HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GAR

-tion was formed to insure the ongoing restoration, preservation, and upkeep of the garden's natural resources and history. The City of Newton received funding for the garden's rehabilitation from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management, and the Newton Community Preservation Fund; through this funding, an extensive restoration and preservation plan named the Houghton Garden Rehabilitation Project was created.

The 1999 project included comprehensive research and analysis, including the documentation of the garden's existing conditions and its associated properties, and a treatment recommendations report. This report warranted the City of Newton and the associated groups to make the necessary changes and updates to the garden while preserving the garden's historical integrity. The dam, constructed in 1980 to replace the damaged original, was repaired in an effort to restore the water level of the pond to its original and historic level (D). A gate was designed and installed at the pond's outlet in order to insure proper water exodus. Erosion control efforts were undertaken along both Hammond Brook and Woodman Stream, and minor repointing of the stone bridges was completed. The stone steps leading to the outlook (C) were reset and a handrail was added to the (replacement) timber bridge crossing Woodman Stream (A). The Chestnut Hill Garden Club's concrete bench was reset and relocated further away from the water's edge. One of the most considerable alterations to the garden's original form, was the introduction of wheelchair accessibility to the garden by widening some of the paths to meet ADA regulations. The existing fence around the property was replaced with a black, vinyl chain-link fence and a steel picket fence along Suffolk Road with

two pedestrian entrance gates (West and East Entrances), each flanked by large granite posts displaying the "Houghton Garden" entrance sign.

Houghton Garden was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the spring of 1999. The listing served as an extension of the Old Chestnut Hill Historic District National Register listing, which is comprised of mostly early twentieth century estates and buildings. The garden is the only formally private garden in Newton that is now open to the public. The garden is operated and maintained today by the cooperation of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the City of Newton Conservation Commission, the Chestnut Hill Garden Club, and the Friends of Houghton Garden; who work together to insure the ongoing preservation of the garden, its history, and its valuable resources.

Houghton Garden is open to the general public from dawn to dusk. Dogs are permitted if on leash, however no horses or bicycles are allowed. A bike rack is located just inside the East Gate Entrance. Parking is available along Suffolk Road

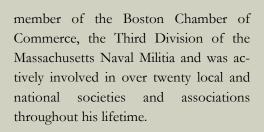


The Discover Historic Houghton Garden Walking Tour has been created by the Newton Planning Department in conjunction with the Newton Historical Commission.

Setti D. Warren, Mayor

Discover Historic HOUGHTON GARDEN

n the morning of October 1st, 1896, a crowd of fifteen hundred gathered at the First Congregational Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts to witness the marriage of Clement Stevens Houghton and Martha Gilbert Colt. Martha, a Pittsfield native, was the youngest daughter of the Massachusetts Supreme Court Judge James D. Colt and his wife Elizabeth. Clement was the only surviving son of Sarah Jane and William S. Houghton, proprietor of the largest wholesale shoe company in New England. Clement's own fortune was fueled by his education at both the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University and by the same perseverance that led his father to such lucrat-



In 1904, Clement, Martha, and their four children, Elizabeth, William M., Samuel G., and John D. moved to the genteel neighborhood of Chestnut Hill, where they established their family estate. The prominent family fashioned an opulent lifestyle in their new home complete with upwards of eleven servants, including a governess, seamstress, laundress, parlor maid, chambermaid, cook, kitchen girl, chauffeur, gardener, and a house manager. The 26-acre estate



TOWARD RESIDENCE ACROSS POND FROM ROCK GARDEN - 1932

-ive successes. His wealth was largely based on his executive positions within several manufacturing companies of products including wool, textiles, roofing materials, and shoes. Clement was a

featured a Spanish Colonial Revival dwelling designed by the architectural firm of Chapman and Frazer, a carriage house, and gardeners cottage settled in a lush landscape.

HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GAR

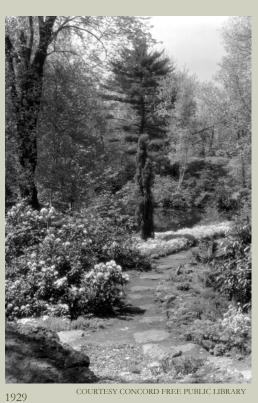
Representative of twentieth cen-

tury estates, the designed landscape reflected both the garden theories and trends of the period. For many years, Americans relished the opportunity to emulate the glories of the Old World; however, as American culture developed further, a desire to compete with European traditions arose. Similar to most of the estates in the area, a lavish, formal garden was planted close to the house in elegant geometric patterns designed to be complimentary of the residence's architecture. The comprehensive landscaping plan also included the creation of a large wild garden away from the house, which landscape architect Warren Manning was commissioned to design.

The concept of the wild garden essentially grew out of a yearning to further differentiate the New World from European culture. Inspired by the wild beauty of North America, the father of American landscape design, Andrew Jackson Downing advocated for a freer, more naturalistic approach to landscape architecture. Americans had what European designers had been endlessly trying to re-create... natural beauty. The pure and undomesticated landscapes of the new country inspired an entirely new approach to landscape and garden design in America. These landscapes consisted of resource-based designs in which nature was, in effect, the artist's blank canvas. One of the principle designers who encouraged this "wild" approach was Warren Manning, who believed that the wild garden was embedded in nature and would emerge though careful and deliberate pruning. His personal definition embodied the idea that the wild garden is a "form of floriculture which is concerned with the planting in a nature-like manner colonies of hardy plants that require a minimum of care."

Warren Manning's interest in horticulture and landscape design was

sparked by his father's nursery and his mother's activities as an artist. Manning joined the family business, designing landscapes for the nursery's customers at a young age, while attending classes at Harvard's Arnold Arboretum. Three years after marrying Nellie Hamblin Pratt, Manning left his father's nursery to work for one of the most influential landscape architects of the time, Frederick Law Olmsted. As planting supervisor for the Olmsted office, Manning worked on over 125 projects including the grandiose Biltmore Estate of George Vanderbilt in Asheville, North Carolina. In 1896, Manning left the Olmsted office in favor of establishing his own firm on Tremont Street in Boston, where he had the freedom to design in his own style. Throughout his career, Warren Manning worked on over 1,700 projects including private estates, subdivisions, parks, college campuses, golf courses, and city planning projects in almost every state. Furthermore, he is celebrated for his contributions to the professional world of landscape architecture through his



role in the founding of the American Civic Association and the American Society of Landscape Architects, in which he served as president in 1914. In response to westward expansion, Manning developed an environmental planning model entitled the "National Plan," which provided a land classification system designed to control the exploitation of the country's natural resources including forests, animals, minerals and waterways, and a foundation to evaluate indigenous scenic beauty.

The Houghton's wild garden was designed in conjunction with the pre-existing natural landscape of the property. Warren Manning designed the new garden around the natural rock outcroppings and a natural resource found behind the house: a small brook fed by Hammond Pond. The brook was dammed in the northwest corner of the property in order to create the large ushaped water feature known today as Houghton Pond.

Clement and Martha Houghton



were avid horticulturists, and were very involved in the overall design and planting of the garden. The Houghton's corresponded with the Director of Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, Charles Sprague Sargent, about the garden, and experimented with foreign plant species and seed crossgermination. In addition, Sargent assisted the Houghton's in their plan for the garden to contain at least one of every tree species that would grow and thrive in the New England climate. Martha Houghton made several trips to England, France and Japan to research gardens and to collect plant material, which she brought back to the United States after having received special permission from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Houghton's great appreciation for horticulture extended further in their membership and involvement in the National Conservation Association and the National Association of Audubon Societies. One of the most unique and interesting aspects of this style of garden is the altogether natural appearance of the landscape, and how the man-made features are almost indistinguishable against the wild and natural landscape.

The following tour stops can be found on the enclosed map.

