

THE FOUR SEASONS GARDEN, OLDFIELDS  
(Dickinson Four Seasons Garden)  
4000 Michigan Road  
Indianapolis  
Marion County  
Indiana

HALS IN-7  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
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1849 C Street NW  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### THE FOUR SEASONS GARDEN (Dickinson Four Seasons Garden)

HALS NO. IN-7

Location: 4000 Michigan Road, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

The Four Seasons Garden is located in Marion County, Indiana, at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) on the north side of downtown Indianapolis. The half-acre designed landscape was constructed on the west side of the Recreation Building, and is a small part of the IMA's 152-acre grounds.

Latitude: 39.493788, Longitude: -86.105989 (The center of the garden fountain, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).

Significance: The Four Seasons Garden is a contemplative space designed in 1939 by landscape architect Anne Bruce Haldeman. The well-preserved garden celebrates spring, summer, fall, and winter through plantings, statuary, and a central fountain.

The garden is part of the 26-acre Oldfields estate that was constructed between 1909 and 1913, and is now located within the IMA grounds. The estate received National Historic Landmark designation in 2003 for its connection to the Landon and Lilly families and landscape architect Percival Gallagher of the nationally renowned Olmsted Brothers firm of Brookline, Massachusetts.

Description: The simple, yet elegant, garden is located on the west side of the Recreation Building built by the Lilly family in 1939. It contains a recessed circular fountain enclosed within concentric circles of lawn, a low stone retaining wall, and a vegetative hedge. The bluestone retaining wall has a set of arched steps located at the prime directions (i.e., north south, east and west). The circular vegetative hedge contains a planting of low boxwood shrubs in front of taller yews. Mixed perennial flowers are planted in between. A marble bench is located on a small bluestone patio on the garden's west side.

Among the garden's most recognizable features are four carved limestone putti located in the circular hedge. Each sculpture is approximately 30 inches tall and stands on a 40-inch-tall pedestal. Following a harvest theme, each male putto represents one of the four seasons: *Spring* has flower blossoms, *Summer* has wheat, *Fall* shows the fruits of the season, and *Winter* displays no produce. The sculptures were manufactured in Italy, and archival photographs show that they date to the Landon, not Lilly, family (Four Seasons).

The stone decking for the former swimming pool is located on the south side of the Recreation Building. The pool's footprint is now turf. A stone walk connects

the pool deck to the garden, and includes a sundial on a decorative pedestal.

In 2011, the garden underwent a major restoration, supported by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Dickinson. Among other improvements, this process restored the garden's original circular pool. The original limestone statuary and a marble bench have also been restored. In honor of its benefactors, the garden has been renamed the Dickinson Four Seasons Garden (Indiana Museum of Art).

Anne Bruce Haldeman's Four Seasons Garden demonstrates a high level of historic integrity and maintains its original location, design, setting, built materials, and workmanship. In its transition from a private residence to a museum setting, the garden has retained its contemplative atmosphere. While alternative plant species have been substituted for the landscape architect's original plan, the current planting scheme replicates the designer's intent of enclosing the interior garden space with a vegetative hedge, accented with color from various flowering species. The current plant selections are better adapted for local microclimate conditions and hardiness zone.

History: George M. MacDougal platted the rural Indianapolis subdivision or "town" of Woodstock in 1907 as a 10-lot subdivision, situated on the eastern bluffs of the White River north of 38th street at Michigan Road. Three of the lots were purchased by one of the project's developers, Hugh McKennan Landon, who at the time was president of the Indianapolis Water Company. The Water Company's feeder canal bordered the Woodstock site, and the Landon/Woodstock lots were situated on a west-facing bluff overlooking both the canal and the White River beyond. A dramatic bend in the river at that location also created a broad floodplain which was slated to become an additional water supply reservoir. George and Suzette Landon (the former Suzette Merrill Davis) commissioned Mrs. Merrill's brother Lewis Ketcham Davis to design a country home for the property. The French chateausque estate was constructed between 1909 and 1913, and the Landons lived in the home with their two daughters until Suzette Landon's death in 1918. Hugh Landon married Jessie Spalding Walker in 1920, and the couple lived at Oldfields until Jessie Landon died in 1930. In 1932, Hugh Landon sold Oldfields to J.K. Lilly. Further refinement to the landscape continued through the development of landscape designs by landscape architects Virginia Prince, Anne Haldeman, Schulyer Nolan, and Lawrence Sheridan. In the 1960s, Lilly purchased the remaining Woodstock lots and then donated the entire estate to the Art Association of Indianapolis.

The Oldfields landscape of 1909-1920 included extensive informal plantings, an irregular u-shaped drive, a formal rose garden, and a tennis court located south of the house and across a small ravine. Mrs. Jessie Spalding Landon remodeled the home in 1920 and commissioned the now-historic Olmsted landscape in that year as well. The Landons had visited a garden in Maine designed by Percival

Gallagher of the Olmsted Brothers firm. Mrs. Landon soon wrote to Gallagher, requesting assistance in designing the Ravine Garden. The landscape design which resulted from this initial inquiry included a plan for remodeling the grounds of the entire estate. The report was soon expanded to include design plans for the remodeled rose garden and the new ravine garden between the formal garden and the house. The Woodstock Road was realigned to provide a more favorable entrance experience, and a series of sketch designs were formalized to create a dramatic axial allee from the home to Michigan Road. These designs were implemented from 1920-1923. Directed by subsequent Olmsted Brothers plans, continued improvements to the property included the siting of the Three Graces Fountain and the Gallagher-designed Michigan Road gates.

The Lillys added many outbuildings, including the Recreation Building on the site of the former pasture. Designed by architect Frederick Wallick, who also worked on renovations and additions to the main estate, the Recreation Building is a one-story structure with both a basement and sub-basement. The main building entrance faces east. The interior originally included a game room, kitchen, indoor pool, locker rooms, exercise room, and utility closets. The Recreation Building now operates as a museum and is open to the public.

Directly west of the Recreation Building is the Four Seasons Garden, designed in 1939 by Louisville, Kentucky landscape architect Anne Bruce Haldeman (1903-1993). The daughter of Louisville newspaperman Bruce Haldeman, she had attended the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. This institution was the first to produce women graduates, and was the female alternative to the all-male Harvard. Founded in 1915 by Harvard architectural professor Henry Frost, the school became affiliated with Smith College in 1934 (Five Colleges).

After graduation, Haldeman teamed with former Cambridge School classmate Louise Leland to form the Haldeman and Leland design firm. Their office was located in Louisville at the Francis Building, 606 South Fourth Street. Haldeman's work primarily focused on preserving and restoring historic landscapes, but she also designed intimate and unique garden spaces for acclaimed clients, including the Lilly family in Indiana, and Architect Stratton Hammon near Glenview, Kentucky. In the 1960s, she worked on the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of the historic Farmington estate gardens in Louisville.

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2013 HALS Challenge Entry: *Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women*



View of Recreation Building and former swimming pool deck looking northeast (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).



View of the Four Seasons Garden looking west (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).



View of Four Seasons Garden looking east (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).



View of fountain edge, steps, and retaining wall looking northeast (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).



View of marble bench, steps, and retaining wall looking northwest (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).



View of sundial looking south (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).



*Fall putto and pedestal (Shawn Davis, May 5, 2013).*