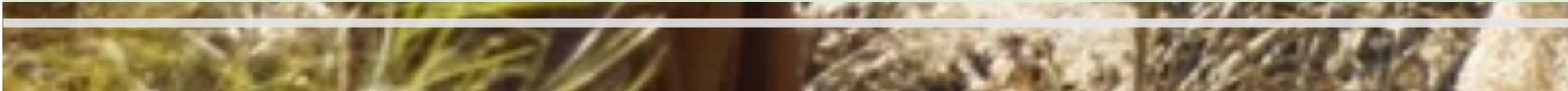


Historic American Landscapes

Janet Gracyk

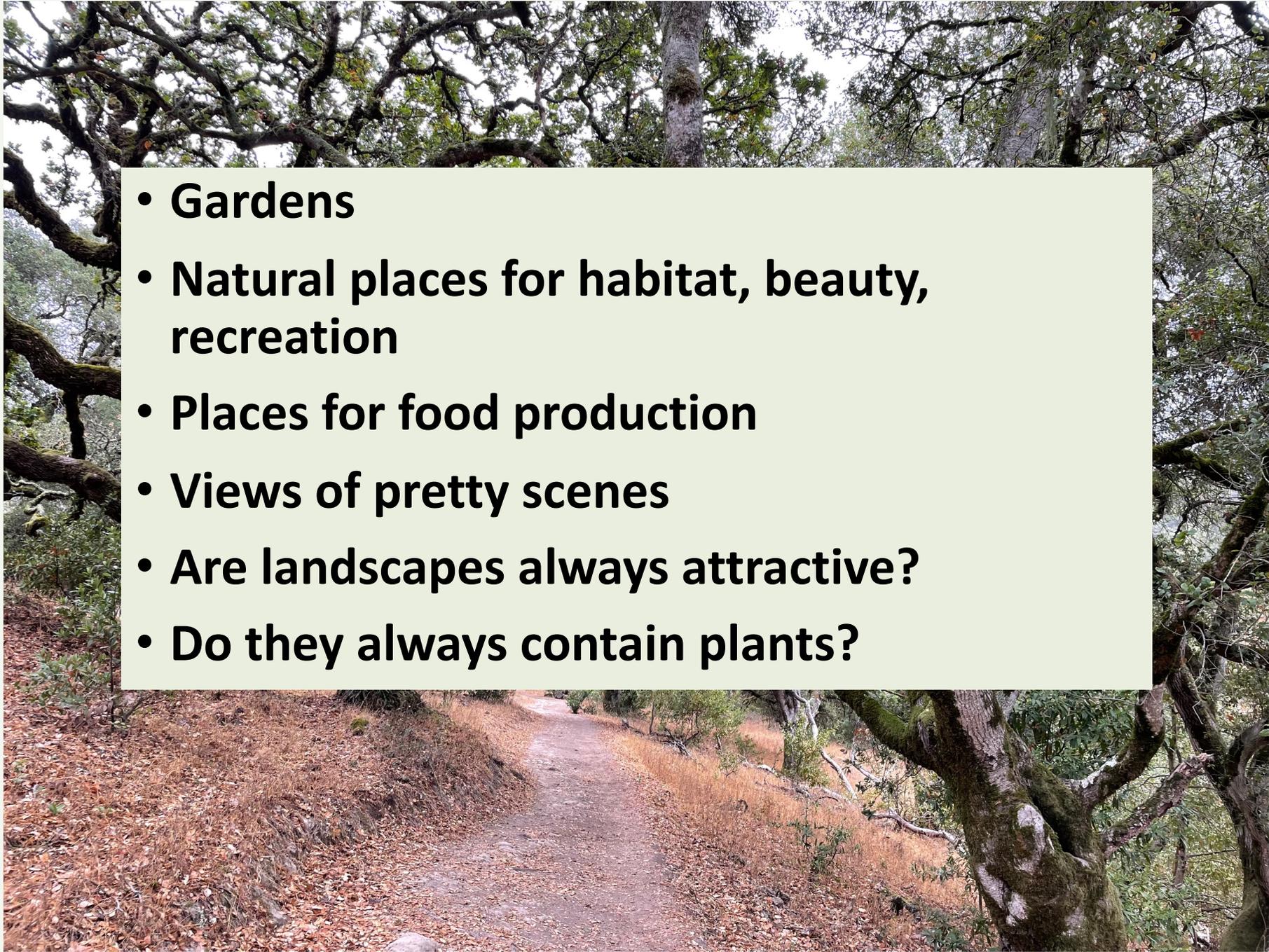
April 7, 2022

Sonoma County Forum



What is a landscape and what do landscapes mean to you?



