and Pass Christian for a year. We had an old club car and it was named the ‘Beauvoir.’ We had to have so many members and sell so many tickets before the railroad would move the car. The people that owned the club car built a shed for it down near the L & N tracks in New Orleans and the car was put away there in the winter. It ran from about April or May until October. The train would leave the West End here at seven ten in the morning and got back about five ten in the evening. The trip took about an hour and forty-five minutes (Parker 1976).

On June 7, 1915, Theodore Roosevelt, United States president, 1901-1909, visited Pass Christian as guest of John M. Parker, Sr. in his 1916 book, *A Book-Lover’s Holidays in the Open*. Roosevelt described the Parker’s home:

Our host’s house was cool and airy, with broad covered verandas, and mosquito screens on the doors and the big windows. The trees in front were live oaks, and others of his own planting – magnolias, pecans, palms, and a beautiful mimosa. The blooming oleanders and hydrangeas were a delight to the eye. Behind the place stretched like a long ribbon to the edge of the fragrant pine forest, where the long leaved and loblolly pines rose like tall columns out of the needle covered sand (Roosevelt 1915, 274).

Mary Brandt, from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, recalled her first visit to meet her husband’s family in Pass Christian in 1918 right after World War I. “The beach was just a natural beach – with debris on it, but it was lovely.” Although her husband had told her how white the sand was, she “just couldn’t believe it.” There were individual piers extending out into the water, some of them were quite long. One she was told was three quarters of a mile long and

“it was a good wide pier . . . with a beautiful pavilion . . . with windows all around it...and they had dances there.” She went on to say that the streets were not paved and that made it difficult to take a drive to see the sights. Miss Brandt explained that existing roads were shell, and a car going about fifteen miles an hour created lots of dust. She added, “There were some lovely homes...and pretty gardens, and nearly everyone had white picket fences” (Brandt 1976).

On March 19, 1923, *The Daily Herald* quoted a tourist’s description of Pass Christian, “as a place many miles long and one house deep.” The following is a description of the Scenic Drive Historic District taken from its nomination to the Register of Historic Places:

It is a noncontiguous district composed of 130 commercial and residential buildings...Originally part of a nearly five- mile cohesive stretch of important seaside residences. The west beach area which is lower in elevation than the eastern section, was devastated by Hurricane Camille in August 1969. The majority of the buildings were completely destroyed leaving vacant lots or prompting new construction... Architecturally the residential portions of the district reflect the picturesque eclecticism typical of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the most prolific era of the community both qualitatively and quantitatively...The predominant pre-1900 tradition is the continuation of the conservative coastal cottage...More current and more numerous are the elegant and distinctive houses showing the influences of the Colonial Revival and Bungalow styles . . . (Scenic 1979).

Colonial Revival was a popular architectural style in Pass Christian but many structures in the Scenic Drive Historic District are characterized by their highly individualistic eclectic styling and feature a combination of design elements from one or more styles – Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, Mission, Greek Revival, Colonial Revival, Creole cottage and Craftsman Bungalow (Scenic 1979).

Structures in the Scenic Drive Historic District were recognized for their outstanding craftsmanship. On May 1, 1989 in the *Sun Herald*, Kat Bergeron wrote a feature story on one of Pass Christian’s master builders, Frank Phillip Wittmann, Sr. Wittmann was a self-trained

architect whose building career on the Coast began in 1893 and continued until his retirement in 1950. Wittmann's architectural trademarks were "dormers, sunny porches and a touch of livable class" (Bergeron 1989, B1). Wittmann's son, Frank Jr. said that "there was hardly a home in the Pass that he hasn't touched" (Bergeron B1+). Kenny Wittmann remarked on his grandfather's skill and said that "When trying to line things up north and south, he never used a level. He used the horizon. His eye was that good" (Bergeron 1989, B1). On May 7, 1989 the Pass Christian Historical Society featured four of Wittmann's houses on their annual tour of homes (Bergeron 1989, B).

Some of the homes in the Scenic Drive Historic District are the work of New Orleans architectural firms. Goldstein Architects, Rathbone DeBuys and Richard Koch are acknowledged in the *Inventory* of the Scenic Drive Historic District.

Architectural and garden design in Pass Christian followed a pattern of country and resort life that was taking place in the Northeast (Griswold and Weller 1991, 14). But on the Gulf Coast during the early 1900s landscape architects were rarely involved in local garden design. When Douglas wrote about garden design in New Orleans he said that there were very few landscape architects practicing in New Orleans during the first half of the twentieth century and that "most residential gardens were the creations of experienced garden club members or architects such as Richard Koch (Hardy and Douglas 2001, 30). The same was true in Pass Christian.

Middlegate Japanese Gardens were developed when oriental gardens were emerging as a popular motif in gardening style (Griswold and Weller 1991). Demand for Japanese architecture, decorative arts, and gardens grew following Japanese exhibits at international expositions in Europe, and in American cities – Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco,

and San Diego. Josiah Conder, the leading authority on Japanese gardens of the period, first stimulated interest in Japanese floral culture with his *Flowers of Japan and the Art of Floral Arrangement* published in 1891. With his 1893 publication of *Landscape Gardening in Japan*, interest in Japanese gardening was piqued internationally. K. Honda read his seminal paper on *Japanese Landscape Gardening* in Washington, D. C. in 1899 (Lancaster 1963, 191). During this period popular magazines such as *House and Garden*, *House Beautiful*, and *Country Life in America* carried articles on Japanese gardening.

Pass Christian was a popular coastal resort as well as a vacation community preferred by wealthy and powerful New Orleans families. Among those who spent weekends or entire summers at Pass Christian was Rudolf Hecht, president of Fidelity Bank and considered one of the more powerful within the “inner circle” in New Orleans politics (Barry 1935 229). Hecht was an international businessman who promoting New Orleans trade through extensive world travel (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Rudolf Hecht. Photo courtesy of Harry Stegenga family.

The wealthy elites of New Orleans as well as the surrounding sugar and cotton growers maintained second homes along the gulf coast and among these, Middlegate Japanese Gardens were among the most opulent and were an exceptional example of the finery created in the coastal resort lifestyle during the Country Place Era (1890-1930).

The Hecht family members have a strong historical connection with New Orleans. Lynne Watkins' father, Lynne Boyd Watkins, was a Louisiana Supreme Court Justice who also fought in the Civil War. The Watkins family had a long and colorful history on the Gulf Coast dating back to the 1880s when they owned and operated Lynne Castle, a popular resort hotel (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Lynne Castle. Source: Pass Christian Garden Club.

Rathbone DeBuys, a New Orleans architect who was a personal friend of the Hechts, designed the teahouses, pool house and guesthouse. DeBuys designed many of the more opulent homes in the Uptown section of New Orleans and his architectural practice extended to

residential and commercial design in Texas, Mississippi, Florida and Illinois as well as New Orleans (DeBuys 1934, 1).

