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A Phoenix from the Ashes: Jackson Park's Japanese Garden, Cultural Exchange,
and the Endurance of Japanese Sites After Pearl Harbor

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Introduction

In 1946, a piece of historic and culturally significant Japanese architecture created for the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago's Jackson Park fell victim to two separate arson attacks.¹ The building, called the Ho-o-den or the Phoenix Palace, sustained serious damage after the first arson incident in June, and was completely destroyed months later in October. Despite being burned down, the tea house of the garden survived in spirit and lives on through its legacy in what is known today as the Garden of the Phoenix. It would be hard to tell that at the site of the Garden of the Phoenix there once was an entire Japanese temple building; yet the legacies of anti-Japanese sentiment are present in the inherent absence and complex history of the historic Ho-o-den. Though the building was victim to arson after World War II, the Japanese garden and the Ho-o-den at Jackson Park had once attracted countless visitors and was an important part of the ways in which Midwestern visitors perceived Japanese culture throughout the twentieth century.

The two World's Fairs that took place in Chicago came at particularly contrasting points of contention for both Japan and the United States. The 1893 fair that organizers themed around 400 years since Columbus's famous voyage to mark the beginning of Western humanity's long quest to modern civilization also marked 30 years since the arrival of Commodore Perry's famous "black ships" that opened up the borders of Japan and brought an end to the old, feudal Japan. The 1933 fair that celebrated a century of progress since Chicago's establishment also

¹ "Fire Destroys 1893 Fair Building," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 13, 1946; "Jackson Park Fire Burns J*p Building of '93 World's Fair," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22, 1946.

came not only within the context of the Depression, but rising Japanese imperialism as well with the recent invasion of China's north-eastern region of Manchuria in 1931. In the four decades between the two fairs, the "old" Japan had transformed itself to become a world power that could give pause to Chicago's white supremacists; however, many of them saw Japan's capability to seriously challenge these views in the region as ultimately an impossibility that could not seriously damage or discredit existing theories of racial hierarchy.² During the years leading up to WWII, most Midwesterners saw Japan as a distant paradox that displayed both modernity and mysticism. Though after Japan's involvement in WWI, the image of Japan as a threatening military power became more pronounced in the global consciousness, but at the same time, various efforts of cultural exchange mythicized the nation's culture in an attempt to make it more approachable.

In the struggle to be seen as a nation capable of challenging Euro-American powers during the context of rising Japanese imperialism in the early 20th century, Japan used popular ideas of Orientalism and mysticism to make its image resonate in the Midwest, where historians like Frederick Jackson Turner were shaping values regarding the landscape as part of a unified national American character. Using the stage of the World's Fairs in Chicago, Japan was able to foster and create a desired and decidedly softer image of itself to project to Western audiences around the world. Japanese gardens were present in some capacity at many if not all of the U.S.'s World's Fairs, but in particular the history of the garden at Jackson Park in Chicago reveals the complex relationship within the Midwestern region, where a smaller population of Japanese-Americans resided in the late 19th century to mid-20th century when compared to the

² Nicholas Wisseman, "'Beware the Yellow Peril and Behold the Black Plague: The Internationalization of American White Supremacy and its Critiques, Chicago 1919.'" *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 103, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 43-66.

Pacific Coast. The Japanese garden became a crucial point of Japanese-Midwestern cultural exchange and reinforced specially curated ideas of Japanese culture as being based on a particular set of aesthetics that inspired mysticism and tranquility. Looking at the Japanese garden in Jackson Park reveals that many Midwesterners' point of contact with Japanese culture in authentic ways was often at the garden, where the Japanese government extolled the natural beauty of Japan's landscape as an inherent trait of Japanese culture in order to soften its image. Midwestern Americans were open to images of Japanese beauty in nature because of existing popular discourses about the natural landscape of the American heartland. The Japanese gardens were a crucial point of contact between Midwesterners and Japanese culture and helped to cultivate a more positive image of Japan in the Midwest amidst rising Japanese imperialism and anti-Japanese sentiment.

