

BRINGING THE PUBLIC BACK TO THE PARK: ANALYSIS OF
SPRINGSIDE LANDSCAPE'S PRESERVATION MAINTENANCE PLAN

Kyle Toth

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Advisor

Randall F. Mason

Associate Professor

Program Chair

Frank G. Matero

Professor of Architecture

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"It isn't a quite dead garden," she cried out softly to herself. "Even if the roses are dead, there are other things alive."

Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*, 1911

Introduction

When Matthew Vassar's laborers and gardeners completed Springside in 1852, in that duplicitous way in which "completion" is a euphemism for "began," the

Poughkeepsie Eagle decried:

Oh tell me not that Paradise
 Bloomed in the East. . . .
No, Paradise near home is found,
 As future poets will sing,
And nature's beauties ever crown
 'Springside's' returning Spring.¹

While there was, in the following years, a musical composition inspired by the site, poets visiting Springside today would be hard pressed to declare that they've found "Paradise near home." Indeed, even the intrepid urban explorer or photographer of "ruin porn" would find surprisingly little of interest or inspiration among the trees of Springside – a pile of bricks here, an old wash tub there, an empty beer can among the rocks. Two of the key features of such alluring spots are missing; first, a substantial ruin worth exploring, and second, and perhaps more importantly, the sense of seclusion and abandonment. Springside is surrounded on three sides (the fourth being a road) by private residences, condominiums, and suburban subdivisions visible from nearly anywhere in the park.

In briefest terms, Springside, or what is left of Springside, is a 20-acre site off Route 9 and Academy Street in Poughkeepsie, New York. Commissioned in 1850 by Matthew Vassar, beer brewer and founder of Vassar College, the private estate was both a pleasure ground and gentleman's farm designed by America's first and perhaps most influential landscape architect, A. J. Downing, with buildings designed by Downing and

¹ *The Poughkeepsie Eagle*, June 12, 1852.

Calvert Vaux. Springside now remains the only extant landscape that can definitively be attributed to Downing, and as such has been a National Historic Landmark since 1969. However, the subsequent parceling out and subdividing of Springside has eliminated the farms and orchards of the estate, leaving only the core pleasure ground of curvilinear paths and wooded knolls. All but one of the dozen-plus Downing and Vaux buildings have burned, collapsed, or been demolished.

The efforts of current owners, Springside Landscape Restoration, to thin and prune trees and re-open lost or overgrown paths around the site have made Springside increasingly recognizable as an intentional, designed landscape. Without knowledge of these efforts, however, Springside gives the impression of being a park in a gradual but inevitable state of decline. Though the cyclical decline and preservation of Springside will be covered in a later section, Springside's history of ownership, threats, and preservation (which has already largely been covered by Springside historian and emeritus Vassar professor Harvey K. Flad), is not the goal of this work. Nor is the goal to naively propose an incomplete and superficial preservation maintenance plan, as a some-160-page plan formulated by landscape architects and the Garden Conservancy already exists. Rather, the objective of this work is to examine these documents in conjunction with one another and to analyze why the restoration of Springside, with such abundant information and resources, continues to prove unsuccessful.

Section 1 will summarize the history and evolution of the site and its accompanying resources. This includes the pre-defined period of significance of Vassar's ownership and residency (1852 to 1868) with support from contemporary maps, written descriptions, and architectural elevations of the primary buildings. The section will then

review the successive private ownership and subdivision of the site, including, in an abbreviated explanation, the repeated threats of redevelopment and rezoning, ending with the creation and stewardship of Springside Landscape Restoration.

Section 2 will review the documents that Springside Landscape Restoration, with designers, historians, and landscape architects, have produced in efforts to maintain and restore Springside. These include Springside's National Register Nomination, Robert Toole's 1987 *Historic Landscape Report* and the most recent and still active *Preservation Maintenance Plan* completed in 2000. Comparison between the documents and changes in objectives or primary goals will be identified and considered.

Section 3 will engage with the current *Preservation Maintenance Plan* and identify key features as they relate to garden theory and the restoration and preservation of historic landscapes. Though many key issues are addressed in the plan, the importance of them, while embedded in within the thorough scope of practical considerations, is largely lost or overlooked. It is here that I will further explore the question raised at the beginning of this introduction, that of paradise and seclusion.

Section 4 will consider comparable management plans for historic landscapes of a similar period of significance or location, including the Central Park Conservancy's 1987 *Rebuilding Central Park* and Olana's 2015 *Strategic Landscape Design Plan*. These formal, "official" plans will be compared with the more vernacular, unwritten maintenance approach of the gardeners at Beatrix Farrand's Bellefield, providing an interesting balance between high-budget, cohesive proposals and local, volunteer, community engagement strategies.

Section 5 will explore the most problematic issue for Springside as it stands today: program. While historic sites like Olana and Bellefield have architectural resources guiding their program and purpose, Springside is left with only its landscape. Defining the program at Springside proves to be problematic to a point of evasion in most writing and planning for the site; thus, the current program will be evaluated, suggesting shortcomings and inherent problems in the approach.

Section 6 will present alternative programs, or, at least, routes of consideration and exploration that could help define and realize programs appropriate and beneficial to the site. A historiography of movement through the site will be provided to understand its shifting purpose and current function. Community organizations or potential stakeholders and their accompanying programs will be suggested.

Despite its appearance, Springside is far from a forgotten or irredeemable landscape. As A. J. Downing's only extant landscape, the reason for Springside's preservation is all too clear – however, the program of the site, aside from “existing despite the odds,” is not. As John Dixon Hunt explains in *The Afterlife of Gardens*, “even a site particularly famous at its inception, hailed perhaps for its pioneering scenes and materials, will survive in changed forms and exist for changed times.”² Springside does, of course, survive in changed forms. Missing buildings and pavilions, fountains and garden features, crowded by subdivisions and condominiums (direct descendants of creator Downing's “a home to every man and a garden to every home” mentality), Springside is a shadow of the private (though sometimes public) pleasure ground it once

² Hunt, John Dixon. *The Afterlife of Gardens*. Philadelphia: 2004. p 12

was. However, relating back to Hunt, to survive Springside must “exist for changed times.” Springside exists, but despite the times, not for them. In short, we no longer need a pleasure garden. We need Springside, in its historic form, to do something new.

As my research for and correspondences about this project have made very clear, there is an extensive community interested in seeing Springside thrive. The hope of this work is to help it to do so.

Section 1

A. The People: Downing, Vaux, and Vassar

Though Springside, at its inception, was hailed as a marvel of landscape design and picturesque gardening, the site’s history, development, and legacy revolve around two key people: its proprietor, Matthew Vassar, and its designer, Andrew Jackson Downing. Accounts of the site, while discussing its principal features, rely on the long-lasting legacies of these figures to convey the issue of the site’s importance. The collaboration of Vassar and Downing leaves some authorships unclear. Of the two, it is generally acknowledged that though Vassar was the impetus and patron of Springside, Downing is the site’s major association and, ultimately, reliable (though not guaranteed) reason for preservation in the face of development. This paper takes a similar opinion, and will therefore focus more on Downing’s contributions than Vassar’s. This is not to discredit the participation of Vassar in Springside’s development, but simply to draw a line that is unfortunately necessary to the parameters of this study.

Matthew Vassar (1792 – 1868) was a predominant entrepreneur and philanthropist of the Hudson Valley region during the mid nineteenth century. British-born and brought to the area as a small child, Vassar took control of the family brewery business as a teenager and developed it into what was, at the time, the largest brewery in the United States. He served on multiple local philanthropic committees and, with his fortune and at the encouragement of his niece, Lydia Booth, founded Vassar College, the country's first women's college, in 1862.

The college, located three miles east of the Hudson River in Poughkeepsie, New York, is Vassar's most famous legacy, noted for its progressive academics and well-manicured campus. Naturally, the campus has greatly expanded and changed over the past century and a half, but visual representations of the grounds surrounding the college's primary building show that the campus' earliest design principles of undulating lawns, wooded knolls, curvilinear carriage roads, and tree-lined paths have carried on in some way to the campus as it is today. The palatial, sanitorium-inspired Main Building and secluded, park-like campus were deeply embedded in contemporary design theories, and Vassar himself took a hand in laying out the college grounds.³ His interests in what would have then been called landscape gardening were reflected by the contents of his library, which contained a number of volumes on the subject, including signed copies of AJ Downing and Calvert Vaux's publications.⁴ The principles Vassar applied to the grounds at Vassar College would have not only been gleaned from the pages of Downing

³ Tatum, George B. and Elisabeth Blair MacDougall. *Prophet with Honor: The career of Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815 – 1852*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989. pp 246

⁴ *ibid*, 245

and Vaux's books, but from Vassar's own collaboration with the two on his private estate, Springside. Scholars even project that had it not been for Downing's untimely death, Vassar would have asked him to design the college grounds, though this can be contested, and there is no evidence of Vassar having asked Vaux, who by this time was involved in the creation of Central and Prospect Parks with Frederick Law Olmsted.⁵

It is well documented, however, that both Downing and Vaux had, a decade earlier, been the primary landscape architect and architect of what would become Vassar's private estate. Vassar biographer Benson Lossing recounts that Vassar had summoned "the eminent rural architect and landscape-gardener," Downing, to review the site for Springside and to "suggest a plan of avenues for walks and drives, and a design for a portal and porter's lodge."⁶ Why the original request was so general will be discussed later – however, it is clear that by the time of Springside's development Downing's reputation had already been well established.

Downing's reputation has hardly suffered over time. Andrew Jackson Downing (1815 – 1852), is revered by scholars as "the most influential garden writer" and "the first great landscape designer in the United States."⁷ Others claim of Downing that "almost singlehandedly he created the profession we now call landscape architecture."⁸ Even renowned New York Times architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable has regaled Downing

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lossing, Benson. *Vassar College and its Founder*. New York: Alvrod, 1867. pp 63

⁷ Clayton, Virginia Tuttle. *Gardens on Paper: Prints and Drawings, 1200-1900*.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990. pp 141

⁸ Tatum, *Prophet with Honor*, i

as “this country’s finest and most famous landscape architect.”⁹ This long-lasting and highly exalted status, however, has little physical evidence to substantiate the claims –

⁹ Huxtable, Ada Louise. “Doomsday Notes on a Rotten Game,” in *The New York Times*, Sep. 28, 1969.



Figure 1: An 1861 portrait of Matthew Vassar by James Henry Wright. Vassar is painted atop a hill in Springside, with the duck pond, gatehouse, and south gate visible beyond. The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

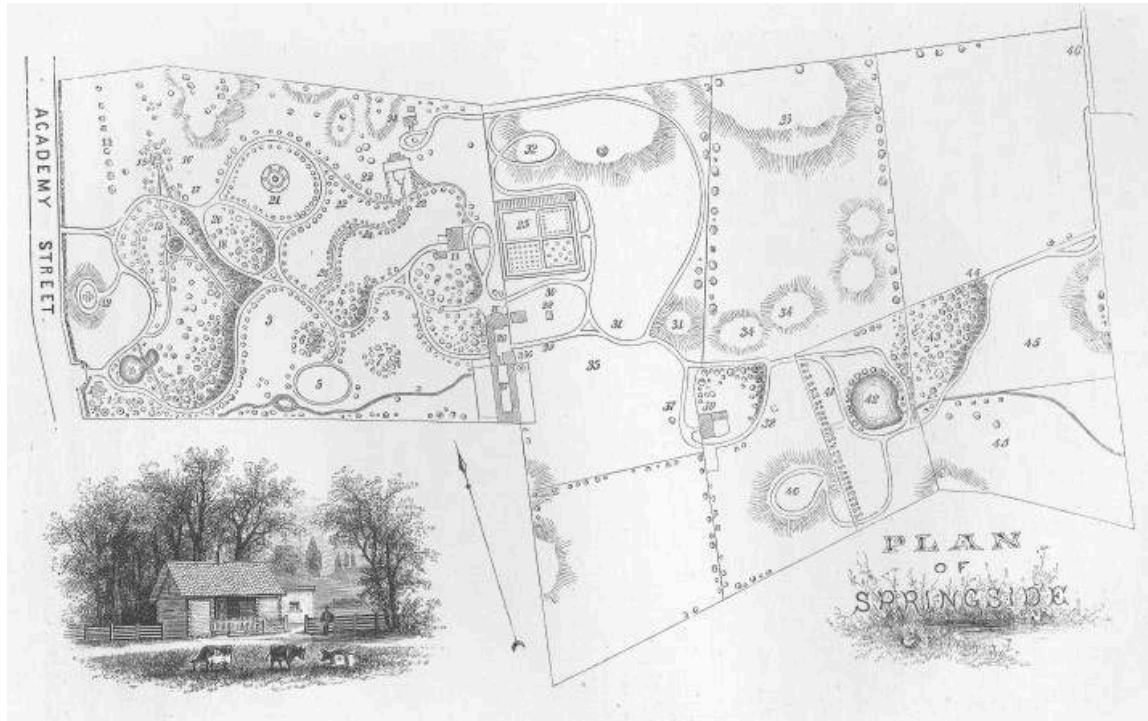


Figure 2: The plan of Springside provided to accompany Lossing's written account of the site in *Vassar College and its Founder*. The portion to the left is the 20-acre pleasure garden that remains today. Vassar Encyclopedia

Springside is Downing's only remaining landscape. While landscapes and residences throughout the country show signs of being "Downing-inspired" and may well have made use of his many pattern books, Springside is the only site to retain drawings and plans in Downing's own hand. The rest of Downing's fame is taken from the theories and the legacies of his writing.

Raised on a nursery in Newburgh, New York, Downing's early landscape writing in horticulture journals led to his position editing *The Horticulturist*, a popular journal that, along with his books on country residences and suburban living, helped to spread his ideas both on how a garden or rural residence should look and, perhaps more importantly, how it should, through careful planning, affect its residents and community. At the time of Downing's writings, an influx of writing from the United Kingdom, like John Claudius

Loudon's *Encyclopedia of Gardening*, raised American interests in the subject. Downing, capitalizing on this market, adapted the works of Loudon (and Mrs. Loudon, whose own garden writing was focused on appealing to female audiences) to American "tastes." The issue of taste was of great importance to Downing, who believed that, through tasteful placemaking, one could produce a more civilized moral code.¹⁰

As such, Downing became "an American spokesman" of taste, advocating the beauty in simplicity and a set of standards of refinement catered to each social and economic class. Downing considered ostentatious houses and overtly indulgent, urban architecture and decoration "unrepublican," as they displayed an amassing of wealth and status exclusionary to others. Instead, he wanted rural dwellings for Americans with appropriate, beautiful forms that manifested their civilized, democratic morality.¹¹

Downing's aversion to large estates also had practical reasoning – without primogeniture laws, the fair division of property could be complicated and difficult to manage.¹²

As an arbiter of taste, Downing relied on the "force of fashion" to encourage beautifying both private and public spaces, hoping that, even should some not read his writing, they would do as the neighbors do and be indirectly elevated.¹³ According to Downing historian Judith Major, Downing firmly believed in "the contagion of good taste" and that attractive neighborhoods and housing performed a public good. As expressed in article titled "On the Moral Influence of Good Houses" written by Theodore Dwight and featured in an 1848 edition of *The Horticulturist*, "we believe in

¹⁰ Major, Judith K. *To Live in the New World: AJ Downing and American landscape gardening*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1997. p 113

¹¹ *ibid*, 110-11

¹² *ibid*, 113

¹³ *ibid*, 122

the bettering influence of beautiful cottages and country houses – in the improvement of human nature necessarily resulting to all classes, from the possession of lovely gardens and fruitful orchards.”¹⁴ It was not only a matter of education, but one of exposure.

Education, of course, was also a matter of importance to Downing, who, in writings that certainly would have been of interest to Vassar, discussed the benefits of sylvan, wooded locations for educational institutions. Creating secluded “embryo arcadias” that offered fresh air, recreation, and the health benefits of the country were clearly subjects that Vassar adopted from Downing in the realization of his college.¹⁵ Carrying on the legacy of Mrs. Loudon, Downing also made references to Flora and Pomona, hoping to expand into female readership so that they too may reap the benefits of beautiful surroundings. A strong, vocal advocate for public parks, Downing’s vision considered the private benefits of public space and the public contribution of private property, believing that well designed villages, houses, schools, gardens, and parks could uplift the individual, the family, and, ultimately, the country.¹⁶

The motto on Downing’s seal, according to his partner in practice Calvert Vaux (1824 – 1895), “il bello e il buono,” speaks well to Downing’s design theory. Written in common, accessible Italian instead of Latin, Downing worked for a good through simplicity and beauty. Downing, recently commissioned to design the Washington Mall and heading to oversee the construction of a village in Newport, Rhode Island, died during a steamboat fire on the Hudson River in 1852. His position as a designer of public space would quickly be filled by the more technically adept Frederick Law Olmsted, but

¹⁴ *The Horticulturist*, Feb 2 1848, as quoted in Major, *To Live in the New World*, 114

¹⁵ Major, *To Live in the New World*, 115

¹⁶ *ibid*, 113

his theories on tasteful placemaking would remain unmatched as the United States developed into a sprawling suburban nation.