A missing element is the voice of the women who designed the gardens. I was told that Estella Paxton Watkins, Lynne's mother, first planned a Japanese garden. It was Watkins' 1911 cottage that developed into the main residence at Middlegate (Figure 14). So I looked to see what might have influenced her choice. She was married to a Louisiana Supreme Court Justice. They lived in New Orleans and Pass Christian. Estella Paxton Watkins lived in New Orleans (1877-1887) when Lafcadio Hearn was writing for the local newspapers. She lived in New Orleans at the time of the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in 1885. She may have seen or heard about the Japanese exhibit that made Hearn decide that he wanted to live in Japan. Hearn's article "In a Japanese Garden" for *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1892 may have caught her attention. Estella Paxton Watkins may have attended one of the international expositions held in other cities and may have actually been among the first Americans to see Japanese architecture and gardens in the United States. It was Lynne Watkins Hecht who turned her mother's dream into Middlegate Japanese Gardens.

When I asked why they had chosen to build Japanese gardens in Pass Christian, she explained that her parents traveled all over the world and Japan was one of their favorite places. Her parents lived in New Orleans where her father was an international businessman. The property in Pass Christian had belonged to her grandmother, Estella Paxton Watkins. I asked who designed the gardens. Dottee said that the idea for the Japanese gardens was her grandmother's, but the design was her mother's. Each time her parents visited Japan they would bring back something for the garden. They also had a buyer in Japan who helped them



Figure 14. Main residence at Middlegate.
Source Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

locate and obtain objects to complete the garden (Cooper 1999).

The buildings and grounds were installed in the 1920s when the livelihood of many local residents rose and fell with the fortunes of wealthy families building large private homes on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Middlegate Japanese Gardens are an elegant example of the skill of local craftsmen working with local materials. The Hecht's collected all of the garden ornaments during their travels in Japan (Figure 15) , but they did not import labor and construction materials from Japan. Since Rudolf Hecht was one of the founders of Mississippi Shipping Company, and it is likely that some materials for the garden traveled on his ships.



Figure 15. Japanese garden lantern. Source: Mississippi Dept. Archives. 1979.

CHAPTER FIVE

MIDDLEGATE JAPANESE GARDENS

Lynne Watkins Hecht lived in New Orleans, a culturally diverse city with a strong gardening tradition. It was from this perspective that she designed the gardens for her weekend home in Pass Christian on property inherited from her mother, Estella Paxton Watkins.

The property location was on the east side of Pine Street near the gulf, (Figures 16 and 17). The three extant houses on the property were known as Eastgate, Middlegate, and Westgate, all owned by her mother, who originally owned and operated Lynne Castle nearby in Pass Christian. Middlegate itself was originally a small cottage built by Estella Paxton Watkins. A two-story addition was later added and this larger home was later occupied by Lynne Watkins Hecht and her husband Rudolf Hecht (Lang 1976).

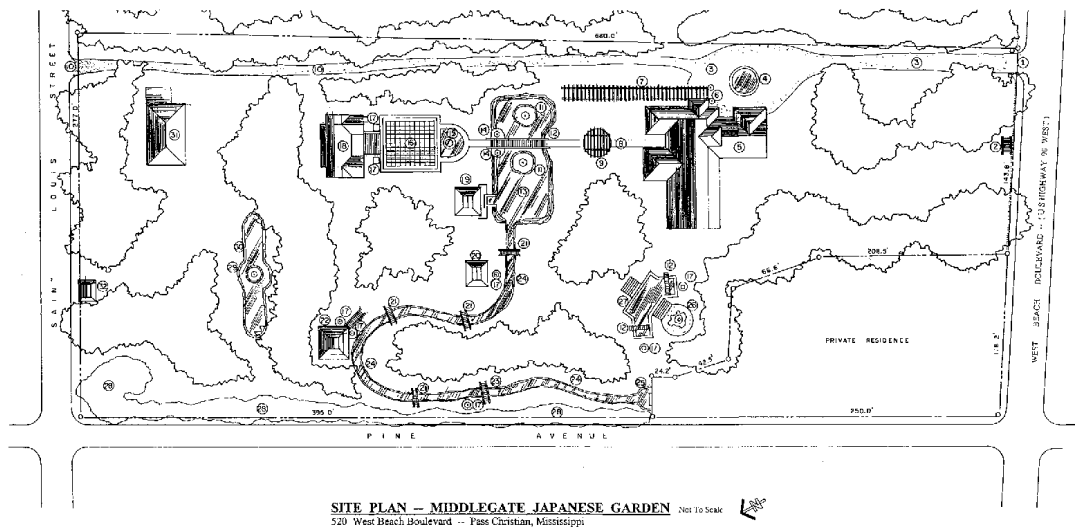


Figure 16. Site plan of the Hecht property.

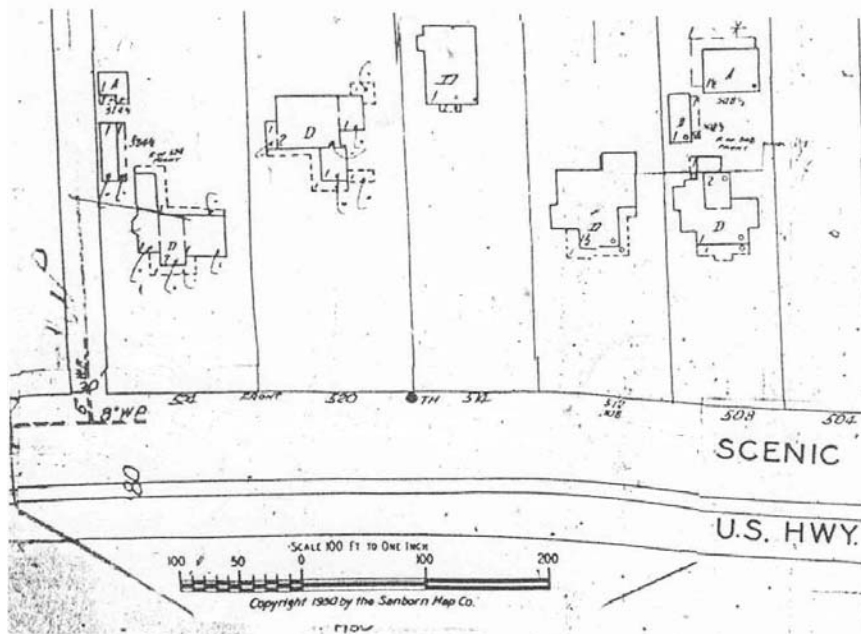


Figure 17. Plot plans for Hecht and adjacent properties. Harrison County assessor's office.

While Rudolf and Lynne Watkins Hecht lived in New Orleans (16 Audubon Place) but made their weekend home in Pass Christian where they built their Japanese Gardens at Middlegate (Friends of the Cabildo 1979, 141; Caire 1976, 84). “One enters Middlegate Japanese gardens through a graceful Oriental gate built of heavy bamboo with a roof of brilliant blue tiles, and wooden side panels in which are cut Oriental hieroglyphics which spell the name ‘Middlegate’” (Costain 1935, 20).

