

Evaluation of Documentation
Related to the Proposed Landscape Restoration
for the Elisabet Ney Museum

Submitted to
Austin Parks & Recreation Department

by

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Addendum

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Purpose

The primary purpose of this report is to determine what documentation exists regarding surviving landscape features installed at the Elisabet Ney Museum in the 1920s and 1930s, the association of significant individuals and organizations with the planning and installation of the landscaping, and the stated intentions those individuals and organizations had for planning and installing the landscape features.

The guiding principle for this report is provided by the National Park Service in its criteria for evaluating historic properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places: “A property is not eligible [for listing in the National Register] if its associations are speculative.”¹

During a meeting with residents of the Hyde Park neighborhood, representatives of the City of Austin and Texas Historical Commission (THC), and other concerned individuals on April 15, 2011, the primary areas of concern were identified as the proposed removal of the stone wall on E. 44th Street at the front of the Ney property and the possible relocation of the crepe myrtles on Avenue H near its intersection with E. 44th Street. The proposed removal of a stone arch on the site of Ney’s dam on Waller Creek is an additional area of concern. These activities are proposed in the “Comprehensive Master Plan for Formosa/The Elisabet Ney Museum” created by Heritage Landscapes Preservation Landscape Architects and Planners.

This project was made more difficult by the incomplete nature of the available research materials. No known copies exist of the 1933 landscape plan for the Ney Museum and only oblique references to the plan exist in Texas Fine Arts (TFAA) and Violet Crown Garden Club (VCGC) records. The annual reports of TFAA and extensive VCGC scrapbooks include financial statements, acknowledgements of assistance, committee reports and newspaper clippings that provide the best information on the work that was planned and carried out on the Ney grounds. Unfortunately, there are no reports for the years 1936 through 1940 in the known records of either group.²

Hyde Park residents provided the researcher extensive information supporting the existing landscape’s significance. The primary historical arguments for preservation center on the landscape’s associations with individuals, organizations and events significant in the city’s, state’s and nation’s histories. These individuals include sculptor Elisabet Ney, author O. Henry, activist/philanthropist Clara Driscoll, future U.S. President Lyndon Johnson, Austin nurseryman Frank T. Ramsey and landscape architect Jac L. Gubbels. The organizations cited are the TFAA, VCGC, Texas Federation of Garden Clubs (TFGC) and the National Youth Administration (NYA). The events involved are the commemoration of Elisabet Ney’s life and work, public works projects of the Great Depression and the centennial celebrations of Texas independence from Mexico and Austin’s selection as the capital of the Republic of Texas.

¹ *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, Part VI-A. http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_6.htm. Accessed April 22, 2011.

² According to Virginia Jones of arthouse, the successor to TFAA, the materials at Austin History Center constitute the TFAA archives, although additional materials are in the collection of the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas. The VCGC archives are in the possession of Mrs. Sandra Holt of Austin, who generously allowed the researcher access to these materials.

This report will delineate the documentation that exists regarding the significance of each of these individuals, organizations and events in relation to the Ney Museum's landscape. The historical and artistic significance of Elisabet Ney, her work and her studio have been confirmed in THC's determination that the Ney Museum is eligible for designation as a National Historic Landmark. Ney's biography, the studio's purchase and preservation by the Dibrell family, and TFAA's stewardship have been covered at length in previous meetings and reports will not be repeated here.

The value of cash donations for the landscape project from outside organizations, particularly from garden clubs, has been cited as an indicator of the level of support for the effort and, by extension, the significance of the project. The figures quoted were given in 1930s dollars, usually followed by the statement that the contribution would be worth much more today. When monetary values are mentioned in this report, the first dollar amount will be the value in 1930s dollars followed by the value in today's dollars in brackets. The latter figures have been determined by using the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index Calculator.³

TFAA annual reports refer to the Violet Crown Garden Club and the Garden Club of Austin, sometimes within pages of each other and referring to the same work. The only published biography of Clara Driscoll refers to her "ardent support" and service as president of the Austin Garden Club, while the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs sometimes cites Violet Crown as the Austin garden club.⁴ There is no record of an Austin Garden Club in the archives at the Briscoe Center for American History or the Austin History Center. City directories of the 1930s do not mention the Austin Garden Club in the lists of clubs and associations. For the purposes of this report, references to the Austin Garden Club and the Garden Club of Austin will be cited as the work of the Violet Crown Garden Club. For further clarification, the current Garden Club of Austin was founded in the 1950s as the Men's Garden Club of Austin.

The Ney Museum Grounds

The relationship between Ney's legacy, the various organizations that have been involved with the museum and the significance of the grounds as they exist today is problematic. Changing ideas of what was appropriate for the site influenced the landscape's development over the years.

In February 1930, an *Austin News* article on the Ney property noted, "Various friends have, at times, supplemented Miss Ney's garden arrangement with shrubs, vines and trees, but the general overgrowth enhances the appearance of age and tradition which enshrouds the castlelike structure."⁵ In May 1930, TFAA President James McClendon's annual address also referenced the condition of the Ney Museum site: "Much satisfaction is expressed that the grounds are kept better than formerly, but 'much more ought to be done.' At the same time a general wish is expressed that any improvements should be made with due consideration for keeping the atmosphere as nearly like that it was in Miss Ney's time as possible."⁶ McClendon was Ney's

³ U.S. Department of Labor website, www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm. Accessed May 1, 2011.

⁴ Martha Anne Turner, *Clara Driscoll: An American Tradition*, p. 79. (Austin: Madrona Press, 1979).

⁵ "Elisabet Ney's Garden," *Austin News*, February 23, 1930. Violet Crown Garden Club scrapbooks, Mrs. Sandra Holt.

⁶ "Report of the 19th Annual Meeting of the Texas Fine Arts Association, pp. 22-23. May 2-3, 1930. Texas Fine Arts Association (TFAA) file, Briscoe Center for American History (BCAH).

friend and attorney, and was very familiar with the property in the sculptor's time.⁷ TFAA's 1933 annual report carries a brief description of the celebration of Ney's birthday that reflects the museum's awareness of how Ney used the grounds: "Tea was served as she liked to give it to her friends, under the big tree in the yard near the creek."

The researcher reviewed four published biographies on Ney, including Bride Neill Taylor's *Elisabet Ney, Sculptor*, which was based, in part, on interviews conducted with Elisabet Ney and her husband in 1897. The book's second printing was sponsored by TFAA in memory of Taylor.⁸ As would be expected, each biographer devoted significant space describing Formosa, Ney's studio now preserved as the Elisabet Ney Museum. Each noted that although the building is now considered to have a romantic castle-like appearance, when it was built, the studio stood out because it was constructed of roughhewn stone unlike the finished masonry on the homes of Austin's most prominent citizens. The building was designed for work; little attention was paid to the living quarters.

Three of the books mention the grounds at Formosa and all three include the information similar to that in TFAA's 1933 annual report: Ney entertained guests near "the lake" or "Bull Frog Lake," the impounded section of Waller Creek behind her studio. Simple meals were served on rough furniture under the trees.⁹ Otherwise, the chapters on Formosa make no reference to the landscape in Ney's time.

The Crepe Myrtles

One of the major points of contention today is the origin of large crepe myrtles on the Avenue H side of the property. In the materials presented by the residents, the plants have been dubbed the "Ramsey crepe myrtles" based on the assumption that they were donated in memory of Elisabet Ney by prominent Austin nurseryman Frank T. Ramsey, who is described as a close friend of the sculptor. The researcher reviewed the article, "The Story of the Growth of the Violet Crown Garden Club," cited by the residents to suggest Ramsey donated the crepe myrtles, but did not find information to support this conclusion.¹⁰

In 1926, Clara Driscoll, founder and president of the Violet Crown Garden Club, wrote an article on the club's growth since its founding in 1924 for *Gossip*, a local monthly publication. In the article, Driscoll noted the effort to create an identity for Austin as "The Crepe Myrtle City." She wrote:

"Through the generosity of F.T. Ramsey & Son, Eugene Howard and Chas. Alf, our nurserymen, and various members of the Garden Club, 600 crepe myrtles were given away. In our second year's free distribution of crepe myrtles, 2200 plants were distributed by the Club. This vast increase over our initial 600 was made possible through the generosity of public-spirited citizens."¹¹

⁷ Bride Neill Taylor, *Elisabet Ney, Sculptor*, p. xxiv (Austin: Thom F. Taylor, 1938).

