Orchids in politics and the public garden: the Untermeyer Park in Yonkers, New York

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The remarkable history of Untermeyer Park, the garden of a luxurious private estate in upstate New York transferred into a public park, is currently muddled in city and architecture archives due to lack of funding and media attention. The park was the first Beaux Art design in the USA by the famous William Welles Bosworth, and yet the site is not regularly noted in the garden history canon despite its proximity and ready access to New York City. The purpose of this paper is to rectify this gross omission and shed light on the relevance of this elusive and bewitching park.

During the industrial revolution in the second half of the nineteenth century, much of the USA rural population moved to the expanding urban centers in search of economic opportunities and an improved quality of life. While the inner city districts became overcrowded with impoverished and unemployed immigrants, the increased housing shortage forced ongoing construction and therefore reduced public accessibility to green open space. Urban water and air became increasingly polluted, and the upper class who could afford the luxury of leisure and travel, escaped from the city's dust and density on weekends and hot summer days. Consequently, former farmland along the Hudson River in the areas of Yonkers and Hastings-upon-Hudson outside the city, became the location of huge mansions for this mobile upper class. However, ongoing suburban sprawl, commercialization, and pollution took its toll, degrading the landscape. In response, a preservationist movement sought to conserve nature, drawing the support of a concurrent arts and cultural movement which, inspired by the Hudson River Valley, was depicting the beauty of natural landscapes. There the Greystone estate, situated at the top of a hill with a wide view over the Hudson River and of the Palisades, impressive stone cliffs at the other bank of the river, with a huge stone mansion adjacent to an extensive, uniquely designed garden, not only displayed refined architectural and artistic works, but also provided an outstanding setting and stage for entertainment in nature.

Greystone was built and developed by three owners who were members of the new bourgeois class. In 1862 John T. Waring, one of the first industrialists in Yonkers, bought approximately 33 acres of land and built the mansion, a 'massive, boxy structure with mansard roofs, prominent chimney towers, and a central square tower with a portico and entry staircase at its base', which he named Greystone for its construction in grey granite (figure 1). During his twelve years of ownership, Waring extended the property to 63.3 acres.1

The estate's second owner, Samuel J. Tilden (1814–1886),2 was Governor of New York State. Tilden acquired Greystone in 1879 and added an additional 46.4 acres of land. By including a 'property called "Tanglewood" on the west side of North Broadway and an undeveloped parcel of 31.9 acres on the east side'3 the size of the property was thus expanded to 111.3 acres. Tilden constructed greenhouses to cultivate imported rare plants. When he died in 1886, after only seven years of occupancy,4 the ownership of Greystone remained, owing to a delay in the execution of Tilden's will, indeterminate for over ten years.

In 1899, the lawyer and advocate Samuel Untermeyer acquired the property and expanded the estate to 171 acres. Around forty years later, in 1940, he willed it at his death to the City of Yonkers to be used as a public park. His
intention was to preserve his garden while making it accessible not only to privileged visitors, but to the general public. Yet this change from private to public ownership would turn out to be more difficult than Untermyer anticipated. While the layout and development of Greystone's garden had been influenced by the ideas and personalities of the three landlords, especially the decisions of Samuel Untermyer shaped the property's landscape design and its future use.

**Samuel Untermyer**

Samuel Untermyer (1858-1940) was a controversial figure in action as well as in personality (figure 2). Born in Lynchburg, Virginia, he moved to New York City after his father, a Jewish immigrant from Bavaria, Germany, died while serving in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Against his parents' will, Samuel Untermyer began to study law and graduated in 1878 from Columbia University.
When he was 24 years of age, Untermyer became a partner in the law firm of Guggenheimer, Untermyer and Marshall as well as the youngest lawyer at court. Outspoken and directly involved in a multitude of important legal cases, Untermyer concerned himself with the public welfare and economic opportunity. As a direct result of a speech he made at the Finance Forum in New York City entitled 'Is there a Money Trust' several of influential financiers including J. P. Morgan were put under examination, resulting in the Federal Reserve Act of 1914. Untermyer, convinced that public transportation was a civil necessity and should be affordable for every citizen, also helped maintain New York City fare rates at 5 cents until 1913. In addition, as a democrat and supporter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, Untermyer was an advocate for the public ownership of public utilities, and defended waterpower grants on the St. Lawrence River against private interests.

Beyond these remarkable civic achievements, Untermyer was fond of traveling and art, as well as horticulture and landscape design, and owned - next to the estate Greystone - several properties in the USA and Europe. He had particularly a great interest in the cultivation of orchids, the demanding cultivation requirements of which flowers in the Greystone's greenhouses made his estate famous throughout the USA. Untermyer made sure that a fresh orchid was always present in the lapel of his suit when appearing at court, and, by this well-appointed emblem, he was easily recognized. Lawyers working with him jokingly said that he 'carried a damp bag of orchids into court so as to have a fresh one whenever the one he was wearing wilted'.