Rudolf S. Hecht (1885-1956), the son of Henrich and Dina Hecht was born in Ansbach, Germany. After completing his education in Germany, Hecht moved to the United States in 1903 to study banking. Hecht first worked in Chicago, and then in 1906 he accepted a job with Hibernia Bank and Trust in New Orleans (Davis 1960, 56). On June 3, 1911 Hecht married Lynne Watkins at Trinity Episcopal Church in Pass Christian (*Times Picayune* 1911). By 1918

Hecht was president of Hibernia, and had earned a reputation as one of the country's leading bankers (Davis 1960, 56).

On December 11, 1923 a Citizen's Committee honored Rudolf Hecht with the *Times Picayune* Loving Cup in recognition of his community service during 1922. The award ceremony took place "within the shadow of the ships which lined the harbor, ships with flags fluttering and with multi-colored pennants flapping in the warm air." Lyle Saxon, writing for the *Times Picayune* (1923, A1) set the scene:

A group of men, bankers, lawyers, merchants, important factors in the city's life, and numerous women were grouped together before the speakers' platform; while behind them, lounging languidly upon the railings and against pilings, were the Negro dock workers, interested spectators, watching silently. A jazz orchestra of fat and perspiring Negroes tooted away with cornets and trombones, while one black man twanged a tinkling banjo, and a light mulatto girl waved a moaning saxophone.

The deep toned whistles of tugs and ferries; shouts of laborers, softened by the open air; the lapping of water against the pilings of the wharf; a ship's bell sounding clear; from somewhere in midstream the muffled sound of exhaust pipes – a river steamboat getting under way... If one listened, he could hear through and above the medley of sounds, a murmur, deep, incessant, sonorous, like the beating of a mighty heart... The Port of New Orleans was awake.

The *Times Picayune* honored Hecht for his leadership in advancing the city's interest (Saxon 1923. A1). By 1922 with Hecht's financial leadership, New Orleans had built a publicly owned cotton warehouse, a municipal grain elevator, and the Industrial Canal, also known as the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain (Lewis 2003, 75). The *Times Picayune* also recognized Hecht for working out a complete new financial plan that put the city of New Orleans on a sound financial basis (Davis 1960, 56).

Rudolf Hecht was a very important person in New Orleans business and politics. In 1920 he was elected one of the six life members of the Board of Liquidation of the City Debt (Davis 1960, 56). New Orleans bankers had created this Board in 1880 to handle the huge debt left over from Reconstruction. The Board had extraordinary powers then and operates with many of the same powers today:

There were nine members: the mayor and two councilmen served ex-officio, while six 'syndicate' members, who made all the decisions served for life... When a ... member died or resigned, surviving syndicate members picked a successor... the mayor, the governor, and the voters had no say... and the syndicate members dictated all the decisions about nearly all large public expenditures... Elected officials controlled only current operating budgets. The syndicate members answered to no one but themselves and their colleagues...Between 1908 and 1971 only twenty-seven men served as syndicate members...In the 1920s Hecht had a reputation for brilliance and was considered one of the most influential men on the Board . . . (Barry 1998, 221).

Rudolf Hecht served as president of the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans from 1928 to December 1932 (Davis 1960, 56). Hecht was respected in banking circles and served as president of the American Institute of Banking in 1918. In 1934 Hecht was president of the American Bankers Association. But world trade was Hecht's primary interest, and in 1919 he was one of the founders of Mississippi Shipping Company, a company involved in international trade between South America and the Louisiana Gulf Coast (Mellin 1955, 28). Hecht worked to expand the New Orleans Port facilities and he traveled extensively promoting international trade (Davis 1960, 56).

He was a founding member of the New Orleans International Trade Mart in 1945 (Bolding 1967, 359). When he died the *Times Picayune*, January 19, 1956, reported that Hecht "was personally entertained by the heads of governments of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay,

Colombia and Costa Rica. He in turn entertained many distinguished guests both here and at his summer home in Pass Christian” (*Times Picayune* 1956, A1).

Lynne Watkins Hecht had family property in Pass Christian. Her parents, Louisiana Supreme Court Judge Lynne Boyd Watkins and Estella Paxton, had remodeled Dr. Savage’s old school as their private residence, and it came to be known as Lynne Castle (Caire 1976, 92). When asked about the Watkins and their daughter Lynne, John M. Parker, Jr., son of Louisiana governor (1920-24) by the same name, said, “I knew her very well. I knew her brother. We used to go swimming together as boys – Boyd Watkins. The Judge was pretty old when I was a boy. They had these three houses right here on Pine Street and the beach” (Parker 1976).

In 1892 Judge Watkins decided that Lynne Castle was too large and advertised to lease it out. The proposal read, “For Rent: A completely furnished and equipped Hotel, named and designated as ‘Lynne Castle’ at Pass Christian, Mississippi, the best winter and summer resort in the south, open all the year round. The lessor, reserving one suit of rooms and one room in the cottage for use of family, will rent, for one or a series of years, said premises completely and elegantly furnished . . .” (Lynne Castle Deed record 1892, 28).

When the *Daily Picayune* reported Judge Watkins’ death March 3, 1901, Watkins was an Associate Justice on the Louisiana Supreme Court (*Daily Picayune* 1901,11). According to the *Daily Picayune*(1901,11), Judge Watkins died March 2 at Lynne Castle, his home in Pass Christian, and his funeral was held at his home the following day. Lynne Boyd Watkins was born in Caldwell County, Kentucky on November 9, 1836, and he was the son of Colonel T. G. Watkins a Kentucky politician who was involved in the administrations of Presidents Jackson, Polk and Pierce (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11). Lynne Boyd Watkins graduated from Bethel College

in Tennessee, and then he studied law under his brother, J. D. Watkins, a senior partner at J. D. and L. B. Watkins Law Firm in Minden, Louisiana (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11).

During the Civil War, Lynne Boyd Watkins served with Company G, Eighth Louisiana Regiment and was in the first battle of Manassas (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11). At the close of the war he was Captain and Provost General of the Corps of Calvary commanded by General Forrest (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11). Lynne Boyd Watkins resumed his law practice, and he was later appointed judge of the Eighteenth Judicial District (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11). On October 8, 1884 Judge Watkins married Estella Paxton, the daughter of Thomas Edwards Paxton and Mary Jane Stephens of Red River Parish (Ancestry World Tree Project 2001).

In 1886, Lynne Boyd Watkins was appointed to the Louisiana Supreme Court to succeed Justice Thomas C. Manning, and Governor Murphy J. Foster later reappointed Watkins for another twelve-year term (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11). Although Red River parish remained Judge Watkins' legal domicile, he "bought a beautiful home – Lynne Castle – in Pass Christian where he lived with his family...and where death overtook him"(*Daily Picayune* 11). According to the *Daily Picayune* Judge Watkins' wife and three children, two boys and a girl survived him (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11). However, the 1910 Harrison County census listed his wife Estella, daughter Lynne and only one son, Thomas Boyd (U.S. Census 1910).