- 
- **Gardens**
 - **Natural places for habitat, beauty, recreation**
 - **Places for food production**
 - **Views of pretty scenes**
 - **Are landscapes always attractive?**
 - **Do they always contain plants?**

“A landscape is the visible features of an area of land, its landforms, and how they integrate with natural or man-made features, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal.” - *New Oxford Dictionary*



Janet Gracyk

“A landscape is the visible features of an area of land, its landforms, and how they integrate with natural or man-made features, often considered in terms of their aesthetic appeal.” - *New Oxford Dictionary*

“Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form. We rarely think of landscape that way, and so the cultural record we have ‘written’ in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves.” – *Pierce K. Lewis*



Janet Gracyk

“Reading” a landscape: how is it used, was it designed?



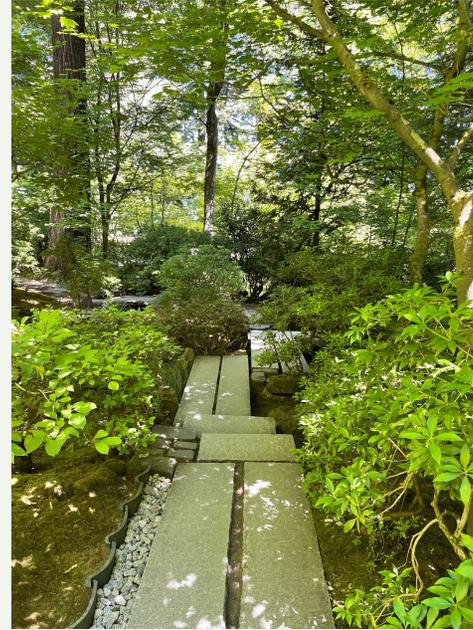
Formality: ancient Islamic gardens featured symmetry, water features, and pattern. These gardens are the ancestors of formal gardens. What are the associations you make to this style?