When his wife died in 1924, Untermyer continued to work until his own death on 16 March 1940 at 82 years of age at his estate in Palm Springs, California. The memorial was held at Greystone and he is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York. While Greystone, according to Untermyer's will, was to be transferred to the City of Yonkers and the public, the difficulty of this transition resulted in the loss of much of the garden's original design.

Greystone

Samuel Untermyer's personality, his worldwide traveling as well as his luxurious lifestyle, had a great influence on the design of Greystone. When he bought the estate in 1899, Untermyer hired the architect J. H. Freedlander (1870–1943) to remodel the mansion. Freedlander was a famous architect at the time and responsible for the design of the Museum of New York City and the construction of the Monument to Perry who fought at the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. He redesigned Greystone into a lavish three-story mansion with 31 rooms and a tower. It ... contained 4 bathrooms, had running water in most of its rooms and gas lightning. Its basement had both a milk room and a wine cellar. Freedlander added 'porches and bay windows on the exterior and on the ground floor a domed vestibule, a Gothic style main hall, beamed ceilings, a smoking room den, whose work was ebony, a Louis XVI salon and a library in the Consol premier style'. Upstairs he installed a 'swimming pool of about 35 feet by 18 feet and a Turkish bath'.

During his first eight years of ownership, Untermyer did not put much consideration into the garden's design, although he did make use of Tilden's greenhouses and dog kennels where he bred collies to compete with J. P. Morgan's own dogs at dog shows. Then in 1907, the landscape architect, architect and sculptor William Welles Bosworth (1868–1960) was asked to redesign the garden. Bosworth had studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, and had worked in the office of Frederick Law Olmsted. Among his designs is the MIT's campus in Cambridge and the AT&T building in New York City as well as the gardens of the Rockefeller Family estate 'Kykuit' in upstate New York. After World War I, Bosworth supervised the reconstruction of the French Palace of Versailles, of the cathedral of Reims in France, and several other projects in an effort to preserve and restore French architectural monuments and works of art. His impressive international and prominent work experience probably caught Untermyer's interest, but the Rockefeller's neighboring Kykuit estate most likely peaked Untermyer's attention and competitive drive. One of the examples he had in mind for the design of his garden was the royal Hampton Court Palace and Garden on the Thames outside London, created around 1514 by Cardinal Wolsey. William Welles Bosworth was thus hired to design the garden, he later recounted, as 'the finest garden in the world'. Bosworth's landscape design transformed Greystone garden into one of the few Grand Beaux Arts gardens of the USA. He provided the visitor with unique vista points spread throughout the various parts of the garden, while simultaneously emphasizing the Hudson valley's specific character (figures 3a and 3b).
Untermyer's garden

Over the years the garden of Greystone became popular not only for its landscape design, but also for its unique plants, the great variety of flowers and the cultivation of rare orchids that were presented to interested visitors at regularly held flower shows.

To enter Untermyer's property, the visitor journeys up North Broadway to the bottom of the estate's hill at which point one originally passed through a huge wrought iron gate, relief sculptures of a unicorn and sphinx guarding the entrance. A sloping drive guided carriages through a forest in the garden's lower area eventually leading up to the front of the stone mansion. Next to the mansion and existing greenhouses, Bosworth placed the formal Garden, termed the 'Greek Garden' because of the columns, sculptures and pavilions reflecting the Greek Revival Style placed in it. This landscape was laid out in a geometric and rectilinear way according to the principles of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and created a contrast to the initial entrance through forest and wilderness. To access the Greek Garden from the mansion, the visitor would take a short, circuitous path which circumnavigated the Carriage House and the Tilden greenhouses. This meandering walkway was in contradiction to the Ecole des Beaux Arts principles and was later straightened when the greenhouses were moved in 1918. A high bordering wall with watchtowers protected the Greek Garden from North Broadway, a major throughway at the time. Thus, Bosworth created an atmosphere of privacy and seclusion. A limestone portal set into the brick wall allowed the visitor to enter the Greek Garden from the mansion. This entrance was flanked by 'diamond-scored stucco panels and topped with a relief of Artemis sculpted by Ulric H. Ellerhusen,' a famous sculptor at the time (figure 4). Bosworth divided the Greek Garden into an upper and a lower terrace, accommodating the site's
topography. His clear layout was organized along a main sight line with the upper terrace featuring "a cross of waterways intersecting at the center and bordered with formal plate bands of flowers."

