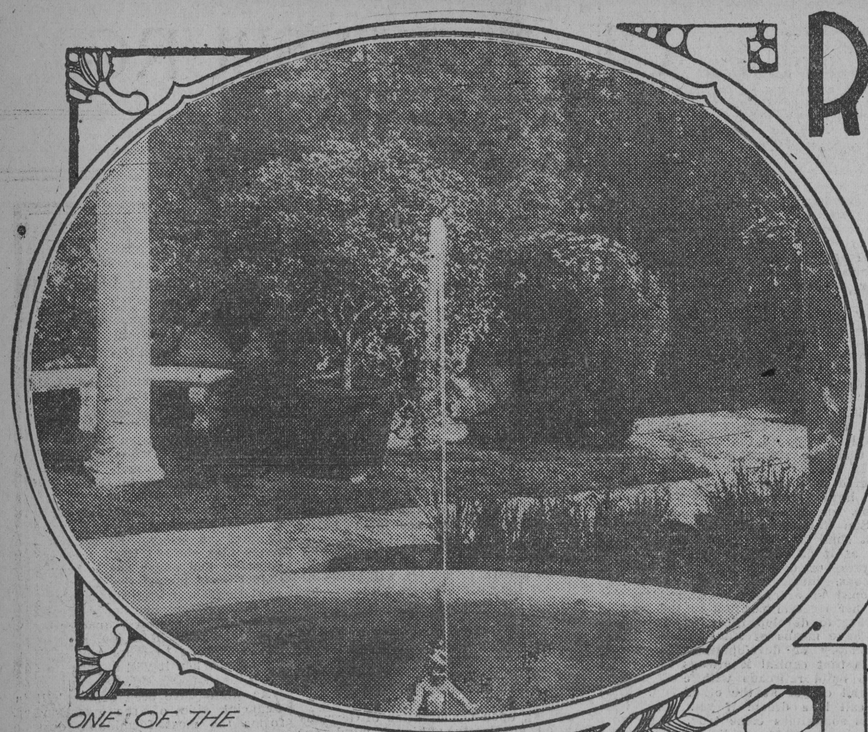
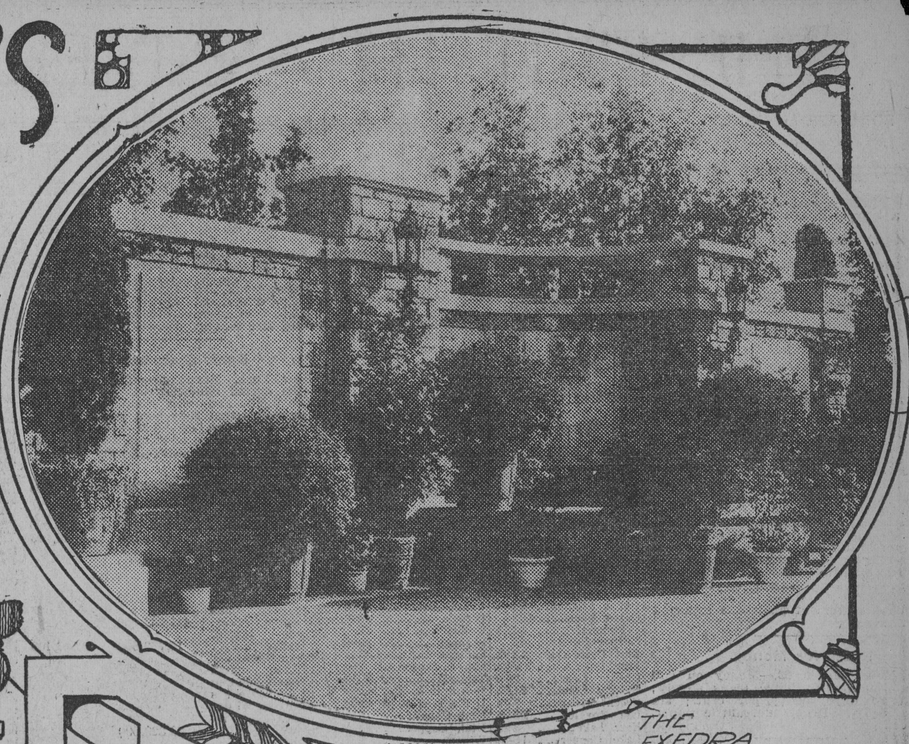
ROCKEFELLER'S WONDERFUL GARDENS