⁸ Ibid., Taylor; Jan Isabelle Fortune and Jean Burton, *Elisabet Ney* (New York: Knopf, 1943); Marjory Goar, *Marble Dust: The Life of Elisabet Ney, An Interpretation* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1984); Emily Fourmy Cutrer, *The Art of the Woman: The Life and Work of Elisabet Ney* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

⁹ Taylor, p. 97; Fortune, p. 256; Goar, p. 212.

¹⁰ Clara Driscoll, "The Story of the Growth of the Violet Crown Garden Club," *Gossip*, February 1926. Violet Crown Garden Club (VCGC) files, Austin History Center (AHC).

¹¹ Ibid.

The article indicates the city's nursery owners collectively donated the crepe myrtles, not Frank Ramsey individually. There is no mention of any of the crepe myrtles being planted as memorials. A history of VCGC updated in 1995 notes that some of the original plantings survived in South Austin and Hyde Park, but makes no reference to any plants at the Ney Museum or any memorials associated with the crepe myrtles.¹²

The biographies on Ney include information on her close friends and associates, but do not mention Frank Ramsey among them; however, Ramsey was acquainted with Elisabet Ney. The sculptor's love of the Texas flag was well known and Ramsey was known for his love of beautiful language and writing. When Ney's statues of Stephen F. Austin and Sam Houston were installed in the Texas Capitol, her friends presented her with a large silk flag and asked Ramsey to write a poem about the flag, which was read by Ramsey's daughter during the presentation. Ney was reportedly moved to tears.¹³

The Landscape Plan

Research indicates that work on the beautification plans for the Ney Museum grounds began in 1932. The earliest written reference found by the researcher is in the *San Antonio Light* for October 9, 1932, announcing the Army-Civilian Round Table's luncheon. "[The program] will be a series of short talks about the Elisabeth [sic] Ney studio . . . [The speakers include] Jac Gubbels, 'The Atmosphere Elisabeth Ney Created,' Mrs. Pressler, 'The Grounds and Plan for Their Beautification.'"¹⁴ During this presentation, Gubbels " . . . spoke of Miss Ney as a disciple of freedom. He described Miss Ney's studio home as having sprung from her likening of the spot to one familiar across the sea."¹⁵

The landscape project would eventually stretch through the 1930s, primarily due to lack of funding. Though a great deal of space in this report is devoted to the work of the TFAA Grounds Committee, this focus should not be interpreted as evidence that the Ney grounds were TFAA's primary concern during this period. The printed reports of the TFAA annual meetings show an organization with varied priorities. In the 1932 annual report, for example, the organization addresses plans for the Interscholastic League Art Contest, traveling art exhibits, exhibits at the Ney Museum, promotion of the Texas Institute of Arts and possible participation in the Texas Centennial celebration.¹⁶ In TFAA annual reports, the Grounds Committee reports were given neither more nor less prominence than the reports of the Circuits (traveling exhibits by Texas artists), Publicity, Exhibits, Museum or Membership committees.

The Grounds Committee, chaired by Mrs. Herman Pressler with Jac Gubbels as a member, began recounting the progress of the landscape project in the TFAA annual report issued in May 1933. In October 1932, the Executive Committee had accepted the plan submitted by Gubbels; Mrs.

¹² Mrs. Billy J. Mills (Bette), "Violet Crown Garden Club, Inc. Club History, 1924-1995. Revised Sept. 1995." VCGC archive, Mrs. Sandra Holt, Austin.

The VCGC identity campaign was ultimately unsuccessful; from the 1920s through the 1940s, Austin City Directories noted that the city's motto was, "Austin, The Friendly City."

¹³ Frank W. Johnson, "Frank T. Ramsey," *A History of Texas & Texans, Volume IV*, p. 1873. (Chicago: The American Historical Society, 1914).

¹⁴ "Army Civil Luncheon," *San Antonio Light*, October 9, 1932, sec. 3 p. 2. www.newspaperarchive.com.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ "Report of the 23rd Annual Meeting, TFAA. BCAH.

R.L. Batts contributed twenty loads of flagstones for paths and Gubbels supervised their installation. In April, former Austin City Manager Adam provided Reconstruction Finance Corp. workers for grading and rolling the grounds and removing weeds, and the City Engineering Department drained the creek and cleared the grounds.¹⁷

Gubbels also submitted plans for two bridges, which “will await contributions covering expense of same.”¹⁸ Although the bridges were never built, the plans are notable because they are the only known surviving printed materials from Gubbels’ landscape design for the Ney Museum. The plans, in the collection of the Austin History Center, are really sketches rather than detailed designs (Fig. 1 & 2).

By the time the 1934 annual report was released, TFAA was facing significant financial difficulties. At the time, TFAA had slightly less than 500 paid members. Annual dues were \$2.50 [\$41] for individuals; membership fees were the single largest source of income supporting TFAA’s \$2,226 [\$37,122] annual budget. TFAA President Harris Masterson, Jr. noted the organization’s struggle to pay a \$914 [\$15,242] debt and called the \$15,000 [\$250,149] still owed for the acquisition of the Ney property “an embarrassment.”

When referring to the grounds work, Masterson stated, “We have been limited in our accomplishments by the lack of even the small amounts of money, which were necessary but which could have been used to such advantage . . .”¹⁹ For the Grounds Committee, Mrs. Pressler reported, “There is no fund for ground development and the committee has depended, for any work done, on the generosity and good will of friends.”

During the summer of 1933, the Reconstruction Finance Corp. had again provided men who cleared away dead trees and constructed the arch over the dam, which the current landscape plan proposes to remove. The Grounds Committee owed TFAA President Masterson \$4.10 [\$68.37] for the cement used to construct the arch, but “Mr. Masterson kindly took in payment the wood from the dead trees.”²⁰ There is no mention of who designed the arch over the dam.

Gubbels was no longer a member of the committee, but was thanked for his “generous and encouraging help.”²¹ There is no documentation of Gubbels’ plans for planting the Ney grounds, but his work in other areas suggests his overall philosophy. When he was hired to advise the City of Austin in acquiring parkland, Gubbels recommended that the city buy open green space that would require little maintenance.²² In his work for the Texas Highway Department and in his book *American Highways and Roadsides*, Gubbels advocated the use of native plants and

¹⁷ “Report of the 23rd Annual Meeting TFAA, pp. 22-23. BCAH.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁹ “Report of the 24th Annual Meeting of TFAA, p. 7. BCAH.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

²² Gregory T. Cushman, “Environmental Therapy for Soil and Social Erosion: Landscape Architecture and Depression-Era Highway Construction in Texas,” *Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture*, Michael Conan, ed., p. 57. (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Library and Collection, 2000).



Figure 1. Sketch by Jac L. Gubbels of a proposed bridge over Waller Creek at the Elisabet Ney Museum. The bridge was never built. Architecture files, Austin History Center. Used by permission.

