

# Women, Education, and the Birth of a Profession

A Study of the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture of Groton,  
Massachusetts (1901-1945)

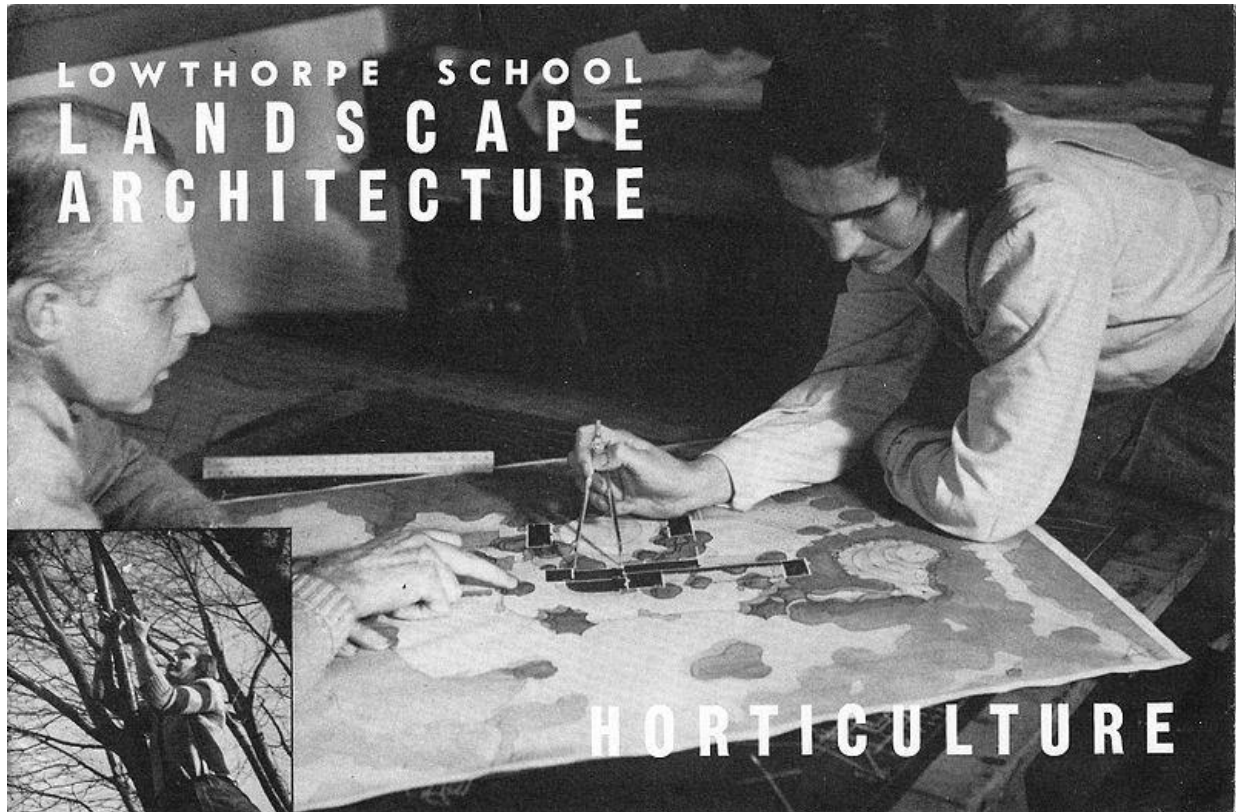


Figure 1. The Lowthorpe School, Cover of Brochure, circa the 1940s. Providence, Rhode Island School of Design Archives, Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture records, SP 2.0, (Lowthorpe RISDA).

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The late Linda Chisholm was the author's own version of 'Mrs Low' and it is to both women that this dissertation is dedicated.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction



The side of the school. At either side of this snowy path, behind the sheltering hedges, are wide beds filled with perennials which show promising clumps even under the white wintry cover.

### A LITTLE VISIT TO LOWTHORPE

Figure 1.1. Early publicity for Lowthorpe. *The House Beautiful* 33, 4 (Mar 1916), p. 111. Public Domain.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a handful of post-secondary landscape architecture programmes were launched in the northeastern United States to formalise what had been largely self-guided, on-the-job training. The success of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Central Park (1859) had stimulated a national craving for green spaces that spurred the growth of public parks and civic landscapes. Commissions for civic work and the large private landscapes of the wealthy created what has been called a golden age<sup>1</sup> for landscape design from the late nineteenth century until the Depression; the up-and-coming classes with smaller properties swelled the audience for home and garden improvement. The founding of *The House Beautiful* in 1896 addressed that wider audience (Figure 1.2). The first 'shelter' magazine, it eschewed the traditional domestic programming, proposing instead to shape and reflect Americans' tastes in gardens, architecture, and interior design.<sup>2</sup> Historian David Streatfield wrote that 'these publications advertised the work of women landscape architects and disseminated design principles by making a clear linkage between large estate gardens and small gardens'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Commonly used; see Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller, *The Golden Age of American Gardens* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Mayfield, 'At Home: Shelter Magazines and the American Life 1890-1930' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Alabama, 2019), pp. 19-21.

<sup>3</sup> David Streatfield, 'Gender and the History of Landscape Architecture, 1875-1975', in *Women in Landscape Architecture: Essays on History and Practice*, ed. by Louise A. Mazingo and Linda Jewell, pp.5-31 (p.10).

# THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL CO.

EAST, WEST, HOME'S BEST

PRICE, 25 CENTS A COPY. \$2.50 A YEAR

VOLUME TWENTY

CHICAGO, SEPTEMBER, 1906

NUMBER FOUR



The Path in the Woods — Miss Thayer's Garden, Manchester, Mass.

11

Figure 1.2. Garden design cover feature. *The House Beautiful* 20, 4 (Sept 1906). Public Domain.

The expanded scope of potential commissions, along with shifting attitudes toward women in design and the workplace, had created a window of opportunity for women in landscape architecture, and a few had begun practising. In 1901, just a year after Harvard University established the first academic degree in landscape architecture, Judith Eleanor Motley Low (1842-1933) founded a landscape architecture school to open the door of the profession to women. Located near Boston in Groton, Massachusetts, The School of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening for Women was the first such school for women in the northeast.

Lowthorpe was in the vanguard: navigating cultural headwinds to frame the school's mission, the school developed a course of study that would attract interested students while remaining within acceptable social boundaries. Lowthorpe thus stepped into two ongoing debates – defining the new field of landscape architecture and setting a course for academia within it – and represented a third: determining the roles women might play as landscape professionals.

Lowthorpe presented itself as a quietly genteel women's vocational institution attuned to the times without overtly challenging convention. In a profile of the school published in March 1916 in *The House Beautiful* magazine, Richard B. Kimball described his visit as an enjoyable wintry jaunt ending at Lowthorpe's charming country place (Figure 1.1), where 'the teaching staff remind one rather of collective hostesses and the students of collective guests'. Pointing out that Lowthorpe was not a finishing school, however, Kimball expounded on its teaching of a useful vocation but then slots the students into an inevitable, acceptable future: 'There is a growing demand for skilful designers of flower gardens and of tree and shrub plantings' he noted.<sup>4</sup>

Lowthorpe graduates did not, in fact, limit their ambitions to flower gardens and planting designs. Through a study of Lowthorpe's history and pedagogical priorities, this dissertation will show that Lowthorpe developed a rigorous, professional curriculum to train women to work in a profession that generally viewed them, and their work, as parenthetical to the practice of landscape architecture. An examination of early developments in academic instruction will show that educational opportunities in landscape architecture came about for women not because institutions began to admit women but because individual instructors and members of the profession opened up to the idea of women working in the field and also, crucially, thought they should be allowed training. Women could and would practice, but for the most part – and with the help of both female and male allies – had to create their own educational opportunities. Lowthorpe was distinguished by a distinctive campus and location, an exceptional faculty, and a unique curriculum, and presents the opportunity to illuminate the profession's development through the prism of an institution dedicated to preparing its practitioners. Equally compelling is the story of its founding, which reaches back into the period when landscape design education was coming together from horticultural,

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<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Kimball, 'A Little Visit to Lowthorpe', *The House Beautiful*, 33, 4 (Mar 1916), pp. 111-113.

agricultural, and architectural courses spread across several institutions. Lowthorpe was at the birth of the profession and its academic wing. It was also a success. Among Lowthorpe's distinguished alumnae (Appendix B) are thirteen landscape architects named 'Pioneers' by The Cultural Landscape Foundation ('TCLF').

This dissertation explores the significance of Lowthorpe in the context of the development of landscape architecture as a distinct profession during the first four decades of the twentieth century. The following chapters will present research findings and analysis. Chapter 2 will set out the historiography and methodology that informed the research. The dissertation's core begins with Chapter 3, which establishes the social and professional contexts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that influenced Lowthorpe's founding. Chapter 4 will focus on the significance of the location in establishing Lowthorpe's bona fides and supporting its pedagogical approach. The relationship of Lowthorpe to the landscape architecture community will be assessed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 will analyse the pedagogical emphases at Lowthorpe in the context of the evolving profession and expectations for women as practitioners. In addition, the chapter will look at Lowthorpe's reputation as a horticulturally focused school in light of landscape architecture's continued effort to define its place in the arts. Chapter 7 will conclude the dissertation by assessing Lowthorpe's achievements and legacy. It will situate the school as an educational pioneer actively engaged in the landscape architecture field during a defining period for the profession and show that Lowthorpe alumnae, like their male counterparts, were well prepared to become outstanding contributors to landscape design in America.

## Chapter 2: Historiography and Methodology

### Historiography

This analysis of Lowthorpe joins a small number of Lowthorpe theses and dissertations, only one of which is a complete study of the school: Jane Knight's 1986 Cornell University Master's thesis.<sup>5</sup> Knight sets the school in the context of its period relative to social strictures and landscape architecture and charts its growth as an institution, including a chronological analysis of the curriculum and assessment of the school's legacy. Written when it was still possible to interview alumnae, the thesis on Lowthorpe provides some pertinent remembrances from students. Richard Schneider's unpublished history establishes a general chronology of Lowthorpe up to and beyond its 1945 merger with the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).<sup>6</sup> Dorothy May Anderson's book on her alma mater, *The Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women* (founded in 1916 in Boston), provides information about the formative period in academia in which Lowthorpe and Cambridge were the only two landscape architecture schools for women, with valuable information on the two schools' collaborations. Part memoir, part institutional history, Anderson, who taught briefly at Lowthorpe in the 1930s, threads comments on events, attitudes, and instructional approaches throughout an ultimately elegiac founding and survival narrative of a significant experiment.<sup>7</sup>

Jennifer Thomas' 2009 master's thesis on the education of Denver native and Lowthorpe alumna Jane Ries (1909-2005)<sup>8</sup> focuses on her years at Lowthorpe (1928-1932) and her later career. The thesis describes Lowthorpe's combined horticulture-and-design pedagogy, includes key faculty and ideologies, and assesses the learning experience on campus at that time. Thomas also explores the academic exchanges between the three Boston-area schools – Harvard, Lowthorpe, and Cambridge – a dynamic that Thomas terms a 'triad of interchange' beneficial to Lowthorpe students. This dissertation will expand that triad, adding the

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<sup>5</sup> Jane Alison Knight, 'An Examination of the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for Women, Groton, Massachusetts, 1901-1945' (unpublished master's thesis, Cornell University, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Richard A. Schneider, 'Lowthorpe' (unpublished manuscript, Rhode Island School of Design, Department of Alumni Relations, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Dorothy May Anderson, *Women, Design, and The Cambridge School* (PDA Publishers: 1987).

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Lynn Thomas, 'The Education of Jane Silverstein Ries at the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for Women, Groton, Massachusetts, 1928-1932' (unpublished master's thesis, The University of Colorado-Denver, 2009).



influence of practitioners who will be shown to have been essential to the development of Lowthorpe and the profession. On women in the profession, Donna Palmer's 1976 master's thesis tracks the profession's development through the archives of *Landscape Architecture*; an appendix includes interviews with influential practitioners and educators, including Lowthorpe's Edith Henderson, Jane Ries, Dorothea Harrison, and Elizabeth Pattee, as well as Anderson.<sup>9</sup> Thaisa Way's 2005 Cornell PhD dissertation, *Women as a Force in Landscape Architecture, 1893-1942*, pulls together the significant strands in the development of the profession of landscape architecture and includes an assessment of the educational milieu in this formative period.<sup>10</sup> Way, Director of Garden and Landscape Studies at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, offers a summary of Lowthorpe's history and pedagogy alongside that of the other schools. The dissertation forms the basis of her 2009 *Unbounded Practice: Women and Landscape Architecture in the Early Twentieth Century*.<sup>11</sup>

## Methodology

The dissertation has relied on primary material as much as possible. With Lowthorpe's closure as an independent institution in 1945, however, came an interruption in record-keeping. What remains of Lowthorpe's records is a relatively small archive at RISD;<sup>12</sup> much has been lost during a sequence of moves within the school, although a small amount of material was archived at Harvard and Cornell. The most important files for this dissertation have been school catalogues and brochures, starting with an undated brochure, likely from 1905-08. The 26 catalogues and a few brochures cover 1910-44 with numerous gaps. The few leaves of correspondence concern either the endowment campaign or a set of Olmsted-owned books. Little correspondence survives to explain decisions about the school's development over time. Student work has not been preserved apart from what was reprinted in catalogues. The most crucial missing pieces are financial data and student records; there are only two financial reports and no enrolment, graduation, or alumnae records.

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<sup>9</sup> Donna Palmer, 'An Overview of the Trends Eras, and Values of Landscape Architecture in America from 1910 to the Present with an Emphasis on the Contributions of Women to the Profession' (unpublished master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 1976)

<sup>10</sup> Thaisa Way, 'Women as a Force in Landscape Architecture, 1893-1942' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Thaisa Way, *Unbounded Practice: Women and Landscape Architecture in the Early Twentieth Century* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013)

<sup>12</sup> 'Guide to the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture Records, 1887-1954', <<https://www.riamco.org/render?eadid=US-RPD-sp2.0>> [Accessed 25 Feb 2022]

Interviews with faculty and graduates are precluded now by the passage of time; however, the record of interviews in the Palmer thesis, the student survey responses summarised in the Knight dissertation, and a few postcards from a 1930s Lowthorpe survey have allowed the voices of some alumnae and faculty to speak. Invaluable archives for Lowthorpe's curriculum included those of the Olmsted firm and the Landscape Exchange Program ('LEP') at the University of Illinois-Champaign/Urbana. From 1910, *Landscape Architecture* magazine ('LAM'), the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) journal, served as an information centre for both the new profession and the schools. LAM's important 'School News' segment, however, did not appear until 1922, halfway through Lowthorpe's life. A search through local newspapers and period magazines has turned up articles that shed light on attitudes and expectations for women in landscape architecture and uncovered Lowthorpe-related advertising, fund-raising, and networking activities.

Although this study looks at women's education and how it was shaped by notions of women's suitability for garden and landscape design, it is not intended as a gender study, which would be outside the paper's scope and the scholarly expertise of the author. Research made clear that the ideologies of patriarchy and the so-called women's sphere played out, not unexpectedly, in landscape architecture during this period, as shown by the deference to such norms with which progressive ideas about women were proposed. Ultimately, the research attempts to uncover, recognise, and explore the contexts that shaped Lowthorpe's approach to educating women and, through this exploration, illuminate the early years of the landscape architecture profession.

## Chapter 3: Lowthorpe and the New Profession of Landscape Architecture



Figure 3.1. Postcard of main house and border, n.d. Collection the Author.

This chapter will examine the dynamic period from the latter years of the nineteenth century through the first decades of the twentieth century when landscape architecture, after some forty years of gradual professionalisation, did not ‘emerge’ as a profession as much as it was finally willed into being. It was willed into being through the efforts of several women and men who, as individuals or by founding or taking on leadership of horticultural, educational, and professional institutions, brought their considerable forces to bear on their mission around the turn of the century.

Ideas around professionalising the field and expanding education began coalescing around the turn of the century in casual gatherings of practitioners, through interrelated institutions like Boston’s Arnold Arboretum, Harvard, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (‘MIT’), and in the forum of the influential but short-lived *Garden and Forest: A Journal of Horticulture, Landscape Art, and Forestry* (‘*Garden and Forest*’), founded by the Arnold Arboretum’s formidable Charles Sprague Sargent. The extraordinary group involved in the push to formalise standards and define the profession included members and alumni of the Olmsted firm and influential practitioners like Frank Waugh, O.C. Simonds, Warren Manning,

Charles Eliot, Fletcher Steele, and Beatrix Farrand, as well as the respected critic Mariana van Rensselaer and Charles W. Eliot, the transformational President of Harvard (and father of landscape architect Charles Eliot). Members of these groups collaborated in establishing the profession, acted as sometimes ambivalent allies for women's education, and functioned as cross-pollinators of ideas in what was, in many ways, a close-knit world. Lowthorpe depended upon this web of connections on both the academic and administrative sides of its venture.

Early on, it became clear that the field would require an academic footing. In the absence of formal education in landscape architecture, the ageing Olmsted Sr, at the end of his career, had 'concentrated on making his office a disciplined training ground'.<sup>13</sup> Academia would bring needed consistency in the 'kind, number, and content of courses.'<sup>14</sup> As landscape architecture sought to professionalise, formal education became the ticket to the practice for both men and women. It seems likely that the increased momentum in establishing the profession drove the rapid instituting of three schools within two years of ASLA's formation, all in the Boston area: Harvard, MIT, and Lowthorpe. MIT's co-educational programme never quite found its footing, however, and the landscape track was being phased out by 1908, leaving Harvard and Lowthorpe to pioneer training for men and women. Over the next fifteen years, several schools across the country announced landscape architecture programmes, expanding the group active in developing academic standards; among these was The Cambridge School for Women, with whom Lowthorpe occasionally collaborated. The profession set about developing professional and educational standards through ASLA's Standing Committee on Education (1909), the National Conference on Instruction in Landscape Architecture (NCILA) of 1920, and the Association of Professional Schools of Landscape Architecture (APSLA) in 1930.

Work for contemporary women was still defined by perceived natural 'aptitudes,' largely domestic in sensibility: thus, flower arranging, horticulture, and small gardens around the home were encouraged. American women formed garden clubs and wrote and avidly consumed gardening manuals that filled both an inspirational and, at least in part, instructional void. Many books promoted garden design as creating a picture with loosely

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<sup>13</sup> Phyllis Andersen, 'The Arnold Arboretum and the Early Years of Landscape Design Education in America', *Arnoldia*, 62, 3 (2003), pp. 2-11.

<sup>14</sup> 'School News: Association of Professional Schools of Landscape Architecture', *Landscape Architecture*, 20, 3 (Apr 1930), pp. 250-252.

massed perennials and an emphasis on colour, paying more attention to horticulture and plant choice than to design or site conditions. Class of 1917 alumna Eleanor Christie's experience, described in the Knight thesis, underscores this observation: having fallen in love with gardens on a tour of Europe, Christie received permission from her father to make a garden at home and sought instruction from garden books in the local library. She found good information on what and how to plant and sample plans but not enough on the fundamentals underpinning layout and technical design considerations. A chance sighting of an advertisement for Lowthorpe, likely similar to that in Figure 3.3, changed her life: 'within ten days, she had enrolled and been assigned a drawing board and was pursuing the answer to her question'.<sup>15</sup> Lowthorpe prepared Christie to practice for more than sixty years as a landscape architect.

**LOWTHORPE**  
**A School of Landscape  
 Architecture for Women**

36 miles from Boston.  
 Intensive training for a delightful and profitable  
 profession for women.  
 Courses in Landscape Architecture, Horticulture  
 and Planting Design.  
 Address the Secretary, Groton, Mass.

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 5 brick buildings. New athletic field. Academy farm—  
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 Dormitory. New school building. Summer camp. For  
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 Mass., Cambridge, 29 Everett St.

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 for Girls*  
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 rection. Stimulating ideals of health, responsibility, and  
 Christian influence. One hundred acres, pine groves, 3000  
 feet of seashore. Expert tutoring. Athletic, Business,  
 Cultural and College Preparatory Courses. Arts and  
 Crafts. Corrective Gymnastics. Recreation Camp July  
 and August.  
 Summer School for advanced students. Training course for councillors.  
 Miss Faith Bickford, Miss Addie Bickford, Directors  
 Box K, Brewster, Mass.

Figure 3.2 Options for women in 1924. *Good Housekeeping* (Jul 1924), p. 12. Public Domain.

Lowthorpe's Elizabeth Pattee, in the 1920 vocational guide *Careers for Women*, described a typical career as starting with drafting in an office before branching off into solo practice, adding an optimistic, 'In the Eastern States there is still a considerable prejudice against

<sup>15</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 31.

women draftsmen, both in architectural and landscape architectural offices, but this will eventually be overcome'.<sup>16</sup> Written by women for women, the landscape architecture entries in *Careers for Women* dispensed with any feminine aptitude angle, though 'a pleasing personality' was recommended.

The idea of aptitudes was pervasive. The MIT programme's founder, Guy Lowell, like many, thought women were a natural:

A woman will fuss with a garden in a way that no man will ever have the patience to do. If necessary, she will sit on a camp stool and see every individual plant put into the ground. I have no hesitation in saying that where a relatively small garden is concerned, the average woman will do better than the average man.<sup>17</sup>

Lowell, in this comment, articulated the two ingrained beliefs women in the profession would continually come up against, the implications of what were believed to be particularly female aptitudes: that they were best suited to designing small gardens and that they would be proficient in drawing up planting plans and laying out flower gardens – subordinate to the real work. Although landscape architects like Beatrix Farrand ignored these limitations or deployed the associated skills to professional advantage, it also seems likely that some women accepted them as appropriate or as a reasonable price of admission to the field. It was, in fact, the perception of women's affinity for gardening that opened the door to the profession in the first place. In 1892, Sargent responded in *Garden and Forest* to proposals that women join the field:

If women develop capacity in this direction there should be opportunity for their employment in a professional way. Some prejudices as to what constitutes a proper profession for women would need first to be removed [ . . . ] There is no reason why women should not enter callings that bring them into the healthy life of the open air, if no hard manual labor is demanded.

In concluding, Sargent – whose opinion carried weight – gave sanction to extending the woman's sphere from the home grounds into the professional world:

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<sup>16</sup> *Careers for Women*, ed. by Catherine Filene (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), pp. 50-56.

<sup>17</sup> Mary Bronson Hartt, 'Women and the Art of Landscape Gardening', *The Outlook*, 88,13 (28 Mar 1908), p. 699.

Therefore landscape-gardening is a suitable employment for those who are capable in this direction. Women are now giving themselves to horticulture, and floriculture to a considerable extent; in the latter, particularly, their almost universal love of flowers gives them a peculiar fitness for such work. Schools for the training of girls in these employments would be admirable institutions.<sup>18</sup>

Mrs Low knew Sargent quite well. It is not certain that she was aware of this particular discussion, but within ten years, she would establish Lowthorpe for these purposes. The professionalisation of landscape architecture was underway, as was the establishment of its academic arm with Harvard and Lowthorpe in the vanguard.

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<sup>18</sup> Charles Sprague Sargent, 'Women as Landscape Architects', *Garden and Forest*, 5 (New York: The Garden and Forest Publishing Company, 1892), p. 482.

## Chapter 4: The School of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening for Women – A Laboratory for Learning



Figure 4.1. A laboratory for learning. Lowthorpe Report of Progress 1929-1930 (Lowthorpe RISDA) n.p.

The founding of Lowthorpe's School of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening (Figure 4.1) within a year of Harvard's programme and its sharing of many of the same patrons and instructors has been read as a commitment to women's academic training. It might also suggest a growing institutional acceptance of professional roles for women, although the findings presented in this dissertation will present a more complex interpretation. At the core of Lowthorpe's mission was its site: the historic house and expansive grounds. This chapter will examine the significance of Groton as one of Lowthorpe's three distinguishing features, alongside its faculty and instructional methodology. The circumstances of the school's founding by Mrs Low (Figure 4.2), the precedents and inspirations, will also set the school in the centre of the activities establishing landscape architecture as a professional practice and an academic field of study.