The *Daily Picayune* commented on his judicial career commenting that:

Judge Watkins was regarded by his associates on the bench and by the bar of the state as one of the most profound jurists, the Supreme Court, rich as it has been in masterminds, has ever boasted. Learned in the law, indefatigable in industry, he has most assuredly left an impress on the jurisprudence of the state . . . His ability as a lawyer and jurist was a heritage. The Watkins family has been prominent for three generations in the law and for two generations in public and legal affairs of Louisiana (*Daily Picayune* 1910, 11).

Judge Watkins was “socially as popular as he was professionally, successful, tall and commanding in stature, handsome and courtly, he was the embodiment of the ideal southern gentleman, showing in word and deed the graces of the brilliant ancestry from which he sprung . . . and that his death will bring sincere sorrow to many homes” (*Daily Picayune* 1901, 11).

A few years later in 1915, the March 22 *Daily Herald* noted that Lynne Castle was destroyed by fire earlier that morning, and that Mrs. Alda T. Rhea was the present owner. It went on to describe Lynne Castle as having 120 rooms, three stories high and frontage of 300 feet and that it was considered “one of the most aristocratic hotels on the coast and numbered among its guests the more prominent visitors who spent the winter months among us.” It was located between Clarence and Henderson Avenue, now the site of Pass Christian Village.

On March 7, 1923 *The Daily Herald* reported the death of Estella Paxton Watkins, “a large property owner in Pass Christian, who was noted for her kindness and liberality.” She was buried in Live Oak Cemetery in Pass Christian.

In the support material of the National Register of Historic Places Sites Survey for the Scenic Drive Historic District the Hecht residence is described as being “the most ambitious bungalow in the district, and the only one surviving Hurricane Camille in 1969”(Scenic Drive Historic District 1979, 19). Mrs. Watkins’ circa 1911 cottage served as the core and the house was expanded room by room. With all the structural changes that followed, New Orleans architect, Danny Taylor said that it is hard to tell what was done when. One person who commented on the architecture said the house stood the force of Hurricane Camille because of its numerous additions; all the walls were exterior walls. According to Taylor the original main cottage included the master bedroom and living area, and a kitchen addition was added to the

rear and west. The main residence was not done in the style of the garden structures. The roofline of the house had straight lines. But the design of the residence used the same materials as the garden and was compatible with the Japanese styled structures (Taylor 2002).

There are banks of windows with diamond pattern glazing. Cypress and pine were used in all of the buildings. Danny Taylor said that he would describe the residence as a Pass Christian beach house; the porch on the side is typical of that type. Columns raised on a base, tapered to a beam are more carpenter, craftsman style. Also, Taylor said that the carpenters made ornamental, chamfered, and beveled edge wood cuts that are characteristic of the California ‘stick style,’ an architectural style that shows Japanese influence. Taylor pointed out that the rafters extended out past the side of the house. Detailing and framing are not Japanese, and Taylor said that he considers the construction techniques to be modern Mississippi crafted to look Japanese (Taylor 2002).

Most of the damage by Hurricane Camille was in the main residence, in the living room in the south area. The main residence in the front protected the raised teahouses in the back garden from more extensive damage. Damages in the gardens from the storm were limited to downed trees, broken ceramic pieces, and missing roof tiles (Taylor 2002).

Only the statuary, garden seats and movable parts were from Japan (Taylor 2002). When Taylor did restoration work he discovered that the blue roof tiles on the teahouses, guest house and pool house were not Japanese, but Italian, Ludowici barrel tiles. The barrel tiles were designed with an end cap made for an embossed image (Taylor 2002).

On March 24, 1930, the first annual convention of the Garden Clubs of Mississippi visited the “famous Japanese gardens of Mr. and Mrs. Rudolf Hecht . . . Mrs. Hecht received the

more than 150 visitors assisted by her wee daughter, Dorothy, and entertained at an Azalea Tea . . . gardens of rare charm and unique setting . . . have given much pleasure to hundreds of visitors”(*Daily Herald* 1930, A1).

Beth Lockett Stewart gave an account of the Garden Club’s third annual Pass Christian Pageant in the *Tarpon Beacon* on April 3, 1941, and said that one of the homes on the tour was “Rudolf Hecht’s nationally famous Middlegate Japanese gardens . . . which never lets visitors down . . . and the guides were dressed up in kimonos”(n. p.). In an undated Pass Christian brochure promoting the towns “beautiful homes and scenic gardens,” Middlegate Japanese Gardens were tagged a “glamorous transplanted bit of the Chrysanthemum Kingdom, open to visitors certain hours each day” (*Pass Christian, Mississippi*, n.d.).

Ray Thompson, in his *Daily Herald* column, “Know Your Coast,” on May 11, 1959 called Middlegate Japanese Gardens, “The Top Tourist Attraction Pass Christian Cannot Publicize”(Thompson 1959, 4.) Then Thompson added that the gardens would be open for the Garden Club Spring Pilgrimage and that on May 19, two hundred fifty Mississippi bankers’ wives, conventioning on the Coast . . . will visit Middlegate Gardens at the invitation of Mrs. Hecht in silent salute to her deceased banker husband” (Thompson 1959, 4). On May 11, 1995, in *The Progress*, Dan Ellis and Billy Bourdin wrote that “Remnants of these gardens can still be sighted from Second Street (St. Louis) between Clarence Avenue and Pine Street but only memories exist now of those visits to the Middlegate Japanese Gardens” (*Progress* 1995, n. p.).

One of the key informants for this thesis was Thelma deMetz Miller. Her father, Adolf Isodore deMetz built the swimming pool and the little river that ran through the Middlegate gardens. Miller furnished a photograph that showed a group of men putting in sheet piling and

forming for the concrete walls of the swimming pool. The elevated teahouse is in the background to one side of the pool, and the guest house is on the other side. Once the pool was completed, water would spill down a rocky hillside into the pool (Miller 2002).

Another interviewee was Horace Labat. During World War II Labat served in the Buffalo Division of the Fifth Army and was awarded the Bronze Star for heroic achievement in action. When I interviewed him on February 10, 2003 he owned and operated Labat's Bar-B-Q Grill, but for many years he worked as a building contractor in Pass Christian and New Orleans. I asked if he was around when Middlegate Japanese Gardens were built and he said that he was. "Old man Whitman and them used to do all the building on it and deMetz did the light contracting. I did some work in the latter years on it. It used to be a showplace for a lot of tourists (Labat). I asked how they dug out that big swimming pool and Labat said that "They did it with shovels. There was no backhoe then; everything was done by shovels, even the street gutters were done with shovels at that time. That was their job, to dig, all day long. You'd be surprised how much can be done in a day like that. Right now, if you would ask somebody to do it; they would die (Labat 2003).

On October 9 and October 15, 2002, I interviewed Dorree, the daughter of Dorothy "Dottee" Hecht Cooper and Asahel Cooper. Her grandparents, Lynne Watkins and Rudolf Hecht built Middlegate Japanese Gardens. Dorree was born in New Orleans in 1952, and moved with her parents, sisters Kathy, Lynne and Elizabeth, and brother, Asahel to Middlegate in 1962. After graduating from Country Day School in New Orleans, Dorree attended Converse College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and received her master's of fine arts at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Kentucky (Cooper 2002).

