æ *The Gardens of Kijkuit* æ

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❧ *The Gardens of Kijkuit* ❧

Group surmounting the John of Bologna Fountain

æ *The Gardens of Kijkuit* æ

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this booklet is to portray by word and picture the gardens of "Kijkuit," the country house of Mr. John D. Rockefeller.

"Kijkuit" is located about a mile and a half from the New York Central Railway Station at Tarrytown, New York. The Pocantico Hills Station of the Putnam Division is less than five minutes walk from the house; the railroad passes through the estate, which comprises some two thousand acres, the greater part being woodland, traversed by about twenty miles of roads.

The gardens were begun in 1907 when the house was being built, the walls having reached the level of the first floor, and were designed and carried out by Mr. Welles Bosworth, architect. In 1912 the house was enlarged, stone columns were substituted for the wooden part of the porticos, another story took the place of a high slate roof and the house was extended toward the east with a new façade. In this work Mr. Bosworth was associated with Messrs. Delano & Aldrich, the architects of the original house.

At the same time the forecourt was enlarged, and the great stairways constructed with the pavilion and John of Bologna fountain.

A new service entrance was effected, the court being lowered to the sub-basement level, the approach concealed underground.

The Borghese Vase

A plan of the house and gardens will be found at the back of the book

“Kijkuit”—meaning lookout—was the name given to the hill-top by the Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century. It was famous then as now for its singularly beautiful views up and down the Hudson, across to the distant mountain ridges of New Jersey, and inland over Westchester County.

The hill rises nearly five hundred feet above the river, and being two miles or more back from it, the traditional glare and heat of the Hudson Valley are not felt.

It is sometimes forgotten that a garden plan must be evolved as systematically as the plan of a house. Being given certain conditions of site, view, nature of land, orientation, etc., point after point is methodically determined, keeping in mind the proportion and relation of each part to the whole. This procedure leads to a logical result without forced or exaggerated effects. Thus a hill-top garden possesses a distinct individuality and differs fundamentally from a garden built upon level ground, with broad expanses of flower beds and deeply extended vistas. In the hill-top garden, the distant views become the principal feature and the garden itself takes the place of foreground in the picture.

Again, all gardens may be classified under two headings—those in which everything is sacrificed to the effect as a whole, the first impression being the main consideration, the others being designed chiefly with the thought of their use and enjoyment by those who are to live in them from day to day. “Kijkuit” is of the latter type. Here one may stroll for a mile or more along paths within easy call of the house, winding in and out through shaded walks or sunny terraces. Here are tea houses and pavilions enclosed and open to suit all seasons, weathers, or time of day. Just as one’s collection of books, pictures and music respond to the varying moods and temperaments of a family, so do the diversified features of this garden.

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

There is an old Chinese theory that a garden should inspire philosophic contemplation as well as satisfy all the senses. The former requisite the Chinese are wont to accomplish by the introduction of some feature or object of great age—a composition of time-worn rocks or the trunk of an ancient tree. At “Kijkuit,” noble views supply this element; while fruit trees, flowers and running water, sunshine and shade, delight the senses.

When Mr. Rockefeller acquired the property an old house stood near the place where the new one now stands. Later it burned down, and there were but a few scraggy trees and a barren rock as points of departure for the landscape treatment. A garden was not considered until the plans of the house were determined and the walls partially completed. The house terrace to the west toward the river, with service roads, heating plant, etc., occupying two stories below it, forced the garden to the north and south sides of the house. Here the ground permitted levelling certain areas. The first of these was walled about to form the Inclosed or House Garden. Principal vistas were then laid out from the main series of rooms across the front of the house. A circular temple, subsequently adorned with the antique statue of Aphrodite, was so located as to terminate the vista from the library southward, and a graceful Italian fountain made a point of accent and interest at the center of the Circular Garden as seen from the dining room windows on the north. The forecourt extended eastward from the entrance doorway, and the remaining elements of the plan, such as the Tennis Court, the Rock Garden, the Japanese Brook, with all the systems of connecting paths, the entrance and exit driveways both for the main approach and the service, arranged themselves in natural sequence.

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The entrance drive winds gradually up the hill, concealed from the house and so planned that the view of the river is screened by trees and held as a surprise until one reaches the west terrace of the house. At the entrance to the Forecourt and the exit on the opposite side, where the driveway leads to the stables and garage on the lower level, stand two important gateways with great posts of rustic masonry topped with pineapples—the emblem of hospitality—and joined by massive scrolls of wrought iron. The design follows in character that of the great gates of Hampton Court Palace.