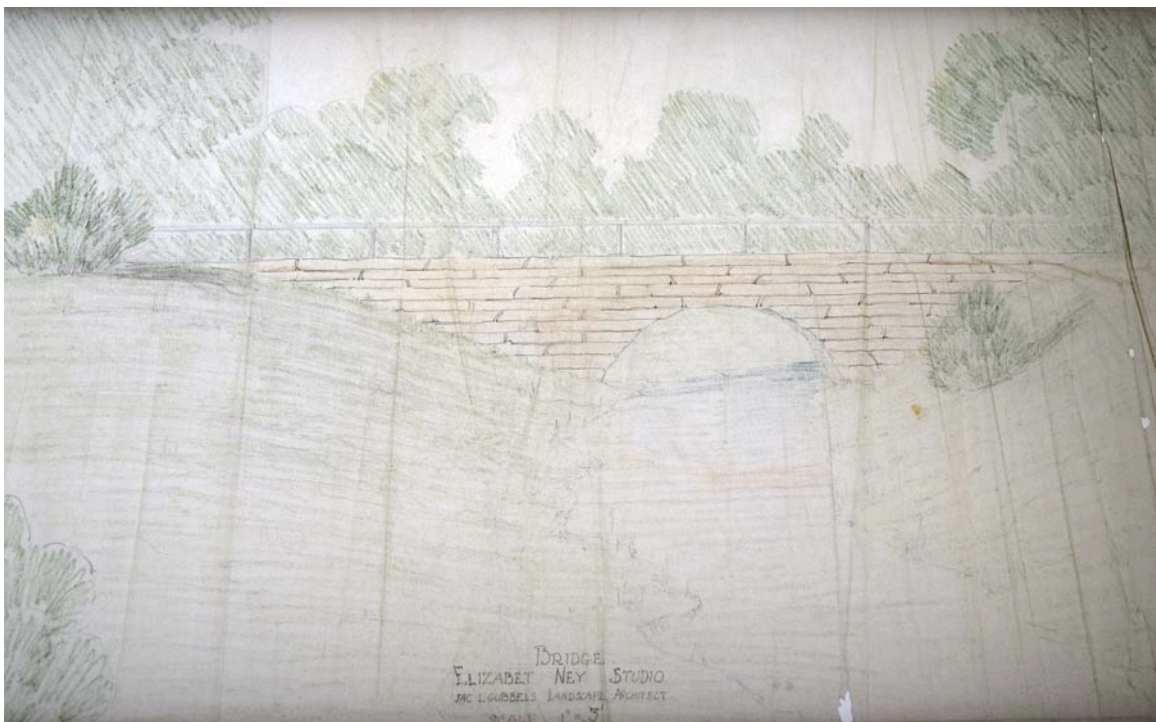


Figure 2. Alternative bridge design by Jac L. Gubbels for the Elisabet Ney Museum. The bridge was never built. Architecture files, Austin History Center. Used by permission.

wildflowers, in part to reduce maintenance costs. In his book, he also specifically states, “The best type of grass for a given country is that which is native.”²³

As previously mentioned, newspaper articles and TFAA annual reports show that usually unidentified shrubs, vines and trees were accepted from a variety of donors over years. The 1934 TFAA annual report specifically thanks Mrs. Batts for the donation of irises to be planted along the flagstone paths, which she also donated, but does not indicate if the flowers and their placement conformed to Gubbels’ design.

The 1935 annual report contained better financial news for the organization as a whole and for the Grounds Committee. Mrs. Goodall Wooten had donated \$25 [\$416] for the Ney grounds, which allowed the committee to raise submerged flagstones. Mrs. Wooten also donated shrubs, flowers, vines and labor. The City of Austin provided dozens of shrubs and “nine fine trees” from City Park.²⁴

The most significant accomplishment was the construction of a cedar bridge over Waller Creek, which cost \$150 [\$2,501] to build. TFAA provided \$75.25 [\$1,254] of the cost and the rest was covered by donations. The money spent for the bridge and the donation from Mrs. Wooten constituted the Grounds Committee’s entire \$175 [\$2,918] budget for 1934-1935.²⁵ Jac Gubbels is not mentioned in either the committee’s report or TFAA’s annual report. By this time, Gubbels was working for the Texas Highway Department and traveling extensively throughout the state.²⁶

There are no additional known accounts of the work carried out on the grounds of the Ney Museum until late April and early May of 1939. Two Austin newspapers, reporting on the VCGC pilgrimage tour of private gardens, carried the most complete reports on the stone wall at the Ney Museum found to date.

Austin Dispatch wrote, “The rock wall around the Ney Museum, now complete except for the wrought iron gate to be added, was a project of the Violet Crown Garden Club and the pilgrimage to be conducted on Wednesday of this week is primarily for the purpose of financing this undertaking.” *Austin American-Statesman* reported, “Proceeds from the pilgrimage will be used toward building a suitable entrance to the Ney studio. Care and improvement of the ground about the Ney museum constitute the major project of the Garden Club.”²⁷ The wall is not described as a tribute to Ney or as a centennial project. There is no mention of who designed or built the wall.

²³ Jac L. Gubbels, *American Highways and Roadsides*, pp. 84, 87. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939).

²⁴ “Report of the 25th Annual Meeting of the Texas Fine Arts Association. R. Niles Graham Pease Collection, AHC.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ A search of Texas newspapers on www.newspaperarchive.com revealed a dozen articles regarding Gubbels’ visits to communities across the state for speaking engagements or inspection trips from May 1934 to April 1935. In October 1934, Gubbels was in Victoria, Corsicana and El Paso, January and February 1935 included visits to San Antonio, while April 1935 brought him to Atlanta (TX), Texarkana and Paris. The search engine does include newspapers in Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth or Houston.

²⁷ “Garden Pilgrimage To Help Pay For Ney Museum Wall,” *Austin Dispatch*, May 1, 1939. “Garden Pilgrimage,” *Austin American-Statesman*, April 23, 1939. VCGC scrapbooks, Mrs. Sandra Holt.

Jac Gubbels' Significance and Surviving Designs

Based on the assessment in the Dumbarton Oaks Library's *Environmentalism in Landscape Architecture*, Gubbels is clearly a historically significant individual and his book *American Highways & Roadsides* is an important work in the development of his field; however, his significance is in highway and, specifically, roadside design.²⁸ His contributions to the general field of landscape architecture are not mentioned in any detail except as they relate to his work with roads and highways.

Due to Gubbels' innovations in roadside park design, particular attention is being paid to built elements in the Ney Museum landscape. The only two documented elements on the Ney grounds associated with Gubbels are the flagstone paths installed under his supervision, which have been removed, and the two bridges, which were never built.

Although there is no documentation that Gubbels designed the stone wall at the front of the Ney property, the question of the wall's removal has focused particular attention on similar structures in Gubbels' other work. Gubbels did advocate the use of variable height masonry walls adjacent to institutions and parklands in the standards he established for the Texas Highway Department,²⁹ and his sketch for one of the proposed bridges for the Ney property includes stonework that is similar in appearance to the masonry pattern in the highway department drawings. The drawings (Fig.1 and 3) do bear a resemblance to the stonework at the Ney Museum; however, the illustrations are generic in appearance and could be applied to many similar projects. This is particularly true of the highway department drawing, which was intended to serve as a guide for highway district engineers and not as a blueprint for a specific project.

As evidence of Gubbels' historic sensibilities, residents have cited a statement in the Dumbarton Oaks publication that Gubbels' first jobs in Texas were "restorations of the San Jacinto Battlefield to its 1830s appearance, using old military plans, as well as the grounds around the Sam Houston home in Huntsville."³⁰ Site visits to both locations by the researcher provided somewhat different assessments.

A conversation with Lisa Struthers, library director at the San Jacinto Museum of History, and a review of the library's files did not reveal any military plans for the battlefield. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas documented the site after the State of Texas acquired the battlefield in 1897. Surviving veterans of the Battle of San Jacinto were brought to the site and asked to indicate where certain important actions had taken place; when the veterans reached a general consensus a marker was placed on that location. Plans for the site's development were as a park and memorial. Because the battle took place on a flat coastal prairie and adjacent marshlands, restoration of the battlefield to its appearance in 1836 was not a priority. Most of the earlier work was removed during the construction of the San Jacinto Monument and related park structures between 1936 and 1939.³¹

²⁸ Gregory T. Cushman, "Environment Therapy for Soil and Social Erosion."

