

The Walter Hunnewell Estate in Wellesley was created in the mid-1800s by Horatio Hollis Hunnewell (hereinafter referred to as HHH), who used the wealth generated by his successful career in banking and railroads to pursue his lifelong interest in horticulture and landscaping. He named the estate "Wellesley" to honor his wife, Isabella Welles Hunnewell, whose family originally owned much of the land. The Town of Wellesley and Wellesley College were subsequently named after the estate.

The large Renaissance Revival-style house was built in 1851 as a seasonal residence overlooking Lake Waban, while the family continued to reside in Boston during the colder months. Even before the house was built, HHH had begun planning and planting parts of the garden landscape he visualized for the property. He was greatly influenced by Andrew Jackson Downing's writings on the landscaping of "country places" and by a number of gardens in Europe and England, which he had visited during his time in the banking business abroad. The evolution of the estate was later featured in the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of Downing's classic "Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening" edited by H. W. Sargent and published in 1875.

The rustic gazebo (known in the family as the Tea House) was built to HHH's own design in 1852. Simultaneously, work was begun on the Italian Garden, whose steep terraces down to the lake, grand granite stairway, lakeside balustrade, stone walls, ornamental statuary and spectacular topiary trees have made it a Wellesley landmark ever since. While evoking an Italianate style of landscaping, he made it his own, especially through his use of Eastern White Pine and other hardy New England species as topiary specimens. The garden was completed in the late 1850's and the slate-roofed pavilion was added at the top of the garden in 1890.

By 1866 HHH had begun planting his Pinetum. Today hundreds of outstanding specimens of coniferous trees from around the world occupy this ten-acre area. Noteworthy are dozens of Massachusetts' State Champion Trees and early introductions of Sargent's Weeping Hemlock, Cedar of Lebanon and Dawn Redwood. In the Pinetum he tirelessly tested non-native species for winter hardiness, a process which he continued vigorously with his rhododendron collection as well. HHH was the first to grow many of the earliest hardy hybrids released by Waterer and other English nurserymen. To promote public interest in his favorite flowering shrubs, he single-handedly supplied all of the rhododendrons for a huge display on the Boston Common in 1873.

By the time he died in 1902 he had also created Pine Avenue (a stately allee of mature White Pines), an Azalea Garden (multi-hued Ghent hybrids grouped around an old Venetian well head), an English Garden (perennial borders with spring-flowering trees and shrubs) and the English Manor-style front lawn ringed with stately specimen trees (including majestic examples of Gingko, Golden Larch, Huntingdon Elm and Weeping Beech).

To support all of these plantings, he established nursery areas, where Head Gardener T. D. Hatfield later bred and selected the first *Taxus x media* hybrid yews. He also built a variety of greenhouses, almost all still in use. Currently cultivated under glass are fruit trees, grape vines, camellias, orchids and hundreds of other container plants.

Subsequent generations of the family have worked hard to maintain the legacy of garden beauty first established by HHH. His great grandson Walter carried this sense of family stewardship to a new level, devoting much time and energy in the last years of his life to placing conservation restrictions on the majority of the 40-acre estate to protect the horticultural heritage of "Wellesley" for future generations to enjoy.