Dorree explained how Middlegate Japanese Gardens came to be built in Pass Christian:

My grandmother designed it and another family friend; Rathbone DeBuys (New Orleans architect) designed the teahouse and the guest house. My great grandmother, Estella Paxton Watkins lived on the property first, and she was interested in starting the Japanese garden. It was started, partly for her. After she passed away, my grandparents kept it for a summer home and added, and kept adding to it. They made the pool bigger and added the little waterfall and the teahouse above it. It just went on from there. They would go to Japan, and they had a buyer in Japan, who would find certain things for them, like a type of lantern. That's the way it got started in the 1920s (Cooper 2002)

Dorree remembers that when her grandmother was alive there was often more than one gardener planting, trimming and maintaining the gardens

During the Hecht years at Middlegate, John and Anna Dambrink lived in the caretaker cottage and supervised the work in the garden. On February 12, 2003 John Dambrink's grandson Harry Stegenga and his wife Janice in a personal interview told me about their family. John Dambrink was originally from Germany and came to the Gulf Coast by way of Winnipeg, Canada. In Canada Dambrink was friends with Anna and Jan Stegenga who were from Holland. When Jan became terminally ill he asked John to take care of his wife and three sons (Stegenga, J. 2003).

A year after Jan's death, John and Anna married, took a honeymoon trip to Pass Christian, and decided to relocate their family to the Coast. Dambrink took a job at a nursery in Pineville a little town about two miles north of Pass Christian. Together he and Anna had five children: Jan, Piet, and Martin Stegenga, and Elizabeth and John Dambrink. Harry said that his father, Piet, was four years old when the Dambrinks moved to the Coast. Piet was born in 1911 and died in 1988. Piet was the gardener in the family, and worked for his father at Middlegate. Harry and Janice did not know what took the Dambrinks to Middlegate Gardens. They didn't know that part of the family history (Stegenga, J. 2003, Stegenga, H 2003).

Janice said that Piet, her father-in-law, often talked to her about working at the Middlegate gardens. The other children went to college and followed different careers. Janice said that Piet claimed that he planted half the trees in Pass Christian. After John Dambrink retired from Middlegate, Piet worked for Lorraine Adams Florist and Nursery in Pass Christian, but he also had a civil service job at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi (Stegenga, J.2003, Hearn 2004, 21).

Piet told Janice that he would dress up as a Chinese coolie, and he would pull a jinricksha full of people around the garden. For one wedding they imported thousands of Easter lilies, and the gardeners had to dig the holes and plant the lilies in the ground so it would look like they grew there. Piet also told her that trainloads of people would come from New Orleans for parties, weddings and events that took place in the garden (Stegenga, J. 2003) (Figure 18).

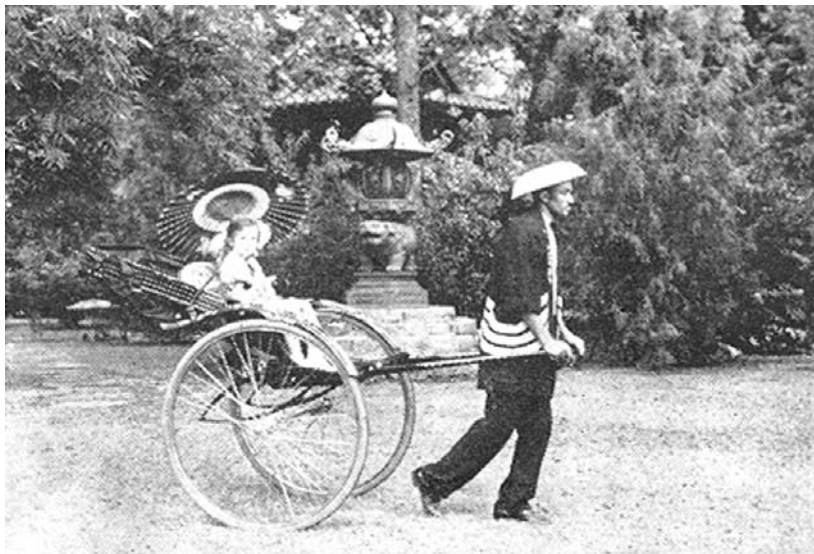


Figure 18. Piet Stegenga pulling a jinricksha. Photo courtesy of Harry Stegenga.

The Dambrinks retired in 1961 after Lynne Watkins Hecht's death. They built a brick home a short distance from the caretaker's cottage on St. Louis Street. Harry's sister Elizabeth and his mother would take trips down to Florida but "Pops" Dambrink would not go. He liked to stay at home. It was a complete world for him. He would get in his car and drive about a block away to the grocery store or the post office. John Dambrink liked to take care of his yard, and he did the outside work until he was in his 80s. In 1969 at the time of Hurricane Camille, John Dambrink's memory had failed and Anna was an invalid. Harry's mother, Valena took care of them during the day while the Dambrink's daughter Elizabeth was at work (Stegenga, J. 2003).

When Hurricane Camille went ashore in Pass Christian the night of August 17, 1969, Piet and Valena Stegenga, John, Anna, Elizabeth and John Dambrink, Jr. (Joey) were all together at the Dambrink's home on St. Louis Street. They were all gathered there because John Dambrink, Sr. refused to leave his home. The next day only Piet, Valena and Joey had survived. A few houses away, the caretaker's cottage had been spared by the Hurricane. Because of severe storm damage at their family cemetery, Trinity Episcopal Cemetery, the family was buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Gulfport. (Stegenga, J. 2003, Hearn 2004, 119).

When Harry Stegenga talked about Middlegate, he said that everywhere in the gardens there was something to look at, big statues of a frog or turtle, the pagoda, lanterns, and the little stream that was like a concrete wading pool with running water. Harry said that the paths leading through the garden would take him over the same bridge several different times as he explored everything. At the teahouses, shoes were removed on the porch and Tatami mats were on the floor. He remembers that the smell of the wood was really nice. Mrs. Hecht was often sitting out on the porch with her collie when he was in the garden. (Stegenga, H. 2003).

After Dorree's grandmother died, her parents and her aunt, Lynne Hecht Farwell, got together and at first they were going to put the entire Middlegate Japanese Gardens on the market. "Then my parents decided they would buy the main residence and the surrounding part of the garden. My aunt bought the part of the property from behind the pool, across the sunken garden and including the guest house. My parents decided that as an experiment, they would move to Pass Christian. My father worked in New Orleans, but at that time, there was a little commuter train. So he didn't have to drive. So they said, well, let's just move there for a year and try it out. And, of course, they never left (Cooper 2002, 15).

