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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Innisfree  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_  
name of related multiple property listing N/A

### Location

street & number 362 Tyrrel Road  not for publication  
city or town Millbrook  vicinity  
state NY code NY county Dutchess code 093 zip code 12545

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Reg David Markey Signature of certifying official/Title Date 7/14/2019

DS/PO  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain:)

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

9/3/2019  
Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	3	buildings
1	0	sites
32	0	structures
21	0	objects
56	3	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE / Garden

LANDSCAPE / Garden

LANDSCAPE / Forest

LANDSCAPE / Forest

LANDSCAPE / Natural Feature

LANDSCAPE / Natural Feature

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC / Secondary Structure

DOMESTIC / Secondary Structure

EDUCATION / Research Facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Chinese & Japanese Garden Design

foundation: Stone

MODERN MOVEMENT

walls: Weatherboard, Shingles

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY Twentieth century

REVIVALS / Tudor Revival

roof: Asphalt, Slate

OTHER: Romantic Era

other: Earth, Stone, Wood

NO STYLE

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Innisfree is a public garden blending Japanese, Chinese, Modern, and ecological design principles in Millbrook, a rural area roughly in the center of Dutchess County, New York. The region is typified by farms, large private estates, and undeveloped or minimally developed open space surrounding small historic hamlets. Innisfree's distinctive sloping, rocky landscape, which forms the literal and visual foundation for the garden, is set within a natural bowl wrapping around the 40-acre Tyrrel Lake. This bowl, with no other signs of human intervention visible beyond the garden, creates a profound sense of intimacy and privacy at Innisfree that is one of its defining characteristics. A product of postwar ideas in American landscape architecture, Innisfree merges the essence of Modernist and Romantic ideas with traditional Chinese and Japanese garden design principles in a form that evolved through subtle, sculptural handling of the site and slow, science-based manipulation of its ecology. The result is a distinctly American stroll garden organized around placemaking techniques used in ancient Chinese villa gardens and described by Walter Beck as "cup gardens."

Drawn to the region, Walter and Marion Beck began developing Innisfree as a private estate. Walter, an artist, and Marion, a gardener, were particularly interested in the landscape and began developing picturesque gardens based on Chinese and Japanese design principles during the early 1930s. Later, they began working with Lester Collins, a landscape architect who would help them design and expand the gardens around their home on Tyrrel Lake. Collins maintained a lifelong relationship with Innisfree, redesigning and expanding it to better serve as a public garden and leading the Innisfree Foundation until his death during in 1993. The period of significance extends from ca. 1930 through 1994. Walter and Marion Beck began designing their estate in 1930; from the beginning, their work focused strongly on the landscape. Innisfree became a public garden in 1960 under the leadership of Lester Collins, who then more than doubled the size of the designed landscape. Between 1960 and 1994, Collins expanded on the earlier garden, using a process of iteration, revision, and deep understanding of natural processes, to create a seamless composition embracing earlier and later work on the landscape. The last feature he designed, the Water Sculpture on the Upper Terrace, was completed in 1994. (See Section 8, Criterion Consideration G for further discussion of Innisfree's exceptional significance during this later period).

The National Register boundary for Innisfree includes 227.20 acres which feature the designed landscapes and buildings associated with the Beck estate and Innisfree. Innisfree Foundation owns and operates the 185-acre public garden that comprises the center of the original Beck estate and nearly all the designed landscape; the boundaries of this parcel largely define the natural bowl surrounding Tyrrel Lake. In addition, the National Register boundary includes a 42.2-acre portion of the parcel north of Innisfree, which retains the original Beck gatehouse and the entrance road which is still used to access the public garden.

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## Narrative Description

Dutchess County's natural topography forms the foundation for Innisfree's design. These landforms and surficial deposits are a result of the retreating Laurentide ice sheet about 20,000 years ago.<sup>1</sup> While the dominant natural habitat in the Hudson Valley is eastern deciduous forest, Dutchess County itself is "at a biological crossroads between species and habitats of the surrounding regions [and] contains a rich diversity of habitats."<sup>2</sup> Set within thousands of acres of only minimally developed open space, allowing a high degree of connectivity between habitats, Innisfree is a superb example of this rich biodiversity. The property includes five if not all six of the habitats targeted in *The Natural Resource Inventory of Dutchess County, NY* as having special conservation value: shoreline corridors, unbroken forests, grasslands and shrublands, wetlands, as well as caves and cliff habitats. Due to the presence of salamanders, an indicator species, it is highly likely that seasonal woodland pools – the sixth of Dutchess County's target habitats, are also present.<sup>3</sup> This signals both substantial and important biodiversity on a single property. Small portions of the site feature Hoosic soils (gravely loam) while most of the soil is rocky Nassau-Cardigan complex or Nassau-Rock outcrop. Overall, the native terrain ranges from undulating to steeply sloping.<sup>4</sup> The bedrock at Innisfree is shale as seen in several large rock outcroppings.<sup>5</sup> Due to the generally poor soils and steep slopes, a small portion of the land was previously used as pasture, but little if any was used for agricultural crops.

The primary features of Innisfree's design are its principal cup gardens (loosely understood as garden rooms), Tyrrel Lake, and the Lake Path. Collins used the unifying features of the lake and lake path to integrate the many cup gardens into one dynamic experience in the natural landscape. The cup gardens vary in form, scale, and materials. One is an organically shaped meadow bisected by a wildly meandering stream and dotted with sculptural rocks and specimen trees. Another is a bog garden that has been carefully but lightly managed so that a new plant community emerged to play a particular aesthetic role. One more still is an elaborate complex of rock terraces stepping down a slope, each with its own vocabulary of design, materials, and mood.

Throughout the garden, there are themes and motifs that recur in varied forms. There is a dynamic tension between what appears to be natural and what appears to be cultivated. At a macro scale, this is evidenced by the entirety of the garden itself emerging from apparent wooded wilderness. Undulating, almost surreal natural topography is echoed in the rounded forms of clipped trees and constructed berms. Tall, straight pine trunks are mirrored in a 60' high fountain jet. Naturalistic bogs are discreetly cultivated while areas that look like traditional planted beds are allowed to evolve and change like native plant communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Roy T. Budnik, and Jeffrey R Walker, "Geology and Topography of Dutchess County, NY," in *The Natural Resource Inventory of Dutchess County, NY* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Dutchess County Planning Department, 2010), 6.  
<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/Planning/nrichapthree.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Mary Ann Cunningham, Neil Curri and Robert Wills, "Biological Resources and Biodiversity of Dutchess County, NY," in *The Natural Resource Inventory of Dutchess County, NY* (Poughkeepsie, NY: Dutchess County Planning Department, 2010), 1.  
<http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/Planning/nrichapsix.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Cunningham, "Biological Resources," 4.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Web Soil Survey." <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Geological Survey, "New York Geological Map Data." <https://mrddata.usgs.gov/geology/state/map-us.html>

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While there are some exceptional horticultural specimens at Innisfree, the vast majority of the plants are native or naturalized. Instead of labor-intensive maintenance to strictly adhere to a fixed planting plan, plants are encouraged to find locations where they thrive just as they do in the wild and then gently edited for aesthetics. Sometimes this is achieved simply by allowing plants to self-sow; sometimes by sowing seed or moving plants in from elsewhere on site to increase a successful population; sometimes by limited hybridization to develop strains that are more ideally suited to specific local conditions. As a result, the overall plantings at Innisfree have an unstudied visual character punctuated by a handful of carefully placed, carefully sculpted trees.

There is also a deliberate choreographing of human perceptual experiences throughout Innisfree. Collins paid particular attention to these ideas. Scale ranges from massive to intimate. Spaces are open and bright, or tight and shadowy. Surfaces vary in material, texture, slope, and sound. Water changes form, scale, and sound. Design and planting details are dense or spare. The same features are often viewed both in the round and from multiple elevations so perspective is always changing. These perceptual changes create changing moods as one moves through the garden. This heightens the sense that a journey has been experienced and completed, a journey that focuses on the immediate to achieve the transcendent.

Another important recurring design motif at Innisfree is use of sculptural rocks. Walter Beck and Lester Collins were inspired in this by the native glacial landscape as well as traditional Chinese and Japanese gardens where such rocks symbolize the creative force of nature.<sup>6</sup> The distinct forms and textures of these rocks at Innisfree give them rhythm, direction, and great aesthetic force to shape and define spaces. “Central to the nature and quality of the work of both Beck and Collins has been the endless supply of rocks. The glacier deposited on the property a combination of sandstone, limestone, granite and quartz. Innisfree rocks come in all shapes and in all sizes, from five pounds to five tons.”<sup>7</sup> Walter Beck had twenty, twenty-five, and sometimes more garden laborers at his command, so they were able to collect such rocks throughout the hilly property and use mules or a barge on the lake if needed to transport them.

Collins believed that the placement of these rocks was critical: “Six inches to the right or left, backward or forward, can wreck a picture. Setting a single rock in a composition is not so difficult. The formula is usually the area of flatness required to support a rock of a certain density. However, the placement of several rocks in asymmetrical balance demands not only intuition but also a critical sense of spacing.”<sup>8</sup> As cup gardens changed over time, these rocks would occasionally be moved by Beck and/or Collins. The largest such rocks have invisible concrete foundations that were also moved to the new location. Several key rocks, like the trio on the Point, remain where set before Walter Beck’s death, but Collins continued to place and move rocks throughout the remainder of his life, particularly to locations along the lake path.

Another important motif at Innisfree is sculptural landforms. Collins began to clear trees to reveal the undulating glacial landforms after Walter Beck’s death in 1954, work that he would continue around the lake in the 1960s. Collins felt that “land shapes, both natural and man-made... separate but also knit together sequences

<sup>6</sup> Lester Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden* (New York: Sagapress, Inc./Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1994), 19.

<sup>7</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 90.

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of cup gardens. Just like the sculptural rocks, these land forms are permanent design features in the garden, for they do not grow and their health is not subject to vagaries.”<sup>9</sup> In the 1970s and early 1980s, Collins created dramatic berms in the garden to echo and emphasize the natural landforms.

## **Resource List**

Innisfree is composed of myriad cup gardens, design vignettes that range widely in scale from a single, moss-covered rock to the entirety of the garden in its natural bowl. For the purposes of this nomination, Innisfree’s entire designed landscape has been counted as **one contributing site**. Within this resource list, fourteen major cup gardens, the primary designed compositions, have been identified and described, detailing the key counted and uncounted resources within each. These resources within these cup gardens comprise three contributing buildings, 32 contributing structures, 21 contributing objects, and three non-contributing buildings.

This resource list progresses as one might experience Innisfree, starting with the entry sequence and then moving through the main garden counterclockwise roughly in the order they are discovered on the designed walk around the Lake. Each of these fourteen major cup gardens has a map and photo key, and resources are labeled and keyed on the respective resource maps and in photo captions. Likewise, the relevant resource map is listed below for each of the major cup gardens, and the photographs illustrating the key resources are listed with the appropriate text description to facilitate referencing between sections of this document. For brevity, photo names cited in the text are given in a four digit format. The primary counted resources and character-defining features are listed at the top of each section. The alphabetical order used in this resource list matches what is used on the map. Within each section, multiple resources are occasionally described within the same paragraph or set of paragraphs. In these cases, the alphabetical order is sometimes disrupted to facilitate the most effective description.

## **Entry Sequence (circa 1930-1985)**

### **Key Features Map 01**

- A. Gatehouse (ca. 1930, 1 contributing building)
- B. Office (post-1972, 1 noncontributing building)
- C. Storage Shed/Utility Building (post-1972, 1 noncontributing building)
- D. Stone Entrance Piers (ca. 1930, 1 contributing object)
- E. Entrance Road/Parking Area (ca. 1930-1960, 1 contributing structure)
- F. Berms (ca. early 1980s, 1 contributing structure)

The Innisfree entrance sequence includes the original entrance gate, gatehouse, a handful of buildings constructed by a later owner, the entrance road, parking area, and berms that comprise the designed landscape generally experienced in a vehicle leading up to the main section of the garden which visitors experience on foot. Aside from expected changes due to growth and decline of woody plant materials, the Entry Sequence remains much as it did during the period of significance from 1960 on.

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<sup>8</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 90.

<sup>9</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 38.

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**A. Gatehouse (ca. 1930, 1 contributing building, photo 0001)**

The gatehouse is located close to Tyrrel Road directly east of the main entry drive to Innisfree. It was originally built by Walter and Marion Beck about 1930 as the gatehouse to their private estate and is linked to one of the entry pillars flanking the entry drive by a low curved stone wall.

The building is one and a half story two-bay by four-bay building with a smaller, two-bay by three-bay transverse wing on the south end that is two and a half stories high. The front-gabled façade facing the entry drive has a stone first story featuring a large, asymmetrically placed tapered stone chimney, a slate-covered pent roof over a simple door flanked on one side by a stone bench, and a clapboarded second story with casement window. It is a fine example of picturesque Cotswold-style architecture, finished with rough stone walls, dark stained clapboards on projecting gables, casement windows with muntins and rough split, subtly colored natural slates on the steep gable roofs. The steeply sloping roof features one long, gently curved ridgeline with several crossing gables and small dormers. Two large stone chimneys project through the roofline. The ground floor was originally used as garages and work rooms, while the second floor was the residence and office for the estate superintendent.<sup>10</sup> In 1972, this gatehouse was included in the sale of about 740 outlying acres of land by Innisfree Foundation to Rockefeller University, which still owns and operates this site as an environmental field research station. While the gatehouse is currently used as the headquarters for the research station, the structure itself is largely unchanged both inside and out.

**B. Office at 495 Tyrrel Road (post-1972, 1 non-contributing building; built after parcel was no longer part of Innisfree)**

Two-story wood framed building, T-shaped, with gable roofs, wood siding and trim. Main block: two bays by four bays oriented east-west, exterior wooden stair leading to sliding glass doors on second floor on west façade facing the road. One gabled wing extends from the main block to the north (one bay by two bays) and one gabled wing extends to the south (one bay by two bays).

**C. Storage Shed/Utility Building at 495 Tyrrel Road, (post-1972, 1 non-contributing building, built after parcel was no longer part of Innisfree)**

Small, square one-bay by one-bay, front-gabled one-story frame building covered in shingles; one solid door.

**D. Stone Entrance Piers (ca. 1930, 1 contributing object, photo 0001)**

The entrance gate to the property from Tyrrel Road features a pair of fieldstone piers with pierced tops that once featured electric lights. A pair of wooden doors historically spanned the opening. The date of these doors, which have been removed and stored by Innisfree Foundation, is unknown.

**E. Entrance Road/Parking Area (ca. 1930-1969, 1 contributing structure, photos 0001, 0002)**

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Mauri, "Innisfree Garden Building-Structure Inventory Form, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation," July 1986.

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The Innisfree entrance road and the landscape surrounding it retain layers that date from the Beck era and the transformation of Innisfree into a public garden. While it doesn't wrap around Tyrrel Lake like the garden proper, the entrance road is a cup garden and is an important part of the visitor experience at Innisfree. The entrance gate to the property from Tyrrel Road features fieldstone piers with pierced tops that once featured electric lights. A pair of wooden doors historically spanned the opening. The date of these doors, which have been removed and stored by Innisfree Foundation, is unknown. For the first approximately 2/10 mile, the dirt road is densely wooded and heads generally south. Along the west side, the terrain slopes very steeply up from the road. On the east side, a shallow linear pond traditionally called Mud Pond is surrounded by trees and parallels the entrance road. Further south on the east side is an orchard now largely overgrown with vines. This stretch of drive is narrow, shady, and rustic.

Where the Innisfree Foundation property begins today at the 2/10 mile mark, the space surrounding the entrance road becomes wider and more open, bright, and sculptural. Undulating terrain is clad in green lawn or moss dotted with specimen trees and rocks, backed by minimally improved woods. The steep woodland continues on the west, but on the east, the mowed lawn drops into a wide bowl. The terrain rises up again further west along an exposed rock ledge backed with woodland. Before Innisfree became a public garden, the driveway branched just south of this bowl with the west fork leading to the Becks' main house on the west side of Tyrrel Lake. The east fork, part of today's entrance road, follows portions of a historic road that led to a former dance hall called the lake house (no longer extant) and barn (extant) which predated the Becks. It also led to the shingled cottage (extant), a clapboard garage (extant), and a small painting studio called "Little Italy" (no longer extant) – all of which the Becks built beside the lake house on the southwest shore of the lake.

Prior to Innisfree opening as a public garden in May of 1960, Lester Collins reconfigured the end of the entrance road. To direct visitors to the new garden entrance for pedestrians, Collins blocked the west fork of the original driveway leading to the main house and converted the first section to lawn. In an existing field set back from the northeast shore of the lake, he created an organically shaped, unpaved parking area dotted with trees and surrounded by woods. Aside from expected changes due to growth and decline of woody plant materials, the only change to the entrance road and parking after the period of significance was in the early 1980s; at that time, Collins created a 5-foot high, 240-foot long curving grassy berm across the original west fork of the driveway to permanently block vehicular access. The visual sweep and implied motion of this berm provide clear direction leading guests to the parking area. Vehicular access for visitors ends at the parking area, but the entrance road continues south from there to the garage, the barn, and the cottage.

#### **F. Berms (ca. early 1980s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0002)**

In the early 1980s, Collins added several sculptural berms. A 5-foot high, 240-foot long curving grassy berm across the original west fork of the driveway was built to permanently block vehicular access, and, with its visual sweep and implied motion in its form, provide clear direction leading guests to the parking area. One tiny berm carries this long one across the drive, while another small one defines the eastern edge of the drive as one arrives at the post-1972 property line. Vehicular access for visitors ends at the parking area, but the entrance



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road continues south from there to the garage, the barn, and the cottage just as it did during the period of significance.

### **Overlook (ca. 1960-early 1980s)**

#### **Key Features Map 02**

- A. Overlook (ca. 1960, character-defining feature)
- B. Berms (ca. early 1980s, 1 contributing structure)

The Overlook is a key transition point for visitors: vehicles are left in the adjacent parking area and from this elevated vantage point, visitors can see around the lake and visually orient themselves to begin their garden explorations on foot. Aside from expected changes due to growth and decline of woody plant materials, the Overlook remains much as it did during the period of significance from 1960 on.

#### **A. Overlook (ca. 1960, character-defining feature, photos 0003, 0004)**

The overlook is a gently undulating lawn, loosely edged by trees but open to the lake, which is characterized by its simple, functional design. It serves as an elevated vantage point from which visitors can see how the garden wraps around the lake and thus orient themselves in the landscape. It also serves as a scenic resting point and informal picnic area. Before the garden opened, Collins slightly reimagined Gerrit Rietveld's iconic Red Blue Chair, creating an unpainted wooden chair for Innisfree that is comfortable, lightweight, economical to build, attractive, and speaks clearly of a taste for Modernism. A line of these Innisfree chairs faces the lake at the overlook, while wooden picnic tables, benches, and animal-resistant trash bins Collins designed are set around the edges of the space. Wooden Innisfree chairs provide comfortable, movable seating at key points throughout the garden.

#### **B. Berms (ca. early 1980s, 1 contributing structure)**

In the early 1980s, Collins added a pair of grass-clad berms at the Overlook entrance to deter visitors from driving to the picnic tables. Their linear forms point toward the lake and the garden, providing visual cues to visitors about how to begin their garden explorations on foot.

### **Lake Path (ca. 1930-1969 & 1992)**

#### **Key Features Map 03**

- A. Lake Path (ca. 1930-1969, 1 contributing structure)
- B. Tyrrel Lake (glacial, approx. 20,000 years old, character-defining feature)
  - B1. Channel & Lower Lake
- C. Sculptural Rocks (ca. 1960-1969, 1 contributing object)
- D. Meadow Rock Face (natural feature further excavated in 1969, character-defining feature)
- E. Daylily Bed (ca. 1980s, character-defining feature)
- F. West Path Rock Face (character-defining feature)
- G. Channel Crossing Bridge (ca. 1969 & 1992, 1 contributing structure)
- H. Hemlock Woods Rock Face (natural feature, character-defining feature)
- I. Pollarded Willows (ca. 1969, character defining feature)

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- J. Gravel Pit (ca. 1960-1969, character-defining feature)
- K. Grass Ramp (ca. late 1970s, 1 contributing structure)

Lester Collins designed the Lake Path as the main organizing feature for Innisfree as a public garden, a physical and experiential journey encircling Tyrrel Lake. When Walter and Marion Beck were alive, only a small portion of this necklace of paths existed as the garden was focused around their house on the northwest quadrant of the lake. He felt it made the cup shape of the public garden “more explicit. In strong contrast was the linear shape of the private garden with its emphasis on the long view of the channel and the lower lake.”<sup>11</sup> Aside from expected changes due to growth and decline of woody plant materials, and the replacement of the Channel Crossing Bridge in 1992, the Lake Path remains much as it did during the period of significance from 1969 on.

#### **A. Lake Path (1930-1969, 1 contributing structure, photos 0005-0012, 0014-0018)**

Collins believed that Innisfree would need to more than double in size from the initial garden the Becks established to both sustain and survive public interest. He knit together the various cup gardens that he and the Becks had developed into a single, integrated and sequential garden experience with the lake path. Collins created the lake path between 1960, when the garden opened to the public, and 1969, when the first bridge across the lake channel was completed and modifications to the north end of the lake were finished. In many areas, it is not a single, monolithic path, but a network of paths and possible routes through lawns and woodlands that enable visitors to chart their own course while walking around the lake to experience the garden. As Collins described it, the path takes on a different character as it traverses a variety of different cup gardens and environments:

Each walk has a rhythm of its own. One of them is a tree-shaded grass allée, one foot above the Lake shore. The steps in another path are fashioned by the roots of hundred-year-old hemlock trees. The way may flank a thirty-foot high cliff or traverse a wildflower meadow. One path is completely open, just several acres of terraced lawns before the next cup garden. Sometimes the walk is of gravel and cleanly edged; sometimes casual stepping stones in the forest floor suggest the best path. In locations accessible to rock moving machines, multi-ton rocks covered with lichens and creeping ferns have been placed along the walks to serve as direction markers. Meticulous planning of the walks has made Innisfree into a demonstration of connecting and shifting focal points, each with its own character.<sup>12</sup>

In the northwest quadrant of the garden, the lake path is more highly designed and detailed, consistent with the overall qualities of that section of Innisfree. In the rest of the garden, the path is more rustic, typically a woodland walk or a grassy swath along the lake. While not every visitor circumnavigates the 40-acre lake, this journey is the quintessential Innisfree experience, and carefully concealed and revealed views of the lake and other key garden features draw visitors along the lake path. The lake path evidences Collins’s understanding of Eastern design principles overall and his specific application of ideas that appeared in Wang Wei’s garden. As he explained, “The traditional Chinese garden is usually designed so that a view of the whole is impossible. The

<sup>11</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 114.

<sup>12</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 38.

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Chinese garden requires a stroll over serpentine, seemingly aimless, garden arteries. The observer walks into a series of episodes, like Alice through the looking glass; botany is only one aspect of the total garden picture.”<sup>13</sup>

Collins created a design for wooden birdhouses, large enough to have been intended for wood ducks, that sit on tall wooden posts. These are located at various places along the Lake Path. While there have been repairs, Collins design has been followed. Thin strips of wood are applied to the face forming a simple diamond tracery. The center diamond frames the bird house entrance.

**B. Tyrrel Lake (glacial, approx. 20,000 years old, character-defining feature, photos 0004-0005, 0013, 0017)**

**B1. Tyrrel Lake: Channel & Lower Lake (photo 0013)**

Tyrrel Lake is a roughly 40-acre glacial lake that is shaped like an arrow pointing north. Lester Collins made it the central feature of the public garden that is Innisfree. “Beck gave to the Lake only a small role in his designs for the garden – just one great view from the Point to the south. The west shore and Dumpling Knoll were allowed to stay densely wooded as a backdrop for the intricately detailed cup gardens he was building.”<sup>14</sup> The Becks’s lake view was of the Channel and Lower Lake, the arrow shaft. Collins wrapped his much enlarged garden around the shores of the main lake, the arrow head. Still over 30’ deep in the middle, this lake is alive with flora and fauna that, along with wave and light patterns, animate the garden.

**C. Sculptural Rocks (ca. 1960-1969, 1 contributing object, photos 0005-0006)**

Walter Beck and Lester Collins used carefully placed rocks, extraordinary glacial erratics, is important sculptural elements in their garden-making at Innisfree. In redesigning the entry sequence when the garden opened to the public in 1960 and creating the Lake Path in 1969, Collins placed five such rocks as wayfinding aids. The first is at the bottom of a gravel path linking the parking lot and overlook to the main garden. The pronounced layers of this massive sedimentary rock reorient visitors to the lake path. While visitors can turn left or right, Collins hoped the subtle angle of the rock layers would direct them to the right, to proceed counterclockwise around the lake and through the garden. Just before the Kwan Yin Bog (see below) a grouping of three rocks bracket the lake path. Two on the right block an old road bed that predated the Becks on site (grassed over but still visible in the topography) and the grouping reinforces the correct route for visitors. Just past the Lip Rock Waterfall (see below), a smaller, extravagantly shaped rock on the left points across the path to a nearly hidden stone staircase leading up to Heather Hill (see below). While the main path continues, this rock highlights another possible route to explore.

**D. Meadow Rock Face (natural feature further excavated in 1969, character-defining feature, photo 0030-0032)**

**F. West Walk Rock Face (natural feature, character-defining feature, photos 0010 & 0016)**

**H. Hemlock Woods Rock Face (natural feature, character-defining feature, photo 0016)**

Lester Collins used these large natural rock faces encircling Tyrrel Lake to help define the designed landscape at Innisfree. In his book, he wrote that he “had been thinking for a long time about Wang Wei’s concept of a total

<sup>13</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 109.

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landscape in which a large cup garden encompassed many smaller ones. Wang Wei used a river as the floor of his garden, with cliffs and hills as the enframing walls on all sides. Innisfree had a forty-acre lake, three cliffs, and enclosing hills.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1969, as part of his first major project after the garden opened to the public, Collins had the Meadow Rock Face excavated to fully expose the east face of this massive granite outcropping. The other major rock faces are shale. During the 1960s, the Hemlock Woods Rock Face was cleared of vegetation. Since then, some vegetation has been allowed to self-sow in crevices on all of these cliffs, especially the Meadow Rock Face where visitors tend to linger. Like other areas developed by Collins, they are not weeded regularly, but rather edited to maintain the visual character he desired, here mostly sheer rock but enlivened with some naturalized plantings.

#### **E. Daylily Bed (ca. 1980s, character defining feature, photo 0004)**

In the 1980s, Collins created one of the only cup gardens at Innisfree that depends entirely on flowers. He planted the east side of Dumpling Knoll with reblooming daylilies, probably *Hemerocallis* ‘*Stella D’Oro*,’ with golden yellow flowers similar to the fall color of ginkgo trees which appear elsewhere in the garden. This mass of color is visible from the Overlook and from other points along the east shore of Tyrrel Lake. Collins had built a small dock in the 1960s at the base of the Daylily Bed that, like the ones on Pine Island and in the East Meadow served as a stop for visitors touring the garden on the Becks’ barge, the Precious Pearl (see below). Those tours were discontinued in 1969 as they were deemed too slow by visitors and too expensive by Innisfree Foundation. When this dock needed major repairs in 2002, it was instead removed. Like the three major rock faces and the Gravel Pit, the Daylily Bed helps define the overall cup garden that is Innisfree.

#### **G. Channel Crossing Bridge (1969 & 1992, 1 contributing structure, photo 0012)**

In 1969, the first Channel Crossing Bridge was built, which Collins called, “the most significant construction achieved at Innisfree since the garden became public.”<sup>16</sup> It was created by piling oak and pine slabs that were discarded tailings from a lumber mill on the mud bottom of the channel until the upper slabs (usually) stayed above the water’s surface. “In the winter of 1992...the simple channel crossing was replaced by a 138-foot-long bridge made of two-inch by eight-inch pressure-treated timbers with supports of galvanized pipe. Two of the supports go down fifty feet through water, mud, and muck to bedrock. This robust yet elegant structure, which appears to float just above the Lake surface, is more prominent in the landscape than were the floating duckboards.”<sup>17</sup>

#### **I. Pollarded Willows (ca. 1969, character defining feature, photo 0015)**

In 1969, Lester Collins created Willow Island (see below) which he planted with trees pollarded at about twelve feet so they spread out horizontally but not vertically. He planted similarly pollarded willows along the east shore of the lake near the cottage, where the topography is rather flat and open so some definition was needed. He wrote, “Their architectural quality is hard to achieve with shrub plantings. If allowed to grow normally the

<sup>15</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 92.

<sup>17</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 114.

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willows would be a good design in the landscape but a poor design in the garden picture. They want to become giants, upsetting the concept.”<sup>18</sup>

#### **J. Gravel Pit (ca. 1960-69, character-defining feature, photo 0018)**

The ridge along the east side of the lake is a natural deposit of gravel. Before Collins began work at Innisfree, and possibly before the Becks owned the property, some gravel had been mined along the lake shore creating a steep slope just settled at the angle of repose called the Gravel Pit. When Collins created a new entry sequence for Innisfree the public garden in 1960, he created the Overlook just above the Gravel Pit. He then planted that slope to provide visual interest both from the Overlook and from elsewhere around Tyrrel Lake. Because drainage is naturally sharp and there is no irrigation on this side of the lake, plantings must be extremely drought tolerant. Collins first planted a mass of *Yucca filamentosa*, with tall flower stalks that ornament views from the Overlook. Over time, *Opuntia humifusa*, New York’s native cactus, and *Asclepias tuberosa* were added, while *Verbascum thapsus* and, along the edge, *Digitalis lutea* have self-sown there.<sup>19</sup> This is an early example of a xeriscape, a term coined in 1981, particularly for a comparatively lush region of the United States.<sup>20</sup>

#### **K. Grass Ramp (ca. late 1970s, 1 contributing structure)**

Lester Collins’s redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, in the late 1970s included providing access to that sunken space for wheelchairs and strollers. At about the same time, Collins added the Grass Ramp to provide similar access at Innisfree. It is on the south end of the natural gravel deposit on which the Overlook and Gravel Pit were created. Collins cleared existing trees and regraded the terrain to create a gentle slope linking the Overlook above and lake shore and path below. As the substrate is gravel, the surface remains solid even in wet weather. As another example of Collins’s design innovations, his provisions for accessibility predate the 1991 American Disabilities Act (ADA) by at least ten years.

### **Kwan Yin Path (ca. 1930-1969)**

#### **Key Features Map 04**

- A. Wisteria Arch (ca. early 1960s, 1 contributing object)
- B. Kwan Yin Bog (1969 on, character-defining feature)
- C. Mist Waterfall (late 1960s-early 1970s, 1 contributing object)
- D. East Rock Garden (1930s-1950s, 1960s on, character-defining feature)
- E. Lip Rock Waterfall (1938, 1 contributing object)
- F. Row of Dawn Redwoods (1 in early 1940s, others late 1970s-early 1980s, character-defining feature)
- G. Willow Island (1969, 1 contributing structure)

Named by Walter Beck for the East Asian bodhisattva of compassion, the Kwan Yin Path borders the northern end of Tyrrel Lake. In the 1960s, as part of his efforts to construct a new entry sequence at Innisfree, Lester Collins did significant work along the Kwan Yin Path. He succeeded in creating a strong sense of arrival, making it clear that the designed landscape had truly begun. This cup garden is lush and mostly shady. Views

<sup>18</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 33-34.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on wildflowers at Innisfree, please refer to the downloadable catalogue

<http://www.innisfreegarden.org/wildflower.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xeriscaping>

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expand across the length of the lake and then narrow to an intimate focus on the myriad designed features right along the path, only to open again at the entrance to the next major cup garden.

In the 1930s when the first garden features were designed here by the Becks, the Kwan Yin Path itself was nearly level with the lake and typically quite wet. In 1969, Collins dredged the north end of the lake and used the resulting material to raise the level of the Kwan Yin Path, particularly at the northernmost point of the lake past the Kwan Yin Bog. This keeps visitors' feet dry and brings them closer to the pair of important water features that bracket the East Rock Garden on the north side of the path, described below.

**A. Wisteria Arch (ca. early 1960s, 1 contributing object, photo 0019)**

The Wisteria Arch is a simple structure along the Lake Path at the beginning of the Kwan Yin Path. *Wisteria floribunda* grows up a simple wooden post on the water side and crosses above the path on a cable. Collins wrote, "Innisfree has no stunning start or end as do the gardens of Italy or France. The garden is like a continuing scroll painting and visitors can enter the sequence of pictures wherever they choose."<sup>21</sup> Far from a "stunning start", this loose, asymmetrical archway casually marks the transition to the more intensely designed section of the garden.

**B. Kwan Yin Bog (1969 on, character-defining feature, photo 0020)**

The Kwan Yin Bog is the first important feature coming from the parking area and overlook, along the lake side of the Kwan Yin Path. Collins developed the idea of bog gardens at Innisfree to capitalize on the many wet areas present in this natural bowl. This one, however, is distinctive because it is so visually bold. Collins encouraged plants that appear in many of his other bog gardens including natives: tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), northern blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*), crimson-eyed rose mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) and naturalized non-native yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). To create a pleasing pattern, he began having the garden maintenance crew cut rather quickly each week around small clumps of these individual species, creating a low, dense mat of green on which these common but desirable plants are presented as specimens, inviting viewers to compare and contrast growth habits, foliage colors, and textures. This graphic display is strongly reminiscent of a Japanese rock garden, like Ryoan-ji, where a spare composition of rocks positioned in gravel suggests an entire landscape. Perhaps Collins enjoyed the difference between such traditional *kare-sansui*, dry gardens, and his bog garden, wet by definition. The Kwan Yin Bog creates a plinth for the first long north-south view of Tyrrel Lake, with the Fountain Jet on Pine Island and the Corn Crib Bridge in the Corn Crib Bog as distant highlights.

**C. Mist Waterfall (ca. late 1960s-early 1970s, 1 contributing object, photo 0022)**

On the inland side of the Kwan Yin Path past the Kwan Yin Bog is the Mist Waterfall, the first of two key designed water features in this cup garden. Prior to 1960, there was only the small waterfall that runs over a boulder below today's Mist Waterfall. While it may have been moved a bit, that boulder appears to have broken off of the large rock face above. In the later 1960s, Lester Collins added water mist to the rock outcropping to create the Mist Waterfall. In the early-to-mid-1970s, he and his son, Oliver Collins, collaborated to rework the mechanics, particularly the nozzle that creates the mist. The result is a more robust cloud of mist that hangs in

<sup>21</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 111.

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front of the cliff and catches both morning and late afternoon light. Between 1981 and 1989, when Oliver was a student at the California Institute of Technology, they worked with the Cal Tech model shop to make several more iterations of the nozzle (including the one currently in use). These did not change the look of the Mist Waterfall, but instead greatly reduced mechanical maintenance requirements.

At the base of the Mist Waterfall, Collins planted a large bed of *Petasites hybridus*, which has very large, rounded green leaves. The large scale, coarse texture, and visual weight of the planting are a perfect complement to the massive rock face. The plant spreads aggressively given appropriate conditions, which the mist itself creates. Demonstrating his understanding of how individual plants work and a both practical and innovative way of using that knowledge, Collins knew that the steep slopes on either side of the mist were too dry for petasites to succeed and would thus provide natural containment. He planted petasites below the mist, allowed it to reach the extent of its spread, and designed around that. The maintenance staff never has to work to keep this plant in check.

**D. East Rock Garden (ca. 1930s-1950s, 1960s on, character-defining feature, photos 0023-0024)**

Past the Mist Waterfall, still on the inland side of the Kwan Yin Path, is the East Rock Garden. This area slopes up steeply to the north and northwest from the path to the beginnings of the large rock face that extends from the Mist Waterfall well into the Meadow. The East Rock Garden was originally created and tended by Marion Beck and her gardeners. This densely planted area is dotted with carefully placed stones, mostly of small to medium sizes, and a single pool of pea gravel, suggesting water and providing a resting spot for the eye. Until 1960, it was an exactly tended traditional rock garden. However, after the garden staff dropped suddenly from twenty to five, Lester Collins developed different management techniques resulting in a different aesthetic that could be maintained by the smaller, less skilled garden staff. This approach is Darwinian. Garden plants that survive are allowed to move around across the slope, while native plants are allowed to move in, and the mix is gently edited as needed. After decades of careful curation, Collins' concept has fully matured, with choice garden cultivars like hellebores, *Iris cristata*, and epimedium growing happily beside common native species like white wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) that have been encouraged to take root, and plants of both types have naturalized throughout. The result is a lush profusion, unstudied and utterly engaging to serious gardeners and non-gardeners alike.

**E. Lip Rock Waterfall (1938, 1 contributing object, photo 0025)**

The other important water feature along the Kwan Yin Path is the Lip Rock Waterfall created by Walter Beck and Lester Collins in 1938, perhaps their first real collaboration. They laid a wide, essentially flat rock horizontally and cantilevered it out over an assemblage of smaller rocks. A gentle flow of water runs in a sheet across the top of the lip rock and then drips quietly down to moss-covered rocks below. Today, a casual array of plants grows up amongst these rocks, including various ferns, Japanese primroses, and native columbine. The water for both the Mist Waterfall and the Lip Rock Waterfall is piped from the reservoir built by the Becks in about 1930 on a ridge that forms the western boundary of the garden. After it runs over these falls, the water is piped under the Kwan Yin Path to the bog below that flows into the lake.

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**F. Row of Dawn Redwoods (1 in late 1940s or early 1950s, others late 1970s-early 1980s, character-defining feature, photo 0007)**

Just past the Kwan Yin Bog along the lake shore is a long staggered row of dawn redwood trees (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). The oldest of these, with a very wide flared trunk, has an important provenance. Dawn redwoods were known in the fossil record but thought to be extinct until a single living tree was discovered in China in the early 1940s. Harvard's Arnold Arboretum mounted an expedition in 1948 to collect seeds from this tree. They then distributed seeds and seedlings to arboreta around the world to preserve this rare species. Collins, then on the faculty of Harvard's Department of Landscape Architecture, was able to obtain two seedlings as gifts for the Becks, his Sinophile clients. Innisfree's other early specimen is located near the juncture of the entrance and service roads.

**G. Willow Island (1969, 1 contributing structure, photo 0021)**

This tiny island – accessible to visitors only by sight – is topped with carefully pollarded weeping willows (*Salix babylonica*) that Collins thought resembled “vine-covered bowers.”<sup>22</sup> It is tucked in close to the north shore at the western end of the row of dawn redwoods. Collins created it in 1969 when he dredged the north end of the lake and raised the Kwan Yin Path.

**Heather Hill (ca. 1930-early 1970s)**

**Key Features Map 05**

- A. Heather Hill (ca. 1930s-1940s, 1960s-early 1970s, character-defining feature)
- B. Stairs (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- C. Sculptural Rocks (ca. 1930s-1940s, 1980s, 1 contributing object)
- D. Berm (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing structure)
- E. West Rock Garden (ca. 1940s-1950s & 1980s, character-defining feature)
- F. The Spring and Stone Steps (ca 1940s-1950s, 1 contributing structure)

**A. Heather Hill (ca. 1930s-1940s, 1960s-early 1970s, character-defining feature, photos 0026-0029)**

This cup garden sits atop the large roughly north-south rock outcropping that begins above the Kwan Yin Path and extends into the meadow. Heather Hill boasts commanding views of both Tyrrel Lake to the east and the Meadow and Terraces to the south and west respectively. The name Heather Hill dates from the Beck era. It is unclear where heather was originally planted but some remains in the West Rock Garden and it has naturalized in the lawn on the southern end of Heather Hill. Toward the north end of Heather Hill, the Becks built a traditional Chinese tea house surrounded by a moss garden that was both high maintenance and very delicate. Lester Collins removed the moss garden after 1960 out of necessity, when funds were severely limited. For the same reasons, the tea house itself was removed in the very early 1970s. Choice, carefully placed rocks, a berm, moss that persists with very little or no care, and an array of mature trees and shrubs now adorn Heather Hill.