B. The Place: Site Details

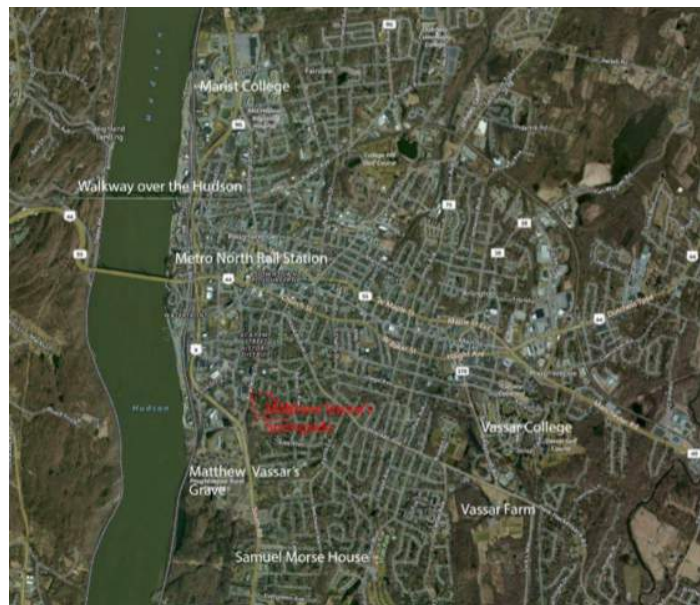
Springside is an approximately 25-acre site in Poughkeepsie, New York, located at the eastern end of Academy Street and adjacent to US Route 9. A predominantly wooded area partially cleared for agriculture during the nineteenth century, the site covers a shallow, irregular valley once bordered by woods and now bound by roads and suburban subdivisions. To the south of the site is a small, east to west flowing brook.¹⁷ In the northeast corner of the site, a small natural spring at the foot of a Sycamore tree lends the property its name. As described by Calvert Vaux, Springside “being full of easy sweeps and gentle undulations, is somewhat secluded and park-like in its character, fine healthy trees being scattered in groups and masses over its whole extent.”¹⁸ Though modern development has changed much of what was once Springside, the core ornamental garden remains and makes up the current portion of the park.

The park is accessed by an entrance road off Academy Street, fronted by a contemporary gatehouse. The original gate and gatehouse to the estate, the only remaining building on the site, is slightly further down Academy Street. The curving entry road passes a manicured hill, in which sits the site’s National Landmark plaque. A

¹⁷ Toole, Robert. “Springside; AJ Downing’s only extant garden,” in *Journal of Garden History*, Vol. 9, 1989. 28

¹⁸ Vaux, Calvert. *Villas and Cottages. A series of designs prepared for execution in the United States*. New York: Harper & Bros, 1857.

small gravel parking lot behind the gatehouse is provided for visitors to the park. The road continues off-site, over the aforementioned stream, to provide access to the private condominium development beyond. Visitors to the park follow, on foot, a gravel, often muddy road that leads towards the center of the garden. The garden includes a series of curvilinear paths cut through lawns and underbrush that lead to, in no particular order, features such as a small Stonehenge, a deer park, multiple rocky, wooded, knolls, the namesake spring, and ruined building foundations. A thorough exploration of the site as it relates from one feature to another can be found in Lossing's biography of Vassar, in which he gives a detailed, written account of a walking tour from one end of the property to the other.¹⁹ For now it is enough to say that each of the landscape's features, though maintained, are in various states of decline.



Figures 3 and 4: The larger context of Springside. The blue dots in Figure 3 represent historic sites in the surrounding Hudson Valley. Figure 4 shows Springside in relation to the city of Poughkeepsie and Vassar College.

¹⁹ Lossing, *Vassar College*, 61 – 80

C. Background: Site History

By the mid-nineteenth century, public parks had entered the American scene in the form of rural cemeteries situated adjacent to major urban areas, with Mount Auburn opening outside of Boston in 1831 and Mount Laurel outside of Philadelphia in 1836. The popularity of rural cemeteries among the general public led to the realization that the country needed public parks.²⁰ As noted in an 1848 edition of *The Horticulturist*, “in the absence of great public gardens, such as we must surely one day have in America, our rural cemeteries are doing a great deal to enlarge and educate the popular taste in rural embellishment.”²¹ The cemeteries, which featured undulated hills dotted with monuments and gravestones of prominent city members, quickly became a sort of pleasure ground for city dwellers needing respite from the crowded town. Tombs and markers were treated like garden follies – attractions that drew the eye and guided visitors through the grounds.

According to Lossing, Vassar was a “most zealous promoter” of establishing a rural cemetery outside the city of Poughkeepsie.²² With 11,000 residents, Poughkeepsie was, at the time, among the sixty largest urban areas in the United States. A cholera epidemic of 1842 had overcrowded the already limited burial space within the city’s limits. Considering this, Vassar became the chairman of a committee whose purpose was to find a suitable plot of land in the area of Poughkeepsie where they could establish a

²⁰ Tuttle, *Gardens on Paper*, 161

²¹ “Public Cemeteries and Public Gardens,” *The Horticulturist* Oct 3 1848.

²² Lossing, *Vassar College*, 60

rural cemetery.²³ Vassar found an area slightly inland from the Hudson River known as Eden Hills that included a preexisting farm. Vassar bought the property, as Lossing tells it, “on the impulse of his own judgment,” exchanging \$8,000 for 44 acres in 1850.²⁴ Under the guidance of Downing, Vassar quickly set out to make “improvements” to the property, such as the thinning of trees and planning of paths. The intention was to sell the improved land to the committee, but the local population didn’t take enough interest in the cemetery for it to be financially feasible. Frequent advertisements in the *Poughkeepsie Eagle* plead for Poughkeepsie residents to subscribe to burial plots. Though the committee failed to garner notice, Vassar repeatedly offered the improved land for sale as a cemetery lot.²⁵

His attention to the land, however, was not entirely driven by a public good – Vassar’s intention, should the land not be sold, was to adapt the site to be his private estate. The improvements, therefore, were to work twofold, either as a rural cemetery or a private gentleman’s farm. As Lossing explains of the land Vassar impulsively bought, “Mr. Vassar determined to make Springside a place of delight for himself, his friends, and his fellow-citizens.”²⁶ By 1853, a nearby plot of land within closer vicinity to the river was chosen for the cemetery, but work on Springside as a private estate had already been largely completed. Still, Vassar’s improvements and creation of Springside weren’t necessarily intended for himself. As late as 1855 Vassar was trying to rid himself of the property in favor of another, unidentified parcel; as the *Poughkeepsie Telegraph*

²³ Tatum, *Prophet with Honor*, 220

²⁴ Lossing, *Vassar College*, 60

²⁵ Tatum, *Prophet with Honor*, 223

²⁶ Lossing, *Vassar College*, 63

advertised in late February, Vassar, “having recently purchased other landed estates in the neighborhood for contemplated improvement, disposes to part with this property on liberal terms.”²⁷ Though Vassar ultimately kept Springside for himself, his early attempts to sell the property explain his desire to make it such a widely appealing space suited to multiple needs so that, should a buyer arise, the value of the property would be significantly raised.

D. Design: Downing and Vassar’s “Improvements”

Under Downing and Vassar’s supervision, “improvements” to the property began in the autumn of 1850, when road clearing began with the construction of the north entrance (the current entrance in use to the park). Preexisting farm roads were worked into the new roads planned through the valley.²⁸ The south entrance and adjacent pond were cleared and, by 1851, a unified path system had been put in place. Vegetation was cleared and trees with thinned, with new trees planted throughout the grounds. In April of 1851, a topographical map of the improvements, drawn by William Jones, the chief engineer of the Hudson River Railroad Company, was publicly displayed to foster interest in the cemetery scheme. Along with the plan, a drawing of a gatehouse by Downing was displayed, though the stone and brick gatehouse of this cemetery scheme

²⁷ “Springside: For Sale or Exchange,” *The Poughkeepsie Telegraph*, February 20 1855, p. 3

²⁸ Toole, Robert. “Springside; AJ Downing’s only extant garden,” in *Journal of Garden History*, Vol. 9, 1989. 22

was not ultimately built.²⁹ The Jones map was also used as a construction document that guided alterations to the grounds. The wood-frame gatehouse that stands today was built by the autumn of 1852.³⁰ By this time, the plans for a large villa that Downing had begun in 1850 were being considered more thoroughly, though put on hold due to Downing's death. These plans would later be altered into another never-built villa by Calvert Vaux.³¹ Alterations to the Jones map and a later map by Jacobs show the deliberate choice to develop the site as a private residence instead of a cemetery.

²⁹ *ibid*, 23

³⁰ *ibid*, 24

³¹ *ibid*, 25



Figure 5: Rear Elevation of Springside's stable, signed AJD. Springsidelandmark.org



Figure 6: Rear Elevation of the Gardener's Cottage, later Vassar's Cottage, signed AJD. Vassar College Archives and Special Collections

By February of 1851, the frontispiece of that month's edition of *The Horticulturist* featured "a perspective view and ground plan of a barn and stable designed for a villa residence of a gentleman on the Hudson."³² Though Vassar is not yet directly named (as he is in later Downing publications), the designs of the buildings exactly match those that were built at Springside. Downing, taking pride in his own achievement, continued to describe the developing Springside as "remarkable for the completeness, convenience, and good effect of the various buildings, joined to much natural beauty and features of the locality in which they are placed."³³

Under the guidance of Vaux, Springside continued to develop into a private gentleman's farm of orchards, livestock, produce, multiple buildings, and the ornamental garden. The garden, as Lossing describes it, covered land that had been developed thus:

The primitive forest trees on the knolls were left to grow on, untouched; the hallows and ravines were transformed into beautiful narrow paths or broad roadways; a deer park was laid out and peopled with tenant from the woods; *jets d'eau* and little hollows filled with sparkling water were formed; and in the course of years more than one hundred thousand dollars were added to the first costs of the then almost profitless acres.³⁴

One such spring recounted by Lossing is, of course, the spring near the "aged" sycamore, which he says is protected by a stone shelter and guarded by an iron watchdog. Vaux, in his 1857 account of the property, presents a more pragmatic record of the estate and its parts, explaining:

³² Downing, Andrew Jackson. "Our Frontispiece," *The Horticulturist*, Feb 1851

³³ *ibid*

³⁴ Lossing, *Vassar College*, 63

A roomy coach-house and stable illustrated in the last edition of Downing's cottage residences, also a cottage for a farmer and gardener, an ice-house, an aviary and poultry-yard, an entrance-lodge, summer-house and arbors, and an extensive conservatory and vinery have been erected from time to time, and the whole property has been thoroughly drained, the surface being enriched wherever it was thought necessary.³⁵

All of the buildings were of frame construction in the Hudson River Bracketed style, a style described by Ada Louise Huxtable as "a particular American confection of board and batten siding, pointed and truncated gables, and jigsaw frosting trim," all of which the Springside buildings included.³⁶

According to David Schulyer, these details, along with architectural features like sliding doors and cupola ventilators, point to the predominant hand Vaux had in the designs of Springside's buildings, though the majority of the drawings are signed by Downing.³⁷ The buildings were kept to one and a half or two stories so as not to interrupt the smaller-scale knolls and landscape elements of the shallow valley, while small dormers and galleries were provided on upper stories of the buildings to provide views across the estate.³⁸ The small scale of the buildings and whimsical decorations, combined with the effects of the surrounding grounds, lead one early visitor to the site to describe the gardener's cottage as "an ornate cottage, a perfect bijou of a house, which looks as though created by some fairy wand and dropped in the most appropriate spot in the world

³⁵ Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*, 1857, 277-78

³⁶ Huxtable, "Doomsday Notes," 1

³⁷ Schuyler, David. *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815 – 1852*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. 164

³⁸ Cranz, Galen. *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1982. 46

for it to stand.”³⁹ As the stone and brick residence designed by Vaux was never constructed, it was this “bijou of a house” that ultimately became Vassar’s permanent residence, overlooking to the east the vegetable and flower gardens and to the west the ravines and paths of the grounds. Vassar remained in possession of Springside until his death in 1868. Though later additions to the grounds somewhat altered Downing’s initial concept, Vassar’s estate quickly garnered admiration and acclaim.

Vassar’s own affection for the property was also quite evident. In a letter of August, 1866, Vassar wrote, “I am spending the hot months among the Evergreens & flowing water-brooks at Springside, our average temperature some 8 degrees less than our city temperature.”⁴⁰ After his wife Catharine’s death in 1863, Vassar sold his property in town and made Springside his permanent residence. During the majority of his years of residency at the estate, Vassar, in clear, if not deliberate accordance with Downing’s desires for public parks, opened the grounds to the public. One visitor recounts that “Mr Vassar, with generosity equal to his taste, permits the public to enjoy the charms he has created,” and that on approaching Springside “a stone wall bounds the road on the left, on top of which a signboard warns the public that they ‘are not permitted to Springside on Sunday.’”⁴¹ After 1867, Vassar began to restrict visitation to the site further, opening to the public less frequently and issuing special tickets of admittance for Vassar students.

³⁹ Neutral Tint, Tarbell. “A Drive through Springside with Matthew Vassar,” *Ballou’s Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, Vol. XIII No. 9, August 29, 1857. 2

⁴⁰ Vassar as quoted in Tatum, *Prophet with Honor*, 253

⁴¹ Neutral Tint, “A Drive through Springside,” 1-2



Figure 7: *Springside: Center Circle*, Henry Gritten, 1852 The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College



Figure 8: *Springside: View of Barn Complex and Gardens*, Henry Gritten, 1852 The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College



Figure 9: *Springside: View of Gardener's Cottage and Barns*, Henry Gritten, 1852, The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College

E. Recent History

Vassar died while presenting his farewell address to the college's board of trustees in June of 1868. After his death, Springside was purchased by the owner of a neighboring property and was later subdivided and partially sold by subsequent generations, with the construction of Spring Gable to the north in 1929. By the middle of the twentieth century, the preservation of Springside began to be largely questioned. These development proposals and repeated battles for preservation are thoroughly detailed by Vassar professor emeritus Harvey K. Flad in a soon to be published article, "Springside, Preserving Downing's Last Landscape."⁴² For purposes of this study, an abbreviated overview of the events suffices. The important factor is that, through multiple attempts and many close calls and compromises, the core of Springside remains.

During the 1950s, Springside was proposed as the site for a new Poughkeepsie High School. Though this never came to be, the now abandoned Springside fell into disrepair. By 1968, owners requested to rezone Springside from single to multi-family and commercial use, but the application was denied on the grounds of the site's historical importance.⁴³ In August of 1969, the carriage house and stables were burned in an act that the inspecting fire chief affirmed was "definitely arson."⁴⁴ The fire added to the increasingly contentious national attitudes between preservationists and developers, causing Huxtable to observe of the fire, "whatever force is at work has unerringly struck

⁴² Flad, Harvey K. "Springside: Preserving Downing's Last Landscape," manuscript for future edition of *Hudson River Valley Review*.

⁴³ Ibid, 10

⁴⁴ Huxtable, "Doomsday Notes," 1

down just those historic buildings that were being actively promoted for preservation at the same time that they stood in the path of expressways, urban renewal, private developments or other ‘improvements.’”⁴⁵ Huxtable’s coverage of the fire, alarmingly titled “Doomsday Notes on a Rotten Game,” ended positively, however, hoping that, with fewer resources to maintain, the cottage and remaining building would receive better care and attention. The mid-twentieth century was, for Springside, a period of neglectful ownership and overwhelming developmental pressures that raised serious doubts about the park’s future.