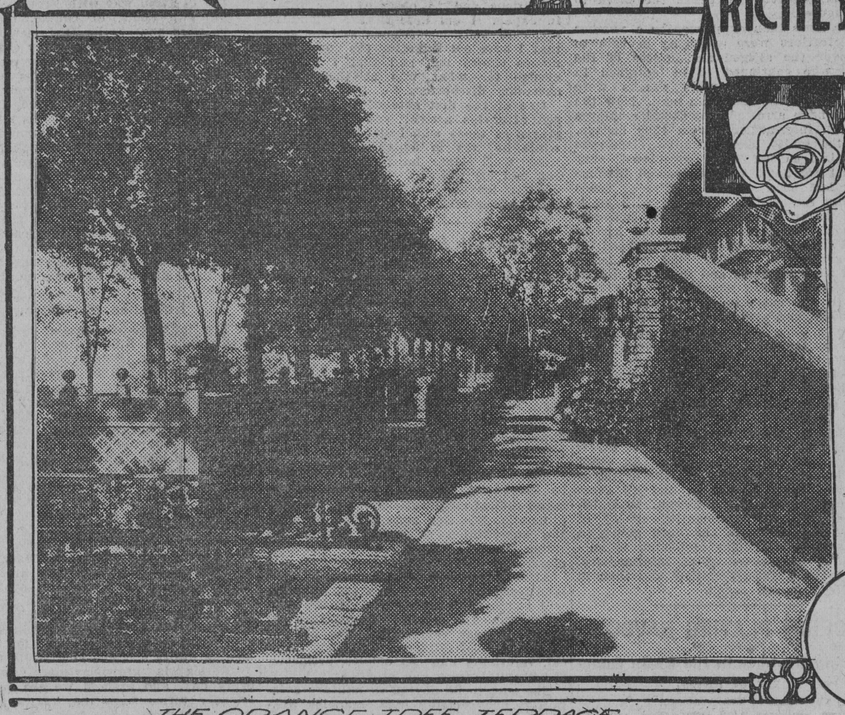
A LITTLE STROLL THROUGH THE TARRYTOWN ESTATES OF AMERICA'S RICHEST MAN



ONE OF THE FOUNTAINS AND MARBLE COLUMNS ADORNING THE GROUNDS...



THE EXEDRA FOUNTAIN.



THE ORANGE TREE TERRACE



EXTERIOR OF PERGOLA & THE ROSE GARDEN.

—Photos, Copyright, 1913, by Robert H. Moulton.

By ROBERT H. MOULTON.

THERE is a popular notion that John D. Rockefeller's hobby is golf, and it is perhaps true that there is no mer admirer or more ardent sup- er of the ancient Scottish game his country than the oil magnate. those who have had the good ne to see the beauties of Pocan- Hills, the great Rockefeller es- near Tarrytown, N. Y., with Mr. feller himself as a guide, will u that his greatest enthusiasm ems to be centered in the won- gardens which he has caused reated there.

ough Mr. Rockefeller has made cantico Hills estate his spring all residence for perhaps 10 it was not until four years ago conceived the idea of estab- an elaborate system of gar- n the place, and it was a year efore the first earth was turned rying out the project. Since me hundreds of men have been ed more or less continuously ning an almost barren hillside n acreage which now blooms a profusion of old-world and world beauty, yet not the slight- blicity was given to the under-

erlooks the Hudson.

the oil magnate acquired the l tract of land there was on it ple wooden house which he oc- d for a part of each year. But charm of the surrounding land- pe, which is hilly and wooded, and ords from the heights many beau- ful views of the Hudson River, ap- aled to him so strongly that he de- ded to build a more comfortable stone structure. The site selected was on the brow of a hill, about 500 eet above the Hudson and some two iles to the east of it.

Soon after the house was started. Rockefeller began to feel the d of a more consistent environ- t. The rugged simplicity of the te immediately surrounding the e was practically unbroken save a road that wound up to the inence. He first planned to build simple parapet, and to use the ers from his greenhouse to orna- t an already existing small for- garden. But as the house grew realized that it would require a e elaborate setting. He there- sought the advice of a specialist in landscape gardening, with the result that a scheme for a series of terraces, open and enclosed gardens and waterways was decided upon. The fact that the ground sloped gradually down to the Hudson made this kind of treatment the logical selection.

While the gardens at Pocantico Hills cannot, because of their comparative newness, be compared with many of the famous gardens of Europe, they, nevertheless, contain many striking and original features not to be found in similar places of the old world. The general idea behind the project might be termed American in its sense of compactness and comfort. There are, however, many evidences of English, Italian, French and even Japanese influence.

The Imposing Gateway.

