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Frontispiece: *Bridge in Wild Garden Lagoon*, Stan Hywet Hall, 1997, detail. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

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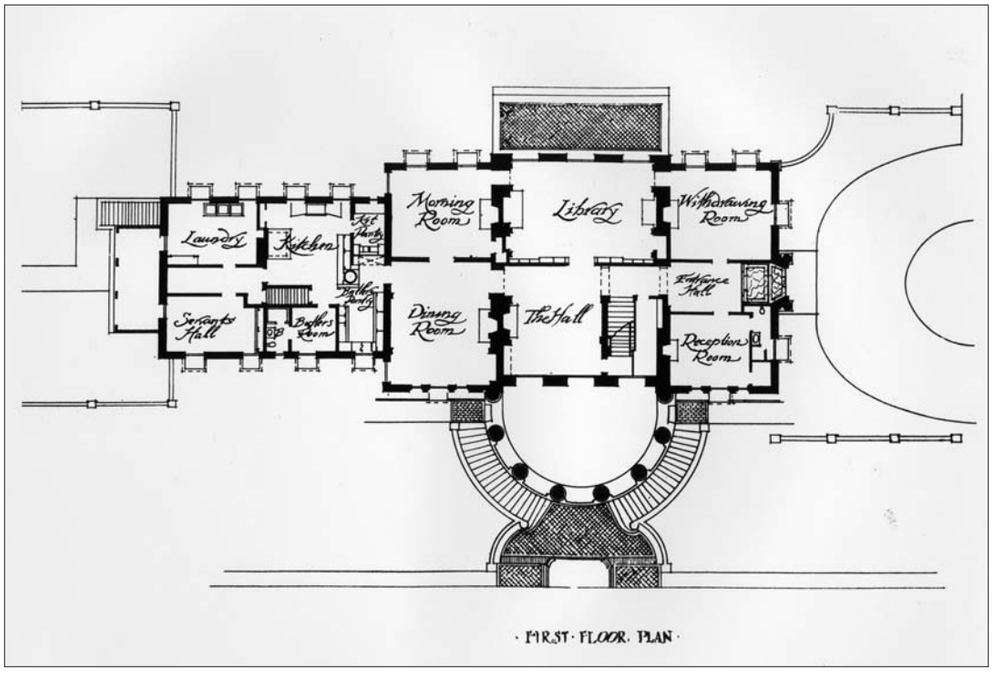


3.3. Plan of first floor. From *Monograph of the Work of Charles A. Platt.*

3.4. Construction of fountain terrace, 1907. Gwinn.

trace the natural contour of the cove and thereby frame the lake panorama. Within this embrace, Lake Erie would seem almost to belong to the garden. Samuel Howe, one of many critics to write about Gwinn, later described the force of the appropriation: "Think of having a lake of your own a hundred miles long, the boundaries of which no eye can determine, and to know that it is yours for ever, and that it cannot be taken from you."[15] Few of Platt's houses would have the advantage of such dramatic, scenic splendor.[16]

Platt seems never to have considered any other location for the house but the edge of the bluff, where the impact of the lake was sharp and spare. In his design, the lake would first be revealed from inside the house, through French doors in a large central hall, and then from a large portico on the north facade, in the Italian tradition. The curving form, which replaced a square version he had proposed initially, resembles the portico on the south façade of the White House, which in turn recalls the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli—classical examples all. Herbert Croly later wrote that Platt's design "comes, as it were, to a head in this portico, which is both the one ornamental member of the house itself, and the member which will be of most use and pleasure to the inhabitants thereof."[17] (Fig. 3.3) Curving stairways from the portico lead to a terrace below, and there, a broad view of the lake. Another set of curving stairs leads to a lower terrace, and from there a flight of steps descends to the narrow beach and the water itself. Two curving walks take visitors to the end of the seawall. Each of these elements takes its proportions from the house. (Fig. 3.4)

From this vantage point, lake views are austere, in the manner of Whistler. Water and sky appear almost as changing planes of color and light, abstract compositions in keeping with Platt's preference for clarity and balance. At the same time, a vivid sense of the lake's expanse and force is heightened by this enframement, which delivers the water view into the heart of the design. Platt's scheme provided both an architecturally elegant space and transcendent views, the hallmark of his best work. (Fig. 3.5)

3.5. *Boy with Dolphin from East Staircase,* 1995. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

American landscape design in the 1920s was characterized by increasingly far-ranging experimentation. Landscape practitioners became adept at integrating clearly defined outdoor spaces with the fundamental precepts of the Olmstedian Picturesque, finding ingenious means to combine outdoor rooms with borrowed views and other strongly articulated responses to the genius loci—a principle expressed by one of the era's great landscape architects, Beatrix Farrand, as "keeping step with the great stride of Nature." Other themes emerged during this innovative decade. As practitioners gained sophistication, so, too, did clients, many of whom were active partners in the design process. Extended and frequent travel to Europe provided a stream of ideas to both practitioners and their clients, and the ability to confidently mix historical influences, even within a single landscape passage, grew. As designs became more varied and more secure, they also became more idiosyncratic. In particular, the notion that landscapes could achieve distinction by reflecting individual client personalities gained footing.