When entering the garden through the Greek portal the visitor faces a descending stepped water channel, running south to north. It ends in a square basin situated in front of the stage of a small Greek theater. Another waterway crosses perpendicularly to the first through a center basin. Water seems to flow continuously out of elevated marble bowls at the ends of both channels. At Untermyer's time, forty fountains and interconnected lights integrated in these waterways provided tranquility and freshness in summer as well as atmosphere at night. Next to these waterways, formal walking paths direct the visitor's movements and attention. The walkways are arranged around square patches of grass, following the layout's main axis. When passing over small stone bridges at the center basin, the visitor's attention is drawn to this strict geometry of the landscape design (figure 5).

The amphitheatre, situated across from the main entrance gate, is lined by colonnades and eclectically styled, combining Greek revival era style with that of the Italian Renaissance. Rows of concentric stone walls behind the stage provide seats for spectators, transforming the garden and nature itself into the scenery of a play (figure 6). A pair of double columns was placed at each corner of the stage. The columns are topped with sphinxes, in a way reminiscent of the Piazza de St. Marco in Venice (figure 7).

The east-west waterway was marked by a small pavilion on one end and a rotunda of fourteen Corinthian columns on the other (figures 8 and 9). Bosworth designed this rotunda as a folly, i.e. purposely constructed without a sheltering roof. When standing in the rotunda, the visitor has a wide view over the garden, the Palisades and the Hudson River valley, as well as over a large and deep reflecting pool on the terrace below (figure 10). The rotunda's floor displays a detailed marble mosaic depicting the face of Medusa, in Greek mythology the daughter of two water gods who turned people into stone with her gaze (figure 11). The mosaic therefore metaphorically connects the view of the Hudson to the pool below. This pool was sized to allow bathing on hot summer days and its sides and floor are covered with a mosaic depicting waving lines and hidden sea animals to create an illusion of a natural basin (figure 12 and 13). The reflecting and swimming pool was the main feature of the lower terrace. It is accessible to the visitor by taking stairs situated on both sides of the rotunda. The square lawn next to the pool was used for leisurely entertainment. Shaded by the colonnades situated next to the upper terrace's theater, spectators could watch, for example in 1923, performances by the expressionist dancer Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) (figure 14).

Both the upper and lower terraces of the Greek Garden are lined with skillfully detailed limestone balustrades designed in Italian Renaissance style. They were employed by Bosworth to emphasize the horizontality of the terraces and to define the artificial creation of outdoor space according to Beaux Arts principles (figures 15 and 16). Other garden elements as well as its scenic setting and vistas followed the Grecian tradition by placing, for example, sculptures or buildings as focal points to dramatize the natural environment. The artwork, which Untermyer and his wife Minnie acquired on journeys through Europe and the USA, added much to Greystone's...
landscape design. In addition to the sculptures by Walter Schott, Ulric H. Ellerhusen and Paul Manship, they attained in 1903 a marble fountain sculpture, called the 'Brook', by the local sculptor Isidore Konti. Besides the Greek Garden, additional outdoor rooms were created throughout


FIGURE 6. Untermyer Park, Yonkers, NY, theatre's stage with plantings that are probably not as originally intended. Photo by Gerti Gaining, 2006.
Untermeyer's estate. Starting at the theatre's colonnades, the visitor can walk down a 'thousand-step' stair to a vista point and hideout platform in the lower part of the hill's slope (figure 17). The limestone balustrade, enclosing this circular terrace, was topped with two high, antique marble columns imported from Europe. The columns towering among the trees of the forest thus frame the visitor's view of the Hudson River below (figure 18). Untermeyer's grandson, Samuel Untermeyer II, recalls that his grandfather created this space as a copy of one of the long walkways at the Villa D'Este in Italy.

Halfway down the vista stair, another platform, this time designed with closely spaced columns, marks the entrance to the Color, Rose and Vegetable Gardens. These elements of Untermeyer's garden are little documented and are in ruins today (figure 19). Originally, the Color Garden was 'a series of smaller, rectangular spaces connected by a long staircase, each of which contained plants with blossoms of a certain color'. The Rose Garden is said to have featured a pergola 'columns supporting twining vines'. A visitor would pass through this pergola en route to the Vegetable Garden, in which 'large open terraces designed in an Italian style [were] bisected by a blue tile-lined water channel'.