**B. East Stairs (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0026)**

A narrow, turning staircase of rough stone leads up from the Kwan Yin Path, just southwest of the Lip Rock Waterfall. It follows the living rock face, and is largely hidden from view along the Kwan Yin Path by a dense

<sup>22</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 33.



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planting of *Pieris japonica*. One of the sculptural stone wayfinders along the Lake Path (above) is used to draw attention to the subsidiary route through the garden. The steps themselves and the immediate edges are lushly planted, mostly in ferns. Several smaller staircases are part of the West Rock Garden (see below), and a simple trail of stone stepping stones leads down the south slope of Heather Hill.

**C. Sculptural Rocks (ca. 1930s-1940s, 1960s-1980s, 1 contributing object, photos 0027-0028)**

Many rocks atop Heather Hill remain from the Beck era, while others were placed at various periods by Collins: when the moss garden was removed in the 1960s, when the tea house was removed in the early 1970s, and when a berm was added in the 1980s.

**D. Berm (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0027)**

In the 1980s, when Lester Collins created undulating berms in various locations at Innisfree, he added one following the western edge of the ridge on Heather Hill. This creates a subtle sense of enclosure along that edge helping to define the Heather Hill cup garden, and also conceals parts of the garden further to the west so as to increase the sense of mystery and surprise.

**E. West Rock Garden (ca. 1940s-1950s & 1960s, character-defining feature, photos 0028-0029)**

On the western slope of Heather Hill is the West Rock Garden. Although much smaller in scale than the East Rock Garden along the Kwan Yin Path, it was also a traditional rock garden established during Marion Beck's lifetime. Although the perennial plantings have been simplified and scaled back in favor of more moss, perennials, shrubs and specimen trees do remain along with native and naturalized plants.

**F. The Spring and Stone Steps (ca 1940s-1950s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0029)**

As part of the West Rock Garden, the Becks bracketed the planted slope with rough stone steps and created the Spring, a small water feature within the rock garden. The steps on the south end lead to the Collins era Corduroy/Timber Bridge, which crosses the Meadow Stream where Heather Hill, the North Lawn, and the Meadow meet. It is described below. At that point, the Meadow Stream runs north-south at the western base of Heather Hill. The steps that originally led to the Chinese tea house are on the north end of the west rock garden. They remain as built by the Becks, leading from the top of Heather Hill down to the path and Meadow Stream at the base, where a narrow stone slab serves as a bridge across the stream into the north lawn. Within the West Rock Garden, the Spring is a tiny rivulet of water bounded beautifully by stones that cascades west, down the west side Heather Hill. The water disappears underground and joins the nearby Meadow Stream.

**The Meadow (ca. 1930-1985)**

**Key Features Map 06**

- A. The Meadow (ca. 1930-1985, character-defining feature)
- B. Lakeside Bog Garden (ca. 1960s on, character-defining feature)
- C. Grove of Clipped Pears (ca. mid-1980s, character-defining feature)
- D. Sculptural Rock (ca. mid-1980s, 1 contributing object)
- E. Yin and Yang Rocks (ca. mid-1980s, 1 contributing object)
- F. Dumpling Knoll (glacial landform, character-defining feature)

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G. Meadow Stream (ca. mid-1950s on, 1 contributing structure)

G1. Bog Gardens

G2. Spring House Bog

G3. Yarimizu

H. Zigzag Bridge (ca. mid 1980s, 1 contributing structure)

I. Stone Slab Bridge (ca. late 1960s, 1 contributing structure)

J. Stepping Down Bridge (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)

K. Corduroy/Timber Bridge (ca. late 1980s, 1 contributing structure)

**A. The Meadow (ca. 1930-1985, character-defining feature, photos 0030-0036)**

Lester Collins believed that the Meadow, visually central and a nexus of connecting paths and spaces, was the most important cup garden he created at Innisfree.<sup>23</sup> Collins's Meadow is an irregular shape that surrounds Heather Hill, includes Dumpling Knoll and the Meadow Stream, and extends to the base of the terraces. He expanded this from a smaller area called the Meadow during the Beck era; at that time, it was a more of a clearing just south of Heather Hill that was mostly surrounded by trees. Shortly after Collins came back from living in Japan for more than a year as a Fulbright Scholar and after Walter Beck's death – both in 1954 – Collins began to develop this cup garden. He began by clearing most of the area to reveal the undulating natural landforms and open the space for longer views. He also created the Meadow Stream, a central feature discussed below. To augment select trees that he left in the meadow, Collins planted larch (*Larix sp.*) and fragrant swamp magnolias (*Magnolia virginiana*) close to the Meadow Stream where some survive today. The overall concept and form of the meadow was fully realized in 1969, when Collins exposed more of the massive granite ledge that faces the lake and reshaped the shoreline along the Meadow in sweeping curves. That was part of the same undertaking during which the north end of the lake was dredged, the level of the Kwan Yin Path was raised, and Willow Island was created. This spectacular cliff was integral to Collins's vision for implementing Wang Wei's ideas and creating an overall cup garden at Innisfree. Collins placed a row of wooden Innisfree chairs at the south end of this cliff, angled to best capture views of the lake and Dumpling Knoll.

**B. Lakeside Bog Garden (ca. 1969 on, character-defining feature, photos 0030-0031)**

After Collins excavated more of the Meadow Rock Face and sculpted the adjacent lake shore, he began to encourage water's edge plantings but only to the north. This essentially continues the dense planted edge that begins in the Kwan Yin Bog and continues in a thinner band along the north end of the lake to the narrow, northern Meadow. Plants introduced in the Kwan Yin Bog appear, tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), northern blue flag iris (*Iris versicolor*), crimson-eyed rose mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) and naturalized non-native yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), but royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) appears and in some areas dominates the mix. When the Meadow widens along the dramatic curves that Collins created in 1969, these lush plantings stop and the crisp line where mown lawn meets the lake surface calls clear attention to this sculpted shoreline. This is an example of a recurring theme in Collins's work at Innisfree, that of contrast, of creating design elements that serve as foils for each other to make the overall composition stronger, more lively.

**C. Grove of Clipped Pears (ca. mid-1980s, character-defining feature, photo 0030, 0032)**

<sup>23</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 33.

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In the mid-1980s, Lester Collins planted a grove of Callery pear trees (*Pyrus calleryana*) that have been clipped into tight domes. These serve several important design functions. Most visitors see them first from a distance, from the Overlook on the opposite side of the lake, so they capture the viewer's attention and encourage them to walk over to investigate. As the majority of visitors walk around the lake counterclockwise, their first clear view of these trees is with Dumpling Knoll, a symmetrically rounded glacial landform, as a backdrop. The natural form of the hill and the created form of the clipped trees engage in a lively dialogue that continues through the garden, what is natural and what is man-made. Suggestive of modern art, the pears' circular shadows animate the ground plane with a shifting composition throughout the day. This grove also serves as a fulcrum, swinging visitors from the roughly north-south lake shore and granite ledge around the end of Heather Hill to face west and see the meadow stream and the terraces beyond for the first time.

**D. Sculptural Rock (ca. mid-1980s, 1 contributing object, photo 0032)**

When Collins planted the pears, he also placed a single and lovely standing stone in their midst. Hidden at first, visitors discover it when they are close to the grove of trees. A classic cup garden, the trees enclose and frame the stone so visitors pause to look at it more carefully.

**E. Yin and Yang Rocks (ca. mid-1980s, 1 contributing object, photos 0030, 0032, 0034)**

Collins punctuated the minimalist edge of the meadow where the contiguous planes of lawn and water meet with two sculptural stones. Following Chinese ideas, he thought of the pair as Yin and Yang Rocks, one vertical (yin) and one horizontal (yang.)

**F. Dumpling Knoll (natural landform, character-defining feature, photo 0030, 0032, 0034-0036)**

Like his use of carefully selected rocks, Collins used sculptural landforms as important but low maintenance design elements. A prime example of this is Dumpling Knoll, a glacial landform along the lake shore. Its distinctive, smoothly rounded form ornaments views from many points throughout the garden. During the Beck era, this was wooded but Collins carefully cleared the hill to reveal its remarkable form and create important spatial definition.

**G. Meadow Stream (ca. mid-1950s on, 1 contributing structure, photos 0033, 0034, 0036)**

Using traditional Japanese garden design and construction techniques he had studied while living in Kyoto in the early 1950s as a Fulbright Scholar, Lester Collins created the Meadow Stream shortly after his return to the United States. A stream had run through a largely wooded area before the Becks created their reservoir in about 1930, but after that, it only ran when snow melt or storms overflowed the reservoir. Collins reworked the water system so his stream would flow gently throughout the year and then carefully designed its curving course. As he described it:

The stream is so poised in the landscape that it establishes aesthetic control by giving to the Meadow both tension and motion... Sections of the water course are wide so that the flow will be quiet, permitting reflections of the larch and the magnolias and bringing down the sky roof. Yellow irises and later pink or white mallows border the stream which is crossed by three wooden bridges and a great stone slab.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 34.

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Some sections of the stream are narrow, resulting in the pleasant sound of water running over small stones across its channel, laid, or perhaps more accurately, tuned for just the aural and visual experience Collins sought. Collins reworked a tiny section of the Meadow Stream in the last spring he was at Innisfree, replacing a single rill with two to refine the effect.

### **G1. Meadow Stream: Bog Gardens (photos 0033, 0035)**

Collins used lush bog plantings – irises, mallows, royal fern, Japanese primroses, Joe Pye weed, even skunk cabbage – along the Meadow Stream to create visual interest with the plants themselves, to contrast with the neatly mown lawn that typifies the Meadow, and to conceal, reveal, and frame views of the watercourse and surrounding garden features. Like other bog plantings, these are more sustainable as they do not require additional water to produce exuberant growth. The plantings along the Meadow Stream also benefit from the higher levels of organic materials in the water (compost tea) as it flows down from the reservoir. The process Collins developed to remove decomposing organic matter from the lake to retard algae growth and then use it to organically fertilize plants along streams, waterfalls, and in the small area that is occasionally irrigated is discussed below.

### **G2. Meadow Stream: Spring House Bog (photo 0033)**

Just to the south of the Corduroy Bridge lies the Spring House Bog, a linear space running roughly north-south. It is framed by Heather Hill to the east and to the west by a former driveway and the Burly Wall, part of the Terraces created in the 1930s around the Becks' main house. This area had been fairly unkempt until Collins began work on the meadow stream in the 1950s and regularized the flow of water through the Spring House Bog. He then experimented with the impacts of soil chemistry on plant life there and was thus able first to get rid of undesirable grass and then change the chemistry again encourage a plant community he felt was aesthetically pleasing. Over time, as his concept and the plants themselves matured, this bog garden became a lush counterpoint to the massive rough-hewn boulders used to construct the Burly Wall and the smooth rise of Heather Hill, dotted with specimen trees. The Becks had built a small spring house located roughly where the Corduroy/Timber Bridge is now (see below). That taken down in about 1985 although this bog garden still bears the name.

### **G3. Meadow Stream: Yarimizu (photo 0034)**

Collins created an extravagantly curved oxbow in the meadow stream which he called the Yarimizu, translated as "lightning" from archaic Japanese. At the Yarimizu the stream is wider, the water flow is almost imperceptible, and the reflection of the sky is deeply important. While the rest of the meadow stream is edged in exuberant plantings, they disappear here, as they do along the Meadow's shoreline. Clipped lawn covers the carefully sculpted ground plane and extends right to the end of the water, accentuating the bold form and providing a perfect foil for the rest of the stream.

### **H. Zigzag Bridge contributing structure (ca. mid 1980s, 1 contributing structure, photos 0035-0036)**

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The several bridges across the meadow stream are important to the overall composition of the Meadow. Collins added this wooden bridge over the Meadow Stream to help define the southern part of the Meadow. It follows a traditional Japanese design, wooden boards held up above the water's surface on posts that follows a zigzag path. That forces those crossing it to notice their surroundings: the path is not straight so one cannot move quickly, and the repeated change in direction offers new vistas.

#### **I. Stone Slab Bridge (ca. late 1960s, 1 contributing structure)**

Lester Collins set a large rather flat stone at grade with the surrounding lawn to serve as a bridge across the Meadow Stream.

#### **J. Stepping Down Bridge (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0033)**

The Stepping Down Bridge "is the only original wood bridge [created by the Becks] still being maintained and rebuilt. Since it is the main way to the stone steps which ascend to the upper terraces, more architecture is demanded than a piece of stone can provide."<sup>25</sup>

#### **K. Corduroy/Timber Bridge (ca. mid 1980s, 1 contributing structure, photos 0008, 0029)**

Stepping stones were originally used to cross the Meadow Stream at the north end of the meadow where Collins built the Corduroy/Timber Bridge in 1985. While the stream is very narrow, he believed this more robust structure was required to balance the huge scale of the north lawn.<sup>26</sup> When the wooden bridge was last repaired, the corduroy surface of irregular half-round logs was deemed unsafe and not replaced. The bridge structure is such that this feature could be added back at any time.

### **North Lawn and North Meadow (ca. 1930-1980s)**

#### **Key Features Map 07**

- A. North Lawn (ca. 1940s-1980s, character-defining feature)
- B. Berms (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing structure)
- C. Tiptoe Rock (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing object)
- D. Cedar of Lebanon (ca. 1930s, character-defining feature)
- E. Stone Bridge & Staircase (ca. late 1920s- early 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- F. Meadow Stream (see Key Features Map 06 for description)
- G. North Meadow (ca. 1940s-1980s on, character-defining feature)
- H. Service Road (ca. late 1920s-early 1930s & 1959, 1 contributing structure)

#### **A. North Lawn (ca. 1930-1980s, character-defining feature, photos 0037-0038)**

#### **G. North Meadow (ca. 1940s-1980s on, character-defining feature, photo 0037)**

The North Lawn and North Meadow run successively northward from the current location of the Corduroy Bridge at the top of the meadow, up a small valley between Hemlock Hill and the original driveway to the

<sup>25</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 94-95.

<sup>26</sup> In 1994, after Collins death, the Corduroy Bridge was reconfigured for safety and durability. Matching the original dimensions, the current bridge has a hidden steel substructure with wood decking that was designed so that half-round logs could easily be replaced to maintain the corduroy texture. Reinforcing steel was also installed underneath the Stepping Down Bridge and the Zigzag Bridge.

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Becks' main house. Based on historic aerial photographs, the existing spatial pattern of open space in the north lawn and north meadow surrounded by woodland were in place sometime between the aerial views taken in 1940 and 1955. As early as the 1936 aerial photo, woodland had been cleared to begin shaping the north lawn. The 1940 image is of better quality and shows additional open space created along that driveway in what is today the north meadow. The 1955 image shows that clearing expanded considerably, creating the corridor of mostly open space that remains today from the Point north roughly following the former driveway.<sup>27</sup>

The shift from North Lawn to North Meadow happens about where the northern set of stone steps in the West Rock Garden comes down the slope of Heather Hill. Collins felt the neatly mown North Lawn was the limit of the most designed portion of the garden that includes the major cup gardens like the Meadow, while the North Meadow, like other areas including Pine Island, is more wild but still clearly not wilderness. With additions Collins made to the space in the mid-late 1980s, the spare, elegant composition of the North Lawn carefully frames views of the bold textures of the North Meadow. Because this pairing is yet another example of how Collins used contrasts in his work at Innisfree, each space makes the design of the other stronger.

Collins began creating his bog gardens, essentially wet meadows, in the 1950s in the Spring House Bog and elsewhere starting in about 1960. It is highly likely that he began using similar techniques during that same period to create and manage dry/drier communities of meadow plants for their aesthetic qualities. Oliver Collins always remembered his father tinkering with the meadows at Innisfree, so Lester Collins was certainly working on them at least by the late 1960s or very early 1970s. Like the bog gardens, carefully timed interventions in the natural succession process, here mowing in late fall, is essential to creating and maintaining the desired plant community and the desired aesthetic effects. Like the other gardens at Innisfree, Collins embraced lean soils to produce resilient plants and deter the growth of weeds that flourish when more nutrients are available in the soil. Like all of his cup gardens, and the innovative approach to maintenance Collins developed, gentle editing over time is key. In his meadows, selective removal of undesirable species, mostly achieved by cutting just those plants down season after season, allowed the plant species Collins wanted to eventually become dominant both in the existing plants and the soil's seedbank.

Overall, the North Meadow reads as open space defined by its natural valley topography, ringed by dense woodland on the upper slopes. It features both dry and wet meadow areas interspersed with a handful of specimen trees, including venerable examples of a native shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) and a bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). This meadow extends the expansive feeling of space, suggesting great scale from points in the garden where the large lake is not visible. The naturalistic aesthetic also functions as a visual transition between the more intensely designed part of the garden with neatly mown lawns to the unimproved woodland that encircles it. The same wetland plants that appear in the Kwan Yin and Spring House Bogs repeat at the southern end of the meadow plus Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*). Natives including little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), bee balm (*Mondarda fistulosa*), and various

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<sup>27</sup> The degree to which these areas were opened and when is confirmed by historic aerial photographs available on Dutchess County Aerial Access. *Dutchess County NY Aerial Access*, <https://gis.dutchessny.gov/aerialaccess/?xmax=698843.8515741639&ymax=1068628.658640489&xmin=696838.6149552464&ymin=1064345.618178241>

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types of goldenrod (*Solidago sp.*) as well as naturalized yellow foxgloves (*Digitalis lutea*) create a rich tapestry of color and texture in the more upland northern portion of the North Meadow.

**B. Berms (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0037)**

**C. Tiptoe Rock (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing object, photo 0037)**

**D. Cedar of Lebanon (ca. 1930s, character-defining feature, photo 0038)**

When the spring house beside the Corduroy Bridge was taken down in about 1985, Collins regraded the North Lawn to create a series of gracefully undulating berms. These speak to the rolling glacial landforms on site but also create a subtle sense of enclosure and thus definition for the North Lawn. He worked around some key specimen trees, including a cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) and Irish yew (*Taxus baccata*) that were both planted during the Becks' lifetimes, and added one strongly vertical sculptural stone, Tiptoe Rock.

**E. Stone Bridge & Staircase (ca. late 1920s- early 1930s, 1 contributing structure)**

**F. Meadow Stream (see Key Features Map 06)**

The Becks built their main house in 1930, and the large, arched cobblestone bridge over a steep drop to a stream along the course of their main driveway was built in concert with but before the house was begun. The stream comes down from a small valley further up the hill and continued roughly east to the base of Heather Hill and then south through the Meadow to Tyrrel Lake. The Becks dammed that smaller area to create their reservoir. From that time until Lester Collins reworked the flow from the reservoir when he created a designed watercourse for the Meadow Stream (see below), it only ran with storm runoff. Any flow was piped under the secondary driveway that lead to a seldom if ever used circular drive on the south side of the main house and continued underground to the base of Heather Hill where it emerged once again on the surface. Although this looks like two streams in the garden and on maps, the run from the reservoir to the lake is actually all the Meadow Stream. Since the mid-1950s, the stream under the Stone Bridge has run year round.

When the bridge was built or shortly thereafter, the Becks had a lovely set of rough stone steps built from the south end of the bridge down the north slope to the stream. The drop from the driveway to the stream there is about 25 feet. On the west side of the bridge, there is a large mass planting of pachysandra that dates from the Beck era. On the east side, where the steps are, the stream edge is planted with Japanese primroses which were certainly encouraged if not planted by Lester Collins. To further define this small dell, he planted a variety of specimen understory trees here including native dogwood (*Cornus florida*), sapphire berry (*Symplocos paniculata*), *Cercis canadensis*, and *Stewartia pseudocamellia*.

**H. Service Road (ca. late 1920s-early 1930s & 1959, 1 contributing structure)**

The original driveway was roughly a north-south route linking the Becks' house (south) to Tyrrel Road (north). The Becks entered on the north side of the house, but an eastern branch split off the main drive and led to a circular drive on the south lawn below the house. That eastern segment of the drive bisects the North Lawn. In 1959 the circular drive on the south lawn was removed and in 1960, Collins directed visitors to the new public garden to the east side of the lake, not the house. So in those two years, segments of the Becks drive were removed and the remaining portions that wrap around the north end of the North Meadow and then turn south were converted to a maintenance service road and pedestrian path in 1959 when, and it remains thus today.

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## **Terraces (ca. 1930-1994)**

### **Key Features Map 08**

- A. Terraces (ca. 1930s-1994, 1 contributing structure)
  - A1. Burly Wall
  - A2. Daffodil Wall
  - A3. Peony Tai
  - A4. Psychological Wall
  - A5. Flame Wall
  - A6. Upper Terrace
  - A7. Middle Terrace
- B. Ginkgo Grove (ca. 1952 & early 1980s, character-defining feature)
- C. Berm (ca. 1982, 1 contributing structure)
- D. Water Sculpture (ca. 1992-94, 1 contributing object)
- E. Buddha Cave (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- F. Pergolas (ca. early 1980s, 1 contributing object)
- G. Circular Grotto (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing object)
- H. Lotus Pool/Stone Steps Waterfall (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- I. Grouping of Sculptural Rocks and Weeping Trees (ca. 1960s, character-defining feature)

#### **A. Terraces (ca. 1930s, 1981, 1994, 1 contributing structure, photos 0039-0042, 0044-0048)**

Walter and Marion Beck selected a location for their main house (no longer extant) that is the only place on the property from which one can look across part of the main lake and down the channel and lower lake for a stunning view of a long body of water bounded by steep, wooded hills on both sides. The Becks' house site naturally sloped very steeply down to the east. To create a workable building site and room for ample gardens around it, the solution was to create two north-south terraces, the Upper and Middle Terraces, stepping down that east-facing slope with stone retaining walls approximately one-story high and several hundred feet long built with the house in about 1930. These stone walls run to grade on the north end and in between are linked by several stone staircases. Because many Italian stonemasons had been brought to the Millbrook area to build large houses, there was an ample supply of skilled labor available when the Becks' house and terraces at Innisfree were constructed.

The Upper Terrace is at the highest most westerly location, supported by the Psychological Wall (north) and the Flame Wall (south). Middle Terrace is buttressed from north to south by the Burly Wall, the Daffodil Wall, and the Peony Tai. Along the base and associated with these three walls, a series of subordinate cup gardens link the stone Terraces to the organic forms of the meadow.

While the native slope was steep, there were some places that would have required fill behind the retaining walls. Instead of being filled, such openings were used to create three large grottos set behind the stone walls. The largest, accessed from the middle terrace, was used as a workroom, essentially a potting shed. The smaller grottos, one on the south end of the middle terrace and the other just below it, are simply follies with living rock ledge exposed inside.



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To heighten the drama when that long view was revealed as visitors entered the house on the north side and moved through it the south, the Becks made a purposeful decision not to open other views of the lake from their house and the main garden areas surrounding it. As Collins reworked and expanded the garden, additional views of the lake from this area that he opened with major clearing efforts in the adjacent Meadow in the late 1950s and the 1960s became very important.

### **A1. Terraces: Burly Wall**

The Burly Wall forms the northeast section of the Terraces, running from the waterfall and stone steps opposite the Stepping Down Bridge, parallel to the Spring House Bog and the east branch of the former Beck drive, almost to grade roughly where the North Lawn begins.. The name derives from the rough boulders that are stacked to create this retaining wall. Likely in the 1980s when he was working on the North Lawn, Collins planted a line of plume poppies (*Macleaya cordata*) along the base of the wall. Rich blue green leaves with bright white undersides flutter even in a slight breeze, suggesting light and motion, contrasting with the obvious weight of the boulders. Like the petasites below the Mist Waterfall, *macleaya* is spreads rapidly, but again, Collins selected a location where that does not happen. The old driveway bed, now the service road and path, is too compacted for the seeds to germinate. The Spring Hill Bog is too wet. Some seedlings start along the top of the Burly Wall but that area is regularly mowed. With such careful placement, the best qualities of the plant are enjoyed without risk.

### **A2. Terraces: Daffodil Wall (photo 0044)**

South of the Burly Wall, the stone steps, and the waterfall is the Daffodil Wall. Area along its base is uncharacteristic of cup gardens at Innisfree because it depends entirely on bloom: “Thousands of daffodils flower in spring, followed by masses of sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*), which flower in July and August, after the nearby laurels and before the mallows along the stream. Virtually maintenance free and growing more luxuriant each year, the sweet peas with their strong pink color enliven a sultry summer day.”<sup>28</sup> The sweet peas both cover the yellowing daffodil foliage and thrive in the poor, dry soil on this slope. After Collins’s death, this area was covered in compost. In the richer soil, weeds, particularly crown vetch, largely overpowered the sweet peas. Collins himself embraced lean soil believing it resulted in more resilient plants and retarded the growth of many weeds, an idea that is just recently being embraced by those at the forefront of horticulture.

At the south end of the daffodils is a fern-leaf beech (*Fagus sylvatica* ‘*Asplenifolia*’), the middle of three planted over time but within sight of each other by Collins. The oldest is on the west slope of Heather Hill, and the youngest is on the north slope of Dumpling Knoll. Beyond the beech, the ground starts to slope up and native mountain laurel is planted between the Daffodil Wall and a low, dry-laid stone wall along the former driveway.

### **A3. Terraces: Peony Tai (photo 0040)**

Along the Daffodil Wall south of the laurels is the Peony Tai. Beck “constructed a series of long stone planters stepping down the hillside, an ancient Chinese garden device called tai that was used to display flowers that

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<sup>28</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 34-35.

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droop over. Beck planted his cascading plant boxes with peonies. A person walking along the lower path looks up into a tilted field of white and pink flower heads against the sky.”<sup>29</sup>

#### **A4. Terraces: Psychological Wall (photo 0045)**

#### **A5. Terraces: Flame Wall (photo 0042)**

These retaining walls supporting the Upper Terrace and visible on the Middle Terrace are themselves extraordinary features. Both are mortared with stone coping. Collins describes Beck’s compositions: “The flame wall...with its huge tapered slabs of sandstone, is [Beck’s] most complicated wall. He called his most beautiful wall, which buttressed his wife’s cutting garden, the Psychological Wall.”<sup>30</sup> It is unclear why Beck called it the Psychological Wall, but the name persists.

#### **A6. Terraces: Upper Terrace (photos 0039, 0041-0042, 0044, 0046)**

The Becks’s house was located on the upper terrace. After years of deliberation on what style of house to build, the Becks decided to copy the Queen Anne building known as the laboratory at Wisley, the Royal Horticulture Society’s garden in Surrey, England. Collins described their process:

A photographer was sent out from London to photograph the stone, wood, and stucco building with its slate roof and elegant brick chimneys. The photographs were then given to architects Robert Carrère and Norman Averill in New York. The copy was adapted for the Becks’ needs, which included an organ for Marion and a painting studio for Walter on the top floor.<sup>31</sup>

The house ran east-west, with a smaller ell on the west end running north that was a garage, living accommodations for the chauffeur, and the main meeting and tool storage space for the garden staff. The main entrance to the house was through a partial courtyard on the north side accessed along the western spur of the original driveway. Even so, the south façade was considered the front because it faced the principal view down Tyrrel Lake.

Close to the house and about level with the ground floor, the Becks created a paved terrace along the edge of the upper retaining wall, there, the Flame Wall, which rises up along part of the terrace to create a parapet wall about 3’ high. The paving was created using angled bricks intended for Tudor-style chimneys laid in a pattern resembling Chinese fretwork. This was inset with large slate slabs and smaller panels of concrete. Walter Beck further embellished this ornate paving with various Chinese symbols including lotus, yin and yang, as well as various mythological creatures carved into the stone and pressed into concrete.<sup>32</sup>

Along the western edge of the paved terrace, there are three low raised beds built of stone. During the Beck era, these beds and the area just to the north were planted with traditional garden perennials. Collins changed these plantings to function better with his smaller workforce: “In this cup garden Collins used trees rather than rocks as sculpture: purple smoke trees, weeping copper beeches [that one pruned to maintain a small scale and domed

<sup>29</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 26-27.

<sup>30</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 91.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 25.

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shape], a Japanese threadleaf maple, and a blue spruce so horizontal it is literally prostrate.”<sup>33</sup> This kaleidoscopic array of colors, textures, and growth habits is quite different from the rest of Collins’s work at Innisfree but is a superb companion to the highly detailed and idiosyncratic rock and brickwork. Some of the looseness Collins achieved in plantings elsewhere in the garden is also evident in the more formal plantings on the terraces. Various types of low growing sedum, native columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), and Kenilworth ivy (*Cymbalaria muralis*) have been allowed to naturalize in crevices in sculptural rocks, stone walls and steps, and terrace paving. Walls, sculptural rocks, and even some trees on the terraces are draped in a variety of vines, including trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*), crimson glory vine (*Vitis coignetiae*), porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea petiolaris*), wisteria, and many types of clematis. Collins added the trumpet vine and additional clematis in the early 1980s when he built the Pergolas (see below).

In March 1982, Innisfree Foundation, led by Lester Collins, made the decision to demolish the main house, which had fallen into severe disrepair.<sup>34</sup> The massive 50+-year old house required extensive and expensive repairs. The nonprofit could never afford to heat it, exacerbating maintenance issues, particularly relating to the building’s foundation. Great care was taken during demolition to preserve the original brick paving and raised beds on the Upper Terrace, as well as the Buddha Cave (see below). Collins initially planned to create a new garden in what he imagined was the stone foundation of the house, but it was revealed to be ceramic block, a precursor to concrete block, and not aesthetically pleasing. Collins spent the last decade of his life working on a design solution for this area which is described below (see Berms, Ginkgo Grove, Water Sculpture, and Pergolas). While the demolition of the Becks’ house did occur during the period of significance, this change does not impact the integrity of the garden as a whole. Relatively speaking, the footprint of this alteration was small and the vast majority of features on the terraces remain as they looked by the later 1960s. This decision reflects the continuing and sometimes difficult choices Collins had to make to adapt the private garden to a public one, particularly with an extremely limited budget and workforce. It also demonstrates his continued design work at the garden, and his thoughtfulness and skill in carefully and successfully balancing a postmodern sculptural composition (Water Sculpture, see below) against the densely detailed ornamental form of the terraces.

#### **A7. Terraces: Middle Terrace (photos 0039, 0042, 0043, 0045, 0047-0048)**

##### **I. Grouping of Sculptural Rocks and Weeping Trees (ca. 1960s, character-defining feature, photos 0039, 0042-0043)**

In the Becks’ lifetimes, the Middle Terrace consisted of a white garden to the south, which included a Lotus Pool (below), and just north of that, “the most extravagant cutting garden in Dutchess County,” featuring regular beds organized around a central path.<sup>35</sup> Too costly for Innisfree Foundation to maintain, the cutting garden was removed after Marion Beck’s death in 1959. Because the gardener originally employed by the Becks to tend the white garden worked for Innisfree Foundation into the 1960s, that labor-intensive garden persisted until he

<sup>33</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 9.

<sup>35</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 116.

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retired.<sup>36</sup> Collins folded a portion of the cutting garden area into the north lawn and created a unified design with the rest of the Middle Terrace to the south. He brought in more sculptural rocks and planted weeping Norway spruce, weeping larch, a weeping beech, and weeping Japanese maple, all set in a field of lawn. Together, this rhythmic composition suggests something like a mountain range and, as the trees grow slowly and the stones not at all, it requires very little maintenance. The relative simplicity of the scheme also allows rockwork created during the Beck era to come to the fore.

**B. Ginkgo Grove (ca. 1952 & 1982, character-defining feature, photos 0039, 0041)**

**C. Berm (ca. 1982, 1 contributing structure, photo 0041)**

In 1952, Lester Collins gave Walter and Marion Beck a pair of ginkgo trees that were planted on either side of the main door on the south façade – the view side – of their house on the Upper Terrace. Native to China, this ancient type of tree was commonly planted around Buddhist temples. After the Becks' house was taken down in 1982, Collins constructed a spiral berm on the former house site and planted a grove of columnar ginkgo trees around it.<sup>37</sup> The latter are pruned to maintain a shorter, narrow tubular shape while the older pair, not a cultivar, are tall with strongly horizontal branches. Collins's use of two forms of the same tree creates a lively visual dialogue.

**D. Water Sculpture (ca. 1992-1994, 1 contributing object, photos 0039, 0044)**

The last thing Lester Collins designed at Innisfree was the water sculpture on the Upper Terrace in the center of the former house site and the spiral berm he created there. Like most features at Innisfree, the design was iterative. In the 1980s, Collins envisioned a major water feature in this location that would be tall enough to catch the afternoon sun and be visible from different points throughout the garden. He started with a garden hose and mister nozzle held aloft atop a ladder, and adjusted the height of the point where the water emerged. He also adjusted the water flow as it needed to be enough to create a strong show, but not so much that it flooded the surrounding lawn. In 1992, Collins created a wooden mock-up on site of the structure that currently exists to check its scale in relation to the overall space. As with the Mist Waterfall along the Kwan Yin Path, Oliver Collins helped design the mechanics that created the effect his father wanted from the water sculpture. Working near the Cottage where Lester and his wife stayed from April through October each year, the father-son team experimented with the fountain mechanism and finalized its design and construction of the nozzles/water filter portion in the spring of 1993. Fountain operation on the Upper Terrace required the installation of a water pump and electrical service nearby to run it. That work was delayed by Collins's sudden death in July 1993 followed immediately by a major drought which consumed any excess time and resources. This unusually striking fountain was constructed just as Collins had envisioned, although the work was fully completed early in 1994. There is a wooden tower about 13.5' high and just shy of 2' square constructed of four vertical 10x10" timbers with short 10x10" cross pieces at the top creating an openwork rectangular frame. It is stained a deep reddish brown resembling Corten steel. A cloud of very fine mist that averages about 50' high and wide emerges quietly from the top of the tower, changing shape in reaction to the slightest breeze, and is then absorbed into the surrounding lawn.

<sup>36</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 115.

<sup>37</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 35.

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**E. Buddha Cave (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0046)**

Buddha Cave is a detailed grotto built against the living rock of the natural slope rising to the west from the Upper Terrace. Tiny rivulets of water drip down over moss covered rocks, exceptional natural rock formations that look like an animal and a seated human are framed in cave-like constructs, and two shallow pools sit at the base. Plantings are loose and wild, including ferns and other fine-textured species on the slope, while various vines scramble along larger rocks and a low wall at the base. Created by Walter Beck, it was originally visible from the second floor of the main house. Referencing Buddha Cave, Collins wrote that Innisfree “has a few high-maintenance areas such as the hillside cup garden above the brick terrace, but over the years these have proved that they can pay their way in exceptional aesthetics. They would otherwise have long ago have been drastically simplified or destroyed.”<sup>38</sup>

**F. Pergolas (ca. 1982, 1 contributing object, photo 0041)**

Another small change was made in 1982. “[W]hen the house was razed the only good way to stop Beck’s terrace from visually slipping down the hill into the lake was to build a vine-covered pergola that would contain but not dominate.”<sup>39</sup> Collins draped the spare, simple wooden pergolas in trumpet vines and clematis, defining the space and also providing some shade on this sunny, paved area. Most of these pergolas are on the Upper Terrace, but two short stretches were also built on the Middle Terrace.

**G. Circular Grotto – (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing object, photos 0045, 0047)**

Collins described the Circular Grotto visible on the Middle Terrace and built in to the Psychological Wall as “one of the first, and one of the most beautiful, of Beck’s cup gardens,” saying it:

begins with a high stone wall [Psychological Wall]. The sensation of the perpendicular rise – or its reverse, the sheer drop – is a recurring need in pictorial design. A row of cedars [native *Juniperus virginiana* on top] heightens the wall and connects it to the woodland beyond. Built into the retaining wall is a five-foot circular cave. With a *yang* and *yin* sense of humor, Beck filled the entrance to the grotto with two stones, definitely male and female, to guard the grotto.<sup>40</sup>

With just enough depth to create deep shadow, the pair of seemingly figural yet natural stones is displayed clearly as if in a spotlight.

**H. Lotus Pool/Stone Steps Waterfall (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photos 0047-0048)**

Roughly in front of the Circular Grotto (just southeast) is the Lotus Pool. A small amount of water runs over a curved rock into an irregularly shaped, rock-edged pool. Pure white lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera* sp.) planted by the Becks in the 1930s are still a highlight when they bloom each summer. Japanese primroses and forget-me-nots are planted around the edges. Water flows from that small pool into a narrow rill running east, under a path, and over a larger curved rock down a slightly longer drop to an area referred to informally as the “big stone steps.”

<sup>38</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 102.

<sup>39</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 95.

<sup>40</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 26.

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Described by Lester Collins as “a fine example of garden design,” this water course and steps composition built into a recess in the lowest line of retaining was created by Walter Beck. They link the Middle Terrace and the Meadow near the the Stepping Down Bridge.<sup>41</sup> Beck was playful in his design: “To establish design control Beck sometimes reversed the common-sense-way. Here...he dwarfed the stairway by making the retaining wall as wide as it is high.”<sup>42</sup> On the south side of the steps, Beck gave this cup garden both more space and more intimacy by carving it out around two existing trees. Plants, predominantly hosta and sedum, are grouped loosely around small, sculptural rocks. After dropping from above, water runs across smooth stones before disappearing underground. One of the two trees in this area, an ash, died in 2017 but otherwise this cup garden remains essentially as designed.

### **South Lawn (ca. 1960-mid 1980s)**

#### **Key Features Map 09**

- A. South Lawn (1930s, 1960s, & 1986, character-defining feature)
- B. Berms (1986, 1 contributing structure)
- C. Oak Cluster (pre-1922, 1930s, character-defining feature)
- D. Larch Grove (late 1970s-early 1980s, character-defining feature)
- E. Picnic Rock (1930s, 1 contributing object)

#### **A. South Lawn (1930s, 1960s, & 1986, character-defining feature, photo 0049)**

The South Lawn lies between the terraces, including the former house site, and slopes gracefully down to the point. It is a verdant, undulating plane poised between dense woodland on the west and Tyrrel Lake to the south and east. This simple and soothing composition is a visual rest between the design density of the Terraces above and the Point below, and a perfect frame for the long view of lower Tyrrel Lake so prized by the Becks.

Based on early postcards showing Tyrrel Lake, at least some of the South Lawn was open before Marion Beck owned the property, probably as pasture given the terrain. When Walter and Marion Beck built their main house in the early 1930s, a large circular drive and massive cut stone steps between the house and that portion of the driveway were constructed on the South Lawn. Lester Collins felt that the circular drive and stone steps were out of place and out of scale. He removed them shortly after Marion Beck’s death in 1959. These features are visible in the 1955 aerial photograph of the site but are not in the 1970 aerial.<sup>43</sup>

#### **B. Berms (ca. 1986, 1 contributing structure, photo 0049)**

In 1986, Collins regraded part of the south lawn, creating a berm running east-west across the slope that draws the natural hillside into the composition and conceals what lies ahead.<sup>44</sup> Another small berm was constructed to suggest some enclosure for the Stone Mountain (see below) and strengthen that cup garden.

<sup>41</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 91.

<sup>42</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 69.

<sup>43</sup> *Dutchess County NY Aerial Access*,

<https://gis.dutchessny.gov/aerialaccess/?xmax=698843.8515741639&ymax=1068628.658640489&xmin=696838.6149552464&ymin=1064345.618178241>

<sup>44</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 35.