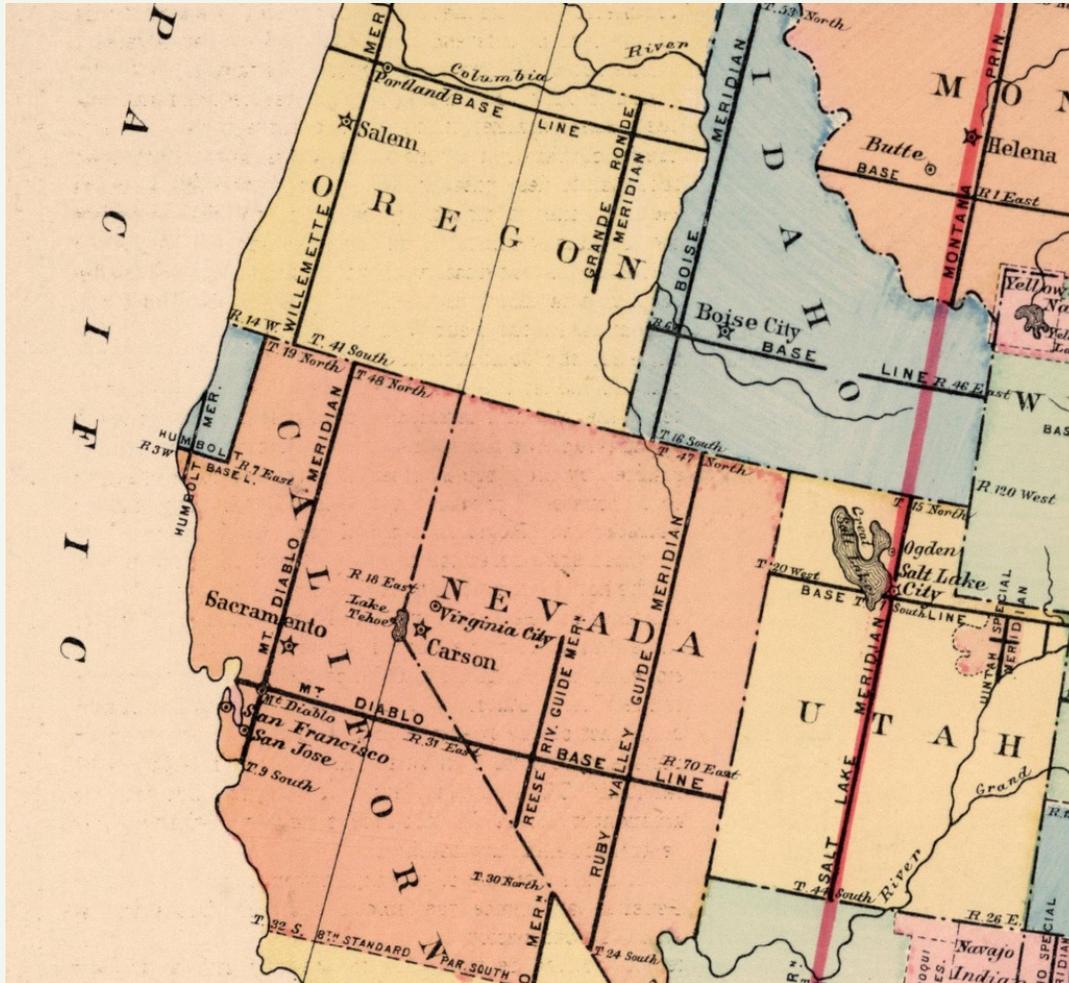
Formality: ancient Islamic gardens featured symmetry, water features, and pattern. These gardens are the ancestors of formal gardens. What are the associations you make to this style?



Informality and naturalism: These landscapes are just as contrived as formal gardens. The style arose in England around the early 1700s as a reaction against autocratic rule. What are the associations you make to this style?



Jefferson's Grid



The Diablo Meridian and Base Line were established in 1853 by the United States Public Land Survey System

Jefferson's Grid

Q 3215 Coffey Lane, Santa Rosa, CA, USA

Lot 43 | Township 7 North, Range 8 West | Mount Diablo Principal Meridian | city: Santa Rosa • Sonoma County, California | Lat, Long: 38.46768, -122.74633