To the west of the mansion was the Rock Garden. In contrast to the formal landscape design of the Greek Garden, the naturalistic style of rocks reminded one of the environments in upstate New York (figure 20). By
making use of the naturally existing features of the site, the Rock Garden was designed as a massive stone formation with a wrought iron pavilion on top and a small waterfall pouring out into a round basin below. The pavilion could be accessed by two bridges and was named, probably because of its airy character, 'the Eagle's Nest'. When standing in it, the visitor had a view over the Rock Garden and the forest, with another vista of the Hudson River valley and the Palisades. According to traces along channels left in the rocks today, water must have flown out from the pavilion's east side and split around the northern and southern edges before meeting on the western side as a strong waterfall terminating in a water basin below. In order to observe this water spectacle, the visitor would walk around the north side of the pavilion and proceed underneath one of the bridges to the Eagle's nest and then pass through a covered stairway (figure 21). A platform provided a place to rest and look at the waterfall. The acoustic sound must have been very impressive. The visitor would continue down along the waterfall and eventually be guided up again on the south side of the basin. Even though this Rock Garden today is dried out and hidden by trash and refuse, it is easy to imagine what once had been — and could become again — an attraction of the Untermyer's Park.

Besides the mansion, a variety of other, smaller granite buildings were situated on the estate. They were used as hothouses, as conservatories including four grape houses and four peach houses, as a palm house, an aquatic house, a tropical house and a rose house. In addition, there were gardeners' sleeping quarters, in which some of the 50 to 60 gardeners stayed during the growing season.

Untermeyer's horticulturist and superintendent George H. Chisholm stated that Greystone's flower beds 'usually carried about 500,000 chrysanthemums, 300,000 pansies, 400,000 geraniums, 200,000 to 300,000 tulips, almost 3
Before being employed by Untermyer, Chisholm had been working for the British Government as a plant pathologist in Bermuda. Later he was an independent landscape designer for private clients like William Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie. Creating 'horticultural surprises' for Untermyer, Chisholm invented the 'topato' by grafting the Irish potato with the tomato in order to produce a single plant that would produce less-fattening fruit. He also injected liquor into unripe honeydew melons thereby creating 'exotic' fruits. During the Untermyer estate's tax proceedings in 1942 and 1943, Chisholm specified that a Paulonia imperialis [foxglove tree] was 'the most valuable single tree [and] had a coverage of 200 feet'. Additionally, he reported 'about 125 elms, an unusual double row of Cryptomeria japonica [Japanese cedar], over 2000 Rhododendrons, imported at a cost of $250 000, 25 or 30 Japanese maples and 200 dogwoods valued at $400 each'.

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The great variety of flowers growing in Untermyer’s garden was regularly shown to interested visitors. These shows were highly praised by the Horticultural Society and well attended by the public.

The public garden

Untermyer’s interest in landscape architecture went beyond the design of his own garden. He admitted having “a secret desire” to be the New York’s Park Commissioner, since as “Park Commissioner”, he said, “I could make the parks of New York really beautiful. They ought to be planted out like the parks in European cities.” To confirm his enthusiasm for landscape design and for the creation of public green open spaces, he added, “I’ve made a study of the subject. If I were Commissioner, I’d be glad to spend a lot of my own money.”
It would be a pleasant job, working among flowers. Unfortunately, in contrast to this latter statement, he did not manage to provide an endowment for the future maintenance of his garden due to the financial and personal complications he encountered when first offering Greystone to the city.

Untermyer had the idea to preserve his garden as a public park — without anybody having to pay fees or being in need of an appointment to visit his garden. This vision was likely influenced by the theories of the landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852), who even today is considered the father of American public parks. In Downing's opinion, parks were necessary institutions to promote a more democratic social life in the USA. To him, parks needed to be part of a general reformist program including publicly supported libraries, art galleries and other opportunities for social interaction. Downing's main interest was to raise the level of 'social civilization and social culture' in the USA. In 1841, he wrote the successful book *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, in which he rejected the classical styles prevalent in landscape architecture. Downing created a new aesthetic category for landscape design and introduced the style of the 'Beautiful and Picturesque', which was inspired by previous English works and reflected the Romantic Movement in art and literature. His writing about the Hudson River Valley and about the necessity to introduce parks as public institutions was printed in illustrated periodicals of the time.

Not only was Untermyer inspired by Downing, but also by Robert Moses, then the head of the Parks Department of New York State. Moses (1888–1981), a son of German Jewish immigrants, created a great number of public parks and highways throughout New York State and received much publicity for his construction efforts. Moses impressed Untermyer, and they began a
friendly correspondence that unfortunately quickly became strained during the complications of turning Greystone into a public garden.