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**C. Oak Cluster (ca. pre-1922, 1930s, character-defining feature, photo 0044)**

The South Lawn is anchored by grouping of three oaks on its eastern edge. This includes an extraordinary white oak with a spread of approximately 125' which clearly predates the Beck era. With trunks very close to the white oak, there is, moving east, a red oak and a pin oak. These are not as old as the white oak and may or may not predate the earliest of the Beck years, although these and other similarly sized oaks at the Point (see below) may have been planted in the 1930s when that space was created. In Japanese fashion, Lester Collins propped up the white oak's long horizontal branches to prevent them from breaking off under their own weight and thus venerate the age of the tree. The result is boldly sculptural. This effort began in the late 1960s when Collins was increasingly concerned about children climbing on the lower branches and damaging them. Supports were adjusted as needed over time, with a few more added.

**D. Larch Grove (late 1970s-early 1980s, character-defining feature, photo 0049)**

In the late 1970s or early 1980s, Collins added a grove of several types of larch trees to the eastern side of the South Lawn, east of the former driveway, where the hillside is roughly east facing instead of south facing like the bulk of this major cup garden.

**E. Picnic Rock (1930s, 1 contributing object)**

On the east-facing slope of the South Lawn along the lake shore the Becks had a massive, roughly rectangular slab of slate set on stone legs to create a low table. They would sit on the rock and picnic with a lovely view across the lake toward the East Meadow, Hemlock Woods, and Pine Island (see below). It is unclear precisely when this feature was added, but as a similarly large slab is incorporated into the Point (below), and that work was completed in the 1930s, it is likely that Picnic Rock was created within the same time frame.

**The Point (ca. 1930s-1990s)**

**Key Features Map 10: The Point**

- A. Stone Mountain (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- B. Stone Mountain Stream (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- C. Sculptural Rock (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing object)
- D. Row of Oaks (ca. 1930s & 1960s, character-defining feature)
- E. The Point (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure)
- F. Turtle Rock (ca. 1937, 1 contributing object)
- G. Dragon Rock (ca. 1937-38, 1 contributing object)
- H. Owl Rock (ca. 1937, 1 contributing object)
- I. Lotus Bog (ca. 1930s on, character-defining feature)
- J. Overflow Waterfall (ca. late 1950s-early 1960s, 1 contributing structure)
- K. Shell Rock Bridge (early 1990s, 1 contributing object)

The Point, which projects south into the lake, was the southernmost extent of the garden during the Beck era and where they focused their earliest garden-making efforts.

- A. Stone Mountain (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photos 0050-0051, 0054)**
- B. Stone Mountain Stream (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0051)**

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Walter Beck created a rough archway of variously sized uncut rocks – some extremely large – balanced without mortar. Called the Stone Mountain, this functions as the northern gateway to the point. A small stream bubbles up (through underground piping) below the Stone Mountain and runs down southwest to the Lotus Bog (see below) and Tyrrel Lake. Stream water cascades over rocks and iris, ferns, and Japanese primroses grow along the edge. At the bottom, a large, roughly flat rock serves as a bridge just where the stream joins the Lotus Bog. Just to the west of that point, the Becks had built a rustic wooden pergola. When that needed considerable repairs, Collins removed it and placed a wooden bench on the site, a less emphatic invitation to enjoy the long view that also allows the topographic sweep from the Stone Mountain down to the streamside bench and back up the wooded western ridge as well as the curve of the footpath along the Lotus Bog to be more fluid.

**C. Sculptural Rock (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing object, photo 0050)**

**D. Row of Oaks (ca. 1930s, 1960s, 1 character-defining feature, photos 0050-0051)**

**E. The Point (ca. 1930s, 1 contributing structure, photos 0050-0054))**

**F. Turtle Rock (ca. 1937, 1 contributing object, photo 0052)**

**G. Dragon Rock (ca. 1937-38, 1 contributing object, photo 0052)**

**H. Owl Rock (ca. 1937, 1 contributing object, photo 0052)**

In the 1930s, Walter Beck designed a series of stone retaining walls and steps that give clear north-south orientation to a natural peninsula in the lake. Instead of an organic slope arcing across the peninsula, he created three largely flat terraces with this structure – two larger and another the path the lake shore. This series of smaller cup gardens flow in an enfilade, one into another and visually crosses the lake south to a pedimented bat house on Pine Island (added by Collins, see below). This reinforces the strongly linear experience of the long view down to the lower Tyrrel Lake that begins on the Upper Terrace and South Lawn.

Opposite the Stone Mountain stands a massive and vertical sculptural rock that Collins considered the most beautiful monolith in the garden. Together, those two features create a gateway to the Point. It is likely this stone was placed in the 1930s when this major cup garden was created. Running south roughly from the standing stone is a row of several species of oak. Most were likely planted in the 1930s to help define this space, although at least one, a sawtooth oak (*Quercus acutissima*) was added later by Collins, probably in the 1960s given its size. Running south from the Stone Mountain is a stone retaining wall (visible as a bench-high stone parapet at this level) with a footprint like a simplified meander. This completes the frame for the highest level on the Point, a flat lawn dotted with smaller, less important sculptural rocks. A red oak (*Quercus rubra*) had been growing near the Stone Mountain, on the southwest side of the stream, until it tipped over in 2014. It created a roof over the Stone Mountain, pulled a sense of enclosure across the grass terrace to its east from the row of oaks there, and also was a critical element in the long view from the Upper Terrace and South Lawn just to its west. Collins would cite this tree, which blocked a portion of that view around which the Becks had designed so much, as an example of the Asian concept of middle distance. Garden elements near the viewer could be explored in detail, the long view could be enjoyed from afar, while the middle distance was the bridge. By blocking some of the distant, often borrowed vistas, features in the middle distance create a sense of mystery enticing viewers to continue through the garden to see more. This key feature will be replaced by Innisfree Foundation.



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Very rough, wide slate steps lead to a somewhat semicircular intermediate level paved in irregular slate, defined by a low stone wall along the north arc. On axis with the steps and the grass terrace above, a short, sloped lawn drops to the level of the path, the lowest level, directly beside the lake. Parallel to the retaining wall above, a low stone wall, also with a meandering footprint, divides the path from the water in the Lotus Bog (see below).

As Collins describes the most famous aspect of the Point:

[in] probably his finest work...Beck placed the three rocks which compose the Point cup garden in 1937. The center rock, a rather homely boulder, became important when it was given stone feet. It became dynamic yet amusing, a friendly dragon guarding the south water entrance to the garden. The huge, flat, upright rock called Owl Rock faces east, forming a foil to the forest trees behind. The pine tree, leaning into the space, binds together the Owl Rock and the Dragon Rock, leaving the Turtle Rock, the third rock, isolated, its influence bearing on the water. The three rocks and the pine lift this cup garden out and up from the Lake. Interchange the rocks and the picture is shattered.<sup>45</sup>

In 1938, his first year associated with Innisfree, Collins suggested the stone feet for Dragon Rock, which itself is perched atop the west end of the low stone wall, opposite a portion of the wide steps above.

What is believed to be dwarf greenstripe bamboo (*Pleioblastus viridistriatus*) had been growing just around the corner along the Lotus Bog since about the 1940s. Lester Collins allowed this to extend to the western side of the Point, gently defining that portion of the paved terrace as the low stone wall does to the east. This bamboo holds its intense chartreuse hue throughout the season in the face of full sun and radiant heat from the many rocks on the point, creating a brilliant effect visible from many locations in the southern reaches of the garden. The pine tree died in the early 1990s, but other than that, the Point remains much as it did during the Beck era, the only portion of the garden to so do.

#### **I. Lotus Bog (ca. 1930s on, character-defining feature, photos 0053-0054)**

Just west of this important trio of rocks is the Lotus Bog. Rockwork designed by Walter Beck forms the eastern edge of this bog, the stream from the Stone Mountain joins the bog on its northern shore, and the overflow waterfall from the reservoir defines the southwestern edge of this area. Pink hardy lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) planted by the Becks mix with natives including rose mallows, blueberries, swamp azaleas (*Rhododendron viscosum*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), and narrowleaf cattails (*Typha angustifolia*). These native plants were encouraged or introduced by Collins who then oversaw the evolution of this plant community through careful editing to achieve the loose, gestural aesthetic qualities he desired. The conversation between the pink lotus and Collins' prized pink rose mallows that begins in late July or early August is especially fine. The Lake Path wraps in a horseshoe around the Lotus Bog, so it is easy to enjoy both long and detailed views. Lester Collins used the Lotus Bog as a transition from the more obviously designed portion of the garden at Innisfree to the more rustic areas that he developed by extending the lake path all the way around Tyrrel Lake in 1969.

#### **J. Overflow Waterfall (ca. late 1950s-early 1960s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0055)**

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<sup>45</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 26-27.

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### **K. Shell Rock Bridge (ca. early 1990s, 1 contributing object)**

As an extension of his efforts to make the Meadow Stream flow year round from the north end of the reservoir, Lester Collins created the overflow waterfall at the south end of the reservoir. As the name implies, this acts as a safety valve, quickly bringing down the level of the reservoir after storms or snow melt without overrunning and possibly damaging the stylized course of the Meadow Stream and its various plantings. Water cascades spectacularly over rills of living slate ledge that have been exposed over time through erosion. After a major storm, the sound can be heard will across the lake, heightening the drama. The Lake Path used to veer up the east-facing slope a bit here but in the early 1990s, Collins moved a massive rock with a natural concave curve, the Shell Rock Bridge, to cross the stream on level with and closer to the shore. This small change preserves the smooth arc of the path around the Lotus Bog.

### **Pine Island (ca. 1965-1979)**

#### **Key Features Map 11**

- A. White Pine Stand (pre-1922, character-defining feature)
- B. Bat House (ca. 1950s, 1 contributing structure)
- C. Fountain Jet (ca. 1979, 1 contributing object)
- D. Berm (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing structure)
- E. Dock (ca. late 1960s, 1 contributing structure)

This area is integral to Collins's overall design vision for the site. Pine Island's wooded character stands in contrast to the more clearly designed and high-maintenance cup gardens on the opposite site of Tyrrel Lake. This more naturalistic character continues through the Corn Crib Bog, Hemlock Woods, and the East Meadow.

#### **A. White Pine Stand (pre-1922, character-defining feature, photos 0056-0057)**

Pine Island is the southernmost part of Lester Collins's Innisfree. The name comes from the stand of white pines that covered this area even before Marion Beck owned the property. It was an unimproved and virtually inaccessible area during the Beck era but Collins brought it fully into the garden in 1969 with construction of the Channel Crossing Bridge and completion of the Lake Path. Pine Island is actually a peninsula between the wide upper part of Tyrrel Lake, which is encircled by the garden, and the narrow, lower part of the lake, which is only accessible by sight down the lake channel. To the west lie the channel and the Channel Crossing Bridge. To the east is the Corn Crib Bog, and south of that is a narrow bridge of solid ground which makes access to Pine Island possible with service vehicles.

For this cup garden and the others in this seemingly wilder side of the garden, Collins's philosophy was "to take what nature has provided and turn it into an art form without harming the fragile ecosystems."<sup>46</sup> He created routes enabling visitors to go up from the Channel Crossing Bridge through the pines, or follow the curving shoreline essentially at water level. Over a decade, Collins removed heavy undergrowth to expose gently rolling, sculptural topography and limbed up the soaring pines. As a result, along the upper path, this rustic space has a spare, strongly vertical, cathedral-like feeling. With more light hitting the ground plane, the native seed bed was activated so, in addition to fragrant pine needles, the floor is carpeted in an array of low-growing

<sup>46</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 36.

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native plants like Canada mayflowers (*Maianthemum canadense*), partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), hay scented ferns (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*), and even pink lady's slipper orchids (*Cypripedium acaule*). In this upper area, there are three very simple benches, and a handful of the Innisfree chairs offering visitors places to rest and enjoy a wide range of views. There is also a single sculptural rock laid horizontally along the ground.

Collins was dismayed with the initial results of his clearing, writing that "it seemed from the opposite shore too serene, too reminiscent of a National Geographic poster."<sup>47</sup> "The goal of this part of the garden is to conceal the signs of careful maintenance. The garden pictures must appear to evolve naturally. The pollarded willows and the mowed lawn on the opposite shore are by contrast conspicuously groomed."<sup>48</sup> To solve this, Collins allowed a range of natives like blueberries, buttonbush, and various ferns to grow up, particularly along the lake shore. Consequently, the path along the lake has an entirely different character than that above it through the pines. It is much more intimate with a tighter focus on curving shoreline and the shrubs and ferns that form a loose, visually permeable edge along the water. From this lower path, where the slope of pines rises up sharply to the south and the unbroken expanse of the lake stretches out to the north, this thin line of plantings is critical, creating just enough enclosure to ground visitors.

#### **B. Bat House (ca. 1950s, 1 contributing structure)**

Straddling the lower path is a simple structure Collins created as a Bat House and garden folly. It is a short gable roof pediment supported on four posts and visible across the lake from various points in the garden. The view of it from the Point is especially important as it lines on axis with the grass terrace and the wide stone steps there. Visitors along the path experience the Bat House as an archway of sorts.

#### **C. Fountain Jet (ca. 1979, 1 contributing object, photos 0056-0057)**

#### **D. Berm (ca. 1980s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0057)**

In 1979, Collins created the Fountain Jet on Pine Island, a simple column of water that mimics the surrounding pine trunks. It took some years of experimentation with pumps and fountain nozzles for the water to "get up into the treetops and still retain enough white water mass to ensure a dramatic effect from a distance."<sup>49</sup> As Collins describes it:

Between the two Island hillocks is a vertical water cup garden, a sixty-foot-high fountain jet producing mist and rainbows. In traditional Western design, water from fountains falls into geometric pools, here the water splashes on random rectangular chunks of flagstone. Through the open joints between the flagstones the falling water is returned to the Lake by underground pipes. A well pump under the nearby water lilies supplies the water. The electric control wire runs a quarter of a mile on the Lake bottom to a switch in the workshop.<sup>50</sup>

In the 1980s when he was building berms elsewhere in the garden, Collins added a curving berm just south of the Fountain Jet that suggests some enclosure and defines this smaller cup garden within the overall Pine Island composition.

<sup>47</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 92.

<sup>48</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 36.

<sup>49</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 37.

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**E. Dock (ca. late 1960s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0058)**

In the 1960s, Collins added several docks to the lake shore. For a while after Innisfree opened to the public, visitors could be ferried about on barge called the Precious Pearl. Originally built by the Becks and used only for garden maintenance, Collins added benches to allow it to function as a tour boat. The dock on Pine Island made it easier for visitors to get off there to explore.

**Corn Crib Bog (ca. 1960s on)**

**Key Features Map 12**

- A. Corn Crib Bog (ca. 1960s on, character-defining feature)
  - A1. Tall Woody Thicket
  - A2. Lower Mix of Woody & Herbaceous Plants
  - A3. Low Herbaceous Plants
- B. Corn Crib Bridge (ca. 1960s, 1 contributing structure)

**B. Corn Crib Bridge (ca. 1960s, contributing structure, photos 0062-0063)**

During the 1960s Lester Collins brought the lake path across the Corn Crib Bog (east of Pine Island) “by means of a structure that looks and acts like a small covered bridge. In reality it is a hundred-year-old corncrib, modified and provided with a long bench for waiting out a shower. In the spring the stream which flows under this bridge is choked with candelabra [Japanese] primroses.”<sup>51</sup>

**A. Corn Crib Bog (ca. 1960s on, character-defining feature, photos 0060-0063)**

- A1. Tall Woody Thicket (photo 0060)**
- A2. Lower Mix of Woody & Herbaceous Plants (photos 0061-0062)**
- A3. Low Herbaceous Plants (photos 0062-0063)**

Collins did some of his most innovative work in the Corn Crib Bog, collaborating with nature to create gardens with particular aesthetic effects through careful manipulation of native ecosystems. Here, he created three bog gardens, each with distinct visual qualities and plant communities, simply by making interventions in the natural succession process at different time intervals. When circumnavigating the lake in a counterclockwise direction, the first of these bog gardens next to Pine Island is the Tall Woody Thicket, a mass of shrubs and small trees teeming with wildlife and concealing the fact that the path lies right along the lake shore. Only trees and the largest shrubs are removed and only every five to seven years. In the next bog garden, the Lower Mix of Woody & Herbaceous Plants, the lake is suddenly revealed over a lower, more open and varied mix of woody and herbaceous plants. Here, shrubs like blueberries, winterberry, and button bush combine with tussock sedge and purple pitcher plants, all needing the additional light that the more frequent removal of the largest shrubs – every two to three years – affords. On the inland side of the path lies the third bog garden, Low Herbaceous Plants, a lush planting of Japanese primroses followed predominantly by both royal and hay scented ferns. This is achieved by cutting and raking the bog garden once every fall, thereby ensuring that the faster growing herbaceous plants will out-compete slower growing woody plants. Relying on careful timing and the passage of time instead of a major outlay of labor or capital, this dynamic process took decades to achieve the distinctive effects Collins envisioned.

<sup>51</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 37.

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## **Hemlock Woods (ca. 1960-69)**

### **Key Features Map 13**

A. Old-Growth Hemlocks (pre-1922, likely natural feature, character-defining feature)

### **A. Old-Growth Hemlocks (pre-1922, likely natural feature, character-defining feature, photos 0064-0066)**

Like on Pine Island, Lester Collins created an important but rustic cup garden by utilizing an existing stand of a single species of trees, here “a hemlock forest which has never been cut.”<sup>52</sup> The experience of Hemlock Woods is dramatically different from Pine Island. In Hemlock Woods, the topography is very steep and rocky, the ground plane is a highly textured maze of tree roots, the scale is more intimate than that of the soaring verticals of pines, and the smell of the hemlocks is distinct. Even the sound visitors’ footsteps make is different: near silent on the pine straw and almost hollow traversing the hemlocks’ surface roots over rock ledge. Several Innisfree chairs located here allow visitors to pause to take in the view of the lake from this vantage point.

## **East Meadow (ca. 1930 and 1960s-early 1990s)**

### **Key Features Map 14**

- A. Cottage (ca. 1922, 1 contributing building)
- B. Yin and Yang Rocks (ca. early 1990s, 1 contributing object)
- C. Smoke Bush Grove (ca. pre-1922, character-defining feature)
- D. Columnar Maple Grove (ca. 1980s, character-defining feature)
- E. Columnar Ginkgos (ca. 1980s, character-defining feature)
- F. Weeping Beech Cluster (ca. 1970s, character-defining feature)
- G. Berms (ca. 1970s, 1 contributing structure)
- H. Air Spring (ca. late 1980s, 1 contributing object)
- I. East Meadow (ca. pre-1922, 1960s on, character defining feature)
- J. Docks (ca. late 1960s, 1 contributing structure)
- K. Garage (ca. 1930, 1 contributing building)
- L. Barn (ca. pre-1922, 1 noncontributing building)

### **A. Cottage (ca. 1922, 1 contributing building, photos 0068, 0070)**

### **G. Berms (ca. 1970s, 1 contributing structure)**

The cottage is a rustic wood frame structure meant to recede into the landscape. It was constructed by the Becks by ca. 1930, possibly in two phases, and was minimally renovated on the interior after 1960 by the Collinses. They painted it a rich dark brown to make it even less visible. It consists of two primary rectangular, gabled forms, roughly parallel, that are connected by a small, single-story form with a very low perpendicular gable. The whole building is covered in dark stained wood shingles, has divided lights, mostly triple casement windows, and has an asphalt shingle roof.

The eastern portion of the structure is entered through a simple wood door on the east facade with divided lights under a pent roof supported by wood brackets; there is a secondary wood door on the south side entered from

<sup>52</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 37.

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the carport. Gabled dormer windows facing east and west light the attic. The western section of the structure, closest to the lake, includes a very small bathroom addition added by the Becks. The largest exterior door in the cottage, wood flanked by square casement windows, faces the lake on the roughly west façade. It is covered by a pent roof supported by wood brackets. A narrow connector set back from the two main volumes connects those sections of the cottage; this connector has divided light casement windows and an exterior door facing south.

The gabled carport was constructed in the 1970s as were the surrounding berms, Collins's experiment prior to creating the rest of the berms at Innisfree. Bringing rolling ground planes up around the structure on the southeast corner, these berms further reduce the visual impact of the Cottage on the garden. The expansive screened porch overlooking the lake on the northwest side was added to the Cottage by Lester Collins in the 1980s and was quickly featured in *Garden Design Magazine*. With screen panels forming the roof as well as the walls, it is visually unobtrusive. Collins painted the metal porch furniture the same dark brown as the house so it, too, disappears in the landscape. This porch has recently been reconstructed and is very close to Collins's design, although it is not cantilevered over its supporting posts as was the original.

**B. Yin and Yang Rocks (ca. early 1990s, 1 contributing object, photo 0067)**

Much like the pair of rocks, one vertical (yin) and another horizontal (yang), Collins added these Yin and Yang Rocks to create visual interest along the shore. Here, close to the Hemlock Woods, the standing stone is just on land, while the flat slab straddles the waterline so its surface creates a tiny island.

**C. Smoke Bush Grove (ca. pre-1922, character-defining feature, photos 0068-0070)**

**D. Columnar Maple Grove (ca. 1980s, character-defining feature, photos 0068-0069)**

**E. Columnar Ginkgos (ca. 1980s, character-defining feature, photo 0070)**

**F. Weeping Beech Cluster (ca. early 1970s, character-defining feature, photo 0070)**

The cottage is anchored to the landscape and also visually obscured by several groves of trees which Collins called "tree cup gardens." The first and largest, which includes plantings predating the Becks' ownership, is a random, undesigned orchard of smoke trees (*Cotinus coggygria*).

The flower and seed panicles form the smoke which lasts from June to frost. First the color is buff to pale rose, later the panicles resemble frozen smoke. The real wonder of this tree garden lies in the Rackhamesque trunks and limbs. Close by is another tree cup garden; here again the picture is strong enough in its own right so that it composes without boundaries. Five sentry sugar maples (*Acer saccharum* 'Monumentale') rise in asymmetrical balance from flat grass. Never trimmed, their foliage remains in a tight column; their varying heights shape the space. A tree or grouping of trees is like any other garden feature, such as a rock or a waterfall, a factor to be pictorially weighed and correctly handled in the garden framework.<sup>53</sup>

The irregular profusion of the smoke trees is mirrored on the opposite side of the cottage by a massive pair of weeping Beech trees that, over time, have merged into a single sculptural form. Collins moved these from an area near the Innisfree driveway entrance along Tyrrel Road in the early 1970s, before the outlying property was sold to Rockefeller University. The emphatic vertical counterpoint of the maples is repeated in the shorter,

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thicker forms of columnar ginkgo trees that loosely encircle the Cottage. Collins planted those in the early 1980s when he added columnar ginkgos across the lake around the former house site on the Upper Terrace.

#### **H. Air Spring (ca. late 1980s, 1 contributing object, photo 0069)**

The Air Spring, informally known as “the bubbles,” was created in the late 1980s. It is a water feature in the water. Lester Collins, with technical input from his son, Oliver, designed this playful, ever-changing low mound of water bubbling up from the surface. Not intended to aerate the lake, it was meant to create more interest along the more rustic side of the garden. It animates the lake surface with concentric rings of ripples that on a windless day move out toward the far reaches of the lake. It is located between the Cottage and the lake, between some of the willows that are still pollarded to maintain Collins’ aesthetic vision of a vine-covered bower. This water feature is created with vast amounts of air pumped underwater from a mechanism in the Cottage basement.

#### **I. East Meadow (ca. pre-1922, 1960s on, character defining feature, photos 0067-0069, 0071)**

The Cottage and surrounding tree cup gardens are set against the sweeping expanse of the most naturalistic parts of the East Meadow, underscoring the rustic quality of this side of the garden. This native meadow mirrors the size and planar quality of the lake, creating an incredible sense of scale and extending literal and figurative fields of light back to shadowed woodland edges. Like the north meadow, this naturalistic cup garden serves as a visual transition between the more intensely designed parts of the garden with neatly mown, bright green lawns to the unimproved woodland around it. Starting in the 1960s, Collins worked over many decades to edit out undesirable plants and create a plant community that he found aesthetic in a dry area that is never irrigated. As a result, the east meadow is alight with myriad natives including little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), bee balm (*Mondarda fistulosa*), and various types of goldenrod (*Solidago sp.*). Since Collins began work on the plant communities that comprise this meadow, it has been mowed, like the North Meadow, once each autumn.

#### **J. Docks (ca. late 1960s, 1 contributing structure, photo 0071)**

Here Collins built two adjacent docks close to the Garage (see below), one for boats and one for swimming. The boat dock is a square elevated above the water’s surface so low boats used for maintenance with oars or electric motors can be discretely hidden (and protected) beneath. This dock was also used previously as a stop on the barge tours around Tyrrel Lake that were offered in the early days of Innisfree’s life as a public garden. Collins loved to swim in the lake (as well as ice skate there in the winter) but the bottom of the lake near the Cottage is muddy and often crowded with water lilies. To make getting in and out of the water easier for swimmers, the long thin dock he designed sits right on the surface of the water just a few feet south of the boat dock and extends out far enough for the lake depth to increase to the point that the water lily population disappears or at least decreases significantly. While completely functional, Collins reduced the design of these docks to the sparest of detail and lightest of profiles. The result is a strong minimalist sculptural composition along the lake.

#### **K. Garage (ca. 1930, 1 contributing building, photo 0072)**

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<sup>53</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 37.

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The rectangular, single-story garage was likely built by the Becks in conjunction with construction of their cottage. A single roof gable runs roughly north-south and the roof is clad in asphalt shingles. It is sheathed in wooden clapboards stained dark brown, a few double-hung windows, and a concrete floor. It has a pair of wooden doors on the north end of the long west facade facing the lake shore. Together these open wide enough on vertical hinges to admit a single car. Each door has a row of fixed panes of glass in the upper section. The interior space is completely open and roughly the width of two garage bays. After Marion Beck died in 1959 and Lester Collins and his family began to stay at the cottage whenever at Innisfree, they used the garage for their car. After the Becks's main house was demolished, Lester Collins moved the garden maintenance crew to this garage. It continues to serve as the crew's meeting space, workshop, and primary tool storage space. The lean-to roof on the long east façade is now used to cover small, motorized work vehicles. Collins would also give occasional slide lectures for Innisfree visitors in the garage. He hung two large picture frames painted a brilliant Chinese red inside on the east wall to literally frame his slide images, and those remain today.

**L. Barn (ca. pre-1922, 1 noncontributing building; predates Beck ownership, photo 0073)**

This is a simple, single story wooden structure of modest size and construction that predates the Beck era. Sided in wooden clapboards stained dark brown, the barn has a raised wooden floor as well as a few small windows with fixed glass. The roof, with a single gable running roughly east-west, is clad in asphalt shingles. There is no large door and no hay loft, so it was likely used for smaller farm animals. Today, it is used for storage.

**Integrity**

Innisfree possesses a remarkable degree of historic integrity. The garden's design formed over a period of six decades, settling into a final form in 1994. The garden reflects the natural growth and decline of plants, much of which reflects the long-term realization of Lester Collins's early, innovative, and sustainable landscape vision. Beginning in 1960, when Innisfree became a public garden, Collins trained Innisfree grounds staff in careful maintenance practices that preserved significant design features and encouraged or took advantage of natural processes. Under the direction of Petronella and Oliver Collins, Collins's wife and son, these maintenance practices continued after his death and have preserved the integrity of the garden's design. The Innisfree Foundation is currently working on formalizing these practices in a written maintenance plan to guide future staff.



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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Landscape Architecture

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1930 - 1994

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Walter Beck

Lester Collins, FAIA

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance dates from 1930, when the Becks began work on the garden, to 1994 when the final component of Innisfree garden, the water sculpture on the upper terrace, was completed. See Section 8 summary for Criterion G discussion of exceptional significance.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

See Section 8 summary for Criterion G discussion of exceptional significance.

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Innisfree, a 185-acre designed landscape in Millbrook, New York, is nationally significant under Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture and Criterion G for exceptional significance as the masterwork of Lester Collins (1914-1993), a seminal figure in American twentieth century landscape architecture. Lester Collins, Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, was one of the most sought-after designers and influential educators of his generation. Innisfree, his life's work, is one of the largest intact modern designed landscapes in America. Innisfree's design reflects the philosophies and practices that guided Collins's approach throughout his career, integrates innovative, sometimes truly groundbreaking horticultural and environmental engineering practices, and embodies the distinctive characteristics of postwar Modernist landscape architecture. Innisfree began as the private estate of Walter and Marion Beck, who started initial work on the garden during the early 1930s. Starting in 1938, they continued its development in collaboration with and under the direction of Lester Collins. In 1960, following the deaths of the Becks and pursuant to their wishes, Collins transformed Innisfree from a private estate garden into a substantially larger, more nuanced public garden. He ran the public garden while continuing to gradually develop and transform the landscape until his death in 1993.

Innisfree played a central role in the life and career of Lester Collins for fifty-five years and demonstrates his personal and professional growth as a landscape architect. Particularly from 1960 on, when he was essentially his own client, Collins had the freedom and time to explore and experiment with new design ideas in a way that was not possible with more traditional commissions. Innisfree is Lester Collins's masterwork, the fullest expression of his singular and holistic approach to design. Innisfree demonstrates Collins's focus on the experience of people in the landscape; his ability to respond adroitly to the particularities of site and program; his approach and aesthetics as a Modernist; his scholarly understanding of landscape history, particularly of Romantic, Chinese, and Japanese gardens; and his innovative use of scientific and engineering principles to develop an environmentally and economically sustainable landscape. Innisfree has long been a mecca for designers from all over the world and it is now attracting similar attention from the global horticultural community. It is consistently included in academic publications and is recognized by all who know it as a singular and poetic work of art. Abstracting natural and art historical forms as well as natural processes, Collins created a designed landscape at Innisfree that brings visitors closer to the essential qualities of nature itself.

The period of significance for Innisfree, 1930-1994, includes the garden's genesis as a private estate for Walter and Marion Beck, its transformation into a public garden in 1960, and the design evolution that continued under the direction of Lester Collins until his death in 1993. The last component that Collins designed, the water sculpture on the upper terrace, was not executed until 1994 due to a drought the previous year. (A further discussion of the period postdating 1960 is included in the Criterion G argument for exceptional significance.)

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### Criterion C – Landscape Architecture

Lester Collins was renowned for the breadth and depth of his historical and horticultural knowledge and his innovative and intuitive approach to designing inviting and engaging spaces. During his long association with Innisfree, Collins studied and worked abroad for years at a time, most notably in Asia and North Africa. Lester Collins attended Harvard's Graduate School of Design right between his close contemporaries Dan Kiley, James Rose, Garrett Eckbo, and Lawrence Halprin, so he shared an educational experience that ushered in the age of Modern landscape architecture in America. After obtaining his Master of Landscape Architecture degree, he joined the faculty and quickly became the dean of Harvard's landscape architecture department, where his students included Richard Haag, Robert Zion, Howard Breen, and Ian McHarg. Following work in Japan as a Fulbright Scholar in the early/mid-1950s, Collins moved to Georgetown in Washington, DC. From then on, he deeply influenced the landscape of our nation's capital and its surroundings with his many public and private commissions in the region. Describing Collins, distinguished Washington architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen, FAIA, stated, "I always thought he was the best."<sup>54</sup> Architect Mark Simon, FAIA, concurred, "I think he was the most important and unsung landscape architect of the late 20th century."<sup>55</sup> Through his work, and the deep friendships that developed with colleagues, students, and clients, Lester Collins established an international reputation as an important designer and educator who united intellectualism, pragmatism, an intuitive sense of space, and a surprising flair for what would make the design memorable. "In the pantheon of landscape designers, 'Lester was right up there,'" said legendary architect Charles Moore.<sup>56</sup> Lester Collins, considered "the dean of Washington landscape architects," deserves to be more widely acknowledged as one the top landscape architects of his era, with Dan Kiley, Garret Eckbo, James Rose, and Lawrence Halprin. His work was acclaimed by both critics and the public. Working mostly as a sole practitioner, Collins regularly collaborated across disciplines with the most important designers of the day, including Walter Gropius, Hideo Sasaki, and Charles Moore. His work was groundbreaking, influential, and wide-ranging. It included large-scale urban design, urban spaces, corporate, academic, medical, and research campuses, as well as both small and large-scale private gardens.

Innisfree, and the entirety of Collins's oeuvre, embody Modern ideas in landscape architecture. Collins and his contemporaries sought design models that broke from the rigid formalism of the Beaux Arts style and ways to imbue designed landscapes with narrative meaning that told of a connection between people and nature, not a domination of nature by man. Oliver Collins, Lester's son, recalls that his father would repeatedly tell his students at Harvard that it was easy to design a landscape that looks great from an airplane, always in plan view, and ask them instead to focus on how it would feel to be *in* that space. Collins's extensive travel and study of landscapes in Asia, Africa, and Europe is consistent with that of many other landscape architects and architects of the Modern era, including Kiley, Rose, Halprin, and Collins's student Richard Haag, who all searched widely for meaningful design inspiration. Science and technology were embraced as forces for positive change in the postwar era, and Collins did likewise in his practice. Like the best of his contemporaries,

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<sup>54</sup> Patricia Dane Rogers, "Appreciation: Even Mother Nature Bowed to Lester Collins," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1993, T1.

<sup>55</sup> Rogers, "Appreciation."

<sup>56</sup> Rogers, "Appreciation."

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Collins thought about natural systems on a broad scale, and his work supported the healthy functioning of these ecosystems. His ideas went well beyond those of his colleagues, however, sharing similarities with and yet still surpassing today's cutting edge ideas in sustainable horticulture.

At Innisfree, working for the Becks and then the nonprofit he ran, Lester Collins created a conscious work of art that operates on many levels at once. Innisfree's foundational design concept, introduced by Walter Beck and inspired by 8<sup>th</sup> century Chinese poet and painter Wang Wei, is the "cup garden," or garden vignette. In his work on Innisfree as both a private and public garden, Collins expanded on this infinitely scalable concept to create a memorable and engaging landscape experience. Innisfree's resulting design possesses a universal, timeless quality and yet is a clear expression of what Collins saw as the best of postwar American culture. By abstracting natural and art historical forms as well as natural processes, and combining those with a master choreographer's sense of how people respond to and move through space, Collins created a designed landscape that brings visitors closer to the essential qualities of nature itself. By referencing art, science, and history in this meditation on nature – a garden emerging from and embraced, not threatened, by wilderness – Collins created also a meditation on human culture.

Lester Collins pioneered innovative, ecology-based environmental engineering and landscape management practices at Innisfree. In the 1940s, years before such techniques first appeared in scientific literature, Collins began to control algae growth in Tyrrel Lake, the central garden feature at Innisfree, by controlling water chemistry through both mechanical and natural processes. Collins also continued a plant hybridizing program started by Marion Beck, although his focus was on creating ecotypes – slight variations on plant species that are ideally suited to the Innisfree environment. As a result, over time, key plant varieties such as Japanese primroses and aquilegias have naturalized throughout the site to become signature features. Beginning in 1960, when garden staff and funds were suddenly and dramatically reduced, Collins developed long-term management techniques for various ecosystems that transformed wild or minimally developed areas into revolutionary new types of gardens. Collins's prescient innovations are remarkably similar to but a step ahead of sustainable practices considered cutting edge today; instead of planting, he harnessed natural processes to literally *generate* resilient, low-maintenance plant communities that achieved aesthetic effects he desired. These resulting gardens require specific but remarkably little maintenance. These changes, however, took decades of patient, precise interventions and delicate but deliberate editing for the desired plant communities to emerge and thus achieve Collins's bold vision. Like traditional mixed plantings, these vibrant plant communities add dynamic interest throughout the year but with only a fraction of the maintenance needs. With their exuberant forms and massing, Collins's curated plant communities act as a foil for neatly mowed lawns and clear, geometric forms, such as sculpted lake and stream edges, trees that are clipped or selected for precise edges, carefully placed sculptural rocks and massive living rock ledges. In this fashion, the entire garden illustrates the concept of yin and yang that Collins worked with quite consciously. These contrasts animate the experiential and even emotional journey that visitors take each time they walk at Innisfree. This generous yet bounded wildness also grounds the garden in the larger landscape, making it easier for visitors to connect with nature at a deep, even primal level. Still implemented at Innisfree today, Collins's innovative practices have created a large, highly memorable and

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moving public garden that is able to run effectively with a very small maintenance budget and staff. As a result, Innisfree is attracting a new wave of attention from international leaders in landscape design, horticultural and scientific communities for its powerful, cost-effective model for other public and private landscapes, supported by decades of proven success.

Emblematic of its postwar context, Asian philosophy, and Collins's own beliefs, Innisfree is a place of hope, peace, connection, contemplation, and of wonder. It celebrates the joyful union of man and nature. As an experience, it never fails to surprise, inspire, and delight, be it with the beauty, serenity, and wit appreciated by visitors of every age and background; intellectual references to T'ang Dynasty China, the Heian period in Japan, 18<sup>th</sup> century England, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Modernism enjoyed by the most sophisticated designers and connoisseurs; or sustainable landscape design and management techniques that have been time-tested at Innisfree but are now recognized by landscape architects, professional horticulturists, and serious gardeners as today's cutting edge ideals.

### **Criterion G – Exceptional Importance**

The period of significance, 1930-1994, encompasses the fullest development of Collins's design at Innisfree and encapsulates his evolution and achievements as a landscape architect over more than half a century. Innisfree is exceptionally significant at the end of this period because his work on the site in the final decades of his life both completed and expanded his conceptual idea for the garden and the innovative technology through which he created and sustained it. The last years of Collins's involvement were especially important because the work accomplished is seamlessly integrated into the earlier work, thus completing his artistic vision for the landscape

Lester Collins's work at Innisfree spanned six decades and his entire career as a landscape architect. In 1938, during his final year as an undergraduate English major at Harvard, he started work at Innisfree building the Lip Rock Waterfall with Walter Beck. Collins died on July 7, 1993, shortly after suffering a stroke. That year, he replaced one small rill in his Meadow Stream there with two, carefully adjusting the rocks to create just the right visual and aural patterns, and fine-tuned the fountain mechanism for the water sculpture on the Upper Terrace; the fountain was completed in 1994, after his death, from Collins's plans.

Collins's work at Innisfree from 1938 to 1969 included his work as a collaborator, consultant, and designer for the Becks on the private garden and the significant early work he undertook to transform Innisfree into a public garden. The 1969 completion of the path around Tyrell Lake, including the installation of the channel crossing bridge, marked the solidification of his vision for how Innisfree would be experienced by the visiting public, a journey through the landscape. While the specific route might be different for each visitor on each visit, the sense of progressing this journey is underscored as one moves around the lake. The aspects of Innisfree's design that he created between 1969 and 1994 completed the composition and were achieved through a process that was gradual and iterative due to a combination of practical, philosophical, and natural factors. Collins never drew a formal plan for Innisfree, instead relying on his deep knowledge of the site and inspiration led by both natural and creative processes to evolve the design. As a result, this later work is fundamentally inextricable

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from and directly integrated into the earlier work, creating a seamless composition that is, as a whole, of exceptional importance.

Time was integral to Lester Collins's approach at Innisfree, far beyond what is typical in gardens and landscape architecture. His overall design concept remained the same but critical elements in the garden were added, evaluated and revised thoughtfully over the years. His groundbreaking ideas about environmental engineering and integrating design and maintenance were processes inspired by nature that, once begun, required decades for his vision to emerge. For these reasons, it is essential to understand and evaluate the significance of Innisfree and Lester Collins's work there in its totality over time. Because of his long association with Innisfree, Lester Collins was able to learn and respond to the site intimately – qualities of light and sound, ecology and drainage; the forms of land and rock and woods; the scale, movement, and drama in the native landscape as well as his own carefully evolving design. Like the gardener monks of Japan that he studied, Collins's work at Innisfree was iterative. Instead of making a set of drawings and moving on as most Western landscape architects do, Collins worked slowly, patiently, and without drawings. Over the decades, he was able to draw on his deep site knowledge to refine and perfect his ideas. Although the overarching design changes he made that distinguish Innisfree the public garden from Innisfree the private estate were in place by 1969, he later made important additions, including a truly remarkable series of fountains, and brought his most innovative horticultural and engineering ideas fully into form.

