



BEATRIX FARRAND
Garden at Bellefield

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites
Hyde Park, New York



photo 1927

The Beatrix Farrand Garden at Bellefield

Beatrix Farrand is recognized as one of this nation's finest landscape architects. In 1912 she designed the enclosed formal garden and surrounding wild garden for Thomas and Sarah Newbold at Bellefield, their estate in Hyde Park, New York. A walk through its gates affords a glimpse of Farrand's virtuoso talents and a view into the great country house era of turn-of-the-century America.

Beatrix Farrand (1872 - 1959): Landscape Gardener

Farrand's work defined the American taste in gardens throughout the first half of the 20th century when her clients included the period's most powerful individuals and institutions. Unfortunately, few of Farrand's many creations survive today. Notable exceptions include the Rockefeller's Eyrie Garden in Maine, large portions of the Princeton and Yale campuses, and Dumbarton Oaks, in Georgetown, indisputably one of the great gardens of the world.

Farrand (née Beatrix Cadwalader Jones) claimed to spring from "five generations of gardeners" and felt her career as a landscape gardener was inevitable. There was no formal training program for female landscape architects at the time, so she drew from her surroundings. She grew up in a house filled with the greatest

minds of the day, including Edith Wharton (Farrand's aunt, just 10 years her senior), Henry James, Henry Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, John LaFarge, and John Singer Sargent. Her family garden at Reef Point, in Bar Harbor, Maine, became a laboratory. Farrand was the only student of Charles Sprague Sargent, the first Director of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, living with his family, working at the Arnold, and touring with "the Chief." She then traveled widely in Europe before opening her New York office in 1893. In 1899, at the age of 27, Farrand became one of 11 founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Farrand's Hyde Park garden, her earliest extant residential design, has remained largely intact. It was created almost two decades into her professional career, the same year she began work at Princeton, married Max Farrand, and turned 40. Though a relatively small commission, the Beatrix Farrand Garden at Bellefield is a fully mature work consistent in complexity and depth with Farrand's most famous projects.

The Newbolds at Bellefield

The Newbolds were members of old New York society. Their main residence was a McKim, Mead & White-designed townhouse in New York City, where winters were spent. They summered in Europe, Maine, Newport, and Manchester-by-the-Sea. Like many of their peers, they came to the Hudson

Valley primarily in the spring and fall. A descendant of Thomas Jefferson and a member of the Livingston clan, Thomas Newbold was a cousin of Edith Wharton (née Edith Newbold Jones) and Beatrix Farrand.

In 1908, the Newbolds called upon their friend, Charles Follen McKim, to remodel their 18th century home in Hyde Park. As that project neared completion, their cousin, then Beatrix Jones, was asked to design the garden that now extends out from the living room on the south end of the house that was added by McKim, Mead & White. Bellefield is the only known pairing of works by arguably the most famous designers of that era. Because their designs are so closely interwoven, house and garden should be read as one composition.

During this period, the flower garden was an essential element of the ideal Hudson Valley villa, along with landscaped parks, stables and carriage trails, boat houses for sailing and ice boating, as well as farms and greenhouses to supply fresh flowers and comestibles. These gardens were often elaborate complexes, and Bellefield is a good example. In addition to Farrand's enclosed garden and wild garden, there was a rose garden surrounding a Byzantine capital, a long lilac and espaliered fruit tree allée, a boxwood parterre, and a kitchen garden. The park-like grounds were further planted with a variety of fine specimen trees.

A Connection to the Past

Turn-of-the-last-century Americans sought to ground their new nation (and often new wealth) by mimicking age-old European designs. The palatial home of Frederick Vanderbilt just to the north is a dramatic example, but the Farrand Garden is little different. The garden plan, a series of axial links between house and landscape, follows ideas based in classical antiquity that were re-popularized during the Renaissance and then echoed through ensuing centuries. In addition to classical references, Farrand also linked this garden to the Hudson Valley and the Newbolds' family history there. A grove of Black Locust trees and the rough field stone walls and edging reference the early Dutch homesteads in the region so loved by the Newbolds' neighbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Throughout time, many gardens have told stories, and this idea of narrative is another historical device Farrand used in Hyde Park. Bellefield is a classic portrayal of the union between man (architecture) and nature. The strongly architectural garden elements correspond directly to components of the house, visually linking the two. These motifs are then simplified and naturalized in a series of transformations best understood looking down the length of the garden from terrace beside the house.

Stone walls become a clipped hemlock hedge, and elaborate mixed beds become a single plane of lawn. A wild garden of flowering trees, shrubs, and bulbs surrounds and obscures the geometric enclosure, creating a final link between the formal garden and the larger landscape, where traces of the hand of man all but disappear.