In 1970, Springside was sold to Robert Ackerman, who proposed the approved development of a seven hundred apartment complex on the grounds. Though this permission was later rescinded, the New York State Department of Parks and Recreation, fearing further vandalism and damage to Vassar’s cottage, removed the entry portal and projecting gable from the front elevation of the residence and placed it in the New York State Museum in Albany, New York in 1976.⁴⁶ Ackerman presented new development proposals in the early 1980s, hoping to build a luxury condominium complex. Staunch opposition, appeals, and delays on the grounds of environmental impact resulted in a compromise between Ackerman and Springside preservationists – the approximately twenty acres of Vassar’s pleasure grounds would be preserved and development would only take place on the parcel across the stream (a parcel later consolidated with Springside but not part of the original estate) on the condition that a non-profit organization would finance and maintain the Springside landscape. With this

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ Flad, “Springside,” 10


compromise, landscape architect Robert M. Toole produced a Historic Landscape Report of the site, identifying key landscape features and presenting preliminary restoration and



Figure 10: The entry portal of Vassar's Cottage in the New York State Museum in Albany, where it is currently located. PC: Wikipedia contributor upstateNYer

*Matthew Vassar
loved it here.*

so will you.


Springside

a uniquely situated enclave of condominiums on a 44 acre site which
was once the summer home of Matthew Vassar.
\$234,900 to \$301,900

Sales center and four furnished models open daily 10:00 to 5:00.
Closed Thursday and Friday.

Directions: Taconic State Pkwy north to Rte. 55 west to Mid-Hudson Bridge.
Route 9 south to Academy Street exit. Left at stop. Proceed to second entrance
on right at bottom of hill.
Offering by prospectus only

181 Academy Street
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601
(914) 454-7700

Figure 11: (bottom left) Marketing for Springside Condominiums, taking advantage of the Springside and Vassar brand. Vassar College Archives and Special Collections

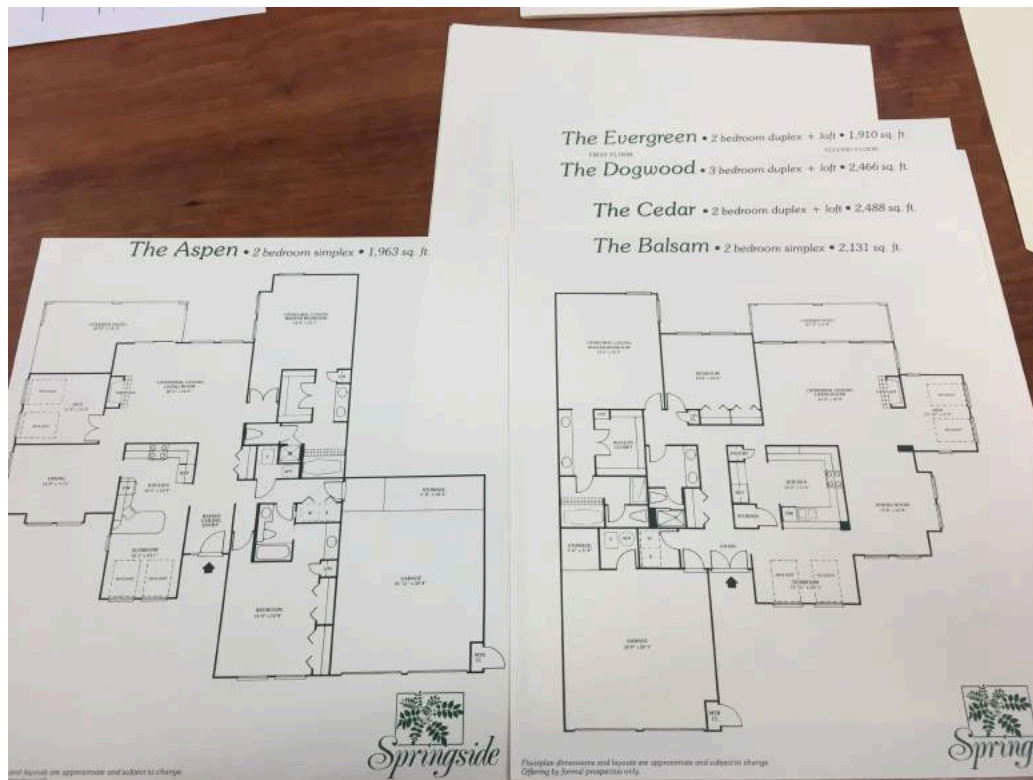


Figure 12: (bottom right) Ackerman's Springside Condominium development advertising, taking advantage of the "woodland" qualities of Springside. Potential buyers received a packet complete with possible floorplans such as these, as well as maps of the adjacent historic garden. Vassar College Archives and Special Collections

maintenance plans for Springside Landscape Restoration, the resulting non-profit organization. Ackerman, however, used the preservation of the park to his advantage, advertising his luxury, custom built condominiums with maps of the park and captions that read, "Matthew Vassar loved it here. So will you."⁴⁷

In 1987, Anthony Walmsley and Charles Birnbaum compiled *Site Analysis Landscape Master Plan and Maintenance Plan of Springside National Historic Landmark*, a document that ten years later was updated through a grant from the Garden

⁴⁷ Springside Condominiums Welcome Packet, Vassar Archives and Special Collections

Conservancy to become the *Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape: Springside National Historic Landmark*. This report remains the site's active preservation maintenance plan. Springside Landscape Restoration continues to maintain the site.

Section II: Documentation and Planning

As Section 1 makes clear, there are several existing documents dedicated to the documentation, preservation, restoration, and maintenance of Springside. However, current conditions of the site also make it clear that, though well intentioned, the goals of these documents have yet to be achieved. Comparison of these documents highlights consistently repeated goals and changes in approach over the three decades they were written.

A. National Register Nomination, 1969

The first document aimed at Springside's preservation is the site's National Register of Historic Places nomination from 1969.⁴⁸ This nomination, however, is immediately problematic. Subtitled "the Matthew Vassar House," the nomination classifies the property as an unoccupied, private, deteriorated building with an "other" use. Though both the architecture and landscape architecture are selected as significant to the site, the majority of the brief description is dedicated to Vassar's cottage, the future of which is called into question within the text. The brevity and bias of the text, with phrases

⁴⁸ "Springside" (The Matthew Vassar House), National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, National Park Service, 1969

like “admirably conveys,” “potent ‘tastemaker,’” and “suave blend,” speaks to its earlier incarnation as an entry in the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings of 1969. Though updated, the text makes minimal documentation or argument for Springside. The very short and ineffective statement of significance mentions Springside’s associations with Downing and Vassar, and falsely claims that the site is “adjacent to the college” (when, in reality, it is three miles southeast). Perhaps most problematic is the nomination’s blatant condemnation and unsubstantiated accusations of the property’s owner. The final line of the description, which focuses on this subject, reads:

With an owner who has least tolerated [underline original] destruction of parts of the cottage, if not actively encouraged or financed it, the future of this last example of Andrew Jackson Downing’s architecture is very much in doubt.⁴⁹

While a fire chief had determined arson as the cause of destruction on barn and stable, no conclusion was drawn on who began the fire. A historian making such an implicative claim is surprising to say the least, if not inflammatory. While the passion for preservation is appreciated, an update to the nomination goes on to sarcastically explain changes to the residence, saying that “within the past month, virtually the whole of an addition at the western side of the cottage, and a significant section of the roof of the cottage have been torn off – or as Mr. Ackerman says, ‘disassembled.’” While the authors’ resentment is understandable, the petty bias of their language nullifies the effectiveness of their already underdeveloped arguments.

B. Historic Landscape Report for Springside, 1987

⁴⁹ *ibid*, 5

A more thorough documentation of Springside was developed in 1987 when landscape architect Robert M. Toole compiled the *Historic Landscape Report for Springside*.⁵⁰ The document recounts the general significance of the site and its features as they related to the Downing era period of significance (1850-52), and presents preliminary analysis for possible restoration. Toole breaks down his report into evaluations of the site's character defining features and then considers actions that could help improve these features.

A primary feature for Toole was Springside's highly compromised seclusion. Once a woodland retreat, Springside of 1987 was a much smaller park with condominiums and suburban subdivisions on the slight hills to each side of the valley. Toole explains that the redefinition of the park's boundaries through judicious planting would return the sense of seclusion necessary to the site's woodland otherness.⁵¹ Toole then discusses Springside's wooded mound features – natural rock features built up with soil and vegetation to create small wooded hillocks throughout the valley. These, Toole finds, are predominantly still intact, and require “incidental reshaping” and judicious thinning out of undergrowth and newer or sick trees.⁵²

At the time, the circuitous path and roadway systems around the mound features had been greatly obscured by flooding, erosion, and unrestricted vegetation growth. Using the W. B. Jones map and three paintings of Springside done by Henry Gritten in 1852, Toole explains that the courses of the paths could be cleared and re-established to reflect how they were in Downing's time. These considerations are reinforced in Toole's

⁵⁰ Toole, Robert M. *Historic Landscape Report for Springside*. 1987

⁵¹ *ibid*, 67

⁵² *ibid*, 76

next section, which addresses the abundance of invasive growth and modes of selective pruning and thinning around the site. Toole believes that undergrowth should be entirely removed from the park, leaving any shrub-like or taller vegetation around the wooded knolls and rocky outcroppings. This reinforces the mounds as features to be viewed and circumnavigated, rather than climbed and explored.

A major, lasting problem of Springside is its inadequate drainage. The shallow valley of Springside is located towards the bottom of the much larger slope that descends east to west from the city of Poughkeepsie to the Hudson River, making the park a sort of retention basin for water as it makes its way to the river. This problem was addressed by Downing in the site's initial construction with a series of clay drainage ways and pipes running through and under the park, but these have long since broken and degraded or eroded, leaving much of lower fields and clearings frequently under shallow standing water. Even in this early study, Springside's dire need for an improved subsurface drainage system is identified and highlighted. Toole proposes replacing this drainage system, and though he doesn't go into detail on its logistics, the importance of the correction is emphasized.

The drainage system isn't the only thing Toole believes needs replacement or reconstruction. Towards the end of the report, as a long-term goal of restoration, Toole proposes recreation of the dozen buildings that once stood on the Springside site – starting with, of course, Vassar's cottage and the stables. Toole recognizes the fundraising and time that such reconstruction would take, but still considers that the buildings, rebuilt in their original situations, would contribute significantly to Springside

and aide in making it a last, “living monument to the national and international importance of Andrew Jackson Downing.”⁵³



Figure 18. Map of Springside 'Illustrative Restoration Plan'. The Office of R. M. Toole, 1986. The map illustrates a restored landscape that utilizes the site's present mature tree cover, new planting and reconstruction of all roads, paths, architectural elements and garden features, to restore the landscape garden to the design completed in 1852 (and recorded by the Henry Gritten paintings) at the time of Downing's death.

Figure 13: A restoration plan included in Robert Toole's *Historic Landscape Report*, presented in the report with a map of existing conditions and a primary re-grading and re-turfing plan. Vassar College Archives and Special Collections

⁵³ *ibid*, 75.

C. Preservation Maintenance Plan, 2000

The most recent document focused on Springside's restoration is a master plan published in 2000 through the collaborative efforts of Springside Landscape Restoration, the Preservation League of New York, the Garden Conservancy, and landscape architects Toby Tourbier and Anthony Walmsley. The 200-some page document, *Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape: Springside, National Historic Landmark*, is broken down into six primary sections: I. Introduction, II. Existing Conditions in 1999, III. Issues, Objectives, Approaches, Strategy, IV. Year 2000 Preservation Maintenance Plan, V. Conclusion, VI. Appendices.

The introduction to the plan recounts the general history of Springside's development and decline, but also focuses on the development of the document and its predecessors. Though the document only tangentially acknowledges the earlier efforts of Robert M. Toole, the plan does discuss a 1989 *Landmark Master Plan*, now unavailable, created by Anthony Walmsley and Company. The "pace-setting report for its time" focused on much of what Toole had previously identified: the clearing of secondary and invasive vegetative growth, maintenance of the site's features (specifically, the still standing porter's lodge), interpretative signage for visitors, and archaeological research into the site's pathways and underground drainage system, which the authors consider "one of the site's most unique features."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Tourbier, Toby and Anthony Walmsley. *Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape: Springside, National Historic Landmark*. New York, NY, 2000. 6

The authors then discuss their references and models for their study, citing Margaret Coffin and Regina M. Bellavia's 1995 *Guide to Developing a Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape* and the 1997 *Landscape Preservation Maintenance Plan for Dumbarton Oaks Park, Washington D.C.* The authors recognize the similarities of the challenges faced by Dumbarton Oaks, primarily that suburbanized watersheds cause stream erosion and flooding. They then explain the major difference in scale of the projects, with Springside hoping to address twenty acres compared to Dumbarton Oaks' four out of twenty-seven.

The section on existing conditions is broken down into subsections on topography and groundform, surface water and drainage, driveways and walks, and buildings and structures. Each of these are thoroughly documented with written explanations and photographic examples, highlighting different features and the relationships between them. Throughout the site, the cottage, retaining walls, and building foundations are identified for stabilization and eventual reconstruction. These observations are followed by a thorough inventory of trees around the site, broken down by the part of the park in which they grow and identified by scientific name, common name, and height.

The section on Issues, Objectives, Approaches, and Strategy is broken down into subsections reviewing the 1989 Master Plan Recommendations, the 2000 Preservation Maintenance Plan, and Priorities, Implementations, and Costs. The primary objectives of this plan, the mission statement of which was to "restore the Downing landscape as closely as possible to the original design," have already been mentioned above, with the important addition, in this more thorough examination, of efforts to "restore the original

buildings in their landscape setting in some agreed sequence around an interpretive and educational program.”⁵⁵

The Year 2000 Plan, which expounds upon these earlier subjects, adapts its mission statement, intending to:

Set forth the tasks, actions, and procedures that are needed now and in the foreseeable near-term future **to protect and stabilize the historic landscape, including its significant historic features and materials, from irrevocable loss or change to its historic integrity.**⁵⁶

The authors then explain the distinction between preservation maintenance and preservation planning, maintenance being applied to the upkeep of specific features and planning being the general research and considerations of the features and the park as a whole.

The subsection on prioritization and implementation breaks down the authors’ system of classification of projects, explaining their terminology for long or short-term projects and for the general up-keep of the site.

Section IV, the Year 2000 Preservation Maintenance Plan itself, is an exhaustively thorough examination of the park, broken down first into seven zone and thirty-three sub-zones. Each zone is documented with a map relating it to the larger context, an enlarged map of the sub-zone, additional photographic or historic documentation of the sub-zone, text on the historic significance of the sub-zone, a description of the area and its conditions, and recommendations for preservation maintenance. These recommendations are broken down into three qualifications: protection, stabilization, or repair. Major trees are then listed and rated for condition class

⁵⁵ *ibid*, 34

⁵⁶ *ibid*, 36

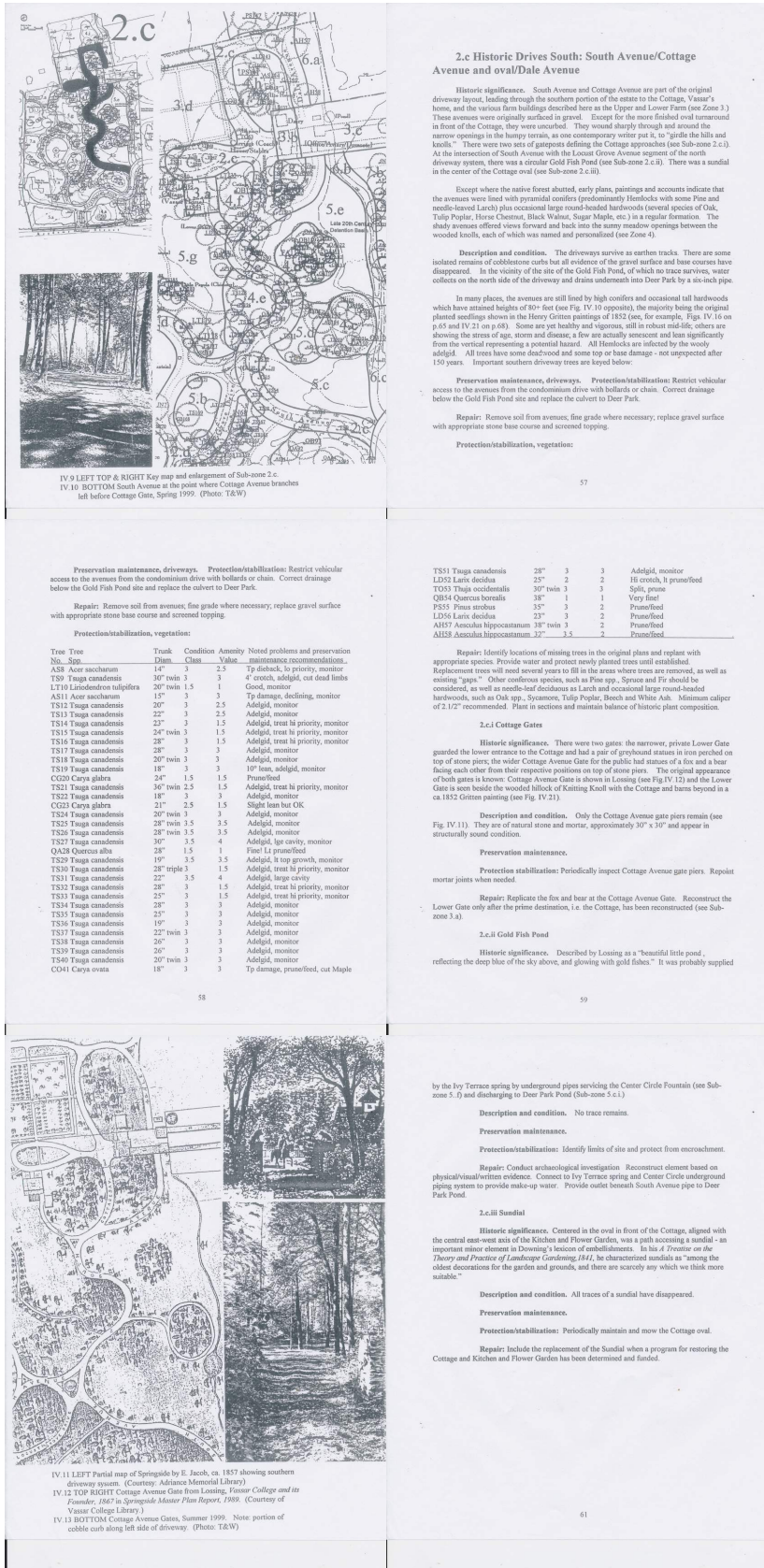


Figure 14: An example of the PMP's documentation and presentation of subzones. Full-page versions of the images can be found in Appendix B.

and amenity value, considering both the tree's health and its contribution to the scene (i.e., foreground, landmark tree, background tree).