Up until 1960, the designed landscape at Innisfree occupied essentially the northwest quadrant of the land surrounding Tyrrel Lake. Lester Collins's organizing idea for Innisfree as a public garden was to expand the garden to encircle the lake and draw visitors on an experiential journey that, as he described it, would both sustain and survive public interest. By the end of 1969, this Lake Path loop was completed. In the 1970s, Collins redesigned the mechanicals for the one of Innisfree's most important water features, the Mist Waterfall on the Kwan Yin Path, updating his work from the 1960s to create the current look, a cloud hanging before the rough face of a large rock outcropping. On Pine Island, he created another major water feature, the Fountain Jet (a 60-foot column of water visible from many points around the garden that took several years to perfect), slowly cleared away the understory, and limbed up the white pines. He moved an old corn crib from a nearby farm to create a covered bridge across the wettest part of what is known today as the Corn Crib Bog. He also created his first berms on site around the Cottage to conceal the carport that he had added. These berms, like the later ones elsewhere on the site, were sculpted and re-sculpted until he was satisfied with the forms.

In the winter of 1981-82, Lester Collins and Innisfree Foundation decided to demolish the Beck house because the extensive and much-needed repairs were well beyond the nonprofit's financial reach. To blend the former house site into the landscape, Collins added berms and columnar ginkgos and, on the eastern edge of the Upper Terrace, vine-draped Pergolas. He added more berms at the Overlook entrance to block vehicular traffic, as well as on the North and South Lawns to animate those spaces. Creating one of the garden's most memorable vignettes, he planted a grove of pear trees in the Meadow clipped tightly to mimic the regular, rounded natural form of the adjacent Dumpling Knoll and contrast with the irregular, chunky natural form of the Meadow Rock

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Face. He planted columnar ginkgos and columnar maples around the Cottage as foils for the extravagant, twisting forms of ancient smoke bushes and huge weeping beech trees. He created yet another important water feature, the Air Spring, beside the Cottage. It is a strong column of air arising from the lake floor that creates a playfully animated mound of bubbles and concentric rings rippling out across the water's surface.

In the early 1990s, Lester Collins created his most iconic water feature at Innisfree, the Water Sculpture on the Upper Terrace where the house once stood. This lyrical Minimalist design – a tall, narrow pillar from which a vast, billowing cloud of fine, light-filled mist emerges – is fully consistent with his other late work like the Enid A. Haupt Garden. True to his iterative process, it took Collins several years to finalize the fountain form and height as well as design and build the mechanism. Construction of the wooden base and installation of water and power was about to begin when Collins had a stroke in June, 1993, and died July 7, 1993. Once his family recovered enough to proceed, the summer of 1993 emerged as a major drought so focus and funds shifted to installing additional irrigation. Early in 1994, the Water Sculpture was finally finished following Collins's design, completing Innisfree's remarkable design.

## **History of the Resource**

### ***The Early History of Millbrook, New York***

The land that would become Millbrook was first settled by Quakers. By the 1740s, they were transforming forests into farms and industrializing the banks of the Wappingers Creek. In the process, they established two villages: Hart's Village, and the hamlet of Mechanic, respectively north and south of the present-day Village of Millbrook. The agriculture and industry that fueled these early settlements gradually moved west after the Civil War. As it exists today, "Millbrook is the product of three transformative nineteenth century forces: 1) the railroad; 2) post-Civil War private fortunes; and 3) America's Anglophilic fascination with, and determination to create, an indigenous culture of country estates."<sup>57</sup> In 1867 George Hunter Brown built Millbrook Farms, the first prototypical Millbrook estate with a large, architect-designed house as the focal point of the designed landscape with both pleasure grounds and working agricultural lands. Brown was an industrialist and railroad executive who engineered the northern extension of the Dutchess and Columbia County Railroad. The Millbrook train station, which in turn gave name to the town, was named for Brown's estate. In the days before automobiles, the Millbrook station (halfway between Hart's and Mechanic) provided a vital transportation link that fueled the growth of large estates. The Village of Millbrook developed around this station largely as a service center for these estates, and was officially incorporated in 1896. Since the Civil War, the region around Millbrook has remained a popular location for country homes, particularly by wealthier families and individuals from New York City.

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<sup>57</sup> John Foreman, "Big Old Houses: A Short History of Millbrook (Part 1 of 2)," *New York Social Diary*, January 6, 2015.  
<http://www.newyorksocialdiary.com/the-way-they-live/2015/big-old-houses-a-short-of-history-of-millbrook-part-1-of-2>.

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***Walter and Marion Beck's Millbrook Estate***

Following this trend, Walter and Marion Beck created a country residence in Millbrook as a companion to their luxurious apartment on New York City's Fifth Avenue. They named this estate in reference to the simple rural life celebrated in W.B. Yeats's poem, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree." Otto Walter Beck (1864-1954) was born to German immigrants near Dayton, Ohio, where his father was a groundskeeper at a veterans' home. Beck showed an early interest in art, and local arts patron Mrs. J. B. Thresher supported several years of his study at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, Germany. Beck returned to Ohio in 1892 and became a professor at the Art Institute of Cincinnati. In 1897 he married Caroline Peabody Perkins and moved to New York to teach at the Pratt Institute. Caroline died in 1921. In 1922, this fairly poor artist married a wealthy divorcée and avid gardener, Marion Burt Stone (1876-1959). Beck's best-known images are pastel portraits of aged Civil War veterans in their well-worn military uniforms. Beck wrote several books, *Art Principles in Portrait Photography* (1907); *Self-Development in Drawing as Interpreted by the Genius of Romano Dazzi and Other Children* (1928); and *Painting with Starch* (1956, published posthumously). Marion Beck, from Saginaw, Michigan, was the youngest daughter of lumber and iron magnate, Wellington R. Burt. For a time, he ranked as one of the wealthiest men in the United States and is thought to have had upwards of \$90 million when he died in 1919. While his success should have left his children extraordinarily wealthy, Burt had an extraordinary will. It contained a "spite clause" which specified a delay of twenty-one years after all of his children and grandchildren were dead before the bulk of the fortune could go to any descendants.<sup>58</sup> His children only received small annuities. They contested the will and were able to get some additional funds but still only a small portion of their father's fortune. Although she had much less than expected, it was Marion Beck's money that paid for the life she led with Walter Beck, including travel, art collecting, and development of their estate at Innisfree.

Marion Burt Stone owned the land that would become Innisfree prior to her marriage to Walter Beck.<sup>59</sup> She had acquired a number of smaller properties surrounding Tyrrel Lake, and her holdings eventually comprised about 900 acres. The vast majority of the land was wooded, with three large open areas near the lake. On the western shore a former pasture sloped down to the lake. On the eastern shore, a field was set back above the lake. On the southeast shore, where a wide flat lawn sloped very gently to the water, a dance hall had been built in the late nineteenth century. Early postcards show that daytime visitors could rent row boats and enjoy the lake. While the business had closed before Marion Beck acquired the property, the lake house structure was still intact. Sometime after their marriage in 1922, the Becks started spending time at Innisfree. Adjacent to the lake house, they built a cottage where they slept, along with their staff and any guests. Their primary living space was the older structure, with its open interior and wide porch facing the lake. Walter Beck also built a small freestanding studio building near the cottage that he called "Little Italy."

The Becks lived like this when at Innisfree for at least five years while they developed a design vision for their estate by looking at models in the U.S. and abroad. In Paris in the late 1920s, they interviewed the Modernist architect Le Corbusier – already internationally famous – as a prospective architect for their new home. They

<sup>58</sup> "Wellington R. Burt," *Wikipedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington\\_R.\\_Burt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington_R._Burt)

<sup>59</sup> Lester Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 1.



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somehow decided that his work was best suited to South America.<sup>60</sup> After that, the Becks embraced the English Picturesque landscapes of William Kent, Capability Brown, and Humphry Repton and decided to build a very traditional English country house set in a traditional English garden. They had detailed photographs taken of the massive Queen Anne house, now called the Laboratory, at Wisley, the Royal Horticultural Society's garden in Surrey, England. They gave these to the architects Robert Carrere and Norman Averill, who then built a copy of this house at the top of the pasture on the west side of the lake. Construction on the house began in 1930. At the same time, a picturesque English landscape with more formal terraces and perennial borders around the house and a broad lawn between the house and the lake was under construction. At some point shortly after the house and a series of massive stone retaining walls were completed, Walter Beck decided that this design approach was wrong for the site. Garden construction stopped, and the Becks set off for another study tour of Europe.<sup>61</sup>

In London, the Becks learned by chance about the Wangchuan Villa, a garden built by Wang Wei, an influential poet and painter in eighth-century China. Located outside of the T'ang dynasty capital, modern-day Xi'an, this remains one of the most famous gardens of ancient China.<sup>62</sup> With the steep wooded slopes, rock outcroppings, and a large body of water in this ancient Chinese model that looked much like their own property, the Becks – finally – found lasting inspiration for Innisfree.

Embracing all things Chinese from that point forward, the Becks began to collect Chinese art in earnest, developing, amongst other things, a particularly fine collection of Chinese textiles that they donated to the Fogg Museum at Harvard. Walter Beck “studied Chinese landscape paintings and even hired scholars to translate manuscripts. He had no intention of building a Chinese garden in Millbrook; he felt that to imitate ancient Chinese gardens would merely advertise an emptiness of spirit and a lack of creativity. He did, however, believe that a working knowledge of the techniques of Chinese garden art would always be pertinent for solving his design problems.”<sup>63</sup> Beck distilled the place-making techniques he observed in Wang Wei's garden into something he called “cup gardens.” These are carefully defined, inwardly focused gardens or garden vignettes – three-dimensional pictures – set within a larger naturalistic, even wild landscape. Collins stated that “The basic concept of the cup garden...allows garden builders to set their sights on a vast scale or on a small scale and...readily accommodates change.”<sup>64</sup> Beck quickly set about creating his own cup gardens at Innisfree, often with horticultural advice from his wife. Unlike Wang Wei, or perhaps more recognized figures like British garden designer Lawrence Johnston, who used his cup-like rooms at Hidcote, in England, to draw visitors through a sequence of events and create an overall sense of place, Beck focused more on individual compositions. Relating these to each other and to the landscape as a whole at Innisfree was the work of Lester Collins.

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<sup>60</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 3.

<sup>61</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Wangchuan Villa Handscroll by Wang Yuanqi.”  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/49187>.

<sup>63</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 5.

<sup>64</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 118.

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***Lester Collins Collaborates with Walter and Marion Beck***

Landscape architect Lester Collins played a critical role in Innisfree's design and development. He obtained his early training at Harvard, honed his knowledge of Chinese and Japanese landscape design through international travel and study, and played a prominent role in the field through his roles as an educator and independent landscape architect. (See the section Lester Collins's Life and Career for an expanded discussion) Collins's involvement with Innisfree began before the inception of his professional career. In February of 1938, the Becks met Lester Collins at a lecture on Chinese gardens at Harvard, where Collins was in his senior year as an undergraduate English major. That same spring, with Collins's first visit to Innisfree, this trio began their long collaboration on the garden. Lester Collins and the Becks shared keen interests that would guide their work together: The Romantic landscape, Asian art and design, Modernism, and the desire to create contemplative, even spiritual places. Because of his family's long involvement with agriculture and horticulture, and his own early design efforts and scholarly research and writing on Romantic landscapes and Chinoiserie, Lester Collins was able to contribute immediately to the garden scheme at Innisfree. In those earliest years, he worked with Walter Beck to create the rock lip waterfall along the north end of the lake. He also added feet, or smaller rocks beneath Beck's "dragon" rock on the point to lift it to greater prominence and a more appropriate scale for the space. Collins continued visiting and corresponding with the Becks, providing suggestions for their garden. On his return from nearly two years of travel and garden study throughout Asia in 1940, Collins provided valuable insights into the experience of gardens there. In all of their travels, their collecting, and Walter's careful studies, the Becks themselves never visited Asia. While the three developed a rich friendship and frequently worked together on the garden, Collins was not a paid landscape consultant at Innisfree until his return from World War II in 1945.

Having no children, the Becks wanted to plan for the future of their Millbrook garden and estate. Like the design, their plans went through several iterations. One will left it to Columbia as a faculty retreat, another left it to Harvard's Arnold Arboretum. After Walter Beck's death in 1954, Marion Beck asked Lester Collins to actively help her with this planning. Inspired by Dumbarton Oaks, in Georgetown, a former private estate given to Harvard as a public garden, museum, and study center, she decided to endow a foundation in her will for the "study of garden art at Innisfree," with the Becks' collection of Asian art complementing their extensive garden library and garden. The focus was to have been on the "Eastern and Western civilizations which have influenced garden design."<sup>65</sup> She planned an endowment of \$1,000,000 and designated Lester Collins as the foundation president. This nonprofit, Innisfree Foundation, was to transform Innisfree into a public garden, create a study center for scholars and students, and sponsor exhibitions, symposia, and publications on garden art and related subjects.<sup>66</sup> However, when Marion Beck died in 1959 after an illness that consumed her financial resources, those plans had to change, and change quickly.

<sup>65</sup> "Foundation Set Up at Innisfree," *Millbrook Round Table*, August 1, 1957, 1.

<sup>66</sup> "Foundation Set Up at Innisfree," *Millbrook Round Table*, August 1, 1957, 1.

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### ***Innisfree as Public Garden***

Collins did not realize there was serious financial trouble until he served as the executor of Marion Beck's estate. The anticipated endowment of \$1,000,000 did not exist. Innisfree Foundation, the newly formed nonprofit stewardship organization, had to raise \$200,000 early in 1960 to settle Marion Beck's personal debts simply to secure ownership of the property.<sup>67</sup> Collins was forced to cut the garden staff from twenty to five, eliminate other staffers, and make myriad other cost-cutting changes. Despite these challenges, Innisfree opened to the public in 1960.<sup>68</sup>

Under Lester Collins's leadership, as both the designer who created the Innisfree landscape of today and the president of Innisfree Foundation, Innisfree successfully transitioned from a private to a public garden. Organizationally, Collins helped the Becks craft the original mission for the Innisfree Foundation and then shaped the nonprofit that exists today. Physically, after helping create a private retreat for his friends and clients, Collins orchestrated its material transition to a public space that would both sustain and survive public attention.

Throughout his 55-year association with the garden, Lester Collins evidenced a superb ability to sculpt the land and choreograph movement through space. Drawing on classic landscape architecture, as well as the episodic, experiential, "Alice-in-Wonderland" aspects of traditional Chinese and Japanese gardens, the jazz-like syncopations and simplicity of Modernism, and the ideas of abstraction and asymmetrical balance common to all three, Collins created the dreamlike sequence of vignettes that defines Innisfree.<sup>69</sup> To have done this for wealthy clients, as during his 20-year collaboration with the Becks, would be remarkable. To have created much of present-day Innisfree in the face of serious economic constraints is extraordinary. Speaking in the third person, Lester Collins wrote,

When Innisfree became a public garden in 1960, Lester Collins knew that unless the garden were doubled in size the lawns and plantings would not survive. He had been thinking for a long time about Wang Wei's concept of a total landscape in which a large cup garden encompassed many smaller ones. Wang Wei had used a river as the floor of his garden, with cliffs and hills as the enframing walls on all sides. Innisfree had a forty-acre lake, three cliffs, and enclosing hills. Collins now had a great opportunity to experiment with the full purport of Wang Wei's concept. He envisioned solutions that garden designers would find useful and that people would enjoy.<sup>70</sup>

Throughout his work to transform the private estate into the public garden of today, Collins maintained the cup garden concept and the spirit that he and the Becks envisioned for Innisfree — a contemplation on the joyous union of man and nature. About Innisfree, Charles Moore wrote, "There is, in keeping with the Chinese philosophy, a process of bringing your attention to the immediate, to the moment in a particular place, in order to lead to a comprehension of the universal, and not the other way around."<sup>71</sup> In his work to create the public

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<sup>67</sup> Letter from Watson Washburn, attorney for Marion Beck's estate, to Lester Collins, the estate's executor, February 1960. Innisfree Foundation archives.

<sup>68</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 8.

<sup>69</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 16.

<sup>70</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Moore, introduction to *Innisfree: An American Garden* (New York: Saga Press, 1994), xii-xiii.

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garden, “Collins adhered scrupulously to the Eastern design principles as did Beck. Rather than undermining the formula established by Beck, Collins strengthened it by taking full advantage of its inherent flexibility.”<sup>72</sup> He did, however, need and want to make changes. In describing this process Collins states,

Before 1960 the garden was a small enclave in many acres of water, wood, and marsh; this enclave, however, was so complex that it seemed huge. Beck gave to the Lake only a small role in his designs for the garden – just the one great view from the Point to the south. The west shore and Dumpling Knoll were allowed to stay densely wooded as a backdrop for the intricately detailed cup gardens he was building. His unflagging creativity was, at times, more impulsive than critical, and as the cup gardens multiplied without relating to one another, the density of the images became almost overwhelming. Today, the Lake dominates the design, and the acreage of the garden has more than doubled. Nevertheless, both visually and intellectually, the scale of the public garden is less grand than was the scale of the private garden. The overall cup garden concept has been so well implemented that the east and west shores of the Lake have become intimate. The end result of many years of clearing land shapes to bring the Lake completely into the picture is a larger garden which seems smaller.<sup>73</sup>

Collins developed a clear vision for the whole public garden by the mid-1960s, and had implemented his key changes by 1969, when the first bridge across the lake channel was built. This completed the circuit around Tyrrel Lake that Collins envisioned as the organizing feature of Innisfree as an overall cup garden and as a public garden. For the first time this enabled visitors to journey around the lake as they experienced various aspects of the garden, like a continuous scroll painting. Collins carefully controlled and curated this experience. He describes that he:

knew that in designing from private garden to public garden the most serious pitfall would be oversimplification. A progression of tranquil, uncluttered cup gardens linked by well-defined pathways could become monotonous as the way progressed around the Lake. Deliberately engineered contrasts, light and shade, horizontal and vertical, pollarded weeping willows and forest hemlocks, pine needle floor and lawn floor were sound cup garden techniques. However, something extra would be needed to make the garden memorable.<sup>74</sup>

In his book, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, Lester Collins identified some of the ways he worked to make the garden memorable, including the manipulation of color on the terraces, inventive water features, and transforming the lake shore into “an ornamental collar.”<sup>75</sup> Collins described the meadow as the most important cup garden at Innisfree, and the terraces that once supported the main house form a highly visible backdrop to this space. The upper terrace is a riot of color and texture, quite a contrast to the patchwork of greens that dominates the landscape. Playing off the Becks’ terraced construct of wildly eccentric red brickwork and grey stonework, Collins wove an intricate pattern that includes weeping red Japanese maples, chartreuse columnar ginkgoes, the large light green leaves of a carefully pruned catalpa tree, a weeping purple beech clipped into a tight fountain, horizontal blue junipers, a columnar bronze barberry, the deep green frond-like boughs of a dwarf cryptomeria, and a purple smoke bush. He overlaid these with a pergola festooned in orange trumpet vines and a

<sup>72</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 117.

<sup>73</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 109-110.

<sup>74</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 112.

<sup>75</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 113.

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wide array of mostly purple clematis. On the middle terrace, once a high-maintenance white garden filled with regular beds along a central path, Collins created an equally bold composition, but the restrained color palette of greens and greys makes it feel peaceful. He removed the path and beds, revealing an existing lotus pool and stone grotto that had been largely hidden. On a field of bright green lawn, Collins set an array of large stones, weeping Norway spruce, and weeping larch, that together suggest a mountain range or some landscape of the imagination like the background of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*.

Cup gardens like these are interesting through the seasons. Collins believed that "A garden should look beautiful all year," especially if he hoped to consistently attract visitors.<sup>76</sup> By exposing, highlighting, or creating features like dramatic landforms, rocks, specimen trees, planting schemes that relied on foliage color and texture and plant form rather than blossoms, and water features, Collins created a highly sculptural design that is just as visually engaging in the depth of winter or a rain storm as it is in the peak of spring bloom or the height of fall color.

Begun in the late 1950s following Walter Beck's death and Lester Collins's return from living in Japan as a Fulbright Scholar, the *Yarimizu*, a Japanese term for a narrow, winding stream, in the meadow is an excellent example of the water features Collins created to enliven the Innisfree landscape. He says, "Sections of the watercourse are wide so that the flow will be quiet, permitting reflections of the [trees] and bringing down the sky roof. Yellow irises and later pink or white mallows border the stream, which is crossed by three wooden bridges and a great stone slab. The stream is so poised in the landscape that it establishes aesthetic control by giving to the meadow tension and motion."<sup>77</sup>

As funds allowed, Collins opened portions of the Becks's densely wooded site, revealing natural landforms and carefully editing existing vegetation to leave magnificent trees and great swaths of natives like blueberries, iris and various ferns. He transformed a "cluttered cathedral" of 120-foot-tall white pines on the island into "sculpture" by clearing the understory to reveal gentle hills, removing lower limbs of the pines, and creating windows through the pine boughs offering views of the otherwise hidden lower part of the lake.<sup>78</sup> The extra light activated the native seedbed, and the ground is now covered with a tapestry of low-growing native plants. In 1969, Collins began one of his most expensive undertakings. He dredged the north end of the lake, sculpting the shoreline and revealing a massive granite cliff, today a key feature in the garden. With the dredged material, he created a small new island and raised the path along the north shore of the lake. This higher path kept visitors out of the mud and enabled them to better enjoy the Lip Rock Waterfall that Beck and Collins had created together, and the Mist Waterfall that Collins designed, which often emits a sunlit cloud that hangs against a dark rock face. He created bog gardens along much of the new shore, and planted willows that were carefully pollarded to control scale and suggest "vine-covered bowers."<sup>79</sup> Collins completed his organizing route around

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<sup>76</sup> Marion Lynn Clark, "The Ten-Point Lester Collins Garden Plan," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1971, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 33.

<sup>78</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 36.

<sup>79</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 33.

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the lake with construction of the Channel Bridge to the island in 1969. Over the years, he created new cup gardens, designed extraordinary water features, sculpted fanciful berms, and judiciously added plants like Japanese primroses, Joe Pye weed, and columnar maples to create a living collection that is unpretentious by design and undemanding by requirement.

Collins found the idea of a cup garden, i.e., one with controlled focus and containment, to be infinitely scalable — it could be a mossy rock or the entire site — and infinitely flexible. When a tree grows significantly or comes down in a storm, a rock or another tree or shrub can be added or subtracted to rebalance the composition. Keeping these cup gardens in balance, however, is the most challenging part of maintenance at Innisfree. Collins states,

Certain additions or subtractions are uncomplicated. An expensive weeping Norway spruce with a captivating king in its upper torso is easy to track down and easy to insert in a deteriorating composition. Pruning a tree that is making the picture lopsided so expertly that balance is restored is a normal part of Innisfree routine. More intricate are the additions and subtractions that have to be anticipated. If in midsummer a grove of recently pollarded ginkgoes appears perfect, one or two trees should be root pruned for moving in the following spring. Here the dilemma is that continued healthy growth will coarsen these trees. This problem can be tempered but not countered by careful trimming, and the only long-term solution is fewer trees. More labor intensive is the large-scale subtraction of grass, seedling shrubs, and trees which has so successfully solidified the concept of the overall Innisfree cup garden. This determined and persistent eradication has smoothed planes and sharpened outlines, giving increased definition to the sides of a cup. Once the clearing of underbrush and the felling of mediocre trees have established a land shape such as Dumpling Knoll, its aesthetic value to the garden depends mainly on the quality of its maintenance.<sup>80</sup>

Because of his long association with the garden, Lester Collins was able not only to create an inventive and engaging large-scale design, but to work continually to balance his many cup gardens and develop the innovative maintenance practices that continue to do so today. As such, Innisfree is a remarkably complete manifestation of the landscape architect's vision. Constrained by lack of funds and labor, Collins relied on creativity, a deep knowledge of the site and related sciences, plus patience. Because there are no traditional perennial borders or long clipped hedges, keeping the lawn neatly mowed is the biggest weekly task. Intensely planted areas that remain from the Beck era have been allowed to naturalize. Only what survived and spread remains. Charmingly casual plants like native wood asters are now allowed to persist instead of being weeded out. Choice natives like columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) are actively encouraged by being allowed to set seed and self-sow. In some cases, seed is collected and sowed in areas where a larger population of the plant is desired. Like the bog gardens, these areas are lightly but carefully edited instead of intensely managed as they were when the Becks' Kew-trained gardeners reigned. If something appears that does not work, it is removed. If nature brings something new to the mix that is a happy addition, those plants are encouraged to flourish, and more may even be moved in from elsewhere on the site. There are a few high-maintenance cup gardens or features, but "over the years these have proved they can pay their way in exceptional aesthetics."<sup>81</sup> These few features serve another remarkable purpose. Looking at the rigorously clipped domes of the pear trees in the

<sup>80</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 103.

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meadow and the neat lawn, visitors assume that the wooded area above them on the rock face of Heather Hill and the bog garden along the lake shore are maintained with the same level of intensity, that everything they see at Innisfree is purposeful. While the aesthetic qualities of those areas are managed, it is by gently directing nature's own sometimes chaotic energies and ideas. As a result, visitors embrace what many simply assume are native plants dotted here and there which they would decry as weeds in a garden with a different aesthetic. Tim Richardson, author of *Great Gardens of America*, elaborates on Innisfree's characteristic approach:

The genius of this place lies not so much in the ideas which the designers formulated for the cup gardens, many of which are disarmingly simple, but in the way they have been maintained over the years. Essentially, everything is allowed to settle into the prevailing spirit of the place; if it does not, it is removed. It is this sensitivity, this care and attention to the qualities of the landscape, natural and made, that make Innisfree such a memorable success.<sup>82</sup>

Like his traditional Chinese and Japanese counterparts, Collins used his deep knowledge of the site and clear ideas for the garden to design in situ at Innisfree, instead of on paper. James Rose, a fellow Modern landscape architect, used this method exclusively. This methodology was unique in Collins's oeuvre as his clients, often major institutions, required drawings. Dispensing with drawings at Innisfree allowed Collins to save time and money and also contributed to the organic, dynamic approach he took to the garden's design. In *Innisfree: An American Garden*, Collins describes this process: "Western gardens are frequently designed on paper far from the actual site; a Chinese garden, like a Chinese scroll painting, evolves... Not a landscape architect in the Western sense, the Chinese garden builder is usually a painter, and he may record his garden with a brush after but not before it is begun."<sup>83</sup>

### ***Innovative and Sustainable Practices at Innisfree***

In his work to make Innisfree environmentally and financially sustainable, Collins made major though often invisible interventions; many were his own innovations that combined his deep understanding of horticulture and ecology, as well as "a strong dose of farmer common sense."<sup>84</sup> No small part of Collins's overall success as a landscape architect was his ability to understand and respond to a site and develop simple and innovative solutions that enhanced the overall design while dealing with physical constraints. At Innisfree, this is exemplified by his use of the lake and creation of the lake path to organize and unite the entire garden, his work to reveal existing sculptural landforms to bring drama and definition to various cup gardens, and his groundbreaking approach to essentially partner with natural ecosystems to create highly ornamental albeit untraditional gardens.

Creating gardens that function as plant communities as opposed to traditional mixed borders is a concept now at the leading edge of horticultural thought. In 2017, influential landscape architect Thomas Rainer wrote, "The big shift I see in horticulture over the next decade is a shift from thinking about plants as individual objects to

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<sup>81</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 102.

<sup>82</sup> Tim Richardson, *Great Gardens of America* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2009), 113.

<sup>83</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 16.

<sup>84</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 89.

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thinking about plants as social networks--that is, communities of compatible species interwoven in dense mosaics.”<sup>85</sup> Prominent landscape designer Larry Weaner voiced similar ideas with the 2016 publication of his, *Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change*.<sup>86</sup> Collins had gone even further at Innisfree.

Starting in 1950s and expanding significantly in 1960 when funds and labor were suddenly quite limited, Lester Collins developed cost-effective and environmentally sensitive techniques that combine garden design, construction, and maintenance, and are still implemented on site today. By understanding the ecosystem in each section of the garden, including its natural succession process and the specific functioning of constituent plant species, Collins found he could achieve desired aesthetic effects by patiently making small, carefully timed adjustments to an area that over time would favor certain plants or plant types, or cause the natural plant community to change dramatically. The results are exactly the types of plant community-based designed landscapes that the likes of Thomas Rainer and Larry Weaner hope will become the widely-embraced goal in the future, yet Collins’s “revolution” started sixty years before Weaner and Rainer issued their call to arms. Although native plant communities (not simply native plants) in the United States were studied at least as far back as the 1920s, Innisfree may represent the first and almost certainly the longest continuous use of horticultural community manipulation in a landscape design context.<sup>87</sup> As Collins described it in his typical understated fashion, “Over the years [the Innisfree] staff has become most adept at prodding nature to put on a far better show than nature is wont to do.”<sup>88</sup>

In a simple example of his innovative work to create gardens with particular aesthetic effects by gently shaping plant communities, Collins found the native rose mallows (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) he prized were not forceful enough to self-sow as vigorously as he desired in Innisfree’s many natural and created bogs. He discovered that simply by making small openings in existing vegetation, mallows would appear and flourish. Today, these native hibiscus are a key ornamental feature in many areas at Innisfree. In a more dramatic example, Collins created three gardens with distinct visual qualities and distinct plant communities in the large bog by the Corncrib Bridge on the southeast end of Tyrrel Lake. This was accomplished not by planting different plants but by cutting back in each area at different time intervals to utilize the natural succession process as a change agent. To start, he removed all trees and large shrubs from the previously wooded bog. In one section, trees and large shrubs continue to be removed roughly every five to seven years, resulting in a thicket of woody plants teaming with birds that conceals the nearby lake from view. In the next section, more shrubs were removed more frequently (perhaps every two to three years) creating a generally lower, more open bog garden where views of the lake are suddenly revealed. Here, as more light hits the ground plane, natives like blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum* and *V. angustifolium*), buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), winterberry (*Ilex*

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Rainer, “Modular Planting: Random By Design – A New Approach to Ecological Horticulture,” *Grounded Design*, April 2, 2017. <https://www.thomasrainer.com/blog/modular-planting-design-random-by-design>

<sup>86</sup> Larry Weaner, *Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change*. (Portland: Timber Press, 2016).

<sup>87</sup> Edith A. Roberts and Elsa Rehmann. *American Plants for American Gardens*. (New York: MacMillan, 1929)

<sup>88</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 97.



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*verticillata*), and purple pitcher plants (*Sarracenia purpurea*) appear on their own and thrive. In the third section, on the inland side of the path, the entire area is cut down and raked every fall. As a result, the fast-growing herbaceous plants outcompete the slower growing woody plants. In late May or early June, this area is blanketed in Japanese primroses which have naturalized, followed by a lush carpet of royal ferns (*Osmunda regalis*).

Starting in the 1950s, Lester Collins experimented with a somewhat more complex process in the bog above the Stepping Down Bridge, between Heather Hill and the Burly Wall. Over the course of quite a few years, he made successive changes in the soil pH and nutrient levels to eventually support a plant community that he felt was aesthetic. Early in the year, this area was inundated with water that overflowed the reservoir, but the rest of the year it got only small amounts of water from the nearby spring that was the original source of water for the house. Both iris and grass grew in the area, but neither very well. Seasonally, it was too wet for the grass and then too dry for the iris. Lester initially applied sulfur to make the soil more acidic hoping to make growing conditions difficult for the grass, which has a dense root mass that makes it difficult for other plants to get established. This worked. When about half of the grass was gone, he applied fertilizer and introduced forget-me-nots (*Myosotis scorpioides*). These thrived and have since been introduced and naturalized into many damp areas at Innisfree. Collins eventually added lime to make the soil more neutral and more hospitable to a wider range of plants. Over time, the iris and forget-me-not populations exploded, joined by Japanese primroses and native turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), later augmented with its cultivar, *Chelone glabra* 'Black Ace,' and queen of the prairie (*Filipendula rubra*). When Collins's plumbing changes brought more water to this bog more regularly, skunk cabbage appeared. Today, the area is a verdant mélange of textures and colors throughout the growing season.

Managing soil chemistry, as above, was an essential element of Lester Collins's innovative approach to design and maintenance at Innisfree. Contrary to common practice during his lifetime, Collins did not enrich soils at Innisfree with compost or manure, or later, with chemical fertilizers, as phosphorus added anywhere in the natural bowl at Innisfree would eventually reach Tyrrel Lake and promote algae growth. He found that plants grown in lean soils were more resilient and thus required less maintenance. He also felt that rich soil encourages weed growth. According to his son, Collins helped others understand his approach with an analogy, asking if it would be a good idea to feed their dog everything it wanted. English horticulturist Beth Chatto is credited as the first to adopt this horticultural approach, which was described in her book, *Beth Chatto's Gravel Garden*, published in 2000.<sup>89</sup> Both Thomas Rainer and Larry Weaner embrace lean soils in their seminal books, *Planting in a Post-Wild World* and *Garden Revolution*, published in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Once again, Lester Collins was well ahead of today's leading practitioners.

At a time when wetlands were swamps and generally viewed as unpleasant, Collins identified them as integral natural ecosystems in the topographic bowl that is Innisfree and embraced them. By the 1960s, many political, financial, and institutional incentives were in place to drain wetlands to create more buildable or agricultural

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land. Tile and open-ditch drainage were considered conservation practices under the Agriculture Conservation Program, and these policies caused wetland losses averaging 550,000 acres each year from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s.<sup>90</sup> At Innisfree, Collins preserved and expanded wetlands for several key reasons. He used these wetlands to help filter water running into and retained in Tyrrel Lake to both control algae growth and improve water quality. He used them to absorb excess storm water. He also recast wetlands as “bog gardens,” which are now key aesthetic features at Innisfree. These bog gardens offer a lush, constantly changing palette requiring no additional irrigation and very little maintenance compared to a standard garden border that would provide similar visual interest. In 1982, English horticulturist Beth Chatto published her influential book, *The Damp Garden*, first to introduce similar ideas.<sup>91</sup> Work Collins began on bog gardens at Innisfree in the 1950s was considered revolutionary when Chatto’s book appeared about decades later.

As Collins began creating his bog gardens in the 1950s and 1960s, essentially wet meadows, it is highly likely that he began using similar techniques during that same period to create and manage communities of meadow plants for their aesthetic qualities in dry areas that received no supplemental irrigation. Oliver Collins always remembers his father tinkering with the meadows at Innisfree, so Lester Collins was certainly working on them at least by the late 1960s or very early 1970s. Like the bog gardens, carefully timed interventions in the natural succession process, here mowing in late fall, is essential to creating and maintaining the desired plant community and the desired aesthetic effects. Like the other gardens at Innisfree, Collins embraced lean soils to produce resilient plants and deter the growth of undesirable invasive plants that flourish when more nutrients are available in the soil. Like all of his cup gardens, and the innovative approach to creating and maintaining gardens Collins developed, gentle editing over time is critical. In his meadows, selective removal of undesirable species is mostly achieved by cutting just those plants down during the growing season to weaken them and before they set seed. This allowed the plant species Collins wanted to eventually become dominant both in the existing plants and the soil’s seedbank. Once again, the important English horticulturist, Beth Chatto, is credited with introducing some of these ideas in her book, *The Dry Garden*, first published in 1978.<sup>92</sup> Landscape designer Larry Weaner, who is now widely acclaimed for his meadows, felt there was very little interest in meadows when he started designing them in 1982.<sup>93</sup>

Over the past ten years or so, a major new concept in ecology has emerged, that of novel ecosystems. Innisfree doesn’t quite fit the bill, but it is very close, “A novel ecosystem is one that has been heavily influenced by humans but is not under human management.” The term was created to recognize the bulk of the globe’s landscapes that bear signs of human influence, and to go beyond, “the common assumption that pristine ecosystems are ‘good’ and anything else is ‘bad.’”<sup>94</sup> An example would be the vegetation that appeared over

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<sup>89</sup> Beth Chatto. *Beth Chatto’s Gravel Garden* (New York: Avery, 2000).

<sup>90</sup> Thomas E. Dahl and Gregory J. Allord, “Technical Aspects of Wetlands: History of Wetlands in the Conterminous United States,” United States Geological Survey Water Supply Paper 2425.

<sup>91</sup> Beth Chatto, *The Damp Garden*. (London: J.M. Dent, 1982).

<sup>92</sup> Beth Chatto, *The Dry Garden*. (London: J.M. Dent, 1978).

<sup>93</sup> Jane Garmey, “The Natural Look, With Much Effort,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 2008, F1.

<sup>94</sup> Emma Marris, “Ragamuffin Earth,” *Nature*, July 2009, 450. <https://www.nature.com/news/2009/090722/pdf/460450a.pdf>

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time on abandoned elevated tracks that inspired New York City residents to reimagine that space as the garden now known around the world as the High Line. Todd Forest, vice president for horticulture and living collections at the New York Botanical Garden, who has a PhD from the Yale School of Forestry, first suggested a link between Innisfree and novel ecosystems in 2017.<sup>95</sup> In July of 2018, Dr. Noel Kingsbury, a prominent horticulturist who has written almost thirty books, returned to Innisfree to research his upcoming book on landscape maintenance. He took this idea further, feeling that Innisfree goes beyond traditional gardens and beyond novel ecosystems to offer a highly promising and sustainable direction in the future of horticulture. Kingsbury christened the gardens created through Collins's method of allowing garden plants to naturalize and native plants to move in over time, tended only with gentle editing, as "novel ornamental ecosystems." To document this new concept, he felt that a PhD student could do their entire dissertation on Collins's East Rock Garden along the Kwan Yin Path.<sup>96</sup> In *Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in Post-Wild World*, Emma Marris argues that, "Our goal going forward...must be a hybrid of wild nature and human management...a global, half-wild rambunctious garden, tended by us."<sup>97</sup> In such a context, Innisfree is indeed a revolutionary accomplishment evincing ideas of global import more than half a century before leading scientific and horticultural voices began to give shape to similar concepts.

As global warming has begun changing weather patterns dramatically, landscapes that are resilient in the face of both flooding and drought have become a global concern. With his "farmer common sense," this was always a chief concern for Collins. His design process began with the fundamentals of the site: "The first thing I ask myself about a garden is 'Is it going to work? Is the drainage right?'"<sup>98</sup> As Collins began re-engineering the garden for public use shortly before Marion Beck's death, managing water was high on his priority list. This included both limiting the need for irrigation and creating proper drainage. He achieved the former by gently shaping aesthetic plant communities truly suited to various ecosystems on site so they require minimal irrigation, or in the case of his bog and meadow gardens, no irrigation. Collins also worked to carefully control storm runoff, an essential matter, as Innisfree is effectively a large bowl with Tyrrel Lake at center.

In the mid 1950s Collins had Innisfree's then twenty-five-person crew dig the meadow stream (including the Yarimizu) and create bog gardens along its path and at its outlet to the lake. There had been a stream in roughly that location before the Becks built a reservoir up on the western slope above their house and garden. After that, the stream only ran when spring snowmelt or a major rainstorm were more than the reservoir could hold, leaving an eroded gash the rest of the year. After Collins reworked the hydraulics as part of the Yarimizu project, this stream now flows at a moderate rate throughout the year, with its bogs easily absorbing any excess flow. Similarly, the many other bogs around Innisfree absorb storm water and the resulting increased water levels in the lake. In times of drought, the bogs continue to provide ample water to their plants without the need

<sup>95</sup> Todd Forest, New York Botanical Garden, interview by Katherine H. Kerin, Innisfree Landscape Curator, October 25, 2017.

