

What 7th and 8th Grade Students will learn is **the History and Restoration of Untermyer Gardens** **A walking and talking tour with photos through the Gardens**

"Greystone", the 99 Room Mansion House on 113 acres in NW corner of Yonkers, NY

The construction of Greystone began in 1862. It was built by John T. Waring, owner of the world's largest hat manufacturing company located in Yonkers, NY.

Waring and his family lived at Greystone from 1868-1879. He unfortunately went bankrupt resulting in a lower-priced sale of the estate.

The second owner: Samuel Tilden, purchased the estate in 1879-1899. Tilden was a retired Governor of NY who in 1876 was presidential candidate vs. Rutherford Hayes. He won the popular vote but lost the electoral vote.

Tilden had a strong interest in horticulture and had Lord & Burnham Greenhouses installed on the property. He died in 1886.

The third owner was Samuel Untermyer. In 1899 at the peak of his career he acquired the Greystone estate for the then price of \$171,000. He was much more interested in the property overlooking the Hudson with the magnificent view of the Palisades and less interested in the mansion house itself.

Untermyer proceeded to buy adjoining properties increasing the overall size of the property from 113 to 150 acres.

He loved horticulture, the extended property was now perfect for his garden endeavors. His love of flowers and gardening was developed as a boy from working in the garden with his mother in Virginia.

Family History: Untermyer was born in 1858 in Lynchburg VA to Therese and Isidor Untermyer. He was the middle child of five. His father owned a dry goods store. He made good money selling confederate soldiers uniforms however made a very poor investment in in tobacco manufacturing leading him into bankruptcy. He died in 1866 when Sam was only 8 years old.

Therese was aware of her husbands' poor money management and had routinely put money aside to avert any financial woes. Two years after her husbands' death, following friends from VA, she moved the family to NYC purchasing a kosher Boarding house on the lower eastside.

Samuel attended public schools, then went on to CCNY and ultimately to Columbia Law School graduating at the age of 20 in 1878. He was a brilliant student and ultimately proved to be a brilliant, prominent lawyer and civic leader.

The Personal Life of Samuel Untermyer

In 1880 he met Minnie Carl and fell madly in love with her. While they shared a common German heritage, they were of different religions; he a Jew, she a Christian. His mother was extremely opposed to a marriage based on their religious differences. However, Samuel and Minnie continued their relationship and had two children out of wedlock. Sadly one child did not survive. Either by concession or perseverance, they were married in 1883 and had two more children.

Untermyer loved Minnie's interest and passion for the Arts; dance, poetry, literature and music. She had a cultural vibe he greatly admired. Having been financially successful, they were well-traveled, visiting all the grand estates and gardens throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. Untermyer gleaned many ideas in his travels he later included into his own garden.

Untermyer's Professional Life, a brilliant, prominent lawyer and civic leader

In 1879 he was paid the largest fee ever paid to a lawyer in mergers and acquisitions (then) \$75,000. (today \$4 million)

1909 Untermyer was an ardent "Suffragent" campaigning for women's right to vote.

1910 he was counsel on the merger of Boston Consolidated and Utah Copper earning (then) \$775,000. (today \$18 million)

1912 as lead counsel on the Pujo Committee; a trust-buster & economic reformer, the leading architect of the Federal Reserve.

. Representing Herman Berstein, he won a huge libel suit against Henry Ford exposing his virulent antisemitism.

. He successfully argued to save the nickel subway fare and exposed corruption in the NYC building industry.

. He was one of the earliest leaders to fight against Nazism and tried to lead a boycott of German made goods.

Guggenheimer, Untermyer and Marshall was the first Jewish Law firm established on Wall Street with expanded clients from various industries; theatre, merchants, publishers, manufacturers, breweries and mining entities.

The Gardens

Adjacent to his professional career, Untermyer had another passionate interest: his 150-acre estate overlooking the Hudson and the Palisades. In 1916 he called on William Wells Bosworth, who designed Rockefellers garden at Kykuit, to come help him create the world's greatest gardens. Bosworth was an exemplar of the Ecole des Beaux Arts firmly rooted in neoclassicism. Gleaning from a combination of the Taj Mahal and Alhambra, Bosworth came up with an Indo-Persian type of Mughal garden; rectangular in form with a crossing of waterways and various kiosks and porticoes

He designed a 3-walled garden with the 4th wall open to capture the spectacular view of the Hudson and the Palisades. Within the Walled Garden he planned criss-crossing canals, a Greek stoa with Doric columns, a Greek Amphitheatre with Ionic columns, and the Temple of the Sky with Corinthian columns and a mosaic floor with Medusa's head, snakes and all, as the centerpiece. Below was an elaborate swimming pool with a tiled floor of sea creatures. To the North was a loggia leading to The beautiful Vista, 139 steps down to the semi-circular terrace with two monolithic cipollino marble columns, to the North an ornamental Vegetable garden, the Rose and Dahlia Garden, the Gate House below. In addition, he created the Temple of the Love with Rock gardens and Waterfalls and last the Sun Dial. The gardens were filled with a vast array of statuettes, fountains and of course the flowers – plantings.