Map Satellite POI

Draw & Measure
Selection Tools
Share/Save Map

Show US city limits
 Show county lines
 Show Sec Twn Rng labels

Google

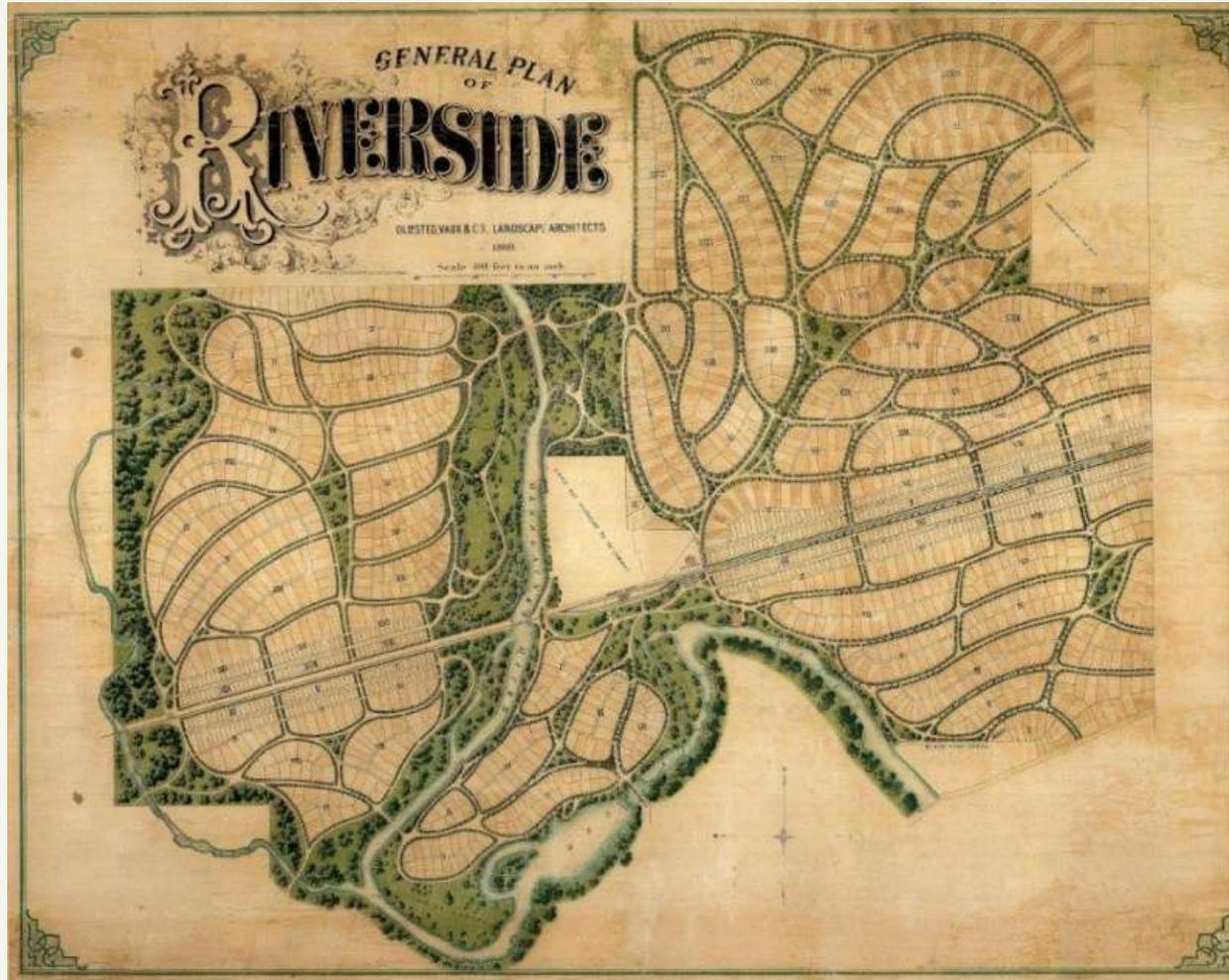
Keyboard shortcuts Map data ©2022 Google Imagery ©2022, CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies, USDA/FPAC/GEO 200 m Terms of Use Report a map error

Find parcel: Section: eg 34 Township: eg 3 North Range: eg 69 West PM: < any > State: California GO!

Public Land Survey overlaid on north Santa Rosa.