Figure 4.2 Judith Eleanor Motley Low at Lowthorpe. Courtesy of National Park Service (n.d.) <<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/women-in-landscape-history.htm>> [accessed 6 June 2022]. Public Domain.

Almost nothing has been preserved of the early years of Lowthorpe, and little is known about the personal impetus for Mrs Low's establishment of the school apart. Several oblique references suggest a coming together of impulses within Mrs Low's acquaintance: 'contacts with the group behind this development [the Harvard programme]' were cited in a Lowthorpe brochure; alumnae Agnes Clark wrote of 'a group of friends' who shared a love of gardens as supporting Mrs Low's plan.<sup>19</sup> The *Boston Sunday Globe* expanded the circle of influences, citing her love of horticulture, well-known Shanghai gardens, and studies at Swanley Horticultural College, located in England, as precedents for the school.<sup>20</sup> This anecdotal

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<sup>19</sup> 'Lowthorpe as a School of Landscape Architecture for Women', Providence, Rhode Island School of Design Archives, Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture records, SP 2.0, (Lowthorpe RISDA), loose document, n.d; Agnes Selkirk Clark, 'Studying Landscape Architecture under Ideal Conditions', *Bulletin of the Garden Club of America*, 3, 2 (Mar 1925), pp. 36-38.

<sup>20</sup> 'Training Women as Gardeners', *The Boston Sunday Globe* (26 Oct 1913), p. 64.

reference to studying at Swanley has been oft-repeated; Swanley would seem unlikely given that at the time Swanley admitted women in the 1890s, Mrs Low would have been preoccupied with family matters, including the deaths of both of her parents and her husband. She did, however, apply for a new passport in 1899 and could have embarked on a reconnaissance trip before establishing Lowthorpe.



Figure 4.3. Woodland Hill, circa the 1930s. Courtesy of Mrs George Skinner, *Arnoldia*, 64, 1 (2005), p. 5. Copyright Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

There would seem no need to look abroad for inspiration, with Harvard's Bussey Institution and the adjacent Arnold Arboretum on Mrs Low's doorstep. She had grown up with her grandparents at the Bussey homestead, Woodland Hill (Figure 4.3), for which her mother, Maria Motley, a granddaughter of Benjamin Bussey, had a life tenancy.<sup>21</sup> Merchant and horticulturist Bussey had in 1835 left his estate and a financial endowment to Harvard for a school of agriculture and horticulture, in itself a progressive idea: most secondary schools of the time were private institutions focusing on religion, liberal arts, and the classics. Mrs Low's father, Thomas Motley, Jr, was an instructor at the Bussey Institution until his death.<sup>22</sup> Woodland Hill, carved out of the estate for the family, would finally go to Harvard upon Maria Motley's passing, and the Bussey lands would eventually be subsumed into the Arnold

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<sup>21</sup> Benjamin Bussey, 'Last Will and Testament', Probate Docket Books (1793-1916), Vol. 75, 1842 (Norfolk County, Massachusetts), Filmstrip Images 621-639.

<sup>22</sup> 'Records of the Bussey Institution, 1883-1994: A Finding Aid', Arnold Arboretum Archives of Harvard University (June 2003), © President and Fellows of Harvard University, n.p.

Arboretum. Had the family retained Woodland Hill for one more generation, Mrs Low might have sited Lowthorpe there, taking advantage of proximity to Bussey, the Arboretum, Harvard, and professional resources.

The Bussey Institution (Figure 4.4) may be considered a precedent for Lowthorpe through Bussey-Motley family ties, its horticultural focus, and the example of its admission of women (the only Harvard institution to do so). In 1897, referencing an existing landscape gardening course, Harvard authorised Bussey instructor Benjamin Watson to include female students: 'A demand having arisen for the admission of a few women to Mr. Watson's course on landscape gardening, the Corporation granted the application on the ground that a knowledge of horticulture and landscape architecture might open to women a field in which they could win success.'<sup>23</sup> In 1898, President Eliot wrote to a colleague:

Mr. Watson would also like to receive women in his course on Trees and Shrubs, or in the course on general Horticulture. He says that he has one good woman student in Landscape Gardening, and that another woman has applied for the course in general Horticulture. Watson is in favor of giving women the same opportunities that he gives men.<sup>24</sup>

MIT students Martha Hutcheson and Marian Coffin supplemented what they saw as a horticulturally inadequate MIT course with Watson's classes.<sup>25</sup> Bussey's influence may have been felt at Lowthorpe through the perspectives of alumni like landscape architects Loring Underwood, Rose Standish Nichols, and Nichols' brother-in-law Arthur Shurcliff (originally spelt Shurtleff), all of whom lectured at the school. President Eliot's son Charles studied at Bussey in 1882 in preparation for practice as a landscape architect and campaigned for Harvard to institute an academic programme in landscape architecture.

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<sup>23</sup> 'Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College: 1897-98', Harvard University (Cambridge: Published by the University, 1899), pp. 39-40.

<sup>24</sup> Andersen, 'Arnold Arboretum', p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Clarence Fowler, 'Three Women in Landscape Architecture', *Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Alumnae Review IV* (Northampton, MA: Smith College, 1932), p.10.



Figure 4.4. The Bussey Institution, 1890s. *Arnoldia*, 64,1 (2005), p. 8. Copyright Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

The brief, though not insignificant, appearance of the Bussey Institution in the story of landscape architecture spotlights its role in pioneering landscape design instruction and as a forerunner to Lowthorpe. Overshadowed by the Arnold Arboretum, it was side-lined when Harvard established its landscape architecture programme not at Bussey but instead, in a rejection of an agricultural/horticultural heritage for the profession, within the Lawrence Scientific School, whose synthesis of arts and sciences represented a more desirable aesthetic for landscape architecture. Watson's courses became required for Harvard landscape architecture students, however, and in 1909 after the reorganisation of Bussey, he joined the landscape school faculty. With interests in horticulture and garden-making and ties to the Bussey Institution and the Arnold Arboretum, Mrs Low would have been aware of the momentum in defining landscape architecture as a profession. She was also familiar with establishing institutions for the greater good and the legacy they built. In addition, there was the informal precedent of women creating their path through a man's world, as in the oft-cited example of Beatrix Farrand designing her training with Boston and New York resources, or as noted in this chapter, Hutcheson and Coffin simply fashioning an ad hoc curriculum to fill MIT's gaps. Lowthorpe would obviate that need.

Mrs Low's proposal of 11 September 1901 (Figure 4.5) for a school teaching 'landscape gardening, elementary architecture, horticulture, botany and allied subjects' noted classes

starting that October, but instruction did not begin until the following September. Whether or not Mrs Low scouted Swanley in 1889-1900, by July of 1901, she was in Boston and had located and purchased the Prescott House, a substantial property in the bucolic country town of Groton, some 35 miles outside the city. (Maps of the campus and Groton are included as Appendix D.) The immediate next steps would be to lay out and furnish the residence, schoolrooms, and campus; hire staff and recruit faculty; design an instructional framework for women; validate the endeavour through commitments of support from the landscape design community; and create enough public awareness to acquire students. It was an accomplishment, even with the extension of a year: the other two Boston schools, Harvard and MIT, already had libraries, infrastructure, and well-established instructional frameworks, plus the endowments, history, and academic status to attract and support qualified students. Lowthorpe could not start on an equal footing, but it could attach history to its school through its site, as will be shown, and draw on the same resources as the men's schools for curriculum and instruction.

An announcement of a revised opening date for September 1902 (Figure 4.6) reflected the preparation and changes that had occurred in the interim. There was now a name for the school – The School of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening for Women – along with an expansion of technical courses and a realignment of school fees from an all-inclusive \$500 per year to \$100 per year plus boarding costs. (Tuition would remain at that rate until the 1916-1917 school year.)

Lowthorpe had a slow start. Long-time instructor Laura Dawson recalled in 1928 that Lowthorpe had grown “. . . from a trembling vision with one student to a substantial professional school of the first rank’.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Laura Dawson, ‘25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Report: Class of 1903’ (Cambridge: Radcliffe College), p. 70.



IT IS PROPOSED TO ESTABLISH A COLLEGE WHERE INSTRUCTION WILL BE GIVEN TO WOMEN IN LANDSCAPE GARDENING, ELEMENTARY ARCHITECTURE, HORTICULTURE, BOTANY AND ALLIED SUBJECTS.

FOR THE PRESENT INSTRUCTION WILL BE GIVEN IN THE HOUSE AND ON THE LAND OF MRS. EDWARD GILCHRIST LOW, WHICH IS SITUATED ON "THE GREAT ROAD" IN GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS, THIRTY-FIVE MILES FROM BOSTON ON THE BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD, THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL. HERE INSTRUCTORS AND A FEW STUDENTS WILL LIVE. OTHER STUDENTS IN HOUSES NEAR BY.

THE LAND WILL BE USED AS FLOWER GARDENS, KITCHEN GARDENS, FRUIT PLANTATIONS AND NURSERIES FOR TREES AND SHRUBS.

THE TEACHING WILL BE DIVIDED INTO THEORETIC AND PRACTICAL WORK, INCLUDING LECTURES, OBJECT LESSONS UPON THE LAND, IN THE GREENHOUSE, IN THE FIELDS AND NEIGHBORING WOODS.

THE COURSE OF STUDY AND WORK IS FOR TWO YEARS OF TWO TERMS EACH.

FEES, FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS A YEAR, IN ADVANCE PAYMENTS OF TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH TERM. THIS YEAR THE FIRST TERM WILL BEGIN THE SECOND WEEK OF OCTOBER.

THE ABOVE FEES INCLUDE ALL EXPENSES EXCEPT LAUNDRESS, MEDICAL ATTENDANCE AND BOOKS.

ADDRESS,

MRS. EDWARD GILCHRIST LOW,

LOWTHORPE,

GROTON, MASS.,

OR ARCHIBALD M. HOWE,

10 TRUMONT ST., ROOM 65,

SEPTEMBER 11, 1901.

BOSTON, MASS.

Figure 4.5. Proposal for Lowthorpe, 11 September 1901 (Lowthorpe RISDA).

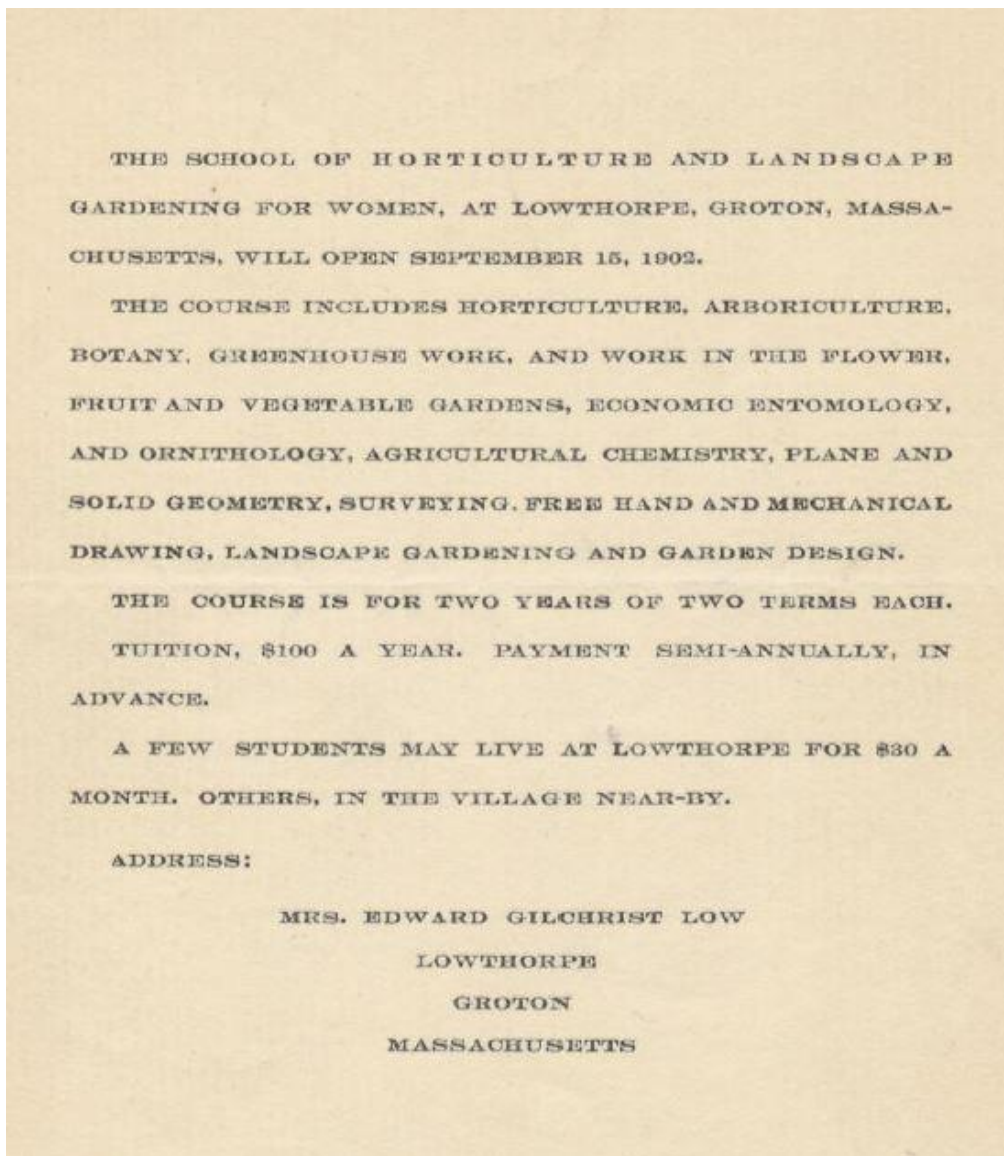


Figure 4.6. Announcement of start date, 1902 (Lowthorpe RISDA).

‘Lowthorpe’ may represent a serendipitous combination of Mrs Low’s husband’s surname and a Motley family name sometimes spelt Lothrop. Principal Merrell stated that Mrs Low founded the school in memory of her husband Edward Gilchrist Low;<sup>27</sup> a story likely well known, as Mrs Low was remembered as someone who enjoyed sharing the story of the school’s early days (a habit potentially also the source of the Swanley connection).<sup>28</sup>

Groton offered an attractive pedigree as a centre of elite secondary education with the venerable Lawrence Academy (est. 1792), named for the same family that endowed the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard and the exclusive Groton School (est. 1884). Pertinently, however, the Prescott site itself had strong ties to women’s education: the young

<sup>27</sup> Mrs Cyrus Winslow Merrell, ‘Lowthorpe’, *Landscape Architecture*, 15, 4 (Jul 1925), pp. 262-264.

<sup>28</sup> Schneider, *Lowthorpe*, p. 21.

Margaret Fuller, trailblazing journalist, editor (and co-founder with Ralph Waldo Emerson) of the Transcendentalist journal *The Dial*, editor of the *New York Daily Tribune*, and reputedly the first woman allowed to use Harvard's library, had been a student there in the late 1820s in the school for girls run by Miss Prescott.<sup>29</sup> Eighty years later, the cachet of that connection sufficed to be regularly noted in catalogues and publicity about Lowthorpe.

The house was furnished with an 'ample library and reading room well supplied with the best reference books' and a 'well equipped studio and draughting room' as shown in Figure 4.7.<sup>30</sup> Meals were taken together; Esther Barnes ('32) remembered that Tuesday food trucks meant chops, chicken, and fish but, even more appealing, 'the saturation of the menu with foods at their freshest: blueberries three times a day in season, apples, asparagus . . .'<sup>31</sup> Students enjoyed a large conservatory; for horticultural studies, there was a zoned greenhouse, a violet-house, a cold grapery, an azalea pit, and tool sheds. As the school outgrew its facilities in the middle years, special funding brought a new dormitory and a separate drafting building.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 4.7. The original drafting room, appearing well used. *The House Beautiful*, 39, 4 (Mar 1916), p. 113. Public Domain. Reprinted in Lowthorpe 1916-17 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

<sup>29</sup> Paula Blanchard, *Margaret Fuller: From Transcendentalism to Revolution* (New York et al: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1987), pp. 41-47.

<sup>30</sup> 'Lowthorpe School', circa 1905-08, Harvard University - Collection Development Department, Widener Library, HCL / 009292630\_HUL-METS (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 214.

<sup>32</sup> 'School News: Lowthorpe School', *Landscape Architecture*, 19, 3 (Apr 1929), p. 225.



With such facilities plus shrubberies, orchards, meadows, and woodland, including an order of trees and shrubs from the Arnold Arboretum,<sup>33</sup> the grounds constituted an outdoor workshop for the practical half of Lowthorpe’s ‘theory plus practice’ pedagogy. They were also ample enough, as the 1910-11 catalogue noted, ‘to allow the students practical experience in the development of an estate’, one of the obvious career paths for graduates during the private landscape boom called the Country Place Era. Students designed and maintained flower and vegetable gardens as well as water features and hardscape; Clark described ‘a direct contact with actual gardening . . . guided by the direction and influence of men and women trained in each special branch of study so that . . . a suitable foundation has been attained for professional work’(Figure 4.8).<sup>34</sup> Eminent landscape architect Ellen Shipman’s testimonial for the 1928-1929 catalogue affirmed the accomplishments of Lowthorpe’s early decades in turning out well-prepared novice practitioners. It tied the quality of the training to the location:

After years of trying students from other schools in my office I now employ only graduates of Lowthorpe. The training women receive at Lowthorpe School is unsurpassed, so far as my knowledge of schools goes. The distinct advantage that Lowthorpe has is its situation—its lovely grounds and old gardens as well as the distinguished and delightful old house [. . .] One can readily understand why the young women from Lowthorpe leave there so well equipped, and with a true love of their work and of the School.<sup>35</sup>



Figure 4.8 Supervised construction. *The House Beautiful*, 39, 4 (Mar 1916), p. 113. Public Domain.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Lowthorpe School’ (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Clark, ‘Ideal Conditions’, pp. 36-38.

<sup>35</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1928-1929 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

It was also a campus where the women could enjoy spare time and social activities; Clark remembered that ‘old garden seats invite[d] one . . . to rest after the labors of a day’ (Figure 4.9).<sup>36</sup> Anderson mentioned that the atmosphere at Lowthorpe was more relaxed than at Cambridge,<sup>37</sup> and Valencia Libby summarised happy times recorded in the notebooks of Edith Schryver (‘23): ‘Schryver and her classmates took on pet names; made up skits, jokes and cartoons for each other’s entertainment; and chatted away in the studio while working on their plans. It was a most congenial sisterhood . . .’<sup>38</sup> (Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.9. Terrace at the main house. Lowthorpe Brochure, n.d. (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

Resident faculty hosted parties and teas; there was a range of ages, although most students were college-age, some with college degrees. Some students were older: Elizabeth Lord was 39 in her first year at Lowthorpe, having spent several years working with her mother on garden designs in Oregon; Nellie Allen came to Lowthorpe in 1916 at age 42, a divorced mother starting a new life. Most students would have been from families with the resources to provide tuition and support. Elizabeth Lord’s father had been governor of Oregon; Louise Payson’s aunt was a botanist whose book on trees featured an introduction by Sargent.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Clark, ‘Ideal Conditions’, p.37.

<sup>37</sup> Knight, ‘Lowthorpe’, p. 130.

<sup>38</sup> Valencia Libby, *The Northwest Gardens of Lord and Schryver* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press: 2021), p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Annie Oakes Huntington, *Studies of Trees in Winter*, intro. by Charles Sprague Sargent ([Boston]:Knight and Millet, 1902).



Figure 4.10. Lowthorpe students and faculty, circa 1920. Edith Schryver is smiling on the front row, third from right. Among the faculty may be Louise Hetzer, Elizabeth Leonard Strang, and Laura Dawson. The dog is unidentified. Photo courtesy of Robert Melnick, FASLA.

Despite an evolving school description that promoted landscape architecture over gardening and plantsmanship, horticultural coursework appears to have shaped the campus layout, with investments in upgraded greenhouses and gardening facilities continuing through its middle years. According to Jane Knight, the Garden Club of America took on Lowthorpe as a funding project in the 1930s, raising \$20,000 of a goal of \$50,000; the monies were remitted to Lowthorpe in 1932, no conditions attached; \$8,000 went toward a badly needed new greenhouse (Figure 4.11) while the balance went to the endowment fund.<sup>40</sup>

With only two financial reports available from the years the school was in operation, and those two presenting expenses inconsistently, it is difficult to know with any certainty how Lowthorpe's funds were directed. The grounds did contribute to their own support, with a stream of income from plant sales going into the general fund.

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<sup>40</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p.75.





Figure 4.11. The New Greenhouse at Lowthorpe. Lowthorpe 1937-1938 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

The house and grounds came to symbolise Lowthorpe's identity, a symbol that could be read in multiple ways. Located outside the hub of activity centred on Boston's Cambridge and Brookline communities, Lowthorpe could be seen as remote, with travel a chore for visiting instructors. William Marquis, an Olmsted instructor planning to be at Lowthorpe once a week during the school term, suggested making arrangements for subsequent terms by letter 'without my having to go to Groton.'<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, it showed a certain stature – a genteel setting for young women with impeccable ties to elite institutions past and present. Prospective students like Margaret Holt ('33)<sup>42</sup> were attracted by the Groton location and others by pictures of greenhouse and grounds work (Figure 4.12). The campus also showcased the design talents of students during summer fetes, teas and fund-raisers, and Founder's Day activities. It was open to prospective students, patrons, locals, and the occasional journalist. The historic former girls' school packaged the progressive experiment that was Lowthorpe in non-threatening, feminine wrappings, as the 1916 *House Beautiful* article illustrates: garden days would not have happened at a men's school but provided essential publicity and networking opportunities.

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<sup>41</sup> William B. Marquis, 'Letter to Mr. John A. Parker, 21 June 1944', Washington, D.C., Library of Congress, Olmsted Associates Records: Job Files, 1863-1971; Files; 6620; Lowthorpe School; Groton, Mass., 1917-1945 (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

<sup>42</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 50.



Figure 4.12. The perennial border's plantings changed yearly, in charge of the students. *The House Beautiful*, 39, 4 (Mar 1916), p. 112. Public Domain.