<sup>96</sup> Noel Kingsbury, interview by Katherine H. Kerin, Innisfree Landscape Curator, July 17, 2018.

<sup>97</sup> Emma Marris. *Rambunctious Garden*. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011). Back cover.

<sup>98</sup> Marion Lynn Clark, "The Ten-Point Lester Collins Garden Plan," *Washington Post*, April 11, 1971, 13.

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for additional irrigation. Collins also reconfigured the reservoir above the garden to effectively and beautifully release any overflow down a waterfall beside the lotus bog at the point.

Lake management is another example of sustainable design at Innisfree. Maintaining the 40-acre lake is critical to the overall aesthetics of the garden, and to Collins's organizing idea of making an overall cup garden, composed of many smaller cup gardens at Innisfree. Innisfree incorporates what appears to be the first use of "hypolimnetic withdrawal," removing nutrient rich (predominantly in phosphorus), oxygen poor water from the bottom of the lake to deter algae growth and create healthy conditions for desired flora as well as fauna. Collins implemented this technique in the mid-1940s to resolve increasing problems with algae. The first use of this technique to be documented in scientific literature was on Lake Kortowskie in Poland in 1956.<sup>99</sup> The development of this technique at Innisfree provides a good example of Collins's empirical approach. The Innisfree maintenance crew told Collins that the lake started to grow algae. Separately, they reported that the Becks had closed off a cold, sulfide spring beside the lake because of the smell. Collins put it together that when the spring stopped flowing away, algae flourished. Using his "farmer common sense" he surmised that the spring water smelled because it was rich in various nutrients (anaerobic decomposition smells terrible), was cold because it came from the bottom of the lake, and that those nutrients which the spring previously carried away had become a food source for the algae. If he once again removed those nutrients from the lake, algae growth would diminish or cease. Again, applying common sense, he thought that the nutrients in the lake would settle to the bottom, which was consistent with reports he had gotten that the spring water was always cold. Collins essentially recreated the spring with a pipe that allowed water to flow from the *bottom* of the lake into a nearby bog as it had previously. Within a few years, the lake had returned to its pristine condition. Collins further deduced from this experience that fertilizers could never be used on a large scale at Innisfree, so the garden would have to embrace imperfect lawns and, as much as possible, organic maintenance practices.

Innisfree has a long-running decorative plant-breeding program. The plant breeding started with Marion Beck, who adapted the work of Lewis Stadler at the University of Missouri on mutation breeding of corn to ornamental plants. She started in the early 1930s, only 5 years after Herman Muller's 1927 discovery that chromosomal changes are permanent.<sup>100</sup> These efforts were relatively rudimentary and involved putting an X-ray tube in a greenhouse and selecting aesthetically interesting progeny. In the mid 1940s, Collins persuaded the Becks to change the selection criteria, so that they chose the plants best able to survive in the Innisfree environment. After their deaths, he continued this effort, although without the radiation. With his family's rich history as farmers and fruit growers, Collins understood quite a bit about plant breeding and genetics, including plant ecotypes, variations in a single species that develop in a particular geographic area and are particularly suited to its conditions. Facing initial failure with certain highly desired plants at Innisfree, Collins employed a simple process of selective breeding via hand-pollination to create successful ecotypes over time. This involved

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<sup>99</sup> Gertrud K. Nürnberg, "Lake Responses to Long-Term Hypolimnetic Withdrawal Treatments," *Lake and Reservoir Management* 23:388-409, 2007. See table that shows all uses reported in open literature. See also: Julita A. Dunalska, Grzegorz Wisniewski & Czesław Mientki, "Assessment of multi-year (1956–2003) hypolimnetic withdrawal from Lake Kortowskie, Poland," *Lake and Reservoir Management* 23 (2007):4, 377-387.

<sup>100</sup> Noel Kingsbury, *Hybrid: The History and Science of Plant Breeding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 267-270.

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cross-pollinating plants with the most desirable characteristics (i.e. vigor, size, floriferousness) to encourage those traits. With native species, efforts could extend to the wild collection of either pollen or plants from the immediate surrounds to enrich the Innisfree stock. In the fairly contained ecosystem at Innisfree, this breeding program outpaced natural selection relatively quickly and thus offered an economical and efficient technique for creating large-scale impacts in the Innisfree landscape as these ecotypes naturalized. According to his son, Oliver, Collins thought of this process as "assisted natural selection." Similar ideas are now being explored to adapt flora to global warming. The process continues at Innisfree. As a result, descendants of the Japanese primroses, *Primula japonica*, that Marion Beck imported from England and were originally only marginally successful have now naturalized throughout the property in huge numbers to become a signature feature. Other species, also considered signature plants at Innisfree today, have been selectively bred with great success and naturalize readily, including the native columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), yellow foxgloves (*Digitalis lutea*), Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*), and rose mallows (*Hibiscus moscheutos*).

### ***Popular and Critical Reception of Innisfree***

In the nearly 70 years since Innisfree opened to the public, the garden has delighted and captured the imagination of experts and non-experts alike. Garden lovers, landscape writers and critics have sought to capture the unique aesthetic qualities and unusual design sophistication of Innisfree in various descriptive terms. Lester Collins believed the approach to the garden itself, which he developed in concert with Beck, created the core spirit of the garden's captivating design. He posited that:

Because of their studies in the arts of China, Beck and Collins were aware of a different reality, richer perhaps, certainly more complex. Nonlinear thinking, something of the dream world, became very important as the Innisfree garden evolved. As these men were creating the garden, they found the unconscious influencing the conscious mind and their work became not only more imaginative, but also more intuitive.<sup>101</sup>

David Wheeler, the founder and editor of the English journal, *Hortus*, wrote:

Like the pyramids of Egypt or the Great Wall of China, Innisfree helps us to define what we mean by 'civilization.' It is one of the few places in this world that has lived up to – nay, exceeded – my expectations.<sup>102</sup>

In his book *Great Gardens of America*, Tim Richardson wrote:

The association with the transcendent immanence of Yeats' lines is perfectly in keeping with the feelings evoked by this singular place, for Innisfree is a garden of richly interwoven vistas and episodic energies, wreathed in a tranquil yet exciting atmosphere which stays fresh in the mind for many years.<sup>103</sup>

Charles Birnbaum, president and CEO of The Cultural Landscape Foundation wrote:

Passion, patronage and perseverance are on display at a grand scale in Lester Collins' [sic] highly personal and thoroughly original career-defining masterwork, *Innisfree*. Luxuriating in his creative quest more than a half

<sup>101</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 89.

<sup>102</sup> David Wheeler, email to Katherine H. Kerin, Innisfree landscape curator, March 25, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Tim Richardson, *Great Gardens of America* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2009), 104.

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century, Collins set out to transform the distinctly American garden, initially created by painter Walter Beck and his wife Marion, into a scenographic landscape that defies traditional style conventions. *Innisfree* is like no other garden – as with *origami*, it unfolds, surprises and delights.<sup>104</sup>

These prominent individuals recognize Innisfree as a visionary and influential design of twentieth century landscape art. Their comments address the uniquely inventive, almost magical character of this garden, its fusion of eastern and western landscape traditions, and its facile yet unpretentious references to both modern and ancient aesthetics. Equally compelling as these written descriptions are the bewitching photographs of the garden taken and published over the history of the property- in the mist at sunrise, in the golden light of sunset, and at all other times of day and in varying weather conditions. Many photographs were published in Collins's definitive book *Innisfree: An American Garden*; others appear in the books and articles listed in the bibliography or are displayed on the garden's website, [innisfreegarden.org](http://innisfreegarden.org), and in its printed materials.

### **Lester Collins's Life and Career**

#### ***Lester Collins (1914-1993)***

In his introduction to *Innisfree: An American Garden*, Charles W. Moore, FAIA states that:

Lester Collins...has left behind a legacy and an influence. He has shaped the earth, and taught others to shape the earth. Lester Collins had some good answers, and always offered a genuine response to the problems facing designers. His answers were based on real people and how they move and interact with the environment. He even had some handle on the question which we often forget while busily supplying answers: how do we shape the human environment to foster the good things shared by people of all cultures – peace, awareness, beauty?<sup>105</sup>

Landscape architect Lester Albertson Collins grew up in an affluent, educated, Quaker family in Moorestown, New Jersey. His aptitude for horticulture, design, engineering and innovation, as well as his pragmatism and perhaps even his focus on the individual experience, were rooted in family and faith. Descendants of Francis Collins, who first arrived in what would be New Jersey in the 1670s, his family still farmed the same homestead, along with many other tracts of land up and down the Eastern seaboard and had developed numerous related business interests. In what was originally an effort to grow new fruit crops in Florida, Lester Collins's grandfather, John S. Collins, was largely responsible for the development of Miami Beach as a resort. He coined the term "Miami Beach," where the famed Collins Avenue still bears his name. He built the Collins Bridge linking Miami to Miami Beach, then the longest wooden bridge in the world, making future growth possible. He and his family built a hotel, a casino, and began residential development there. The landscape architect's father, also Lester Collins, was widely respected, won many regionally important awards in agriculture, and was considered "the dean of New Jersey's fruit growers."<sup>106</sup> He made many innovative contributions to New Jersey horticulture that are honored with an auditorium bearing his name at Rutgers University. His mother, Anne's, family, the Albertsons, had a similar history as early Quaker settlers and large-

<sup>104</sup> Charles Birnbaum, email to Lorraine Alexander, 2017.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Moore, introduction to *Innisfree: An American Garden* (New York: Saga Press, 1994), xii-xiii.

<sup>106</sup> "Lester Collins, 77, Led Fruit Growers." *The New York Times*, February 9, 1957.

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scale farmers and business owners. Her father, Chalkley Albertson, was noted, as, among other things, an innovative engineer, building countless roads and bridges.

Lester Collins's first design work began at a very young age, creating trails at the rustic camp his family owned in Maine. He had a deep connection with this wild nature and would eventually bring his bride to that wooded lakeside for their honeymoon. He graduated from Choate and started college at Princeton but graduated from Harvard with a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1938. His unpublished undergraduate thesis presaged much of his future career. It looked at the Picturesque style in English landscape and theater set design, identified Chinoiserie as a relief from the sameness of Western design, and declared that the eighteenth century was when the Englishman "learned to feel with his eyes."<sup>107</sup> After completing his undergraduate degree, Collins studied gardens in Asia, travelling through China, Tibet, Japan, Korea, Cambodia, Indonesia, and India in 1939 and 1940, as documented in his unpublished travel journals. Oliver Collins, Lester's son, owns numerous art objects his father collected on that journey, as well as a large watercolor the senior Collins painted *en plein air* of Himalayan peaks. For much of the time in Asia, Collins traveled with John O. Simonds, a Harvard friend who had just completed his degree in landscape architecture. The two would later collaborate frequently and were in practice together for many years. Both men returned from that trip with a deeper appreciation of Asian philosophy and design and the importance of the experience facilitated by landscape.<sup>108</sup>

Collins returned to Harvard in 1940 and received his Master of Landscape Architecture degree from the Graduate School of Design in 1942. During his years as an undergraduate and graduate student in Cambridge, Modernism became an important force in the American design community with Harvard arguably at the center of that change. With the rise of the Nazi party in Europe, and the 1933 closure of the Bauhaus – the great Modernist school of design – many artists, designers, and intellectuals arrived in the United States, and many Modernist luminaries arrived at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD). Walter Gropius led the architecture program at Harvard from 1937-52. Architect Marcel Breuer taught there from 1937-46. Landscape architect Christopher Tunnard was a GSD faculty member from 1938-43. With the exception of Tunnard, Harvard's landscape architecture faculty at the time lagged a bit behind their colleagues in the architecture program, and most were more rooted in a traditional Beaux-Arts approach to design.

Just a few years ahead of Collins, fellow Harvard students Dan Kiley, Garrett Eckbo, and James Rose famously clamored for change and began exploring the ramifications of Modernism on the landscape during the late 1930s. All three, plus Lawrence Halprin, who was just behind Collins at Harvard, became acknowledged masters in modern landscape design. Incorporating ideas from modern architecture, they used new materials and techniques, used plantings to integrate interior and exterior spaces, focused on the particularities of the site, demonstrated an interest in Eastern thought and design process, and blended traditional methods with modern

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<sup>107</sup> Lester Collins, "Actors in the Picturesque: A study of the picturesque in eighteenth-century England with special reference to the relationship between the informal garden and the stage" (Undergraduate Honors thesis, Harvard University, 1938).

<sup>108</sup> Susan Rademacher, *Mellon Square: Discovering a Modern Masterpiece*, ed. Charles Birnbaum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 27.

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forms.<sup>109</sup> While these ideas were not fully incorporated into the Harvard curriculum, they were certainly in the air and clearly impacted the way Collins approached design. Collins's earlier life, however, demonstrates that he was already keenly attuned to these ideas. Although he fully embraced the tenets of modern landscape architecture shared by his contemporaries like Dan Kiley, James Rose, Garrett Eckbo, and Lawrence Halprin, and has even been identified as a Minimalist, Collins's deep intellectual curiosity enabled him to learn from and establish collegial relationships with faculty whose work was more traditional.<sup>110</sup> As an example, he dedicated his undergraduate thesis in 1938 to professor and landscape architect, Bremer Pond, a member of the old guard at Harvard who had worked for Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. It is easy to imagine that Pond was an invaluable aid to Collins's work on Picturesque landscapes.

From 1942-45, Collins served in World War II as a member of the American Field Service with the British Army in North Africa. There, he continued to look at landscapes, taking away important lessons in design for hot climates that he utilized in future projects, including work in Washington, DC, Florida, Amman, Jordan, and Cairo, Egypt. He also met his future wife, Petronella leRoux, a nurse and officer in the South African Army.

Collins joined Harvard's landscape architecture faculty in 1945 while his fiancée enrolled at Radcliff to pursue her PhD in history. Collins served as dean of the Landscape Architecture department in Harvard's Graduate School of Design from 1950-1953. To help his students understand the impact, the experience of their designs, Collins was instrumental in creating the Field Laboratory at the Case Estates in Weston, Massachusetts, for Harvard's GSD where students could build their own small-scale designs.<sup>111</sup> This one example encapsulates his innovative creativity, his pragmatism, and his embrace of the post-war landscape ideal expressed, among other places, by Garret Eckbo in his 1950 book, *Landscape for Living*, and by Thomas Church in his 1955 book, *Gardens are for People*.

His teaching style and the impact he had on students can be glimpsed in an oral history interview conducted and videoed by the Cultural Landscape Foundation, landscape architect Edward L. Daugherty. Reminiscing about studying at Harvard under Lester Collins, Daugherty states:

[Collins] was young, he was vital, he was spontaneous. He was like one of these fireworks fountains in which sparks and ideas flew off, and they were offered generously. He was a very modest man and gentlemanly in his approach. I can only use the word generous to explain. He was willing to offer ideas to everybody. His critiques were really thrilling. You would really get a lot out of his observations, his questions on how you were advancing a solution to a problem.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Marc Treib, introduction to *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1994), ix-x.

<sup>110</sup> Nancy Slade, "Lester Albertson Collins," *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 58.

<sup>111</sup> Nancy Slade, "Lester Albertson Collins," *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Stephanie Foell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 56

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Edward L. Daugherty, "Edward L. Daugherty Biography: The Harvard Years (8 of 12)." The Cultural Landscape Foundation, January 22, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqt-7gcpFJM>



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In 1953, Collins left Harvard to spend a year in Japan as a Fulbright Scholar based at Kyoto University. During this year, he studied traditional Japanese garden design and construction methods and studied what is considered the world's first garden book, the *Sakuteiki*. Working with Fuku Ikawa, a Japanese scholar of English Literature at Kyoto University, Collins created an early, if not the first English translation of the seminal eleventh-century text. The pair used the original Heian period name for the work, the *Sensai Hisho*, which they translated as *The Secret Garden Book*. This project involved the careful study of physical gardens, work with other Japanese garden manuscripts, and input from university colleagues, scholarly priests, and esteemed gardeners to better understand the principles outlined in the rather short, unillustrated text. In his summation, Collins wrote that this text urges gardeners to study nature and great gardens but to "build the essence rather than the copy," exactly the design approach Collins long followed, particularly at Innisfree.<sup>113</sup>

Collins is credited with encouraging his then-student, Richard Haag, to apply for the Fulbright Fellowship, a similar, student-level award. Collins and his earlier travels inspired Haag, now recognized as a master landscape architect, to continue his studies after Harvard in Japan as a Fulbright Fellow from 1953-1955.<sup>114</sup> Haag's most famous designs are Gas Works Park in Seattle, Washington, and the Bloedel Reserve, on Bainbridge Island, Washington, which is the American landscape most similar to Innisfree. It is highly likely that Collins and Walter Gropius crossed paths during the latter's only, yet deeply influential, trip to Japan in 1954. In 1953, while Gropius was the dean of Harvard's architecture program and Collins was dean of the landscape architecture program, the two collaborated on a major project in Chicago, Michael Reese Hospital.

On returning to the United States in 1954, Collins moved his family to Georgetown. According to his wife, Petronella, this was so Collins could investigate the role of Dumbarton Oaks, a research institute, public garden, and Harvard satellite.<sup>115</sup> While serving as a lecturer in Landscape Architecture and Garden Design at Dumbarton Oaks, Collins finished the translation project begun in Japan. This unpublished work is called *The Secret Garden Book: An Early Japanese Garden Building Handbook – A Contemporary Interpretation by Lester Collins*. Like Collins's undergraduate thesis on the Picturesque, this text is significant because one sees influences of these design ideas in his work and because it documents the landscape architect's ability to understand related topics of design, art, culture, and engineering/construction at a nuanced, deeply scholarly level.

The focus of Lester Collins's work as a Fulbright Scholar and Dumbarton Oaks Lecturer was directly shaped by his earlier travels in Asia. In his unpublished Japan manuscript, Collins writes, "In 1939, the great garden historians, Tsuyoshi Tamura and Osamu Mori, began my knowledge of early Japanese gardens."<sup>116</sup> These scholars told Collins about *The Secret Garden Book*, known today as the *Sakuteiki*, and they directed him to sites in Japan, China and Korea with gardens and vestiges of gardens that may have been influenced by this

<sup>113</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 20.

<sup>114</sup> *Pacific Coast Architecture Database*, "Richard Haag (Landscape Architect)." <http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/1620/>

<sup>115</sup> Patricia Dane Rogers, "Appreciation: Even Mother Nature Bowed to Lester Collins." *Washington Post*, July 29, 1993. T1.

<sup>116</sup> Lester Collins, *Sensai Hisho: An Ancient Japanese Garden Handbook*, unpublished manuscript in Innisfree Foundation archives, 1954.

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ancient and influential text. It is significant to note that Collins was thus able to see these sites before Allied attacks on Japan in 1944-45, and the Korean War in 1950-53.

This work related to the *Sakuteiki* also demonstrates Collins's ability to connect meaningfully with important thinkers in many fields, a recurring theme in his life. In his unpublished Japan manuscript, Collins credits towering figures in world of Asian art and garden history as guides. Mentioned above are Tsuyoshi Tamura (1890-1979) and Osamu Mori (1905-1988), whose work published in English brought in-depth information on Japanese gardens to a broader Western audience. Tamura was a professor of landscape architecture at Tokyo Imperial University and thought to be the father of national parks in Japan. Tamura's 1935 *Art of the Landscape Garden in Japan* is included in Collins's personal library. He may well have used it when developing his travel plans for 1939-40. Mori, Tamura's former student, published widely and his work resonated with Modernists around the world. Walter Gropius wrote the introduction to Mori's 1965, *Katsura Villa*, filled with stunning photographs of this imperial villa in Kyoto that illustrate clear links between Japanese and Modernist aesthetics. Collins's library contains several of Mori's books, including *Typical Japanese Gardens* (1962). Collins also cites the guidance of Asian art historian and professor, Alexander Soper (1904-1993), and archeologist and Asian art historian, Langdon Warner (1881-1955). Soper won the prestigious Charles Lang Freer Medal from the Smithsonian Institution, which honors distinguished career contributions by scholars in the history of art. Soper's deep expertise was wide-ranging, as demonstrated by just two of his many books that are still considered the authoritative texts: *The Art and Architecture of Japan* (1955) and *The Art and Architecture of China* (1971). Collins also owned these books. Warner was a larger than life figure, thought to be the inspiration for the fictional Indiana Jones character, and a true scholar. A Harvard graduate, Warner conducted several important expeditions to China for Harvard's Fogg Museum in the 1920s and was a curator there. An early edition of Warner's 1926 book, *The Long Old Road in China*, is in Collins's personal library. It is possible that Warner, or at least his work, helped Collins plan his first trip to Asia. As part of the Monuments Men team, Warner oversaw work in Japan in 1946, published *The Enduring Art of Japan* in 1952 (also in Collins's library), and was actively involved in organizing *The Exhibition of Japanese Painting and Sculpture* that opened in January 1953, and toured museums in the US. Warner was once again perfectly poised to advise Collins on his own 1953-54 itinerary and arrange introductions in Japan.

From 1955-1970, Collins was a Washington-based partner in what quickly became a prominent landscape architectural firm, Collins, Simonds and Simonds; Collins joined the Pittsburgh-based firm his friend and travel companion, John Simonds, had formed in 1939 with his own brother, Philip. Lester Collins and John Simonds shared many beliefs, particularly relating to the physical and spiritual connection between people and their environment. Simonds, widely acclaimed in his own right, wrote a great deal and summarized some of those shared ideals in his important text, *Landscape Architecture*, first published in 1961: "It is fundamental to intelligent land and resource planning that the natural systems which protect our health and well-being be understood and sustained."<sup>117</sup> Their work together was wide-ranging and included the important 1961 design for

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<sup>117</sup> John Ormsbee Simonds, *Landscape Architecture: The Shaping of Man's Natural Environment*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 15.

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Equitable Plaza, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Still a well-used and vibrant urban park, the six-acre design surrounding a tight cluster of buildings including colorful paving, irregularly shaped planting beds, and lively fountains, is considered to be Pittsburgh's finest example of International Style planning.<sup>118</sup> Collins stepped down as a partner in 1970 but continued to consult for that firm, which is now known as Environmental Planning and Design.

From 1971 until his death in 1993, Collins was the sole practitioner at Lester Collins Associates. He was named a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1964.<sup>119</sup> By 1970, Lester Collins was locally recognized as a leading landscape architect in Washington, D.C. On August 30, 1970, the *Washington Post* summed up his reputation: "Washington has more than 500 interior designers and it is impossible, knowledgeable sources say, to say that any one them is the standout. As for landscape artistry, Lester Collins is considered Washington's finest (and he is considered one the best in the U.S., as well.)"<sup>120</sup> A frequent collaborator, Mark Simon, FAIA, of Centerbrook Architects and Planners, LLC, said, "He was fun to work with. At the heart of all that, [he] was a brilliant designer who made difficult situations simple, but who could make simple solutions interesting."<sup>121</sup> Lester Collins was featured in many other newspaper articles and has been noted in recent scholarship for his contributions to the field.<sup>122</sup> A 1980 article in the *Washington Post* supplement, *The Magazine*, dubbed Collins the "dean of Washington landscape architects."<sup>123</sup> After earning that moniker, according to his son, Collins joked with friends and family that it was clearly time to move on.

In the early 1970s, Collins and his wife purchased a nineteenth century conch house at 1415 Thompson Street in Key West and split their time between Georgetown and Florida. He was doing a considerable amount of work in Florida; he and his South African wife preferred warm climates, and they loved the outré arts scene in Key West at that time. In 1981, when their son, Oliver, went to college, they sold their townhouse at 1619 33<sup>rd</sup> Street NW in Georgetown. They then spent winters in Key West and summers at Innisfree, in Millbrook, New York, which Collins had designed and was then running as a public garden as president of the nonprofit Innisfree Foundation.

In addition to his skills as a designer and a plantsman, Collins had other attributes that advanced his design practice. He was a quietly charismatic figure, much admired for his integrity and intellect by those who knew him. He combined qualities of both the old guard and bohemian intellectuals. He attended the right schools, was listed on the Social Register, and was a member of venerable private clubs including the Cosmos Club, in Washington, DC, the Century Association, in New York City, and the Chevy Chase Club, in Maryland. Although Petronella Collins was not a Quaker, and was most likely an atheist, Quaker Plain Speech, a simple

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<sup>118</sup> Nancy Slade, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "John Ormsbee Simonds." <https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/john-simonds?destination=search-results>

<sup>119</sup> American Society of Landscape Architects Fellows Database. <http://asla.longtermsolutions.com/>

<sup>120</sup> Aurora Reich, "Answers to Readers' Questions," *Washington Post*, August 30, 1970, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Nancy Slade, "Lester Albertson Collins," in *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Stephanie Foell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 58.

<sup>122</sup> *Shaping the American Landscape: New Profiles from the Pioneers of American Landscape Design Project*, ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Stephanie Foell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009).

<sup>123</sup> Andy Leon Harvey, "Living Out," *The Magazine* (*Washington Post* weekly supplement), March 2, 1980.

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way of speaking with honesty and directness and without honorifics, was used in their home. At the same time, Collins and his wife were part of intensely intellectual and liberal communities first in Cambridge, MA, then Washington, DC, and later Key West, FL. Critic and historian Lewis Mumford was a close friend who frequently visited Collins at Innisfree from his nearby home in Amenia, NY. Dillon Ripley, the longtime head of the Smithsonian, was also a longtime friend. Peter Krulewitch, a client, friend, and trustee of the Innisfree Foundation, tells of visiting Collins in Key West when Bob Graham, then governor of Florida, arrived unexpectedly late one evening – entourage in tow – just to spend a little time with Lester. Collins admired the tie on one of the governor’s underlings, and Graham instantly told him to give it to their host. While he had seventeenth-century furniture that had descended through the Collins family, he also embraced the graphic boldness of twentieth century art and design. Collins painted the interior of the cottage at Innisfree, where he spent part of each year from 1960-1993, in yellow, red, blue, and black – the colors of Gerrit Rietveld’s Red Blue Chair, an icon of Modernist design. The yellow does look remarkably like Chinese Imperial yellow, as well. In contrast, he painted the exterior and the porch furniture a deep brown, so they would disappear from view in the garden. He hung the walls with early original posters by Roy Lichtenstein and Paul Klee and created assemblages of industrial salvage, folk art, and bits of nature throughout the house. The latter included shells, deer antlers, and various taxidermy specimens, including the head of a boar Collins shot while living with a tribe in Indonesia during his first major trip to Asia. By all accounts, the Collins homes in Georgetown and Key West were similarly appointed. Collins’s youngest brother, Daniel, said that Lester was not thrifty, he was cheap and proud of it. Lester gave Daniel a watch from Tiffany and announced it was the cheapest one they sold. It was still, however, a Patek Philippe.<sup>124</sup> Oliver Collins, Lester’s son, agreed with his uncle, but said it all came together as effective marketing when his tall, thin father would arrive for a client meeting in his “vintage” British racing green Jaguar, sporting well-worn gear from Brooks Brothers, with one in his long line of Afghan hounds – with exotic names like Nimla, called after a Mughal garden in Afghanistan – perched in the passenger seat.

Throughout his career, Collins collaborated with many other important architects and landscape architects. He worked with Walter Gropius on Chicago’s Michael Reese Hospital, in 1953, where Collins worked to create healing, therapeutic landscapes. The Cultural Landscape Foundation website relates that, “In June 1953, Collins wrote in a planning staff report that the efforts were looked upon as having ‘near and far definitions.’ The designers, he said, were thinking ‘of the hospital campus in relation to American living for one hundred years—and more. ... [It] should be designed, as hospital rooms are designed, caring for human beings.’”<sup>125</sup> Other important collaborators included Cesar Pelli (Comsat Laboratories, 1969, Clarksburg, MD), Edward Durell Stone and Edward Stone Jr. (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC), Charles Moore (numerous commissions), and Sasaki Associates (Enid A. Haupt Garden, 1987, Washington, DC). In such cases, Collins contributed his expert skills as a designer and plantsman to collaborations with larger firms, and their staff was often tasked with drawing the complex plans required. This fact that plans for collaborative projects were usually produced and thus signed by other offices makes Collins’s work difficult to document. In a

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Collins, interview by Katherine H. Kerin at Innisfree, summer 2016

<sup>125</sup> The Cultural Landscape Foundation, “Michael Reese Hospital.” <https://tclf.org/landscapes/michael-reese-hospital>

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telephone conversation with Oliver Collins and Katherine Kerin, Innisfree Landscape Curator, Bill Marzella, a landscape architect at EHT Tracerics who was working on a Cultural Landscape Report on the Enid A. Haupt Garden, expressed his confusion over Lester Collins's role. He said that Collins was at nearly every meeting, was copied on nearly all correspondence, but that the Smithsonian had only one drawing, and that of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, that was signed by Collins.<sup>126</sup> Oliver explained that the larger firms with which his father collaborated generally produced the drawings since few clients wanted to pay Collins's hourly rate merely for drafting services.<sup>127</sup> For this effort, projects listed have been documented using the few scholarly resources to date that touch on Collins's work, a fragment of his resume that survives, and various articles written during his lifetime and just after his death.

Collins's work stretched from Maine to Miami, and east to Cairo, Egypt, where he designed the grounds of the U.S. Embassy, and Amman, Jordan, where he designed portions of the Queen Alia International Airport. The vast majority of his commissions were in the Washington, DC, area. So many of those were in prominent locations that, even if few today realize it, Collins deeply influenced the public face of our nation's capital. In addition to the Haupt Garden (NR Listed 2017 as part of the Smithsonian Institution Quadrangle Historic District), other projects for the Smithsonian Institute include the complete redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, as well as significant portions of the National Zoo and the National Arboretum. Collins worked frequently for the National Park Service and designed 29 parks for it along Pennsylvania Avenue alone. He did campus design at George Washington University, American University, Gallaudet University, and the National Cathedral. He worked on the grounds at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and did the landscape design for many major office buildings, including Federal Office Building No. 6 (the Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building), which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2017).<sup>128</sup> Moving just slightly further away from Washington, Collins's work includes the seminal 1967 Comsat Laboratories, in Clarksburg where his pastoral setting for Cesar Pelli's groundbreaking High-Tech office building perfectly embodies what Leo Marx described in his influential 1964 book, *The Machine in the Garden*.<sup>129</sup> Other major projects in the region included NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, MD, Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Springs, MD, Gunston Hall in Lorton, VA, and campus design for the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, and the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, VA. Collins also had many prominent private clients in the Washington D.C. Region and beyond, including the likes of Paul Tudor Jones.

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<sup>126</sup> The Cultural Landscape Foundation recently uncovered considerable additional documentation that shows the comprehensive nature of Collins' work to redesign the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden and the strong positive response it gleaned at the time from design critics and the Smithsonian staff. This line of inquiry may also yield more specifics on Collins' work on the Enid A. Haupt Garden. "A Lester Collins Landscape Hiding in Plain Sight." May 13, 2019, <https://www.tclf.org/lester-collins-landscape-hiding-plain-sight?destination=search-results>

<sup>127</sup> Oliver Collins, Katherine H. Kerin, and Bill Marzella, Telephone meeting and related email, April 19, 2016.

<sup>128</sup> Kimberly DeMuro and Bill Marzella, "National Register Nomination for Federal Office Building No. 6," 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington D.C., NY," 2017.

[https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Federal%20Office%20Buildng%20No%206\\_0.pdf](https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Federal%20Office%20Buildng%20No%206_0.pdf)

<sup>129</sup> Maryland Historical Trust, "COMSAT Laboratories." <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/Montgomery/M;%2013-59.pdf>

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***Lester Collins – Miami Lakes, Florida***

Several generations of the Collins and Graham families had been involved with development in the Miami area. Due, in part, to their friendship, the Grahams commissioned Lester Collins to create a master plan for their new town of Miami Lakes. Initially encompassing about 3,000 acres that the Grahams had farmed, Collins began work on the project in 1962 and continued over many years. He considered it his magnum opus.<sup>130</sup> Oliver Collins notes that the Grahams thought so much of his father that they insisted he do everything, including design the signage, and paid to have him create many of the construction drawings. This was unusual as Collins was a sole practitioner and often collaborated with larger firms with junior staff who would do the drafting at a more economical rate. One sees the influence of earlier designers like Clarence Stein and his Garden City movement. Collins and Stein may have known each other through their mutual friend, Lewis Mumford, who founded the Regional Planning Association of America, an urban reform organization, with Stein in 1923. Collins's work at Miami Lakes was nonetheless innovative and influential.

His program for the master plan was to create a lively and welcoming community, allow for decades of growth, and be flexible enough to withstand changes in the real estate market. Collins achieved this by carefully integrating residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed uses from the start. Unlike other contemporary developments in the region, Collins formed Miami Lakes with tree-lined streets winding around curving lakes (essential for storm water control), through neighborhood shopping centers, beside numerous "tot-lot parks," and all leading to the mixed-use town center called Main Street. A review of *Miami Modern Metropolis* says this midcentury period "coincides with "the lowest ebb of planning culture in American history," notes Jean-Francois Lejeune in one essay. In Miami this "resulted in undifferentiated and rampant sprawl," he says. There were flashes of good sense, such as the town center for the 1960s Miami Lakes master-planned community, which remains walkable to this day."<sup>131</sup> Still a vibrant community and desirable address, Miami Lakes quickly became an important model for other planned communities in the region and elsewhere, particularly through the New Urbanism movement. On the Congress for the New Urbanism Florida Chapter website Jean Scott writes, "the plan for Miami Lakes anticipated New Urbanism with its incorporation of commercial centers, public spaces, and an interconnected street pattern. Later, [Victor] Dover notes, the design for the city's Main Street provided an important precursor for New Urbanism."<sup>132</sup> This project demonstrates Collins's ability to innovate, to create places people want to occupy, and to understand and smoothly integrate the project site and program.

Work on Miami Lakes started when Collins was at Collins, Simonds, and Simonds; Oliver Collins reported that his father was a bit nervous about who would continue the Miami Lakes work when he stepped down as a partner at the firm. The huge project could keep a sole-practitioner comfortably busy, so Collins was relieved

<sup>130</sup> Patricia Dane Rogers, "Appreciation: Even Mother Nature Bowed to Lester Collins," *Washington Post*, July 29, 1993.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Steuteville, "Miami Modern Metropolis: Paradise and Paradox in Midcentury Architecture and Planning," Center for New Urbanism Florida Chapter. <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2010/07/11/miami-modern-metropolis-paradise-and-paradox-midcentury-architecture-and>

<sup>132</sup> Jean Scott, "An Overview of New Urbanism in South Florida," Center for New Urbanism Florida Chapter. <http://cnufloida.org/resources/new-urbanism-florida-articles/an-overview-of-new-urbanism-in-south-florida/>

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when the Grahams tapped him to continue at the lead. The Graham family still owns much of Miami Lakes, and the town's website credits Lester Collins in full for the design:

Lester Collins, former Dean of the Harvard School of Architecture, was enlisted to create a Master Plan for the area that would become the center of Miami Lakes. Collins laid the foundation for an integrated community, including residential, commercial, industrial and mixed uses. Collins' [sic] original concept for the town continues to be incorporated into new planning and development and has been recognized by national and local media as one of the best examples of community master planning in the nation. The precise planning and development of the original 3,000 acres of land led to a vibrant and beautiful city with parks, 23 lakes, tree-lined streets, and a hometown atmosphere. Urban planners nationwide have consistently praised the Miami Lakes Master Plan for its winding streets, lush landscaping, generous parks, peaceful cul-de-sacs, and controlled mixed use and exclusive business parks.<sup>133</sup>

### ***Lester Collins – The National Zoo, Washington, DC***

Starting in 1971, Collins worked with fellow Modernist, architect Avery Faulkner on a master plan for the National Zoo. In the unpublished annual garden reports Lester Collins prepared for the Innisfree Foundation Trustees, he wrote that the then-director of the National Zoo visited Innisfree and asked that Collins create a similar landscape and feel for the zoo. According to a 1972 record of appropriations hearings, "This plan will emphasize the animal exhibits in a park-like setting, minimizing the architectural features, such as buildings. The latest techniques in animal exhibition, management, care, and education are being incorporated into this plan. At the same time, the eighty-year old zoo continues to be used by millions of visitors from all over the country."<sup>134</sup> On April 22, 1972, the *Washington Post* reported: "It could not be better. The Faulkner-Collins masterplan combines the spirit Olmsted – a genius at bringing nature into the city, as demonstrated by his Central Park in New York – with the most advanced ideas of displaying animals without depressing cages and fences...Faulkner and Collins are designing with nature rather than in defiance of nature."<sup>135</sup> The plan was not implemented in its entirety, but many of the features and exhibits Avery and Collins imagined were built. In 1972, Collins designed the original giant panda exhibit at the National Zoo. An example of China's long history of giving pandas to foreign nations, sometimes called panda diplomacy, two giant pandas arrived in April 1972 following Richard Nixon's historic first visit to China in February of that year. Collins masterfully managed the absurdly tight schedule, far-reaching political implications, international visibility, and the particular needs of the pandas, creating what is arguably the most famous zoo exhibit ever. Things had to happen so fast, Oliver Collins recalls, that his father was often on site overseeing construction.

According to Avery Faulkner, it was Collins who, on virtually no notice, located the rare bamboo required by Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing in Alabama. 'It was straight out of Charlie Chaplin,' Faulkner recalled. 'The pandas were arriving from China the next day and the zoo dispatched drivers to go get the bamboo in the middle of the night. But the Alabama authorities discovered that it was infested with mites and sent men with sidearms to

<sup>133</sup> Town of Miami Lakes, "History." [https://www.miamilakes-fl.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=166](https://www.miamilakes-fl.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=166)

<sup>134</sup> Committee on Appropriations, "Construction and Improvements National Zoological Park," in *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1973: Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations United States Senate* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972).

<sup>135</sup> Wolf Von Eckardt, "Time to Bring Nature Back to the Zoo," *Washington Post*, April 22, 1972, B1

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retrieve it.’ In the end, he said, Collins prevented what might have been an international incident over starving pandas by swearing on a Bible to rid the bamboo of the bugs by dipping the roots in pesticide.<sup>136</sup>

Demonstrating Collins’s innovative creativity and his pragmatic, logistical abilities, the new design emerged smoothly from a busy historic site, incorporated new ideas and technologies relating both to care of the animals and education of the public, and created a place that connected these two populations far more than it divided them.

### ***Lester Collins – The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC***

Collins’ redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden in Washington demonstrates his virtuosic skills as a designer and plantsman as well as his remarkable ability to work successfully with complicated programs and logistics, and complicated (sometimes difficult) teams. In a recent article, the Cultural Landscape Foundation notes, “As records from the period make clear, his extensive but sensitive work was an adept response to several complex and multifaceted challenges...Collins transformed what had been called a “desert-like expanse’ into a shaded, choreographed journey through an urban oasis.”<sup>137</sup> Like at Innisfree, Collins created cup gardens, here vignettes to showcase sculpture, and strung them together to create at “choreographed journey.” In both, he frames, conceals, and reveals views to draw visitors through the space and animate the experience.

The original design illustrates the rather different ways the Modern movement was expressed in architecture and landscape architecture. When the 1.5-acre sunken garden first opened in 1974, it was a failure. Designed by Modernist architect Gordon Bunshaft, of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, as an extension of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Museum building he designed at the same time, it was envisioned as a neutral setting where a rotating display of sculpture would create the focus. It featured a center court fourteen feet below ground level with a rectangular reflecting pool and two flanking terraces. Within what was effectively a walled garden, Bunshaft gave a nod toward Japanese rock gardens and covered the floor with pebbles. It had no grass and only a few plants. The garden’s shortcomings were immediately evident. The site was incredibly hot, the pebbles were difficult to walk on, and there was no access for strollers or wheelchairs. It was certainly not a space that focused on the experience of the people within it.