A Since the "wild garden" is designed to blend into the natural landscape, the materials used to construct the manmade features are often of a natural, woody, or earthy origin. These materials are chosen because they are derived from nature and can render a more naturalistic image and experience of the man-made features in that particular setting. These features are generally constructed in a simple, rustic style in an effort to further camouflage them into the natural landscape. The timber bridge (replacement of original) crossing Woodman Stream, is a beautiful

MRS. HOUGHTON'S ROCK GARDEN WITH GLIMPSE OF POND BEYOND

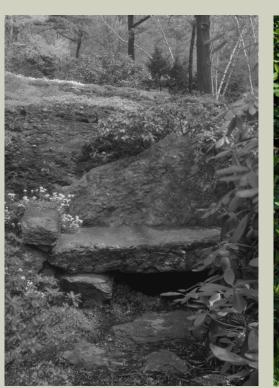
example of one of the man-made features in the garden designed to blend into the natural setting. One of the natural materials used consistently throughout Houghton Garden is Roxbury Pudding Stone. Roxbury Pudding Stone is a conglomerate rock that is formed when moving water carrying mud and rocks suddenly deposits the material, eventually creating a rock formation with smaller rocks and sediment throughout it. This bedrock formation stretches across the Greater Boston Area, underlying most, if not all of the towns in the area.

B Originally, the garden was set on a 26 -acre estate that stretched far beyond its modest ten-acre borders of today. Much of the lot was subdivided after the Houghton family passed away, and has since become conservation land, residential lots and home to the MBTA Green Line. The two stone and timber bridges situated adjacent to the MBTA tracks bridge the source of the water that sustains Houghton Pond and manages the pond's water level. These structures blend almost seamlessly into the natural surround as a result of their material and how nature has enveloped them. The plank surface of the bridges over time has become covered with dirt and other deposits, where grass grows and the paths continue across without change.

C Warren Manning believed that seats and overlooks within a garden provide the visitor with an opportunity to appreciate the smaller details that they may otherwise pass by. Outlook points and seats found throughout Houghton Garden were not a mere afterthought, but carefully planned features of the overall design. They were put in place so that the observer may appreciate the beauty

of the garden's design and may find pleasure in the more modest features of the landscape. The Martha Houghton Memorial Bench, located atop the ledge, was presented in 1981 by Martha's daughter, Elizabeth Houghton Martyr. The outlook provides a stunning view of the pond, which reaches a depth of approximately twenty-nine inches. The garden has become home to a vast array of wildlife through the years, including over ninety-seven species of birds and hundreds of different species of plants, trees, and other flora.

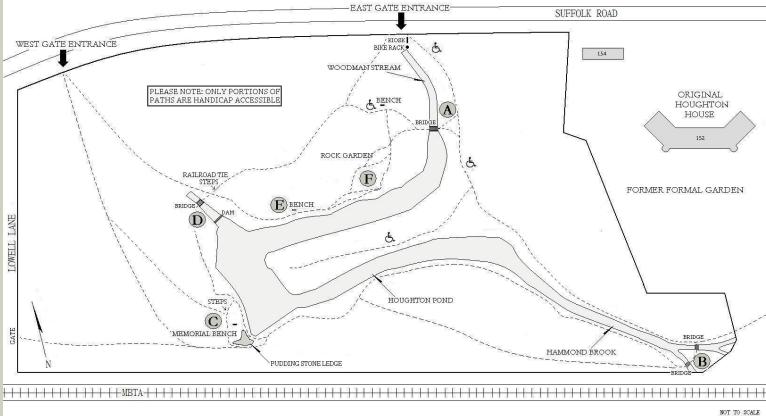
D The stone and concrete dam, found in the northeast corner of the garden was designed by Warren Manning to restrict the water flow of Hammond Brook and Woodman Stream in order to create Houghton Pond. When originally built, the dam was made of the same stone as the adjacent stone bridge. It encompassed the same shape and form as the present dam, but its materi-



COURTESY CONCORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

1932

ROCK SEAT AT MRS. HOUGHTON'S ROCK GARDEN



als created a more naturalistic appearance evoking the image of a beautiful waterfall.



2011

The original dam, dilapidated and ineffective was replaced in 1980 with the current concrete structure found today, which was repaired once again during the 1999 rehabilitation project. The stone bridge is one of the artificial features of the garden that has remained fundamentally untouched since its creation in the early 1900's. However, as the bridge has remained unchanged, the surrounding landscape and scenery has changed considerably. Over the past century, the water level of the pond has fluctuated several times, causing detrimental alterations to the design and overall feel of the bridge. The landscape that once sloped down to the small brook that flowed over the dam and under the bridge, was lined with beautiful plants, flora and stones. Today, the water level rises and decreases in accordance with the seasons, often submerging the aforementioned plants underwater.