A New Garden Style

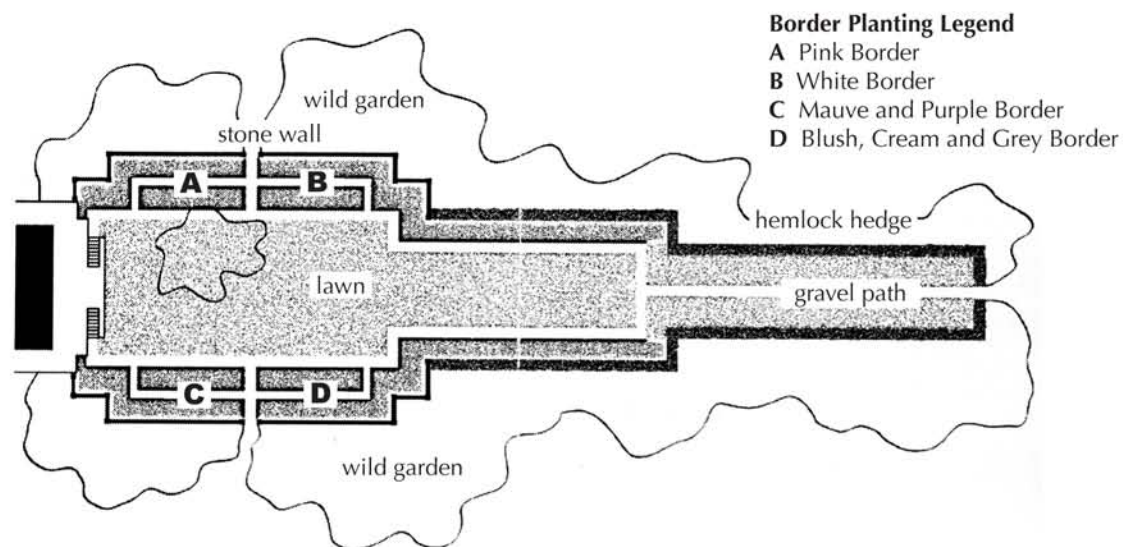
While Farrand's designs reflected a sophisticated understanding of history, her work was also highly innovative. The late 19th century saw a radical change in the use of plants, and the range of plants in use. The Arts and Crafts ideology of self-reliance and its more naturalistic aesthetic prompted a move away from the Victorian bedded out parterres of brightly colored annuals and tender plants. A new style emerged that relied more on hardy plants in compositions that considered texture, form, and bloom sequence in addition to color, and softer, more sophisticated palettes were coming into fashion. This was also an age of great plant hunting expeditions, and many specimens that were "discovered" then have become staples in the garden today. Due, in part, to her friends and relations, Beatrix Farrand was at the center of these horticultural and stylistic innovations, and was one of the first landscape gardeners to utilize these new ideas and new plants.

The original planting plans for Bellefield have been lost, but plans Farrand created in the same period for a nearby garden with similarly sized formal borders (William A. Read residence, Harrison, NY, plans from 1909-1910), have been used as the basis for this restoration in Hyde Park. Following the Read plans,

the beds at Hyde Park are arranged by color scheme, including pink; white; mauve and purple; and the unusually lovely blush, cream and grey. Early, black and white photographs of Bellefield show the same painterly drifts of flowers set off against the vine-draped stone walls and dark hemlock hedges that garden visitors see today.

Reviving the Farrand Garden

A gift from the Newbold family, Bellefield is now part of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. The National Park Service (NPS) charged the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association (BFGA) with restoration and ongoing maintenance of this outstanding American garden. Founded in 1994 by a small group of garden lovers, BFGA is a non-profit organization fueled by countless hours of volunteer effort, with assistance from a talented horticulturist and enthusiastic NPS staff members. Regular financial support comes from BFGA members and special events, augmented by occasional grants received from the Garden Club of America (Bellefield was twice a runner-up for the GCA's Founders Fund Award), the Jane W. Nuhn Charitable Trust, the Federally-funded Challenge Cost Share program, the National Park Foundation, and the Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties, which maintains a close and supportive affiliation. BFGA is dedicated to preserving the Beatrix Farrand Garden at Bellefield, and educating the public about this influential American designer and her rich garden legacy. Enhanced interpretive materials for the Farrand Garden, including the creation of audiovisual pieces, and restoration of the wild garden are BFGA's current long-range goals.



Directions to Bellefield

New York State Thruway: take Exit 18 (New Paltz). Take Route 299 East to Route 9W South. Follow signs to Roosevelt/Mid-Hudson Bridge. After crossing, follow overhead signs to Route 9 North. Bellefield is on the left side of Route 9 about 7 miles north of the Mid-Hudson bridge. Enter at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Home and Presidential Library and follow signs to Bellefield.

The Taconic Parkway: From the south, take the Route 55 (Poughkeepsie) exit. Follow Route 55 West to Route 9 North. Bellefield is about six miles north on Route 9. Enter at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Home and Presidential Library and follow signs to Bellefield.



The Beatrix Farrand Garden Association

P.O. Box 315
Hyde Park, New York 12538
www.beatrixfarrandgarden.org

The Beatrix Farrand Garden at Bellefield is open, free of charge, from dawn until dusk, seven days each week.



BEATRIX FARRAND GARDEN ASSOCIATION

Membership Acceptance

Yes, I want to help preserve the Beatrix Farrand Garden at Bellefield. Please enroll me as a member of the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association at the following level:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Individual \$35 | <input type="radio"/> Fellow \$250 |
| <input type="radio"/> Family/Organization \$50 | <input type="radio"/> Patron \$500 |
| <input type="radio"/> Sustainer \$100 | <input type="radio"/> Benefactor \$1000 |

name: _____

address: _____

city: _____

state/zip: _____

telephone: _____

email: _____

I would like information on becoming a volunteer.

As a member, you will receive our newsletter and advance notice of special events. Your gift of support is fully tax-deductible, and your generosity is most appreciated. Please make your check payable to the:

Beatrix Farrand Garden Association

PO Box 315

Hyde Park, New York 12538

www.beatrixfarrandgarden.org

Your contribution may result in additional support for the Beatrix Farrand Garden at Bellefield, as many companies will match gifts made by their employees. Please contact your employer for further information.