The charm of the shaded lawns and the picturesque planting of the English landscape, the formal walks and borders of the French gardens and the hillside terraces characteristic of the Italian villas are all found combined here in harmonious union, each one adding beauty to the other, with a constant note of variety sustaining the interest of every part.

The imposing yet graceful entrance to the estate is the first feature to claim the attention of the visitor who drives out from Tarrytown. It is a superb grilled iron gateway of Italian design, its shining black relieved here and there by a touch of gold. The high iron fence surrounding the place is of a similar detail. Opposite the gateway is a beautiful exedra fountain of marble. Water spouts from the mouths of three carved stone masks, the central face being that of a smiling girl and the other two men, one of whom is grinning and the other scowling in jealous rage. There are lights in the heads of the fountain, making three bright streams of water at night, and bulbs sunk around the rim of the basin throw rippling reflections from the waving water on the surface of the niche above.

This is a detail that applies to the whole series of improvements. Every waterfall, brook and fountain is electrically equipped, and in some instances with colored globes. There are also many forms of light posts in special places, and Japanese lanterns are keyed in the iron grills, suspended from pergola roofs and bracketed from the walls. This treatment, which rendered the garden as usable by night as by day, is practically new in landscape gardening.

Passing through the big iron gates and the forecourt one reaches the house, which is surrounded by a glass-inclosed porch. From the south end of this porch is visible a scene of great beauty. Here is a sunken garden with unadorned grass panels, enlivened by bands of flowers in the borders and edged with box and with accents of clipped trees brought from Holland. Through the center of this garden flows a canal, which begins in a cascade in front of a stone teahouse and ends in a monolith fountain. The water first gushes from the pedestal of a statue and falls over steps into a basin, filled with water plants, below. Leaving the basin, the water flows down the canal, playing in the air at various points along its course.

Illuminated Cascades.

Perhaps the most effective lighting of all the water treatments occurs in the sunken gardens. Here the cascades are lighted, and each little basin in the canal forms a luminous bouquet along the central path.

The teahouse already referred to is one of the most delightful details in this particular part of the gardens. The exterior is of rough stone and the interior white marble. The openings of the teahouse are furnished with window sash which may be removed in summer, but in all seasons the place is flooded with light. At the rear is a little balcony overlooking another detached inclosure known as the morning garden, because it catches the early morning sun.

A flower-embowered walk leads from this secluded and fragrant place to the tennis court, at one end of which is a huge flagstaff set in a base of red marble, and at the other end a drinking fountain, emerging from a stone wall. The drinking apparatus of all the fountains on the grounds is of a unique and interesting design. In this particular instance the handle is a bug standing on a flower, and on the other side, instead of the conventional metal cup, there is a leaf hollowed out so as to form the receptacle for the water. The chain to which it is fastened is attached to a bronze monkey clinging to the rocks above.

Near the tennis court is the Wilderness Brook, which has its source in a pool at the south end of the sunken garden. This pool is apparently fed by springs, the water dripping from stalactites in a deep grotto at the side of a great rock and then over huge boulders which flank the opening. Winding steps lead to the top of the great rock, where is found a miniature garden, some 20 feet square, sheltered by an enormous umbrella tree.

Turning your head you immediately find inspiration to continue your wanderings. At the end of a cool, almost mysterious grove gleam the proportions of a classic Greek temple. The outside of the temple is bare of ornament, but the interior of the dome is richly decorated in blue and gold. The foundation of the temple has been converted into a cave. The entrance to the cavern is through a bronze door, and the interior is a noble room, with a vaulted ceiling, supported by splendid columns of carved stone. In one wall is a grotto, where a fountain plays, and in the center is a magnificent urn on a marble pedestal. From the cavern a tunnel leads under the arbor terrace straight to the house. This is an ingenious idea, since if it begins to rain when one is in the vicinity he can reach the house without getting wet.

Picturesque Terraces.

Skirting the temple one follows a path which leads to a long arbor, forming the western wall of the inclosed garden. The arbor is of lattice construction and the color scheme is lavender and white, conforming with the wistaria vines that trail over it. Passing through the arbor one arrives at the summit of a group of terraces which lead down the slopes toward the river. These terraces form, perhaps, the most spectacular feature of the whole garden plan. A double ramp, with frequent landings, descends so gradually that one scarcely realizes he has gone down more than half a dozen feet, when suddenly he finds himself on the orange-tree terrace, so called because its principal decoration is a row of orange trees, unsurpassed for size and perfection.

These trees are not less than 400 years old. They were bought at auction from an old French chateau near Le Mans, and in competition, as it turned out, against a representative of the French house of Rothschild. The Rockefeller representative bid on the first tree until the price soared to a point which caused the Frenchman to drop out. The American then calmly announced that he would take the entire lot at the same figure.