The Lowthorpe pedagogical approach assumed a sizeable campus 'to fit women to practise landscape architecture as a profession, or to follow any of the lines of work, now opening out to women, comprehended under the terms landscape architecture, landscape gardening, and horticulture'.<sup>43</sup> A letter in the Olmsted archives at the Library of Congress, however, brings to light a proposal in 1922-23 that would have moved Lowthorpe from Groton to a location near the Arnold Arboretum.<sup>44</sup> The proposed site would not equal the instructional amenities at Groton, but the writer, Olmsted Jr, thought that on balance the proximity to the Arboretum and the city of Boston would more than compensate. The plan was never enacted, however, whether owing to the \$50,000 estimated cost or what has become clear were deep ties to the Groton campus cannot be determined. In Lowthorpe's 1930 Report of Progress, the Director, Robert Sturtevant, reaffirmed the significance of the site to the educational mission, closing with:

A dream – possibly – but Lowthorpe is unique in its location. It has its valley and hill, its old gardens and plantings and, with new gardens, new facilities, it might well become an even lovelier place to visit, a more promising laboratory for learning [. . .] We welcome visitors and I wish each of you might see the School in active operation [. . .] in its varied routine of lecture, desk criticism, or practical garden work.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps the uncertainty in terming the location 'a dream' reflected outside pressure. It has been suggested that informal discussions on merging Cambridge and Lowthorpe failed partly

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<sup>43</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 'Foundation and Purpose', circa 1913-14 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

<sup>44</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted Jr, 'Letter to Mrs. F.L.W. Richardson, 17 January 1923' (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

<sup>45</sup> The Lowthorpe School, Report of Progress: 1929-1930 (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

because Lowthorpe was loathe to give up the campus and greenhouse work, as Cambridge's Henry Frost, presumed head of a combined institution, had apparently made clear.<sup>46</sup>

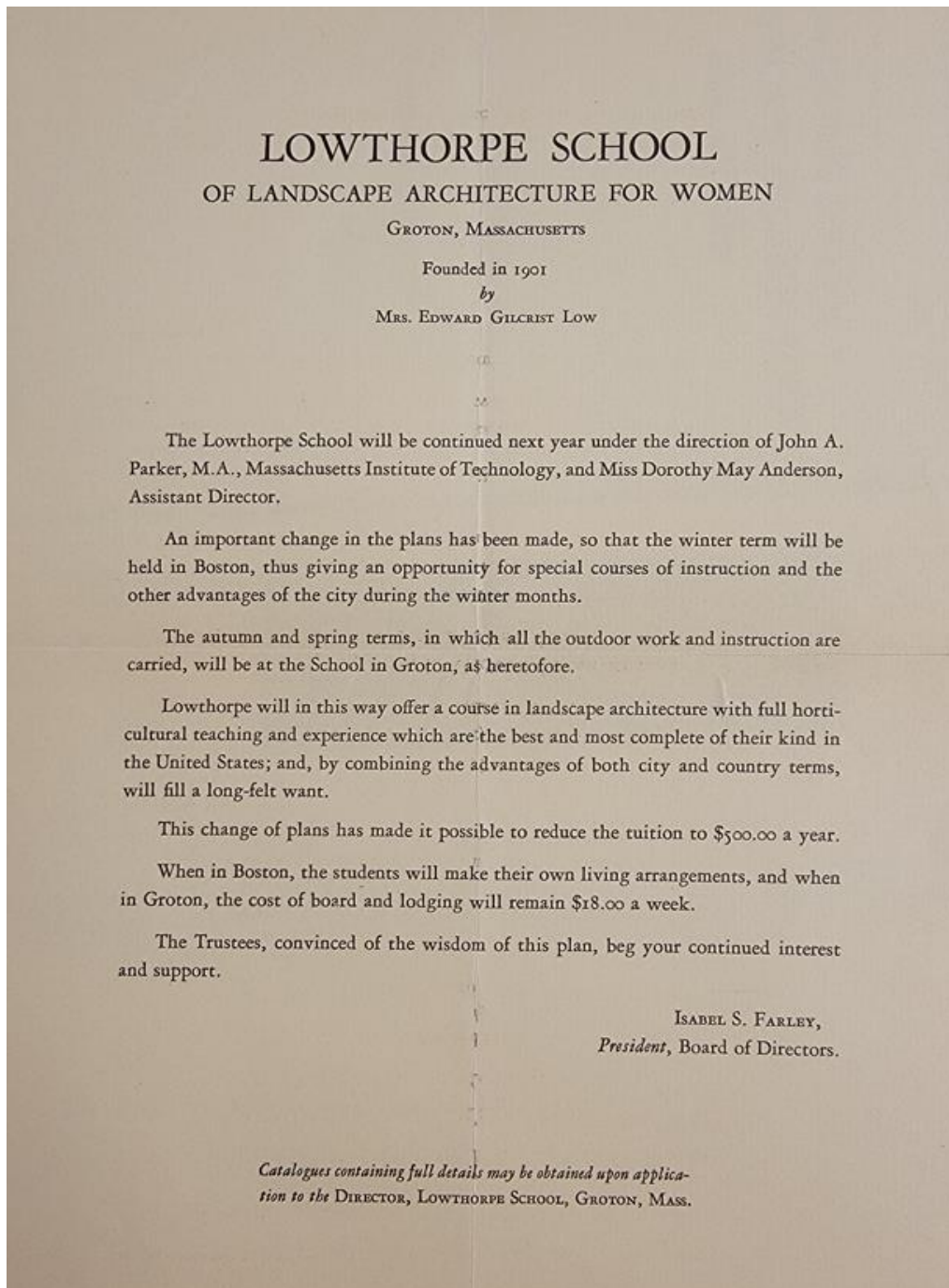


Figure 4.12. A reassuring statement about the future, with a new Director and a Boston Winter term. Circa 1934-35 (Lowthorpe RISDA).

Lowthorpe found a compromise: in 1934, Isabel S. Farley, President of Lowthorpe's Board, announced a new Director, John Parker, and a new programme: the winter term to be held in Boston annually, which she noted 'will fill a long-felt want' (Figure 4.12). Mrs Farley

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, *The Cambridge School*, pp. 53-55; Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 73.

reiterated that Lowthorpe would continue its 'full horticultural teaching and experience which are the best and most complete of their kind in the United States' by carrying on at Lowthorpe as usual during the remaining terms of the school year.

The school viewed its campus as a 'laboratory for learning', complementing an exceptional faculty and a unique curriculum. These and the involvement of Lowthorpe in the wider academic community will be examined in the following chapters.

## Chapter 5: Lowthorpe and the Landscape Architecture Community

This chapter will examine the mix of resources from the active landscape architecture community that Lowthorpe deployed in executing its programme. Those who helped build Lowthorpe were also those shaping the profession, and Lowthorpe reflected in microcosm the profession's efforts to establish consistently high standards for incoming practitioners. The centrality of the Harvard and Olmsted networks to Lowthorpe mirrored their influence on the profession. Both remained fundamental to Lowthorpe throughout its existence; moreover, as seen through Lowthorpe, their essentially patriarchal nature to the profession stands out.

### The Arnold Arboretum

The relationship with Harvard's Arnold Arboretum (Figure 5.1), an eminent botanical research facility, was an asset. Sargent, its founding director, was at the centre of the professionalisation of landscape architecture and education, and the Arboretum was laid out by Olmsted Sr. Though Sargent emphasised that it was 'not a School of Forestry or Landscape Gardening',<sup>47</sup> the Arboretum was an invaluable resource to the newly established schools. MIT planned to use the Arboretum for 'Horticultural and botanical studies in the laboratory and the field [. . . and] to study landscape gardening effects in the park of the Arboretum'.<sup>48</sup> Lowthorpe took similar advantage of the Arboretum, with regular excursions from Groton for on-site studies; one catalogue noted weekly visits during a special programme.<sup>49</sup> The Arboretum also supplied plant materials used in Lowthorpe's greenhouses and plant nurseries, along with what Elizabeth Pattee remembered as 'an odd collection of surplus things from the Arboretum'.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Arnold Arboretum, '150 Years of Plants and People', <<https://arboretum.harvard.edu/arnold150/150-years-of-plants-and-people/>> [Accessed 3 June 2022].

<sup>48</sup> Eran Ben-Joseph, Holly D. Ben-Joseph, and Anne C. Dodge, *Against All Odds: MIT's Pioneering Women of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT, 2006), p.6.

<sup>49</sup> Lowthorpe 1910-11 Catalogue (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 135.



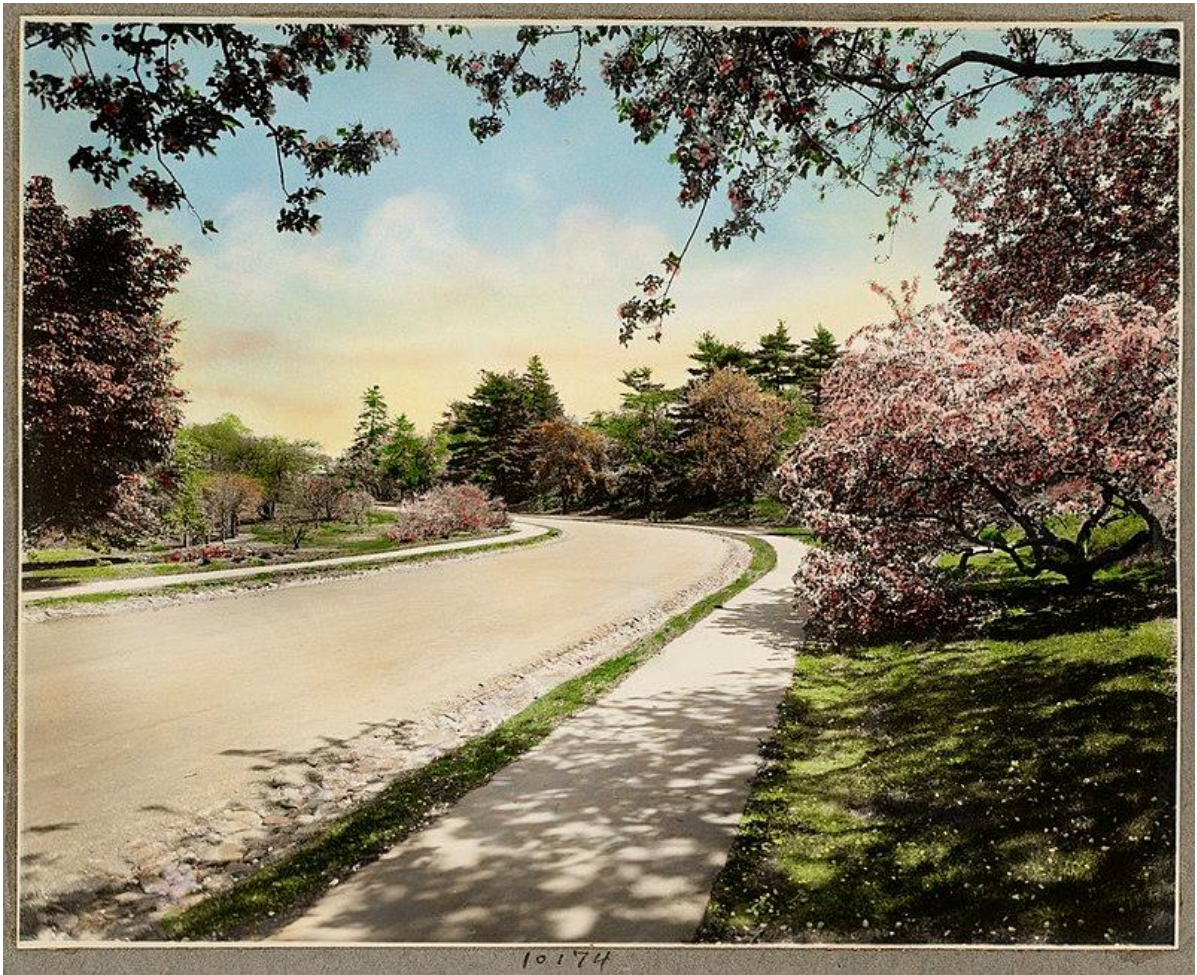


Figure 5.1. The Arnold Arboretum, 19 May 1921. Courtesy Boston Public Library, List (08\_01\_000660). Public Domain.

From the beginning, Lowthorpe had touted the relationship: ‘with which celebrated connection and its management the Lowthorpe School is in close touch’, suggesting that Sargent and his team advised the school.<sup>51</sup> Arboretum connections appear on the earliest instructor rosters, as well. Jackson Dawson, the Arboretum’s revered plant propagator, had children teaching at Lowthorpe (Figure 5.2): son J.F. Dawson, a landscape architect, and daughter Laura, a plant specialist. Laura Dawson came straight to Lowthorpe in 1903 after graduation from Radcliffe, taking up the teaching position she would hold for the rest of her life. Dawson’s son-in-law, Harold Hill Blossom, a 1907 Harvard landscape architecture graduate, also joined the faculty in the 1920s and hired graduates for his practice.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> ‘Lowthorpe School’, circa 1905-08 (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Edward Clark Whiting, ‘A.S.L.A. Notes: Harold Hill Blossom’, *Landscape Architecture*, 26, 3 (Apr 1936), pp. 148-50.



Figure 5.2. The Dawson family, circa 1901. Far left: Jackson Dawson, with daughter Laura at his side. Far right, J.F. Dawson. Leaning against the doorframe on the right is daughter Minnie Motley Blossom, wife of Harold Hill Blossom. Photo: Unknown. Courtesy Arnold Arboretum <<https://arboretum.harvard.edu/stories/dawson-medals-come-to-the-arboretum-archives/>> [accessed 15 Aug 2022].

#### Harvard-Olmsted Resources

Harvard, establishing its programme at the same time as Lowthorpe, was a significant resource, as was MIT to a lesser extent, although Lowthorpe's last director, John Parker, was an MIT alumnus.<sup>53</sup> A few faculty or alumni from MIT lectured at Lowthorpe, especially when Lowthorpe was holding its winter term in Boston at MIT. Harvard played a larger role in Lowthorpe's history, however, taking on some oversight responsibilities for Lowthorpe from the beginning, guiding the curriculum, lending faculty and expertise, and serving as patrons and trustees over the life of the school. At least 21 Lowthorpe faculty had Harvard ties compared to approximately five from MIT, though such tallies are lower than actuality owing to the numerous missing catalogues. From Harvard:

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<sup>53</sup> MIT's Dean, William Emerson, Chairman of Lowthorpe's Education Committee, likely arranged the appointment.

- James Sturgis Pray, who became the powerful and influential head of Harvard's Landscape Architecture department. He supervised Lowthorpe's landscape architecture curriculum, taking over from Arthur Shurcliff.
- Henry A. Frost, an architect and the founder of the Cambridge School. Frost led joint Lowthorpe-Cambridge study tours to Europe and taught at Lowthorpe from 1926-29.
- Bremer W. Pond, a landscape architect who would join Frost at the Cambridge School; at Harvard, he became Charles Eliot Professor of Landscape Architecture and succeeded Pray as head of the department, leading its merger into the Harvard Graduate School of Design. Pond taught at Lowthorpe in 1912-13 and served as a corporation member for several years; he joined the Education Committee in 1941.
- Landscape architect and Prix de Rome winner Norman T. Newton. Like Pond, Newton also earned the Charles Eliot professorship at Harvard. He joined the Harvard faculty in 1939 and the Lowthorpe faculty in 1941.
- Robert Swan Sturtevant, the Director of Lowthorpe from 1927 to 1932, who led the degree-granting partnership with Simmons College in Boston.
- Stanley H. White, a Cornell graduate who earned an MLA at Harvard in 1915, who joined the Olmsted offices and taught at Lowthorpe during the early 1920s.<sup>54</sup> At the University of Illinois, he co-founded the Landscape Exchange Program discussed in this chapter. White dedicated his *A Primer of Landscape Architecture* to Sturtevant in memory of their time together at Lowthorpe; a sabbatical from Illinois enabled him to guest lecture at the school in the 1929 Spring term.<sup>55</sup>

The most important individual relationship, however, was that with Harvard-educated landscape architect Fletcher Steele, who not only lectured and critiqued student work at Lowthorpe for many years but also served on the Education Committee. As a Trustee, he temporarily oversaw Lowthorpe during leadership turmoil in the early 1930s, spending a great deal of time at Groton. He designed a new programme for the school, interviewed

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<sup>54</sup> 'School News', *Landscape Architecture*, 13, 2 (Jan 1923), p. 156; Malcolm Cairns and Gary Kesler, 'Stanley White: Teacher,' *Landscape Architecture*, 75, 1 (Jan/Feb 1985) p. 87.

<sup>55</sup> Lowthorpe 1929-30 Calendar (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

replacement candidates for Director, and saw the programme through the storm.<sup>56</sup> One of the most influential landscape architects of his time, Steele's 'Blue Stairs' at Naumkeag, the western Massachusetts estate he designed for Lowthorpe benefactor Mabel Choate,<sup>57</sup> is a twentieth-century landscape icon. A recent biographer described his long involvement with Lowthorpe as 'his strongest professional attachment'.<sup>58</sup>

Given the concerted effort to establish an academic foundation for the profession, and with so much of that effort concentrated in the Boston area, it was perhaps inevitable that the local schools – Lowthorpe, Harvard, and after 1916, Cambridge – would share instructors: Harvard and Cambridge lent Frost to Lowthorpe, and Lowthorpe's Director Sturtevant taught at Cambridge; Harold Hill Blossom taught at both the women's schools. While all three schools were united in their focus on excellence in design instruction, each retained a distinctive personality in its curriculum despite the sharing of ideas that must have taken place.

Having relocated from New York to the Boston suburb of Brookline in 1882, the Olmsted firm provided another local resource for Lowthorpe and Harvard. Olmsted Senior and Junior had been concerned about professionalising training, as an 1895 letter indicates: 'We are gradually preparing a grand professional post-graduate school here,' the elder Olmsted wrote his son.<sup>59</sup> Such activities and the firm's correspondence indicate its centrality to the profession's educational branch (Figure 5.3) – in essence, the Olmsted firm created the closest thing to a school of landscape architecture in existence before the new programmes of 1900. When Olmsted Jr and partner Arthur Shurcliff were asked to start the Harvard programme in 1900, they initiated a model of instructor-practitioner that would become standard in the field.

Of the Harvard faculty and alumni noted above as having lectured at Lowthorpe, all but Newton are known to have worked at the Olmsted firm at one time or another, as had Jackson Dawson's son and son-in-law. Among active practitioners at the firm, both Olmsted

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<sup>56</sup> Catalogues that would show Steele's changes have not survived.

<sup>57</sup> Whether Steele introduced Choate to Lowthorpe or vice versa has not been determined.

<sup>58</sup> Robin Karson, *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect* (New York: Abrams, 1989), p. 168.

<sup>59</sup> Andersen, 'Arnold Arboretum', p.4.



brothers,<sup>60</sup> Shurcliff, Percival Gallagher, William B. Marquis, and several others taught at Lowthorpe over the years; Shurcliff was likely involved for the first eight or nine years.

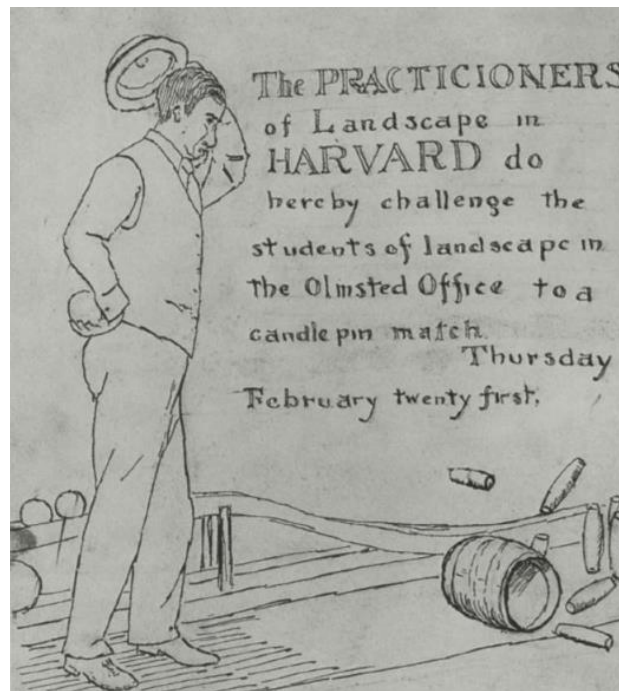


Figure 5.3. Who is a student, and who is a practitioner? A Harvard-Olmsted challenge, Olmsted office scrapbooks (1907). Image courtesy National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted Historic Site. Public Domain.

The firm was a remarkable and committed resource from Lowthorpe's earliest days into its merger with RISD in 1945. Archival material shows Olmsted assistance in planning and oversight, delivering instruction, and backing fund-raising efforts. The firm identified gaps in the curriculum and created supplementary material to compensate. Olmsted Jr also loaned Lowthorpe volumes from his father's personal library, meaningful enough – some were believed annotated by his father -- that he sought to recover them from RISD after the merger.<sup>61</sup> A 1920 letter to Lowthorpe from Gallagher mentioned Olmsted Jr's 'recent meeting with those interested in Lowthorpe',<sup>62</sup> and a trail of Lowthorpe-Olmsted correspondence shows the Olmsted practitioners preparing to lecture at Lowthorpe under the direction of Olmsted Jr. The letters discussed the type and detail of problems for each term, remarked on analyses of student work, and considered plans such as bringing additional instructors to the school.<sup>63</sup> Wrote Gallagher, 'it was [suggested] that I meet the class at the

<sup>60</sup> Lisa Chaderjian, 'The Olmsted Legacy and Women in Landscape Architecture', *Olmsted 200*, 12 Jan 2021, <<https://olmsted200.org/the-olmsted-legacy-and-women-in-landscape-architecture/>> [accessed 2 June 2022].

<sup>61</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted Jr, 'Letter to Dr Mel Scott, January 6, 1953' (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

<sup>62</sup> Percival Gallagher, 'Letter to Miss Amy L. Cogswell', n.d. (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

<sup>63</sup> Herbert W. Blaney, 'Letter to Percival Gallagher, 18 March 1918' (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

Atkins place and look over the plans they have made and consider the plans on the ground.’<sup>64</sup> Olmsted practitioner-instructors drew on actual commissions for pedagogical problems, anonymising working materials to copy for the school. Principal Amy Cogswell asked that students be shown what had been done by the firm and why: Lowthorpe students thus had the opportunity to make proposals for commissions undertaken by the country’s leading design firm and compare them to proven solutions. Figure 5.4 illustrates similar instruction.



Figure 5.4. Conferences in the drafting room and outdoors. The Lowthorpe School, 1940 Brochure, (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

### An Exceptional Faculty

The correspondence with the Olmsted firm not only underscores its attention to Lowthorpe but also highlights the constant efforts of Lowthorpe to obtain the best instruction the profession had to offer. Mrs Low’s connections, along with Lowthorpe’s growing standing in the landscape architecture community, enabled the school to attract lecturers not provided directly by Harvard’s institutions or the Olmsted firm, including pioneering women landscape architects Beatrix Farrand and Ellen Shipman and influential garden writer Louise Beebe Wilder, a member of the Board of the New York Botanical Garden.<sup>65</sup> During the summer of 1944, Lowthorpe students also had a unique opportunity to study with one of the twentieth century’s most influential visual arts teachers: the Bauhaus’ Josef Albers. Albers knew of Lowthorpe through in-laws who, as wartime refugees from Germany, had been housed on the Groton campus. Taking a few summer weeks off from his post at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Albers taught design, colour, and freehand drawing in a course intended to

<sup>64</sup> Percival Gallagher, ‘Letter to Miss Amy L. Cogswell, 13 May 1919’ (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

<sup>65</sup> As noted in Lowthorpe catalogues for 1932-33 and 1933-34. Shipman was also on the ‘Faculty’ list in the 1942-44 catalogue.

instil 'an appreciation of the functional qualities of form and space relationships'.<sup>66</sup> It was a remarkable learning experience for the students.

Lowthorpe returned the favour to academia. Elsa Rehmann ('11) taught landscape design at Vassar in the 1920s. Stanley White caught the 'teaching fever'<sup>67</sup> at Lowthorpe before leaving for the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's programme. John Parker, Lowthorpe's last director, went from Lowthorpe and RISD, his first teaching and administrative role, to set up a planning department at the University of North Carolina. In 1994, he was named a Distinguished Educator by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning – the ACSP's highest honour.<sup>68</sup>

The best, though problematic, source of faculty information is the 26 school catalogues which, along with a few brochures, yield a list of 76 faculty members (Appendix C). There are wide variations in how information was collated and presented, with no apparent consistency regarding the notation of credentials or types of teaching roles. Some interesting facts can be gleaned: two instructors came from Swanley College, and one from the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. Another brought experience at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Lowthorpe itself hired six of its graduates as faculty. Supplementary lectures from practitioners were routine; in some years, the ratio of guest lecturers to regular faculty was as much as 1:2 though it is unclear what kind of teaching load the guests carried. Letters from Olmsted's Marquis to Director John Parker in 1943 and 1944 detail a routine 1.5 days per week, and 63 to 66 weekly school days per year, with a full teaching commitment of preparing problems, teaching design and construction, taking consultations, and marking papers.<sup>69</sup>

Continuity came from Mrs Low and, after her retreat from school affairs in her old age, the long-tenured instructors. Laura Dawson and Louise Hertzner spent their entire careers at Lowthorpe; Mrs Low then various instructors resided in the main house, including John Parker and his family. (Parker, the school's final Director, and long-time instructor Elizabeth Pattee saw Lowthorpe into its new life at RISD in 1945.) Significantly, no term represented in the

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<sup>66</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 164.

<sup>67</sup> Cairns and Kesler, 'Stanley White', pp. 86-90.

<sup>68</sup> Edward J. Kaiser, Raymond J. Burby, and David R. Godschalk, 'ACSP Distinguished Educator, 1994: John A. Parker', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 38, 2 (2018), pp. 233-235.