²⁹ Jac L. Gubbels, "Suggested Plantings Preservations & Arrangements for Highway & Roadside Improvement," (Texas Highway Department, 1937.) Texas Department of Transportation archival material, Austin. Courtesy John Paul Moore.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 57.

³¹ "San Jacinto Battlefield cartographic material / Landscape architecture drawings 1930-1940 / Renderings 1930-1940," files at the Ethel and Albert Herzstein Library at the San Jacinto Museum of History, San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, LaPorte, Texas.

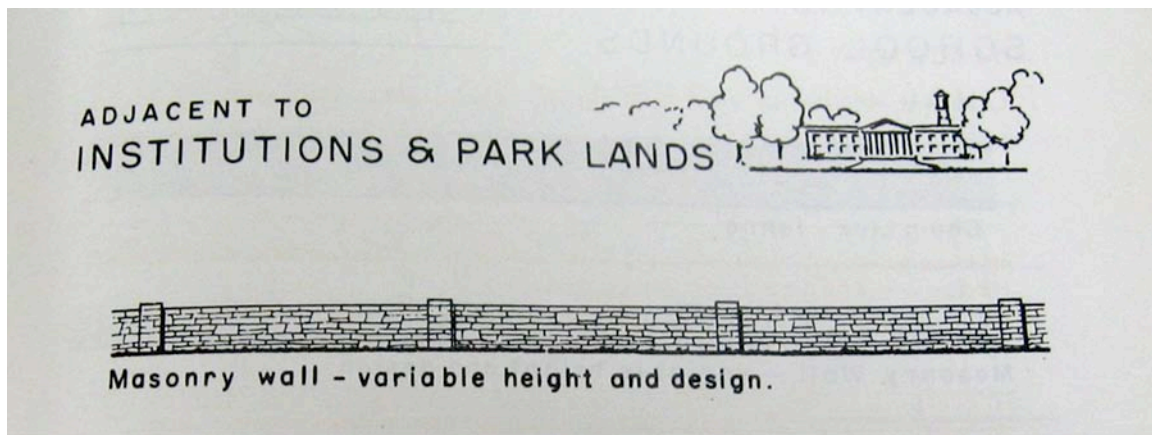


Figure 3. Jac Gubbels rendering for the Texas Highway Department, 1937. Courtesy John Paul Moore.

Since Gubbels' day, fewer changes have been made at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum in Huntsville than at San Jacinto. A stone wall built as part of Gubbels' plan separates the park from the surrounding neighborhood and serves as a retaining wall in areas where sloping ground was removed. The wall runs well behind the historic Sam Houston home, which is surrounded by a picket fence (Fig. 4). From the front of the house, the picket fence, plantings and outbuildings obscure the view of the stone wall and the neighborhood behind the historic building (Fig. 5).

Gubbels' work was completed in 1929 and attracted criticism early on. In a 1935 letter to the Sam Houston Memorial, J.L. Clark, a history professor at Sam Houston State Teachers College (now Sam Houston State University), complained, "I have never been satisfied with what was done there in the way of restoration. Much of it, from the historical standpoint, was desecration rather than restoration."³² His recommendations included replanting the entire yard and removing the stone walls enclosing the complex and replacing them with a wooden picket fence.

In 1975, Bell, Klein and Hoffman, Architects and Restoration Consultants, presented their preservation and development plan for the Huntsville museum. They recommended "the removal of all contemporary plant material that was planted in deliberate beautification attempts on the homesite grounds" and replanting the grounds based on the available historical documentation.³³ They also recommended a picket fence to mark the historic Sam Houston homesite. There is no specific mention of the stone walls in the homesite restoration plan, but earlier sections of the plan differentiated the improvements associated with the park from those associated with the historic homesite.³⁴

It is not known if the wall at the Ney Studio is a surviving element of the 1933 landscape design or an addition created after the plan was adopted and unrelated to Gubbels' work. If Gubbels did design the wall, its significance would be as an element of his overall landscape design. Without a

³² "Preservation and Development Plan for the Sam Houston Memorial Museum," Bell, Klein and Hoffman, Architects and Restoration Consultants, Austin, October 1975, p. 39.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³⁴ *Ibid.*



Figure 4. View from the rear of the Sam Houston House with stone wall in foreground. Huntsville, Texas. Photo by David Bush.



Figure 5. View of the front façade of the Sam Houston House. Photo by David Bush.

copy or detailed description of Gubbels' plan for the Ney grounds, it is not possible to determine the importance of the wall in relation to Gubbels' work.

The 1930s Landscape Project as a Memorial to Elisabet Ney

There is no documentation to indicate what TFAA's Executive Committee intended when it endorsed Jac Gubbels' landscape plan in October 1932. Although the original purpose of TFAA was the preservation of Elisabet Ney's studio and sculpture, the organization quickly adopted a broader mission as noted in the memo of agreement between Ney's husband, Edmond Montgomery, and Ella and J.B. Dibrell, who were purchasing the Ney studio to ensure its preservation. The Ney Museum would be "an institution for the exhibition of the art works of the said Miss Ney, and to promote the interests of the people of Texas in the study and appreciation of the fine arts."³⁵ Early on, Mrs. Dibrell reached an agreement with Montgomery to sell Ney's statue of Lady Macbeth, a self-portrait considered her masterpiece, with most of the proceeds from the sale to be set aside for founding a school of liberal arts separate from the Ney Museum. The school of liberal arts was said to be one of the Ney's fondest dreams.³⁶

By the time TFAA incorporated in 1929, advocating art was featured more prominently in its mission, "The purpose for which this corporation is formed is the promotion of sculpture, painting and fine arts, and in this connection more especially to maintain in the City of Austin the Elisabet Ney art studio and Elisabet Ney collection of sculpture and other works of art, and a museum of fine arts and generally promote the fine arts in the State of Texas."³⁷

TFAA President James McClendon's vision for the property included construction of a Texas Institute of Art on the land adjacent to the studio. The institute would house a comprehensive collection of works by Texas artists and a research library. Noting that Ney's reputation had been "fixed in history," TFAA President Harris Masterson wrote in the 1932 annual report, "With all this preparatory labor brought to a successful conclusion, the Association is at last free to concentrate on the main objective in the minds of its organizers — the promotion of the interests of art among the people of Texas." Throughout the 1930s, Ney's sculptures were displayed in her workspace on the first floor, while the second floor was used as a gallery for Texas art; in 1932, the basement was converted to gallery use for temporary art exhibits.

The landscape plan was adopted at a time when the organization was seeking to expand its influence statewide. In the March 1933 issue of *Gossip*, Mrs. Herman Pressler contributed the article, "The Elizabeth Ney Museum – A Shrine." She thanked Jac Gubbels, "... who has been most generous in working out and giving a lovely plan to the Fine Arts Association." She then reiterated the proposal to reach outside Austin for support: "The plan is to interest Garden Clubs and Art Groups over the state, as well as individuals, in making a Shrine for Art of the Elisabet Ney place ... art which will include sculpture, painting and landscape."³⁸

³⁵ TFAA file, BCAH.

³⁶ Eugene Edward Prohaska, "Advocating Art: The Texas Fine Arts Association, 1911-1943," Master of Arts thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 1993. Photocopy in the files of arthouse, Austin.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ VCGC scrapbooks.

The main form of recognition for donors was to be inclusion in a Garden Book of Remembrance; separate books were to be kept for art clubs and garden clubs.³⁹ The books are not in the collections of either the Briscoe Center for American History or Austin History Center. The only named gifts recorded in TFAA annual reports were both from Mrs. Margaret Scruggs Carruth in honor of her mother, Mrs. Gross Scruggs, a former president of the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs. Although not specifically stated, at least one gift was likely made in Ney's memory. The 1933 annual report notes that Mrs. Johanna Runge, one of Miss Ney's friends, donated plants from her garden to the museum. There is no record of what kind of plants Mrs. Runge donated or where they were planted.