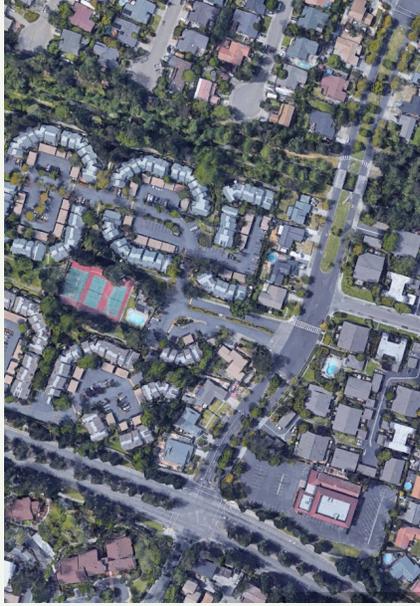
From randymajors.org

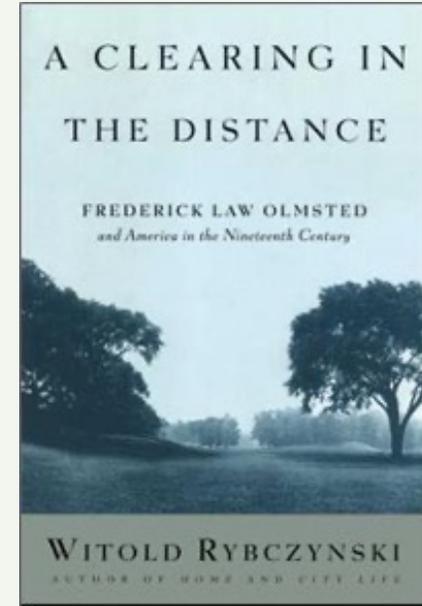
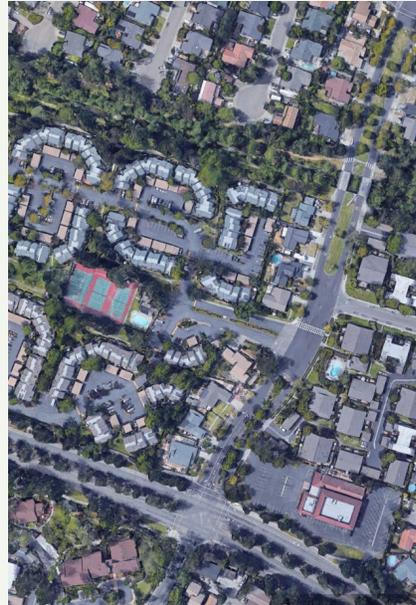
Responding to Thomas Jefferson's (unrealistic) ambition that all Americans should live on rural lands, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux began designing the first planned suburban community in Riverside, Illinois in 1868.



Map from the Riverside, Illinois website.







Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) was the founder of American landscape architecture.

Ideas of democracy – allowing everyone access to land – are still treasured today and have become a foundational American ideal.

See www.olmsted.org for more information and an interactive map.



MALAKOFF DIGGINGS,

NEVADA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C.



Landscape Documentation

- Learn the who, what, when, where, and why of a landscape
- Is the place significant?
- Is anything original left?
- How should the landscape be treated going forward?



Landscape Documentation

❖ The Secretary of the Interior provides guidelines for different kinds of documentation

The Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) is part of the Heritage Documentation Program - [nps.gov/hdp](https://www.nps.gov/hdp)

- Federal Program to create a permanent record of historic landscapes
- Modeled on HABS (1933) and HAER (1969)
- Created in 2000
- May be used for mitigation for loss of significant landscapes

Landscape Documentation

- ❖ My favorite is the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS)
 - Document the history
 - Establish why the place is important
 - Describe the place as it looks today
 - Provide drawings and photographs
- ❖ The final records are stored at the Library of Congress as a permanent record, accessible to anyone
- ❖ HALS hosts an annual competition. This year's theme is Olmsted landscapes