E The Roxbury Pudding Stone bench

situated in the knoll of Mrs. Houghton's Rock Garden, is another deliberate design feature of the garden created to enhance the overall design and appreciation of the wild garden. The location and direction of the bench, similar to the outlook, was designed and placed purposefully to direct the observer's gaze in a certain direction and to stimulate a greater appreciation of the beauty of the garden and its design. The bench is made of the conglomerate, Roxbury Pudding Stone, a natural resource found throughout the garden. At some point in time, one of the armrests of the bench was replaced with granite, which was restored to its original Pudding Stone material during the 1999 garden rehabilitation project. The natural material of the bench, and its rustic appearance may elicit the presumption that it has always been there, and was yielded by Mother Nature herself. Although the integrity of the bench has remained essentially unchanged since its creation in the early

HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN HOUGHTON GARDEN

1900's, the substantial changes of its surround has dramatically altered the character, general feeling and mood of the area. When originally created, the bench was nestled into the stone ledge with a large Catawba Rhododendron flanking its left side (when sitting), in turn establishing a secluded covert. Throughout the past century, the Rhododendron has flourished and grown behind the bench and around to its right side. In recent years, the plant was removed from the bench's left side and the area is no longer secluded, but free and open to the rest of the garden.

F Martha Houghton was inspired by English horticulturist, Reginald Farrer to create what would become one of the earliest rock gardens in American history Following her travels to Europe and Asia, Martha enlisted the help of land scape architect Wayne Stiles to assist in the design and construction of an alpine rock garden along the northern edge of Houghton Pond. Born in 1884 in Boston, Wayne Stiles was an avid golfer who worked as a draftsman for a prestigious architectural firm during his younger years. Although he was never formally educated, Stiles declared himself to be a landscape architect, a field in which he had a very successful career. His profession led him to countless landscape design projects including large estates, private gardens, city and town planning and golf course design, for which he was best known. Construction for the rock garden commenced on July 17, 1918 at the hands of builder, J.R. Shields. While the garden was being built into the natural ledge, an underground drainage and compartment system was constructed. The compartments were supplied with unique soil mixtures (soil, crushed stone, mortar and rubble, loam, sand, and leafmould) which directly corresponded with

the specific needs of each individual plant. rock gardens generally require stead-The drainage system allocated proper drain- fast maintenance and tender care, age throughout the garden, insuring that each and the lack thereof from 1956 to plant would receive the correct amount of 1974 greatly contributed to the garwater it needs. Martha's rock garden received many awards during the late 1920's and early 1930's, and was described as "the best example of [rock garden] in this country of becom- plants from the once famous garden, ing design, proper construction, and desirable hidden under the dense overgrowth. arrangement of flower and foliage ... a wonderful pageantry of Naturalistic beauty..." in a 1937 issue of Gardener's Chronicle. In 1934, with the garden reaching its pinnacle, Martha Houghton with Dorothy Hansell and Florens DeBevoise,



MRS HOUGHTON'S ROCK GARDEN 1929



MRS HOUGHTON'S ROCK GARDEN 2011

founded the American Rock Garden Society with Martha serving as its second president. Demanding strict dedication and attention,

den's excessive overgrowth. Careful weeding and pruning in recent years has revealed that there are still living

Following the deaths of the Houghton's (Clement in 1949 and Martha in 1956) the garden was largely abandoned and was subjected to over twenty years of neglect. Fortunately, due to an unsuccessful bid to develop the property for an art school and a persuasive argument from the Chestnut Hill Garden Club, the City of Newton acquired the garden through the process of eminent domain. In 1974, with cooperation of the Newton Conservation Commission, the Chestnut Hill Garden Club began working on restoring and maintaining the historic garden. The originally enchanting garden had become almost unrecognizable. The plants and trees were overgrown, concealing the paths and preventing adequate sunlight from reaching the withering plants. As a result of the crippled dam, the once sparkling pond had been reduced to an unconstrained morass. The Club worked diligently on the rehabilitation of the garden, clearing paths, pruning trees, removing weeds, replanting perennials, restoring the dam and small footbridges around the garden. In addition, the Club hosted garden tours and plant sales to raise money for current and future projects in the garden. In 1975, Houghton Pond underwent an extensive dredging in order to restore it to its historic grace and function. The Friends of Houghton Garden, a non-profit organiza-