Untermeyer's vision to open his garden to the public turned out to be more difficult in the end than at first anticipated. When his wife Minnie died, the ownership of Greystone was transferred to a trust, with Untermeyer's children Alvin, Irwin and Irene as the trustees. Untermeyer required that this trust would provide for insurance, repairs, alterations or improvements to the estate. He would also have the right to live at the estate as a tenant. In his will, he specified that 'so long as I occupy the place pending the sale of the property, I will maintain the grounds and greenhouses in the style in which they have been heretofore maintained by me and that the public may have the benefit of access to the grounds which they now enjoy'. This statement indicates how important the quality of maintenance of Greystone and its public accessibility were to Untermeyer. The Indenture of 2 January 1937, stated that in regard to
the question of maintenance the tenant, i.e. Untermyer himself, 'will quit and surrender the premises hereby demised in as good state and condition as they were in at the commencement of the term, reasonable use and wear thereof and damages by the elements excepted.' Further the agreement specified, 'the tenant shall have free use of all fruit, vegetables and other products of the premises during the term of this lease'. It addition, the condition was made that 'no waste or injury to the trees, shrubbery, or vines (not to) remove them from the premises' were permitted and that 'the grounds shall be kept at all times in neat order and condition'.

In 1929, due to the Great Depression and the crash of the stock market, Untermyer's income as well as the value of Greystone drastically plummeted. Consequently, his children, who were more interested in getting rid of the
property than in keeping it, were forced to postpone the intended sale of Greystone. They hoped that Moses' construction efforts in the area, like the Sawmill River Parkway, the Spuyten Duyvil Bridge, and the Sawmill River Parkway-Riverside Drive connection, would help to increase the value of the land in the near future, and they asked their father to change his will in order to permit the selling of the estate within sixty days.

The ownership of Greystone had already been accompanied by tax problems before Untermyer's time. When Greystone was in the trust of Untermyer's children, the USA Internal Revenue Department suspected that Untermyer had committed fraud in real estate tax payments and claimed the sum after a thorough investigation. In order to clear the issue and to reduce conflict among the trustees, he had to repurchase the estate from the trust in May 1938.

Towards the end of his life, the question of how to preserve Greystone and how to ensure its accessibility to the public became more and more of concern to Untermyer. Since the State of New York, the City of New York and City of Yonkers were bankrupt and since he had not been able to use his savings on an endowment to provide for future maintenance of the garden, Untermyer needed to find support for his idea somewhere elsewhere. He turned to Moses in 1939 and invited him and his wife to visit Greystone in order to determine with their own eyes whether the garden was suitable to be transformed into a public park. In a letter to Moses of 12 August 1939, Untermyer explained that he 'would like to donate his garden to the City of Yonkers, which did not have a public park at the time. He mentioned that he was aware of Yonkers' financial situation, which would hinder it from coming up for the maintenance of the garden 'in the style that would be necessary'. Untermyer estimated the costs of the park's maintenance at this point to be $75,000 to $100,000 per year and added that he could not afford to set aside such a sum as a fund. Subsequently, he stated that in his opinion it would be appropriate for the State to take over the property in order to secure it for permanent public use. Untermyer expressed his conviction that Greystone was an attractive New York State asset and therefore should be turned into a state park.

Moses responded only three days later on 15 August 1939. While accepting Untermyer's invitation, he made it clear that it would be 'indispensable' for Untermyer to pledge a substantial part of the cost for upkeep in order 'to get any cooperation'. The Greystone garden could not become a state park unless

**FIGURE 21.** Untermyer Park, Yonkers, NY, the stairway underneath the 'Eagle's Nest' was probably joined by a waterfall on each side. Photo by Ceri Gunning, 2006.
the expenses of maintenance and operation were provided for by a financial endowment.

Another four days later, Untermyer pointed out to Moses again that his garden was especially suitable to be used as a public park. He brought to his attention that the estate was open to the public one day each week and that it 'has been patronized by thousands of visitors (from 20,000 to 30,000 a year), the daily attendance fluctuating with the season and the attractiveness and variety of the floral and horticultural displays'. Untermyer emphasized that features like statuary and antique gates, a collection of rhododendrons, 'valued at $250,000' and regarded as 'the best of Rhododendrons in New York', as well as a collection of cryptomeria trees and rare hickory made Greystone unique and 'differentiate[d] it from any other place in this country'. He implied that he expected, when offering all of this as a gift to the people of the USA, who were represented in this case by Moses, gratitude or at least acceptance, but especially the necessary funding. Untermyer continued that, in regard to the question of maintenance, he was 'hoping that you and your colleagues will agree with me that it would be a sacrilege to turn the place over without the adequate support' and that Moses should 'find it sufficiently unique to justify the expenditure'. Moses replied on 29 August 1939 that he did not consider Greystone fitting for a county or state park, but that it would definitely be 'an admirable city park and arboretum'. He agreed that the expanding City of Yonkers needed a local park in the near future. In addition, Moses suggested that the matter should be decided by the City of Yonkers on the basis of a local referendum, so that an assessment of the property, 'indicating in as much detail as possible the location of buildings and other facilities'. A blueprint was delivered promptly two days later to Moses' office in New York City, showing Greystone's 'permanent structures, improvements and roadways on a scale of 130 feet to the inch'.

Unfortunately, despite every effort and inquiry, this map could not be located.