In 2002, Dorree had recently returned to the Gulf Coast to live in Bay St. Louis. She had been living in California and had worked as a set decorator on motion pictures, including: "Legends of the Fall" "Batman and Robin," "Message in a Bottle," "A Time to Kill," and "Up Close and Personal." Dorree said that in a way her mother had prepared her for a career as a set decorator because "we were always entertaining." Also growing up in a Japanese garden was like growing up on a movie set, because a Japanese garden was very unusual in Mississippi. "But I always told my mother she gave us great training for me to work on movies because we could pull off a party at the last minute and we just all worked together and did it. And it was fun" (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree continued: "When we were little children . . . a couple of times for a garden tour we wore little kimonos that my grandmother brought back from Japan . . . and there were little paper chrysanthemums for our hair . . . And when my grandmother was still alive, she had parties; and she would get us all dressed up; and we would pass around little baskets of cigarettes, or sometimes, hors d'oeuvres with our little kimonos on" (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree said that she did not have a “first” memory of the gardens, but when she thinks about being a child in the garden she thinks of the swimming pool:

We were always swimming in the pool. And it was probably one of the oldest pools on the Gulf Coast. It still doesn't have a filter. It's just like a big concrete lagoon and it has to be cleaned out once or twice a year, the leaves taken out and scrubbed down with chlorine and then filled back up. An artesian well feeds the pool. The house and pool are not on city water . . . The pool was concrete and around the edges are granite rocks to make it look like a big natural pond. We put chlorine in it every night, so it's clean. It's not like a dark green pool. It looks more clear but not as crystal clear as a pool most people would like for a swimming pool. There are two islands in the pool and a bridge goes over it, so it was really fun to swim in. The pool is long, but it winds around. And the two little islands break it up and there's a bridge between the islands. So I'd say it could be as long as an Olympic pool and not quite as wide . . . The bridge is wood, slightly arched and painted red (Cooper 2003, 09).

Based on a letter written in 1937, it is evident that Dorree's mother, Dorothy shared her fondness for the swimming pool. Some of Rudolf Hecht's papers are deposited in the Special Collections Division of the library at Tulane University. Included with his papers is a letter written by Lynne Watkins Hecht to Martha in Pass Christian. Mrs. Hecht and her daughter Dorothy were staying at the Thermia Palace, Healing Spa Island, in Piestany, Slovakia. Dorothy had just returned from Budapest where she went swimming in a pool that had “waves.” The pool was calm for a half hour and then the waves would be turned on for a half hour. Dorothy said that it was like a storm and that “we would love to have waves in the pool at the Pass” (Succession of Lynne Watkins Hecht, 1956).

Harry Stegenga also had a fondness for playing in the pool. “Being kids, things seem larger than they are. I thought the pool was about ten hundred feet. It was huge, and it had a curve in it, so you could swim around the pool. In the middle of it, they had an island, and it had a garden planted on the island” (Stegenga, H. 2003) As an adult, Stegenga thought that the pool

might have been forty feet by thirty feet. The island was about ten or twelve feet in diameter (Stegenga, H. 2003).

Middlegate Japanese Gardens, an undated brochure, told visitors that the most interesting feature in the garden was the gigantic bronze statue of Buddha that came from the gardens of the great Daibutsu in Kamakura, Japan. Rudolf Hecht had first seen this Buddha when he visited Kamakura in 1924. Dorree said that her family had a story of how the Buddha came to the garden:

The story we were always told in the family about the Buddha, was that on the same day that the stock market crashed, October 29, 1929, my grandmother and grandfather got a wire saying “I found your Buddha. He’s on the way.” This was a big piece. It is bronze. It’s maybe 14 feet high with the pedestal it’s on. And it is supposed to be 300 years old. It was shipped from Japan in a huge crate and supposedly he came with rice patties in his hand for good luck (Cooper 2002, 09).

In *Around the Face of the Globe* Rudolf Hecht described his return trip to the gardens of the Daibutsu twenty-eight years later. On that trip Hecht didn’t have time to travel over the whole country but he set aside a day to visit Kamakura. Hecht said that Kamakura had a history as the seat of government for Feudal Japan, but in modern times “it was a very peaceful community famed for its ‘Daibutsu,’ a huge forty-three feet high bronze statue of Buddha, into which one can climb like our Statue of Liberty, to review the surrounding countryside” (Hecht 1953, 186).

To me the chief interest this time was to re-visit the exact spot on which, during my previous visit in 1924, quite near the big Buddha, rested the much smaller Buddha now in my garden in Pass Christian. I decided that though we could not reproduce the mountainous background, we had otherwise done every well in copying the Buddha’s original setting” (Hecht 1953,186).

Dorree explained that in the Middlegate gardens the granite wall behind the Buddha is right on the property line. A cover of dense vegetation conceals activities on the other side of that

granite wall. The Buddha is up on a hill overlooking the garden. “Looking back from the swimming pool you can see him up there, very serene” (Cooper 2002, 15). At the lower level, bronze statues of two samurai warriors guard the Buddha. “When we were children we used to call one Thunder and one Lightning because one had a dagger, but we thought it looked like a lightning rod” (Cooper 2002, 15). Looking toward the Buddha, it is not apparent that there are two levels. Granite steps lead up to the reflection pond that embraces the area surrounding the Buddha. On each side, the reflection pond is crossed by a little bridge. More granite steps lead up to the Buddha (Cooper 2002,15).

Harry Stegenga said that for luck, people would make a wish and put coins in the Buddha’s hands. Stegenga “liked to climb the steps to the Buddha, find the coins people left, and take the money up to Grant’s store, with, a nickel for a Stage Plank, a nickel for a Moon Pie and a nickel for a root beer (Stegenga, H.2003).

There is another story about the Buddha. After Hurricane Camille a man came into Middlegate Gardens, and was very disturbed to see that the Buddha was still there. He told Asahel Cooper, Dorree’s father, that he should just push that thing over in the mud. The man believed that the Buddha was the cause of the hurricane, disasters, and evil. Dorree said that the man was very upset because his family died in the storm and he blamed the Buddha (Cooper 2002).

At the time of Hurricane Camille, Eastgate and Westgate no longer belonged to the Hecht heirs. Westgate was demolished by Camille and all the members of the George Smith family, except one little boy, died. Eastgate was not damaged (Bourdin 2004). However, the family stayed that night with the Coopers at Middlegate. Dorree and her brother Asahel were each away

from the Coast that night. When the water started rising in the main residence at Middlegate, everyone went upstairs and then nailed the door shut at the top of the stairs. Dottee Cooper said it was a good thing that it was night and they did not try to leave. The next morning when they opened the door they saw nothing at the bottom of the stairs (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree said when she returned home a few days later, all the landmarks were gone. It looked like a bomb had been dropped. Janice Stegenga spoke of the “stairs to nowhere,” because often that was all that was left of a dwelling. Dorree said that most of the garden was okay. A lot of trees were missing. The fountain was destroyed. The cranes were broken up. But most of the lanterns were okay and the Buddha was okay, which was remarkable because it was the house behind the Buddha, Westgate, that was totally destroyed (Cooper 2002, 09).

When she was growing up, Dorree said that everyone in the community knew about the Japanese gardens. Several people had tried to take a peek at it. When she attended Pass Christian High School for two years, some boys told her: “Oh, we’ve been there. We’ve sneaked in there and gone skinny dipping in the pool” (Cooper 2002, 09). Now she is very grateful that she grew up in the garden, but when she was young it was different. “I felt a little funny...no one else had this in their back yard” Now she sees it as a magical place (Cooper 2002, 09).