TFAA continued its focus on expansion when it requested \$6,700 [\$109,286] from the commission overseeing the Texas Centennial celebrations. The report of the Centennial advisory committee described the funds being “. . . for use in enlarging and otherwise improving the Elizabet [sic] Ney Memorial Building in the City of Austin”; the committee also noted that “[The] grounds have been beautified but are now in need of additional improvements.”⁴⁰ This report contains the only reference to the Ney property as the “Memorial Building”; TFAA called the building the Ney Museum or the Ney Studio, which were the names used in newspapers and by the garden clubs. The request for Centennial funding was eventually denied; the Ney landscaping as a Centennial project is addressed later in this report.

There is no documentation to address the motivations of the VCGC, TFGC or the garden clubs' individual members in the Ney landscaping. The plaque on the wall erected in 1939 does not mention Ney, and the records of both clubs include the Ney project along with other civic improvement efforts. VCGC and TFGC will be discussed in more detail in later sections of this report.

Though any work done on the grounds of the Ney Museum indirectly honored the sculptor's memory, there is no documentation that the work done in the 1930s was carried out specifically in Ney's memory. Beyond the poor appearance of the grounds, there is no documentation to indicate what motivated the TFAA Executive Committee to endorse Jac Gubbels' landscape design in October 1932. There is no documentation of what Gubbels hoped to achieve with his plan, which was adopted at a time when TFAA expected to expand the museum into an art institute despite the organization's history and the nation's economic crisis. Without a copy of Gubbels plan, it is not clear whether he was designing for the Ney as it existed or the Ney as the Board of Directors envisioned it.

The Stone Wall and Landscaping as a Centennial Monument

In 1932, TFAA adopted a resolution supporting the organization's active participation in the centennial celebrations of Texas' independence from Mexico. The occasion was seen as “. . . the latest opportunity for showing what the Association can do for the cause of art in our state . . . It is pre-eminently the privilege of the state art association to take the lead. Nothing will help us more in our growth; nothing will more creditably advertise us to the people of Texas and to the outside world as well.”⁴¹ There is a single line in the 1933 annual report stating the organization should explore participating in the Centennial, but no additional references to the celebrations in the 1934 or 1935 annual reports.

³⁹ TFAA 23rd annual report, p. 23.

⁴⁰ “Reports of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians to the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations,” 1935, mimeograph, Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

⁴¹ “Report on the 22nd Annual Meeting of TFAA,” p. 15. BCAH.

It is noteworthy that the Centennial is not mentioned in the annual report published in May 1935, because approximately two months later the Associated Press released an article on the meeting of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians for the Texas Centennial Celebrations, which was evaluating requests for allocations from the \$765,000 [\$12,757,630] in state and federal funds available for Centennial projects. The article reports, “An Austin delegation asked \$6,700 [\$109,286] to recondition the former home of Elizabeth [sic] Ney, sculptress, now used as a museum. The house would be landscaped by Austin garden clubs.” Although the Advisory Board recommended the funds be provided, the Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, which had final authority, did not approve the allocation.⁴²

The only other reference discovered that ties the landscape plan to the Texas Centennial is in the *History of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. 1928-1948*. Known as the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs in the 1930s, the organization noted that the landscape plan “. . . was a fine undertaking so that the museum would be in gala garden dress for the Centennial.”⁴³ The project was not mentioned as a means of honoring Ney; rather, it was seen as complementing the state garden clubs’ support of roadside beautification efforts for the expected influx of out-of-state visitors attending the Centennial celebrations.

In 1939, the year the stone wall at the Ney studio was completed, Austin celebrated the 100th anniversary of its selection as the capital of the Republic of Texas. The *Austin American-Statesman*’s Special Centennial Edition, published on March 26, 1939, includes an article on the Ney Museum but does not mention the landscaping or the museum’s new stone entrance. October 17, 1939, was the 100th anniversary of President Mirabeau B. Lamar’s arrival in Austin; the city marked the anniversary with a parade and celebrations. There is no mention of the Ney Museum in the *Austin American-Statesman* on October 17 or the days before and after.⁴⁴

The two newspaper articles that mention the new entrance, cited earlier in this report, do not refer to the wall or the landscaping as being projects related to Austin’s centennial. There are no other articles in the VCGC scrapbooks relating to a dedication ceremony or official announcement of the project’s completion. It should be noted that compiling press clippings in scrapbooks was taken very seriously at this time and was considered an important responsibility for the designated volunteers; even the briefest mentions were included in the scrapbooks.⁴⁵ Close examination of the VCGC scrapbooks did not reveal any mention of the stone entrance other than the two articles quoted earlier in this report.

There is no documentation that the stone wall was a monument of either the Texas or Austin centennials; the plaque on the wall says only, “This wall was a gift of the Violet Crown Garden Club of Austin 1939.” References to the “Centennial Wall” appear only in the recent materials submitted regarding the proposed landscape restoration.

⁴² “Historian in Austin Hearing on Centennial,” *Mexia Weekly Herald*, July 30, 1935. www.newspaperarchive.com. *Reports of the Advisory Board of Texas Historians*, 1935. Harold Schoen, compiler, *Monuments Erected by the State of Texas to Commemorate the Centenary of Texas Independence*. (Austin: Commission of Control for Texas Centennial Celebrations, 1938).

⁴³ Green, Mrs. John W., compiler. *History of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. 1928-1948*, October 1949. VCGC archive, Mrs. Sandra Holt.

⁴⁴ *Austin American-Statesman* collection, microfilm, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

⁴⁵ Juliana Kuiper, “Scrapbooks: Intrinsic Value and Material Culture,” *Journal of Archival Organization*, Volume 2, Number 3, 2004. pp. 83 – 91.

Violet Crown Garden Club

As noted earlier in this report, the VCGC was founded in 1924 by Clara Driscoll and counted among its members many of the most prominent women in Austin society. A comparison of the VCGC membership files in the possession of Mrs. Sandra Holt and TFAA files at the Briscoe Center for American History revealed substantial overlap in the membership of VCGC and TFAA in the early 1930s. This would not have been an unusual occurrence given the nature of the two organizations and Austin's considerably smaller population at the time.

Civic beautification efforts were traditional projects for garden clubs and women's clubs across the country, but were particularly popular in Texas in the years leading up to the centennial celebrations in 1936. The Texas Highway Commission responded by appointing Mrs. Frank W. Sowell of San Antonio as Chairman of the Citizens Organization " . . . to organize the women and interested men in the work of highway beautification."⁴⁶ The May-June 1936 issue of *Southern Home & Garden* included a roster of beautification projects being undertaken by garden clubs across Texas. The list included VCGC's project on the Ney grounds along with the River Oaks Garden Club's mission to beautify the grounds of River Oaks Elementary School in Houston and the Garland Garden Club's beautification of the Garland town square among many projects across Texas.