In the same month, after correspondence with his son Alvin, Untermyer changed his will so that Greystone would be offered first to the state, then to the county, and then to the City of Yonkers. The beneficiary would be entitled 'to sell or dispose of the balance of the property, for any purpose whatsoever', in order to provide for the costs of maintenance and 'in the case of the City of Yonkers [being the recipient], to provide it ... with additional assessable values for levying the taxes to offset ... loss of the portion utilized solely as a park'. But, as letters from 20 September and 11 October 1939 indicate, Moses had not yet lost interest in the topic. He suggested that Untermyer should consider, in case neither the state, nor the county nor the city of Yonkers would accept Greystone, giving 'all plant material and statuary, which can be readily removed', together with a sufficient sum to be replanted and placed in the New York Botanical Garden as 'a new garden to be known as the "Untermyer Garden"'. Further, he recommended that Untermyer should donate money from a sale of Greystone to New York City and the public. This donation would then be used, according to Moses, 'for the establishment of a new playground in one of the congested and neglected
sections of the city... such playground to be called "Untermyer Playground" [and to be located] in the North Bronx, south of Mount Vernon, where rapid transit is about to be provided [and where] practically no park facilities existed at the time. When looking at how Moses spent money on his own architectural visions of public projects and parks and also when regarding how closely Greystone's design came to his preferences of style, it is hard to understand how Moses could make these suggestions and reject the chance to create a public park out of such a luxurious estate's garden. But the problem in dealing with Moses, as son Alvin Untermyer later described, was that his father incorrectly appeared to be more concerned about perpetuating, at public expense, the maintenance of [his] particular abode and something that [he] had built up, rather than providing an appropriate park for the underprivileged public. Moses seemed solely interested in creating an open space that was accessible to a broad public in a way that fit his overall concept for New York City without spending the funds of the State of New York. 

Untermyer rejected Moses' suggestions and replied on 14 October 1939, that he was not willing 'to do anything in the way of dismantling Greystone as its entire value for the public would...be destroyed'. He continued that 'if the place cannot be perpetuated as a garden and museum', he and his children had decided that it would be the best that after his death the property would be taken apart and 'sold as building lots, which would realize at least $500,000 to the estate — less inheritance taxes'. Untermyer was, as his correspondence with the director of the New York Botanical Garden of 14 October 1939 indicates, surprised that the expense of maintaining a garden could be so much of a problem and he was even more dismayed that neither the State nor the County would 'grasp the opportunity' to acquire Greystone as a park.

Despite these discouraging discussions, Untermyer remained convinced of his intention to make Greystone publicly accessible. Proving once and for all his qualities as a lawyer, he employed a trick to ensure the preservation of his garden. In the final version of his testament, Untermyer made it the first priority that at his death Greystone would be given to the State of New York to be used as 'a public park and gardens, to be known as "Samuel Untermyer Park and Gardens"'. In this context he demanded that all parts of his garden should be made 'available to the public for their use and enjoyment affording not only means for physical activity and relaxation but also aesthetic pleasure and inspiration for those less actively inclined who came to enjoy the beautiful floral and horticultural displays'. Untermyer clarified that 'there is now constructed on the property bequeathed an open-air theatre and walled-garden, known as the 'Greek Gardens', that is now and has been for many years devoted to exhibitions of flowers and flowering plants similar to those that have for generations characterized the exhibitions at the Hampton Court Gardens in England'. He especially expressed his hope 'that the State of New York or the appropriate authority thereof...would arrange for the perpetuation of these exhibitions and for the maintenance of the property in a condition generally similar to that in which it has been maintained by me'. In addition, Untermyer recommended the continued employment of his superintendent George H. Chisholm because of his knowledge of plants and his 'capacity to maintain and improve the property bequeathed, as a park and garden'. In case the State of New York rejected to accept his will, Untermyer added to his testament the option 'to offer the property to the City of Yonkers and the City of New York'.

All happened exactly as Untermyer had foreseen: when he died, the state refused to turn his garden into a state park. Consequently, the _cy pres_ doctrine, which states that when literal compliance with a will is impossible, the intention of a donor or testator should be carried out as nearly as possible, was applied to Untermyer's testament. A declaration, which interpreted the will accordingly, was recorded on 24 April 1941, and the City of Yonkers was brought into the situation as Untermyer intended: the city had to maintain parts of the property of Greystone as a public park. Subsequently, in order to reduce the costs of maintenance, the City of Yonkers sold parcels of the property keeping only the lots with the Greek Garden, the vista stair and the Eagle's nest in their ownership. The mansion and the greenhouses were later destroyed.