Historiography

Many historians who have written about the World's Fairs in America have noted that they provided crucial opportunities for nations to promote themselves to a domineering Western audience on their own terms in spite of or while actively engaging the larger discourses of modernity that dominated the World's Fairs.³ Historian Eric Sandweiss considers the 1893 Fair to have been successful in displaying the cultural essence of non-Western nations through its architecture in order to make the image of the nation visual and thus directly palatable to an audience that sought to impose ideas of modernity onto various exhibits. Ooi Yuki, who has also written about the 1893 Fair, focuses more acutely on the power imbalances present at the fair,

³ See, for example, Eric Sandweiss, "Around the World in a Day: International Participation in the World's Columbian Exposition." *Illinois Historical Journal* 84, no. 1 (Spring 1991), 2-14; Yuki Ooi, "'China' on Display at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893: Faces of Modernization in the Contact Zone," in *From Early Tang Court Debates to China's Peaceful Rise*, eds. Friederike Assandri and Dora Martins (Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 53-54; and Sae Yamamoto, "From The Representation of 'Japan' in Wartime World's Fairs: Modernists and 'Japaneseness'." Translated by Aoki Fujio, Jessica Jordan, and Paul W. Ricketts. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 26 (2014): 104-134.

particularly in the divide between the White City and the Midway Plaisance exhibits, and applies the theory of the “contact zone” between Chinese and Americans at the Chinese exhibit on the Midway Plaisance.⁴ Because the Chinese exhibit was created by Chinese Chicagoans instead of the Chinese government, the exhibit was crucial in fostering a new Chinese American identity where in the decades before the Fair, most Chinese in America would not consider themselves to be unified under a single Chinese identity but rather in relation to their hometown or clan.⁵ In contrast to the Chinese exhibit at the fair, the Japanese pavilion was curated and funded singularly by the Japanese government, and little evidence exists that suggests the active contribution of Midwestern Japanese Americans to the exhibition. Many scholars have focused on the tangible architecture created for the fairs; however, the topic of Japanese gardens as a prevalent and enduring artifact of cultural exchange is not considered. Gardens exist as a renewable and changing idea with slightly more approachability than Japanese architecture, particularly in the Midwest where an appreciation for nature was beginning to take root as part of the foundational myths of the region at the time.

Due to rising Japanese imperialism in Asia, the Japanese pavilions at the World’s Fairs of the 1930s were a significant chance for the Japanese government to repair Japan’s image in the West. Many scholars argue that the Japanese government repaired its image through the creation and reinforcement of careful narratives of progress, tradition, and modernity. Historian Kari Sheperdson-Scott argues that the Manchuria exhibit in the 1933 Fair that was created by the Japanese and attached to the Japanese pavilion provided a way for the Japanese government to soften the image of Japan imperialism in China for its Western audience by promoting a narrative

⁴ Ooi, “‘China’ on Display at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893,” 53-54. The Midway Plaisance, located between Washington Park and Jackson Park, was home to the Fair’s “less civilized” exhibits such as those of Javanese and Native American cultures, whereas exhibits in the White City were meant to represent the latest and greatest civilization has to offer.

⁵ *Ibid*, 57.

of progress in Manchuria. Yamamoto Sae connects the Japanese pavilions at the late 1930s Fairs during the precipice of war to larger discourses on the topic of Japanese uniqueness that were popular at the time among the Japanese elite. To Japanese architects and other organizers of the last World's Fair before war broke out in 1937, there was no fundamental difference between "modernity" and "tradition" when it came to defining Japanese "uniqueness;" both were equally needed in order to draw Western visitors in with the intent that they would be enticed to travel there.⁶ Japan had to take on both the images of a traditional Japan based on old art and wooden architecture and a modern Japan based on technological and bureaucratic innovation in their exhibits in order to be effective in the West. The discourses of tradition and modernity at the Fairs would help cultivate a certain dichotomic image of Japan, particularly in the years that led to the war. However, this dichotomic image of Japan during these momentous fairs had mixed reviews by their intended Western audience who wanted to see flamboyant and dazzling new exhibits, as both Yamamoto and Sheperdson-Scott notice that the Japanese pavilion in 1933 was "an understated place.... [that] lacked spectacular appeal" especially in comparison to the other exhibits at the fair that marked marvels of the progress of civilization.⁷ In order to have Japanese culture resonate with Western visitors, the Japanese organizers had to actively utilize pre-existing notions of Japanese culture as based upon ideas of "Oriental mysticism" popular at that time.