<sup>69</sup> William B. Marquis and John Parker, Correspondence 1943-44 (Olmsted LOC), n.p.

catalogues brought forward an unchanged roster and rarely even a slightly modified roster from the previous year; in the latter years, there was sometimes more than 50% turnover. Some turnover, particularly among Harvard instructors and active practitioners, may reflect limits on time away from their regular jobs. The value of these visiting instructors in creating such an exceptional roster of Ivy-League faculty, many with advanced degrees, would have likely been worth the time in recruitment and planning, year after year.

#### Participation in Academic and Professional Circles

Information for Lowthorpe in the years up to 1924, when it was finding its way with a seriousness of purpose evident in early announcements and brochures, is sparse. It is not until the middle years of 1924-34, particularly under Directors Merrell and Sturtevant, when more information is available, that a maturing and confident Lowthorpe is seen extending its profile in broader academic and professional circles. A more assertive name also appeared on the 1924-25 catalogue: 'Lowthorpe – A School of Landscape Architecture for Women'.

One opportunity benefiting both students and the school as an institution was presented by the Landscape Exchange Problems ('LEP') programme. Loosely organised in 1924 by ASLA in concert with landscape architecture departments across the country, the LEP was intended to encourage consistent, and consistently high, design standards across the schools. Based on the 'landscape problem' pedagogical tactic,<sup>70</sup> students competed in addressing six varied design problems in two tiers of difficulty per year. (Figure 5.5 shows an example of the two classes of problems, all designed by ASLA.) Each was conceived by a professional practice or the ASLA education committee and was juried by practitioners or academic faculty members – Lowthorpe was on the jury rota. Faculty member Frederick Kingsbury served on the Exchange Committee for several years and was one of two executive secretaries in the programme's second and third years.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> James Sturgis Pray, 'The Department of Landscape Architecture in Harvard', *Landscape Architecture*, 1, 2 (Jan 1911), pp. 53-70.

<sup>71</sup> 'General Regulations', Landscape Exchange Problems Archives, 1924-1971, The University of Illinois Archives, Series 12/4/30.



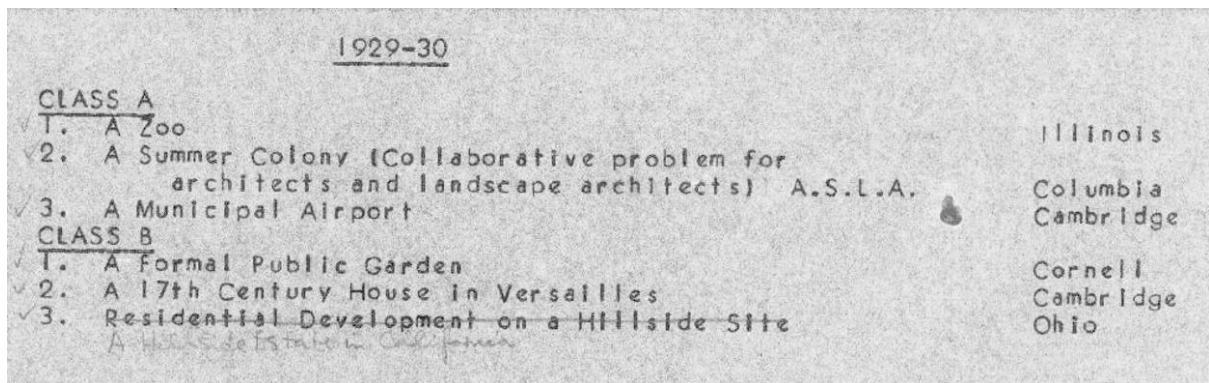


Figure 5.5. Landscape Exchange Problems, 1929-30. Courtesy the University of Illinois, Landscape Exchange Problems Archives, 1924-1971, Series 12/4/30.

Prominent landscape architects would have regularly assessed Lowthorpe students' work.<sup>72</sup> The students generally did as well as those from other schools, often winning merits in blind judging; the award winners were named in School News – more positive publicity for Lowthorpe. The school was proud of the students' achievements: Merrell reportedly 'spoke of the work of the students and their high rank' at a fundraiser, saying that the 'students led in a competition of seven schools'.<sup>73</sup> The LEP archive at the University of Illinois does not, unfortunately, have copies of the student submissions or their marks – these were sent back to the schools and students – but the summaries in *Landscape Architecture's* 'School News' segment reflect detailed, thoughtful, and constructive criticism. On at least one occasion, the problem itself came in for censure. Problem creation was an exhaustive process, requiring topographical maps and a series of specification documents. As an investment on the part of the profession and the schools, the programme was free, although participating schools did pay the costs of the materials. 'The exchange problems are doing much to raise the standards of design' was the profession's assessment in 1931.<sup>74</sup> The series continued for nearly fifty years<sup>75</sup> and was remembered as 'great fun' by alumna Jane Silverstein Ries,<sup>76</sup> whose project corresponding to the 1929 Class B-1 problem is shown in Figure 5.6.

<sup>72</sup> For example: Cornell's Bryant Fleming, Olmsted's Gallagher, A.D. Taylor, O.C. Simonds, and Ferruccio Vitale, all well-known and well-respected.

<sup>73</sup> 'Lowthorpe's Campaign Explained at Luncheon', *The Boston Globe*, 13 May 1925, p.7.

<sup>74</sup> G. Leslie Lynch, 'School News', *Landscape Architecture*, 21,3 (Apr 1931), p. 246.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Richard Hodges and Miriam Easton Rutz, 'An Historical Summary of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture', *Landscape Journal*, 16, 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 108-114.

<sup>76</sup> Palmer, "An Overview", p. 122.

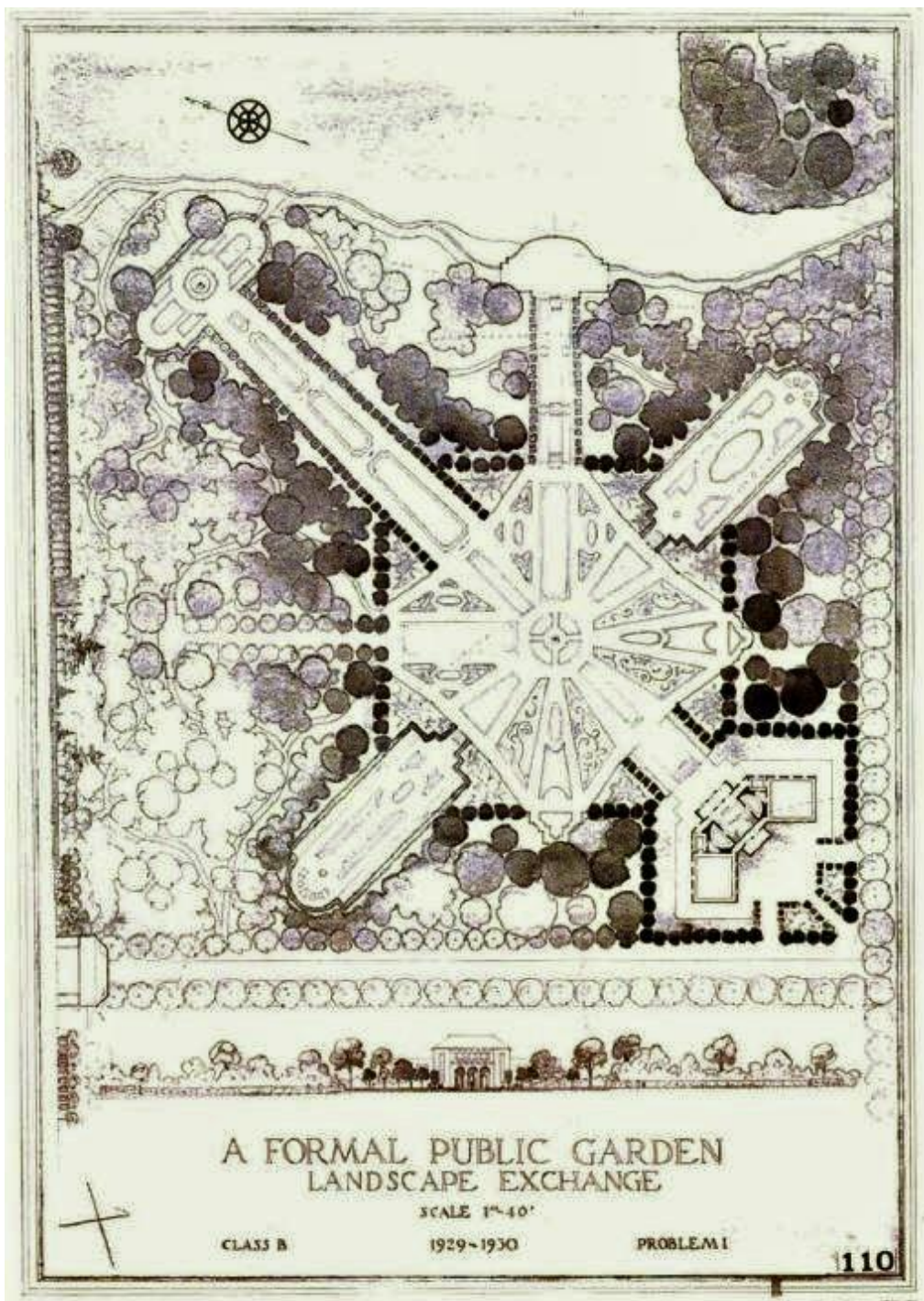


Figure 5.6. Jane Silverstein Reis Class B-1 Solution, 1929-30. Courtesy Jane Silverstein Ries Papers, WH1785, Western History Collection, The Denver Public Library.

Over time, Lowthorpe’s leadership served in ASLA and NCILA governance roles alongside influential educators and practitioners. The ‘School News’ section of *Landscape Architecture* regularly reported developments at Lowthorpe. Faculty by-lines appeared in *Landscape Architecture* and other periodicals. Lowthorpe’s Sturtevant, Chairman of the NCILA’s Committee on Planting and Planting Design, published ‘Planting Design – Its Teaching and

Study'<sup>77</sup> in *Landscape Architecture* in 1927. As an iris expert, he also wrote regularly for the *Bulletin of the American Iris Society*. Pattee published a 1939 series in *Horticulture* magazine entitled 'Little Lessons in Landscape Design',<sup>78</sup> and she also wrote one of the landscape architecture entries in 1920's *Careers for Women*.

The sponsorship of conferences, courses for the public (including community training during both world wars), and colloquia enhanced Lowthorpe's standing and gave periodicals like *Wright's House and Garden* an opportunity to promote it to the readership that might reach prospective parents and students. The garden talks of Director Merrell were noted with approbation in *Landscape Architecture* in 1928,<sup>79</sup> as had been her role in Lowthorpe's bringing a renowned European expert on alpine plants to the U.S. two years earlier. This well-received national tour of lectures<sup>80</sup> earned positive attention for Lowthorpe beyond the northeast. In 1941 the school sponsored five colloquia:<sup>81</sup> three in Boston, one in Groton featuring Fletcher Steele, and one in New York at the Museum of Modern Art ('MoMA'), where Norman Newton shared his perspectives on the perennial topic of defining landscape architecture.<sup>82</sup> Lowthorpe did not establish a school perspective on theory or weigh in on design debates, however; the colloquia and garden events, as well as its publications, generally focused on small gardens, horticulture, and planting design. Whether this was by choice or because those topics, traditionally associated with the women's domain, were solicited from Lowthorpe by editors and sponsors is unknown.

### Patrons and Supporters

In the early years, an all-male group of patrons validated the school's endeavour, as shown in Figure 5.7. By 1916, the group had expanded to include several prominent women, including the Presidents of Mount Holyoke, Wellesley, and Radcliffe.<sup>83</sup> After incorporation in 1909, Mrs Low established formal oversight. A small group of officers and 20 Board members were listed in the 1928 catalogue; ten years later, eight officers, 22 trustees, and 30 members

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<sup>77</sup> R.S. Sturtevant, 'Planting Design-Its Study and Teaching', *Landscape Architecture*, 18, 1 (Oct 1927), pp. 52-59.

<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Greenleaf Pattee, 'Little Lessons in Landscape Design', *Horticulture, New England Edition*, series of four (Mar-Jun 1939).

<sup>79</sup> 'School News', *Landscape Architecture*, 18, 2 (Jan 1928), pp. 167-168.

<sup>80</sup> 'School News', *Landscape Architecture*, 16, 3 (Apr 1926), pp. 206-207; *House & Garden*, 49, 1 (Jan 1926), p. 53.

<sup>81</sup> 'School News', *Landscape Architecture*, 31, 4 (Jul 1941), p. 201.

<sup>82</sup> Published as Norman T. Newton, 'Landscape Architecture Today, A Biological View: What Points Really Matter?', *Landscape Architecture*, 32, 1 (Oct 1941), pp. 18-21.

<sup>83</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1916-17 Catalogue (Lowthorpe Harvard), n.p.

were listed. Some catalogues list larger groups, and some list none at all. Among both trustees and corporation members, a growing majority in later years were women.

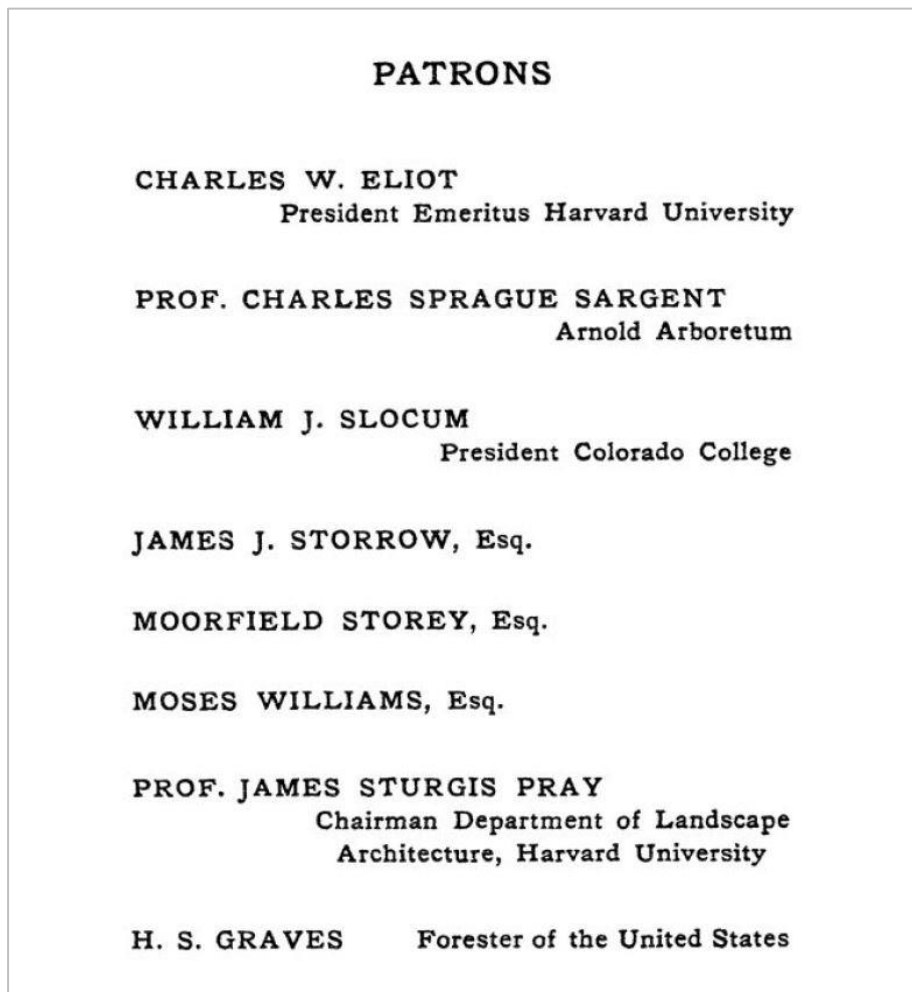


Figure 5.7. First Patrons. Lowthorpe 1910-11 Catalogue, Harvard University - Collection Development Department, Widener Library, HCL / 009292630\_HUL-METS (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 13.

Mabel Choate of Naumkeag, who acted as a Trustee in the late 1930s, lent her name to Lowthorpe events and was a presence at fund-raisers. She hosted study visits at Naumkeag for the students (Figure 5.8) and introduced Lowthorpe graduates to potential clients in regional garden clubs by sponsoring luncheons and teas in their honour.





Figure 5.8. Lowthorpe students at Naumkeag, 1935. Image from Dorothy May Anderson, *Women, Design, and the Cambridge School* (PDA Publishers Corporation: 1987) p. 45.

Supporters like Miss Choate were essential to Lowthorpe, for as dedicated as Mrs Low, Steele, and the Olmsted-Harvard group were to the Lowthorpe project, one critical component was missing: there was no endowment. The 1910 catalogue noted that the school was not self-supporting and needed funds for general expenses, cost of instruction, and the endowment of scholarships. The appeal was repeated in the next two years' catalogues. In 1920, the Olmsted firm intentionally sent a 'no-charge' invoice to the school for the series of classes taught by Percival Gallagher. Lowthorpe appreciatively protested (Figure 5.9). Gallagher consulted with Mr Olmsted, who suggested that 'we send you a bill in regular form, but at the same time express the intention of turning over to the Endowment Fund of the School the amount of our charge when it is paid'.<sup>84</sup> This small gesture reveals a good deal about the financial situation, as does Olmsted Jr's assessment of Lowthorpe's resources in his 1923 letter suggesting Lowthorpe depart Groton: staying put would necessitate 'far greater resources than Lowthorpe has or can reasonably expect ever to attain.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Percival Gallagher to Miss Amy L. Cogswell, n.d. (Olmsted LOC).

<sup>85</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted Jr, 'Letter to Mrs. F. L. W. Richardson 17 January 1923' (Olmsted LOC).

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LOWTHORPE SCHOOL  
GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Mr Percival Gallagher.  
Boston  
Massachusetts.

JAN 31 9 22 AM '20

My dear Mr Gallagher:

I have waited long to acknowledge our debt to you- Such silence must be explained by the fact that I expected an account for the time and attention you had given the class of 1919, and ,when remitting,I had hoped to express,in some measure, my appreciation of all that was done for us last year-

I have just received a trifling bill from Olmsted Brothers which states- to my great surprise- "Personal services of Mr Gallagher- no charge"- This is most generous of you, but I feel it should not be- It is quite enough for a busy man to take time to open the eyes of young people to the breadth and scope of the profession they aspire to enter, when every moment is precious and really committed to the affairs of the Olmsted Firm.

So- my dear Mr Gallagher, will you not send me a little memorandum of the compensation you may fix upon a service I so deeply appreciate?

Very truly yours

*Amy P. Cogswell*

January 30th, 1920.

Figure 5.9. Principal Amy Cogswell to landscape architect Percival Gallagher re Olmsted Firm services, 30 Jan 1920. (Olmsted LOC). Public Domain.

The school ran a deficit more often than not, which had 'been met by funds supplied by a very few people who have been interested in it. To be definite, about fifty people.'<sup>86</sup> This statement, at the 1925 Boston launch for the endowment campaign, makes keenly felt the absence of any chequebooks, banking documents, or financial correspondence in the archives, as it is nearly impossible to trace these crucial threads of patronage. The 1928 and 1931 financial statements do not contain this detail. Had each of the fifty donated an average \$5,000,<sup>87</sup> the school would have reached its \$250,000 goal.

The means were there: the dozens of patrons, corporation members, and trustees who were named in catalogues spanning the life of Lowthorpe included Boston Brahmins like James J. Storrow, who helped found General Motors and was a Harvard Overseer, and members of New York's 'The Four Hundred' such as the Havemeyers of the Domino sugar fortune. The 'committee of women'<sup>88</sup> announced on 20 March 1925 to assist the campaign included Mrs J.P. Morgan among other Gilded Age worthies; Ellen Shipman was Vice-Chairman, while

<sup>86</sup> 'Campaign Explained', *Boston Globe*, p.7.

<sup>87</sup> Per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$5,000 in January 1925 would approximate \$86,000 in 2022. [https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) [accessed 13 Aug 2022].

<sup>88</sup> 'Will Aid Lowthorpe School Drive', *The New York Times* (21 Mar 1925), p. 13.



President Emeritus Eliot, Olmsted Jr, and Sargent were honorary members. Fundraisers held up and down the east coast on the landscaped estates of the financial and social elite are documented in society notices. Yet in two years, according to the 1927-28 Financial Report,<sup>89</sup> the school met only 37% of its goal with \$93,000, although a separate dormitory fund drive had raised almost \$24,000 toward a goal of \$52,000 and nearly \$4,000 had been raised for scholarships. There the drive stalled. The Garden Club of America's \$20,000 infusion was welcomed in the early 1930s, and in January 1939, renowned conductor Arturo Toscanini led a concert at Boston's Symphony Hall to benefit Lowthorpe. Society from around the northeast attended,<sup>90</sup> netting Lowthorpe \$1,800.<sup>91</sup>

Lowthorpe by this time was an established institution, endorsed by the profession's leadership and accepted in academic circles. Its 25<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversaries were covered by major newspapers. With a growing enrolment, it had graduated 93 women by 1931 (a solid showing, given that Harvard, with its resources, had 225 alumni at that point).<sup>92</sup> The students were taught and critiqued by landscape architects at the top of the profession who represented design approaches ranging from European Beaux Arts eclecticism to Olmstedian pastoral/picturesque to emerging modernist ideas. Yet the inability of Lowthorpe to secure its future, given its donor pool's extreme wealth and active participation in the campaign (and with the backing of the most lauded members of the landscape architecture community), is striking. In the context of Olmsted Jr's clear-eyed observation that Lowthorpe was unlikely 'ever to attain' the funds it needed, this failure suggests a fundamental lack of faith in the endeavour. The implications will be discussed further in the conclusion of this dissertation.

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<sup>89</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 'Financial Report for 1927-1928' (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

<sup>90</sup> 'Toscanini Appearance for Lowthorpe School', *The Boston Globe* (7 Jan 1939), p. 11.

<sup>91</sup> Schneider, *Lowthorpe*, p. 51.

<sup>92</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 80; Melanie L. Simo, *The Coalescing of different Forces and Ideas: A History of Landscape Architecture at Harvard 1900-1999* (Cambridge: Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2000), pp. 127-30.

## Chapter 6: Training Landscape Architects

. . . always the spirit of Lowthorpe has been to achieve by work and study the direct knowledge necessary to become a successful gardener as well as a designer of gardens.

—Agnes Selkirk Clark, 1925



Figure 6.1. Surveying Practice. *The House Beautiful* (Mar 1916), p. 113. Public Domain.

From her earliest announcements, Mrs Low began marshalling the resources discussed in this dissertation toward one goal: ‘the training of young women who desire to enter upon any of the many lines of work in life appropriate to women comprehended under the terms Landscape Architecture, Landscape Gardening and Horticulture’.<sup>93</sup> In this, Lowthorpe broke with precedent. Unlike Bussey or Swanley, Lowthorpe was not a school of agriculture, gardening, or horticulture, but planned to teach women all the skills needed to practise as landscape architects (Figure 6.1). Describing Lowthorpe’s programme in her 1908 guide, *Gardening for Women*, Frances Wolseley reported that ‘Mrs. Low asks me to draw attention to the fact that the work of “landscape design” is the most important in her school. Garden and greenhouse work are secondary to this.’<sup>94</sup>

This chapter will examine Lowthorpe’s unique and pioneering instructional approach in view of the widely held belief that women were a natural for work in horticulture. It will also note Lowthorpe’s response to academic standards and consider the commitment to horticultural

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<sup>93</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1911-12 Catalogue (Lowthorpe Harvard), n.p.

<sup>94</sup> The Hon. Frances Wolseley, *Gardening for Women* (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company, Limited, 1908), pp. 220-223. Viscountess Wolseley founded Glynde College for Lady Gardeners in East Sussex, England, and wrote about and campaigned for women’s professions in horticulture.

training in context of the strained relationship between plantsmanship and the landscape architecture profession.

Three distinct periods help organise what can be a confusing series of changes and course corrections. In the early years, the school developed practical training centred on horticulture and design to prepare women for their potential job opportunities (Figure 6.2). In the middle years, from approximately 1924-34, with the school established and a group of alumnae in practice, the school engaged more broadly with the profession and academic organisations, worked to meet new educational standards, and expanded resources for its students. The final years saw old troubles come to a head, yet the school continued to refine its curriculum and bring top-tier instruction to its students.