The non-profit membership corporation 'Samuel Untermyer Parks and Gardens' was established in 1941 with the purpose of 'carrying out the charitable and public purposes of the bequest of Greystone'. The certificate of incorporation stated as the objective 'to develop, improve, maintain and operate such land as...a public park and garden...and as...a public playground and/or for horticultural purposes'. But the taxation of Greystone remained an ongoing issue. Consequently, and by virtue of a provision presented by the lower courts and decided in accordance with the _cy pres_ doctrine and the certificate of incorporation, the garden was not sufficiently used as a public park and playground to justify exemption of the property from taxation. However, after further investigation, the court found that the...
property had been used since 1941 strictly for public purposes, that it had 'neither been devoted for public events of only charitable character, nor for private entertainment nor for other events, such as horticultural shows, held under exclusion of the public'.

Greystone was finally exempted from taxation in 1942.

While under the ownership of the City of Yonkers, the garden received the status of a Historic Landmark of the USA National Register of Historic Places. A bronze plaque at the garden's main entrance gate commemorates this status and is inscribed with the names of the former landowners. Since there are fewer than 2500 places in the USA on the National Register of Historic Places, Greystone was finally given some of the accreditation Untermyer had hoped for. Despite all the difficulties he encountered, Untermyer's garden is today a public park and still acknowledged for its unique landscape design. However, considering the strictures Untermyer had set up in the trust for its maintenance, Untermyer Park's condition is currently in decline.

The lost plan

During the 60 years of public ownership, the landscape design of Greystone has been considerably neglected and altered, but its former beauty can still be traced in what has been set in stone. Today, much of the artwork that Untermyer had collected to enhance Greystone's distinctiveness has been destroyed or removed from the garden. The relief of the unicorn, for example, situated at the lower entrance, is headless and only the hinges of the entrance gate are left to tell of its original quality and craftsmanship. The removal of the bronze sculpture, 'The Three Dancing Maidens', is also a great loss to the garden. It had originally been placed in front of the mansion, but was donated in 1947 by Untermyer's children to be located at the Central Park Conservatory Garden known today as the 'Untermyer Fountain' (figure 22). Created in 1910 by Walter Schott (1861-1938), Untermyer probably saw another casting of this sculpture while staying at his property in Berlin's Heerstrasse. In the vicinity of Berlin is the so-called Nymph fountain, located in the park of the castle Schlitz in Teterow, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (figure 23); it is easily imaginable that Untermyer visited this castle and park and was impressed by the artwork and location.

Nevertheless, some sculptures do remain exhibited in their original place in the garden and have been restored, such as Manship's sphinxes, which creset over the theater's stage. Even though much of the planting arrangement has been lost as well, there are still some plants to be found that are old enough to have been there when the garden was first created: the strangely shaped conifers at the sides of the entrance gate, a few large rhododendron bushes next to the theatre's stage, as well as other species growing further down the hill.

The Greek Garden is the most visited and best restored part of Greystone today. It is still very attractive, but has been considerably vandalized over the years. Most of the destruction happened during the economic crisis of the 1970s when cities cut back on park maintenance and when drugs, crime and
vandalism increased in general. Today, the guard's house at the bottom of the hill is still derelict: a ruin with its entrance closed off by a fading yellow police band, befitting the scene of fallen trees, broken steps and smeared walls.

The first major renovation effort was started in the late 1970s under the leadership of the local landscape architect James Piccone. His approach focused not on restoring buildings and artwork, but merely beautifying the structures. During this period, one surmises that Bosworth's original plan of Untermyer's garden was lost or stolen.

Today the landscape architect Ralph Crosby is involved in renovating and enhancing the infrastructural elements, like the irrigation system, before taking care of the more visible parts of the garden. Crosby has been working with the Park Department Deputy Commissioner August Cambria on the basis of the detailed report by the office 'Heritage Landscapes Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners' to restore the park. But the renovation has come to a stop several times, since they need to apply continuously for grants and governmental funds to provide for maintenance and restoration. Consequently, despite the effort of the City of Yonkers, a lot more work needs to be done as well as money to be invested to re-establish the former beauty of Untermyer's garden.

Over the years Greystone's restoration has cost millions of dollars designed to be enjoyed by all residents of the Tri-State area. The buildings and mosaics have been renovated, new bushes were planted, trashcans installed, and red rubber concrete pavement laid down. The old carriage house located outside of the garden's perimeter wall in front of the upper entrance gate was rebuilt and modernized to accommodate the Park Department's offices as well as rooms for a theater company, which currently holds a summer stage at 'Untermyer Park'.

Still, it remains unclear whether the layout of the garden today corresponds with the original concept. Bosworth's own publication of the first design ideas, the 'Preliminary Plan of Greystone Gardens', in the Architectural Review Journal of December 1918, is his only known drawing of the gardens and the only exact existing drawing telling of his intention. Nevertheless, in measuring the elements set in stone and when redrawing the layout of the Greek Garden, Bosworth's formal design remains very present today.