I argue that the Japanese gardens were effective tools in reinforcing the decidedly softer and mystic parts of Japanese culture at this critical moment of rising imperialism. Christian Tagsold has identified a pattern in many early English language writings about Japanese gardens that has persisted until the 1890s, where the authors will ascribe an inherent mystic or romantic

⁶ Sae Yamamoto, "From The Representation of 'Japan' in Wartime World's Fairs: Modernists and 'Japaneseness'." Translated by Aoki Fujio, Jessica Jordan, and Paul W. Ricketts. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 26 (2014): 120.

⁷ Kari Sheperdson-Scott, "Conflicting Politics and Contesting Borders: Exhibiting (Japanese) Manchuria at the Chicago World's Fair, 1933-34." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 3 (2015), 540.

vision to the gardens.⁸ Japan was able to benefit from these existing ideas of approachability to Japanese culture in the United States and cultivate them via the gardens at the World's Fairs; even if the architectural buildings themselves weren't universally appealing to an outsider audience, the natural landscape of a garden could provide more accessible levels of approachability. Through this usage, Japanese gardens resonated within the Midwest because many Midwestern visitors might already have been well predisposed to ideas of romanticizing the natural landscape by the time of the 1893 Fair, when Turner presented the image of the tamable frontier natural landscape of the pioneers to the public.⁹

The Origins of the Garden: The 1893 Columbian Exposition

Charles Dudley Arnold was a Canadian photographer that took an entire collection's worth of photographs of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. In his photographs, he captured nearly everything at the fair, from the administration building to the Ferris Wheel. Many of his photographs are simply candid shots to capture a building's architecture with no real staging, but all of the photographs that exist of the Japanese pavilion are tellingly mediated or staged in some way. For example, shots of the German Village are candid and casual, especially in comparison to Arnold's shots of the Japanese Pavilion.¹⁰ The photograph of the exterior of the Ho-o-den and the tea garden shows a full view of the garden from afar, with a variety of Japanese men in various clothes, some wearing traditional yukatas, some wearing suits and hats, all scattered around the foreground of the garden and facing forwards to gaze into the camera. The faraway angle suggests that Arnold, when capturing the photograph, wanted to fit in as much of the landscaping of the garden as possible. The skyline of the buildings surrounding the

⁸ Christian Tagsold, *Spaces in Translation: Japanese Gardens and the West*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 2.

⁹ John Bodnar, "Memory in the Midwest Before WWII," in *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 121.

¹⁰ University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf3-00039, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

fenced off area seem to clash with the tranquil garden scene presented by the Japanese architecture, as if it were almost a scene taken straight from Japan if not for the buildings peeking through the trees in the background.¹¹ The photo, with its careful angle and framing, seems to blend the people depicted in with the background, as if they were affixtures to the building and the garden itself, especially when viewed from afar. This subtle association between the Japanese people and the landscape in this photograph might tell us that Arnold was thinking about displaying not just the people, but the larger gardens as well in order to subtly display an association between the people and the architecture and landscape surrounding them as peaceful and traditional.

Another of Arnold's photographs of the garden is even more telling of the mediated and careful nature of these photographs. The photograph depicts a quiet scene in the garden behind one of the Ho-o-den's three building fixtures. A woman dressed in a formal kimono stands with her back turned to the camera at an angle that draws attention to her large obi sash. The angle the photograph is taken allows for the tree at the right side of the photograph to obscure the Chicago skyline, allowing this photograph to look even more so than the previous image as if it were taken within Japan itself.¹² The woman, facing away from the camera, seems to portray a sense of quiet dignity, and as the woman's face is obscured, it is difficult to determine her ethnicity with accuracy. This image and its careful framing plays on ideas that Japanese culture is built on an unattainable mystery, and that the world presented in the photograph is an outsider's perspective of Japan in a fenced off Midwestern setting, as if Japan were transposed thousands of miles away to the Midwest. It also associates femininity with Japanese culture, applying

¹¹ University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf3-00033, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

¹² University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf3-00031, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

aesthetics of beauty to the landscape at the park. To those working at the Japanese pavilion, appearance was everything. Through positive appearances and gestures, Japan was able to make a mark on the Midwestern region during an early stage in its development as a more globalized nation.