The Demise (after Untermyer died in 1940)

In October of 1939, a very strange thing happened. The Paul Manship's bronze Acteon was stolen from the garden. What would seem impossible, a 250 pound nearly 5 foot high statue was stolen. Untermyer thought, no ordinary thief could have done this...the garden suddenly seemed vulnerable. Untermyer died March 17, 1940. Prior to his passing he tried repeatedly to ask NY State, Westchester County and last, the City of Yonkers to accept the gardens and it's maintenance without an endowment. He advised each of them that he did not have enough money to do an endowment, what was left had to go to family. In May of 1940, Parke-Bernet Gallery ran a two day auction selling off everything – all contents of the house plus the prized plant collections. In 1943, the City of Yonkers accepted the house and property then with 70 acres. In 1948, the city sold off 24 acres and the mansion was razed leaving a large hole. In 1953 Garden apartments were built across Broadway. In 1962, the parcel of land north of the Walled Garden was sold to the hospital. There was but a sliver of the original property left owned by the City of Yonkers. This was the garden's darkest hour. It became a scary jungle. The people it attracted then were the homeless, kids wanting to drink or get high, hippies and cult followers of Son of Sam. It came down to only 16 acres left of the original 150. In 1986, 27 acres were sold to a developer wanting to build condominiums. That developer went bankrupt before starting the project. A second developer got involved and the same thing happened again. The land was put back in the banks hands. In 1992, a local real estate agent, Nortrud Spero got involved and in combination with Open Spaces Institute and the Trust for Public Land, as well as the bank lowering it's price – In 1996 the city bought back the land for Untermyer Park bringing the Park up to 43 acres.

The Untermyer Conservancy 2010/2011

In 1988, Architect, Stephen Byrns, and his partner, Thomas Lollar moved to Yonkers from Manhattan. The move was a catalyst of things to come. Inspired by a community of artists, writers and various other creative types, Steve became involved in local issues of preservation. He discovered Untermyer Park and began to learn its history and was intrigued by its former glory. In 2010 Steve learned the fountains were turned on and actually worked to a degree. Steve felt drawn and excited there may be a glimmer of hope. The history, the gardens, the architecture and the horticulture, he felt were all an important part of America's cultural and social heritage. Maybe Untermyer's grand creation could be brought back to life. From Steve's position at the Landmarks Preservation Commission and Wave Hill, he approached Marco Polo Stufano, now retired from Wave Hill, about the possibility of working on the Untermyer project. Ironically, Stufano when he was a student at NYBG he studied under the well known T.H. Everett. Everett had taken him to Untermyer Park telling him that he had worked there for a short time in 1927 when he first arrived in the USA before joining NYBG and how absolutely amazing it was back then. T.H. Everett had become the director of horticulture at NYBG. He died in 1986. With all this in mind, Stufano said 'Yes' to Steve that he would help with the restoration.

The master plan was to: once again stabilize the walls in the Walled Garden, plan the plantings of trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, tropicals, aquatics. In the Temple of Love, there was 70 years of neglect to be cleared of garbage, overgrowth and invasives exposing a chain of Rock gardens and at one time waterfalls. In 2015, the amphitheatre was restored.

In 2017, The Vista was cleared allowing a clear vision of the Hudson as well as exposing two of the color gardens.

In 2018, the canals and pools were dismantled and rebuilt with modern Irrigation. The unicorn at the Gatehouse got a new head. The mosaics on the floor of the Temple of Sky was repaired yet once more. In 2019, the Gatehouse walls were stabilized and roofing material placed at the top to avoid further damage. The outside was whitewashed. The inside retained the historic graffiti. Also in 2019, a \$50,000. grant was given for the restoration of the mosaic-lined pool from the NY State office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The Ongoing Future Plans of the Untermyer Conservancy

Still a work in progress is the mosaic-lined Persian Pool. This project is anticipated on being completed in the fall of 2023. Each year head gardener, Timothy Tilghman creates a new and exciting theme changing the annual plantings along the canals and the pool below the amphitheatre.

Having single-handedly created a hoop house on the property, Timothy is now able to start seedlings for the Ornamental Vegetable garden. The pergola above the original columns of the Rose garden was installed in 2020/2021.

The lower terrace of the Vegetable garden is now a small orchard of apple and pear trees.

In 2018, Yonkers High School students, as a pilot project of our Youth Horticultural Initiative helped create the Rhododendron Walk below the Vegetable Garden.

In 2017 having the Gatehouse cleaned out and stabilized the gardeners created a Ruin Garden inside the Gatehouse. An informal tapestry of plants paved with original concrete pavers. A mysterious room to the back has had a bubbling grotto added and openings have been created to allow light in the room.

The Rock and Stream Garden expansively reinterprets a long buried rock garden from Samuel Untermyer's era. Water emanates from a pool at the top flowing down to a basin at the bottom connecting with the Temple of Love cascade. Midway down is a seated viewing platform. The plantings are a wide variety of unusual woodies and alpine-affiliated plants.

The Woodland has been opened up exposing new trails cleared and covered in woodchips.

New to come: The Meadow will occupy a large open area crisscrossed by the carriage trail. Potentially a native garden more ecologically friendly habitat for birds and pollinators. It will also greatly reduce the need for mowing.

The future plan of creating a Stumpery is in the initial stages. A whimsical woodland fantasy anchored the stumps of uprooted trees with abundant ferns. Intended to delight children, a stone hermitage will be built to house the 'spirit' of the arcadia.

In addition, the Sundial will also be reinterpreted and placed off the carriage trail. And The Long Garden will be recreated. It wasn't even visible until 2017. And a new plan ahead is creation of The Quiet Garden, an entire new feature including a pond.

Last but far from least is the Color Gardens. The Conservancy is arranging a land swap with St. John's Riverside Hospital to reunite the three gardens with the two owned by the City of Yonkers. The gardens will have restored fountains, and each terrace will be planted with its own color theme.

The History & Restoration of Untermyer Conservancy Gardens