Descending from the Orange-tree terrace by another easy and graceful incline one comes to the second or middle terrace, on which are three large rock-rimmed pools. The central pool was built with steps at the ends, under the water, and is used as a swimming pool. Beneath its coping stones a water pipe, pierced at frequent intervals with fan-shaped outlets, is run. These outlets serve to spread the water, which comes with sufficient force to throw it 12 or 15 feet toward the center of the pool in a perfect mist, so that when the sun is shining the air is filled with a myriad of rainbows. The same effect is gained at night by turning on a multitude of tiny electric bulbs which stud the rim.

As one leaves the swimming pool terrace, wondering when the variety is going to end, his ear is greeted by the sound of water trickling over stony beds. Exploring farther, he comes upon a charming little brook which gushes from a huge rock. This brook is formed by the water from the swimming pool and fountains, which is conducted underground to the edge of the outermost terrace and then brought forth again as already described. It skips and dances over picturesque stones, forming waterfalls and lakelets, under bamboo bridges, and on through a most alluring little water garden filled with lotus. The edges of the brook are set with alternating large and small stones in characteristic Japanese fashion, and it is planted along its banks with dwarf plants and shade trees.

Teahouse of Mahogany.

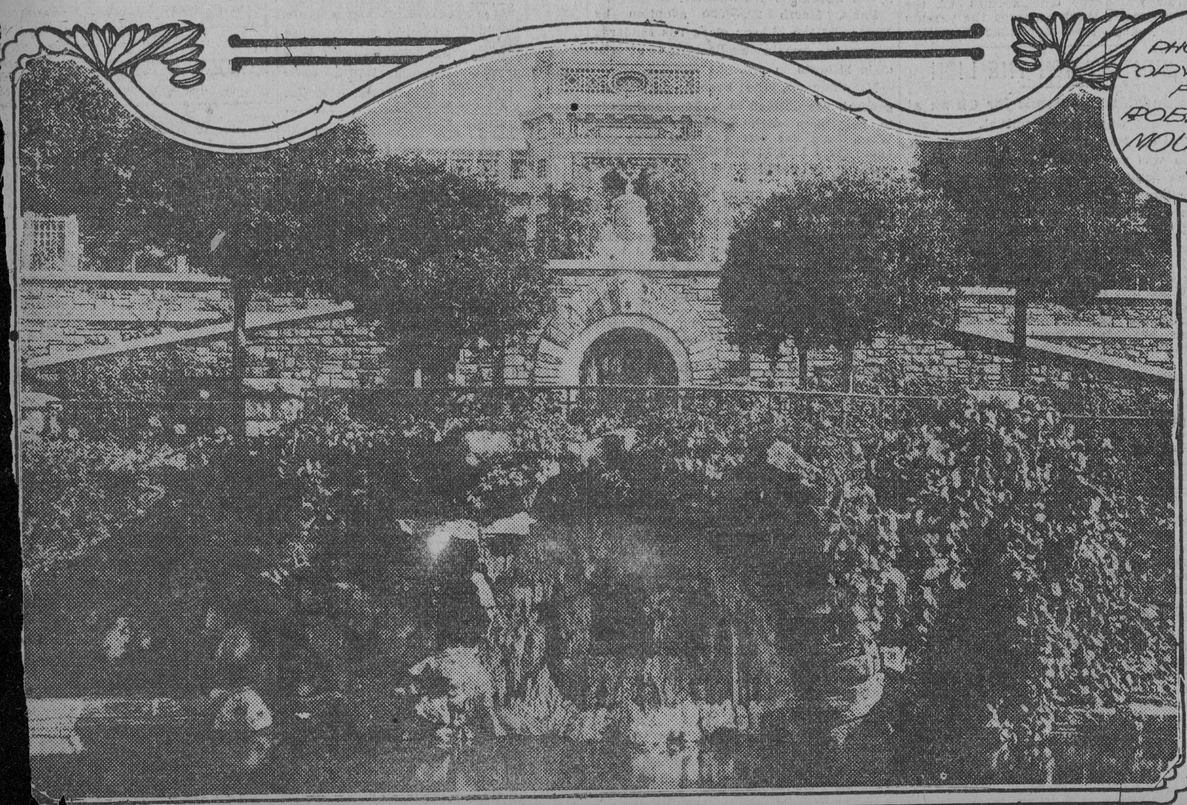
Following the pathway of the little stream, one finds it broadening into a miniature lake, on the bank of which stands a most beautiful Japanese teahouse. It was built by Japanese carpenters, and is a model of characteristic workmanship. The wood is solid mahogany. Inside are two rooms fitted in the Nippon fashion with matting and beautiful panels of silk embroidered with cherry blossoms and views of the sacred mount of Fuji.