As an example of the site's thorough documentation, the authors explain that sub-zone 2.c.iii, Sundial, was once centered in the oval in front of Vassar's cottage and was "an important minor element in Downing's lexicon of embellishments." They go on to explain that "in his *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening 1841* he characterizes sundials as 'among the oldest decorations for the gardens and grounds, and there are scarcely any which we think are more suitable.'" The authors not only recount the position of the garden feature, but relate it to Downing's own text, revealing their in-depth examination of both site and subject. Under the recommendations for the sundial, the authors suggest "Repair: Include the replacement of the Sundial when a program for restoring the Cottage and Flower Garden has been determined and funded."

For non-decorative, vegetative zones and features, such as 4.c, Rock Roost, the authors recommend "Repair: Plant beech seedlings. Introduce native/indigenous vigorous, spreading ground covers and low shrubs where natural regeneration is not occurring. Re-create circuit walk." In sub-zone 4.d, these ground covers and recommended in order to "simulate historic intent."⁵⁷ The authors, then, are presenting solutions that consider multiple factors that include natural growth and erosion of plant matter alongside historic plantings and historic intent.

Later in the report, specific specimen trees are considered in the sub-zones. For example, in 5.a, Walnut Row, a 150+ year old walnut tree is recommended to be treated and protected, while, because of the trees age, plans to plant replacement walnut trees are

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 87.

suggested, should the tree die. Other features, especially structural or architectural, are recommended as deserving of their own Preservation Maintenance Plan to be completed at a later date by a project specific team.

Considerations of streams and low-lying areas repeatedly suggest the development of a comprehensive stormwater management plan in conjunction with local property owners and the City of Poughkeepsie. These suggestions include proposed re-grading maps of the site and potential new underground drainage systems. Rudimentary drawings of restored views after re-grading and replanting are provided along with the recommendations.

The concluding section of the plan explains the varied time frame of different projects suggested throughout the document, breaking down tasks in simple terms by level of urgency, agency, season, and cost. Among the appendices are a Recommended Plant Lists, Sample Maintenance Record Tables, and a Guide to Source Materials that provides information on the materials necessary to the restoration of a site like Springside.

The recurring documentation and planning focused on Springside show that the site is not only of interest to historians, academics, and local community members, but to professionals invested in park maintenance and restoration. The thoroughness of the final preservation plan leaves little left to explain or consider when it comes to the possibility and logistics of the park's future. However, the Springside of 2018 proves that, despite these impressive efforts, much work still needs to be done.

Section III. Landscape Theory in *Preservation Maintenance Plan*

With thirty-three sub-zones, the 2000 Maintenance Plan begins, through the sheer bulk of it, to lose the sense of its key factors. This is, of course, a necessary evil, as it is in this case better to have more done for future projects than less, but the loss of key points among the text obscures its effectiveness. Many of these key points are important to highlight, as they relate directly to current theories on landscape experiences and park management. To emphasize some of these points, this section reviews the plan alongside the writings of contemporary landscape theorists and historians John Dixon Hunt and Galen Cranz. These observations relate primarily to the visitor's experience of the park – that is, issues the general public might find most detrimental to their impressions. These issues of visitor experience, previously laid out by Toole, are corrected (though perhaps tangentially instead of intentionally) in the PMP.

There is no lack of comparisons of landscapes to stage sets – in fact, the association is made to the point of being banal. Still, it is important to understand the relationship in order to fully understand the visitor experience that the PMP is trying to maintain. First, and perhaps most importantly, theatre, like film, requires of the audience a suspension of disbelief – that is, the audience must allow itself to believe that the reality being presented on-stage is, after all, real. For these productions, set designers and scenic artists are challenged to create and present an alternate world that contributes to the telling of a story and aligns with the aesthetic tone of the performance. This world must also frame the performance, raising questions of foreground, background, sightlines, light and shadow, etc. Springside is, similarly, designed to be an alternate reality, a place

where the world is not to be as it usually appears, but where it is expected to be accepted as reality. This is what Robert Toole calls Springside's "internalized composition with a strong sense of place" that produces "a garden of unusual intimacy."⁵⁸ This secluded unification of parts is what caused nineteenth century visitors to Springside to praise its sylvan charms and "Eden"-like quality. The deterioration of many of the park's key elements has eliminated the effects it once achieved. The audience now disbelieves. A great credit of the PMP is that it addresses the corrections necessary to rebuild Springside's alternate reality.

The breaking down of Springside into zones based on their features and compositions is similar to the idea of creating vignettes on a stage, where a limited scenic group implies an extension into the world beyond. This applies not only to Springside as a whole, but to each of its knolls and attractions, beginning, for visitors, with the entrance to the park. John Dixon Hunt, in *The Afterlife of Gardens*, highlights the importance of the entrance to a park, explaining that an effective entrance prepares visitors for what to expect in the grounds beyond.⁵⁹ Springside's entrances, categorized in the plan as 1.a, 2.a, and 2.b, are explained in the PMP as being "carefully composed to be inviting and welcoming, to have a tranquilizing effect on the visitors and prepare them for the sylvan beauties that lay within."⁶⁰ Springside has two primary entrances not far apart along the same axis that offer very different experiences – the south entrance, flanked by retaining walls and protected by an iron gate, historically gave way to the porter's lodge and duck pond, while the north entrance provided a more circuitous route into the grounds, curving

⁵⁸ Toole, *Historic Landscape Report*, 30

⁵⁹ Hunt, John Dixon. *The Afterlife of Gardens*. Philadelphia: 2004. p 40

⁶⁰ Walmsley, *Maintenance Plan*, 51



Figure 15: The current North Entrance to Springside that serves both the park and Condominium development. PC: Hannah Karp



Figure 16: The historic South Entrance to Springside as it appears from Academy Street today. Beyond is the small gravel lot provided for Springside Landscape visitors.

between large hills before turning back to the porter's lodge and pond. Now the south entrance remains locked and the duck pond is a small gravel lot for visitor parking, but, as the park is generally approached from the south, the "South Entrance ensemble" acts as a marker of the site that piques visitor interest as they move to the north entrance. While the plan records the changes to the area and the unattractiveness, they also document "the lodge's backdrop of forest trees" that they believe are "crucial to maintaining the original scenic character."⁶¹

The north entrance, which now includes a small frame gatehouse, provides access to the condominium development to the south of the park, and as such is maintained by the condominium association. However, this entrance also acts as the entrance to the park, making Springside, from the outset, look like an inaccessible, private residential community. Noting the inappropriate feel of this entrance, the plan recommends negotiating a more "sympathetic approach" with the condo association. An appropriate, thoughtful entrance brings visitors into a place apart.

Hunt furthers his thoughts on entering a place apart, extending the expectations into the park itself. "Is absorption, indeed," Hunt continues, "a desired product of garden visits? I cannot think of a worthwhile garden or park into which I do not step – on even the umpteenth visit – without a strong sense of entering a special zone."⁶² This absorption is achieved not only through an effective entrance, but the effectiveness of the park as a whole – especially as a park differentiated from its surrounding context. The distinctiveness of Springside, aside from the completeness of its internal design, was

⁶¹ *ibid*, 53

⁶² Hunt, *Afterlife of Gardens*, 40

historically derived, like its successors Central and Prospect Parks, from the visual elimination of its surroundings. During its early incarnation, this elimination was less crucial; surrounded by wooded hills, the farm that became Springside required less work to produce a secluded impression. Still, efforts were made to keep the wilderness of natural woods in the background and to fade parts of the park adjacent to the borders into its more manicured, designed spaces. This effect is discussed by Galen Cranz in her considerations of parks in urban contexts, in which she explains that banks of trees create a backdrop for an internal natural, or even “natural,” spectacle – that is, even a specimen tree stands out against a more homogenous, indistinguishable mass of vegetation.

The primary purpose of a heavily planted border for such a park is, of course, to obscure and screen the park’s “ugly urban surroundings,” that, despite their architectural quality or craft, are ugly simply for their intrusion into what is expected to be a sylvan retreat.⁶³ This is especially difficult for Springside, where the surrounding thinly wooded hills barely veil the adjacent condominiums or abutting residences. In theatrical terms, the “stage” of Springside lacks legs, curtains or walls that interrupt the audience’s sightlines into the wings and prevent them from seeing beyond the world they are intended to accept. In the case of Springside, the metaphor of legs may even be more pertinent and helpful than simply claiming a need for a fortified, well-defined boundary. While legs prevent unwanted views, they still allow performers to enter unimpeded. Springside has a number of community access paths (some actively supported by SLR, some not), that, treated carefully, could provide access to the park without compromising its internal

⁶³ Cranz, Galen. *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1982. p 37



Figure 17: The primary access road through Springside to the condominium development. This photograph is taken from the small gravel parking lot provided for Springside access. The entrance to the park is located beyond the hill on the left.



Figure 18: The creek that forms the southern border of Springside. The condominium complex is visible through the trees.

integrity. As they stand, however, many of them seem to be cleared directly into the backyards of private residences, making not only the path, but also its adjacent zones seem exclusionary.

Efforts to restore (or create, where they were once unnecessary) Springside's boundaries are proposed in zone 7 of the Maintenance Plan. Broken into subzones, the plan especially addresses zone 7.b, the area along the stream and retention basin that divides Springside from the condominiums. While solutions to and protection of the water systems are considered in zone 6, zone 7 examines how to replant these areas in order to screen out the condos and create Springside's "legs." This is done through proposing a combination of deciduous canopy and shade trees, coniferous trees, understory trees, shrubs and vines, and grasses and groundcover. The proposals include new grading, drainage, and riparian plantings to produce a "simulated 'woodland edge.'"⁶⁴ Their terminology, though unintentional, reveals that they are hoping to accomplish exactly what is discussed above – to "simulate" a woodland edge in order to obscure the outside world so that its inner world may be reinforced and more readily believed. Springside is not a place of reality, but rather, of simulated, alternate nature.

These banks of trees, which in some instances extend into the park, perform functions of framing and contrast. As noted by Cranz, background trees act to highlight features set against them, but they can also, by extension into the grounds, produce a sense of curiosity that draws visitors further into the grounds.⁶⁵ This is also achieved at Springside by the arrangement of the wooded knolls, which obscure and reveal features

⁶⁴ Walmsley, *Maintenance Plan*, 141

⁶⁵ Cranz, *Politics of Park Design*, 37

as visitors move through the park. This reinforces the idea of vignettes discussed earlier, where focus on a single situation creates an imaginary extension of that scene.

Springside's Preservation Maintenance Plan addresses aspects of the visitor experience that theorists find crucial to producing a lasting impression. By renegotiating the parks compromised entrance, redefining its boundaries, and reintroducing the notions of contrasting foreground and background to the park, the Maintenance Plan lays out a framework for restoration that would communicate to visitors that they are entering and exploring somewhere very special.



Figures 19 and 20: Panoramic views of the wooded knolls and hills of Springside

Section IV: Comparable Preservation Plans

Though Springside's *Preservation Maintenance Plan* very wisely uses pre-existing landscape plans as models, namely that for Dumbarton Oaks and the landscape guide mentioned in section II.C, the authors openly acknowledge the weaknesses in their comparisons. These are predominantly related to those of scale, but another, unobserved major detriment in the disparity in location and period. While Dumbarton Oaks has come to be seen as a singular, mid-Atlantic bastion of landscape design and garden history, Springside has faded into the background of a well-known and often studied Hudson River Valley landscape tradition. Associated with artists like Thomas Cole and Frederick Church (whose estate is discussed in IV.B), the Hudson River School mode of painting merged vistas of the picturesque river and rough wilderness with a refined grandiosity. The paintings often featured, alongside the wild buck or scurrying squirrels, intrepid Americans in the foreground, coming across lands that have, in some instances, already begun to be threatened with cultivation. Though the tradition makes clear nods to its predecessors in England and Europe, it is regarded as a distinctly American style, even when applied by its artists to scenes in Africa or South America.

Downing, with his notions of refined nature and specimens of wilderness (rocky, wooded knolls, curated carriage trails, free-roaming deer, abundant water-fowl), was also likely drawing inspiration from his English landscape counterparts like Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton, whose Red Books provided clear visual examples of the kinds of

“improvements” being made on English country estates.⁶⁶ However, Downing also clearly also admired the textures and sightlines of the Hudson River School over the vast, smooth stateliness of Repton. Considering his hopes to apply design theories in a distinctly American, democratic way, his tighter compositions and smaller, scale vignettes make sense. He worked in a vocabulary that was not only specifically American, but specifically of the Hudson Valley, the area in which he was designing.

This area, sometimes referred to as America’s “Loire Valley,” Is now a frequent destination for day-trippers and historic home enthusiasts, featuring both early homesteads like Montgomery Place (much admired by Downing) and the opulent gilded age mansions of the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers. Because of their geographic proximity and similar reliance on the Hudson Valley gardening tradition, I have chosen three such sites whose management plans employ methods that could benefit further ideas of maintenance and restoration at Springside. These are Central Park, New York, (Olmsted and Vaux, 1857-1873), Olana, Hudson, New York (Frederick Church, 1860-1900), and Bellefield, Hyde Park, New York (Beatrix Farrand, 1911).

⁶⁶ Toth, Kyle. “A.J. Downing,” in *The Architect’s Library: a collection of notable books on architecture at Vassar College*. Ed. Nicholas Adams. Poughkeepsie, NY: Vassar College Libraries, 2014.