The City of Yonkers was and is not, as predicted by Samuel Untermyer, wealthy enough to maintain the garden in its previous style.

Conclusion

A landmark with a special connection to the history and politics of the USA, situated in an exclusive location with a remarkable landscape design, the 'Untermyer Park' in Yonkers should easily stand out among public parks and receive the funding necessary for its maintenance. But since opened to the public, the garden has become undefined through its subsequent use. Still more disappointing, although the park is publicly accessible, only a few actually visit and reap the garden's rewards. A revival of the once regularly held horticultural shows and opening Greystone once a week might add stir up public attraction to the garden. Due to the current lack of funding, re-establishing the garden's former horticultural significance is a momentous
challenge. Beyond the summer theater, the garden lacks specific programming. 'Untermeyer Park' is more of a historic remnant than contemporary public space. It may not be necessary to modernize the garden to conform to today's needs, so much as to retrace its history and revive it for future generations.

In conclusion, the transformation of a private garden into a public park depends on funding as well as on the preservation of its initial design and use. Greystone's history needs to be documented, explained and publicized, not only to heighten its distinctiveness, but also to clarify what needs to be done in order to restore Bosworth's design and to re-established Untermeyer's civic intentions and aspiration for the garden. Since a garden is a work of art, it should be possible to preserve and maintain it in the way it was created, in order to ensure not only its appearance, but also its future use by the public.

Acknowledgment
I thank the support of the following persons for helping to complete my research: August Cambria, Ralph Crosby, Genya Erling, Prof. Dr. Gerit Groning, Patricia O'Donell of Heritage Landscapes Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners.

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NOTES

1. John T. Waring was the President of the City of Yonkers. He established a hat manufacturing business in the city in 1840, which is said to have been the 'largest hat manufacturer in the world' by 1862. Heritage Landscapes Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners, Untermeyer Park, Greystone, Yonkers, New York: Historic Landscape Report and Treatment Plan (Charlotte, Vermont and Norwalk, Connecticut: Heritage Landscapes Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners, September, 1995), p. 5. Hereafter cited as Untermeyer Park Report & Plan.

2. It is said that the mansion reflected the industrial background of Waring: 'We may trace the manufacturer of Flats in the rectangular line and big mass of the house ...'. (Untermeyer Park Report & Plan, p. 5.)

3. Ibid., p. 5.


9. Ibid., p. 126.


12. Samuel Untermeyer Papers, 1911-1952, inter-office memo, November 18, 1932, Background of Yonkers Property by E. Seeman (Jewish Reader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Campus, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion), p. 3. Hereafter cited as Samuel Untermeyer Papers for that date.

13. Ibid., p. 3.

14. Ibid., p. 3.


18. Ibid., p. 15.

19. Ibid., p. 35.

20. Ibid., p. 36.

21. They were sculpted by Paul Manship (1885-1966), who also created a set of almost life-size bronze statues, called 'Diana and Actaeon' and his hounds' for Untermeyer in 1924 upon the death of his wife. Where these sculptures exactly had been located in Greystone's garden during Untermeyer's time is unknown. The Statue of Diana is now shown at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers, NY, but according to Samuel Untermeyer's letter to Robert Moses of 14 October 1930, an unspecified other Paul Manship statue was stolen by some of the men.
who were working on a W. P. A. project outside the place. Samuel Untermyer Papers.


33. Isidore Konti (1862-1938) was trained in the Beaux Arts tradition and had taken part in an exhibition of the National Sculpture Society at the Madison Square Garden. His sculpture 'the brook' is now on display in Yonkers Hudson River Museum. Personal visit in 2005.

34. Untermyer Park Report and Plan, p. 20.
35. Ibid., p. 20.
36. Ibid., p. 20.
42. Ibid., p. 20.
43. Ibid., p. 20.
44. Ibid., p. 20.
45. Ibid., p. 20.
46. Ibid., p. 20.
47. Samuel Untermyer Papers, letter from Alvin Untermyer of September 21, 1939, p. 2.
48. Ibid., p. 2.
49. Ibid., p. 2.
50. Ibid., p. 2.
51. Ibid., p. 2.
52. Ibid., p. 2.
54. Ibid., p. 2.
55. Ibid., p. 2.
56. Samuel Untermyer Papers, Inter-office memo, November 18, 1952, p. 3.
58. Samuel Untermyer Papers, Inter-office memo, November 18, 1952, p. 3.
60. Ibid., p. 2.
61. Ibid., p. 2.
62. Ibid., p. 2.
67. Cambria, August, Deputy Commissioner of the Park Department of the City of Yonkers, 23 June 2005, Interview.