VCGC had experience with beautification projects before becoming involved with the Ney Museum plan. There was the "City of Crepe Myrtles" effort in the organization's first years of existence. In 1930, the garden club supported a street beautification project proposed by Jac Gubbels for the City of Austin. The project involved planting flowering trees (primarily redbud and plum) on the city's north-south streets and shade trees (primarily oak) on the east-west streets. VCGC member Veannis Pressler chaired the committee coordinating the garden club's efforts with Gubbels. The wife of a prominent real estate and insurance broker, Mrs. Pressler had been appointed a member of Austin's first park commission in 1928 when Gubbels was a parks consultant to the City of Austin; she would work with Gubbels again when she chaired the TFAA Grounds Committee.⁴⁷

TFAA's annual report for 1932-1933 recorded that garden club members voted "to foster the project in developing the grounds of the Elisabet Ney Studio" on October 7, 1932. The garden club's vote came the same month the TFAA Executive Committee endorsed Gubbels' plan. In January 1933, the VCGC donated \$50 [\$859] to pay for the survey necessary before the landscape plans could be carried out.⁴⁸ VCGC's next significant donation of cash to TFAA was in 1934, when the club provided \$47.25 [\$812] toward construction of the cedar bridge over Waller Creek.⁴⁹

The 1934 TFAA annual report notes garden club members had met on the Ney grounds and spread "poppy, larkspur and various seeds and planted the Queen's Crown vine on the fence." The report also commended the Violet Crown Garden Club for its donation of plants and

⁴⁶ "The History of the Texas Highway Department, 1927-1937," 1938, p. 18. Mimeograph, Texas Department of Transportation archive.

⁴⁷ "Park Commission Named by Mayor," *Austin American-Statesman*, June 8, 1928. Microfilm, Austin History Center. "No Wonder Jac Gubbels Looks Pleased!" *Gossip*, November 1930. Violet Crown Garden Club scrapbooks, Mrs. Sandra Holt.

⁴⁸ TFAA 23rd annual report, 1933, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹ TFAA 25th annual report, 1935, p. 16.

“splendid service.”⁵⁰ Although this report focuses on the work on the Ney grounds, a review of the VCGC scrapbooks shows a wide range of projects including flower shows, tours of private gardens, lectures and gardening demonstrations. The VCGC history for 1939 states that in addition to raising money for planting the Ney grounds, the flower shows and garden pilgrimage also allowed the club to plant shrubs on the grounds of the new city library (now Austin History Center) and the new YWCA (now the site of the FOX 7 television studio).⁵¹ Garden club also planted wildflowers throughout Zilker Park.

VCGC continued to raise money for beautifying the Ney grounds, but a change from the earlier days of the project is evident in a newspaper article on the 1939 TFAA annual meeting. The article states, “Mrs. J.W. Bradfield of the Violet Crown Garden Club will speak on their project for the Elisabeth [sic] Ney Museum grounds.”⁵² From 1933 through 1935, the chairman of the TFAA Grounds Committee had always given the report at the TFAA annual meeting.

On April 13, 1941, after TFAA had turned the Ney Museum over to the City of Austin, the *Austin American-Statesman* reported that the VCGC’s annual garden pilgrimage would fund “civic beautification in and around Austin.”⁵³ In 1953, the garden club paid for construction of the stone wall on the grounds of the French Legation.⁵⁴

The Violet Crown Garden Club was and is a significant institution in local history. There is no documentation that the stone wall was meant as a tribute to Elisabeth Ney, is an integral part of Jac Gubbels’ plans or is the work of a master craftsman. Nevertheless, the wall is evidence of the contributions made by the Violet Crown Garden Club to civic beautification efforts in Austin.

Texas Federation of Garden Clubs

In its *Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. Handbook, 1952-1953*, the organization formerly known as the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs (TFGC) includes a photo of an unidentified man sitting on the stone wall at the Elisabeth Ney Museum. The beautification effort at the museum is described as the organization’s first statewide project, noting that in 1933, each club member of Texas Garden Clubs was invited to contribute individually “to the restoration fund for this museum and ground.”⁵⁵ The TFAA annual reports call into question the impact of the federation’s involvement in the landscape project.⁵⁶

In 1930, TFGC President Mrs. Gross R. Scruggs wrote an article for Austin’s *Gossip* describing the special interest the federation had taken in beautifying state highways for Centennial visitors under the motto, “Every State Highway Beautiful in 1936.”⁵⁷ Five years later, TFGC’s executive board meeting was held in Austin and featured a talk on highway beautification by Jac Gubbels, by then landscape architect for the state highway department. During his presentation, Gubbels

⁵⁰ TFAA 24th annual report, 1934, p. 17, 15.

⁵¹ “Violet Crown Garden Club, Inc. Club History.”

⁵² “TFAA Meets At Austin In May,” *Corsicana Daily Sun*, April 6, 1939, p. 7.

⁵³ VCGC scrapbooks, Mrs. Sandra Holt.

⁵⁴ *A History of the French Legation*, Kenneth Hafertepe, p. 32. (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1989).

⁵⁵ “First State Beautification Project,” *Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. Handbook, 1952-1953*, p. 57. Photocopy courtesy John Paul Moore.

⁵⁶ “History of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc., 1928-1948.”

⁵⁷ “Mrs. Gross R. Scruggs, President of Texas Federation of Garden Clubs Writes Special Article for Gossip,” *Gossip*, June 31, 1930. VCGC scrapbooks.

recognized the major role TFGC had played in roadside parks and right-of-way plantings.⁵⁸ For some reason, this five-year cooperative effort was not considered a statewide project.

TFGC publicly endorsed the Ney project during its 1935 meeting, stating, “This is not merely an Austin project nor a Texas Fine Arts Association project, but something every Texan should have a part,” and encouraged the state’s garden clubs to support the project. TFGC did not report making a contribution itself at this time.⁵⁹

“History of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc.” states that the Dallas Garden Club made the first cash donation to the effort followed by a contribution from the Violet Crown Garden Club, but the TFGC history does not mention when the donations were made.

As early as October 1932, TFAA was discussing plans to enlist support from garden clubs across Texas. During a program by TFAA members at the Army-Civilian Round Table in San Antonio, “Mrs. Herman Pressler spoke of plans being formulated to enlist the interest of all Texas and enroll many new members. Especially are contributions being asked from art and garden clubs. Clubs are being asked to contribute funds for the beautification of the ground.” TFAA’s annual report states that “Mrs. Buckner sent out sixty-five letters to the various Garden Clubs of the State, asking their interest in and contributions to the [landscape] project,” in October-November 1932.⁶⁰

TFAA received the Dallas contribution of \$20 [\$326] in November 1932 and the VCGC’s \$50 [\$859] donation in January 1933. According to the minutes of TFAA’s annual meeting, the Executive Committee voted on May 5, 1933 to ask the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs to support the landscape project. Based on this timeline, the cash contributions cited in TFGC’s history were made before TFGC endorsed the project.

In the annual report for 1934, TFAA acknowledged TFGC’s cooperation with the landscape project and the Tyler Garden Club’s contribution of \$5 [\$83]. As mentioned previously, VCGC’s first donation was used to pay for a survey of the grounds before work began. The contributions from Dallas and Tyler along with a second donation of \$47.25 [\$812] from VCGC were combined with other TFAA funds to pay for construction of the cedar bridge discussed earlier.⁶¹

In its annual reports, TFAA was scrupulous in acknowledging donations and endorsements from outside organizations. Because no TFAA reports have been found for 1936 through 1939, it is possible TFGC’s endorsement brought in additional contributions or support; however, based on the documentation available, the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs did not play a significant role in the development of the Ney Museum landscape.

Clara Driscoll

The “Savior of the Alamo” lived in Austin from 1914 to 1929. In that time, she built a landmark house, Laguna Gloria, landscaped its grounds, founded the Violet Crown Garden Club and the

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁹ *Year Book of 1935-1936 of the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs, Centennial Issue*, pp. 24-25 (Dallas: Advertising Committee of the Texas Federation of Garden Clubs). Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

⁶⁰ “In the Realm of Society,” Clara C. Pancoast, *San Antonio Light*, October 22, 1932. www.newspaperarchive.com. TFAA 23rd annual report, 1933, p. 22.

⁶¹ “TFAA 25th annual report. AHC.

Pan American Round Table, served as president of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, and was active in Al Smith's campaign for president in her role as a member of the Democratic Party's national committee.