A. Rebuilding Central Park: A Management and Restoration Plan, Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, 1987

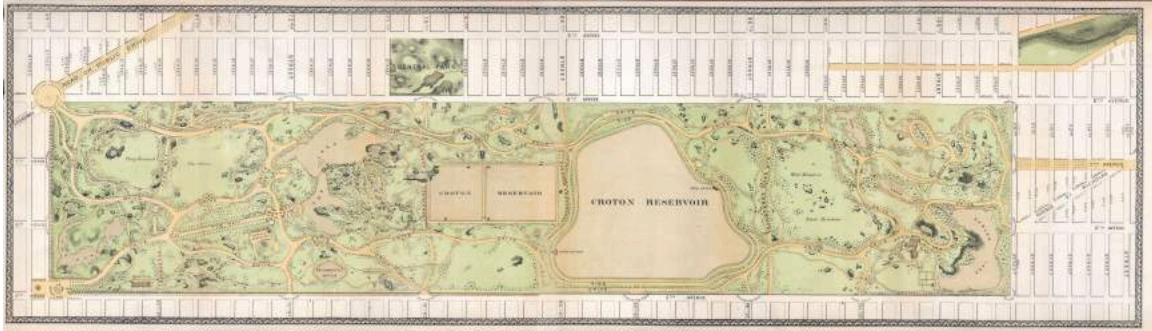


Figure 21: Olmsted and Vaux's Central Park Plan, 1860. PC: untappedcities.com

Though vastly different in scale, context, and audience, the management plan of Central Park is a crucial text in understanding approaches to park restoration and maintenance, especially for sites in as dilapidated a state as Springside. First, Central Park's trajectory of decline and rejuvenation efforts mirrors that of Springside – note that the Central Park management plan was published the same year as Robert Toole's *Historic Landscape Report for Springside*. In the heart of New York City, sixty-three miles south of Springside, Central Park had the funds and interests of the entire island of Manhattan (and beyond, besides) to keep restoration efforts afloat – but, importantly, it did happen. Central Park is also the product of Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) and Calvert Vaux, Downing's partner in the design of Springside, who undoubtedly used a similar approach to the unruly Central Park site. Central Park, like Springside, was also specifically designed for public perusal, though, for the first time, under the terms of a public park instead of a private cemetery or estate.

James Fitch, in his introduction to *Rebuilding Central Park*, notes that Olmsted would have been “thoroughly immersed” in the theories of Downing, while also having

the benefit of English-trained architect Calvert Vaux.⁶⁷ Fitch exalts the “sagacity” of Olmsted in examining the barren rockiness of the Central Park site and breaking it down into key rocky outcroppings and landforms that would be incorporated into their final design. These are broken down into the elements of the park as it stands: grassy meadows, parklands with high shade and little understory growth, thickets of native undergrowth, and a range of bodies of water, with carriage roads and footpaths winding throughout. These, of course, are the basic elements of Springside. It is likely that Vaux, still involved at the time with the development of Springside, applied the same approach to site examination and manipulation to the much larger area of Central Park. Because of its basic design elements, association with Vaux, and similar timeline of decline and public interest, Central Park presents maintenance and restoration strategies that would help Springside’s PMP.

The plan begins with a brief history of Central Park’s creation, changes, and decline, leading up to the study that produced the management plan. The methodology applied to their three-year study of the park was broken down into fifteen steps. While the majority of the plan documents the application of this methodology to the different facets of the park from general features like vegetation to specific sites like the Great Lawn, it is the methodology itself that is advantageous to Springside’s redevelopment.

Many of the steps, as outlined by Elizabeth Rogers, were incorporated into the creation of Springside’s current maintenance plan. However, steps that were not considered provide valuable insight. The first step, *formulation of a policy*, which seems

⁶⁷ Rogers, Elizabeth Barlow. *Rebuilding Central Park: A Management and Restoration Plan*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987. p 7

all too obvious, is missing from Springside's plan. This step aims to answer the primary questions of:

Is the landscape a historic one, and if so how faithful to the original should the restoration be? What uses will the landscape serve? What activities will be excluded? Who will use the landscape?⁶⁸

These questions, which are more thoroughly considered in Section V, are simple, but necessary. The Springside plan answers the question of “why” with the generic idea that history happened here, but it does not, at the outset, answer the larger implication of “why” meaning “what purpose will it serve?” That absence of this clarification is one of Springside's fatal flaws.

Steps 2, 3, and 4, evaluate the site and its problems as they've evolved over time and as they currently exist, then breaking these down into precincts, which at Springside are considered zones and subzones. Step 5, *maximization*, considers each precinct for its defining characteristics (i.e. horticulture, drainage, circulation), and focuses on how to maximize that characteristic – that is, if vegetation is the main aspect of this zone or sub-zone, how may that be enhanced and fortified? Step 6, however, takes this further with the *establishment of priorities*. Unlike the maximized characteristics, the priorities are user-based. As Rogers explains:

If scenic values are of primary importance in one place, then user activities or circulation might have to be somewhat curtailed there; if athletic use is the top priority, it might have to be achieved at the expense of scenery and horticultural interest. Priorities for each precinct therefore have to be considered once again in view of the situation in contiguous precincts and yet again in the context of the landscape as a whole.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *ibid*, 19

⁶⁹ *ibid*, 20

Again, the question of “for what purpose” is raised as it relates to each zone of the site. Springside’s most frequent answer for this question is the superficial “this is as it was,” and not “this is as it should be.”

Steps 7 and 8, *setting aesthetic goals and devising solutions and making recommendations*, are thoroughly considered by the Springside plan on both the large and small scales. Steps 9 and 10, *preparation of scope and estimates* and *setting a project timetable*, though less thoroughly developed, are still considered in the laying out of project timelines and feasibility at Springside. However, it is there that the Springside plan, compared to Rogers’ methodology, stops. Step 11 addresses one of Springside’s great downfalls – *fundraising*. This section encourages the breakdown of the park into costs of restoration and future maintenance, solutions to which can then be explored in both the public and private sector. With many contributing agents, the Springside maintenance plan was the result of such outreach and fundraising – however, the plan does not lay a framework for continued support.

Step 12, *public relations*, is a wavering, unwritten focus of Springside Landscape Restoration. Fluctuating public interest and investment is a reflection of Springside’s inconsistent position in the public eye – in the spotlight when under threat, but otherwise out of sight and out of mind. When all of this is established, step 13, *the design process*, considers if the restoration design can be feasibly accomplished. If not, alterations may be made, but if so, step 14, *construction*, may begin. The methodology ends with step 15 – *maintenance*. The Springside plan grapples with maintenance, even though it is one of its primary objectives. The great difference of the Central Park plan is that it insists on

the establishment of a maintenance framework, and demands (instead of suggests) that questions of “who” and “how” be answered.

In its final section, *Rebuilding Central Park* evaluates its supporting organization, the Central Park Conservancy. The Conservancy, to many degrees, fulfills the same functions as Springside Landscape Restoration, however, with a much larger financial and political backing. This goes back to location and interest, but it also ties in to effort and maintenance – the Conservancy never stops exploring new opportunities and collecting resources.

Central Park is seen by the Conservancy as a “people’s park,” and is as such constantly re-examined and maintained to serve the needs of the people while preserving its historic integrity. They have, at every turn, answers ready for the question of “for what purpose?” that extend beyond history and carry historic intent forward into today. *Rebuilding Central Park* provides a step-by-step methodology that Springside could use throughout the restoration process to define and maximize its intentions.

**B. Strategic Landscape Design Plan, Olana State Historic Site, Hudson, New York,
Nelson Byrd Woltz: Landscape Architects, The LA Group, 2015**



Figure 22: An aerial view of Olana State Historic Site. PC: The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Located thirty-six miles to the north of Springside in Hudson, New York, Frederick Church's Olana, designed by the artist's own hand, is also a testament to the landscape theories of the picturesque and the contributions to landscape architecture that came out of the Hudson Valley. Church began Olana as a *ferme ornée* in 1860, which he extended over the next four decades to include orchards, meadows, woodlands, and carriage trails that presented visitors with carefully composed vistas and vignettes reminiscent of his famous paintings. The focal point of Church's estate is now the main residence, built between 1869 and 1872. The residence is ultimately a Downing-esque, Italianate grouping of halls and towers with abundant polychromatic, Moorish decorative schemes. Though the landscape is attributed to Church, the house is the product of both Church and, fittingly, Calvert Vaux, who was brought into the project while he

simultaneously designed buildings for Central Park. Like Springside and Central Park, Church kept the grounds of his estate open to the public so that they may experience his sequential, artistically composed scenes. Because of its similarities in style, origin, function, and through its association with Vaux, Olana is a clear choice for comparing management tactics.

The *Strategic Landscape Design Plan* for Olana was compiled after five months of research and surveying by Nelson Byrd Woltz, Landscape Architects, and The LA Group, Landscape Architecture and Engineering. Much of the groundwork in research and mapping is, like the plan at Springside, attributed to a previous Historic Landscape Report produced by Robert Toole. Olana's *Landscape Design Plan* is, through title alone, a fundamentally different type of document than Springside's *Preservation Maintenance Plan*. Olana's plan acknowledges this, suggesting within the text that additional work be done to complete a PMP that would establish such day-to-day and long-term management tools as maintenance guidelines, pruning techniques, and record keeping. The purpose of Olana's plan, then, is different in concept, but very similar in function.

The plan is primarily dedicated to laying out the restoration of Olana's farm and to the protection and maximization of the famous viewsheds to and from the park. With concise but clear explanations, the plan displays a thorough (or at least, in some cases, a passing) consideration of each of Elizabeth Rogers' fifteen steps, beginning with the fundamental questions of purpose and audience. This is summarized nicely in the introduction, which explains that:

The plan provides guiding principles as well as specific recommendations for projects that will invigorate the site; these projects will help organize the visitor experience of Olana so that the importance of the landscape can be legible while

creating diverse programmatic opportunities appealing to a broader visitorship. The Strategic Landscape Design Plan proposes a framework for these projects, orders them in terms of priority, and provides budgetary information to facilitate funding efforts.⁷⁰

These are, again, the key elements that occasionally surface through the mire of Springside's exhaustive text. Many of the guidelines proposed for Olana relate not only to function and maintenance, but to design and aesthetic as well. This, of course, makes sense for a design plan, but the cohesiveness of aesthetic and style is a tactic that could be exponentially beneficial to a site like Springside. Olana's plan helps to establish Olana as a brand – in fact, they even discuss branding and marketing in the potential sale of produce and honey that comes from Olana's revitalized farm.

The plan's dedication to user experience and aesthetic impressions is so thoroughly considered that the plan itself becomes a prototype for Olana's future branding. The plan is organized carefully, artfully, and, to borrow their word, legibly. Its legibility is, for Springside, the Olana Plan's greatest lesson. Undoubtedly, in the fifteen year span between the completion of Springside's plan and the creation of Olana's, mapping technology and computer graphic imaging have greatly improved, making graphic representation significantly clearer and more possible. Olana's plan uses this possibility to its full advantage, making large, legible graphics the focus of the pages, accompanied with concise text that refers, when necessary, to additional details and more thorough documentation in an appendix. The relinquishing of encumbering but necessary details (like feasibility studies) to an appendix keeps the focus of the plan at the forefront, allowing for easy, direct understanding of the content. This produces a plan that is

⁷⁰ *Strategic Landscape Design Plan, Olana State Historic Site, Hudson, New York*, Nelson Byrd Woltz: Landscape Architects, The LA Group, 2015, p 4



Figure 23: Graphics from Olana's *Landscape Design Plan*. Full-page versions of the images can be found in Appendix C.

accessible to both the professional and the layman. It is, certainly, a presentation, but one that presents its ideas in a very effective, digestible manner.

Timelines are organized legibly, accompanied by compelling but informative graphics. The abundant maps of the site explaining different projects are individually simple and well defined. All of this goes back to the fundamental difference between the two plans – the one being design based, the other focused on preservation approaches. However, the clear focus and legibility of Olana’s plan could be a great asset in any future understanding of the scope of work that the park at Springside requires. Like Frederick Church, A. J. Downing and Calvert Vaux are very brand-able, marketable names whose distinct aesthetic summon notions of home and nature for anyone familiar with their work. Preservation planning at Springside could significantly benefit from maintaining not only the site, but the image that the site conjures.

C. Informal Management at Bellefield, An Email Exchange with Anne Symmes, Bellefield Horticulturist



Figure 24: The Farrand Garden at Bellefield, surrounded by the wild garden. PC: Beatrix Farrand Garden Assoc.

Now a part of the Home of Franklin Roosevelt National Historic Site, the adjacent Bellefield (along with seventy-five acres of the original estate managed by NPS and 86 additional acres preserved by Scenic Hudson) is one of the oldest extant 18th century estates in the Hudson Valley. The period of significance, however, dates to the ownership of New York Senator Thomas Newbold, who hired McKim, Mead, and White to expand the federal farmstead into a Colonial-Revival mansion with numerous outbuildings and, to the south, a walled garden. To design the garden, Newbold hired Beatrix Jones, later Farrand – a well-connected and prominent designer (Farrand may have been distantly

related to Newbold, as her aunt, who helped propel her on a course of landscape studies, was Edith (Newbold Jones) Wharton).

Completed in 1912, the garden at Bellefield, after passing into the hands of the National Park Service, fell into a state of disrepair until NPS chartered the Beatrix Farrand Garden Association in 1994. Funding from the National Park Foundation, the Garden Conservancy, and the Garden Club of America resulted in a thorough restoration of the walled garden – efforts that are, to this day, well maintained. These efforts have the benefit of dedicated overseers who, with their own hands, constantly maintain, improve, and preserve the garden. Located only six miles from Springside, Bellefield’s proximity, current function as a park, and dedicated project overseers make it a fitting match in comparing management tactics.

As Anne Symmes explains, management of Bellefield is “informal” and has “grown organically” over twenty years of figuring out how to maintain the site with very few financial resources.⁷¹ Research for the site was completed as the thesis of one of the founding members of the association, who found that though no plans for Bellefield remained, planting plans for gardens of a similar scale designed by Farrand could be applied to the still visible plant beds. As horticulturist for the site, Symmes has kept careful record of all of the plants used at Bellefield. Their primary goal is to “create the garden as Farrand would have designed it.” The terminology here is important. Unlike Springside, which has an abundance of historic documentation, Symmes is tasked with

⁷¹ Symmes, Anne. “Re: Vassar’s Springside.” Message to Kyle Toth. 8 February 2017. E-mail.

pairing photographs of the site to contemporary plant lists to identify what may have been included in Farrand's perennial border compositions.

The management of these borders and the vines that grow along the walls, however, are Symmes' only responsibilities. The lawn, trees, hedges, walls, paths, and irrigation are all maintained by the National Park Service. These services Symmes considers a "tremendous help," as they are generally the costlier procedures that "present all sorts of challenges along the way." Though Symmes' work is restricted to the walled garden, NPS maintains the surrounding "wild garden" of the estate – park-like lawns dotted with trees, allées, and stone walls.

To guide the broader scope of the NPS property, a General Management Plan was created in 2010 for the entirety of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. This, however, covering such a large area of land, did little to address the specific qualities, conditions, and requirements of Bellefield. This was rectified by efforts of the NPS and the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation in 2012 that produced a Cultural Landscape Report for the Bellefield estate. This document, according to Symmes, includes Bellefield's history, site conditions, analysis and evaluation, and treatment recommendations. Though not specifically called a management plan, the CLR appears to address many of the primary concerns of the previous management and design plans discussed. Again, a simple difference in terminology produces a document of similar content that is considered a significantly different body of work. When asked initially about a management or maintenance plan for Bellefield, the initial responses of an informal, unwritten process only led later in the discussion to what is ultimately such a plan.

Requests to review the CLR are pending, but the confusion around its existence are an important take-away for Springside. Symmes and the Beatrix Farrand Association are only concerned with maintaining the legacy, aesthetic, and experience of Farrand's walled garden. The rest of the Bellefield estate is left to a partnering but separate organization with its own goals and strategies that work in tandem with the association's. When asked if she now refers to the CLR for maintenance issues after its production, Symmes explains that, for her focused work on the perennial borders, she relies primarily on her years of experience and on the maintenance theories and recommendations of Farrand herself, who includes her ideas on the subject in some of her writing. The CLR, she believes, will prove useful in future work restoring the "wild garden" that surrounds Farrand's walled garden. She finds that for this project the images and recommendations of the CLR will be an "important guide," but she also is thankful that the document is "general enough to allow us [Beatrix Farrand Association] flexibility," knowing that "we will have to make some changes and adjustments along the way in order to make it happen."

This flexibility of approach is one of the reason's why the walled garden restoration has been a success. Though she uses historic plant lists and planting plans as a reference and makes determined efforts to use historic strains of plants instead of cultivars or substitutes, she recognizes that sometimes to must "adapt to these kinds of realities, exploring new varieties that work, are reliable, and can be more financially suitable in the long haul." Of this, she says the source materials for their work at "a continual inspiration for us, but not an absolute imperative."