The Japanese gardens at America's World Expositions have had varied fates after the end of the exhibition. The garden created for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Fair in St. Louis, the first extensive Japanese stroll garden in America, was destroyed after the exhibition and traces of its presence no longer exist.¹³ Meanwhile, the Japanese exhibit created for the California Mid-Winter Exposition in 1894 in San Francisco became a beloved Japanese tea garden after the end of the exposition.¹⁴ The locations of these gardens, one in the Pacific Coast region where a larger demographic of Asian American community resides and one in the Midwest, suggest a more receptive audience or community in California willing to undertake its continued upkeep. However, the Japanese garden at Jackson Park differs from these gardens because Japan had explicitly intended for the Ho-o-den building to be a gift to Chicago to be kept after the fair and not torn down with everything else. The garden at Jackson Park has had various waves of upkeep, from being seen as neglected in the first few decades after 1893, until Chicago park committee members undertook various efforts to renew it in earnest in the 1930s until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, when the building was seized and taken over as a storagehouse.

John J. Flinn, the author of previously published and successful handbooks about Chicago, published a handbook for the World's Columbian Exposition compiled from official sources he was able to find a year before the fair's official opening in 1892. After reviewing all

¹³ Seiko Goto, "The First Japanese Garden in the Western World: The Garden in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition." *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 27, no. 3 (2007), 252.

¹⁴ Kendall H. Brown, "Fair Japan: Japanese Gardens at American World's Fairs, 1876-1940." *SiteLINES: A Journal of Place* 4, no. 1 (2008), 13.

of the sources and writing everything out, Flinn decided to dedicate the handbook not to the people of Chicago, or the official organizers of the fair, or even to a loved one, but instead to “His Imperial Majesty the Mikado of Japan, who was first among the great rulers of the Earth to recognize the World’s Columbian Exposition... in the display of princely generosity toward Chicago, this volume is dedicated by the compiler.”¹⁵ Flinn holds Japan in such high regard because the Asian nation had spent more money on its exhibit “than many of the countries in Europe” and would bestow Chicago with its created structure after the end of the fair.¹⁶ Flinn’s dedication of the handbook and his reverent mention of the gestures the nation of Japan made to Chicago indicates that he saw Japan as exemplary of the spirit of the World’s Fair, above even all other nations. Flinn, who was already intimately familiar with Chicago, saw Japan’s gift to the city as a positive addition that many would enjoy long after the fair. Already, Japan’s tactics of diplomacy and appearance through the stage of the World’s Fair were strongly effective, even before the fair had begun.

Another account of the 1893 World’s Fair comes from fiction that reflects the attitudes some had at the time regarding the gardens. Samantha was a character from a series of books created by Marietta Holley that was made to represent the average late 19th century American woman. To instill the qualities of an “average” Midwestern or Southern American, Samantha narrates all of her stories in an accented coquillary drawl and vernacular language, imposing a strong voice on all of her tales. Though Holley portrayed her as an average American woman, Samantha was a progressive figure; along with the account on the World’s Fair, she also tackled some of the problems of her contemporary American society, such as the women’s suffrage

¹⁵ John J. Flinn, *Hand-book of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, (Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry, 1892), 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 207-208.

movement.¹⁷ Samantha's account of the Columbian Exposition is extensive; at 700 or so pages, it takes the reader along with her as she explores the fairgrounds with her husband Josiah. When Samantha makes her way to the Wooded Island, she is overwhelmed with an array of emotions at the beauty of the gardens there. Samantha is impressed by Japan's exhibit at the Wooded Island as well, saying that "Japan jest shows herself at her very best, and lets the world see her in a native village, and how she raises flowers, and makes shrubs and trees look curious as anything you ever see."¹⁸ Yet Samantha, who found even the landscaping at the Japanese pavilion completely foreign, assures that "what is strange in one country is second nater in another."¹⁹

Holley, in writing these scenes, was using the beauty presented in the garden as something her American readers could relate to, which reflects that Holley likely saw the Fairs as an informative place where visitors could positively learn about cultures from around the world. Through the approachability and mystery presented by the gardens, Japan presented an opportunity for positive cultural exchange with the Midwest, particularly in the relatively early stages of Japanese development. Not present at this 1893 Exposition, however, were any signs of political tensions within Asia that would lead to the Sino-Japanese war a year later in 1894.