After the death of her brother in 1929, Driscoll closed Laguna Gloria and moved to Corpus Christi to oversee her family's extensive holdings. She was active in Franklin Roosevelt's successful presidential campaign in 1932 and lived in South America from 1933 to 1935 when her husband was appointed U.S. ambassador to Chile. Driscoll had not lived in Austin for four years when the VCGC endorsed the landscape plan for the Ney Museum and did not live in the United States when the plan was first being implemented.

The only published Driscoll biography, *Clara Driscoll: An American Tradition*, does not reference Elisabet Ney or the Ney Museum and only references TFAA regarding Driscoll donation of Laguna Gloria to the organization in 1943. Though Driscoll was obviously familiar with TFAA and its work, there is no indication that she was actively involved in the organization. Driscoll's significance in the history of TFAA occurred two years after the organization turned the Ney Museum over to the City of Austin.

Though Clara Driscoll's relationship with VCGC and TFAA contributes to the historical significance of both organizations, she played no documented role in the Ney landscaping.

O. Henry

The researcher could find no documentation of any relationship between O. Henry (real name, W.S. Porter) and Elisabet Ney or the Ney Museum. Porter and Ney both lived in Austin between 1892 and 1895. During that time, the sculptor was planning and building her studio on the outskirts of the city and beginning work on a major commission; the writer was working as a teller and bookkeeper at First National Bank of Austin. He was accused of embezzlement and left the city in 1895. When Porter returned to Austin in 1897, he was arrested and sentenced to prison the following year. He did not return to Austin and died in 1910. None of the Ney biographies index Porter/O. Henry and the researcher found no information indicating the author and the sculptor were acquainted.

Regarding the "violet crown" reference, the Austin Museum of Art website notes that in the fifth-century BCE, the Greek lyric poet Pindar wrote of Athens, "City of light, with thy violet crown, beloved of the poets . . ." ⁶² The Austin History Center website cites an article in the *Austin Daily Dispatch* of August 8, 1894 that refers to Austin as "the City of the Violet Crown." On October 27, 1894, O. Henry published his short story, "Tictocq," which also contains the phrase, "the City of the Violet Crown." ⁶³ In its account of Clara Driscoll's role in promoting gardening in the city, the art museum credits the Pindar quote as the inspiration for the name of the Violet Crown Garden Club.

O. Henry is not significant in relation to the issues addressed in this report.

⁶² Austin Museum of Art website, "About Laguna Gloria."

http://www.amoa.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_lagunagloria. Accessed April 26, 2011.

⁶³ Austin History Center website, "What's the origin of the term "City of the Violet Crown" referring to Austin?" www.ci.austin.tx.us/library/ahc/faq3.htm. Accessed April 29, 2011.

Lyndon Johnson

According to the LBJ Library website, Lyndon Johnson lived in San Marcos, Cotulla, Pearsall and Houston from 1927 through 1931. He worked in Washington, D.C. from 1931 to 1935, the years when the plans for the Ney landscaping were being formulated and work began. He moved to Austin in 1935 to serve as state director of the National Youth Administration. He resigned in 1937 to run for Congress; after the election he spent significant time in Washington, D.C.⁶⁴ The researcher found no documentation that Johnson was involved with the Ney Museum during his years in Austin.

National Youth Administration (NYA)

NYA was a Depression-era program to provide vocational training and part-time employment for needy students. In 1938, the federal government ordered NYA to end its focus on construction projects and begin training participants for employment in war industries, although projects that were in progress were allowed to continue.⁶⁵ The researcher found no documentation of NYA participants working at the Ney Museum.

The Ney Landscape as a Depression Era Public Works Project

The landscape project at the Ney Museum began in 1932 and was substantially completed in 1939. TFAA's 1933 annual report notes that Reconstruction Finance Corp. (RFC) workers were assigned to grade and roll the property and were on site for more than one month. During the summer of 1934, RFC labor was used to clear dead trees and build the existing arch over the dam. There is no mention of RFC workers in the 1935 report.

The 1934 annual report also notes that the TFAA Grounds Committee cooperated with the Civil Works Administration and that eight men from CWA worked on the grounds in November 1933. The CWA operated only from November 1933 through the spring of 1934 to provide work for unemployed laborers through the winter. Much of the CWA's work included clearing land and removing brush, although there is no mention of the specific work that was carried out at the Ney Museum.⁶⁶

The VCGC history states that money earned from flower shows and pilgrimages paid for the landscape work on the grounds of the Elisabet Ney Museum, information corroborated by articles in Austin newspapers of the time.⁶⁷ There is documentation that RFC workers were on site for approximately two months during what was essentially a six-year project. Because VCGC volunteers donated many of the plants and supplies in addition to working on the grounds themselves and VCGC paid for building materials and much of the skilled labor, the Ney effort does not qualify as a public works project.

⁶⁴ LBJ Library website, "President Lyndon B. Johnson's Biography." http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/biographies.hom/lbj_bio.asp#1930. Accessed April 30, 2011.

⁶⁵ Carol Whiteside Weisenberger, "The National Youth Administration in Texas, 1935-1943: A Case Study," 1988, thesis, Texas A&M University. Photocopy, Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

⁶⁶ "The Civil Works Administration," University Libraries, University of Washington, Digital Collections. <http://content.lib.washington.edu/civilworkswb/essay.html>. Accessed May 1, 2011.

⁶⁷ VCGC scrapbooks.

The Ney Landscape and Women's Empowerment

One statement in the materials submitted to the researcher stands out regarding Elisabet Ney and the empowerment of women:

“The determination of the ‘period of significance’ of a person, place or event to be commemorated is a critical consideration when formulating a plan under the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. In the case of Formosa, Elisabet Ney’s residence and studio, the decision-makers determined that Ney’s significance ended with her death in 1907. How tragic.”

The determination of the period of significance for Ney’s studio in no way suggests that her significance ended in 1907. If it had, this discussion would not be taking place. THC would not have determined the studio is eligible for designation as a National Historic Landmark and the building would most likely be considered significant on the local level as an architectural oddity. If Elisabet Ney played a role in empowering women, it was through the example of her life and her art.

It would be easy to dismiss the efforts of the prominent men and women (mostly women) who cared enough to acquire the building and its collection, preserve the property and landscape the site. They enjoyed privileged positions in their community and devoted a significant portion of their time and energy to promoting beauty through art and landscaping. Looking back to the 1930s, these concerns seem out of sync with all that was happening in the world, but addressing these matters resulted in valuable contributions that still benefit Austin today.

It is appropriate that the roles of the people who preserved the Elisabet Ney Museum be recognized for a complete understanding of the history of the site, but that is an issue for the museum’s interpretation plan, not the landscape plan.

Mitigation

After attending the meeting on the impact of the grounds restoration at the Ney Museum and reviewing the materials, it is clear that both sides of the debate share sincere concerns about the project. The following are options that could mitigate the effects of the current landscape project while recognizing the historical contributions of the Texas Fine Arts Association and Violet Crown Garden Club.

Texas Historical Markers – Both TFAA and VCGC would be appropriate subjects for state historical markers. Interested parties would have to research and submit a marker nomination for each organization to the Travis County Historical Commission. If approved, the nominations would be forwarded to THC for final action.

There are fees to produce the markers as well as the cost of installation. Texas Historical Commission does not cover these expenses, which must be paid by outside individuals, entities or organizations. The Ney grounds would be an appropriate location for either marker, although Laguna Gloria would also be a suitable location for a TFAA marker. THC’s guide for researching subject markers that recognize organizations is attached.

The landscape restoration report does note the concentration of markers and plaques around the gate in the stone wall. When placing any additional markers, it could be advantageous to space them along the new paths through the grounds to encourage visitors to walk the site.

Amended nomination – The National Historic Landmark (NHL) nomination for the Ney Studio could be amended to include TFAA and VCGC, a possibility that has already been discussed. Texas Historical Commission does not produce National Register or NHL nominations on its own. THC staff can provide advice on the process and will have to approve the submission before it is forwarded to the National Park Service, but any interested parties must research and write the amended nomination themselves using the appropriate forms.