The garden at Bellefield, for Symmes, is an “ephemeral cultural artifact.” As she summarizes, their goal there is to “bring to light the legacy of a pioneering landscape designer and to tell her story through providing a chance to experience one of her few remaining landscapes.” This is, in all elements but the name, the same goal as Springside, produced by a small group of people on one small but successful subject. According to Symmes, their work in finding historic plants in an effort to create a garden that produces the experience as it was in 1912 has resulted in a garden that “does look different from most perennial gardens you encounter today.” Bellefield is the product of a small group of dedicated caretakers doing site-specific work that the larger, overseeing organization does not have the time or resources to do.

The restoration and management tactics of the three Hudson Valley sites comparable to Springside offer valuable information and unexplored opportunities for Springside Landscape Restoration. First, a structured, detailed methodology applied to every step of the restoration and maintenance processes could help the temporal organization of the projects and the efficiency of their fruition. The comprehensibility and visual accessibility of the Olana plan presentation turns what is otherwise an overwhelmingly daunting series of tasks into possible, visualized goals. Furthermore, the creation of a recognizable aesthetic and marketable brand is a great tool for a site designed by Downing, whose body of work is based on principles of marketability and accessibility. The division of labor necessary for the implementation of a recognizable landscape brand is achieved, slowly but surely, by sites like Bellefield, whose partnership with the National Park Service allows for very specific, detail-oriented work. Though, as

the saying goes, hindsight is 20/20, the nature of an always evolving landscape like Springside should have an equally evolving restoration and maintenance strategy until some relative stability is reached.

Section V: Problems of Program

Galen Cranz, in *Politics of Park Design*, recounts the common rise-and-fall trajectory of late nineteenth and early twentieth century parks. This “vicious cycle” of waning public interests is, according to Cranz, the result of a park’s poorly defined purpose. Cranz writes:

Parks, for lack of definition, are banal; the public loses interest; the number of intended functions declines; the budget allocated is reduced; the park functions have even less to do with societal needs. The way out of the circle is to have a clear understanding about what parks can and should do for cities and their populations.⁷²

As discussed briefly in section 4.A, one of the Springside Maintenance Plan’s most glaring and fatal errors is its lack of a definite, succinct goal for the park and its restoration. A number of ideas are discussed in a very determined but noncommittal way throughout the text, primarily focused on the use of a fully restored, reconstructed Springside as an educational facility. While an educational facility is a clear (if optimistic and misguided) goal, it only makes an appearance in tangential references. The possibility of such a purpose for Springside is most thoroughly discussed in a parenthetical addition to a subsection of the sub-zone evaluations and recommendations.

⁷² Cranz, *Politics of Park Design*, 249

In zone 3.b of the maintenance plan, Coach House/Stables, Dairy/Ice house, and related structures, the Upper Farm, the “Repair” recommendation is to:

Similar to the cottage, make the reconstruction of the farm buildings a top priority for funding. (As suggested in the 1989 *Master Plan*, the Cottage could be the home containing furnishings and artifacts of Vassar’s time illustrating the literature and philosophical basis of the picturesque landscape and the working farm; the Coach House and Stables could be a larger museum to illustrate the practical side of managing a “scientific” farm as then understood. In this way, Springside could honor designer, manager, and owner and be “a lasting monument to the genius of Downing, the management of Bement, and liberality and taste of its proprietor, Mr. Vassar).⁷³

If this is truly the objective of Springside Landscape Restoration, there are a number of reasons that it simply does not work. First, of course, is its formatting within the document, which is presented as a removable aside that happens to relate to a very cost and labor intensive suggestion that is apparently a “top priority.” If reconstruction is a top priority, the first question of anyone involved in the process, from funding to labor, is sure to be “why?” This is what is parenthetically explained, but it is worth reconsidering. The reason for an expensive and difficult reconstruction of a number of Downing-era buildings is because an earlier document suggested it eleven-years prior as a flimsy justification for the same much-wanted rebuilding.

This is one of the major-pitfalls of preservation from which general practice has, thankfully, distanced itself. The ample documentation of Springside and nostalgia for the park as it never was – a fully matured woodland estate – creates a sort of well-intentioned but overbearing fanaticism that loses the whole through its obsession with the parts. This is not to belittle the importance of that supreme trait authenticity, but it is crucial, in this

⁷³ Walmsley, *Maintenance Plan*, 73

case, to remember that in a recreation of the buildings of Springside, not one of them, no matter how detailed a replication, would be authentic.

To exemplify this point, the long-lasting preservation battle over the Boyd Theater in Philadelphia was ultimately lost through jumbled management, poor communication, and ardent fanaticism. The group championing the art-deco theater's preservation listed, among their many goals, a demand for the replication of a historic pipe organ that had been removed and relocated to a high school (or, even, the removal of the organ from the high school and return to the theater). There is an argument for aiming high so that compromises can be made, but there is also exactitude to a point of self-defeat. Such miniscule, "history-told-me-so" goals prevent larger, more pressing goals from being appreciated and realized. Should restoration of the Boyd been to return the theater to it was as the day it opened in 1927, one might also expect for them to air-condition the modern facility by blowing air over blocks of ice. These are restorations for the sake of restoration, coming out of the inability of its management to evaluate a project and let go (or at least re-prioritize) of historic but virtually implausible details.

This is not to say that Downing and Vaux's charming and, at the time, trend-setting buildings are now "implausible." The simple fact is that, aside from the gate-house, the buildings are not there. A few foundations scattered throughout the park are the only remnants of the cottages and stables. Even the maintenance plan's recommendations of stabilizing these foundations while funds were accrued went unheeded – between 2013 and 2015, the effects of weather and invasive vegetation caused the brick foundational arches of Vassar's cottage to collapse. The foundation is now full of the bricks, along with other detritus like plastic waste and a washing machine.

If not even stabilization and protection of the remaining portions of the buildings can be achieved, should total reconstruction really be a top priority?

At this stage in its existence, the reconstruction of the buildings at Springside serves no purpose. Springside as a museum dedicated to the testament of Downing, Vassar, and his estate manager Brement amounts ultimately to a museum with little visitor appeal. Vassar has a very real, very active testament to his legacy a few miles up the road. Brement, though a formative part of Springside's early years, is not a name that the passerby would stop to read. The most lasting opportunity at Springside is its association with Downing. Downing's legacy is, first and foremost, the first landscape architect in the United States, and Springside is his only existing landscape. It is the landscape that matters. It can be argued that the landscape included Downing's important buildings, but here it is worth repeating – the buildings no longer exist, the landscape does. It is worth noting, too, that the primary designer of the buildings, Vaux, considered



Figure 25: The crumbling foundation of Vassaar's Cottage. The brick pillars can be seen in Downing's drawing of the rear elevation (figure 6)



Figure 26: The remaining stone foundation of Springside's Stables.

many of them to be of “minor importance,” claiming that they “interfere less than is often the case with the general result, each having been studied with some reference to its position and artistic importance to the landscape, as well as to its more immediately useful purpose.”⁷⁴ From its very design, Springside has been focused on its landscape. Luckily, that is what remains.

Springside is now a public park, not a private residence. This is setting aside that, as a residence, the cottage at Springside was never Vassar's intended home. If the plan were really to recreate the site as Downing and Vaux intended, Vassar's stone and brick villa (the plans for which exist) would also have to be constructed. As a park, the

⁷⁴ Vaux, *Villas and Cottages*, vi

buildings serve no practical purpose other than storage facilities and an incitement to vandalism. Should a plausible, suitable purpose for the buildings be found, their reconstruction becomes a different issue. This will be explored more in section VI. For now, the important fact is that Downing, Vaux, and Vassar's landscape is still a very real, very manageable place. Though deteriorated and compromised, many of the features of the landscape are still recognizable and, as the maintenance plan points out, salvageable and possible to restore.

As Frances Downing explains in *Remembrance and the Design of Place*, talented designers interpret and use the past "without resorting to nostalgia." "The best designers," F. Downing says, "seek to recreate transcendent experiences, to imagine other people and places, to breathe new life into something ancient and deepen our awareness of place making."⁷⁵ Though F. Downing is discussing the design of new places, the theory can be equally applied to the revitalization of designed but defunct places. These sentiments are echoed by John Dixon Hunt, who explains that it is impossible, in experiencing or understanding a garden, to recreate the mentalities of the people at the time of its inception.⁷⁶ Even the most informed visitor does not have the mind of someone from the 1850s. To combat this, as Hunt rightfully points out, a landscape must adapt in both form and function. Sites that survive and flourish do so because of renewed interpretations that differ from design intentions.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Downing, Frances. *Remembrance and the Design of Place*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2000. p 3

⁷⁶ Hunt, *Afterlife of Gardens*, 53

⁷⁷ Ibid, 17

It is impossible, as preservationists, not to lament the loss of beloved historic fabric, especially when it carries a reputation like Vassar's cottage. However, like the Boyd, the whole is being lost for the love of its missing parts. Springside Landscape Restoration has a very valuable, utilizable resource at its disposal. The organization has done the vital work of saving the park from development and of keeping it open to the public. Now work must be done to restore its still very real landscape and to find it a suitable purpose.

VI. Program Alternatives

A. Historic and Contextual Public Use of Springside

The suggestion to restore Springside solely as a landscape without its famous buildings raises the same question of "why?" as proposals to rebuild it altogether. In a methodological process, this examines Elizabeth Rogers' first question of audience, purpose, and integrity. In effect, considering Springside now strictly as a landscape and not as a landscape with buildings begins the process of the park's revived restoration. Springside becomes what is ultimately, instead of strictly a restoration project, a matter of adaptive reuse. SLR needs to establish new uses for the site that serve their program and management goals without negatively affecting the significance and integrity of the place.

To consider a new purpose for Springside, consideration must be put into the purpose it has previously served. Springside's primary historic functions were a private

residence, a working gentleman's farm, and a public-access pleasure ground. As noted, the residence and farm no longer exist, the former being lost to time and the latter to suburban sprawl. The pleasure-ground, then, is the historic fabric that remains. However, aside from the promise of some kind of pleasure, this tells the current park-goer little about what they may find there.

Historically, the pleasure of Vassar's estate was derived through its perusal and through the observation of its picturesque vignettes of curated wilderness. Newspaper accounts and Lossing's review of the site record the importation of many deer, birds, and water-fowl to populate Springside and its many ponds. These included "white heron, pheasant, gazelles, wood-ducks, hares, rabbits, peacocks, cockatoo, doves, ... domestic fowl, quails, Devonshire cattle."⁷⁸ Visitors, while exploring Springside along its roads and paths, would witness the wildlife in its "natural" habitat, delighting in what was ultimately a microcosm of Hudson River Valley woods.⁷⁹ This kind of microcosmic, publicly available space was aligned with Downing's hopes for democratic spaces where classes might, if not communicate, at least cohabitate.

The three views of Springside painted by Henry Gritten in 1852 prominently feature Springside's livestock, its caretakers, and visitors to the site being guided around the grounds in open carriages. Multiple written accounts from Springside's early days also recount experiencing the landscape from a carriage, such as Tarbell Neutral Tint's "Drive through Springside with Matthew Vassar" of 1857. The account makes much of "beholding the various scenes" of the vignettes presented at Springside. "Two miles of

⁷⁸ Lossing, *Vassar College and its Founder*, p 70

⁷⁹ Neutral Tint, "A Drive through Springside," 2

carriage drives” Tint observes, “conduct you through, around, and over these manifold beauties.” This “perfect paradise of beauties” provided “a constant succession of the most strikingly picturesque and beautiful effects,” including “tiny-footed deer, parti-colored water fowl, and prolific fish ponds.” Seen from a carriage, the presentation of these



JET VALE FOUNTAIN.

Figures 27 and 28:
Representations of
Springside that
accompany Lossing's
text in *Vassar College
and its Founder*. The
only remaining
identifiable feature
today is the small stone
structure over the
Willow Spring (page
77). The dog has since
been replaced by a
kneeling marble woman.
The sycamore to the left
of the spring still stands.



WILLOW SPRING.

scenes would have had a cinematic, slideshow effect, allotted their own time in the spotlight before the road lead to the next nook or knoll. This very curated experience offered a passive view of Springside, sitting in a carriage a few feet above the ground, guided by a host. This may have been a more sophisticated mode of viewing Springside, but the more common, and more lasting, is the exploration of Springside on foot. As early as 1852, visitors were writing to the Poughkeepsie Eagle about how delightful it was to wander around and over the hills of Springside.⁸⁰

The leisurely perusal of Springisde – the viewing of vignettes and scenes from a prescribed course – is thoroughly laid out by Lossing, whose account of Springside in Vassar’s biography is a narrative tour of the site. Writing as if he were a guide to guests, Lossing discusses the site from a plural first person perspective. Of a imagined wandering through the estate, in which readers are asked to “suppose it is a bright day in blossoming May or leafy June,”⁸¹ Lossing writes:

But what is this on our right? It is a charming grassy hollow, only a little below the level of the avenue, open to the sun, and surrounding another shady knoll, thickly covered with deciduous and evergreen trees, with groups of loose stones, over which vines creep and blossom. This open girt of meadow (7) [in reference to a map] is called Little Belt.⁸²

Though a carriage tour through Springside is now a virtual impossibility, Lossing’s account provides an idealized course for a current walking tour, and a detailed record of the visual elements and emotional sensations one was intended to discover.

⁸⁰ Poor New Yorker, “An Hour at Springside,” Poughkeepsie Eagle, July 31 1852, P. 3. Col. 2

⁸¹ Lossing, *Vassar College and its Founder*, 64

⁸² *ibid*, 68

The impressions created by the compositions at Springside and the potential of them to transform and adapt for new audiences in new times is, according to John Dixon Hunt, one of the greatest advantages for the success of such a site. As Hunt explains:

The *longue durée* of major landscape architectural sites suggests that designs are great in part because, like great works of music or theatre, they are hospitable in succeeding periods to many kinds of performance and reception, including those that come from different cultures than the one that designed them. So we should study the palimpsest of successive responses as a means of understanding both the potential of the original design and its continuing appeal.⁸³

In the case of Springside, the resources are available to understand, as well as possible, the appeal of the park during the late 19th century. Its continued appeal, though superficially highly reliant on the names and legacies of its creators, also relates back to its inherent potential as a public space. Galen Cranz discusses at length the historic and evolving purposes of public parks. By Cranz's estimation, the deliberate reservation and protection of land to serve park purposes is the collective body of a city recognizing the need for publically accessible space in which one relax and play.⁸⁴

Though the Hudson Valley has no lack of attractive public spaces, Springside has the distinct advantage of being embedded within a suburban community. A park within walking distance is an asset to any neighborhood, especially one that is well maintained and managed. Adjacent to Poughkeepsie's Academy Street Historic District, Springside benefits from its proximity to well-maintained residences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, making a picturesque setting for a Picturesque park. In a larger context, the plentiful resources of the Hudson Valley, many of which have a similar period of significance to Springside, could benefit from visitors drawn to a renewed and

⁸³ Hunt, *Afterlife of Gardens*, 172

⁸⁴ Cranz, *Politics of Park Design*, 242

ultimately new attraction. How the touring-park of Springside can serve these communities, however, is the park's most pressing dilemma.

B. Potential Programs

The object of this section is not to present definite, employable programs for Springside. Rather, it is intended to follow courses of evaluation that model how programmatic proposals may be approached. For instance, the lack of public interest in Springside is both a result and contribution to its undefined purpose. Aside from being a quiet place to walk a dog (or, on some occasion, steal plants), Springside has little reason for return visits. It is simply not in the public spectrum as a place to go. This could be solved by, say, turning, even temporarily, the large field of what was once the kitchen garden into a community garden with subscription plots. While this is a less crucial asset in a suburban context than urban, where such space is very limited, efforts could be made to make people want to garden at Springside. Flower sales in the spring, for example, or volunteer summer courses on vegetable propagation – perhaps scarecrow contests and pumpkin growing competitions for the fall. The point is not only to get the community to come to Springside, but to come back to Springside repeatedly.

The various meadows and fields, particularly the kitchen garden or “Center Circle” could, during the warmer months, be used as outdoor venues for free public movie screenings or concerts of local musical groups. The BYOChair to a free event is far from unprecedented in public parks, and is often used to raise interest in an otherwise underutilized space. These types of activities, of course, require participation from more

groups than just Springside Landscape Restoration, but the collaboration with other town organizations like arts initiatives or cultural arts commissions brings in the community and, importantly, other groups now invested in the park's revitalization.

With its proximity to Vassar College, Marist College, and Dutchess Community College, the grounds at Springside and their concurrent restoration could provide the opportunity for a type of "living laboratory." The waterways and woods of Springside offer ample resources for lessons in environmental science, watersheds, and site management – courses that, when well coordinated, could provide Springside in turn with some free labor. Again, the point is outreach, cooperation, and community engagement. The more people brought to Springside, the better its chances are of survival.