It’s just a whole world in itself. It is right along the beach on Highway 90, but you can’t see anything from the highway. Japanese gardens are supposed to take one size property or garden and make it seem bigger because of the little trails going through it. At Middlegate you don’t go walk directly from one thing to another. There are curved paths and that kind of thing. So, for all that’s in the garden, it’s not a huge property but it seems bigger because of the arrangement. The teahouses – there are two teahouses and they were placed on hills created by fill dirt from the pools. The teahouses are just tucked away in the trees. So you don’t see some of it until you come up on it. And it is just a very special place (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree described the teahouses as wood structures with bright blue tile roofs and said that some of the tiles once had end caps of some sort of decorative lily. She pointed out wood carving on the sides of the teahouse and said that she thought that originally the carvings had gold leaf. But in general the teahouses were empty rooms. Her grandfather used one as a “sort of summer study, the windows slide open and there are screens in there. In the summer, we put a bed there and sometime we’d sleep up there because it’s up on this little rise, so it would catch the breezes at night” (Cooper 2002, 09).

As an artist, Dorree said that the gardens influenced her work. She did some kimono pieces and she did drawings with bridge shaped motifs. “I would draw the teahouse or the teahouse, a waterfall, and the pool. The bridges were some of my favorites. I took things from the garden, the feelings and ideas came from the garden” (Cooper 2002, 09, 15).

For one show Dorree made sculptures based on the bridges. She used wood that she cut with a saw. The shapes weren’t half moons. They looked something like mountains. She then cut out the sides to match and painted them red, the same as the bridges in the garden. Across the top she put bamboo. From the cross pieces that came to the outside and held the bridge together, she hung tiny prayer papers. Dorree said it was her understanding that in Japan people write prayers on papers and hang them in the temples. The sculptures were a cross between mountains and bridges (Cooper 2002, 15).

Dorree talked about the bridges in the gardens, and said that most of them were just to get from one point to another. There was one over the swimming pool. There were two or three bridges over the little river that flowed through the garden. But there was a special bridge that crossed the river that was sort of a half moon bridge that her grandmother called:

the Wishing Bridge and the story she told us is that you had to climb over the bridge walking backwards, with your eyes closed, all the way to the top, then you went down over to the other side, and then you came back, and looked down. You could then open your eyes and make your wish. But you couldn't speak the whole time or your wish wouldn't come true. And that's what my grandmother called the Wishing Bridge. Now I suppose she just made that up for the children, but I don't know (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree said that the Wishing Bridge had a concrete base and that it was wooden, the steps were wooden and the railing was wooden. Three of the low bridges are concrete and "they once had wood railings on them but they don't anymore. The one over the big pool is wood and the ones going to the Buddha are wood" (Cooper 2002, 09).

She described the little river that flows through the garden and said that it was overflow from the swimming pool. It was concrete and had rocks along the bank and planted to look like a natural stream. "There is a low point in the pool, and it is cut down lower than the rest of the sides so the water can overflow out there . . . It's between three and four feet wide and about six inches deep, depending on the weather" (Cooper 2002, 09). At one time the water used to flow on its own accord, but now it takes a pump. So it flows from underneath that teahouse down into the pool, and then there's just a little low point in the rocks around the pool and it overflows. That's why there is no filter on the pool. It just looks like pond . . . The water does not re-circulate; it is free flowing from an artesian well . . . The little river just sort of ends into a drain at the end of the garden, but no one sees where it goes" (Cooper 2002, 15).

She said that the part of the little river near the Wishing Bridge is "tadpole heaven. We used to catch tadpoles when we were kids. But there are so many frogs out here because of all the water, it's just like a symphony of frogs at night in the summer" (Cooper 2002, 15). When Dorree and her husband lived at Middlegate they planted cypress trees near the Wishing Bridge and she said that it is hard to believe how much they have grown in twenty years.

There are two carved stone statues on different sides of the river. One holds a lute and is the Goddess of Music or Eloquence; the other holds a fish and is the God of Fishermen and all around grantor of success to people in their chosen professions. Granite rocks were used to give the pool and the little river a more natural edge. The waterfall is “built of granite rocks, and the water comes from the top level, hits a rock right in the middle of where the water falls to split the flow, and then it comes down as steps . . . but there is no Zen garden type of thing in there” (Cooper 2002, 09).

There is a long wisteria covered arbor that runs along the side of the house and that is one way to enter the garden. A slate path connects the house, bridge, arbor and sunken garden (Cooper 2002, 09). “The sunken garden had a green tile floor and it surrounded by three or four sets of granite steps. When there were parties, people could dance down there. It was really neat. One time they had a party going on and tables and chairs were out there and the men dressed in black pants and white jackets” (Stegenga, H. 2003).

Some of the best vantage points for viewing the garden are found at the Buddha, at the pool, or from within one of the teahouses, guest house or the main residence. From the teahouse up on the hill there is a whole view of the pool. Back at the main residence or from the guest house, there is the sunken garden, the little round pond that no longer has a fountain, and a short walkway to the bridge over the pool. On the other side of the bridge, there is the arbor covered with Confederate Jasmine and the walkway going to the house (Cooper 2002, 09).

Family weddings have been celebrated in the garden. On April 28, 1951, Dorothy Watkins Hecht married Asahel Walker Cooper, Jr., and Lynne Hecht Farwell was her sister’s

matron of honor (*Times Picayune* 1951). One of Dorree's sisters was married near the pool and the other sister chose the porch of the teahouse above the waterfall (Cooper 2002).

Dorree's brother Asahel was married near the little round pool in the sunken garden which is located between the main residence and the guest house where granite Foo Dogs stand guard and large bronze lanterns light the way. For Asahel's wedding, the lanterns were re-wired. Long ago all of the lanterns were wired for electricity and the gardens were beautifully lighted at night. Now the wiring is bad and nobody knows where all the wires are. Today temporary paper lanterns light the many bronze and granite lanterns in the gardens (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree was married on the wishing bridge in the garden. When she was married it was "in April and the wisteria was incredible. There was wisteria growing all up around the Buddha and thick in the trees. It was beautiful. But she said it was one of those times when the gnats were so bad that little baskets of bug spray were placed throughout the garden for the guests' use. In the wedding photographs, "women were grabbing their hair trying not to mess up their hairdo, but the gnats were in their hair. During the ceremony, I looked at the minister and I saw this little cloud of gnats around his face. I felt like saying, oh, get those" (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree said that she has not traveled to Japan, but she knows that Middlegate Japanese Gardens represent an American's interpretation of a Japanese garden. She said that her "grandfather put in a brick patio on the shallow side of the swimming pool where all the kids would play and that her grandmother had a fit because she said it was not appropriate for the Japanese and wanted a more natural setting all around. But he just thought there should be some kind of concrete or brick or something for people getting in and out of the pool. That's one thing I know that is not of the Asian touch" (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree said that her whole family worked in the garden. She said that there was so much to keep up it was like living on a little farm. The pool had to be cleaned periodically. The house and the pool used well water so the pumps had to be primed. Arthur Conway worked in the garden and was a big help to Dorree's mother, who could not handle all the work by herself. Conway now works for her brother, Asahel, and he really keeps the place together by cutting the grass, trimming and whatever needs to be done in the garden. That is a huge job. We call him "St. Arthur" (Cooper 2002, 09).