Figure 6.2. Renovating the Long Border. The Lowthorpe School, 1937-38 Brochure (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

#### The Early Years: 1901-1924

Lowthorpe likely took counsel from the professional community on coursework that would provide the best preparation for the expected job opportunities. Lowthorpe's early catalogues note the potential to take charge of gardening operations or become assistants upon private estates. The Groton campus itself modelled the scale of residential design or management that women might expect. Adding a robust horticultural line-up to the landscape architecture curriculum would be an advantage: arboriculture, economic entomology, and fruit and vegetable gardening were among the first courses offered at Lowthorpe – perhaps an assemblage recommended by Sargent or Olmsted, and which would be delivered by the Olmsted-Harvard faculty in a two-year period of study. It was an

ambitious programme to fit into two years. The solution, as set out in the 1910-11 catalogue, was to offer two tracks: Horticulture and Landscape Architecture. The latter required all courses, while the horticulture students could substitute additional greenhouse work for drawing, engineering, and design courses. The core of the landscape design course prepared students for the typically female-sphere applications of 'orchards, dooryards, gardens, small estates, village squares, and playgrounds'.<sup>95</sup>

The 1911-12 catalogue describes the programme in greater detail, with course subjects relatively evenly split between horticulture and landscape architecture, including:

- Trees and Shrubs
- Hardy Herbaceous Perennials and Annuals
- Entomology and Soils
- Landscape Architecture
- Botany
- Elementary Forestry
- Drafting
- Planting Design
- Elementary Architectural Drawing
- Study of Vignola's Orders
- Free-hand Drawing
- Principles of Construction
- Surveying and Engineering
- Greenhouse Work and Gardening

The inclusion of forestry indicates preparation for work on estates, which often had tracts of woodland, as did Lowthorpe itself. The study of Vignola's orders and the drawing and history courses are typical of a Beaux-Arts curriculum. The Beaux Arts, combining European-influenced formal layouts with an eclectic mix of plantings and structural features, was a dominant aesthetic in the United States for grand estates until the onset of the Great Depression. There is no indication of a school 'style', however: the library also contained works by English planting specialists William Robinson, known as 'the father of the English

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<sup>95</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1910-11 Catalogue (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 6.

flower garden', and Gertrude Jekyll, doyenne of the Arts & Crafts style garden.<sup>96</sup> The students also made studies of historic garden styles.

The beginnings of a roster of successful alumnae appeared in the 1911-12 catalogue:

Graduates have been successful in their profession (Landscape Architecture) in Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, California, and Massachusetts, one of them making over \$1500.00 the second year after opening her office [ . . . ] one [was] a Head Gardener and Instructor in Botany for five years. She is now lecturing and laying out gardens in various places [ . . . ] Graduates are superintending school gardens.<sup>97</sup>

The list grew. Louise Payson ('16) worked for Ellen Shipman before starting a practice. From the class of 1917: Eleanor Christie, who practised in Cleveland; Mary Parsons Cunningham, mentored by Ellen Shipman; Gertrude Kuh, who built a thriving practice in Chicago; Isabella Pendleton in New York; and Eleanor Roche, who worked in Shipman's office. Nellie Allen ('19) designed gardens in wealthy enclaves north of New York City.

With the 1915-16 school year, the programme was extended from two years to three; there was no longer a dual track. Coursework included advanced versions of landscape architecture courses, along with theory and additional drawing and watercolour courses. The lack of a dramatic change in focus suggests that Lowthorpe needed to keep pace with the four-year colleges, which would have also offered three years' intensive study in the major subject. By the 1917-18 term, Lowthorpe emphasised its focus on professional training in landscape architecture by dropping 'gardening' and 'horticulture' from its name, but it did not drop its fundamental commitment to horticultural training, with courses remaining evenly split. Christie recalled the value of her training through the inclusive curriculum and work on the Lowthorpe campus:

I was the only person at the A.D. Taylor office that knew one annual from another and knew an annual from a perennial [ . . . ] the men had been graduates of Harvard or Ohio State and they hardly knew a Spring Beauty from a Chrysanthemum'<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Library Accession Books (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.d.

<sup>97</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1911-12 Catalogue (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 17.

<sup>98</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 58.



That Christie's capabilities were not restricted to planting plans or residential gardens, however, is shown by her modernist garden, undated but before 1959, for a prominent site in Cincinnati (Figure 6.4).

*A garden of modern design enhances the beauty of the fine new building of the Public Library of Hamilton County, Ohio. Situated in downtown Cincinnati, it makes a welcome oasis among the old gray buildings which surround it. . . . Washington hawthorns, planted in the bays of the eight-foot-high serpentine wall, cast their shadow over the busy street which bounds one side of the garden. . . . The necessity for smoke-resistant plants restricted the choice of material, but magnolias in variety, osmanthus, yews, and hawthorns provide interest throughout the year, with seasonal color supplied by bulbs and bedding plants.*



Marsh Photographers Inc., Cincinnati

## PUBLIC LIBRARY, CINCINNATI

Eleanor A. Christie, Landscape Architect; Frederick W. Garber, Samuel W. Hannaford & Sons, Associated Architects

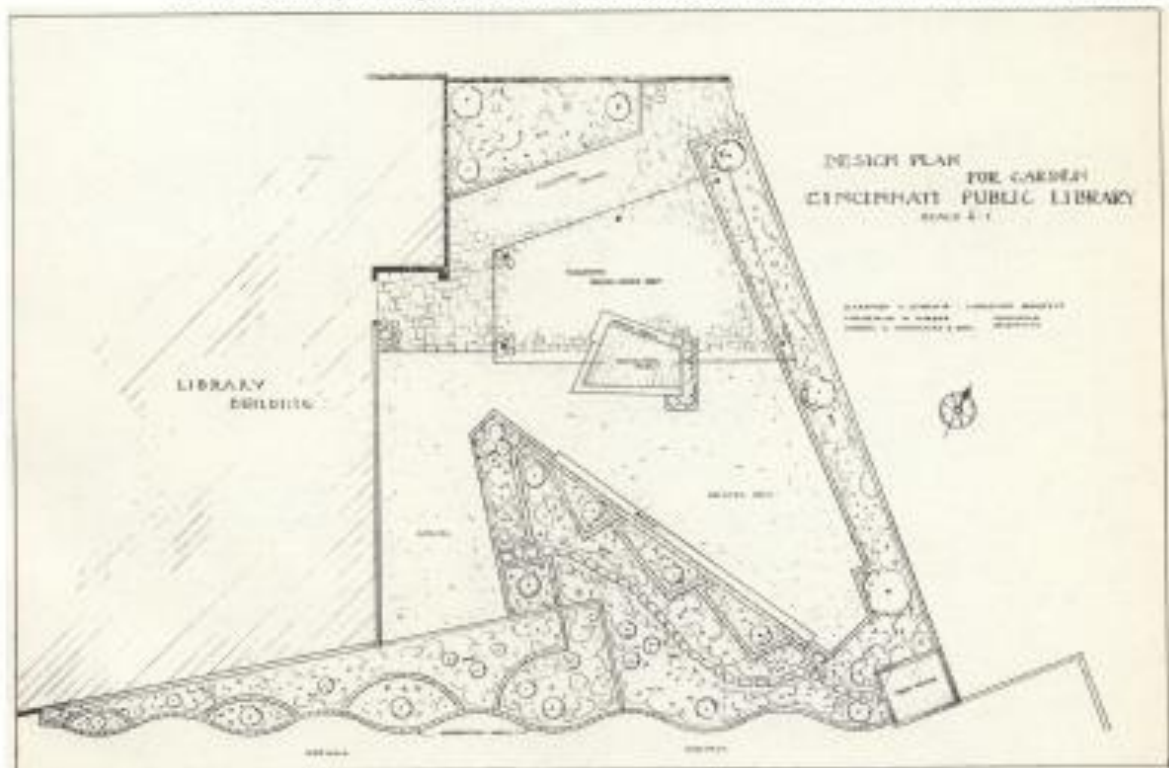


Figure 6.4. Eleanor Christie's design for the Cincinnati Public Library. In James H. Brooks, Jr., 'The Organization Men in Landscape Design, *Landscape Architecture*, 49, 3 (Spring 1959) p. 149.



## The Middle Years: 1924-34

The school increased its focus on professional standards. A favourite in-house tactic involved measuring local properties, as shown in a student's 1924 grading plan of a Groton landscape (Figure 6.5). Surveying work included techniques in pacing off measurements and using hand compasses.<sup>99</sup> When the school expanded with a new dormitory and drafting building, the students developed grading plans and were involved in record-keeping for the construction and landscaping phases. Students also designed and implemented campus features under the supervision of instructors. Among these were an iris garden, a brick pathway, the 'Dawson Dell' of heathers, and a sunken garden (Figure 6.6). *Landscape Architecture* described a summer programme on plan developments through critiqued stages; the project formed a part of a new curriculum requirement for creating individual project files.<sup>100</sup>

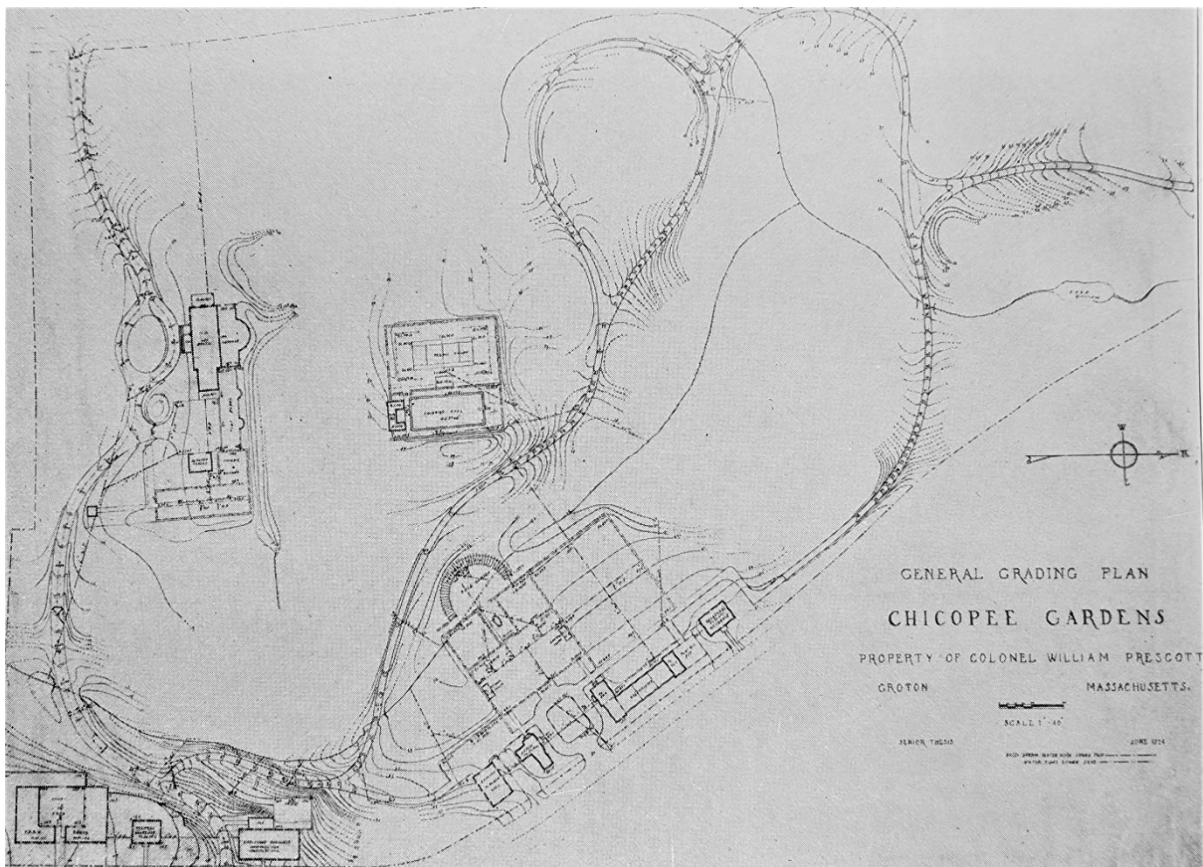


Figure 6.5. Senior Thesis, 1924, grading plan of a Groton property. Lowthorpe 1927-28 Catalogue, (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

<sup>99</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1914-15 Catalogue (Lowthorpe Harvard), p. 21.

<sup>100</sup> 'School News: Lowthorpe School', *Landscape Architecture*, 22, 1 (Oct 1931), pp. 67-68.



Figure 6.6. The Sunken Garden incorporating the ruins of an old barn or cellar. Lowthorpe 1924-25 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

The middle years saw the push by Lowthorpe to extend its presence in academic and professional circles. Participation in the LEP began with its inception in 1924, while the friendly relationship with Cambridge brought a short-lived series of joint programmes from 1925 to 1927. There was an exchange of students between campuses and a summer course held in Groton to benefit the Cambridge students, who felt they needed more exposure to horticulture. The idea of merging the schools was floated but did not come to pass, likely, as Anderson suggested, because the two school's financial situations, assets, and philosophies were too different.<sup>101</sup>

One aspect of the brief collaboration was fruitful, however: it was on a joint Lowthorpe-Cambridge trip to Europe, led by Cambridge's Frost and Sears, that two Lowthorpe students who had not been in Groton at the same time met and hit it off. Alumna Edith Schryver, Lowthorpe '23, joined the 1927 summer tour, as did a new student, Elizabeth Lord, who had enrolled in 1926. The result was a life-long personal and professional partnership and the founding of the first female-owned landscape architecture firm in the Pacific Northwest.

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<sup>101</sup> Anderson, *The Cambridge School*, pp. 39-40.



Edith Schryver's class assignment for a seaside garden was published in Lowthorpe's 1925-26 catalogue (Figure 6.7).

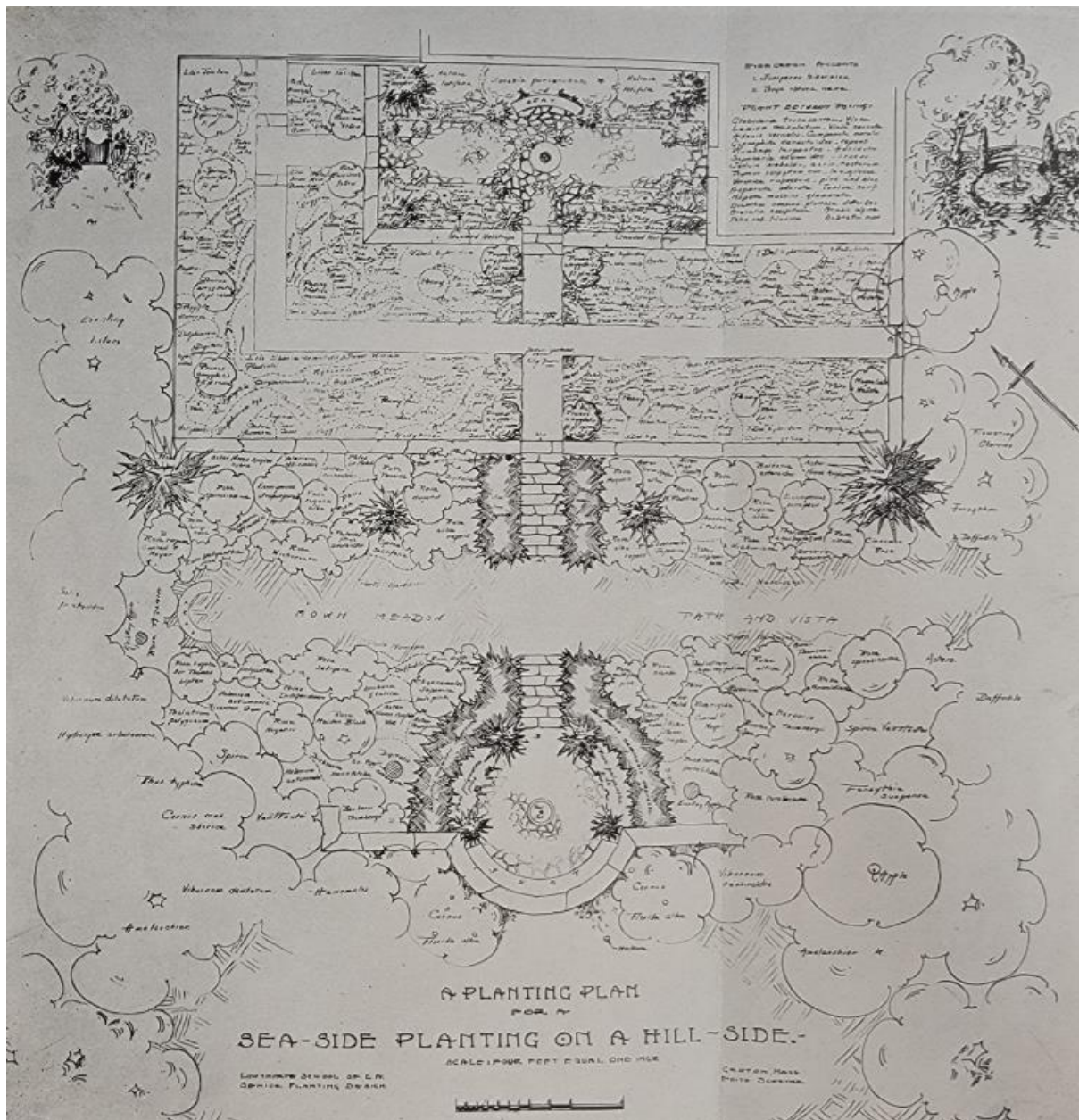


Figure 6.7. Sea-side garden project by Edith Schryver. Lowthorpe 1925-26 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISD), n.p.

Addressing the academic degree issue, the school in 1927 under Director Sturtevant began discussions with Simmons College, a Boston-based liberal arts college for women, to establish an affiliation. Lowthorpe would form a school of landscape architecture, offering undergraduate and post-graduate degree options for its students.<sup>102</sup> Lowthorpe was to stay at Groton, an all-important proviso that brought immediate problems: limited space at

<sup>102</sup> 'The School of Landscape Architecture' *Simmons College Bulletin*, 21,5, Part 2, Mar 1929 (Lowthorpe RISDA).

Lowthorpe constrained the number of Simmons students who could enrol, while not all Lowthorpe students chose to participate in the Simmons programme. One who did, however, was Edith Henderson, who completed her Simmons BSLA in 1934, the final year of the affiliation.

During this period, Lowthorpe continued to steer through the ambiguities and moving targets of professional and academic standards. The 1931 catalogue affirms that Lowthorpe's curriculum was based on ASLA minimum standards, yet some ASLA records show Lowthorpe was not an 'approved school' until 1943 – even though it had been one of the first thirteen schools accredited in the 1930s and its students had been approved for junior membership, based on an assessment of its training, since 1924.<sup>103</sup>

Jane Ries described the Lowthorpe curriculum from the late 1920s and early 1930s:

. . . We learned everything. We had construction, grading, roads, walls, pergolas, pools. We had history of architecture, shades and shadows and all the historic architectural columns and caps. We had plant material like mad. We learned plant materials, went to arboretums, we had soil entomology and surveying, perspective and watercolor and outdoor sketching. We had field trips to estates . . . and summer school where we tended our own garden plot.<sup>104</sup>

Knight's assessment of Sturtevant's 1927 study of planting design across the schools concludes that Lowthorpe's programme had been a model for the other schools.<sup>105</sup> Mary Mcleod Blue, who attended in the mid-1930s, commented on the balance: 'I think we had first-class training, quite equal to that given to men . . . I don't think the training was too horticultural; we had to gain a certain number of points in design before we could start our [senior] thesis.'<sup>106</sup>

The Final Decade: 1934-44

Not all was well at Lowthorpe, however, as what would be the final decade approached in the early 1930s. The school had stopped participating in the LEP for unknown reasons; Sturtevant, who had worked to upgrade the curriculum, left to join the Simmons faculty; with

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<sup>103</sup> Markley Stevenson, 'A Transitional Year: Annual Report of the President of the ASLA, 1946', *Landscape Architecture*, 37, 4 (Jul 1947), pp. 123-125.

<sup>104</sup> Palmer, 'An Overview', pp. 121-122.

<sup>105</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 128.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

the trustees declaring an emergency,<sup>107</sup> Steele recruited Anne Baker, a practising landscape architect, to replace Sturtevant. Steele wrote that 'she took over the school when it was at a low ebb of professional standing' but was 'limited by a brutal lack of funds'.<sup>108</sup> John Parker, who succeeded Baker in 1934, remembered thinking the Trustees were considering closing the school.<sup>109</sup> Knight reported on an article in *Horticulture* magazine in 1937 that referenced attempts to 'revive interest in the Lowthorpe School' and mentioned renewed efforts to raise an endowment. A Lowthorpe-Cambridge merger had been revisited as well, but Lowthorpe eventually withdrew: Anderson quoted a Lowthorpe Board of Trustees comment that the plan 'did not appear to be worked out as a merger of two going institutions, but rather as a complete takeover of Lowthorpe by The Cambridge School'. Anderson also believed that Cambridge was wary of the costs of the Groton campus, so important to the identity and pedagogy of Lowthorpe.<sup>110</sup> Ultimately, what happened during this time is not clear, although the lean period commencing with the stock market crash of 1929 and the Depression was likely a factor, affecting the scope and quantity of landscape design commissions, funding for institutions like Lowthorpe, and general morale. Yet, in many ways, the school looked to be doing well: alumna Henderson noted that there were about 45 students in her class in 1934, up from a group of six in Edith Schryver's class of 1923.<sup>111</sup>

Lowthorpe also continued to provide rigorous, professional training for its students. The winter residence programme with MIT was instituted in 1935 under Parker, an MIT alumnus. The trustees were reportedly enthusiastic about this new opportunity, which saved money (by closing Groton for the winter) and enhanced the curriculum with MIT instructors augmenting the Lowthorpe faculty. The school continued reworking its curriculum, scheduling visiting faculty from the practices through its final independent year. Catalogues from this period show a mature curriculum aligned with professional standards. Supporting this is the 1937 ASLA report on course minima for landscape architecture (Figure 6.8). The chart shows Lowthorpe placing equal attention on plant materials and landscape design, and exceeding the requirements for construction, the latter perhaps to ensure that there could be no criticism of the women's mastery of these masculine capabilities.

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<sup>107</sup> Fletcher Steele, 'Letter to Mary Steele, 1 June 1932', quoted in Karson, *Fletcher Steele*, p. 169.

<sup>108</sup> 'A Biographical Minute: Anne Baker', *Landscape Architecture*, 40, 1 (Oct 1949), p. 34.

<sup>109</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 213.

<sup>110</sup> Anderson, *The Cambridge School*, p. 64.

<sup>111</sup> Palmer, 'An Overview', p. 92.

A.S.L.A. Minima. 3000. Hrs.	Ldsep. Arch. & Prof. Prct.		Engrg. & Grd. Form.		Archtr.	Plants.		Graphic Express'n.	Verbal Express'n.
	L. A. Design	Total	L. A. Const.	Total		Pltg. Design	Total		
A.S.L.A. Minima. %	34% Av. = 37.4%		13% Av. = 12.9		12% Av. = 13.0	19% Av. = 17.6		17% Av. = 13.2	5% Av. = 7.9
Camb. School	25.0	29.2	16.0	16.0	23.3	6.6	17.9	13.6	(R)
Cornell	34.9	37.3	6.3	14.2	15.8	3.2	14.3	13.5	4.8
Harvard	30.8	41.4	11.1	11.1	13.2	12.9	24.3	19.0	(R)
Illinois	14.3	29.6	5.4	10.8	14.4	5.4	17.9	14.3	13.4
Iowa St.	17.5	37.6	5.2	13.6	12.9	5.8	16.6	6.5	12.9
Michigan	20.5	38.5	6.8	15.3	10.3	5.1	17.0	13.6	5.1
Ohio State	30.8	42.0	8.4	11.2	5.6	8.4	19.1	17.3	5.0
Penn. State	21.8	37.8	4.8	16.1	14.5	3.2	16.9	4.3	9.7
Un. of Penn.	35.2	46.2	5.5	10.3	8.0	5.0	13.0	16.0	6.3
Alabama	30.1	41.0	3.0	7.7	11.6	3.2	12.6	20.5	6.5
California	28.3	48.9	6.3	12.6	11.8	3.1	9.4	12.6	4.7
Cincinnati	18.7	31.1	3.1	6.4	24.9	3.8	11.8	17.6	8.4
Georgia	5.2	29.3	9.2	16.7	6.7	3.1	24.3	11.1	12.5
Kansas St.									
Lowthorpe	28.0	32.8	13.8	13.8	16.0	10.7	27.9	9.5	
Mass. State									
Michigan St.	12.0	29.1	1.7	14.5	10.3	1.7	17.1	18.8	10.3
N. Y. St. Forsty.									
N. Car. State									
Oregon St.									
Texas									

Figure 6.8. Chart from ASLA survey, 1937. In Gary O. Robinette, *Landscape Architecture Education Vol. 2* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1973), p. 27.