An interesting proposition has been raised by garden designer and former SLR board member Heather Whitefield, who, in considering the historic maintenance of Springside, mentioned the reincorporation of live sheep and goats into Springside's fields. Before the advent of mechanized lawn-mowing, the estate was kept trim by its plentiful livestock. The sheep were such a prominent part of Springside's pastoral effects that Gritten includes them in each of his paintings. While the proposal seems far-fetched and outlandish it does raise a few interesting opportunities. First, the much beloved Downing/Vaux stable that SLR is anxious to rebuild would once more serve a purpose – and, better yet, its intended purpose. The park, as a whole, would be notably unique, providing appeal and visitor interest. A petting zoo could be made available. Springside would be known as, "the place with the sheep," sure, but it would have a gimmick – it would bring people back to Springside again and again. Like the Beatrix Farrand Association and NPS, an outside agency, perhaps a farm sanctuary organization, could be

solely responsible for the livestock. Like at Olana, the kitchen garden area could be redeveloped into an area that grows marketable produce. The vignettes of Springside would once more include the elements of production and wildlife that once made them so engaging.

Naturally propositions like this raise exponential logistical questions. Parking accommodations, fences and barriers, security measures, funding, are all large issues that SLR would have to face. However, to dismiss opportunities of attraction based on historical precedent because of difficult technicalities is to, again, lose the whole because of its parts. To succeed as a place, Springside needs to become a place that people remember and want to go to again. Springside needs a purpose.

Conclusions

Begun by Matthew Vassar, A. J. Downing, and Calvert Vaux in 1850, Springside became over, the next decade and a half, a beloved country estate and, at times, public park that provided guests with delightful scenes of curated, composed wilderness. Relying on the well-established and popular aesthetic of the Hudson River School, Downing and Vaux produced a model at Springside that would be replicated time and time again in parks across the country. Springside's uneasy transition from a private to public space gave it a vulnerability that allowed for manipulation and doubt, but the repeated and concerted efforts of Springside Landscape Restoration saved the core of Springside from the threat of development.

Maintenance and restoration efforts since have resulted in a number of documents that show both a growing interest in detail and in solutions over time. The sparse National Register nomination deemed Springside a landmark and laid the preservation groundwork necessary for SLR to continue unimpeded. Robert Toole's *Historic Landscape Report* brought into focus the primary issues that Springside faced and provided site-specific evaluations of how these might be addressed. Walmsley and Tourbier's *Preservation Maintenance Plan*, working off an earlier master plan, expanded this research into a thorough record of site conditions and recommended solutions. All of these efforts, however, did so with the impractical and unsuitable goal of recreating Springside as a complex of buildings instead of as a landscape composition.

The maintenance and planning practices of nearby historic landscapes lend many valuable tools to the future of SLR. As learned from Central Park, a methodology of evaluation and response must be established. A "consumer"-based, well-researched method needs to be succinctly defined and implemented. Design planning at Olana proves that a recognizable, visual brand of the Springside experience should be established in order to engage guests and reinforce their impressions of the site's aesthetic. Efforts of the Beatrix Farrand Association at Bellefield show that restoration and maintenance practices should be divided among interested parties, each responsible for their own funding and organization, but all ultimately working toward a common goal.

The poorly defined goal of Springside should be re-evaluated and geared towards its current community. This community, in turn, needs to be defined and engaged, so that interest and investment may grow. The adapting, fluctuating purpose of a site over time is

how such places survive – however, these changes must be monitored, guided, and maximized. Work on a place like Springside is never finished. As long as Springside exists, it will require maintenance and management that adapts with time to the needs of its community. Before anything can be accomplished, people must remember that Springside is still very much there, and very much alive.

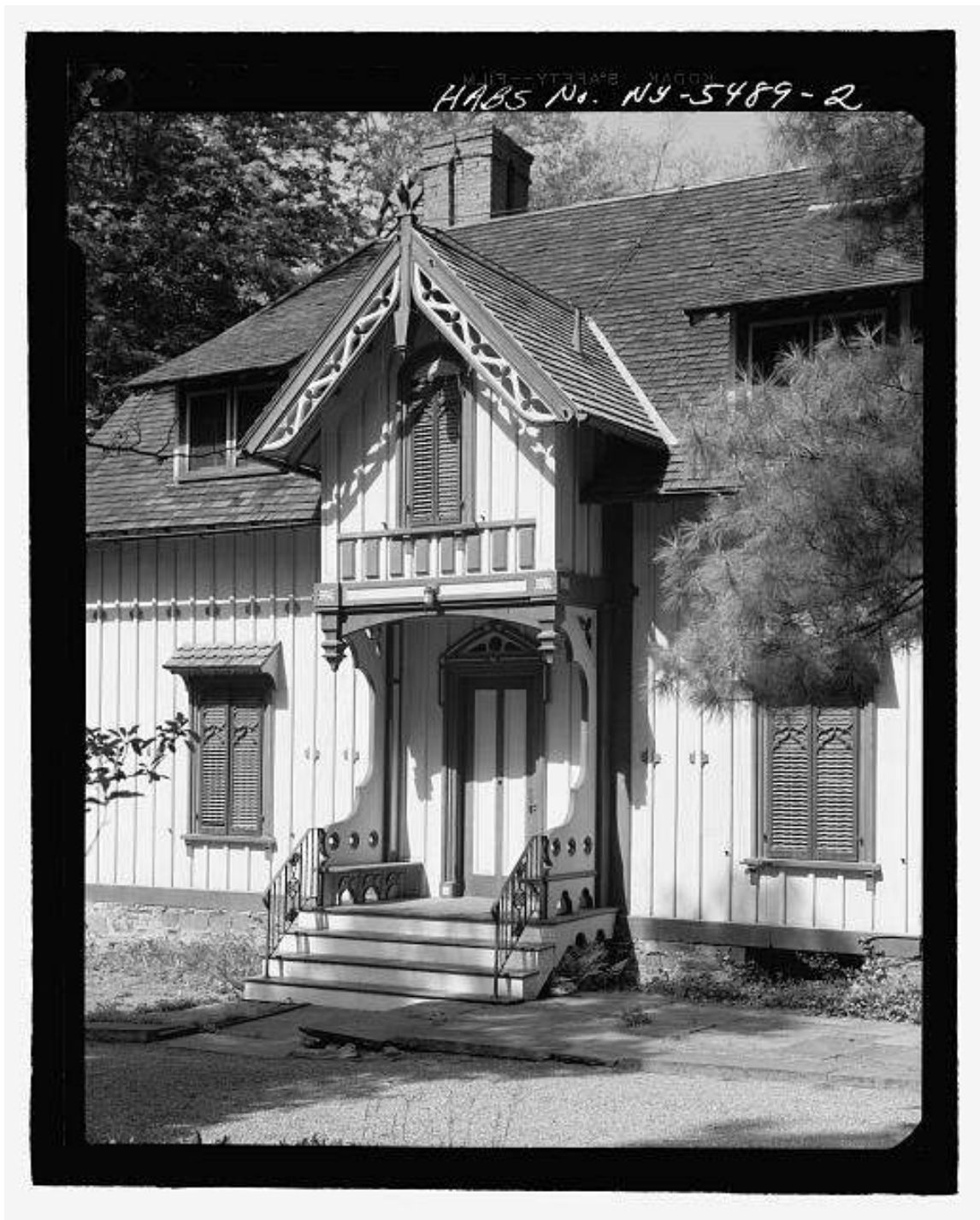
Appendix A: HABS Documentation of Springside



Perspective View of Main Elevation, Springside Cottage



Rear Elevation, Detail of Ground Floor Brick and Stone Arcade, Springside Cottage



Main Elevation, Detail of Entrance Gable and Stair, Springside Cottage



General View of Rear Elevation, Springside Cottage



Main Elevation, Springside Carriage House



View of Main Elevation (Facing Cottage), Springside Barn and Stable

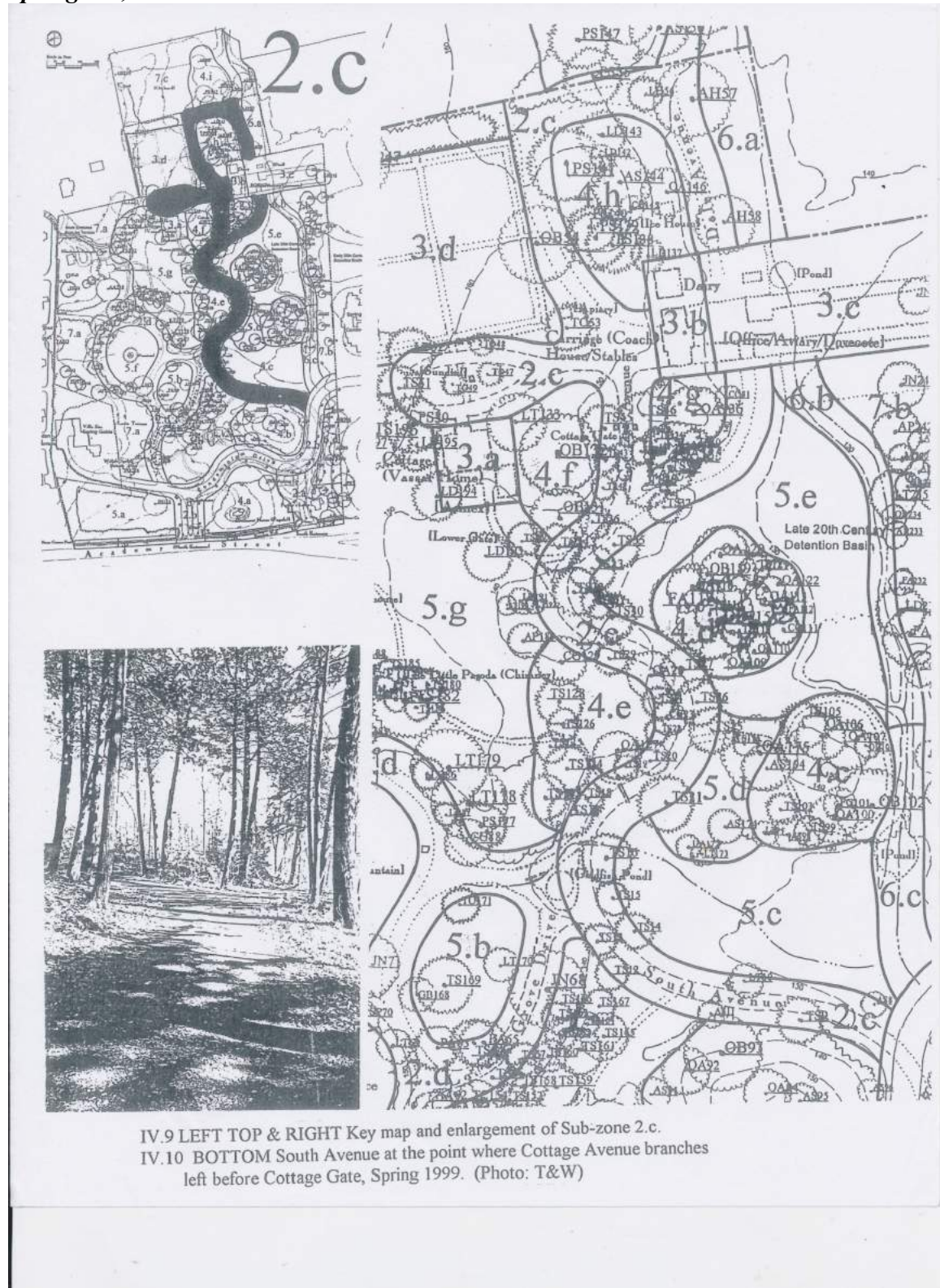


View of Rear Elevation (Facing Stable Yard), Springside Barn and Stables



Persepective View of Main Elevation, Taken From Highway Embankment, Springside Gatehouse

Appendix B: Section 2.c, *Preservation Maintenance Plan for a Historic Landscape: Springside, National Historic Landmark*



2.c Historic Drives South: South Avenue/Cottage Avenue and oval/Dale Avenue

Historic significance. South Avenue and Cottage Avenue are part of the original driveway layout, leading through the southern portion of the estate to the Cottage, Vassar's home, and the various farm buildings described here as the Upper and Lower Farm (see Zone 3.) These avenues were originally surfaced in gravel. Except for the more finished oval turnaround in front of the Cottage, they were uncurbed. They wound sharply through and around the narrow openings in the humpy terrain, as one contemporary writer put it, to "girdle the hills and knolls." There were two sets of gateposts defining the Cottage approaches (see Sub-zone 2.c.i). At the intersection of South Avenue with the Locust Grove Avenue segment of the north driveway system, there was a circular Gold Fish Pond (see Sub-zone 2.c.ii). There was a sundial in the center of the Cottage oval (see Sub-zone 2.c.iii).

Except where the native forest abutted, early plans, paintings and accounts indicate that the avenues were lined with pyramidal conifers (predominantly Hemlocks with some Pine and needle-leaved Larch) plus occasional large round-headed hardwoods (several species of Oak, Tulip Poplar, Horse Chestnut, Black Walnut, Sugar Maple, etc.) in a regular formation. The shady avenues offered views forward and back into the sunny meadow openings between the wooded knolls, each of which was named and personalized (see Zone 4).

Description and condition. The driveways survive as earthen tracks. There are some isolated remains of cobblestone curbs but all evidence of the gravel surface and base courses have disappeared. In the vicinity of the site of the Gold Fish Pond, of which no trace survives, water collects on the north side of the driveway and drains underneath into Deer Park by a six-inch pipe.

In many places, the avenues are still lined by high conifers and occasional tall hardwoods which have attained heights of 80+ feet (see Fig. IV.10 opposite), the majority being the original planted seedlings shown in the Henry Gritten paintings of 1852 (see, for example, Figs. IV.16 on p.65 and IV.21 on p.68). Some are yet healthy and vigorous, still in robust mid-life; others are showing the stress of age, storm and disease; a few are actually senescent and lean significantly from the vertical representing a potential hazard. All Hemlocks are infected by the wooly adelgid. All trees have some deadwood and some top or base damage - not unexpected after 150 years. Important southern driveway trees are keyed below:

Preservation maintenance, driveways. **Protection/stabilization:** Restrict vehicular access to the avenues from the condominium drive with bollards or chain. Correct drainage below the Gold Fish Pond site and replace the culvert to Deer Park.

Repair: Remove soil from avenues; fine grade where necessary; replace gravel surface with appropriate stone base course and screened topping.

Protection/stabilization, vegetation:

Preservation maintenance, driveways. **Protection/stabilization:** Restrict vehicular access to the avenues from the condominium drive with bollards or chain. Correct drainage below the Gold Fish Pond site and replace the culvert to Deer Park.

Repair: Remove soil from avenues; fine grade where necessary; replace gravel surface with appropriate stone base course and screened topping.