The Gardens Amidst Rising Japanese Imperialism

Despite the initial request for the Japanese garden to not fall too deeply into disrepair, after the 1893 fair the Ho-o-do and the garden eventually came into general neglect over the next few decades. A letter to the editor of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1912 complained of the sorry state of the "Japanese tea houses" in Jackson Park, and asked: "Is it not possible for the south park commissioners to transform that portion of the wooded island in Jackson park that contains

¹⁷ See, for example, Marietta Holley, *Samantha Among the Brethren*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1893); ----, *Samantha on the Woman Question*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912).

¹⁸ Marietta Holley, *Samantha at the World's Fair*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1893), 401.

¹⁹ In order to convey Samantha's accent, Holley purposefully spells out certain words such as "jest" and "nature" as "jest" and "nater" respectively.

the two Japanese tea houses into a Japanese garden?” Warfield Webb proposed that the work to restore the garden should “be done by Japanese, as they fully understand the details that are essential to a true garden of this kind” and that during the summer months Japanese people could work there and serve tea for an added fee. Webb was reasoning that the restored Japanese garden would make the park more attractive and help the local economy, ultimately benefiting the entire city. Webb closed his paragraph by saying “the people will be grateful for the change.”²⁰ The atmosphere Webb was writing in was only two years before the outbreak of World War I, which would make Japan into a veritable world power and challenge pre-existing notions of racial hierarchy present in even Chicago.²¹ Furthermore, it was two years after Japan annexed Korea in 1910. In spite of these rising tensions around the world, some Chicagoans thought of Japanese gardens as a beautifying and desirable aspect of the city. Webb’s desire to have Japanese restore the gardens and work there speaks to a certain respect and admiration for Japanese culture. The phenomenon of a non-Japanese community’s desire to restore the Fair’s Japanese gardens is unique to Chicago in comparison to the fate of the Japanese gardens built for San Francisco and St. Louis.

By 1932 Japan’s takeover of a vast area in northeastern China called Manchuria was successful. An article on Japan’s conquest in Manchuria in November 1932 in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* attempted to “[translate the situation] into terms which readers of *The Tribune* will quickly understand” and compared the size of Manchuria to “the combined areas of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio, Missouri, and Kentucky” in order to convey to the Midwestern reader its sheer scale through familiar terms.²² The overall tone of the article is

²⁰ Warfield Webb, “Voice of the People: Wants a Japanese Garden,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct 12, 1912.

²¹ Nicholas Wisseman, “‘Beware the Yellow Peril and Behold the Black Plague:’ The Internationalization of American White Supremacy and its Critiques, Chicago 1919.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1998-) 103, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 43-66.

²² John Powell, “Japan Facing Difficult Job in Manchuria,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 13, 1932.

concerned that the “Manchurian situation” will only be made worse by recent Japanese military developments and bad relations between Japan and China, as well as Japan and Russia. Though the article reflects that some in Chicago would very well be concerned that the situation in China might escalate further, Japan had a golden opportunity to soon redeem itself in the eyes of the public. The very next year after the takeover, Japan would be having another pavilion exhibit at the World’s Fair in Chicago, this time celebrating a “Century of Progress.”

Kari Sheperdson-Scott has examined Japan’s Manchuria exhibit at the 1933 exposition and described it as the “perfect opportunity for damage control” to soften the image of Japan amidst rising militarism.²³ Beyond simply displaying a narrative of progress and prosperity in the Manchuria exhibit to combat negative connotations of conquest, Japan also heavily relied on aspects of Japanese culture to convey an image of beauty and tradition. Japan’s tactic in doing this can be seen in a souvenir book from the Japanese pavilion published by the Japanese Government Railways, a governmental agency established under the Imperial government. Much of the history presented within the book presents Japan’s history as a tale of rapid and clean progress since 1868, when the Shogunate system was toppled and power to the Emperor was restored. But in spite of all of this progress, many Japanese took pride in parts of Japanese culture that were previously “obsolete” during the early years of the Meiji period as nevertheless fundamental to national identity in this “New Japan.” The book says that Japan “has two faces: the colorful, mysterious and romantic Japan of Lafcadio Hearn... is only one side of the show whose facade is a World Power equipped with puissant army and navy, together with Press, Parliament, and net-works of railways and ubiquitous motor and bus services.”²⁴ Here, the rise of

²³Kari Sheperdson-Scott, “Conflicting Politics and Contesting Borders: Exhibiting (Japanese) Manchuria at the Chicago World’s Fair, 1933-34.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 3 (2015), 544.