The 1937-38 catalogue emphasised that 'Before a student graduates, she has designed and supervised the construction of some development on the grounds, such as a terrace, a fence, or a garden . . .'<sup>112</sup> *House and Garden* expanded further:

The importance of excellent design is stressed throughout the entire three years of the course. This is studied from the theoretical historical and practical angles, and it is, of course, linked with practice in drafting, perspective, and freehand drawing. The big basic problems of Landscaping are handled in courses in geology, topography, road making, drainage and grading and the social responsibilities of the profession are considered in Community and City Planning [ . . . ] And finally, in preparation for the hard realities of dealing with clients and contractors, there are courses in estimation and problems of professional practice.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> The Lowthorpe School, 1937-38 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA).

<sup>113</sup> 'Women in Landscaping: Professional Standing is Developed by Thorough Training at the Lowthorpe School', *House and Garden*, 75, 1 (Jan 1939), p. 29.



Examples from that period include Figure 6.9. One of the most notable projects was an herb garden designed and installed by the students in 1938 (Figure 6.10), the first formal garden on the grounds.



Figure 6.9. Supervising construction. Lowthorpe 1937-38 Brochure (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

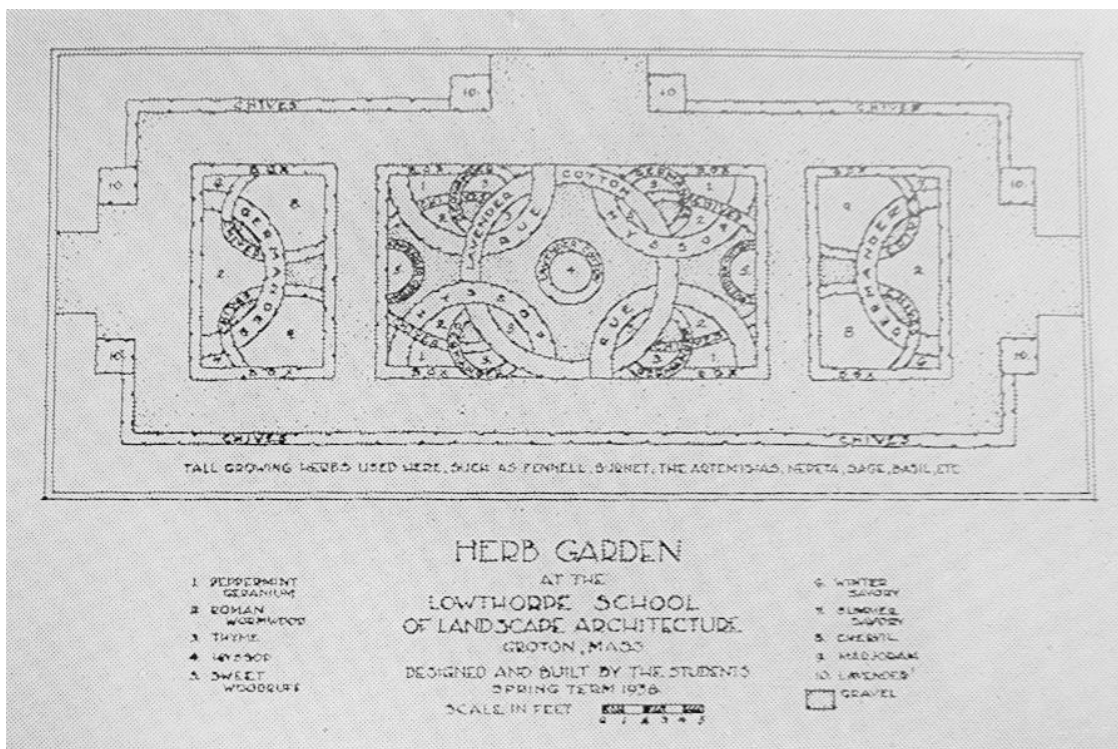


Figure 6.10. Student design for an herb garden, 1938. Leaf from a brochure or catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA).

The increased concentration on landscape design and construction was enabled by Lowthorpe's revival at that time of the two-year horticulture course as a second track. The Dawson Course in Horticulture (Figure 6.11) honoured long-time resident instructor Laura Dawson, who had died unexpectedly in March 1930 and was memorialised on campus with the Dawson Gate and the Dawson Dell.

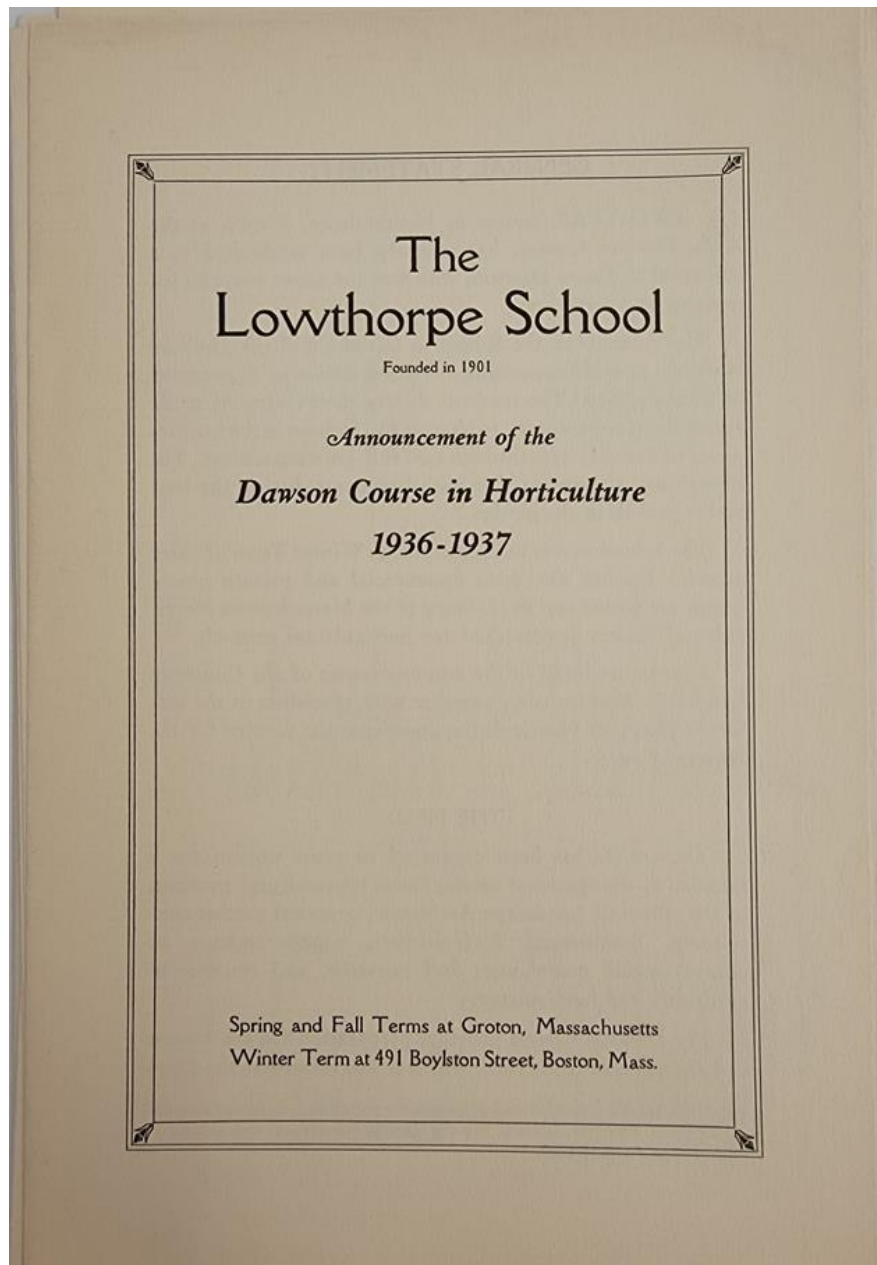


Figure 6.11. Announcement of the Dawson Course. Lowthorpe 1936-37 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA).

Lowthorpe had long since stopped promoting 'assistant' type work on estates and expected students would be practising as landscape architects. In 1937, Walter Chambers, a Harvard professor, began lecturing on managing a professional practice, expanding on the previous

instruction in record-keeping and project supervision. This course was later supplemented by a detailed eleven-page document prepared for Lowthorpe by the Olmsted firm, undated but written after 1941, which sets a professional tone up front:

Any one who practices or intends to practice the profession of Landscape Architecture should have a clear understanding of the preparation and use of Contracts and Specifications, and should learn to use correctly various terms which are found in them and other professional business documents. He should know also his own obligations and responsibilities in relation to his client and should understand various methods of procedure by which work he has planned can be carried out successfully.<sup>114</sup>

There were many constituencies influencing Lowthorpe's curriculum; remarks about 'improving' one aspect or another after a change in leadership recur throughout the research findings. One letter in the Olmsted archive is of particular interest. An unknown correspondent from outside the firm assesses the school's viability in 1943, when it was looking for a merger partner. The curriculum has been 'faddy' and occasionally one-sided, but the school 'is forward-looking' and has 'a high standing', the correspondent told a Hartford, Connecticut civic leader. There is a 'reservoir of good will' that made it an interesting possibility.<sup>115</sup>

The school had tried to keep pace with changing requirements in the profession; its ability to adapt over four decades was captured in a 1939 article in *House and Garden*:

Lowthorpe today is very different from the original school. It has constantly adapted its training to meet the demands of the profession as it has widened its scope during the last thirty years. Women landscape architects who in the early days were called in to advise politely on the use and arrangement of annuals and perennials are now responsible for the development of large parks, playgrounds, and sub-divisions all over the country.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Olmsted Brothers, 'Notes on the Preparation and Use of Contracts and Specifications in the practice of Landscape Architecture, and on Some Methods Followed in Carrying Out Work' (Olmsted LOC), n.d.

<sup>115</sup> 'Letter to Mr. W. H. Putnam, 14th December 1943' (Olmsted LOC).

<sup>116</sup> 'Women in Landscaping: Professional Standing is Developed by Thorough Training at the Lowthorpe School', *House and Garden*, 75, 1 (Jan 1939), pp. 28-29.



The article neatly captures the shift from the pre-Depression era of gardens and estates for the wealthy and well-to-do middle classes to the public works and suburban developments of the ensuing period. From its founding, Lowthorpe had been attuned to social contexts that affected work for its graduates, and it adjusted to mid-century imperatives as well, adding city and community planning to its curriculum, reflecting a growth area for landscape architects. Catalogues from the final years under John Parker showcased student work in contemporary applications in addition to traditional residential design, as shown in Figure 6.12.

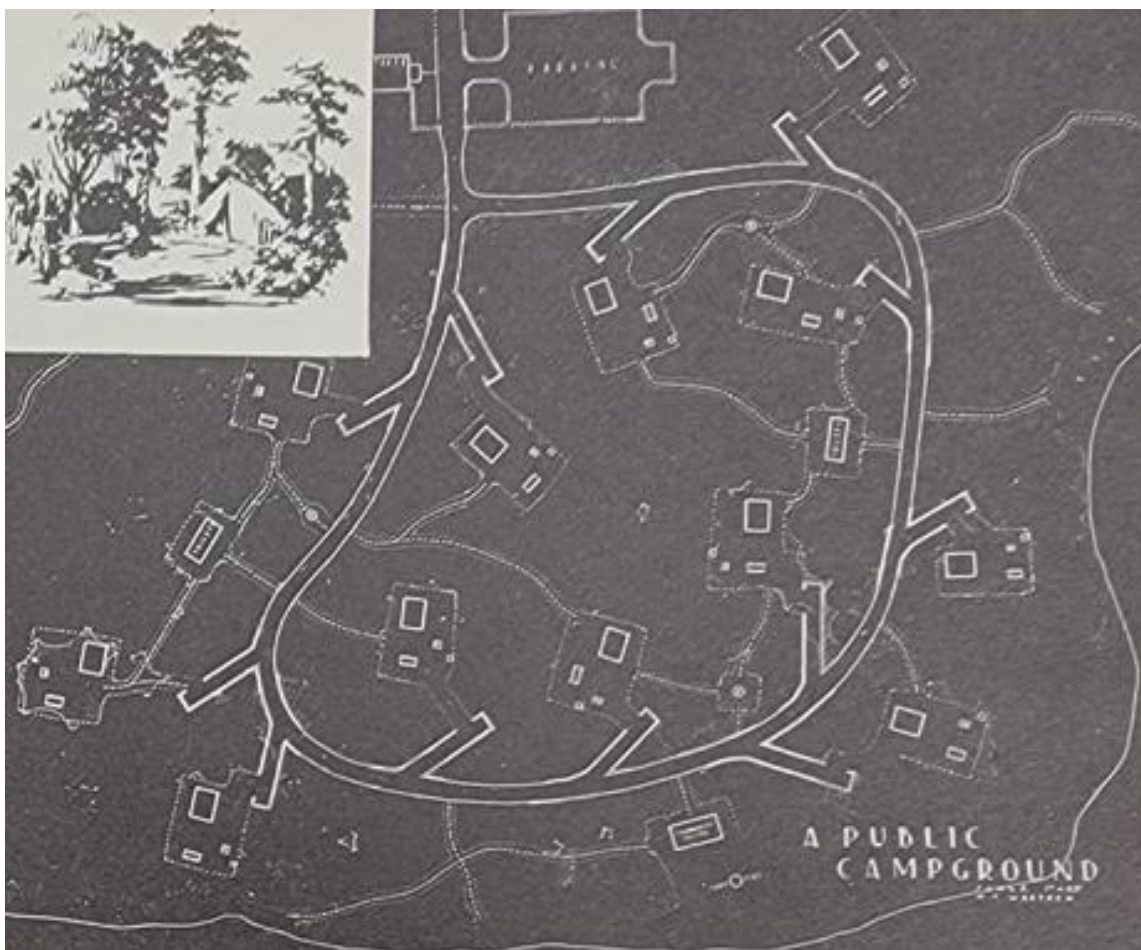


Figure 6.12. Design for a public campground. Lowthorpe Brochure circa 1940s (Lowthorpe RISD), n.p.

With every change required of the school, however, in two things Lowthorpe remained constant over the years: first, the enduring instructional format of classwork plus intensive practical experience on the Groton campus; second, horticulture.

Despite the school's position on the primacy of landscape design, the strength of its landscape architecture faculty and coursework (Figure 6.13), and its roster of practising alumnae, it was the school's commitment to horticulture (as distinct from planting design) that was defining

in the minds of many. By comparison, the Cambridge school taught both architecture and landscape architecture as 'Design, Construction, History, Freehand, and Miscellaneous'. Instruction on plant materials was lumped into the miscellany, along with much else. Anderson explained that horticulture's 'minor position' was due to the intensive focus required by the other subjects.<sup>117</sup> The debate about the role of horticulture in the profession thus found expression in the divergent emphases of these two women's schools.

an investigation of the qualifications of the individual. Those applicants whose preparation seems inadequate for the course in Landscape Architecture are frequently advised to apply for admission to the Dawson Course in Horticulture, which provides an excellent preliminary training for the profession.

**CURRICULUM**

The curriculum is designed to give the student, who intends to become a professional landscape architect, training in the application of the principles of design and the technical knowledge necessary to carry out her work.

FIRST YEAR					
Fall Term	Hours	Winter Term	Hours	Spring Term	Hours
Design 1.1	14	Design 1.2	22	Design 1.3	10
Theory of L. Des. 1.1	4	Community Planning 1.2	7	Surveying 1.3	7
Graphics 1.1	3	Freehand Drawing 1.2	6	Grading 1.3	7
Shades & Shadows 1.1	4	*Hist. of L. A. 1.2	3	Perspective 1.3	5
Topography 1.1	5	*Hist. of Art 1.2	4	Planting Des. 1.3	2
Trees 1.1	11	Trees 1.2	2	Shrubs and Fl.	—
Geology 1.1	2	Arch. Constr. 1.2	4	Trees 1.3	12
Horticulture 1.1	4	Mathematics 1.2	2	Horticulture 1.3	4
Presentation 1.1	4			Presentation 1.3	4
Hours per week	51	Hours per week	50	Hours per week	51

SECOND YEAR					
Fall Term	Hours	Winter Term	Hours	Spring Term	Hours
Design 2.1	11	Design 2.2	21	Design 2.3	14
Planting Des. 2.1	7	Arch. Constr. 2.2	7	Planting Des. 2.3	8
Color 2.1	6	Bldg. Materials 2.2	2	Drainage 2.3	7
Roads 2.1	6	Shrubs 2.2	2	Perennials 2.3	10
Special Plant Materials 2.1	10	Freehand Drawing 2.2	6	Estimates & Costs 2.3	3
Ecology 2.1	3	*Hist. of L. A. 2.2	4	Horticulture 2.3	4
Presentation 2.1	3	*Hist. of Art 2.2	4	Presentation 2.3	4
Horticulture 2.1	4	*Hist. & Prin. of City Planning 2.2	4		
Hours per week	50	Hours per week	50	Hours per week	50

\* Given every other year.

[ 10 ]

THIRD YEAR					
Fall Term	Hours	Winter Term	Hours	Spring Term	Hours
Design 3.1	17	Design 3.2	18	Design 3.3	23
Planting Des. 3.1	12	Planting Des. 3.2	7	Construction 3.3	9
Details, Structures & Specifications 3.1	12	Arch. Constr. 3.2	9	Planting Des. 3.3	9
Pl. Mat. Research 3.1	6	Land. Constr. 3.2	4	Presentation 3.3	9
Hist. of L. A. 3.1	3	Freehand Drawing 3.2	6		
		*Professional Practice 3.2	3		
		Hist. of Art 3.2	3		
Hours per week	50	Hours per week	50	Hours per week	50

\* Given every other year.

**THESIS**

The Winter Term, following the completion of the three years' study, is recommended as being the best time to begin the thesis.

**DESCRIPTION OF COURSES**

The courses at Lowthorpe are divided into the four general divisions of Design, Construction, Fine Arts, and Plant Science. (Numbers following course names refer to year and term in which courses are given: i.e., 1.2 indicates First Year — Second Term.)

**DESIGN**

*Theory of Landscape Design 1.1* — Lectures are given to acquaint the student with the general scope of landscape architecture. The present trend of the profession and the possibilities of the future are discussed, in relation to their geological, historical, and psychological backgrounds.

*Design 1.1* — The basic principles of composition are studied by means of short problems.

*Design 1.2* — The principles of planning are considered. The work of this term serves also to teach the students the principal methods of drawing and rendering.

*Community Planning 1.2* — The design of a large area is studied, concentrating in turn on its many component parts; i.e., villages, parkways, community centres, estates, et cetera. The work is carried on in so far as is possible by the class as a whole, and is presented in some cases as a survey or report; in others as a graphic plan.

[ 11 ]

Figure 6.13. A landscape-architecture intensive curriculum, including courses on city and community planning. Lowthorpe 1937-38 Catalogue (Lowthorpe RISDA), pp. 10-11.

In 1936, midwestern landscape architect and plantsman Jens Jensen observed to Frank Waugh the 'strong tendency by the American Landscaper to get away from gardening, as if that word smelled of cabbage. He has a fear of being classed with the craftsman instead of the professional, and today the art is practically killed because of his efforts to make a profession of it.'<sup>118</sup> There were, in fact, plantsmen among the landscape architects, including Warren Manning and Loring Underwood, and Lowthorpe was of course turning out landscape

<sup>117</sup> Anderson, *The Cambridge School*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>118</sup> Robert E. Grese, *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1998), p. 61.



architects who were skilled with plants and planting design. Jensen, however, accurately identified horticulture as representing an underlying anxiety amongst some in the profession about landscape architecture's place in the arts. Olmsted Sr had accepted the term 'landscape architect' for his profession because 'it helps to established [sic] the important idea of the distinction of my profession from that of gardening [. . .] the distinction of an art of design'.<sup>119</sup> Harvard's Pray was eager to see the field known 'as an art and a science not limited to the study of farming, trees, and plants'.<sup>120</sup> Pray was of the same mind as Olmsted, Sargent, and the Eliots, among others. The younger Eliot, the landscape architect, had campaigned for a department at Harvard before his death, writing, 'The popular notion that my profession is chiefly concerned with gardens and gardening is utterly mistaken. Landscape Architecture is an art of design'.<sup>121</sup>

Lowthorpe's attempts to maintain a balanced curriculum mirror the tension between horticulture and design in the landscape architecture field. Horticulture was a way into the profession for women, yet Lowthorpe's continued investment in that aspect of its curriculum may have perpetuated the perceived affinity of women for what was classed as a subordinate skill. The ambivalence of the profession toward horticulture was not resolved in Lowthorpe's time. In 1969, modernist landscape architect Garrett Eckbo (Harvard MLA 1938) described 'some segments of our profession' as saying, 'We really do not know much about plants; the boys in the back room do the planting plans'. Eckbo concluded that 'the search for a balanced and humane environment finds itself lost between professions and factions.'<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr and Theodora Kimball, eds. *Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect 1822-1903* (New York and London: G.P Putnam's Sons / The Knickerbocker Press, 1922), p. 127.

<sup>120</sup> Anthony Alofsin, *The Struggle for Modernism: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and City Planning at Harvard* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2002), p. 40.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>122</sup> Garrett Eckbo, *The Landscape We See* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), p. 109.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion



Figure 7.1. The Long Border with irises and the statue the students called 'Mrs Low'.  
Lowthorpe Endowment Fund Brochure (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.d.

Mrs Low died in 1933, aged 91, in Boston. Her death is surprisingly unremarked in surviving documents, even though Jane Ries ('32) called her 'our darling' (Figure 7.1). She was described as 'an individual of dominant personality with a clear vision of the future for women' who was 'broad minded' and 'a generation in advance of the times and at least a decade in advance of the logical understanding of what landscape architecture involves.'<sup>123</sup>

In 1942, with dwindling enrolment and continued financial worries, Lowthorpe took steps to ensure the future of its programme. After a two-year search for the right merger partner, in the fall of 1945, faculty and students moved to Providence as the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture at the Rhode Island School of Design, a degree-granting, co-educational design school.<sup>124</sup> The Groton campus was to be sold. The Cambridge school had shuttered three years earlier, essentially absorbed into Harvard, which began admitting women not because of an institutional change of heart but because so many of its students

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<sup>123</sup> Palmer, 'An Overview', p. 121.; Kate Brewster, 'Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture', *Garden Club of America Bulletin*, 4, 14 (Mar 1931), pp. 64-66.

<sup>124</sup> As the pre-eminent visual design school in the United States, RISD has significant cachet. It is associated with the Ivy League's Brown University.

were off at war that its own programme was suffering. After four decades, landscape architecture remained a vulnerable academic programme.

Lowthorpe is an integral part of the story of the birth of the profession and its academic arm. The school's establishment in 1901 was inspired by the same currents of thought that brought about Harvard's programme. It was supported by the pool of resources shared among the schools and the practices. Lowthorpe took part of the exchange of ideas that was centred around the Bussey Institution and the Arnold Arboretum, Sargent and Dawson, the Eliots and the Olmsteds, and aired in *Landscape Architecture*. Practitioners like Steele and Shipman influenced landscape design and mentored the schools and students. Each school developed its own mission and approach, with varying means, but each responded to the same developments and imperatives in the profession. Each began sending landscape architects into the field.