13.15. Courtyard with classical sculpture, guesthouse. Courtesy Kellam de Forest.

13.17. Guesthouse at night. Courtesy Kellam de Forest.

13.16. Courtyard with classical sculpture, guesthouse. Courtesy Kellam de Forest.

to introduce some of the Persian spirit that characterized Goodhue's gardens next door. West of the swimming pool and down a small ravine, he laid a bridge over the creek and transformed a pair of shallow pools into a reflective water feature, applying terra-cotta sculptural motifs. (Fig. 13.18) He created a brick terrace adjacent to the upper pool and thinned the overgrown vegetation, adding native live oaks whose tall canopies offered a leafy roof to the broad sheets of mirror-water. A feeling of pleasure, calm, and unreality suffuses the moment of discovering this hidden grove, when the water's surface brings the sky to the floor of the woods. The setting seems to have been carved out of the wilderness. (Fig. 13.19). It might have been the landscape about which Charles Eliot wrote:

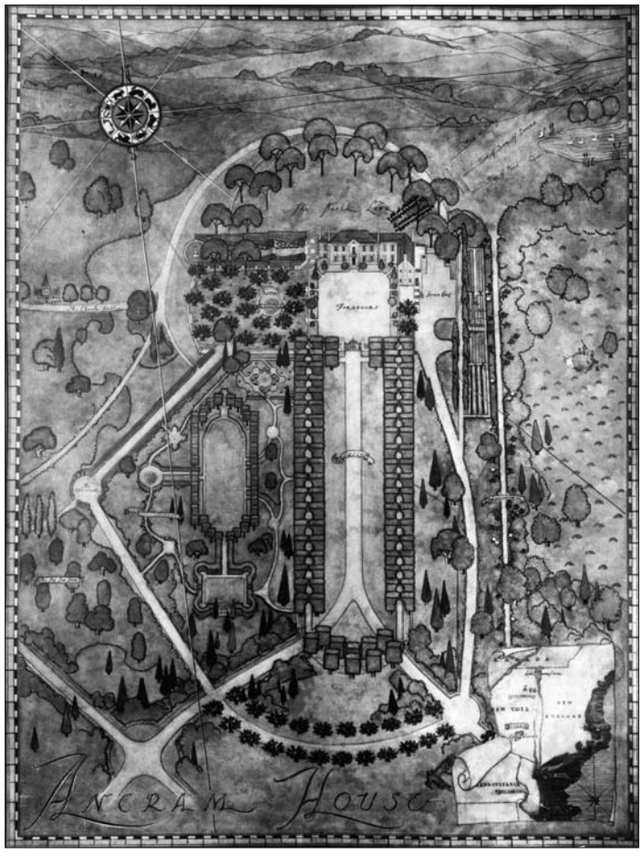
> [The] scenery is artificial in the sense that Nature, working alone, would never have produced it; but the art which has here "mended nature," to

13.18. *Reflecting Pools*, 1998. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

14.18. Swimming pool, Lisburne Grange. Photograph by Paul Weber. SUNY ESF College Archives.

14.19. View south to summer house, Lisburne Grange. Photograph by Fletcher Steele. SUNY ESF College Archives.

When the Sloans asked him to create a new swimming pool for the estate in 1929, he located it in the side of the hill below the terrace, out of sight of the house and the main terrace. (Fig. 14.18) In the pool design, Steele borrowed forms from the Dragon Fountain at the Villa d'Este and added scrolls of close-clipped privet, in the French style, to frame the new feature. He bent the axis of the orientation, so that the pool faced a broad meadow—in Steele's opinion, the "finest feature of the place." His gardens would continue to include wide-ranging historical references, and view would also play a pivotal role.[48] (Fig. 14.19)



14.20. General plan, Ancrum House, Angelica Gerry estate, Delhi, N.Y. SUNY ESF College Archives.

One of Steele's most ambitious projects from the 1920s was a landscape design for Ancrum House (c. 1925), in Delhi, New York, whose intricate plan included landscape passages that alternately concealed and revealed views of the Catskills. (Figs. 14.20, 14.21) Steele also accommodated his client's intense interest in bloom. Among several flower-oriented features were a forced perspective garden, with little drinking pools for Miss Angelica Gerry's dogs, and a mazelike series of beds for her delphinium. Steele devised still bolder uses for flowers in a grand sweep below a large semicircular terrace, where great swaths of iris and peonies appeared in succession. The most innovative aspect of the design was the plan, which accommodated many discrete areas while it set up framed vistas in almost every direction. Steele's colleague and close friend Ralph Adams Cram was the architect of the house (and the nearby church that Gerry

14.21. View east to Catskill Mountains, Ancrum House. Photograph by Fletcher Steele. SUNY ESF College Archives.

14.22. View to Lake St. Clair, Standish and Dorothy Backus estate, Grosse Pointe Shores, Mich. Photograph by Fletcher Steele. SUNY ESF College Archives.

14.23. Long Shot, Backus estate. Photograph by Fletcher Steele. SUNY ESF College Archives.

also commissioned). The job had likely come on his recommendation.

Cram may also have been the source of a concurrent job in Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan, where Steele worked on a much smaller scale, although not a smaller budget. The clients there were Standish and Dorothy Backus, who also hired Steele to design a modest summer house estate, High Cliffe, in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts. In the Michigan project, Steele was held closely to the Elizabethan period of English architecture, working closely with Cram and the client. Like the design for Ancrum House, the Backus place relied on a plan that defined precise garden areas. View was critical here, too, but limited to a single vista of Lake St. Clair, framed by a grading scheme that hid a busy boulevard with a rise in the lawn.[49] (Fig. 14.22) (While the Backuses had chosen to build on a relatively small lot near the village center, Edsel and Eleanor Ford, who were working on their estate project during these same years, were building directly on the lake, about eight miles to the north.) The most innovative feature on the Backus estate was the Long Shot, a forced-perspective modernist feature that comprised twelve bays, each of which displayed its own distinct garden border in a strong palette that kept it from being "merely pretty." (Fig. 14.23) Cram was the architect of the forty-room