

# Goodenough Gardens Complement Home

The old stone wall on the west side of Farmington Road near 10 Mile Rd. has been a familiar landmark for nearly half a century, but the beautiful mansion and majestic grounds that lie behind the wall have remained an enigma.

The house, part of which dates back 100 years, has worn many faces and has grown and changed as the years have passed. The landscaping, too, has grown and changed although the beautiful rolling hills have always dominated the scene.

IT WAS in the year 1869 that Palmer Sherman chose the crest of the hill for the site of his charming light red brick house. It was constructed in the prevailing style that we now call "Victorian". There were several deep bay windows and numerous other long narrow windows with sills at floor level. There was a liberal amount of lacy carved white wooden "gingerbread" trimming and a nice white picket fence in front of the house along Farmington Rd. This was embellished with sturdy brick columns topped by decorative urns.

Palmer Sherman had a farm of 100 acres and in addition to general farming, raised seeds for the Ferry Morse Seed Company. To accommodate the needs of his thriving farm several barns were built behind the house.

It was nearly 50 years later, in 1915, that Luman Goodenough bought Sherman Palmer's farm and installed his family in the pleasant old house for the summer. The Goodenough children rambled through the fields, explored the little river valley, and walked along the top of the old picket fence.

GOODENOUGH spent happy hours working in the garden and developing plans for improving the landscaping and house.

One of the first changes he made was to move the barns that ringed the house so as to gain a beautiful sweeping view down into the valley and to the gentle hills beyond.

An addition to the house was designed by architect, Marcus Burroughs. Burroughs was not very fond of American-Victorian styling, favoring, instead, an English style of architecture. Under his guidance the house took on the aura of an English country house with a rather Georgian flavor.

The white fret-work trim was removed, window shutters were raised and window proportions changed, and a large living room wing was added to the north side of the house. When this was completed in 1918, the Goodenough family became full-time residents of Farmington.

In the late 1920's a new kitchen was added to the house, and sometime after that a library was added on the south side, completing the transformation from Victorian farm house to Georgian mansion.

The gardens were changed and remodeled again and again. Terraces, patios, pools, and formal gardens were designed and made and remodeled. At all times there were lots of flowers. Goodenough often got up at 5 a.m. to tend his beloved garden. Eventually, as the gardens were enlarged, gardeners were hired so that the grounds could be kept meticulously groomed.

IN 1920 the picket fence along Farmington Rd. was replaced by the stone wall. The stones were gathered by Mr. Wixom from the fields of his near-by farm, and another local resident, Mr. Mahoney, constructed the sturdy wall which is as beautiful today as when it was first built. The Goodenoughs were pleased to find that the high wall shielded them from the noise of the increasing automobile traffic.

The stone wall is pierced by a delicate wrought-iron grille and gate. A wide gravel drive sweeps around the base of a small knoll to terminate in a circular driveway below the narrow brick terrace that extends along the living room wing. This became the main entrance to the house with the front of the house used as a service area.

To the west of the house is a level grassy terrace loosely defined by clumps of pituitous junipers. A huge old maple, whose bent trunk is like a piece of living sculpture, dominates the scene.

A long flight of stone steps leads down from the terrace to a rectangular pool and large stone sculpture of a spreading eagle. Groves of tall-trunked dark-needled evergreens flank the stairs. This part of the garden is strongly reminiscent of views of old Italian Renaissance gardens with their terraces, stone steps,

fountains, dark cypress trees and overgrown shrubbery. Even though the antiquity of the Italian gardens is measured in centuries, and of the Goodenough garden merely in decades, a similar mood prevails.

UNDOUBTEDLY, in both

cases, the effect that is now evident is that which was originally planned. Nature has taken over where the original designers left off and added her own touches to the scene. The evergreens were tiny seedlings. When Goodenough planted them. Somehow their

great growth was not anticipated. For while they merely dotted the slope, but before long they grew tall enough to block the cherished view of the valley. Eventually they grew tall enough so that lower branches could be removed to again reveal at least some of

the view. Adding to the romantic aura of this part of the garden are two inscriptions carved in stones, one set at the edge of the terrace and the other at the head of the stairs. The latter reads, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills. Whence

cometh my help? Psalms 121." To the south of the house is a broad sweeping lawn, shaded now by a few evergreens, but at one time sheltered by majestic elm trees. Here, outside the library, is a flagstone terrace, and off the west terrace a depressed grassy area that at one time was a formal garden de-

fined by a carefully trimmed privet hedge. There were long borders of delphinium and other perennials, and the central grass panel was terminated by a small low round pool with a splashing fountain. This garden was the setting for the wedding of the elder Goodenough daughter.



THE FRONT VIEW—The circle drive sweeps up to the beautifully proportioned main wing

of the house. Tall trees frame the entrance, and a brick terrace extends the length of the house.

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