Lowthorpe's pragmatic commitment to horticulture required regular efforts to prove itself by emphasising the primacy of design. These efforts underscore the deep unease of the profession with its horticultural origins at a time when affirming landscape architecture as an art form was central to its identity. Support for Lowthorpe may have initially derived from Mrs Low's close relationships with others in the group – both Dawson and Pray had daughters carrying her family name of Motley – but also suggests an opportunistic desire to sequester horticulture in the female, subordinate, 'back room' of the profession.

The commitment of influential members of practices and institutions to helping Lowthorpe as a school of landscape architecture – rather than as a school of gardening for ladies – is striking, even more so in the context of attitudes of some toward women practitioners.<sup>125</sup> President Eliot, a patron of Lowthorpe, was adamant that women not be admitted to Harvard. The Olmsted firm never hired a female practitioner yet devoted a remarkable amount of resources to Lowthorpe and was essential to its success.<sup>126</sup> Yet others, like A.D. Taylor and Harold Hill Blossom, hired Lowthorpe alumnae. Perhaps Lowthorpe did the ambivalent members of the profession a favour by establishing a separate track for women and taking that issue off the table. In any case, a paternalistic attitude was clearly in play, and respect for Mrs Low was likely a factor, but Lowthorpe's students received more than just 'surplus'

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<sup>125</sup> Although to the male students at MIT, the Lowthorpe women were the 'girl gardeners'. In Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 82.

<sup>126</sup> Chaderjian, *Olmsted Legacy and Women*, n.p.

resources; they got the best of the best. With Lowthorpe especially dependent upon resources from outside the school, the time and energy that key individuals and institutions invested in building the profession stand in sharp relief.

Despite the depth of its support, Lowthorpe could not establish the one thing it needed: financial security. There may have been a lack of faith in the endeavour on the part of some, but much may come down to an inability to prepare a strategic plan in uncertain times, or the distractions of day-to-day survival. The school was also too emotionally tied to the 'dream' of Lowthorpe. Once its greatest asset, the campus was ultimately limiting. It forced fatal compromises on scope and scale, as with Simmons; and if the adaptable Lowthorpe could not think outside the envelope of Groton, then it would be unable to plan its next iteration. In the end, it was the campus that was sacrificed when Lowthorpe joined RISD. The 'spirit of Lowthorpe' was continued at RISD until the early 1960s but by the 1970s the name was no longer attached to the landscape architecture department.

Mrs Low's school graduated perhaps 150-200 women<sup>127</sup> during its forty-plus years as an independent institution, a tribute to what has become clear was a remarkable dedication amongst faculty, supporters, and alumnae to achieving the ideal that Lowthorpe represented. For many faculty and students, it was an idyllic and also productive time. Lowthorpe's training enabled graduates to breach the gender barrier and create successful careers in landscape architecture. From coast to coast, Lowthorpe graduates worked in prominent firms and established their own practices; some played active roles in local and national professional organisations shaping the profession. Alumnae also breached the expectations barrier in the range of their work, whether designing in both traditional and modern styles or taking on both private and civic commissions. As an institution, Lowthorpe pioneered landscape architecture education as well as women's training; its faculty created an increasingly sophisticated curriculum that kept pace with evolving educational standards and latterly reflected the changing scope of landscape design in Depression-era and post-war America.

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<sup>127</sup> According to Schneider, p. 69, Lowthorpe claimed 400 alumnae, while RISD recorded 281. The school reported 93 graduates as of 1931, after which there were a few years of strong enrollment with 40 or more students. Each list uncovered during research has had noticeable omissions and none agree. The estimate of 150-200 is based on informed guesswork.

An expanded narrative of the birth of the landscape architecture profession could be told, bringing the period's rich diversity of ideas and values together with the influence of institutions and individuals to re-examine the formative period roughly between 1890 and 1940. Lowthorpe would form a significant part of that story.



## Appendix A: Chronology of Key Events

### The Early Years: 1901 to 1923

Date	Event	Notes
1901	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The founding of the school with Mrs Low's Proposal</li> </ul>	An October start planned Tuition \$500
1902	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Announcement of a start date</li> <li>School name: 'The School of Horticulture and Landscape Gardening for Women'</li> </ul>	September 1902 start date Tuition \$100
1903-08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prospectus</li> <li>School name: 'Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture, Landscape Gardening, and Horticulture for Women'</li> </ul>	
1909	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporation as 'The Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture, Gardening, and Horticulture for Women'</li> <li>Leadership and Board of Directors established</li> </ul>	Structure: President, Dean, Secretary, and Treasurer Board members not listed
1910-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First list of Patrons published in catalogue</li> <li>Two tracks: Horticulture or Landscape Architecture</li> <li>Notice that the school is not self-supporting</li> <li>In Pennsylvania, the 'Pennsylvania School of Horticulture for Women' opens (Feb 1911)</li> </ul>	Patrons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus, Harvard</li> <li>Charles Sprague Sargent, Arnold Arboretum</li> <li>William J. Slocum, President Colorado College</li> <li>James Sturgis Pray, Chairman, Department of Landscape Architecture, Harvard</li> <li>H.S. Graves, Esq., Forester of the United States</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addition of an Advisory Council</li> <li>Leadership changes, Mrs Low as President</li> </ul>	Advisory Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stephen Child, Esq</li> <li>Louise Hetzer</li> <li>Laura Dawson</li> <li>Miss Alderson</li> </ul>
1913	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First mention of a school Principal</li> </ul>	Principal: Georgina J. Sanders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape Architecture and Horticulture tracks are subdivided</li> <li>A small nursery added to the grounds</li> <li>Updated greenhouse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group A students should qualify as an assistant in a practice to gain the experience needed to open her own office.</li> <li>Group B students should be able to interpret the plans of a landscape architect in 'small places', execute simple planting plans, give advice on engineering considerations. Geared toward outdoor work: school gardens, village improvement,</li> </ul>

horticulture instructors, care of gardens and estates, work in greenhouses or commercial nurseries.

- 1914
- Note that the Department of Landscape Architecture is under Prof Pray's supervision

- 1915
- Name: The Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for Women
  - The Cambridge School begins with its first student in Cambridge, with Henry Frost.

- 1916-17
- Programme expands to three years
  - A new Principal
  - Article in The House Beautiful appears
  - Tuition increases to \$150 / year
  - A list of Patronesses is published in the catalogue
- Principal: Amy L. Cogswell
- Patronesses:
- Mary E. Wooley, President of Mount Holyoke College
  - Ellen F. Pendleton, President of Wellesley College
  - Bertha M. Boody, Dean of Radcliffe College
  - Louise Klein Miller, Curator School Gardens, Cleveland, Ohio
  - Rose Standish Nichols, Landscape Architect, Boston

### The Middle Years: 1924 to 1934

Date	Event	Notes
1924-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new President</li> <li>• Participation in LEP</li> <li>• National involvement with ASLA</li> <li>• ASLA recognizes Lowthorpe graduates as junior associates</li> <li>• Endowment campaign launched in May 1925</li> </ul>	President: Mrs Cyrus Winslow Merrell (an expanded role comprising both Principal and President)
1925-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations in May 1926</li> <li>• Sponsorship of M Correvon's national lecture tour on alpine plants</li> <li>• Beginning of a collaboration with Cambridge School               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Summer 1926: Groton summer school with Cambridge students</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	The Summer Schools become a popular fixture in the calendar
1926-27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gift of Mrs Pierpont Stackpole of \$5000 for a temporary drafting building</li> <li>• Enrolment of 30 students, space problems</li> <li>• Cambridge-Lowthorpe European Tour, Summer 1927</li> <li>• Leadership changes</li> </ul>	Mrs Merrell resigns Robert Sturtevant appointed Director (a new title replacing Principal and President)

1928-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affiliation with Simmons College</li> <li>School year restructured to align with Simmons: four quarters</li> <li>Failure to be selected as a charter member of APSLA</li> </ul>	One summer school session becomes a requirement
1929-30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The death of long-time instructor Laura Dawson occurs in March of 1930</li> </ul>	
1931-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Garden Club of America takes on a fund-raising project for Lowthorpe</li> </ul>	\$20,000 of a goal of \$50,000 was raised Failure to meet goal reported to be owing to the difficult financial times
1932-33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership changes</li> <li>Summer tour of east coast gardens</li> </ul>	Resignation of Robert Sturtevant Anne Baker as President in Fall, 1932
1934-35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership changes</li> <li>A period of 'low ebb' in reputation</li> </ul>	Resignation of Anne Baker, summer 1934

### The Final Years: 1934 to 1945

Date	Event	Notes
1934	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership changes continue</li> <li>The Simmons affiliation ends</li> <li>Announcement of the MIT Winter Term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in tuition</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	John A. Parker and Dorothy May Anderson become co-Directors Previous tuition not known; reduction to \$500/year
1934-35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first Lowthorpe scholarship is announced</li> <li>Dorothy May Anderson leaves Lowthorpe</li> </ul>	The Summer Schools become a popular fixture in the calendar Parker becomes sole Director Competitions in flower shows bring awards
1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A two-year course in Horticulture is brought back</li> </ul>	
1937-38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Horticulture course becomes the Dawson Course in Horticulture</li> <li>Financial difficulties and a renewed attempt to fund an endowment</li> </ul>	
1940-41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Fortieth Anniversary is celebrated</li> <li>A series of five colloquia is held in 1941</li> <li>1941 summer courses on wartime gardening for the public</li> </ul>	
1941-42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defense Garden article published in the Garden Club of America Bulletin</li> <li>Defense gardening courses continue</li> <li>Discussions about solving Lowthorpe's degree-granting and financial problems result in determination to merge</li> </ul>	
1942-43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MIT affiliation ends, return to year-round studies at Groton</li> </ul>	Merger: 22 institutions were approached. The University of North Carolina wanted the school but could not accommodate it immediately; as a result, the offer from RISD was accepted.

1944-45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowthorpe’s final year as an independent institution</li> <li>• Summer 1945: announcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Move to RISD</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• September: the new term begins in Providence</li> </ul>	<p>John Parker becomes head of the Lowthorpe Department of Landscape Architecture  Parker becomes Chairman of the Division of Planning, incorporating the Lowthorpe department and the departments of architecture and interior design</p>

Note 1: Data in this timeline has been derived from the archival materials at RISD including catalogues, brochures, announcements, and correspondence related to the endowment project. Additional information has come from ‘School News’ in *Landscape Architecture*. The timeline is not whole, as many years’ documents are missing.

Note 2: The Groton campus was sold to Archbishop Cushing (later Cardinal Cushing) as a country residence; a year later it became the property of the Holy Union Sisters who established a Country Day School, which educated children for sixty years. The school closed in 2017 as a result of declining enrolment. In 2018, the adjacent Lawrence Academy bought the Lowthorpe property. The main house and the Dawson Gate still stand. The property’s future is unknown.

## Appendix B: Notable Alumnae

**Nellie B. Allen (1874-1961), Class of 1919.\*** She specialized in formal gardens, and was known in particular for her knot gardens. She had met Gertrude Jekyll whose influence was said to be seen in her perennial borders. Among her residential designs was the well-known garden at Thorndale, near Millbrook, NY.<sup>128</sup> Her papers are archived at Cornell University.

**Agnes Selkirk Clark (1898-1983), FASLA, Class of 1918.** Agnes Selkirk married architect Cameron Clark after graduating from Lowthorpe and was an advocate for Lowthorpe – her ‘Studying Landscape Architecture under Ideal Conditions’ in 1926 idealised the Lowthorpe campus and work-study approach. Her husband wrote a testimonial for the mid-1920’s catalogues. She worked in Ellen Shipman’s office before developing an independent practice. Her papers are archived in Connecticut at the Fairfield Museum and History Center.<sup>129</sup>

**Eleanor Christie (1890-?), FASLA, Class of 1917.** She fell in love with gardens on a European tour, which led her to Lowthorpe, as recounted in Chapter 3. She worked for Ellen Shipman before returning to her home in Ohio, where she worked in the Cleveland office of A.D. Taylor before establishing her own practice. Her design for the Marjorie P. Lee Home in Cincinnati was engineered over a garage and was much enjoyed by residents.<sup>130</sup>

**Mary Parsons Cunningham (1888-1934), Class of 1915 or 17.\*** A Vassar graduate, she studied at the Cambridge school after completing her Lowthorpe course and earned an MA through Bussey. She was mentored by Ellen Shipman, and then established her own practice. She returned to teach at Lowthorpe in the 1932-33 term. According to the TCLF site, she led ‘rigorous plant hunting hikes over hill and dale, in all kinds of weather’. She published frequently.<sup>131</sup>

**Joanna C. Diman (1901-1991), Class of 1923.\*** A classmate of Edith Schryver, she was hired by Harold Hill Blossom and then worked with Ellen Shipman in New York, as well as with Louise Payson, another Lowthorpe alumna. She worked for the New York City Department of Parks, where she supervised the Landscape Division. After joining the elite architecture firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, she led the landscape department and was involved in their high-profile commissions.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Judith B. Tankard, ‘Allen, Nellie Beatrice’, in *Pioneers of American Landscape Design: An Annotated Bibliography*, Charles A. Birnbaum and Lisa E. Crowder, eds. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1993), p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> Finding Aid, Agnes Selkirk Clark Landscape Architecture Records, Fairfield Museum and History Center, < <https://www.fairfieldhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Clark-Agnes-MS-B91.pdf> > [Accessed 3 August 2022]

<sup>130</sup> Knight, ‘Lowthorpe’, p. 173; ‘Love of Gardening in Bloom’, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, 29 July 1984, p. 51.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Mary Parsons Cunningham,’ TCLF Pioneer, < <https://www.tclf.org/mary-parsons-cunningham> > [accessed 1 Aug 2022]; Lowthorpe Catalogue 1932-33 (Lowthorpe RISDA), n.p.

<sup>132</sup> Nicholas Adams, ‘Joanna C. Diman (1901-91): A “Cantankerous” Landscape Architect at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 77, 3 (2018), pp. 339-348; The Cultural Landscape Foundation, < <https://www.tclf.org/joanna-c-diman> > [accessed 3 August 2022].



**Louise Hertzner (?- 1937)** was an early graduate of Lowthorpe who then joined the faculty as early as 1905, as superintending gardener and horticulture lecturer. She was named Dean and then Dean Emerita, spending her life at Lowthorpe. A respondent to Knight's survey of alumnae remembered 'Parties in Miss Hertzner's little house at the top of the orchard. Miss Hertzner skiing down the slope from her little house to the school, having learned to ski when 60 or in her 60s.' Her death was noted by a local diarist on April 17, 1937: 'for more than thirty years instructor in Horticulture [ . . . ] passed away after a long illness'.<sup>133</sup>

**Edith Harrison Henderson (1911-2005), FASLA, Class of 1934.\*** Henderson was one of the Lowthorpe students who took the Simmons degree; after graduation, she returned to her hometown of Atlanta where she had a flourishing career. She told Palmer about her work and her weekly garden column in Atlanta's leading newspaper, the Atlanta Journal Constitution. An ASLA Fellow, she was the first woman elected an officer of that organisation, served on its Board, and was chair of the Council of Fellows. Among her notable accomplishments was the design for the landscape of one of the earliest public housing projects in America.<sup>134</sup>

**Helen Kippax (1890-1962?), Class of 1924.** A Canadian native, Kippax established a practice in Toronto designing residential gardens and was a founding member of the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA/AAPC). The Royal Botanical Gardens, Canada, noted that she adapted to modern needs by designing gardens that were 'simple to create and easy to maintain'. She is remembered with the Helen M. Kippax Garden at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Burlington, Ontario.<sup>135</sup>

**Gertrude Diemel Kuh (1893-1977), Class of 1917.\*** Kuh worked with Ellen Shipman before returning to the Midwest, where she established a practice in Chicago; she was also a visiting professor at the University of Illinois. Among her projects were the Florsheim estate, hospitals, corporate flagships, and the Chicago Riverwalk. Her papers are archived at the Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archives of the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>136</sup>

**Elizabeth Lord (1887-1974), Class of 1929\*** and **Edith Schryver (1901-1984), Class of 1923.\*** As discussed in Chapter 6, Edith Schryver and Elizabeth Lord met in the joint Cambridge-Lowthorpe tour of Europe in 1927. Settling in Lord's hometown of Salem, Oregon, they formed the firm Lord & Schryver, the first woman-owned landscape architecture firm in the Pacific Northwest. They designed more than 200 private and public landscapes over a 40-year-period. Their work has gained notice in the last twenty years, with the establishment

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<sup>133</sup> Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 215; Lowthorpe Catalogues (Lowthorpe RISDA); Groton Historical Society Records, Volume 4, 1936-38, p. 66.

<sup>134</sup> 'Edith Harrison Henderson', The Cultural Landscape Foundation, < <https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/edith-harrison-henderson> > [accessed 17 July 2022; Palmer, 'An Overview', pp. 85-95.

<sup>135</sup> Royal Botanical Gardens, @RGBCanada, < <https://twitter.com/rbgcanada/status/1104120472374001666> > [Accessed 15 May 2022]

<sup>136</sup> Landmarks Illinois, [https://www.landmarks.org/women\\_built\\_type/gertrude-eisendrath-deimel-kuh/](https://www.landmarks.org/women_built_type/gertrude-eisendrath-deimel-kuh/), [accessed 15 June 2022]

of the Lord & Schryver Conservancy to save their personal and professional records and support the purchase of their home and studio, Gaiety Hollow.<sup>137</sup>

**Elizabeth Greenleaf Pattee (1893-1991), Class of 1918\* and Faculty.** After graduating from MIT with an architecture degree in 1916, she joined Lowthorpe as an instructor and simultaneously completed a Lowthorpe certificate. While teaching at Lowthorpe (for more than 20 years) she established her own firm with a Lowthorpe graduate, Constance Peters; they took on numerous residential commissions in New England. She also worked with Harold Hill Blossom. She was active in ASLA and was one of the faculty who helped Lowthorpe transition to RISD in 1945.<sup>138</sup>

**Louise Payson (1894-1977), Class of 1916.** Payson worked for Ellen Shipman for twelve years before setting up her own practice in New York, where she completed some seventy commissions, with work being recognized in several shelter magazines. Portland Landmarks quotes Shipman as writing, 'Louise Payson came fresh from Lowthorpe, so young and full of ability, and after twelve years with me, started out brilliantly for herself.' Her papers are archived at the University of Maine.<sup>139</sup>

**Isabella Pendleton (1891-1965), Class of 1917.\*** An early interest in gardening and landscape design led her to establish the Cincinnati Garden Club; she enrolled at Lowthorpe to pursue her interest landscape design. She established a practice between Cincinnati and around the New York area, where she settled. She was a frequent lecturer and writer.<sup>140</sup>

**Elsa Rehmman (1886-1946), Class of 1911.\*** After leaving Lowthorpe, she taught at Vassar College, where she met botanist Edith Roberts. Work in Vassar's botanical laboratory led to a pioneering series of jointly authored articles and the 1929 book *American Plants for American Gardens*, one of the earliest to consider native plants and plant ecology. Landscape architect and pioneer of rewilding landscapes, Darrel Morrison, cites the book as an early inspiration for his career.<sup>141</sup>

**Jane Silverstein Ries (1909-2005), Class of 1932.\*** Ries practiced in her hometown of Denver, Colorado, initially in the firm of Irving McCrary, who as a family friend had suggested she attend Lowthorpe. She was active in professional organisations, remarking to Donna Palmer 'we're fighting like mad' on strengthening laws on qualifications. In 1976, she told Donna Palmer she had completed more than 1200 commissions ranging from

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<sup>137</sup> 'Lord and Schryver-Their Story', Lord & Schryver Conservancy, < <http://www.lordschryver.org/their-story.html>>; Valencia Libby, *The Northwest Gardens of Lord & Schryver* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2021).

<sup>138</sup> 'Elizabeth Greenleaf Pattee', The Cultural Landscape Foundation, < <https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/elizabeth-greenleaf-pattee>> [accessed 17 July 2022]; 'Who is Elizabeth Greenleaf Pattee?', New Jersey Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Land8 < <https://land8.com/njasla-history-of-the-chapter-first-50-years-who-is-elizabeth-greenleaf-pattee/>> [accessed 30 Aug 2022]

<sup>139</sup> 'Architect of the Week: Ellen Louise Payson', Greater Portland Landmarks, <https://www.portlandlandmarks.org/blog/2020/5/21/architect-of-the-week-ellen-louise-payson> [accessed 22 Aug 2022].

<sup>140</sup> 'Isabella Pendleton', The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <<https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/isabella-pendleton>> [accessed 22 Aug 2022]

<sup>141</sup> 'Elsa Rehmman', The Cultural Landscape Foundation, < <https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/elsa-rehmman>>; Roberts, Edith A. and Elsa Rehmman, fwd. by Darrel G. Morrison, *American Plants for American Gardens* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996) [first published 1929 by MacMillan], pp.xi-xxvii.

botanic gardens to hospital grounds to historic preservation. She was elected a Fellow of ASLA in 1965 and awarded the ASLA Medal in 2005. Her papers form the Jane Silverstein Ries archive at the Denver Public Library. She told Palmer that her time at Lowthorpe was idyllic and in corresponding with Knight, called the school 'my beloved Lowthorpe.'<sup>142</sup>

**Eleanor Louise Roche (1892-1975), Class of 1917.\*** Roche was a classmate of Louise Payson and Isabella Pendleton. With Payson, she worked in Ellen Shipman's office after graduation from Lowthorpe. She established her own New York-based practice, specializing in residential and small gardens, although she also worked for the NYC parks department in the 1920s. Her later career took her to Michigan.<sup>143</sup>

**Grace Campbell Wing (1912-1991), Class of 1933 (Lowthorpe) and 1934 (Simmons).\*** Like Harrison, Wing also completed the Simmons degree, and established a long career designing civic landscapes, early on with the New York Parks Department and later with the federal government in Washington. She briefly partnered with her classmate Edith Harrison Henderson on private commissions in Atlanta before returning to Washington. Her government work involved some of the largest development projects of the time. Family travels took her away from practice for some years.<sup>144</sup>

\* Denotes alumnae whom The Cultural Landscape Foundation has listed as 'Pioneers' of landscape design.

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<sup>142</sup> Palmer, 'An Overview', pp. 115-25; Knight p. 179; 'Jane Silverstein Ries', The Cultural Landscape Foundation <<https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/jane-silverstein-ries>> [accessed 16 June 2022].

<sup>143</sup> 'Eleanor Louise Roche', The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <<https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/eleanor-louise-roche>> [accessed 5 Aug 2022]

<sup>144</sup> 'Grace Campbell Wing', The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <<https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/grace-campbell-wing>> [accessed 5 Aug 2022]; Knight, 'Lowthorpe', p. 181

## Appendix C: Examples of Alumnae Work



*Nellie B. Allen, Landscape Architect*

*Photograph by Mattie Edwards Hewitt*

Elizabethan Garden for Thorndale (Millbrook, New York) by Nellie Allen. 'At the League Exhibit in 1938', *Landscape Architecture*, 28, 4 (Jul 1938) p. 173.



Lord & Schryver design for Deepwood Estate, Salem, Oregon. Courtesy Historic Deepwood (n.d.)





A Garden designed by Mary P. Cunningham, n.d. From undated Lowthorpe brochure (Lowthorpe RISDA).