By the summer of 1976, S. Dillon Ripley, longtime Secretary of the Smithsonian, recognized Collins as a “splendid advisor” to the landscaping and horticultural subcommittee working to redesign the sculpture garden. The Smithsonian decided not to hire the landscape architectural firm of Zion & Breen, former students of Collins, but in April 1977, tapped Collins himself to redesign the sunken garden. He agreed to cut his hourly rate by about 40% and cap his total fee at \$4,000 because “a most fascinating and challenging job is involved.”<sup>138</sup> In September of that year, Bunshaft approved the revised design, saying that “Mr. Collins’ assessment of the space proportions and the planting was very sensitive and well thought out.”<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Patricia Dane Rogers, “Appreciation: Even Mother Nature Bowed to Lester Collins,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1993.

<sup>137</sup> “A Lester Collins Landscape Hiding in Plain Sight.” May 13, 2019. <https://tclf.org/lester-collins-landscape-hiding-plain-sight>

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



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Construction began in 1979 and Collins continued to be involved in every detail. The Hirshhorn curator Joe Shannon stated that “no contracts are to be let, or purchases made without Mr. Collins and/or myself viewing the individual plants...[Trees are] art works in terms of distinctive shapes and particular foliage... These plants are integral to the design which Lester Collins prepared for the Museum and it is the Museum’s decision to follow his design in the reconstruction of the garden.”<sup>140</sup>

Collins removed the pebbles and, more than a decade before the American Disabilities Act (ADA) was enacted in 1991, he created ramps for easier access. He physically cooled and visually softened the area with extensive plantings, drawing on techniques he had observed in North Africa and the Middle East. He broke up the large open area into a series of more intimate spaces. Because the sculptures are exhibited on a rotating basis, the landscaping was not designed around individual pieces. Instead, Collins created a calming green oasis with weeping beeches, pines, and crepe myrtles – sculpture in their own right – and draped clematis and ivy across the enclosure's walls. Collins’ design is both more pleasant and more exciting to occupy.

The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden reopened in 1981 to widespread acclaim. Benjamin Forgey, architecture critic for the Washington Post wrote, “The new design reinforces the identity of the garden as a welcoming urban park...[This] park for art...serves the sculpture. The divisions of the space prove essential accents; artworks pop in and out of view as the spectator moves about the space.” The latter is also one of the defining qualities of Collins’ work at Innisfree.

### ***Lester Collins – The Enid A. Haupt Garden, Washington, DC***

The Enid A. Haupt Garden offers a superb example of Collins playing a central but less visible role in a high-profile project, and his ability to respond to what others might view as a difficult site. In front of James Renwick’s Norman style castle, the original Smithsonian building, the 4.2-acre garden along the Washington Mall sits atop the then new underground galleries for Asian and African art. The Haupt Garden design team was also complex. It included architect Jean Paul Carlhian, who was an architecture professor at Harvard when Collins was also teaching at the GSD, and Sasaki Associates. Architectural historian and professor at George Washington University, Richard Longstreth, describes the collaboration in a March 28, 2016 letter to Sharon Park, at the Smithsonian:

The depth of Collins’ knowledge in Asian traditions and the range of his work made him a strong candidate for the inevitable challenges of designing the Haupt Garden. It was, of course, a collaborative enterprise, in which Carlhian himself was an active participant who delineated many of the scheme’s basic components. And the patron, Enid Haupt, was an avid horticulturalist who also left her imprint. Furthermore, some characteristics of the plan can be seen in an only partially realized “temporary” design by Dan Kiley in the mid-1970s. (Hideo Sasaki’s renowned firm was the landscape architect of record, but I doubt if it played any substantive role in the

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

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design.) But it was Collins' many talents that were able to weave together so many particular attributes into a coherent and meaningful whole.<sup>141</sup>

It is worth noting that the Smithsonian is currently working to replace the Haupt Garden with a design by the architectural firm, B.I.G, and have architect and photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto redesign the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden. While change over time is inevitable, recognizing the exceptional significance of the work of Lester Collins will enable decisions for the future of these landscapes to be made within and informed by proper context.

### **Innisfree in Context**

#### ***Comparison of Innisfree to Other Works of Modern Landscape Architecture***

As an important work of American Modernist landscape architecture, Innisfree needs to be understood in the context of modernist landscape design and the work of Lester Collins's best known professional peers, James Rose, Dan Kiley and Garrett Eckbo.<sup>142</sup> The finest landscape design from this postwar period focused on people and their experience in these landscapes, making places people would want to be. It worked to celebrate nature and protect the environment using scientific ideas and new technologies. It also embraced aesthetic ideas from a wide range of cultures, disciplines, and time periods. Innisfree meets all of these criteria. In his introduction to *Landscape for Living*, Garrett Eckbo quotes critic and poet Christopher Caldwell in what could be a summation for postwar landscape architecture as well as Lester Collins's work at Innisfree, "Art is the science of feeling, science is the art of knowing. We must know to be able to do, but we must feel to be able to know."<sup>143</sup>

James Rose's Anisfield Garden, in Saddle River, New Jersey, is very different in scale, setting, and superficial design elements from Innisfree, but there are more essential similarities than differences. Both landscapes celebrate the specific elements of their specific sites and, combined with a subtle understanding of how individuals experience space, facilitate meaningful interaction between people and place. In the Anisfield Garden, Rose worked to save existing trees and create new design features that highlighted and protected them. He used rocks collected on site, sometimes placing them so as to outline and accentuate topography. Similarly, Collins worked to distill the essential qualities of the glacial landscape at Innisfree. Both sites exhibit Japanese influences. Collins and Rose were deeply inspired by Japanese gardens having lived in Japan and undertaken long study of the culture and its design ideas. Both incorporated Japanese design techniques in work that was decidedly related to the American landscape and American culture. Both Innisfree and Anisfield Garden incorporate innovative sustainable design. Rose created a rain garden in his Saddle River project that collected

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<sup>141</sup> Richard Longstreth, letter to Sharon Park at the Smithsonian, March 28, 2016.

<sup>142</sup> The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "Modernist." <https://www.tclf.org/category/landscape-style/modernist>.

<sup>143</sup> Mark Treib, "The Social Art of Landscape Design," in *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living*, ed. Mark Treib and Dorothee Imbert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 29.

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and filtered runoff from the house roof.<sup>144</sup> Collins pioneered myriad sustainable landscape management techniques at Innisfree. Both designers understood landscapes as experiences. Rose wrote that:

A garden is an experience. It is not flowers or plants of any kind. It is not flagstones, brick, grass, or pebbles. It is not a barbeque, or a fiberglass screen. It is an experience. If it were possible to distill the essence of a garden, I think it would be the sense of being within something while still out of doors. That is the substance of it; for until you have that, you do not have a garden at all.<sup>145</sup>

James Rose elected to have a design-build practice, so he could exercise precise control over the physical realization of his designs. Working carefully around existing trees at the Anisfield Garden is a perfect example of what this methodology enabled Rose to achieve. Lester Collins was a superb project manager, as evidenced by his active involvement in sourcing materials for and construction of the panda exhibit at the National Zoo. At Innisfree, however, he was able to go further and, like Rose, truly immerse himself in the physical implementation of his design. Because Collins ran Innisfree as a public garden for 33 years and because dramatic financial reversals right at the start of that period required innovative solutions, Collins was also able to develop and actively manage cost-effective maintenance protocols that still ensure the garden expresses his complete design vision.

Dan Kiley's Miller Garden, in Columbus, Indiana, is a Modernist classic. Like Rose's Anisfield Garden, the scale and setting are very different from the core garden at Innisfree where no other sign of human intervention is in sight. Kiley's work sits on 13.5 acres, less suburban than the Anisfield Garden but bridging the Columbus city grid with the twisting course of the Flatrock River. Both sites are former private residences now open to the public, although this is a fairly recent change for Kiley's work and visitation is limited. The Miller House and Garden are an integrated composition. Even during the Becks's era, that was not the case at Innisfree. As Collins wrapped the public garden around the lake, that 40-acre body of water became the central organizing feature, although it does not exercise the same formal control over the landscape that the Miller House does. There are some important similarities, however. Both landscapes define inviting spaces and shape the visitor's experience of space in a highly sculptural way. Kiley used garden rooms and clear geometries while Collins created asymmetrical cup gardens, but both expertly draw visitors through their choreographed spaces using sensory cues (light, shadow, sound, color, form, contrast, lines of sight, etc.). Kiley loosely divided the landscape on the 4.5-acre plateau where the house is located into four sections by extending geometries from the corresponding sections of the house, each with its own spatial identity closely related to the architecture of Eero Saarinen's residential design.<sup>146</sup> Kiley left the long meadow that sweeps down to the river largely untouched as a foil to the exactly shaped spaces around the house. He linked his famous honey locust allée near the house to the river using a line of red maples. Both landscape architects embraced historical design techniques but without pastiche, creating landscapes that are entirely of their own time. Collins drew on Romantic landscapes, Chinese

<sup>144</sup> James Rose Center, "Anisfield Garden." <http://jamesrosecenter.org/programs/garden-documentation/anisfield>

<sup>145</sup> James Rose, *Creative Gardens* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp. 1958).

<sup>146</sup> Laura Thayer, Louis Joyner, and Malcom Cairns, "National Historic Landmark Nomination for Miller House, Columbus, IN," 2000. <https://www.nps.gov/nhl/find/statelists/in/Miller.pdf>

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and Japanese gardens, and Modernism. Kiley, decidedly a Modernist, described his work on the Miller Garden as “a breakaway from other people in the field, my first really total break into classic geometric design.”<sup>147</sup> From that point forward, Kiley worked regularly with Neoclassical geometries, when, ironically, he had rebelled so strongly against the classical Beaux-Arts style being taught to landscape architects at Harvard that he did not graduate. Another trait that Kiley and Collins shared was less evident in the Miller Garden. Both were serious plantsmen. Kiley was known to start looking for plants for a project even before his design for the site was complete. As a result, at a time when many in the field viewed trees and other plants akin to site furnishings, these landscape architects were able to draw on wide-ranging plant palettes to support their design ideas in complex and sophisticated ways.

While entirely different in purpose, scale, and setting, Innisfree and Garret Eckbo’s 1969 master plan for the Denver Botanic Gardens share an intent to create an engaging outdoor space for people, and both incorporated innovative sustainable practices. The Denver Botanic Gardens covers 23 acres in an urban setting. The goal remains primarily educational, but the program was to extend beyond the purely scientific study of plants and to engage the general public, illustrating different plant habitats and inspiring home gardeners with design ideas and plant combinations. Collins was always very clear that Innisfree was not a place for the study of specific plants, but, beyond offering a distinctive landscape experience, it was for the study of landscape design. For that reason, he never wanted any plants to be labeled. Eckbo’s master plan called for water conservation, biological pest management, and the large-scale incorporation of native plants, making it one of the very first public botanical gardens to embrace sustainable practices.<sup>148</sup> Native plants were a small part of the Innisfree landscape when Lester Collins became acquainted with the project, but for economic reasons, he relied more heavily on native and naturalized plants. Not only was he able to activate the native seed bed to produce many of the plants that now dominate the Innisfree landscape, but, being more suited to the specific growing conditions, these plants are less susceptible to disease, so require less maintenance. Native plants are also important for attracting desirable fauna, which Collins felt were positive additions to the Innisfree experience. While the Becks’s irrigated their garden extensively, Collins’s Innisfree uses very little irrigation. Unlike Denver, where water shortages are standard, Innisfree has an ample supply of water from the lake and the reservoir. Collins’s water restrictions were instead designed to keep labor and power costs down. In their overall bodies of work, Collins and Eckbo worked by the same guiding principles. As Marc Treib says in “The Art of Social Landscape Design,”

If there is an Eckbo legacy, it tells us that comprehensive considerations, with a stress on the analytical stage of design, do not excuse ugly and unworkable places, whether indoors or out. The garden, the park, the promenade are far more than a few trees for shade and a shelter for eating. Landscape architecture is at root the vehicle by which we improve the relations between people and nature. It is a profession, certainly; it is a discipline, undeniably; and ultimately, it is an art, a social art; the social art of landscape design.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Calvin Thompkins, “The Garden Artist,” *The New Yorker*, October 16, 1995.

<sup>148</sup> The Cultural Landscape Foundation, “Denver Botanic Gardens.” <https://tclf.org/landscapes/denver-botanic-gardens>

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### ***Comparison of Innisfree to Other Public Gardens Created As Private Estates***

From the 1940s through the 1970s and beyond, private estates across the country became public as owners navigated the financial and practical challenges of succession, due to the lack of interest of later generations, increasing taxation, and the ever-present need for maintenance.<sup>150</sup> Some successful examples of private estates with substantial gardens that became public are Dumbarton Oaks (1940), Longwood Gardens (1946), Vizcaya (1952), Old Westbury Gardens (1959), Winterthur (1969), Filoli (1975), Kykuit (1979), and the Bloedel Reserve (1988).<sup>151</sup> These present-day public institutions are all located in or near major metropolitan centers and thus have a ready audience of visitors and funders. Most were further supported by tremendous personal wealth from the original owners (with names like Rockefeller and duPont), or tremendous institutional might, as with Harvard and Dumbarton Oaks. Some sites, like Winterthur, have become museums where the historic landscape is essentially a handsome setting. Others have expanded the gardens to the point that they would be unrecognizable to the former occupants, as at Longwood Gardens. In a rural location over 80 miles north of New York City, the closest urban center, Innisfree began life as a public garden saddled with the original owners' debt. That Innisfree survives today and holds to the remarkable design vision of Lester Collins is perhaps miraculous. While it is largely unknown to general audiences – there has never been any advertising while limited public outreach and rudimentary fundraising have just begun – it has earned the highest praise from top-tier garden writers, landscape architects, preservationists, and horticulturists who have learned of Innisfree almost exclusively by word of mouth.

### ***Comparison of Innisfree to Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC***

Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington, DC, is an important public site to compare to Innisfree because its transition from a private estate to a scholarly study center and public garden was an inspiration to the Becks and a project with which Lester Collins was directly involved. In 1921, Robert and Mildred Bliss hired landscape gardener Beatrix Farrand to design the gardens on their Georgetown estate. The resulting landscape is recognized as one of the most important gardens in America today, an urban property that feels like an expansive country estate. This project developed over almost thirty years of collaboration between Farrand and Mildred Bliss, with later changes made for Mildred Bliss most notably by Ruth Havey and Alden Hopkins. Farrand (1872-1959) was one of the most significant designers of the early twentieth century whose distinctive work referenced European garden styles but often included elements specific to American sites, be it local stone or the extensive use of native plants. Farrand's wide-ranging abilities were exceptional for her day, but she and Collins were remarkably similar as polymaths. Her gardens evidence a painterly handling of color and texture, a serious connoisseur's plant vocabulary, a dirt gardener's hard-won understanding of horticulture, a scholar's appreciation for garden and art history, plus a deep understanding of landscape site work and construction.

In 1940, Harvard assumed management of the property, which was given to the university by the Blisses the following year. Their important collections of Pre-Columbian and Byzantine art, as well as a remarkable garden

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<sup>149</sup> Treib, "The Social Art of Landscape Design," 96.

<sup>150</sup> Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 2001).

<sup>151</sup> The dates provided in parentheses reference when the estate opened to the public.

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library, are the foundation for residential research fellowships for scholars in those disciplines. Dumbarton Oaks also hosts conferences, publishes the proceedings from same, and organizes exhibitions. The garden is open to the public, as are several galleries showcasing the Blissess' collections.

To facilitate the transition at Dumbarton Oaks from private to public, Farrand created an extraordinary document, *The Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks*. This encapsulates Farrand's decades of work on the site, explaining the reasoning behind each section of the garden and how they should be maintained to carry those ideas forward. It documents problems she encountered and anticipated, with detailed solutions, and contains extensive lists of plants on site.<sup>152</sup> Together with the many plans and drawings Farrand and others created of Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard staff has a treasure trove of information on which to draw as they care for the public garden on into the future. Like Farrand, Collins was able over many decades to learn the site and refine his design compositions with carefully considered adjustments and maintenance. For nearly 60 years, Lester Collins or a member of his immediate family has been overseeing operations at Innisfree. Most of the garden maintenance staff now working in this public garden were trained by a Collins. As a result, Lester Collins's vision for Innisfree still exists in an incredibly rich oral and practical history and is continually put to active use. Collins, however, made no drawings for Innisfree. At the request of Innisfree Foundation trustees, he did write a book on his Millbrook garden, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, which was published in 1994, shortly after his death. While it does not provide minutely detailed maintenance prescriptions like Farrand's *Plant Book*, it does offer insights into Collins's intentions at Innisfree, and his process for creating, evaluating, and maintaining his cup gardens. It should be understood that the trustees had actually asked Collins to write a book on his overall body of work, which he declined to do. In a telling example of reverse ghost-writing, Collins wrote *Innisfree: An American Garden* in the third person, in many instances downplaying his own role, hoping that someone else would lend his or her name as author.

Farrand was a sole practitioner and, with no firm to carry her superior reputation and rich legacy forward, her name faded to obscurity for many decades following her death. Dumbarton Oaks held the first-ever conference on Farrand's work, and in 2003, several key participants, Diana Balmori, Diane Kostial McGuire, and Eleanor McPeck, published the first book on her work, *Beatrix Farrand's American Landscapes: Her Gardens & Campuses*. Since then, Farrand's rich body of work has become widely acknowledged as seminal in the history of garden design and not just in the United States. Lester Collins died more than thirty years later than Farrand, so his return to general acclaim in the field is now beginning.

### ***Comparison of Innisfree to Other Asian-Influenced Landscapes in America***

The ebb and flow of large-scale Chinese and Japanese influences on design in the West have been largely related to trade. Chinoiserie, the European interpretation of traditional Chinese and other East Asian design, was an important force during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries when trade with China increased dramatically. At that time, the Chinese influence on gardens was commonly seen in architectural details like benches and railings, or architectural follies like the Great Pagoda at Kew Gardens outside of London, England, designed by Sir William

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Chambers and completed in 1762.<sup>153</sup> After having been closed to the West for over two centuries, Japan began to trade globally in the mid-nineteenth century, and Japanese design began to strongly influence European and American design. The first public Japanese garden in America is the Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, created as part of the 1894 California Midwinter International Exposition. Another such example is The Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, widely regarded as one of the oldest and most important Japanese gardens in America. It was constructed in 1914-15 and is considered the masterwork of landscape designer Takeo Shiota (1881-1943). Born near Tokyo, Shiota came to the US in his late twenties aiming to build what he hoped would be "a garden more beautiful than all others in the world."<sup>154</sup>

After China reemerged as a global economic power in the 1980s, several important, specifically Chinese style public gardens were constructed in the United States. One of the earliest is the New York Chinese Scholar's Garden at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden which opened in 1999. Billing itself as an "authentic scholar's garden," it was built by a team of 40 artisans from Suzhou, China, and in partnership with City of New York, the Landscape Architecture Corporation of China, and the Metropolitan Chinese American Community.<sup>155</sup> The major Chinese-style public gardens built in the US since have used complex East-West-public-private partnerships utilizing designers, materials, and craftspeople from China to create gardens that could be in China.

Innisfree is notable as a Chinese-influenced garden in the United States both in time and specific inspirations. Walter and Marion Beck adopted the Wangchuan Villa of 8<sup>th</sup> century poet and painter, Wang Wei, as a model in the 1930s, a time when Japanese gardens, not Chinese gardens were being built across the country. Wang Wei's garden was also a large, rural estate that related closely to nature. The Chinese gardens currently being built in America all relate to the Suzhou style, which were created in urban courtyards. Yue Zhuang is an architect and garden historian who specializes in British and Chinese garden design, with an emphasis on cross-cultural contacts. After reading Lester Collins's book, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, she had some insightful comments:

Our contemporary imagination of Chinese garden is so much shaped by those Suzhou gardens. Elegant as they were, they were after all built as part of urban residences and are inevitably packed or even cramped. Bishu shanzhuang [in Chengde] is an imperial villa garden based in the natural landscape which integrates mountains, a river, and grassland north of Beijing. The Kangxi emperor also intended to express frugality and a Daoist idea of retirement. So the overall atmosphere is close to 'nature' – minimalism or a kind of spontaneity in construction. I guess I feel some comparison may be drawn between Innisfree and Bishu shanzhuang, in their approaches to the way of a garden, the ambiance they create. In particular, the use/selection of rocks at Innisfree is tasteful.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Beatrix Farrand, *Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks* (Georgetown: Dumbarton Oaks, 1980).

<sup>153</sup> Kew Gardens, "Great Pagoda." <https://www.kew.org/kew-gardens/attractions/great-pagoda>

<sup>154</sup> Brooklyn Botanic Garden, "Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden." [https://www.bbg.org/collections/gardens/japanese\\_garden](https://www.bbg.org/collections/gardens/japanese_garden)

<sup>155</sup> Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, "New York Chinese Scholar's Garden." <http://snug-harbor.org/botanical-garden/new-york-chinese-scholars-garden/>

<sup>156</sup> Noel Kingsbury, email to Katherine H. Kerin with excerpts from email to Kingsbury from Chinese garden historian Yue Zhuang, January 16, 2018.

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The desire to recreate or suggest the recreation of a traditional Chinese or Japanese garden typifies the Asian inspired gardens created in the United States. A description of the opening of Liu Fang Yuan (The Garden of Flowing Fragrance) at the Huntington Library reads, “The scene is almost right out of nineteenth century China, except for one thing: it’s in Los Angeles, and it’s 2008.”<sup>157</sup> Many such gardens, including the example in Snug Harbor, have been designed and built by individuals born in Japan or China, who thus work in their native idiom but on foreign soil. For an American garden started in the 1930s, Innisfree is highly unusual if not unique because this scholarly re-creation was never the intent. Walter Beck believed that “to imitate ancient Chinese gardens would merely advertise an emptiness of spirit and a lack of creativity. He did, however, believe that a working knowledge of the techniques of Chinese garden art would always be pertinent for solving his design problems.”<sup>158</sup>

For some reason, other arts were earlier to assimilate Asian aesthetics obliquely, suggesting an evocative similarity of feeling without the pastiche that still dominates Asian influenced American garden design. Excellent examples are the paintings of James McNeill Whistler and the architecture of McKim, Mead and White. Whistler (1834-1903) was deeply influenced by Japanese woodblock prints. This is most evident in the asymmetrical composition and spatial organization of his canvases beginning in the 1860s.<sup>159</sup> McKim, Mead and White’s Isaac Bell House, built between 1881-1883 in Newport, Rhode Island, is a masterpiece of shingle style architecture that at the same time seamlessly incorporates ideas from Japanese architecture. The architects introduced flexibility to the scale and degree of enclosure in the principal rooms by creating large hanging doors that – like Japanese shoji screens – could slide open or closed. They gave a nod to their Japanese inspiration by subtly notching the narrow wooden porch columns to suggest bamboo.

It was these other arts that brought Asian aesthetics to the attention of both Walter Beck and Lester Collins. In 1895, at the age of 31, Beck saw an exhibition of Japanese paintings in Cincinnati which had a profound influence on his own work as an artist. By 1921, while teaching at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, Beck had developed a new technique that was influenced by the calligraphy paintings of Asia and was the subject of his posthumously published book, *Painting With Starch: A Tempera Method*. Beck coated thick paper with a thin film of hot liquid starch and applied tempera paints with brushes of various sizes. He called it “frictionless art.” Like calligraphy painting, this work was necessarily gestural. Paint would float smoothly over the surface, but dry quickly. Beck could have been describing his approach to work on the garden at Innisfree as much as this painting technique, “One does not think in dimensions or restrictions; one is swayed by rhythms, and there is a willingness to follow wherever the experiment leads.”<sup>160</sup> It was eighteenth century Chinoiserie that first drew Lester Collins to Asian aesthetics. In his undergraduate thesis on the Picturesque (Romantic) style in English

<sup>157</sup> Chelsea Mason, “Growing to New Proportions: Chinese Gardens in the U.S,” *US-China Today*, June 20, 2008.

[http://www.uschina.usc.edu/w\\_usct/showarticle.aspx?articleID=11917&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](http://www.uschina.usc.edu/w_usct/showarticle.aspx?articleID=11917&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1)

<sup>158</sup> Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art: Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, “James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903).”  
[https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/whis/hd\\_whis.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/whis/hd_whis.htm)

<sup>160</sup> Walter Beck, *Painting with Starch: A Tempera Method* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1956), 6.



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garden design and theater set design, he wrote about Chinoiserie as being a relief from the sameness of Western design. That early work led to his meeting Walter and Marion Beck at a Harvard lecture on Chinese gardens, travelling throughout Asia for nearly two years between college and graduate school, and developing a network of important scholars and a lifelong passion for Chinese and Japanese gardens, art, and architecture.

Part of a later generation than Beck, Lester Collins's affinity for Asian aesthetics can be viewed as consistent with Modernist design, particularly landscape architecture in postwar America. Like other important mid-twentieth century architects and landscape architects, Lester Collins saw clear relationships between the ideas of Modernism and the aesthetics of Asia. These individuals, like Walter Beck, never wanted to create rote copies, but recognized that understanding the aesthetics would be "pertinent for solving...design problems."<sup>161</sup> Perhaps the first Modernist to have an in-depth experience in Japan, Bauhaus architect Bruno Taut moved from Germany to Japan where he lived from 1933 to 1936. Taut wrote three books on traditional Japanese culture and architecture, comparing its simplicity with Modernism, which books influenced, among others, his former Bauhaus colleague, Walter Gropius. Gropius made his first and only trip to Japan in 1954. Collins began actively studying and working with Asian design ideas in about 1937 when he started work on his undergraduate thesis. In depth of scholarship and understanding, Collins had much more in common with James Rose. After being expelled from Harvard, Rose was stationed in Okinawa, Japan during World War II, where he developed the design for his own home and garden, now the James Rose Center for Landscape Architectural Research and Design, in Ridgewood, New Jersey. He made many subsequent trips to Japan, and eventually became a Zen Buddhist. Like Collins, he adapted Japanese ideas and design gestures to create experiences of nature, not Japanese gardens. When a New Jersey client asked if he could create a Japanese garden for them, Rose famously responded, "Of course, whereabouts in Japan do you live?"<sup>162</sup>

### ***Comparison of Innisfree to the Bloedel Reserve, Bainbridge Island, WA***

Prentice Bloedel, founder and patron of the Bloedel Reserve, said, "Harmony, respect, tranquility – how many times these very words have come to mind as I have walked about the Reserve."<sup>163</sup> Harmony, respect, and tranquility describe Innisfree as well as the Bloedel Reserve, the one designed landscape in America most similar in feeling, intention, and inspiration to Innisfree. Prentice Bloedel ran his family logging business and was devoted to sustainable practices. In 1938, his became the first timber company to begin a reforestation program, planting seedlings on clear-cut land. This idea of cycles in nature became one of the key themes at the Bloedel Reserve. Prentice Bloedel wrote, "There is grandeur in decay: the rotten log hosting seedlings of hemlocks, cedars, huckleberries, the shape of a crumbling snag."<sup>164</sup> In 1951 when he retired, Prentice and Virginia Bloedel purchased a 1920s house on 150 acres. He spent the next three decades developing about 66 acres into a network of gardens, ponds, meadows, and wildlife habitats, set into expansive woodlands. This

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<sup>161</sup>Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 5.

<sup>162</sup> James Rose, "Whereabouts in Japan?" *James Rose Center*. <http://jamesrosecenter.org/about-james-rose/laterworks/>

<sup>163</sup> Prentice Bloedel, *Bloedel Reserve*. <http://bloedelreserve.org/>

<sup>164</sup> Prentice Bloedel, "Experience: The Woodlands," Bloedel Reserve. <http://bloedelreserve.org/experience/>

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parallels the scale and setting at Innisfree, as well as its embrace of nature and an ethos of environmental sustainability.

In the Pacific Northwest's Bloedel Reserve, which began to emerge in the 1950s, Asian influences were common and long had a widespread cross-Pacific impact on America's West Coast, to the point where it has permeated the regional vernacular. In the Pacific Northwest, where much of the climate and thus plant palette is similar to Japan, this is particularly true in gardens. Prentice Bloedel wrote: "We have been influenced by the Oriental attitude toward nature and the expression of it in Japanese and Chinese gardens. They have mastered the art of creating compositions using plants, earth and water, which induce visual and aesthetic emotions."<sup>165</sup>

All of the main ideas at the Bloedel Reserve belonged to Prentice Bloedel. He and his wife, however, engaged a series of prominent landscape architects who created different gardens with Prentice Bloedel, sometimes redesigning the earlier efforts of others. These designers include Thomas Church, Fujitaro Kubota, Richard Haag (Lester Collins's student at Harvard), and Iain Robertson. Both Haag and Robertson have long been on the landscape architecture faculty at the University of Washington. The Bloedels lived on site until 1986 but envisioned their property as a public garden intended "to provide refreshment and tranquility in the presence of natural beauty." They gifted the property to a family foundation they created along with a generous endowment, and in 1988 the Bloedel Reserve opened to the public. Virginia Bloedel died in 1989, and Prentice Bloedel in 1996 at the age of 95. Today, the public garden is virtually identical to the private garden created by the Bloedels.

Innisfree is comprised of a near-endless array of cup gardens wrapping around a lake and set in undeveloped woodland. The native woodland setting is equally important at the Bloedel Reserve, but there, the site is divided into twelve distinct gardens. These include the Japanese Garden, The Glen, the Moss Garden, the Reflection Garden, the Bird Marsh, and the Woodlands. While Innisfree and the Bloedel Reserve share an Asian aesthetic and an environmental ethos, enforced thrift played no role in the development of the Bainbridge Island garden. There are many naturalistic areas like at Innisfree, but there are also many high maintenance, high cost gardens. While much of the Bloedel Reserve subtly suggests Asian influences as at Innisfree, the Bloedels's Japanese Garden and related guest house, like the Japanese Hill-and-Pond Garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, uses overt elements of a traditional Japanese garden and was the creation of a designer born in Japan. It was designed by Fujitaro Kubota, who became a garden designer and nurseryman after emigrating to the United States in the early twentieth century. Before and after World War II, when he and his family here held in a Japanese internment camp, he created the 20-acre Kubota Garden in nearby Seattle that is now open to the public. In 1972, Kubota was awarded the Fifth Class Order of the Sacred Treasure by the Japanese government "for his achievements in his adopted country, for introducing and building respect for Japanese gardening."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> "Bloedel Reserve Japanese Garden," *Japanese Gardening*. <http://www.japanesegardening.org/site/bloedel-reserve-japanese-garden/>

<sup>166</sup> Kubota Garden Foundation, "History." <http://www.kubotagarden.org/about-us/history/>

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Landscape architect Richard Haag (b. 1923) did extensive work at the Bloedel Reserve. He studied with Lester Collins at Harvard, worked for Dan Kiley one summer during graduate school, went to Japan for two years afterwards on a Fulbright Fellowship at Collins's suggestion, and worked for Lawrence Halprin on his return. Thomas Church then suggested Haag to the University of Washington, where he founded the landscape architecture department. Mirroring Collins, Haag's roots in Modernism, his experiences in Japan, and his long immersion in rich native landscapes, in the latter's case of the Pacific Northwest, are clearly felt in his work.<sup>167</sup> (tclf.org Haag entry) Haag is widely celebrated for his innovative contributions to the field of urban ecological design, and his Gas Works Park in Seattle, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is perhaps the most famous example of this approach in the world.<sup>168</sup> At the Bloedel Reserve, one sees how he applies the same design inspirations and considerations for creating healthy ecosystems and wildlife habitat to nonurban settings. There, one feels the deep similarities between the work of Lester Collins and Richard Haag. On Bainbridge Island, Haag's designs include "the Moss Garden, the Garden of Planes, and the Reflection Garden, where he built on [Thomas] Church's initial design. Haag's bird marsh connects these and other gardens on site to the comparatively untouched woodlands to the south."<sup>169</sup> The latter has a direct correlation to the unifying chain of bog gardens Lester Collins created around Tyrrel Lake. Moss plays an important visual role in both gardens and underscores the link to Asian gardens. At the Bloedel Reserve, Haag created the Moss Garden by planting 275,000 Irish moss starts as a temporary cover until native mosses could establish and take over in the moist, temperate, moss-friendly climate of the region. At least 40 different species of moss, most regionally native, are now present. At Innisfree, there is a usually large and diverse moss population – much to the amazement and delight of visiting experts who have not yet conducted a careful tally of species. This is in a region not naturally draped in moss like the Pacific Northwest. Innisfree moss, like most elements in the garden, receives no irrigation, fertilizer, or the careful raking and weeding that Japanese moss gardeners provide. Most of the moss at Innisfree has appeared spontaneously. If there was a particularly nice moss in one part of the garden, Lester Collins might pick up a clump and try introducing it elsewhere, but such efforts were truly minimal. Both designers worked to celebrate native landscape features and native flora and fauna, but Collins was able to harness natural processes to literally create garden areas with the aesthetic qualities he desired.

At Innisfree, using Chinese and Japanese inspirations beginning in the early 1930s was extraordinary. Walter Beck and Lester Collins had productive collaboration at Innisfree when it was a private estate and funds were ample. Much of Innisfree today, however, took shape in the 1960s as Collins worked alone with a severely limited budget to create a public garden more than twice the size of the garden in the Beck era. While the Becks envisioned Innisfree as a public garden and study center and established the nonprofit Innisfree Foundation that has owned and managed the public garden since 1960, there were no funds left after the Becks's deaths with which to create the anticipated endowment. Innisfree survives today because Collins was able to develop innovative and remarkably economical garden design, construction and maintenance techniques. As noted

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<sup>167</sup> Laurie Olin, "Richard Haag." *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*. <https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/richard-haag?destination=search-results>

<sup>168</sup> Thaisa Way, *The Landscape Architecture of Richard Haag* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015)

<sup>169</sup> "Bloedel Reserve," *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*. <https://tclf.org/landscapes/bloedel-reserve>

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horticulturist and author Noel Kingsbury wrote, “Innisfree is a very special place, not just in an emotional sense, but in terms of its place in garden history...Perhaps most important...is the management style, which could be described as minimalist or naturalistic, with a low level of highly skilled intervention instead of the higher levels of less-skilled intervention to be found more conventionally in gardens or designed landscapes. This intervention style is particularly interesting as it does appear as if it has been part of the way the garden has been managed for some considerable time. Given the current interest in sustainable, naturalistic, or ecological styles of management of gardens and designed landscapes this makes Innisfree a particularly important project.”<sup>170</sup>

### ***Later History of Innisfree***

Innisfree Foundation, the nonprofit stewardship organization that still owns and operates Innisfree, was a start-up, without the support of any established institution. Lester Collins ran the foundation and public garden for over three decades during which time he was able to develop the extraordinary garden design and remarkably innovative maintenance practices. He was, however, maintaining a busy landscape architecture practice throughout that period so he focused on what he knew, which was not organizational development. Very little happened in the way of fundraising, and an occasional lecture by Collins was the extent of any public programming. In the early 1970s, Innisfree sold approximately 740 acres surrounding the 185-acre garden core to Rockefeller University for use as a scientific research station and nature preserve, allowing the foundation some small measure of financial security. While a small portion of this property included the gate house and entrance road associated with the former estate, both historic designed resources, the remainder was and remains largely as it was during the period of significance, undeveloped forest land.

Following Collins’s death in 1993, his widow, Petronella Collins, ran the garden for nearly twenty years until her death in 2012 at the age of 92. Their son, Oliver, then oversaw the garden through 2017. Through deep love, strong will, and painstaking thrift, Petronella and Oliver Collins kept Innisfree Foundation going, and maintained the carefully crafted yet seemingly effortless aesthetics of Lester Collins’s masterwork. Their focus remained on the garden, however, not on expanding its audience or funding base.

Since 2012, Innisfree Foundation has slowly begun to expand and enhance its efforts. Innisfree Foundation has welcomed new trustees with a wide range of relevant professional expertise, including public horticulture, preservation, and development. A landscape curator was hired, the first staff person who was not part of the maintenance crew. Her charge is to tell the rich story of this unique landscape through public programs and outreach, and carefully guide garden maintenance drawing on decades of professional experience and a grounding in Lester Collins’s vision and processes at Innisfree. The result has been a deeper and broader understanding of the significance of this remarkable landscape and a renewed outpouring of interest in Innisfree around the world.

In 1997, Garrett Eckbo wrote:

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<sup>170</sup> Noel Kingsbury, email to Innisfree Landscape Curator Katherine H. Kerin, May 7, 2018.

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Now, as I bow out, a new age is forming the next century...Architects and engineers seem heavily focused on increasingly rationalized construction...landscape architects and conservation people are focused on green open space within, around, and between cities, and the salvation of the natural landscape – whatever is left of it...This is all well and good but it misses the chief point of contention in the world landscape – the gap between structural and landscape visions...The only way to save the world from the implications of this split attitude is to merge the two visions into a social/cultural/natural approach. That is the task of the coming century.<sup>171</sup>

Innisfree answers Eckbo's call with its innovative novel ornamental ecosystems and Collins's informed yet intuitive design. A stunning synthesis of art and science created in deep partnership with nature, the extraordinary experience that is Innisfree provides a timely vision for sustainable landscapes that provide sustenance to our very souls.

Innisfree continues to illustrate its national significance as Lester Collins's masterwork and a significant, intact example of large-scale modern landscape architecture. Collins was lauded during his lifetime for his work and influence as an educator and professional landscape architect. His work at Innisfree, completed over 55 years, reflects the philosophies and practices that formed his approach to landscape and demonstrates his personal and professional growth over his career as a landscape architect. The blend of Romantic and Modernist aesthetics, Chinese and Japanese design philosophy and imagery, and the emphasis on environmentally and economically sustainable design resulted in Innisfree's distinctive composition reflecting the careful work of a lifetime.

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<sup>171</sup> Garrett Eckbo, "Afterword," in *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living*, ed. Mark Treib and Dorothee Imbert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 179.

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Name of Property

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Innisfree  
Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
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10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 227.20  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>603849</u> Easting	<u>4624801</u> Northing	3	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>603618</u> Easting	<u>4623310</u> Northing
2	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>604499</u> Easting	<u>4623655</u> Northing	4	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>603636</u> Easting	<u>4624582</u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary for Innisfree has been drawn to encompass the land at the core of Marion Beck's estate which was partially co-designed by Lester Collins and the Becks during their lifetimes and transformed into a public garden by Lester Collins during the second half of the twentieth century. The National Register boundary for Innisfree includes the gate complex and entrance road, which historically served as the entrance to the Beck estate, and the central property which Lester Collins developed from a private estate garden into an expansive, varied public garden. While Beck's estate was historically comprised of 925 acres of land, much of it was undeveloped during her lifetime. The central portion of the estate, which included both designed landscapes and buildings, became the focus of a public garden at Innisfree after Marion Beck's death. To help assure the financial sustainability of the public garden, Innisfree Foundation sold 740 acres of undeveloped land to Rockefeller University during the early 1970s for its Center for Field Research in Ethology and Ecology.