Heritage
Documentation
Programs

HABS/HAER/HALS



HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

SONOMA TRRAINTOWN RAILROAD

HALS NO. CA-61

- Location:** 20264 Broadway Hwy 12, Sonoma County, Sonoma, CA 95476
Lat: 38.277539967611396 Long: -122.45936393737793 (Center of Park Fountain, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)
- Significance:** Sonoma TrainTown Railroad is an excellent example of a vernacular landscape designed as a small amusement park and to showcase a scale model railroad.
- History:** In 1958 Mr. Stanley Frank, employed as a printer in Oakland, began constructing the park on a level piece of land that had formerly been a pasture near the small town of Sonoma. He was well known in the model railroad community for his extensive and well-designed O-gauge model railroad in the basement of his Oakland house. According to Robert Bennett, acting superintendent, Mr. Frank was deeply influenced by Japanese garden design and he employed many of the principles common to Japanese gardens to create the sense that the landscape is much larger than its actual size, compressing scenic elements into a small area. Mr. Frank sculpted the flat lot extensively to create hillsides, creeks and ponds on the grounds and he planted the property with many trees, predominantly cedars (*Cedrus deodara*). Over a space of ten years Mr. Frank designed and installed the landscape to include the small town scenes and the structures to house the trains. All of the trains, train cars and trestle bridges were constructed in Mr. Frank's machine shop and were built at one-quarter scale. The park opened to the public in the fall of 1968. Mr. Frank's sons run the operation now, which generally employs twenty-one people. Additional landscaping has been installed since the opening of the park and additional trains have been added. Between 1993 and 2003 six rides were installed.
- Description:** Sonoma TrainTown Railroad is located one mile south of downtown Sonoma and covers 10 acres. It was opened in 1968. There are one and one-quarter miles of track. The main attraction is the train ride, which winds around the lot, crossing from an outer circuit to an inner circuit. The train engine pulls several train cars, which are open on top and fitted with seats.
- The west facing entry is a wood structure made to resemble a simple train station; three antique, restored cabooses form part of the entry. The structure also serves as an office and houses bathrooms. Immediately on entering one is on the concrete, ground-level railroad platform. Across from the platform, behind a landscaped area, is a pond with an acerator-style fountain, behind which is the amusement park area featuring rides. To the north is a small raised ornamental planting bed, behind which is an open wood structure housing an air hockey board. In the northwest corner is a modern carousel created to appear old, although it is predominantly made of plastic. Opposite and slightly south is an open area, simply landscaped with ivy and shrubs, through which a small creek meanders. Two gravel paths and concrete bridges invite the visitor to cross over this area, cross an area of track, and enter the small amusement park area of the grounds. South of the landscaped area is a raised concrete platform, recently added as a new location for the carousel. In the southwest corner is a quarter-scale



The quarter-scale roundhouse with engines. (Janet Gracyk, July 7, 2010).



A view of the pond and a railroad crossing, as seen from an elevated platform above the entrance. The island containing the rides and petting zoo is visible in the distance. (Janet Gracyk, July 7, 2010).

Documentation Projects



Fischer Hanlon House in Benicia

Documentation Projects



White House

2007 internship for four months. Measured the landscape in great detail, then prepared drawings.



Documentation Projects



Documentation Projects



Mary Ellen Pleasant

Born in 1814? 1817? Died in 1904

A businesswoman and entrepreneur, Pleasant was certainly the most well-known Black woman in California and one of the wealthiest in the nation. She has been called the “Mother of Civil Rights in California,” working to assure equal access and rights as well as assisting escaped slaves.



Computer-enhanced reproduction of a never-before published photo of Mary Ellen Pleasant, from the scrapbook of Emma Scott Jones. Courtesy of Careth Reid and Jesse Warr III. © Bibbs 1993

Photo of Pleasant is from the scrapbook of Emma Scott Jones, via Wikipedia. Bell/Pleasant Mansion on Bush and Octavia, Sand Francisco, late 19th century. Building was demolished. Photo: courtesy Doris M, via FoundSF.org

Documentation Projects



Computer-enhanced reproduction of a never-before published photo of Mary Ellen Pleasant, from the scrapbook of Emma Scott Jones. Courtesy of Careth Reid and Jesse Warr III. © Bibbs 1993

Pleasant and her business partner bought several acres in Glen Ellen in 1889. Pleasant named the property in Sonoma *Beltane Ranch*, and she built the house that stands today.

Baseline Consulting in Sonoma provided their extensive research on Pleasant and the property for my documentation.