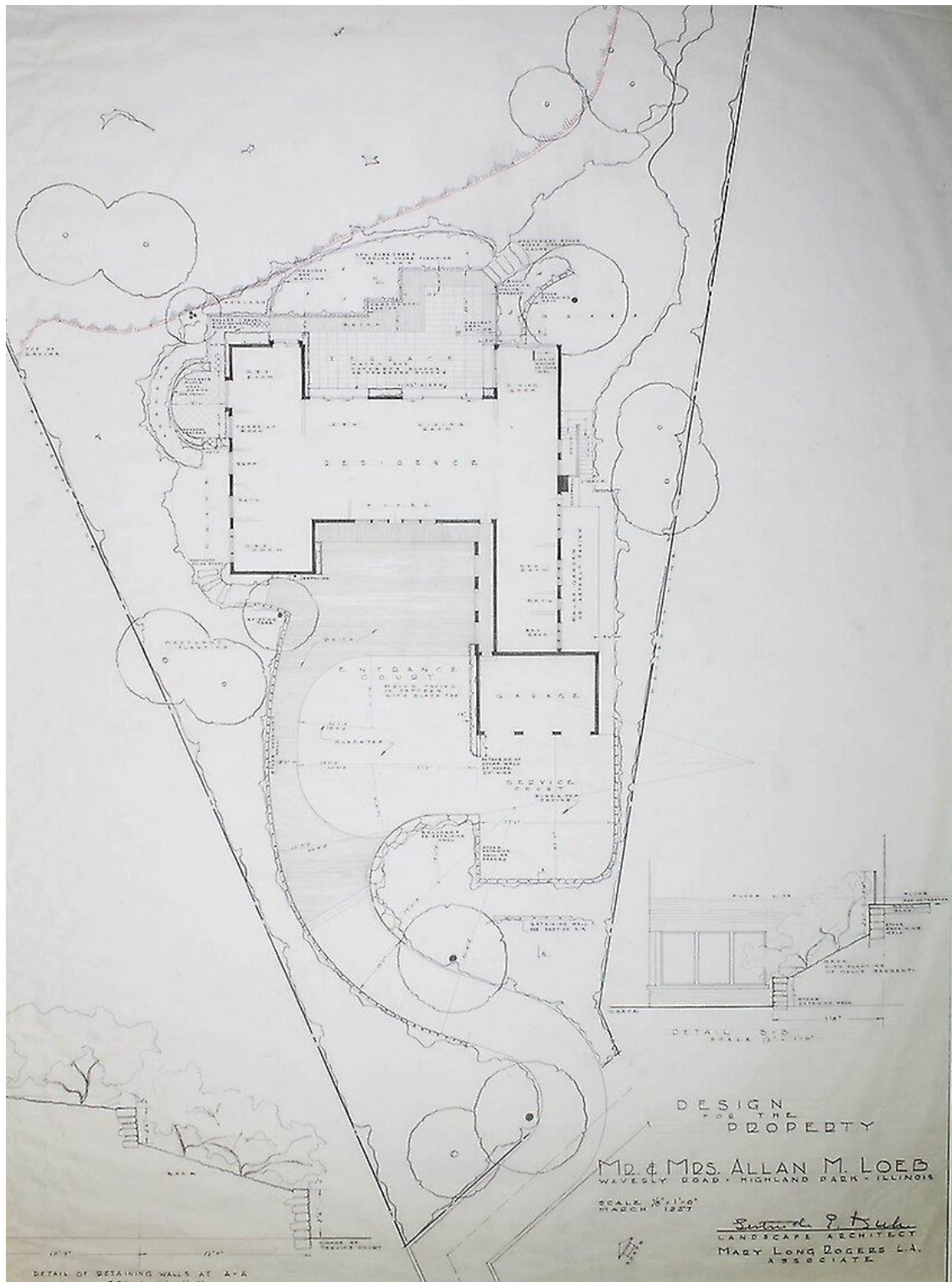
Work of Louise Payson, n.d. From 1937-38 Lowthorpe brochure (Lowthorpe RISDA).





An estate designed by Isabella Pendleton, n.d. From undated Lowthorpe brochure (Lowthorpe RISDA).





Design for the property of Mr. and Mrs. Allan Loeb by Gertude Deimel Kuh, 1957. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



On campus: the Dawson Gate, designed by the students as a memorial to long-time instructor Laura Blanchard Dawson. From 1937-38 Brochure.

Appendix D. Lowthorpe Faculty  
Chronologically ordered.

FACULTY	DATES	# TERMS	SUBJECTS	CREDENTIALS
Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. <sup>145</sup>	~ 1902-09	--	Landscape Architecture	Olmsted
John Charles Olmsted	~ 1902-09	--	Landscape Architecture	Olmsted
Laura Blanchard Dawson (died 1930 in Groton)	1902-30	26-27	Trees and Shrubs	A.B. Radcliffe
J.F. Dawson	~ 1902-09	-	Landscape Architecture and Design	Landscape Architect; Olmsted
Gertrude Sanderson	~ 1902-09	4	Drawing and Garden Design	Unknown
Stephen Child	~ 1904-09	4	Landscape Architecture and Design, Surveying and Engineering	MIT and Olmsted
Loring Underwood	~05 - 1913	4-8	The Garden and its Accessories	Landscape Architect
Carleton A. Shaw <sup>146</sup>	~1910 to 12	2	Entomology and Soils	A.B. Harvard
Edna Cutter	~1910-11	1	Botany, Greenhouse, Gardening	A.B. Smith
Louisa Bancroft Stevens	~1910-11	1	Landscape Architecture, Drawing	Unknown
Robert Cameron	~1910-11	1	Director, Greenhouse; Gardening, Botany	Head Gardener-Botanic Garden, Harvard
John Farquhar	~1910-11	1	Unknown	unknown
Arthur Shurcliff	~1910-11	1	Director, Landscape Architecture	Landscape Architect
Ralph S. Vinal	~1910-11	1	Topics not listed	Architect
Rose Standish Nichols	~1910-13	3	Topics not listed	Landscape Architect
Amy Tripp*	1911-13	2	Topics not listed	Landscape Architect
Edna D. Stoddard	1911-12	2	Landscape Architecture	S.B. Institute of Technology
Miss Alderson	1911-13	2	Head Gardener, Greenhouse, Gardening	Swanley College
Dr Glover Morrill Allen	1911-13	2	Unknown	Well-known naturalist; Ph.D. Harvard
Paul R. Frost	1911-12	1	Landscape Architecture	A.B. Harvard
Louise Hertzler* Faculty, Dean, and Dean Emerita; (died 1937 in Groton)	~1905-37	26-30	Superintending Gardener, Horticulture	Lowthorpe
Elizabeth G. Leonard Strang	1912-29	7-8	Landscape Architecture and Engineering, Architectural Design Drawing, Planting Design, History and Theory	Cornell
Persis Bartholomew	1912-13	1	Botany, Entomology, Soils	S.B. Amherst
Bremer W. Pond	1912-14	2	Landscape Architecture and Engineering, Construction	A.B. Dartmouth, M.L.A. Harvard

<sup>145</sup> Data is derived from school catalogues, with the exception of the Olmsted brothers, which comes from *Olmsted 200*. The 1910-11 catalogue is the first available. Names with an asterisk are Lowthorpe graduates.

<sup>146</sup> The Dawsons, Sanderson, Child, Hetzer, and Underwood are named in Wolseley, *Gardening for Women*, pp. 220-223. An undated brochure circa 1904-08 confirms that list. Laura Dawson's dates at Lowthorpe are known from biographical data.

Elsie D. Varley	1913-14	1	Botany and Soils	Swanley College
Arthur C. Comey <sup>147</sup>	1914-18	4	Surveying and Applied Engineering	Harvard
Stanley B. Parker	1914-15	1	Landscape Design	Lawrence Scientific School
Robert F. Jackson	1914-15	1	Sketching	Harvard
Alexander J. Sholtes	1916-18	2	Drawing and Watercolor	MIT
Harold F. Kellogg	1916-18	2	Architectural and Advanced Landscape Design	B.S. Harvard, Ecole des Beaux-Arts
J. Percy Baumberger	1917-18	1	Botany, Soils, Entomology	Bussey and Harvard
Frederick S. Kingsbury	1923-29 and 1932-33	7	Landscape Design Faculty, Special Lecturer	Harvard
Harold Hill Blossom	1923-29	6	Special Lecturer: Advanced Landscape Design	Harvard
Elizabeth Greenleaf Pattee*	1917-18 1923-33 1942-45	13	Architecture, Design and Planting Design	MIT and Lowthorpe
Robert Swan Sturtevant	1923-27 Director: 1927-32	9	Surveying, Construction, Planting Design	Harvard
Porter W. Dorr	1923-32	9	Construction	Landscape Architect
N.L. Flanagan*	1923	1	Botany and Soils	Lowthorpe
Fletcher Steele	1924-29	5	Special Lecturer/Instructor	Harvard, Landscape Architect
Guy H. Lee	1924-27	3	Special Lecturer/ Instructor	MLA
Henry Atherton Frost	1925-29	4	Special Lecturer/ Instructor; Graphics 27-28; Architecture 28-29	AB Harvard, Architecture Harvard Instructor
Dorothea Harrison	27-32	5	History, Landscape history	AB
Mrs Louise A. Norman	27-30	3	Freehand Fine Arts from 28-29	Unknown
Dorcas Brigham	27-29	2	Horticulture Assistant Horticulture 28-29	A.B., MA
Felicia D. Kingsbury	27-32	5	Landscape Design Assistant Fine Arts 28-29 Landscape Presentation 30-31	Unknown
Rylla E. Saunier 28-29, 29-30	27-28	1	Freehand, Assistant Fine Arts 28-29 Assistant 30-31	Unknown
Marion M. Meredith 28-29, 29-30, 31-32	27-28	1	Garden, Assistant Horticulture 28-29 Assistant 31-32	The Pennsylvania School
Robert Nathan Cram	28-29	1	Design	AB MLA
Kleber Hall	30-33	3	Freehand	Unknown
Margaret R. Jardine	31-32	1	Plant Materials	Unknown
Robert Fuller Jackson	31-32	1	Architecture	Unknown
Francis E. Head	31-36	4	Construction	MLA

<sup>147</sup> The catalogues for 1918-19 through 1926-27 are missing; instructors teaching in 1917 may have had longer tenures.



Assistant Dir. 31-32				
Robert H. Walter	32-33	1	Architecture	AB BA
Archibald Thornton 33-34, 34-35, 36-37	32-37	4	Superintendent and Horticulturist	RHG Kew
Henry B. Hoover	32-33	1	Presentation	M. Arch
Mary P. Cunningham*	32-33	1	Planting Design	AB, Vassar, Lowthorpe 1915, Cambridge 1918, Bussey 1923
Anne Baker Director 32-34 Guest lecturer 34-35	32-35	3	Unknown	Landscape Architect Vassar, MLA Smith, Farrand office
John Parker, Director and Instructor	1934-1945	11	Design	S.B. and M. Arch. MIT
Dorothy May Anderson	33-34	2	Landscape Architecture, Planting Design, Presentation	Cambridge
R. Newton Mayall	34-39	5	Construction	Landscape Engineer
Henry L. Seaver	34-43	9	History, History of Art	Harvard, MIT Professor of History
Virginia G. Cavendish	36-39	3	Landscape Design, Planting Design, History of Landscape Architecture	BA Michigan, Cambridge
John Lyon Reid	36-39	3	Freehand Drawing	MA Calif, M. Arch MIT, Prof. at MIT
Molly S. Drysdale*	36-39	3	Plant Materials, Assistant in LA	Vassar AB, Lowthorpe
Lawrence B. Anderson	37-39	2	Design	MIT, École d'Beaux Arts, Prof at MIT
William H. Coles 39-41, 41-43, 42-44	37-44	7	Horticulture, Superintendent of Grounds	
Walter L. Chambers	37-43	6	Professional Practice Construction in 41-43	BA Ohio State, Harvard MLA, Prof at Harvard
Frederick J. Adams	37-39	2	City Planning	MIT Instructor
Draveaux Bender	39-41	2	City Planning	B.Arch MIT, MCP Harvard, city planning engineer
Agnes Tamm	39-41	2	Horticulture	Columbia, Cornell
Americo J. Nemiccolo	39-41	2	Design, Planting Design, Freehand Drawing	Harvard
Joseph T. Bill	41-43	2	Freehand Drawing	BFA Yale, MLA Harvard
Madeleine Harding* 42-44	41-43	2	Plant Material and Horticulture	Lowthorpe Dawson Course
Kathryn S. Taylor 42-44	41-43	2	Plant Material and Horticulture	unknown
Norman T. Newton 42-44	41-43	2	Design	MLA Cornell FASLA, FAAR, Assistant Prof. Harvard
William B. Marquis	42-45 (+RISD)		Construction	Olmsted
Ellen Shipman	42-44	2	Special Lecturer and Faculty	Apprenticed with Charles Platt, Landscape Architect

Henry B. Hoover	42-44	2	Design and Construction	B. Arch.- Washington, M. Arch. Harvard, American Academy in Rome
Stephen F. Hamblin	~1943-45		Plant material	Harvard

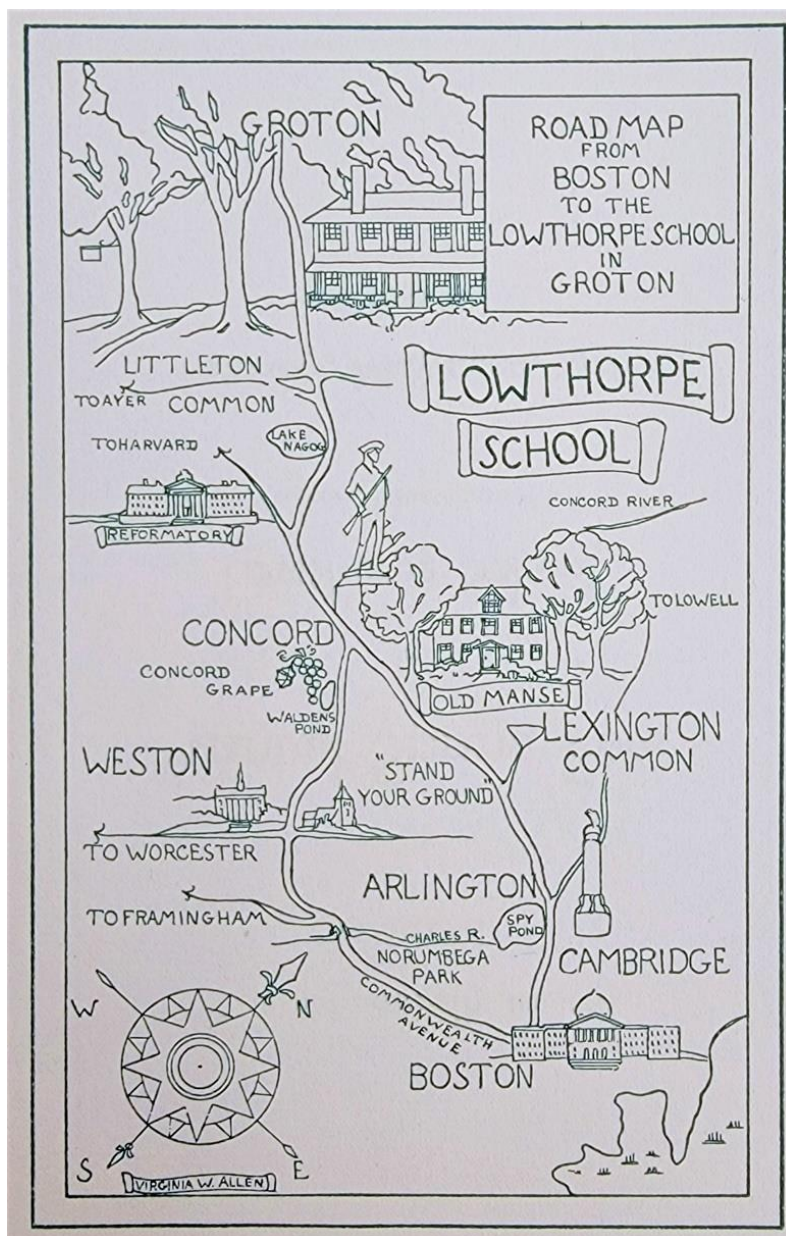
Not included: Many Olmsted instructors are either not known or their dates/subjects are not known. Visiting lecturers are also not regularly recorded in the catalogues. One student commented that Lowthorpe often added unscheduled lecturers, on something of an opportunistic basis.

## Appendix E. Lowthorpe and Groton Maps

Map 1: Road Map printed in an invitation to a 1926 Lowthorpe fete,<sup>148</sup> placing Lowthorpe among resonantly historic sites.

Map 2: Plan of Fully Developed Grounds, 1941.<sup>149</sup>

Map 3: Lawrence Academy simplified plan of Groton, 1942, showing Lowthorpe at #26, the Sturtevant House at #29, and the Robbins House, used as a dorm by Lowthorpe, at #16. The Academy's history notes that the young men found the college-age students at Lowthorpe a 'romantic distraction'.<sup>150</sup>

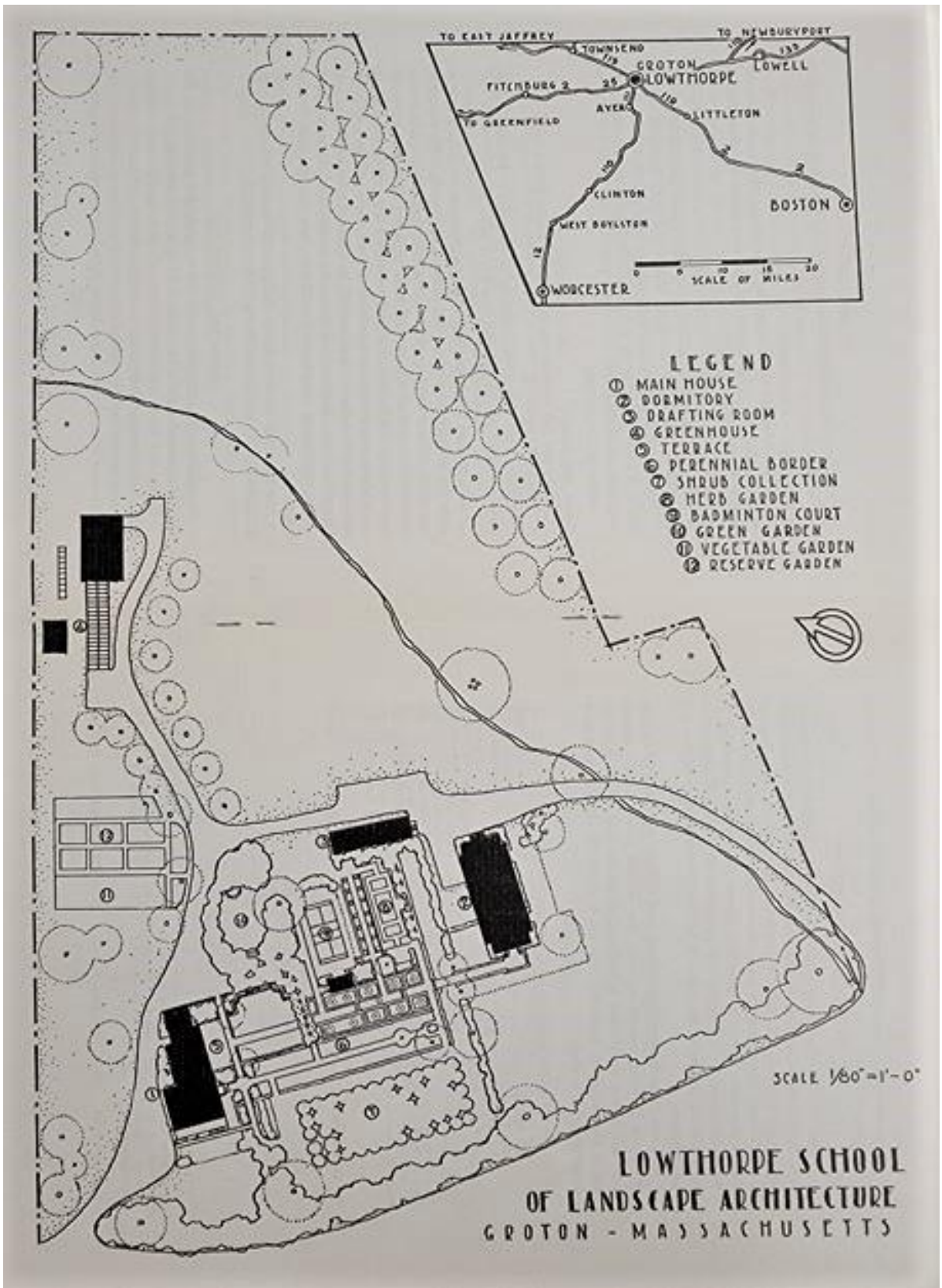


Map 1.

<sup>148</sup> The Lowthorpe School, Invitation to Annual Spring Fete, 22 May 1926, n.p.

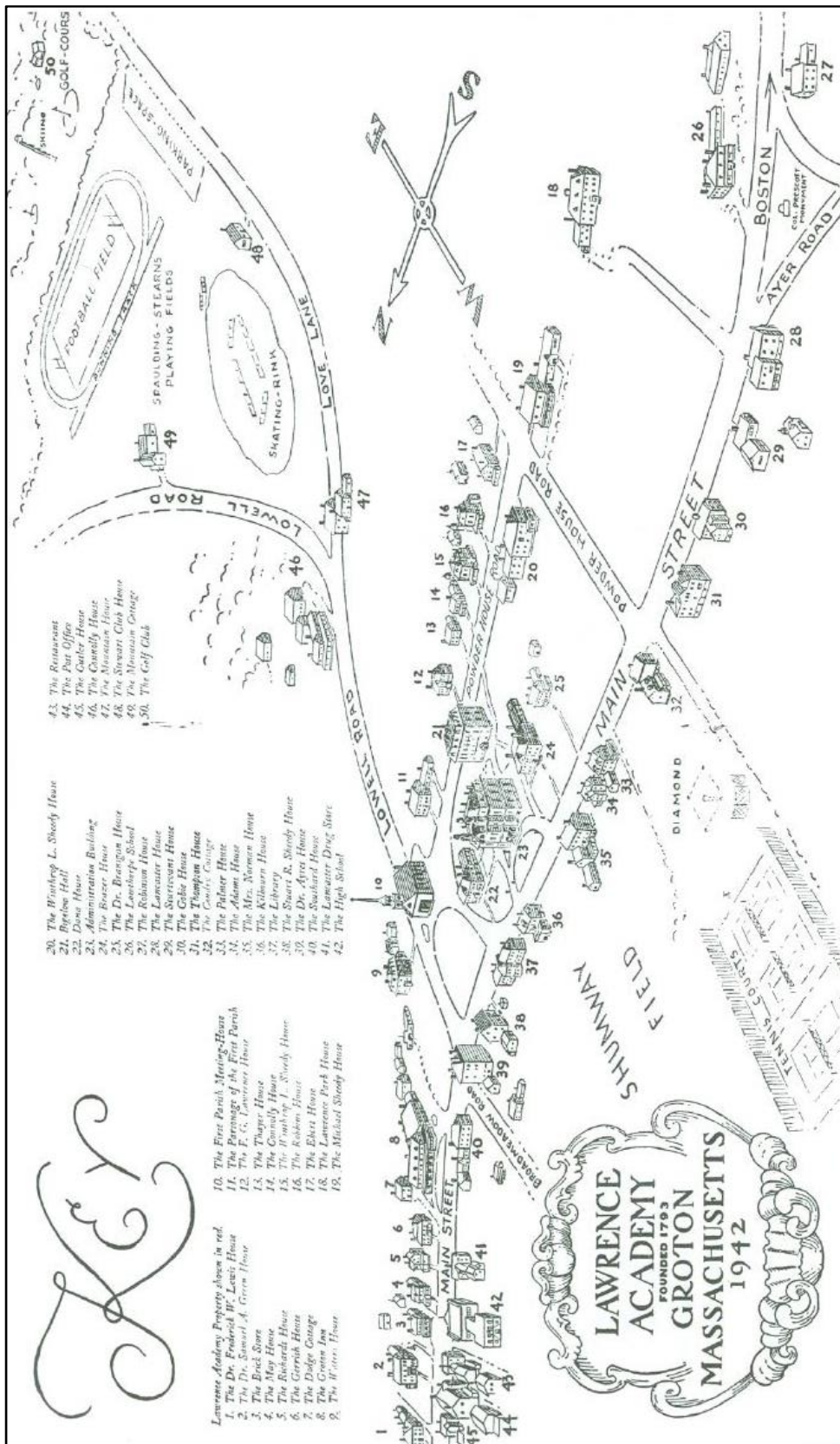
<sup>149</sup> The Lowthorpe School, Catalogue 1941-43, n.p.

<sup>150</sup> Image courtesy the Lawrence Academy. From Douglas Alan Frank, *The History of Lawrence Academy at Groton 1792 to 1992* (Groton: Lawrence Academy, 1992), pp. 261, 313.



Map 2.





Map 3.



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