²⁴ Japanese Government Railways. “Japan.” 1933, page 6. Box 8, Folder 2, Century of Progress International Exposition Publications, Crerar Ms 226. Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois.

Japan as a World Power is described as a positive sign of natural progress to signify that Japan is now well on par with the powerful, progressive nations present at the fair. But despite all of the changes to Japan brought on by urbanization and rising governmental power, the writers assure throughout the book that the basis of Japanese identity remains the same at heart, and that includes especially the pride found in the landscape of the nation. The writers proudly assert on a page dedicated to landscape gardens that “the whole of Japan may be described as one great natural garden.”²⁵ Visitors, as Yamamoto Sae has observed of the wartime fairs, are supposed to be enticed to travel to Japan through the narrative presented at the fair. But for many Midwesterners during the Depression, travel to Japan was undoubtedly a far off fantasy, so Japan had to be transported on a miniature scale via the garden at Jackson Park.

After the end of the fair, efforts to restore Jackson Park funded by influential Chicagoans such as George T. Donoghue began to pick up in earnest in spite of the larger and more pertinent context of the Depression. By 1935, restoration of the Japanese garden and the Ho-o-den at Jackson Park was “33% complete.” The restoration was a readily accepted and appreciated project among Chicagoans, even at one-thirds complete; the article reports that “already the Japanese garden and lagoon at the north end are a favorite studio of sketching classes that come daily in groups of a dozen each.”²⁶ Given these contexts and not even being entirely complete at this time, the Japanese garden still drew in plenty of people, particularly artists or people with similar interests, on the basis of an approachable and novel beauty. By July of next year, the Japanese gardens and the Ho-o-den were restored, complete with a wooden arched Japanese bridge and a teahouse where tea was served. *The Tribune* described the restored garden as “picturesque oriental gardens” at Jackson Park and provided a picture of three young white

²⁵ Ibid, 25-26.

²⁶ James O’Donnell Bennet, “Mystic Orient Lives Anew on Lovely Island,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 3, 1935.

women dressed in fashionable clothes posing by the bridge.²⁷ Given the common clientele described in the articles, the garden seems to have been popular with fashionable and artistic Midwesterners in particular. In spite of the larger contexts of the Depression and increasing Japanese imperialism that caused the “first vogue of Japanese gardens in the West” to decline in the 1930s, Chicagoans happily and readily restored the Japanese garden in Jackson Park.²⁸ Chicago may have been relatively unaffected by the receding trend and these larger contexts because of the World’s Fair and the Japanese pavilion only a few years prior. For the time being, the garden was a popular and cherished place where Midwesterners could come in contact with Japanese culture.

But due to the rise in militarism in Japan, the popularity of the Japanese garden at Jackson Park did not last for much longer. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, anti-Japaneseness in the Midwest skyrocketed, with the increase of hateful language and the forced incarceration of Japanese-Americans across the country. Writers in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* vilified aspects of Japanese culture during the war, warning Chicagoans of the nefarious nature of Shintoism and *kabuki* theater which turned Japan to nationalism and militarism.²⁹ In 1943, *Tribune* writer Delos Avery published an account of an event that happened in 1910 when a handful of University of Chicago students went to Japan. There, the students played baseball with Japanese university students and won seven consecutive games, an event undoubtedly resurfaced by the writer to reassure Chicagoans about the war effort against Japan. At the end of the article is an anecdote of a conversation between two bus riders discussing how Japan is “outlawing baseball because it’s an American game,” to which the other replies: “Good. They’ll learn the same thing about war

²⁷ “Japanese Gardens Provide Cool Retreat,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 12, 1936.

²⁸ Tagsold, *Spaces in Translation*, 6.

²⁹ Lloyd Wendt, “Japan’s Cruel Murder Clubs!” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 22, 1942; Ibid, “Mad Japan: Her ‘Divine’ Mission to Rule the World,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 22, 1942.

before long.”³⁰ The article shows that during the war, the culture of “Quaint Old Japan” as described in the article was vilified as inferior to American culture. It is no wonder that in such an environment, the government requisitioned the Ho-o-den and turned it into a storagehouse, causing the Japanese garden to become neglected through the war.