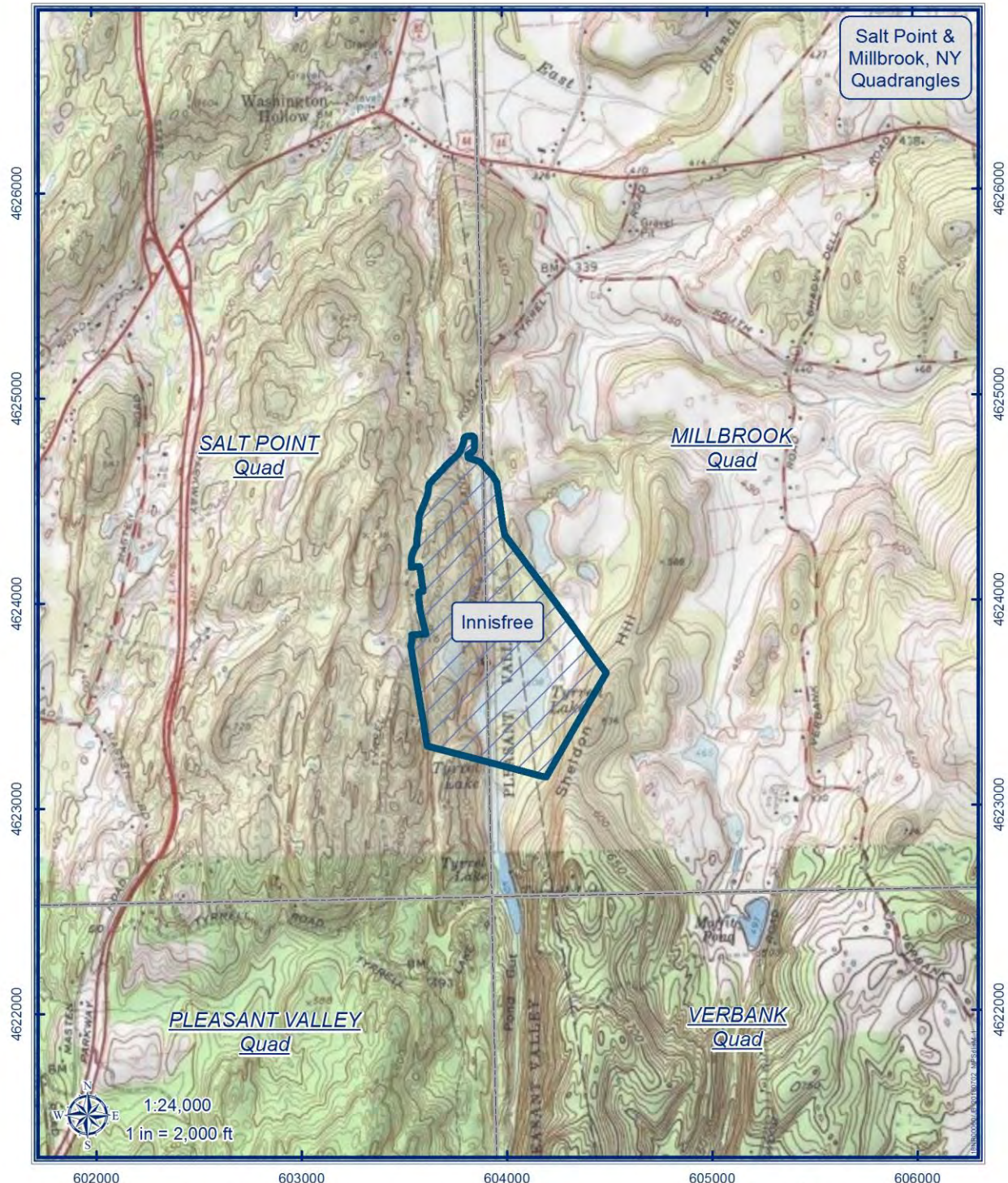
The central 185 acres at the heart of the original estate, which comprise nearly all the historic features associated with the Beck estate and the public garden, remain as Innisfree garden. The gatehouse and part of the entrance road are located on a second parcel; while this is now under separate ownership, it was part of Innisfree during the period of significance during both the property's use as a private estate and a public garden. Only part of the parcel associated with the gate complex has been included in the National Register boundary. The land north and west of the gate house has been excluded due to residential and institutional development by the current owner, Rockefeller University; the boundary follows Tyrell Road on the west, the historic driveway associated with the gatehouse on the north and east, and runs southeast, including Mud Pond, to connect to the eastern boundary of the parcel. These two areas comprise 227.20 acres and include all the known designed features associated with the estate and public garden.

Innisfree  
Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
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Innisfree  
Millbrook, Dutchess Co., NY

362 Tyrrel Road  
Millbrook, NY 12545



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



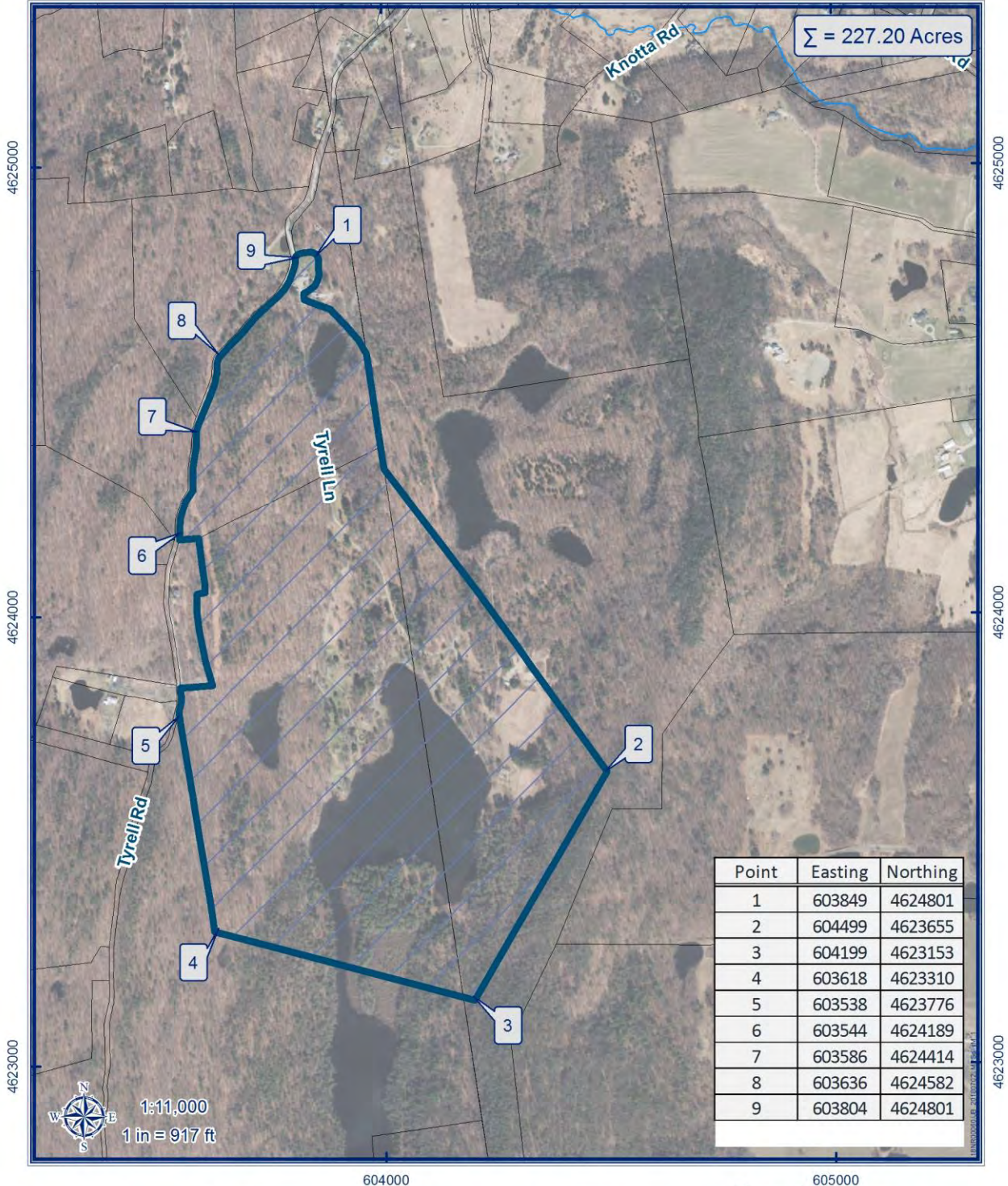
**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**  
Division for Historic Preservation

**Innisfree**  
 Name of Property

**Dutchess County, NY**  
 County and State

**Innisfree**  
 Millbrook, Dutchess Co., NY

**362 Tyrrel Road**  
 Millbrook, NY 12545



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: North American 1983  
 Units: Meter



Innisfree  
Name of Property

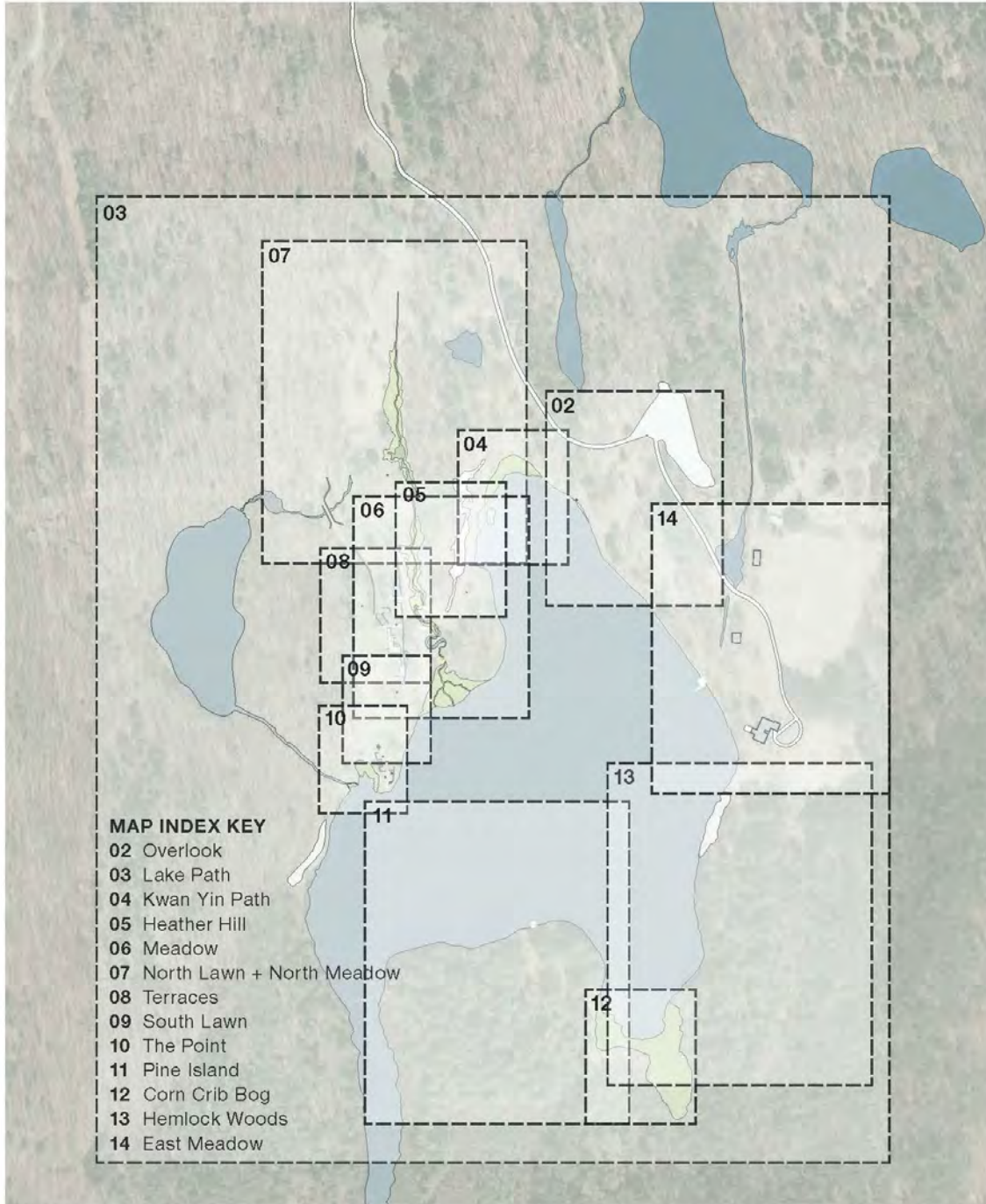
Dutchess County, NY  
County and State



**MAP INDEX 01**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

Innisfree  
Name of Property

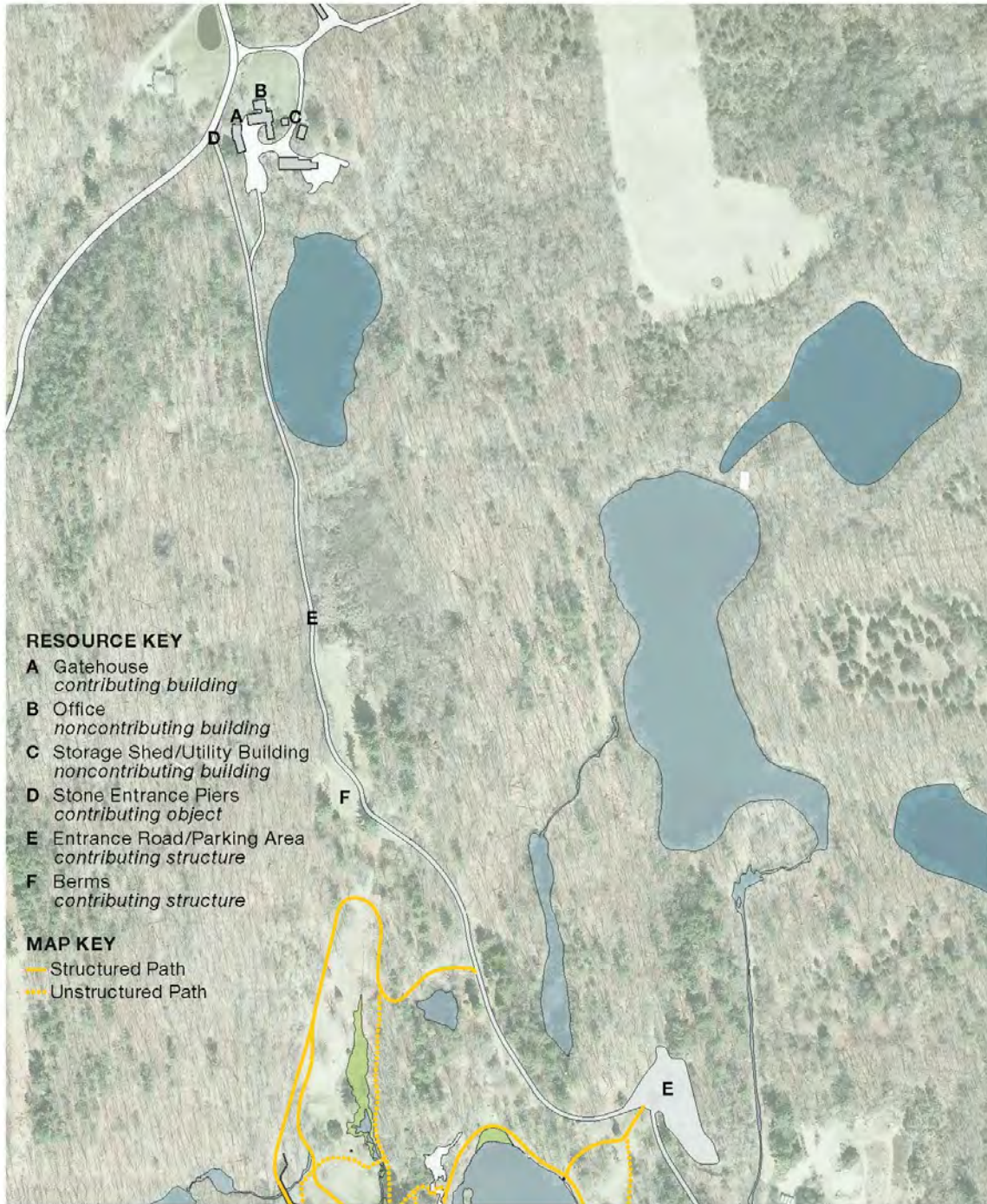
Dutchess County, NY  
County and State



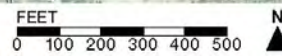
**MAP INDEX 02**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

Innisfree  
Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
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**KEY FEATURES MAP 01: ENTRY SEQUENCE**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



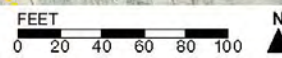


Innisfree  
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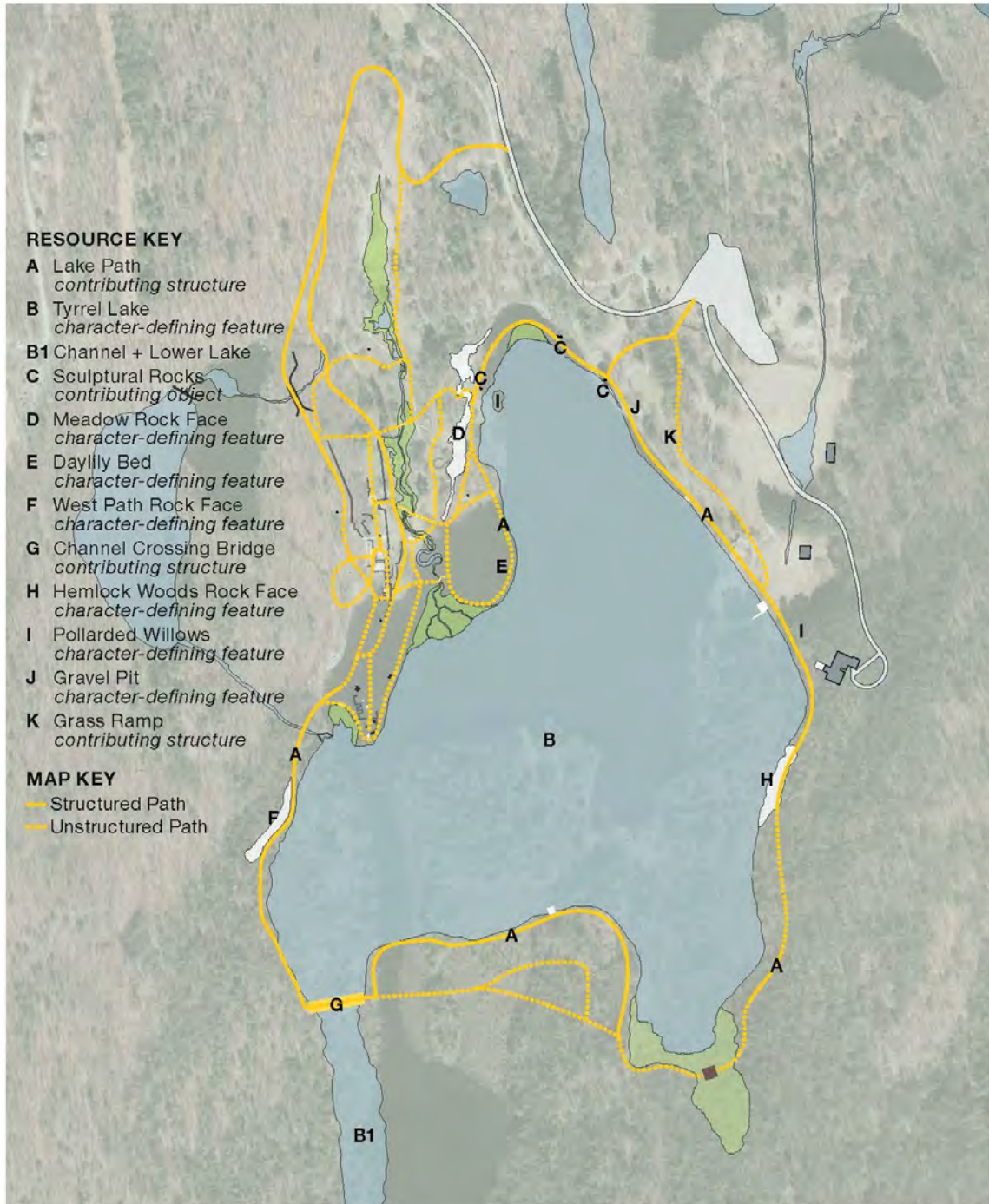


**KEY FEATURES MAP 02: OVERLOOK**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

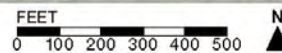


Innisfree  
Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
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**KEY FEATURES MAP 03: LAKE PATH**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

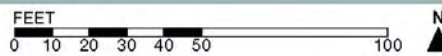


Innisfree  
Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
County and State



**KEY FEATURES MAP 04: KWAN YIN PATH**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

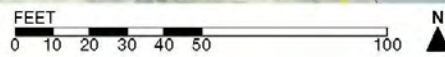


Innisfree  
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**KEY FEATURES MAP 05: HEATHER HILL**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



**Innisfree**  
 Name of Property

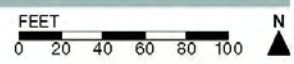
**Dutchess County, NY**  
 County and State



- RESOURCE KEY**
- A The Meadow  
*character-defining feature*
  - B Lakeside Bog Garden  
*character-defining feature*
  - C Grove of Clipped Pears  
*character-defining feature*
  - D Sculptural Rock  
*contributing object*
  - E Yin and Yang Rocks  
*contributing object*
  - F Dumpling Knoll  
*character-defining feature*
  - G Meadow Stream  
*contributing structure*
  - G1 Bog Gardens
  - G2 Spring House Bog
  - G2 Yarimizu
  - H Zig Zag Bridge  
*contributing structure*
  - I Stone Slab Bridge  
*contributing structure*
  - J Stepping Down Bridge  
*contributing structure*
  - K Corduroy/Timber Bridge  
*contributing structure*

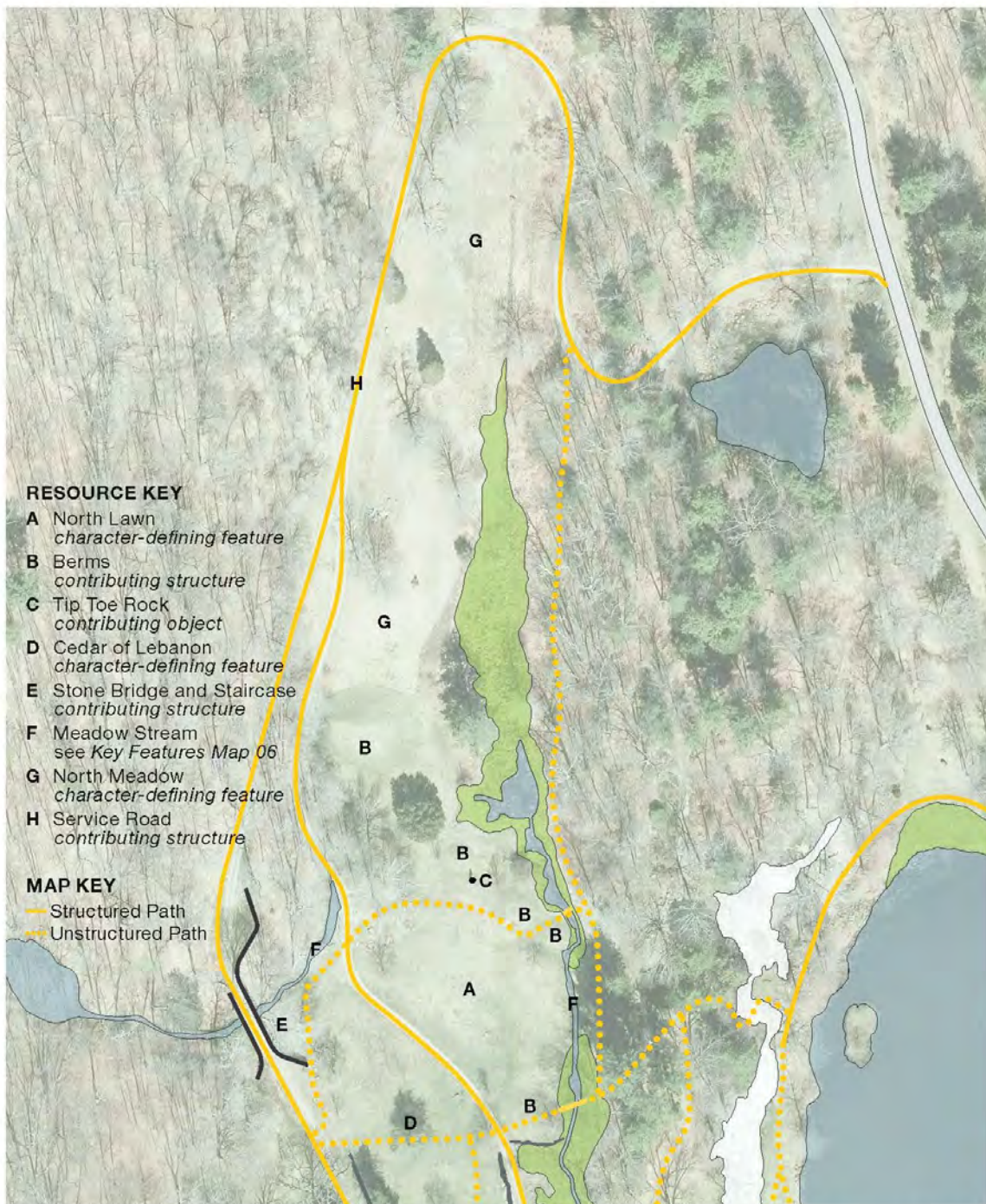
- MAP KEY**
- Structured Path
  - ⋯ Unstructured Path

**KEY FEATURES MAP 06: THE MEADOW**  
 INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



Innisfree  
Name of Property

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County and State

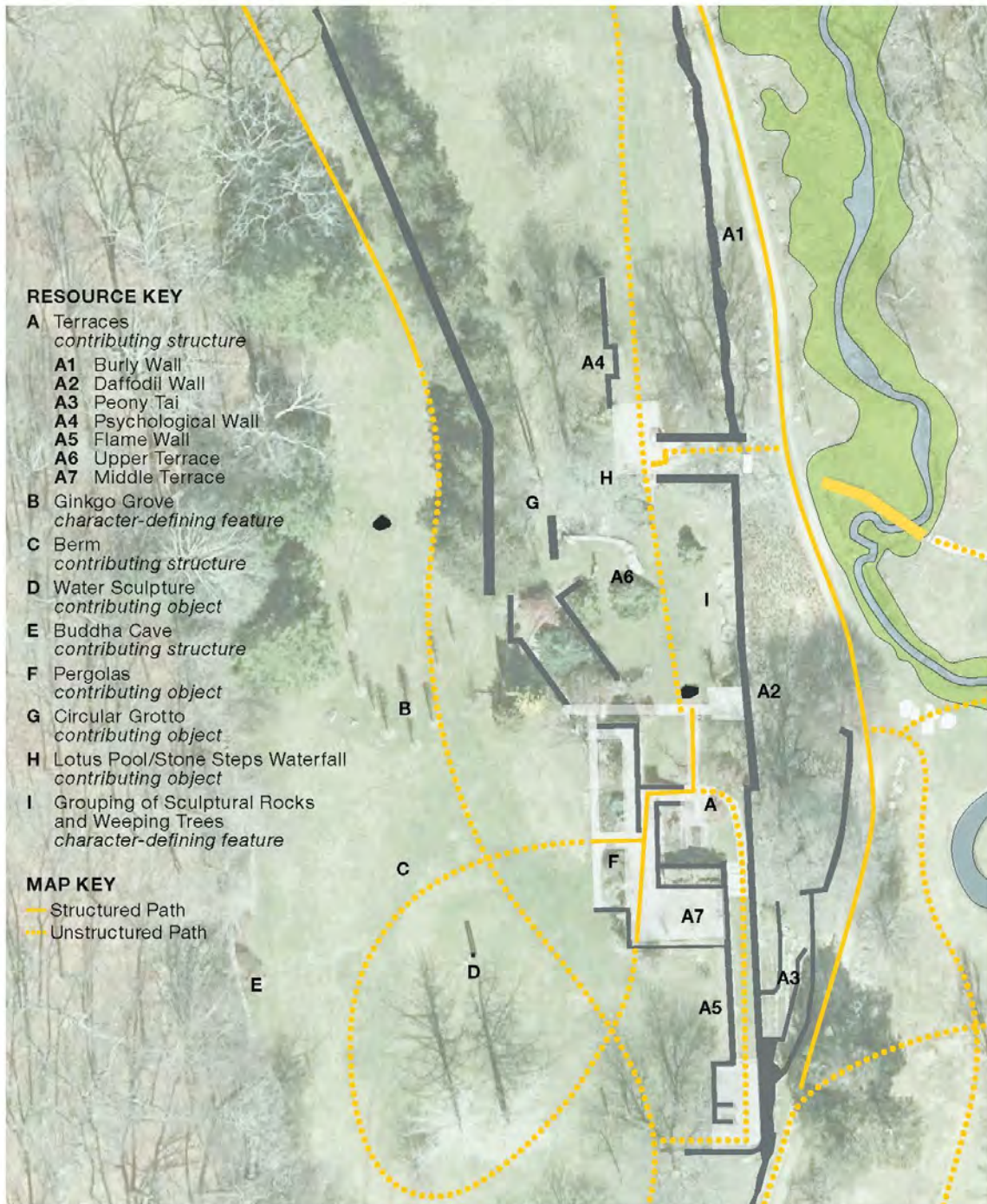


**KEY FEATURES MAP 07: NORTH LAWN + NORTH MEADOW**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

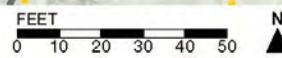


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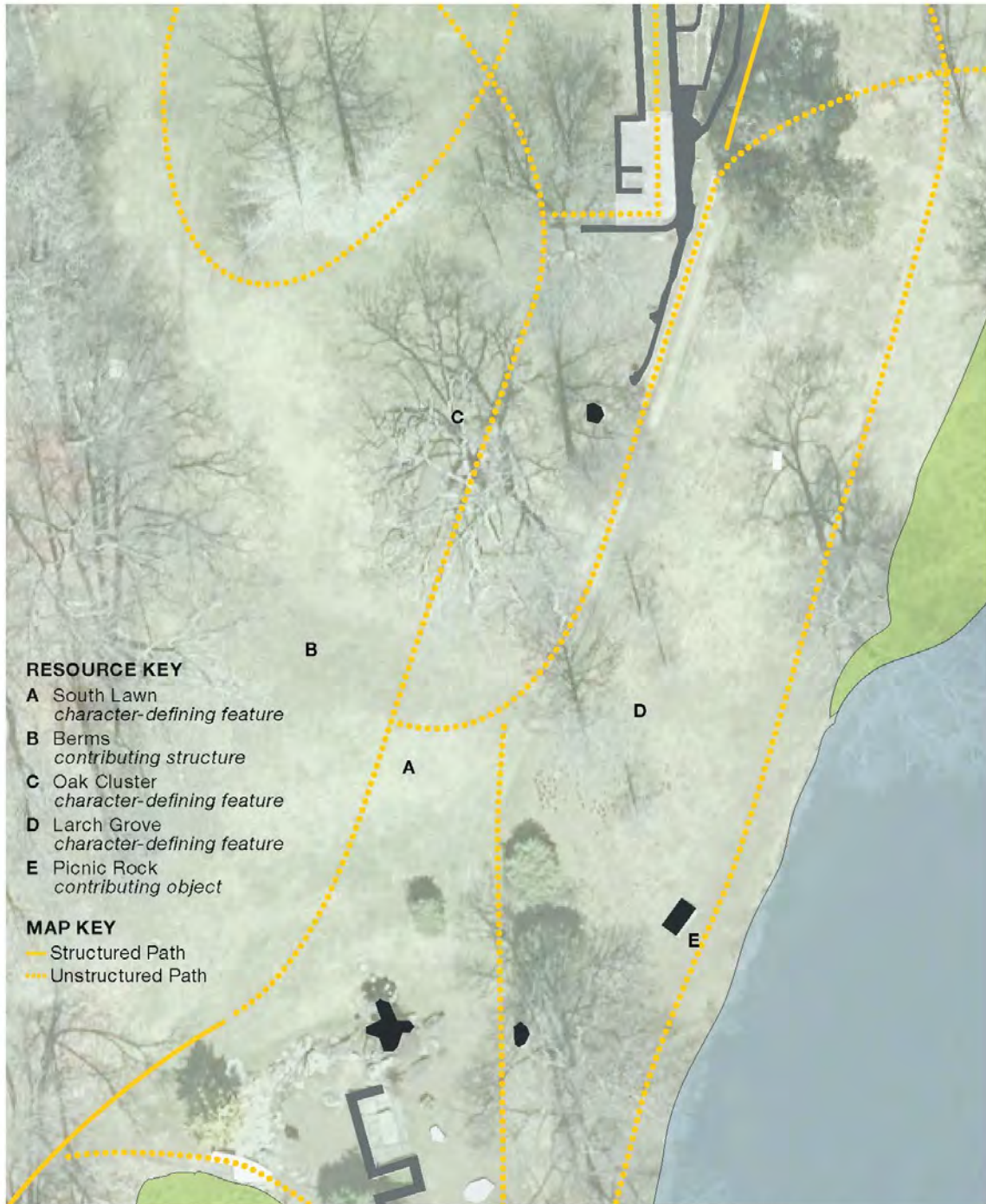


**KEY FEATURES MAP 08: TERRACES**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



Innisfree  
Name of Property

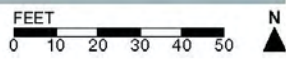
Dutchess County, NY  
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- RESOURCE KEY**
- A South Lawn  
*character-defining feature*
  - B Berms  
*contributing structure*
  - C Oak Cluster  
*character-defining feature*
  - D Larch Grove  
*character-defining feature*
  - E Picnic Rock  
*contributing object*

- MAP KEY**
- Structured Path
  - ..... Unstructured Path

**KEY FEATURES MAP 09: SOUTH LAWN**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



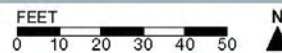


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**KEY FEATURES MAP 10: THE POINT**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



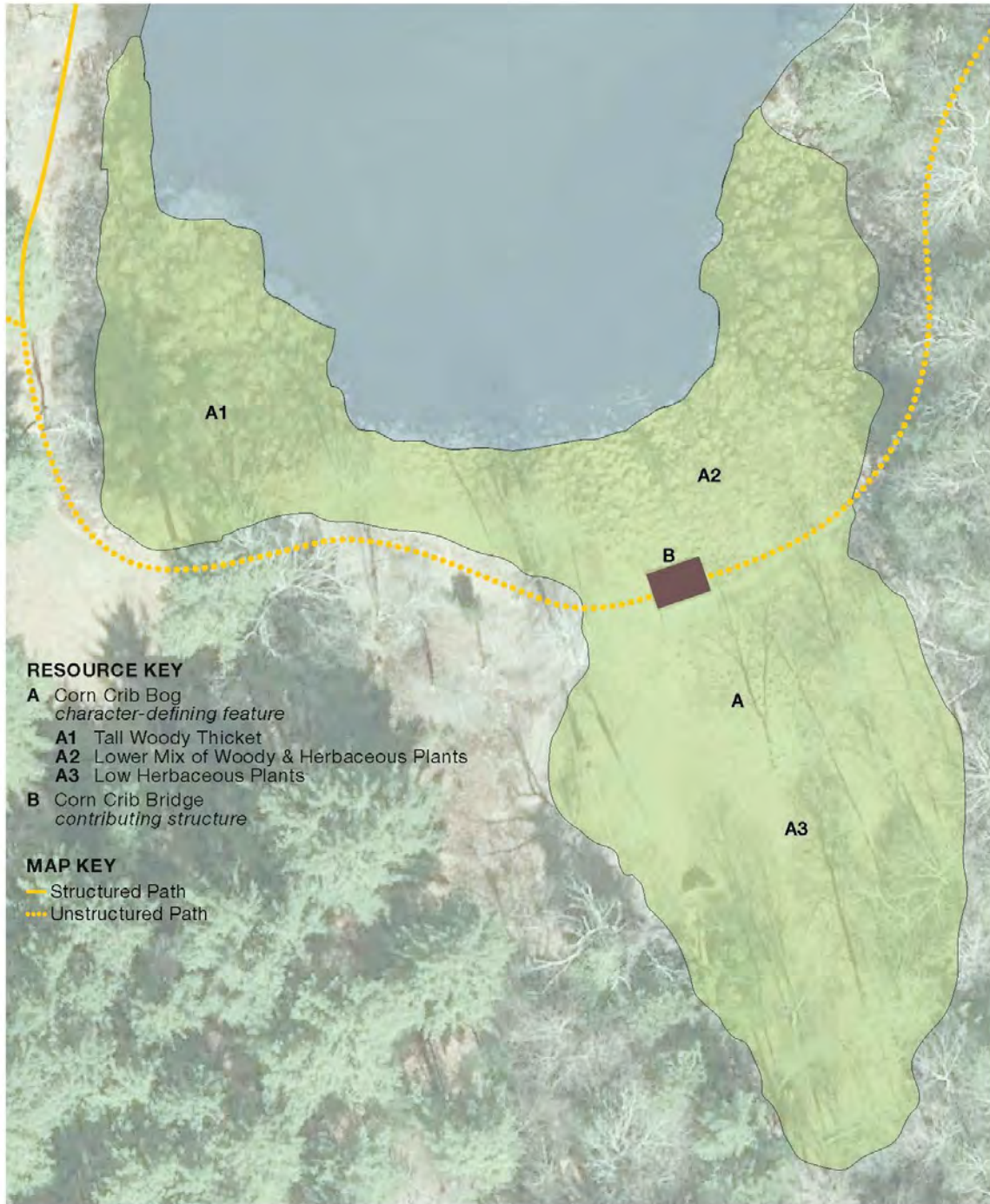
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Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
County and State

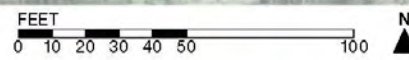


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Name of Property

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**KEY FEATURES MAP 12: CORN CRIB BOG**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

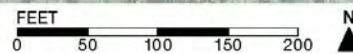


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**KEY FEATURES MAP 13: HEMLOCK WOODS**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

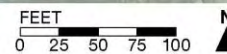


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**KEY FEATURES MAP 14: EAST MEADOW**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



Innisfree  
Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY  
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kate Kerin and Jean Phifer (edited by Jennifer Betsworth, NY SHPO)  
organization Innisfree Foundation date July 2019  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Innisfree

City or Vicinity: Millbrook

County: Dutchess State: NY

Photographer: Katherine H. Kerin (except where noted)

Date Photographed: August 2018 (except where noted)

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

**ENTRY SEQUENCE**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0001.tif**

- Photo Location Map 01, Photo Location 0001
- Key Features Map 01 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Gatehouse (A), Stone Entrance Piers (D), and Entrance Road (E) from Tyrrel Road looking southeast.

Innisfree  
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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0002.tif**

- Photo Location Map 01, Photo Location 0002
- Key Features Map 01 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Entrance Road (E) and Berms (F) from northern edge of Innisfree Foundation property looking south.

**OVERLOOK**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0003.tif**

- Photo Location Map 02, Photo Location 0003
- Key Features Map 02 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Overlook (A) looking south.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0004.tif**

- Photo Location Map 02, Photo Location 0004
- Key Features Map 02 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Overlook (A), Innisfree chairs, and Tyrrel Lake looking southwest toward Pine Island, Dumpling Knoll (with the Daylily Bed), the Meadow, and the Meadow Rock Face.

**LAKE PATH**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0005.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0005
- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Lake Path (A) from Overlook and Parking Area to Tyrrel Lake (B), and Sculptural Rock (C) looking southwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0006.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0006
- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) with Sculptural Rocks (C) along the Kwan Yin Path looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0007.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0007
- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) along the Kwan Yin Path with Row of Dawn Redwoods, Mist Waterfall and the East Rock Garden looking west.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0008.tif**

Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0008

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) with the Corduroy/Timber Bridge connecting Heather Hill (left), North Lawn (right) and the Meadow (center) looking south.