Because of the passage of time and the changes in upkeep, Dorree said that Middlegate Japanese Gardens are not the manicured, perfect place that they used to be when her grandmother lived there. These teahouses have either nothing in them or at one time, they had a low table with the cushions and the guest house had the *tatami* mats on the floor and you had to take your shoes off, but they aren't furnished like that anymore (Cooper 2002, 09).

Dorree considers Middlegate Japanese Gardens as her grandmother's greatest achievement. Dorree was about nine years old when her grandmother died and she remembers her grandmother's last garden project. A small meditation garden was installed in an area behind the shower house, near the walk up to one of the teahouses. "It had gravel on the ground and these stepping stones and a little sculpture, that looked like a little well. There are some ceramic stools. Two gates, made of bamboo and something that looked like bent straw, led into the little garden" (Cooper 2002, 09). That was the last project Dorree knew about that her grandmother told people she wanted. Her grandmother was in a wheelchair and couldn't physically get out there and do it herself" (Cooper 2002, 09).

Lynne Watkins Hecht liked to paint. In 1908 she graduated from Sophie Newcomb College in New Orleans with a degree in art (Sophie Newcomb College 2004). At Newcomb she made pottery and worked with ceramics and glazes. Dorree said she remembers that her grandmother “would go out with friends hunting wild flowers and they would bring the wild flowers back and do paintings on them. She painted on paper, and “she did botanical drawings in watercolors, showing the whole flower, and the parts of the flower”(Cooper 2002, 15).

Dorothy Watkins “Dottee” Cooper, Dorree’s mother said artistic talent skipped a generation because she, Dottee, had never created anything. But a friend told her mom that she had created “all these children” (Cooper 2002, 15). Dorree said that one of her sisters is an artist and her brother Asahel also majored in art. Dottee was active in the Pass Christian Garden Club and the Pass Christian Historical Society. After Asahel, Dottee’s husband, died in 1975, and her five children were grown, she opened a bookstore in Pass Christian called the Book Boat located where the Morning Market is today. Dorree said that her mother believed that operating a bookstore was a service to the community. “It was sort of like a general store. You could just sit there and wait, and you would see everybody. She really enjoyed it because the store was just a hotbed of information” (Cooper 2002, 15).

In “Japan on the Gulf of Mexico,” an article in *Country Life* in March 1935, Maud Costain said that the Hechts created their Japanese gardens at Middlegate to perpetuate their pleasant memories of their travels in Japan (Costain 1935, 20). Lynne Watkins Hecht was an artist who fell in love with Japanese art and Japanese gardens and created a Japanese (Costain 1935, 20). Although the Hechts built the gardens, Middlegate’s first owner, Estella Paxton

Watkins had the idea for a Japanese garden. Middlegate is very near the site of Lynne Castle, the Watkins home and popular resort hotel.

Estella Paxton Watkins owned three houses, Eastgate, Westgate, and Middlegate. Each generation brought change to Middlegate. When the Hechts died Middlegate was subdivided. Eastgate and Westgate were sold. Lynne Hecht Farwell and Dottee Watkins Cooper divided Middlegate Japanese gardens. Farwell took the Guest House and its gardens. Cooper took the main residence and its gardens. Another family member acquired the caretaker's cottage. In 1969 Hurricane Camille destroyed Westgate.

The Japanese style buildings at Middlegate stand as a reminder of the gardens' grander days. Even though the garden is not visible today, the story of its evolution and use by the Hecht family begins to make the garden a very real part of the community's landscape heritage.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Middlegate Japanese Gardens beautifully illustrate universal movements in landscape architecture that took place during the 1920s, a period that was marked by rapid industrial expansion and advances in science and technology. They echo the pattern of country and resort living that became popular during the Gilded Age in America (1865-1929) when national growth and personal wealth soared. In a broader sense Middlegate Japanese Gardens were both influenced by and a result of strategies used by America and Japan, where the countries promoted their technological and artistic achievements in order to establish their international reputations as industrial and military powers.

New Orleans residents, Rudolf Hecht and his wife Lynne Watkins Hecht traveled in the business and social circles of the rich and powerful. They were also international travelers who applied their impressions of a foreign culture to their Gulf Coast landscape and created Middlegate Japanese Gardens. The Hecht's gardens symbolized their good fortune, illustrated the design influences of the rich, and served as cultural ambassadors both on the Gulf Coast and internationally.

I was limited in my study of Middlegate Japanese Gardens by the lack of archival information on the family, the architect, and Gulf Coast architecture and gardens. Rudolf Hecht played a significant role in New Orleans business, politics, and international trade during the first part of the twentieth century. I was not successful in locating any significant collection of his papers. Lynne Watkins Hecht designed Middlegate Japanese Gardens. In addition she had a degree in art from Sophie Newcomb College, she was an artist who did botanical drawings of

native plants, and she was active in garden club activities but I did not find an archival source for any of her papers. Rathbone DeBuys was a New Orleans architect who was well known for his residential and commercial design work that was not limited to New Orleans or the South. I found a catalogue of his work but no archival collection of his papers or drawings. The lack of records and plans regarding DeBuys' Japanese style buildings at Middlegate hampered my study of the gardens. Despite the rich tradition of Gulf Coast vernacular architecture, master builders and craftsmen, I had difficulty finding any noteworthy resource material. I found some very helpful photographs, details, and anecdotes about the gardens at the local garden club and historical society.

At one time the Hecht-Watkins families and Middlegate Japanese Gardens were well known in New Orleans and on the Gulf Coast but those memories are dying along with the people who knew them. Based on my observations of period literature about the families and the gardens, the information was always cursory with few specific details. Other than Rudolf Hecht's explanation on the source of his garden's Buddha in *Around the Face of the Globe* I did not locate any specific information regarding any piece of the extensive collection of Japanese antiquities that made the garden significant. The private nature of the families has left a fragmentary picture of the garden.

I based my study of Middlegate Japanese Gardens on local histories, news accounts, oral histories and personal interviews. Much of what I relate about Middlegate came from people who shared their memories about the garden and how it influenced them, their community and their gardens. I hope that my study encourages an interest in the history of garden design and the contribution made by Middlegate Japanese Gardens.

Middlegate Japanese Gardens are changing with each generation. The gardens are no longer in the public view and they are fading from public memory. Middlegate Japanese Gardens may soon disappear along with the people who carry the memories of the gardens.

Many things influence gardens. Gardens go through cycles of decay, plants age and die, designs evolve, and owners change. Disappearing gardens can quickly become invisible. In *What Time Is This Place*, Kevin Lynch said that “preservation is not simply the saving of old things but the maintaining of a response to those things. This response can be transmitted, lost or modified. It may survive beyond the thing itself” (Lynch 1972, 277).

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