The NHL nomination for Woodlawn Plantation can serve as a guide. When the property was originally listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, the plantation's period of significance was associated with Major Lawrence Lewis and his wife Eleanor Parke Custis, the nephew and granddaughter of George and Martha Washington. In his will, George Washington left the funds to build Woodlawn to Major Lewis. In 1998, a National Historic Landmark nomination was submitted that included multiple periods of significance and recognized the contributions of subsequent owners and organizations in maintaining and preserving the plantation. The U.S. Department of the Interior approved the nomination. The Woodlawn NHL nomination is attached.

Signage – While the landscape restoration is in progress, it could be useful to install informational signage explaining what is happening on the site. Texas Parks & Wildlife Department is restoring the tall grass prairie at the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site and has installed signs throughout the park to explain the project (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Signage explaining tall grass prairie restoration at the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. *Note:* Signs should be cleaned regularly if placed under trees. Photo by David Bush.

Fencing — In their preservation plan for the Sam Houston Memorial Museum, Bell, Klein and Hoffman noted, “[M]ost historical sites co-exist with the dominating elements of modern civilization. This dichotomy is considered beneficial to the understanding of both the historic site and its contemporary environment as parts of a continuum of time known as historic

continuity.”⁶⁸ The example of the picket fence within the stone wall at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum could serve as a starting point for some compromise at the Ney Museum.

Conclusion

In retrospect, one striking element of the discussions regarding the Elisabet Ney Museum, the restoration plan itself and the printed materials generated in response to the plan is the absence of any mention of the mission of the Elisabet Ney Museum. Whatever the final decision on the specific elements of the grounds restoration, the work should be in keeping with the stated mission of the museum:

The mission of the Elisabet Ney Museum is to preserve the memory and legacy of Elisabet Ney for historic, artistic and educational purposes by protecting and enhancing the Elisabet Ney building and grounds; collecting, preserving and interpreting the Elisabet Ney collection; cultivating and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of Elisabet Ney; and ensuring the public maximum access to the Museum and its resources.

⁶⁸ “Preservation Plan, Sam Houston Memorial Museum,” p. 106.

Addendum

Jane L.Y. McCallum

Stakeholders have cited the involvement of Jane L.Y. McCallum in the landscape project as a contributing factor in the landscape's significance. Stakeholders specifically cite 1932 as the year TFAA invited Mrs. McCallum to assist with the project in preparation for the Texas Centennial in 1936 and the Austin Centennial in 1939.⁶⁹ There is no mention of Mrs. McCallum in the TFAA annual reports from the early 1930s. At the time Mrs. McCallum was serving as Texas Secretary of State, a position she held from 1927 to 1933.⁷⁰ The TFAA annual reports make a point of acknowledging assistance from public officials at all levels as well as socially prominent individuals; given Mrs. McCallum's political and social standing, it is unlikely TFAA would have omitted mentioning her involvement with the organization during this period. As noted earlier, the TFAA annual reports do not refer to the landscape beautification as a Texas Centennial project. There are no references to the Austin Centennial in the surviving TFAA reports.

Weigl Gate

The stakeholders have also cited the significance of the wrought iron gate in the 1939 stone wall due to its associations with the Weigl Iron Works of Austin. The earliest documented mention of the gate is in a May 1, 1939 *Austin Dispatch* article stating, "The rock wall around the Ney Museum, now complete except for the wrought iron gate to be added, was a project of the Violet Crown Garden Club . . ."

In 1980, Laguna Gloria Museum presented an exhibit on the Weigls that included a photo of the top of the gate at the Ney Museum. The gate was also mentioned in the exhibit catalog researched by John Fox and Michael Lyon.⁷¹

Although it does not specifically mention the gate, a February 21, 1975 *Austin American-Statesman* article about the Weigls noted, "The Austin Public Library, the French Legation, the Elisabet Ney Museum, Mayor Roy Butler's home, the Capitol, the Dobie Room in the University of Texas Academic Center, Woodlawn, the Gary Morrison home, the Bremond Block, the cemetery at the LBJ Ranch, most of the important buildings in Austin -- all these and many other Texas buildings and sites have been enhanced by some form of Weigl craftsmanship."⁷²

As the above citations suggests, many examples of Weigl ironwork survive in Austin. One of the most significant examples is the wrought iron grille that framed the Texas Declaration of Independence when the document was on display in the State Capitol. Weigl gates and fences are

⁶⁹ John Paul Moore, "The Historic Landscape of the Elisabet Ney Museum: Trees, Plants and the Centennial Wall," *Untold Stories of the Ney Museum*, <http://web.me.com/johnpaulmoore/mmjpm/site/Blank.html>. Accessed May 29, 2011.

⁷⁰ Roberta S. Duncan, "Jane Legette Yelvington McCallum," *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fmco07>, accessed May 27, 2011.

⁷¹ "With Hammers in Hand: Weigl Family Ironworks," [exhibition catalog], Austin: Laguna Gloria Museum, 1980. Austin History Center.

⁷² "Weigl Bros. to be Honored," *Austin American-Statesman*, February 21, 1975, p. 10. Microfilm. Neumann Library, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

in place at the Hirschfield House, 303 West 9th Street, and Smith-Clark House, 504 West 14th Street.⁷³

If the stone wall at the Ney Museum is retained or relocated, the gate should be preserved as part of the project. If the wall were demolished, the gate should be preserved as an artifact exemplifying the work of significant local craftsmen.

June 1, 2011

⁷³ “Weigl Ironworks,” <http://fweiglironworks.com/portfolio.htm> and <http://fweiglironworks.com/history.htm>, accessed May 29, 2011. “Smith-Clark and Smith-Bickler Houses,” National Register of Historic Places nomination, *Texas Historic Sites Atlas*. Texas Historical Commission, <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>, accessed May 31, 2011. “A 10K Walk through German-Texas Heritage in Austin, Texas,” Department of Germanic Studies, The University of Texas at Austin with Texas Historical Commission, www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/germanic/_files/pdf/community/10Kwalk.pdf, accessed May 29, 2011.

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The website www.newspaperarchive.com was particularly useful in compiling this report, although the site does not include any Austin newspapers. The archive site was particularly useful in determining dates for events such as Austin's centennial celebrations that substantially narrowed the searches for *Austin American-Statesman* articles in the microfilm collections of the Austin History Center and the Neumann Library, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

David Bush holds a Master of Arts degree in Historic Preservation from Middle Tennessee State University. He has more than 20 years professional experience with positions at Galveston Historical Foundation, The Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut, and Janus Research, a historic preservation consulting firm in Tampa, Florida. He currently works as director of programs and information for Greater Houston Preservation Alliance.

Bush's "Historic Preservation Plan for Beaumont, Texas" (1995) is on file with the Texas Historical Commission in Austin. He has completed architectural surveys of potential historic districts in Miami and West Palm Beach, Florida, and successful nominations to the National Register of Historic Places for the Roy Farrar House (1923) in Houston and Cumberland Gap Historic District in Tennessee along with multiple determinations of eligibility for potential National Register properties including the Sunset Heights School (1913) and Hogan-Allnoch Building (1923). He is in the process of developing the National Register nomination for Houston's 1940 Municipal Air Terminal.

He has been a program presenter at the statewide conferences of the Texas Society of Architects and Texas Historical Commission, and at the National Trust for Historic Preservation's national conference. With Jim Parsons, he is co-author of the books *Houston Deco: Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast* (2008, Bright Sky Press) and *Hill Country Deco: Modernistic Architecture of Central Texas* (2010, TCU Press). TCU Press of Fort Worth is publishing their next book, *Fair Park Deco: Art and Architecture of the Texas Centennial Exposition*, for release in the fall of 2012.