From the Japanese teahouse a winding path flanked by a forest of rhododendrons leads to a smooth lawn which is used by Mr. Rockefeller as a practice golf teeing ground. Behind it is a little garden full of roses and begonia, which is reached from the house by a private door in the basement. It is called the golf garden, because it is the first thing that greets the eye of the owner when he emerges from his home to play golf. A nine-hole golf course surrounds the house and the garden.

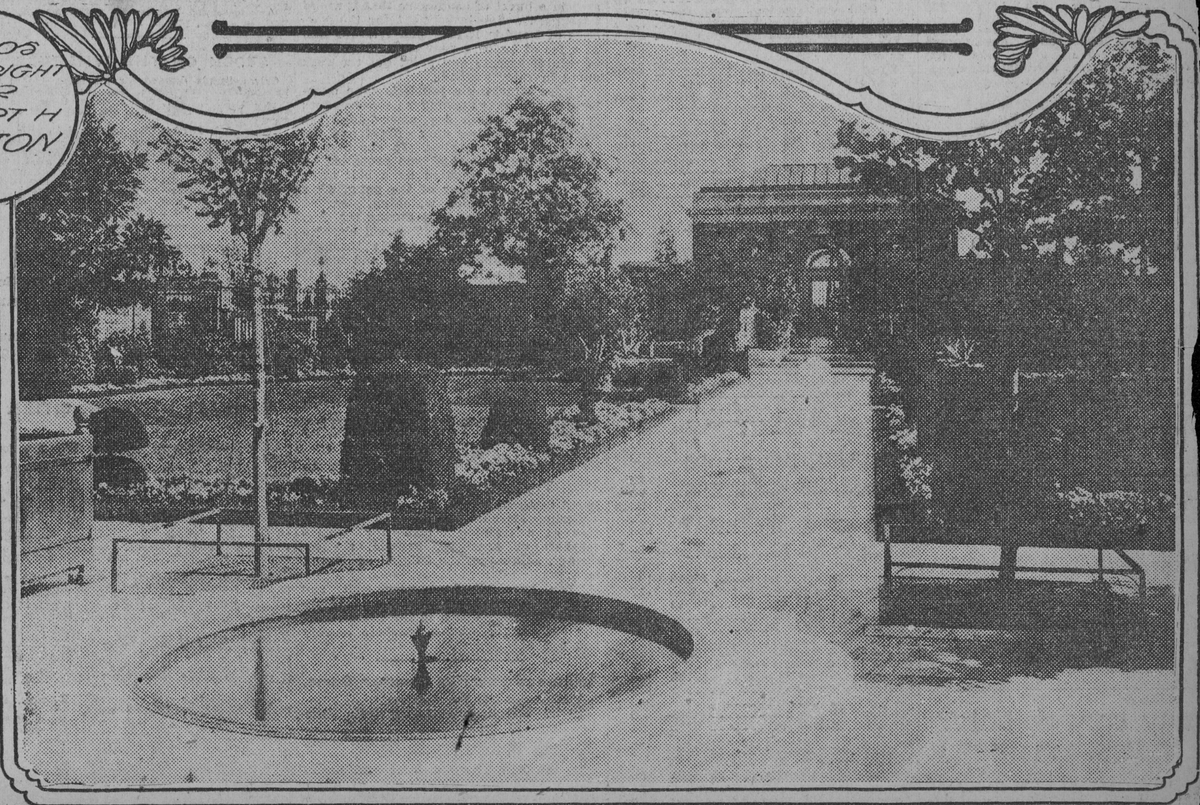
From the golf garden a path leads to the circular garden on the north side of the house, which performs for this end of the structure the same office the inclosed garden does on the south side. At the end of this garden is an old-fashioned rose garden. Here the fine imported English rose trees, standing on single stems over five feet high, and all around are beds of daisies and heliotropes.

After reaching this garden one has completely encircled the house, yet at every step and turn something new and fresh and beautiful has been revealed. The whole estate is a notable expression of skill in landscape architecture, and undoubtedly sets a new standard for a certain kind of American achievement.

PHOTOS COPYRIGHT FOR ROBERT H MOULTON



THE GROTTO



MARBLE CANAL JOINING THE HOUSE.

©Maryland State Archives, msa_sc4150_1_215-0717