Protection/stabilization, vegetation:

Tree No.	Tree Spp.	Trunk Diam.	Condition Class	Amenity Value	Noted problems and preservation maintenance recommendations
AS8	Acer saccharum	14"	3	2.5	Tp dieback, lo priority, monitor
TS9	Tsuga canadensis	30" twin	3	3	4' crotch, adelgid, cut dead limbs
LT10	Liriodendron tulipifera	20" twin	1.5	1	Good, monitor
AS11	Acer saccharum	15"	3	3	Tp damage, declining, monitor
TS12	Tsuga canadensis	20"	3	2.5	Adelgid, monitor
TS13	Tsuga canadensis	22"	3	2.5	Adelgid, monitor
TS14	Tsuga canadensis	23"	3	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS15	Tsuga canadensis	24" twin	3	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS16	Tsuga canadensis	28"	3	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS17	Tsuga canadensis	28"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS18	Tsuga canadensis	20" twin	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS19	Tsuga canadensis	18"	3	3	10° lean, adelgid, monitor
CG20	Carya glabra	24"	1.5	1.5	Prune/feed
TS21	Tsuga canadensis	36" twin	2.5	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS22	Tsuga canadensis	18"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
CG23	Carya glabra	21"	2.5	1.5	Slight lean but OK
TS24	Tsuga canadensis	20" twin	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS25	Tsuga canadensis	28" twin	3.5	3.5	Adelgid, monitor
TS26	Tsuga canadensis	28" twin	3.5	3.5	Adelgid, monitor
TS27	Tsuga canadensis	30"	3.5	4	Adelgid, lge cavity, monitor
QA28	Quercus alba	28"	1.5	1	Fine! Lt prune/feed
TS29	Tsuga canadensis	19"	3.5	3.5	Adelgid, lt top growth, monitor
TS30	Tsuga canadensis	28" triple	3	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS31	Tsuga canadensis	22"	3.5	4	Adelgid, large cavity
TS32	Tsuga canadensis	28"	3	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS33	Tsuga canadensis	25"	3	1.5	Adelgid, treat hi priority, monitor
TS34	Tsuga canadensis	28"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS35	Tsuga canadensis	25"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS36	Tsuga canadensis	19"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS37	Tsuga canadensis	22" twin	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS38	Tsuga canadensis	26"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS39	Tsuga canadensis	26"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
TS40	Tsuga canadensis	20" twin	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
CO41	Carya ovata	18"	3	3	Tp damage, prune/feed, cut Maple

TS51 <i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	28"	3	3	Adelgid, monitor
LD52 <i>Larix decidua</i>	25"	2	2	Hi crotch, lt prune/feed
TO53 <i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	30" twin	3	3	Split, prune
QB54 <i>Quercus borealis</i>	38"	1	1	Very fine!
PS55 <i>Pinus strobus</i>	35"	3	2	Prune/feed
LD56 <i>Larix decidua</i>	23"	3	2	Prune/feed
AH57 <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	38" twin	3	2	Prune/feed
AH58 <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	32"	3.5	2	Prune/feed

Repair: Identify locations of missing trees in the original plans and replant with appropriate species. Provide water and protect newly planted trees until established. Replacement trees will need several years to fill in the areas where trees are removed, as well as existing "gaps." Other coniferous species, such as Pine spp., Spruce and Fir should be considered, as well as needle-leaf deciduous as Larch and occasional large round-headed hardwoods, such as Oak spp., Sycamore, Tulip Poplar, Beech and White Ash. Minimum caliper of 2 1/2" recommended. Plant in sections and maintain balance of historic plant composition.

2.c.i Cottage Gates

Historic significance. There were two gates: the narrower, private Lower Gate guarded the lower entrance to the Cottage and had a pair of greyhound statues in iron perched on top of stone piers; the wider Cottage Avenue Gate for the public had statues of a fox and a bear facing each other from their respective positions on top of stone piers. The original appearance of both gates is known: Cottage Avenue Gate is shown in Lossing (see Fig.IV.12) and the Lower Gate is seen beside the wooded hillock of Knitting Knoll with the Cottage and barns beyond in a ca.1852 Gritten painting (see Fig. IV.21).

Description and condition. Only the Cottage Avenue gate piers remain (see Fig. IV.11). They are of natural stone and mortar, approximately 30" x 30" and appear in structurally sound condition.

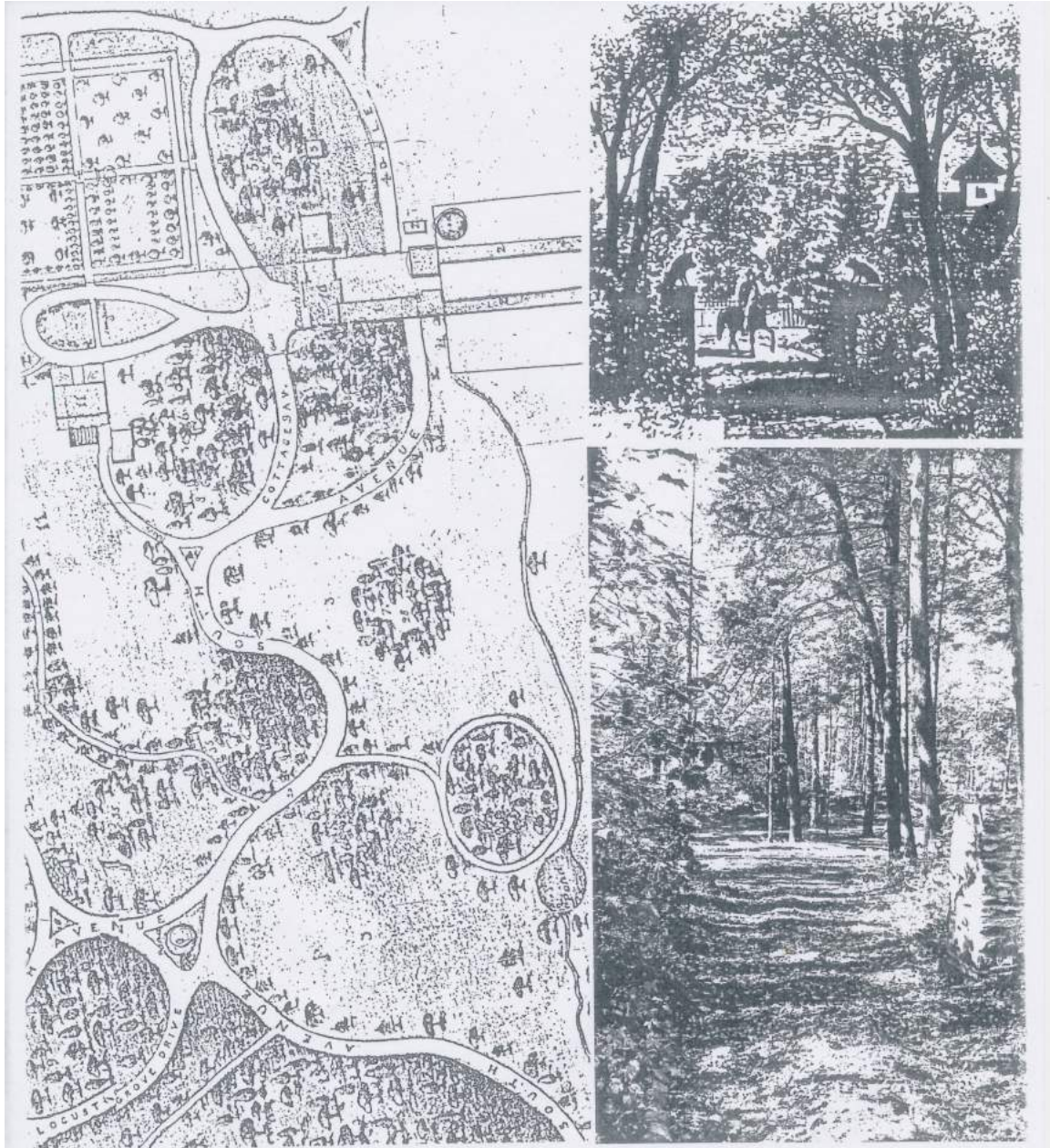
Preservation maintenance.

Protection stabilization: Periodically inspect Cottage Avenue gate piers. Repoint mortar joints when needed.

Repair: Replicate the fox and bear at the Cottage Avenue Gate. Reconstruct the Lower Gate only after the prime destination, i.e. the Cottage, has been reconstructed (see Sub-zone 3.a).

2.c.ii Gold Fish Pond

Historic significance. Described by Lossing as a "beautiful little pond , reflecting the deep blue of the sky above, and glowing with gold fishes." It was probably supplied



- IV.11 LEFT Partial map of Springside by E. Jacob, ca. 1857 showing southern driveway system. (Courtesy: Adriance Memorial Library)
- IV.12 TOP RIGHT Cottage Avenue Gate from Lossing, *Vassar College and its Founder*, 1867 in *Springside Master Plan Report*, 1989. (Courtesy of Vassar College Library.)
- IV.13 BOTTOM Cottage Avenue Gates, Summer 1999. Note: portion of cobble curb along left side of driveway. (Photo: T&W)

by the Ivy Terrace spring by underground pipes servicing the Center Circle Fountain (see Sub-zone 5.f) and discharging to Deer Park Pond (Sub-zone 5.c.i.)

Description and condition. No trace remains.

Preservation maintenance.

Protection/stabilization: Identify limits of site and protect from encroachment.

Repair: Conduct archaeological investigation. Reconstruct element based on physical/visual/written evidence. Connect to Ivy Terrace spring and Center Circle underground piping system to provide make-up water. Provide outlet beneath South Avenue pipe to Deer Park Pond.

2.c.iii Sundial

Historic significance. Centered in the oval in front of the Cottage, aligned with the central east-west axis of the Kitchen and Flower Garden, was a path accessing a sundial - an important minor element in Downing's lexicon of embellishments. In his *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, 1841*, he characterized sundials as "among the oldest decorations for the garden and grounds, and there are scarcely any which we think more suitable."

Description and condition. All traces of a sundial have disappeared.

Preservation maintenance.

Protection/stabilization: Periodically maintain and mow the Cottage oval.

Repair: Include the replacement of the Sundial when a program for restoring the Cottage and Kitchen and Flower Garden has been determined and funded.

Appendix C: Assorted Pages from *Strategic Landscape Design Plan, Olana State Historic Site, Hudson, New York*





The Olana Center Site Plan

The concept plan sites the Olana Center in a way that prepares and orients visitors, offering an array of programmatic opportunities that allow the visitor to engage and interpret the multiple layers of Frederic Church's Olana. Based on the existing deficiencies and proposed improvements, the following building program is proposed:

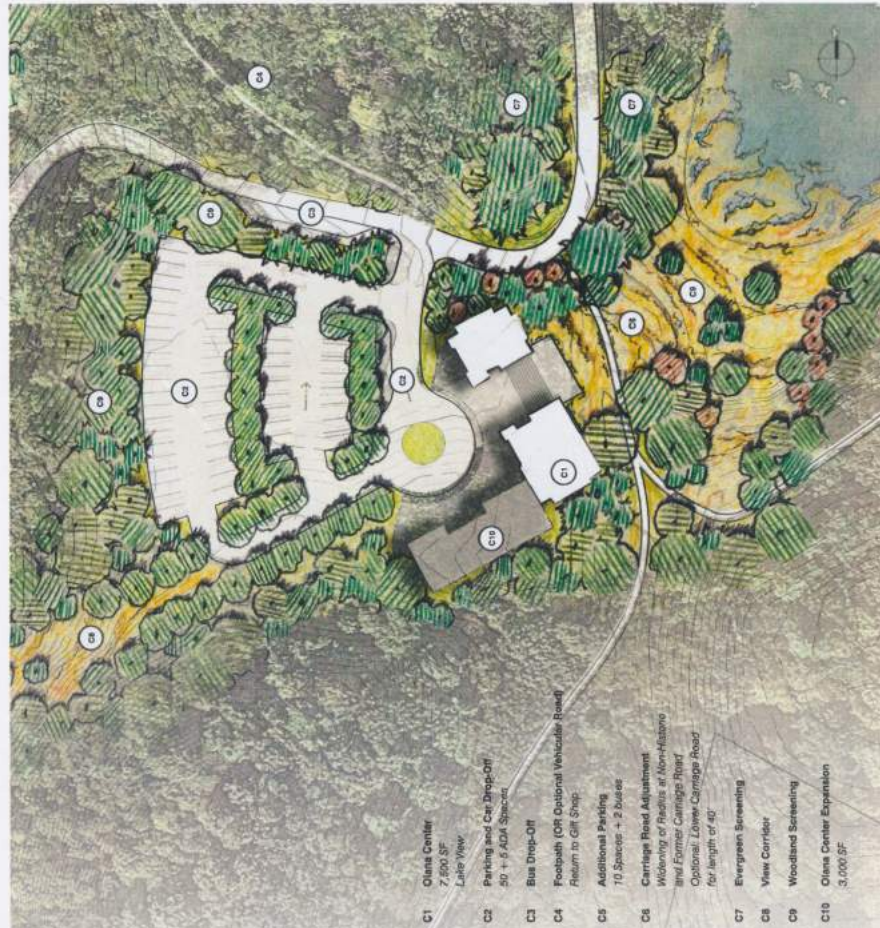
- Entry area
- Ticket point-of-sale
- Multimedia interpretational area
- Public and staff restrooms
- Café
- Museum shop
- Storage area
- Small exhibit area (not collection space)
- Office space for OCHPE or TOP staff
- Large meeting and gathering space

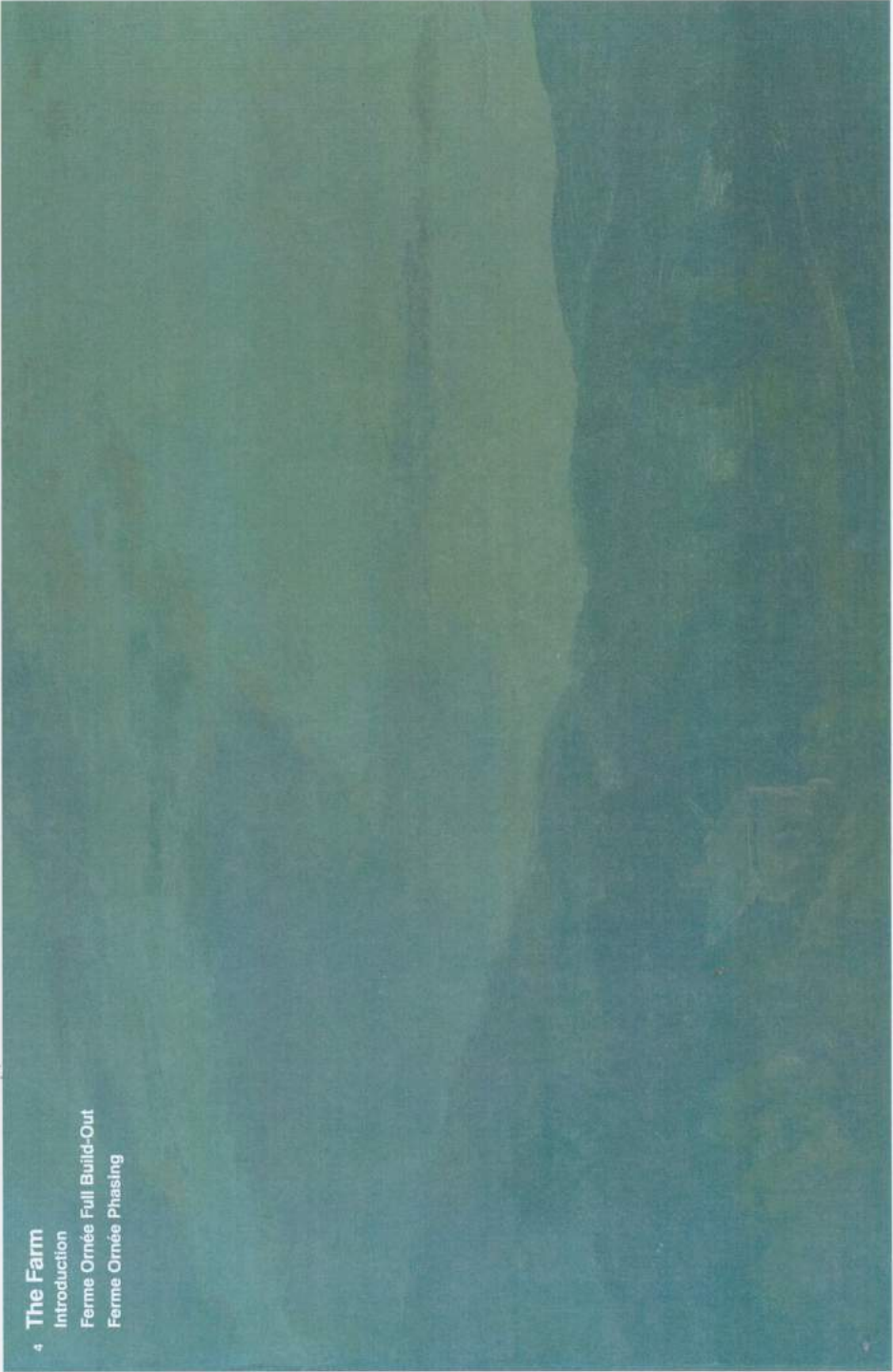
In addition to the building program the following site program elements are proposed:

- Landscape improvements, including accessible pedestrian connections to Olana Center and adjacent destinations
- Outdoor plaza / courtyard (small gathering space and possible café seating)
- Vehicular access / circulation
- Infrastructure / utility areas
- Parking area for at least 40 cars, plus overflow
- Dedicated bus staging area / drop-off
- Fire / emergency vehicle access
- View corridors



Existing Conditions





4 The Farm
Introduction
Ferme Ornée Full Build-Out
Ferme Ornée Phasing



3 The Olana Center

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