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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0009.tif**

Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0009

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) stepping stones to Stepping Down Bridge over Meadow Stream in the Meadow with the Daffodil Wall and the Terraces in the background looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0010.tif**

Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0010

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) along the West Walk Rock Face (F) looking south.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0011.tif**

Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0011

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) along west walk looking south.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0012.tif**

Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0012

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) and Channel Crossing Bridge (G) looking east.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0013.tif**

Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0013

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View to south down Channel & Lower Lake (B1) of Tyrrel Lake (B) from Channel Crossing Bridge (taken by Oliver Collins, c. 2015).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0014.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0014

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) of upper path on Pine Island looking east from near the Channel Crossing Bridge.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0015.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0015

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) through East Meadow with some of remaining Pollarded Willows (I) as well as the Columnar Maples, Air Spring, and Docks along shore.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0016.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0016

- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) in East Meadow with Yin and Yang Rocks along shore looking



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south toward Hemlock Woods, Pine Island, and West Walk Rock Face (F).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0017.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0017
- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) looking north below Grass Ramp with Meadow Rock Face visible to left across Tyrrel Lake (B).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0018.tif**

- Photo Location Map 03, Photo Location 0018
- Key Features Map 03 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lake Path (A) and Gravel Pit (J) looking southeast.

**KWAN YIN PATH**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0019.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0019
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View Wisteria Arch (A) along the Kwan Yin Path looking north, June 2019.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0020.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0020
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of the Kwan Yin Bog (B) where heavy rains left standing water, and panorama across Lake (left to right) of East Meadow, Hemlock Woods Rock Face, Corn Crib Bog, Pine Island, and Dumpling Knoll in Meadow looking southwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0021.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0021
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Willow Island (G) and Pollarded Willows looking south.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0022.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0022
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Mist Waterfall (C) looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0023.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0023
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of East Rock Garden (D) looking southwest.

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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0024.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0024
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Detail of East Rock Garden (D) looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0025.tif**

- Photo Location Map 04, Photo Location 0025
- Key Features Map 04 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lip Rock Waterfall (E — large horizontal rock in center)  
looking north (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2016).

**HEATHER HILL**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0026.tif**

- Photo Location Map 05, Photo Location 0026
- Key Features Map 05 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Heather Hill (A) up Stone Steps (B) from Kwan Yin Path looking southwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0027.tif**

- Photo Location Map 05, Photo Location 0027
- Key Features Map 05 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Heather Hill (A), Sculptural Rocks (C), and Berm (D) looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0028.tif**

- Photo Location Map 05, Photo Location 0028
- Key Features Map 05 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Heather Hill (A), Sculptural Rocks (C) and the top of West Rock Garden (E) looking south.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0029.tif**

- Photo Location Map 05, Photo Location 0029
- Key Features Map 05 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Heather Hill (A) Looking east from North Lawn to West Rock Garden (E), the Spring and Stone Steps (F) with Meadow Stream flowing under Corduroy/Timber Bridge.

**THE MEADOW**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0030.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0030
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A) looking southeast from Heather Hill and top of Meadow Rock Face to sculpted shore with Lakeside Bog Garden (B), Yin and Yang Rocks (E), Grove of Clipped Pears (C), and Dumpling Knoll (F) in early spring (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2016)

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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0031.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0031
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A) looking south between Lakeside Bog Garden (B) and Meadow Rock Face.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0032.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0032
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A) looking east over south end of Meadow Rock Face and Innisfree chairs between Grove of Clipped Pears (C) around Sculptural Rock (D) and Dumpling Knoll (F) toward Yin and Yang Rocks (E) (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2016).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0033.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0033
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A) looking north across Stepping Down Bridge (J), Meadow Stream (G) and Bog Gardens (G1) toward the Burly Wall on the Terraces and the Spring House Bog (G2) (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2014).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0034.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0034
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A), the Meadow Stream (G), the Yarimizu (G3), east toward Dumpling Knoll (F), and the Yin and Yang Rocks (E).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0035.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0035
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A) looking southeast between Dumpling Knoll (F) and Bog Gardens (G1) and west end of the Zigzag Bridge (H).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0036.tif**

- Photo Location Map 06, Photo Location 0036
- Key Features Map 06 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Meadow (A) with the Meadow Stream (G), Zigzag Bridge (H), and Dumpling Knoll (F) in early snow (taken by Oliver Collins, c. 2012).

**NORTH LAWN + NORTH MEADOW**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0037.tif**

- Photo Location Map 07, Photo Location 0037
- Key Features Map 07 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of North Lawn (A), with Berms (B), Tiptoe Rock (C), and beginnings of Meadow Stream looking north toward the North Meadow (G).

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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0038.tif**

Photo Location Map 07, Photo Location 0038

- Key Features Map 07 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of North Lawn (A) with the Cedar of Lebanon (D), sculptural berms, and beginnings of Psychological Wall and the Terraces looking west.

**TERRACES**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0039.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0039
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), Water Sculpture (D), Ginkgo Grove (B), on the Upper Terrace (A6), and the Grouping of Sculptural Rocks and Weeping Trees (I) on the Middle Terrace (A7) looking southwest (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2012).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0040.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0040
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of the Peony Tai (A3) in the Terraces (A) looking west. If the Water Sculpture had been on it would have been visible.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0041.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0041
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), Pergolas (F) on Upper Terrace (A6) looking south toward Berm (C) and Ginkgo Grove (B).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0042.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0042
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A) looking north from Upper Terrace (A6) to Middle Terrace (A7) with Grouping of Sculptural Rocks and Weeping Trees (I) toward the North Lawn (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2007).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0043.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0043
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of of Sculptural Rocks and Weeping Trees (I) on the Middle Terrace (A7) looking north.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0044.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0044
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), Water Sculpture (D) on Upper Terrace (A6) above Daffodil Wall (A2) looking southwest across Meadow Rock Face (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2011).

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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0045.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0045
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), Circular Grotto (G) in Psychological Wall (A4) on Middle Terrace (A7) looking west (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2008).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0046.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0046
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), Buddha Cave (E) on the Upper Terrace (A6).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0047.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0047
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), the Middle Terrace (A7) with Lotus Pool (H) looking northwest toward the Circular Grotto (G) (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2013).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0048.tif**

- Photo Location Map 08, Photo Location 0048
- Key Features Map 08 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Terraces (A), Stone Steps Waterfall (H) from Meadow to Middle Terrace (A7) looking southwest.

**SOUTH LAWN**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0049.tif**

- Photo Location Map 09, Photo Location 0049
- Key Features Map 09 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of South Lawn (A) with Oak Cluster (C), Larch Grove (D), and Berms (B), looking south toward The Point (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2013).

**THE POINT**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0050.tif**

- Photo Location Map 10, Photo Location 0050
- Key Features Map 10 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of The Point (E), with Row of Oaks (D), Sculptural Rock (C), and the top of Stone Mountain (A) looking south (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2011).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0051.tif**

- Photo Location Map 10, Photo Location 0051
- Key Features Map 10 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of The Point (E), looking east over Stone Mountain (B) through Stone Mountain (A) toward Row of Oaks (D) (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2012).

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**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0052.tif**

- Photo Location Map 10, Photo Location 0052
- Key Features Map 10 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of the Point (E) looking south down stone steps to (left to right) Turtle Rock (F), Dragon Rock (G), and Owl Rock (H), with Pine Island and the Bat House across Tyrrel Lake in background (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2012)

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0053.tif**

- Photo Location Map 10, Photo Location 0053
- Key Features Map 10 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of The Point (E) looking west over Lotus Bog (I) toward Hemlock Woods and the Hemlock Woods Rock Face across Lake (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2015).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0054.tif**

- Photo Location Map 10, Photo Location 0054
- Key Features Map 10 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of The Point (E) looking northeast toward the Stone Mountain (A) over the Lotus Bog (I).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0055.tif**

- Photo Location Map 10, Photo Location 0055
- Key Features Map 10 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

The Overflow Waterfall (J) looking west after snow melt (taken by Oliver Collins, c. 2015).

**PINE ISLAND**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0056.tif**

- Photo Location Map 11, Photo Location 0056
- Key Features Map 11 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of White Pine Stand (A) looking east toward Fountain Jet (C) (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2015).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0057.tif**

- Photo Location Map 11, Photo Location 0057
- Key Features Map 11 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Fountain Jet (C) and Berms (B) in White Pine Stand (A) looking south (taken by Oliver Collins c. 2015).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0058.tif**

- Photo Location Map 11, Photo Location 0058
- Key Features Map 11 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Dock (E) on Pine Island looking west.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0059.tif**

- Photo Location Map 11, Photo Location 0059
- Key Features Map 11 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of shoreline walk with Birdhouse on Pine Island looking east.

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### **CORN CRIB BOG**

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0060.tif**

- Photo Location Map 12, Photo Location 0060
- Key Features Map 12 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Tall Woody Thicket (A1) in the Corn Crib Bog (A) looking north toward Tyrrel Lake.

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0061.tif**

- Photo Location Map 12, Photo Location 0061
- Key Features Map 12 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Lower Mix of Woody and Herbaceous Plants (A2) in the Corn Crib Bog (A) looking north toward Tyrrel Lake.

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0062.tif**

- Photo Location Map 12, Photo Location 0062
- Key Features Map 12 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Looking east at the Corn Crib Bridge (B) in the Corn Crib Bog (A) with the Lower Mix of Woody & Herbaceous Plants (A2) on the left and Low Herbaceous Plants (A3) on right.

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0063.tif**

- Photo Location Map 12, Photo Location 0063
- Key Features Map 12 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Corn Crib Bog (A), the Corn Crib Bridge (B), and Low Herbaceous Plants (A3) looking east (June 2019).

### **HEMLOCK WOODS**

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0064.tif**

- Photo Location Map 13, Photo Location 0064
- Key Features Map 13 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Old Growth Hemlocks (A) looking northeast.

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0065.tif**

- Photo Location Map 13, Photo Location 0065
- Key Features Map 13 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Old Growth Hemlocks (A) looking north.

#### **NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0066.tif**

- Photo Location Map 13, Photo Location 0066
- Key Features Map 13 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of Old Growth Hemlocks (A) on top of Hemlock Woods Rock Face looking northwest over Tyrrel Lake.

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**EAST MEADOW**

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0067.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0067
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Yin and Yang Rocks (B) in the East Meadow (I).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0068.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0068
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of East Meadow (I), Columnar Maple Grove (D), and Smoke Bush Grove (C) obscuring view of Cottage (A).

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0069.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0069
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of East Meadow (I), Columnar Maple Grove (D), Pollarded Willows, and Air Spring (H) in Lake looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0070.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0070
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Southeast Cottage façade (A) showing two building volumes obscured by Smoke Bushes (C), and Columnar Ginkgos (E), with Weeping Beech Cluster (F) visible above Cottage chimney, looking northwest.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0071.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0071
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

View of East Meadow (I), Docks (J), looking northeast.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0072.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0072
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Garage (K) looking east.

**NY\_Dutchess Co\_Innisfree\_0073.tif**

- Photo Location Map 14, Photo Location 0073
- Key Features Map 14 (*letters below correlate with key features labeled on this map*)

Barn (L) looking east.

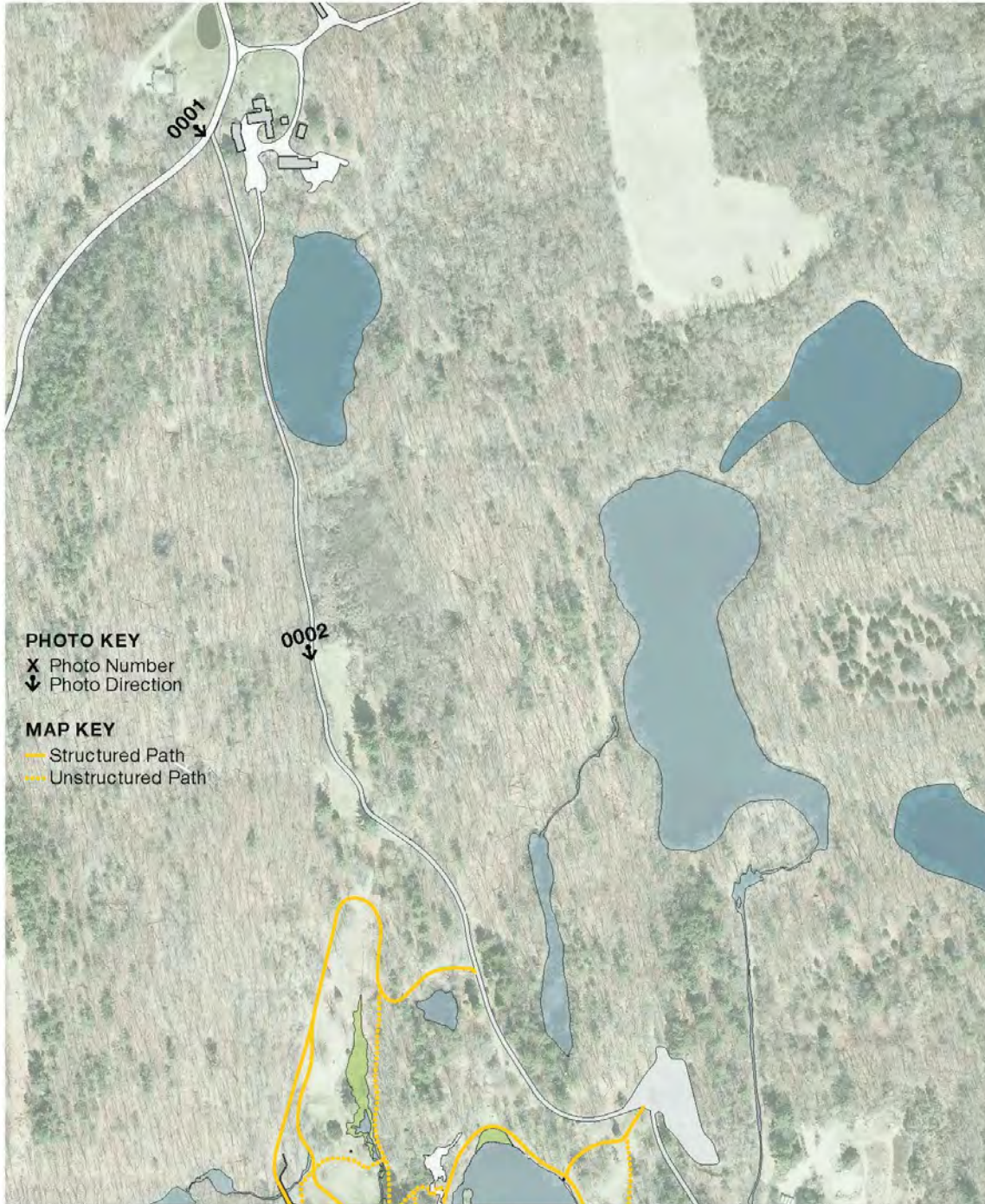
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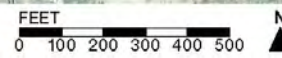


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**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 01: ENTRY SEQUENCE**  
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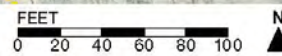


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**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 02: OVERLOOK**  
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**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 03: LAKE PATH**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

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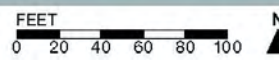
**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 05: HEATHER HILL**  
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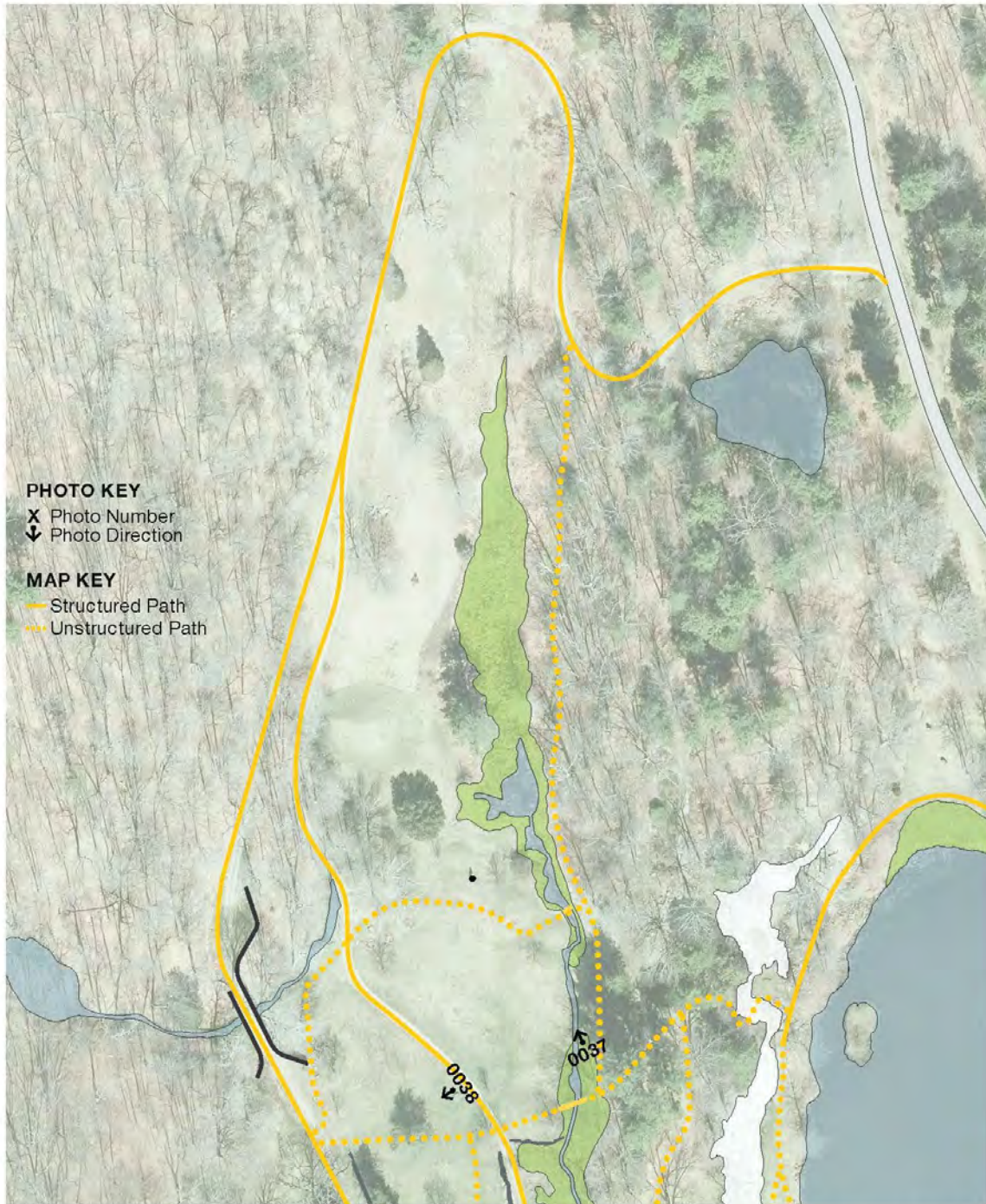


**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 06: THE MEADOW**  
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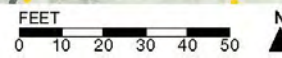
**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 07: NORTH LAWN + NORTH MEADOW  
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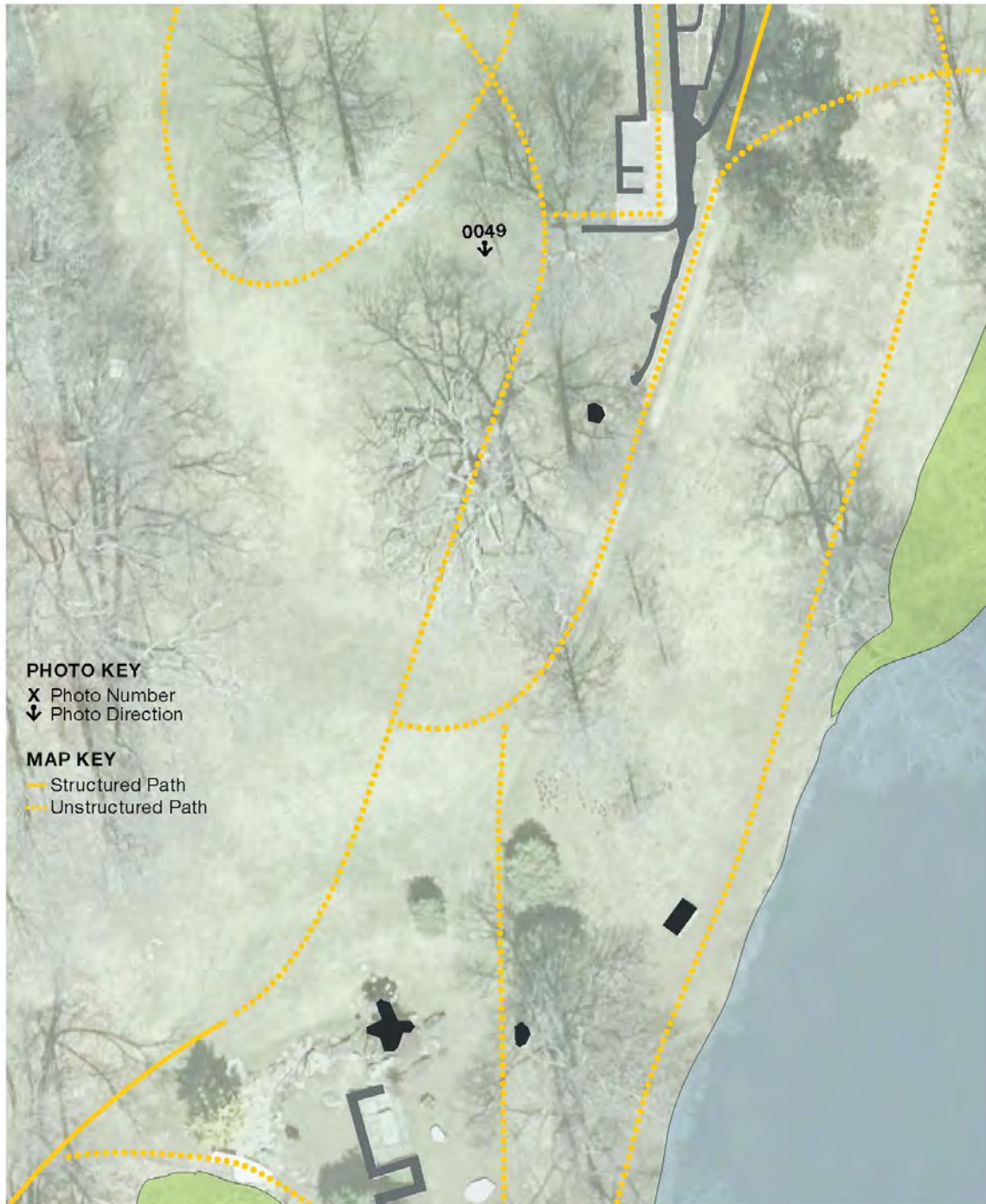
**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 08: TERRACES**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY



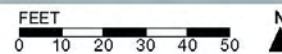


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**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 09: SOUTH LAWN**  
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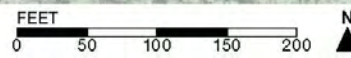
**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 10: THE POINT**  
INNISFREE, DUTCHESS COUNTY, NY

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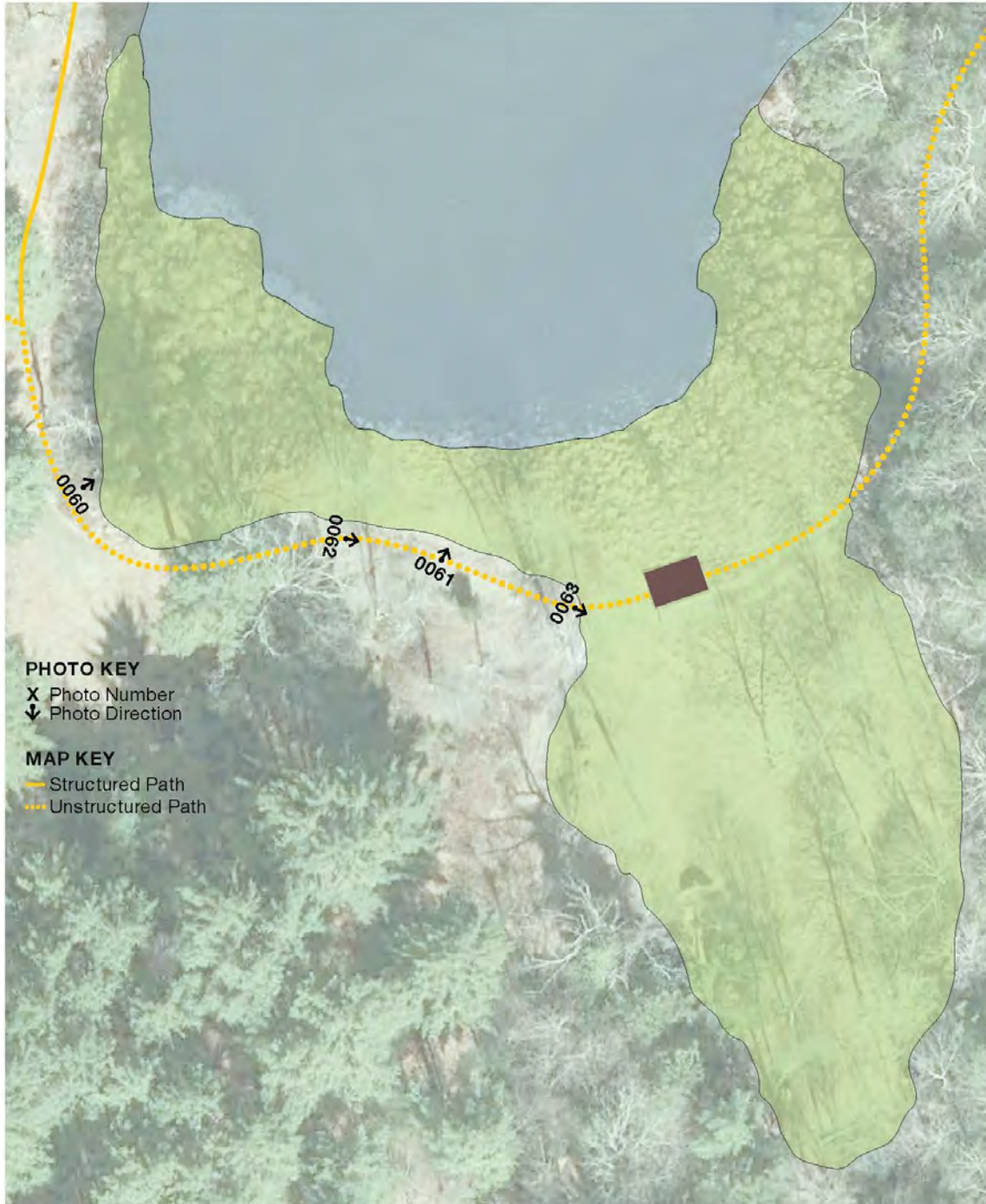


**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 11: PINE ISLAND**  
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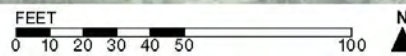


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**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 12: CORN CRIB BOG**  
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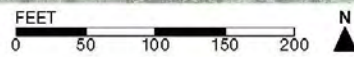


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**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 13: HEMLOCK WOODS**  
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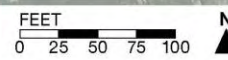


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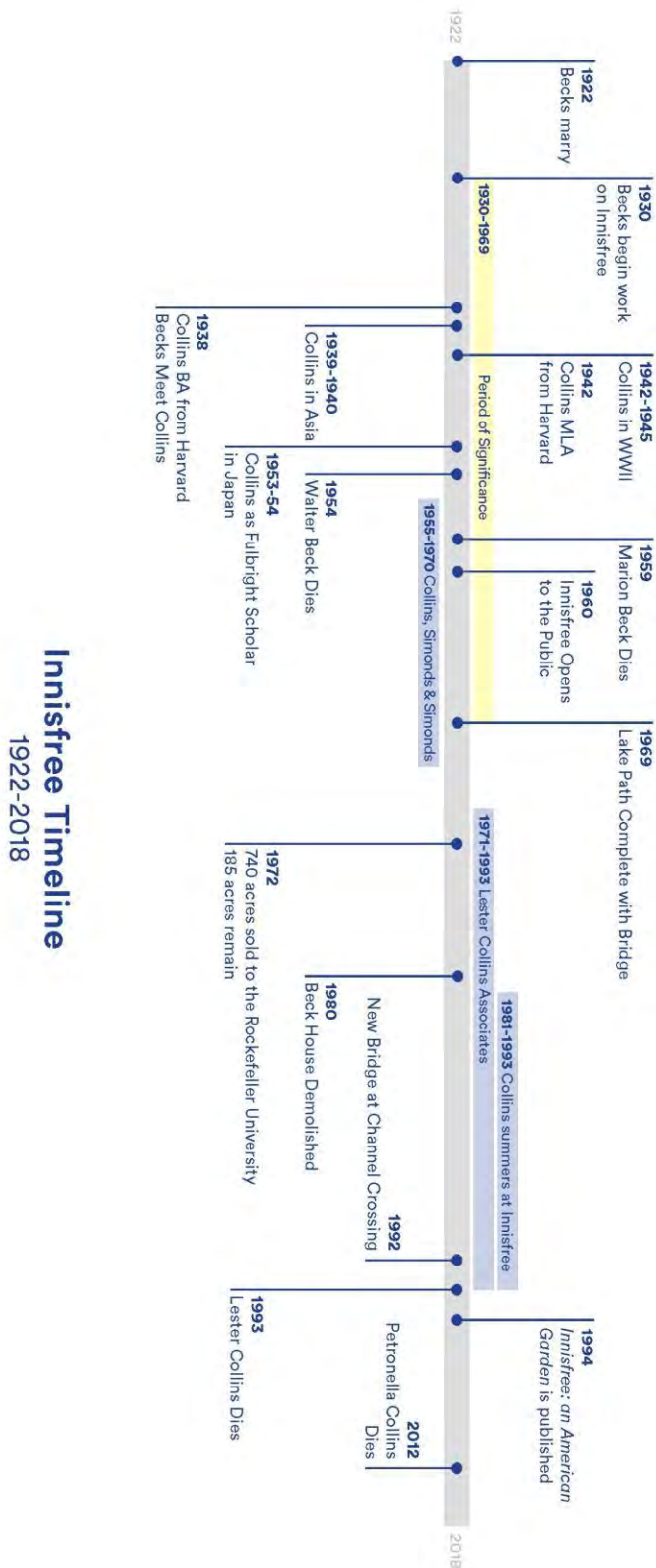


**PHOTO LOCATION MAP 14: EAST MEADOW**  
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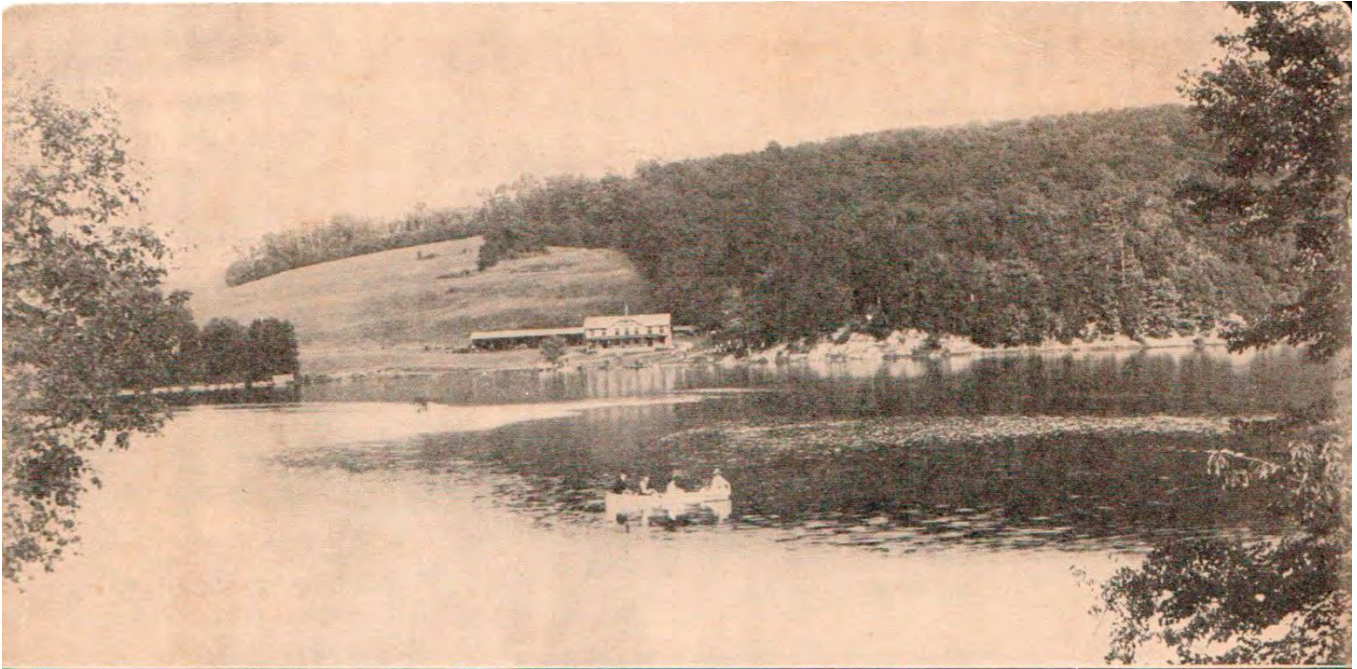
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Upper Lake, Looking East

TYRREL LAKE

TYRREL PRINT, 206-208 FULTON ST., N. Y

Postcard, ca. 1900. Innisfree Foundation archives.



Innisfree

Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY

County and State



Upper Lake, Looking West

TYRREL LAKE

*Aug. 17, '06.*  
TYRREL PRINT, 206-208 FULTON ST., N. Y.

*This is where we spent the day.  
Have you been there this summer?  
J. L. V. W.*

Postcard, ca. 1900. Innisfree Foundation archives.

Innisfree

Name of Property

Dutchess County, NY

County and State



Lester Collins, ca. 1970. Innisfree Foundation archives.



**INNISFREE GARDEN**  
SEASON  
MAY 7 TO OCTOBER 20  
CLOSED MON & TUES  
EXCEPT LEGAL HOLIDAY  
WED, THURS & FRI 10-4  
SAT, SUN & LEGAL HOLIDAY 11-3  
ADMISSION  
WED-FRI \$2  
SAT, SUN & LEGAL HOLID \$3  
INNISFREE GARDEN PATROLLED WHEN CLOSED



































































































































































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/18/2019      Date of Pending List: 8/9/2019      Date of 16th Day: 8/26/2019      Date of 45th Day: 9/3/2019      Date of Weekly List: 9/6/2019

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL                | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape           | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource     | <input type="checkbox"/> Period                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG                 |  |

Accept       Return       Reject      9/3/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



## THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

20 NAZARETH WAY | PO BOX 608, GARRISON, NY 10524 | 845.424.6500/6501FAX | GARDENCONSERVANCY.ORG

Jennifer Betsworth  
Historic Preservation Specialist  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation  
Peebles Island State Park  
P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, New York 12188

September 12, 2018

Dear Ms. Betsworth:

On behalf of the Garden Conservancy, a national nonprofit dedicated to saving and sharing outstanding American gardens, I am pleased to voice strong support for Innisfree's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Innisfree is a superb example of 20<sup>th</sup> century American garden design, a full expression of its time that in the hands of landscape architect Lester Collins was made timeless. The design and the remarkable feeling of the place have long drawn praise from designers, horticulturists, and garden writers from around the world. Collins' innovative and sustainable practices are just now beginning to attract the attention they deserve. As an organization that provides technical assistance to existing public gardens and private gardens considering making a transition to public status, these maintenance practices at Innisfree offer a compelling case study for astonishingly cost effective management, even of such a large designed landscape. These practices have also maintained the integrity of the historic landscape over many decades.

Inclusion on the National Register will help make Innisfree more widely known and will make a wider pool of funding available for its preservation and interpretation. This remarkable landscape is not only an important landmark in American history and design, but it should be an important teaching tool for the general public and other public gardens, as well as designers, horticulturists, and scholars just at a time when multiculturalism, 20<sup>th</sup> century design, and environmental and financial sustainability are recognized as key concerns.

The Garden Conservancy enthusiastically endorses the listing of Innisfree on the National Register of Historic Preservation.

Very truly yours,

Pamela Governale  
Director of Preservation



September 6, 2018

Jennifer Betsworth, *Historic Preservation Specialist*  
**NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation**  
Peebles Island State Park  
P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, New York 12188

Dear Ms. Betsworth:

I am writing on behalf of The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) to enthusiastically support Innisfree's nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Landscape architect Lester Collins, Innisfree (his masterwork), and several of his other projects have long been profiled in TCLF's database of significant cultural landscapes and designers, as well as in its print publications and scholarly volumes. For example, Collins is one of the "Pioneers of American Landscape Design" included in TCLF's 2009 hardbound volume, *Shaping the American Landscape* (University of Virginia Press). Moreover, Innisfree and Pennsylvania Avenue (where Collins designed 29 small parks for the National Park Service) were both included on TCLF's 2012 *Landslide* list: Landscape and Patronage. Collins is also featured in the forthcoming publication, *Shaping the Postwar Landscape*, which will be released later this year (also by University of Virginia Press). A contemporary of Dan Kiley, James Rose, and Garrett Eckbo, Collins was an exceptional twentieth-century designer whose work deserves widespread recognition.

I first visited Innisfree in June 2015 at the request of the Trustees of Innisfree Foundation, and I was awestruck. I spent a weekend exploring the large-scale site, working with Innisfree trustees, staff, and key stakeholders to place this masterfully designed landscape in its historical context, to underscore its national and international significance, and to develop strategies to preserve and interpret what is an iconic project in Collins' career canon. As part of this consultation, I produced a White Paper outlining my findings and recommendations, which advised pursuit of National Register and, ultimately, National Historic Landmark designations for Innisfree. Now, some three years after putting these recommendations forward, I am pleased (and honored) to support the nomination for Innisfree's listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This is an important, foundational step toward further securing Collins' and Innisfree's well-deserved places in the canon of American landscape-architectural design, and toward expanding the public awareness and understanding of a significant cultural legacy.

Yours sincerely,

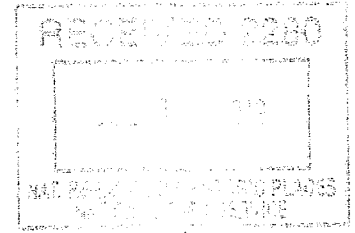
Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR  
President + CEO  
The Cultural Landscape Foundation



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ERIK KULLESEID**  
Acting Commissioner



14 July 2019

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following three nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

James Baldwin Residence, New York New York County  
James H. Case III and Laura Rockefeller Case House, Van Hornesville, Herkimer County  
Innisfree, Millbrook, Dutchess County

The James Baldwin House nomination was prepared by the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project team as part of New York's Underrepresented Properties Grant for LGBT properties in New York City. As part of our reporting requirements for this grant, a slightly earlier version of the nomination was submitted to NPS and reviewed by Jim Gabbert of your office. Jim provided positive comments on this draft, which was subsequently revised and presented to the State Review Board.

The New York SHPO would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Barbara Wyatt of your office, who provided substantial advice and guidance to the consultant who prepared the nomination for Innisfree, an important example of modern landscape design. Barbara helped the consultant to conceptualize and organize the draft and provided instructions on counting landscape features.

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office