Even after the war’s end, anti-Japanese sentiment did not go away completely and continued to fester. *The Tribune* did not attribute the first instance of arson to the Ho-o-den in June of 1946 as such, and used the hateful language to refer to Japan in its headline.³¹ At the time, the cause was undetermined by firefighters, but given the occurrence of a similar instance of arson only four months later, it is highly likely the fire was caused by arson, if not by a similar demographic that caused the fire in October. The perpetrators of the October arson were identified as two 15 year old boys who “kindled twigs and tar paper at the side of one of the buildings ‘just to see it burn.’”³² The two were arrested after they sought help in putting the fire out when the fire began to frighten them. The article makes no mention of plans to restore the buildings, nor is it ready to imply that this instance may have been founded on more than just teenage mischief. In what it hesitates to say, the article reveals lingering anti-Japanese sentiment even after the end of the war. It would initially seem like the days when the garden attracted countless visitors from before the war were long over.

The Garden Reborn

In spite of the incident at Jackson Park immediately in the wake of WWII, decades after the end of the war, Japanese gardens became popular across the United States. According to Christian Tagsold, Japanese gardens in the West outnumber Chinese gardens significantly to the

³⁰ Delos Avery, “When Chicago Beat the J*ps,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 3, 1943.

³¹ “Jackson Park Fire Burns J*p Building of ‘93 World’s Fair,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 22, 1946.

³² “Fire Destroys 1893 Fair Building,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 13, 1946.

point of ubiquitousness.³³ In 2016, an article was published by the gardening magazine *Garden Collage* about an extension to the Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park in Grand Rapids, Michigan that included a Japanese garden. In the article, the lead horticulturist Greg Afman describes his experience working on the gardens from its production to its installment and opening, telling the interviewer from the magazine that the Zen-style garden is the most popular because visitors “are experiencing something new” that they can “explore and figure out.”³⁴ Of particular note is when the interviewer asks Afman about the lack of Japanese sculptures in the gardens in favor of big names like Jenny Holzer and Anish Kapoor, to which Afman replies to by saying: “Initially [the committee] thought about only including Japanese artists, but then it dawned on them not to worry about where artists were from, but their overall aesthetic.”³⁵ Afman’s comments show that Japanese gardens still today represent in many people’s minds what is distinctively exotic and foreign about Asian cultures; being based upon ideas of beauty that are ultimately malleable, the Japanese garden becomes more approachable.

Though the evidence throughout the years reveals how attitudes on Japanese culture in the urban Midwest went from awe and mysticism in the early 20th century to hatefulness and violence during WWII, today the Japanese garden at Jackson Park remains an important and beloved part of Chicago’s parks. Yet the legacies of Executive Order 9066 still run deep within the land and are inherently present in the absence of the Ho-o-den. We may similarly look at recent trends in the United States in the current decade, with the rise of anti-Asian sentiment in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic, and be able to observe that off-setting circumstances such as war and disease contribute to anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. The Japanese garden at Jackson

³³ Tagsold, *Spaces in Translation*, 1.

³⁴ Ruthie Abel, “Midwestern Landscape, Japanese Philosophy Take Root in Michigan,” *Garden Collage Magazine*, last modified July 26, 2016, accessed November 29, 2021, <https://gardencollage.com/wander/gardens-parks/midwestern-landscape-japanese-philosophy-take-root-michigan/>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Park has been a crucial point of Midwestern-Japanese interaction and a place of learning and appreciation since its establishment in 1893. It has also been a place for urban Midwesterners to reinforce existing ideas of mysticism regarding Japanese culture. The presence of Japanese Americans in the Midwest has remained understudied, particularly due to the historically low presence of Japanese Americans in the region, especially when compared to the Pacific Coast region.³⁶ Though the voices of the Japanese Americans that lived in Chicago, especially those that worked the concessions of the tea house in the gardens after 1935 until 1941, are not present within these sources, their contributions are still visible by the continued and celebrated existence of the garden at Jackson Park today.

³⁶ Roger Daniels, "Chinese and Japanese as Urban Americans, 1850-1940." *The History Teacher* 25, no. 4 (August 1992): 435.

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