Documentation Projects



Pond Farm Pottery

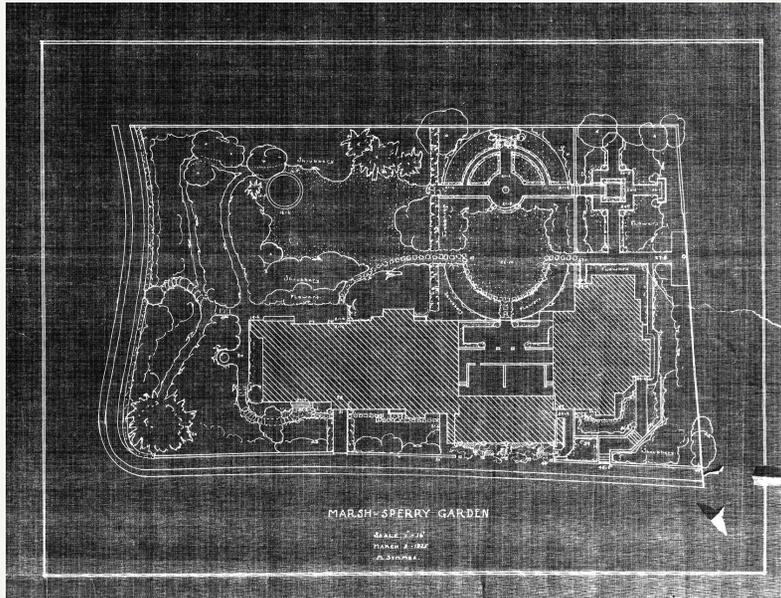
The site is associated with Marguerite Wildenhain (1897 – 1985). She learned Modernist design at the Bauhaus in Germany and applied them to ancient pottery techniques. She was Jewish and barely escaped Europe during WWII, leaving her husband and career behind.

A distant relative, Jane Herr, invited her to California. Wildenhain settled in a small cabin at Pond Farm. She was 40 years old. She helped build her small house and started a new career. She fired the kiln for the last time in 1980 and died in 1985.

This site located in Austin Creek State Recreation. For a time, Marguerite Wildenhain was an influential and accomplished potter who brought new techniques to the country and changed the way we view pottery – now we often think it is appropriate to consider pottery as an art form.

Photo at left – Wildenhain home, 1959. Courtesy of California State Parks. Photo at right - *Marguerite Wildenhain at work*, ca. 1940 / unidentified photographer. Marguerite Wildenhain papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

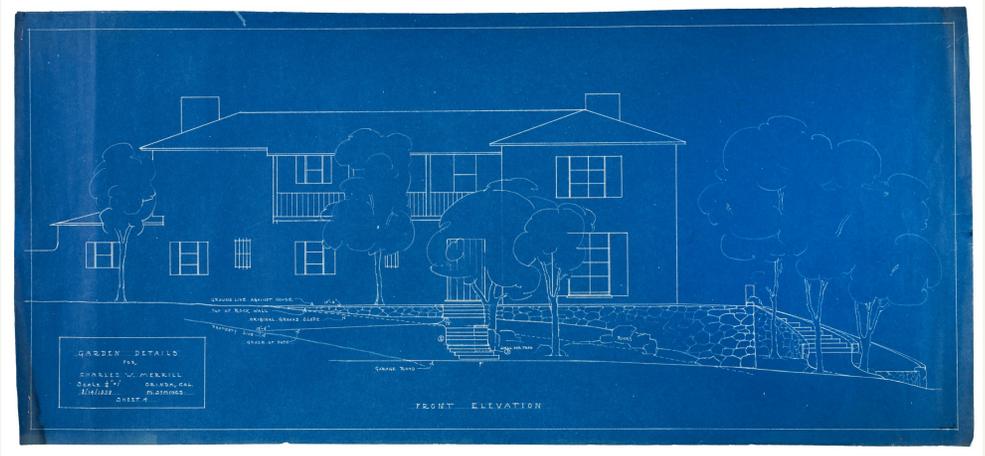
Documentation Projects



Marsh Sperry Garden, Berkeley
1925. Map courtesy of the owner



Unna Garden, Berkeley
1927. Photo courtesy of the owner



Merrill House Garden, Orinda
1938. Map courtesy of the owners



Kathryn Stedman
Born 1900, died 1997
Joe Eichler house in Atherton



Top photo from the Eichler Network. Bottom photo of the Joseph Eichler house by Janet Gracyk



Sonoma Developmental Center Reconnaissance Survey

Painter Preservation & Planning, 2008



Sonoma Developmental Center



Pine Lodge

California State Park, Lake Tahoe



Sonoma Developmental Center



Pine Lodge

California State Park, Lake Tahoe



Vikingsholm

California State Park, Lake Tahoe



The California Garden & Landscape History Society – CGLHS.org



HALS sites in Northern California at the American Society of
Landscape Architects: asla-ncc.org/hals