One of the Entrance Gateways

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The eye is immediately challenged and held by a magnificent fountain of white marble against the eastern sky. It is a facsimile of the one by John of Bologna in the Boboli Gardens at Florence.

John of Bologna Fountain in the Forecourt

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The heroic figure at the top represents Oceanus or Neptune, and the figures below symbolize the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. The huge basin, 20' 8" in diameter, was cut from a single block of granite weighing 50 tons and brought on the deck of a schooner from an island on the coast of Maine to the dock at Tarrytown. In composition and beauty of outline this fountain has for centuries been considered by experts as without a rival.

Approach to the House—from beneath the Great Basin

N. B.—No definite record exists of what the sculptor intended the three figures on the brackets at the feet of Oceanus to suggest. John of Bologna is famous above all for the beauty of silhouette in his compositions, and he doubtless was so pre-occupied with this, that he left attributions largely to the beholder. One theory has been stated in the text. Another is that these figures represent the three rivers—the Nile, the Euphrates and the Ganges. While another, and one more approximated by the different treatment of the figures, is the three ages of man—Youth, Manhood and Age.

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The sculptures on the house façade toward the Forecourt are the work of Mr. F. M. L. Tonetti, who also modeled all the bronze inlets and overflows for the fountains. In the pediment are figures symbolizing the Arts, with Apollo on the right; and Agriculture with Demeter on the left. The vertical panels between the windows represent respectively, implements of gardening and garden trophies suspended from a winged bull, and those of the arts and sciences, carried by a Pegasus.

The Entrance Façade of the House

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

Groups of children holding baskets of flowers extend the façade at the balcony level and sculptured keystones image the four seasons.

Group of Children—on the Upper Terrace of the House

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

Great clumps of old boxwood form the chief adornment of the Forecourt. It is a notable collection, gathered from a wide circumference of the surrounding country.

Old Box Trees in the Forecourt

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

In winter they are carefully protected with matting made of cornstalks and burlap and the Forecourt presents as unique an effect during that season as it does in summer.

North Gateway to Forecourt showing winter coverings

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

From under the marquise one passes through the spacious porticos with vistas of the gardens from all sides of the house to the Inclosed Garden.

Bronze Grilles near the Main Entrance

•§ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT §•

The great fountain is at its best when seen from the entrance doorway of the house. The candelabra of purple marble and the fine white marble vases are reproductions of originals found at Hadrian's villa at Tivoli.

Looking from the Front Doorway

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

In the Inclosed Garden, adjoining the terrace on the south, a little canal of water runs down a marble pavement between sunken panels of green lawn and flowered borders.

The Tea House in the Inclosed Garden

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

This canal links the fountain of the Tea House with a Moorish-shaped basin lined with bronze. The basin is placed at the point of intersection of the canal with a transverse walk shaded by clipped lindens, which frame a vista leading to the Aphrodite temple.

A Bowl of Bronze in the Linden Alley

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

The line of the canal is broken from place to place by basins and water jets which are lighted at night from beneath. Seen from the house terrace, they produce an effect resembling that of a jeweled necklace, the bronze basin framing the pendant. Practically all of the fountains and grottos are illuminated at night by concealed lights within them.

A Corner of the House Terrace

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The water, starting from a pedestal in front of the Tea House and from bronze swans on either side, the latter sculptured by Mr. Rudulf Evans, is splashed by these and a variety of other jets on to the steps of the fountain basin.

Tea House and Inclosed Garden

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

A gay little marble group through which the water spills from this basin into the canal shows fairy children sporting with an infant faun. This is the work of Mr. Emil Siebern.

The Tea House Cascade

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The vaulted ceiling in the Tea House is decorated with colored ornaments in yellow, tan and green and follows the tradition of those designed by Raphael for the Villa Madama near Rome. The furniture is taken from well-known Greek and Pompeiian examples. Over the end windows are two bas relief panels by Mr. Siebern.

Within the Tea House

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

From the balcony in the rear one overlooks the Morning Garden below, the chief decoration of which is a Victory in bronze, a facsimile of the one from Pompeii now in the Naples Museum.

The Tea House Balcony in the Morning Garden

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

The Cippolino Column and Byzantine Capital on which the Victory stands were brought from Greece by Stanford White. The thirteenth century relief in the wall of the pergola at the left, representing the symbol of St. John, came from a church in Venice. Mr. Tonetti's model of a little child standing on the back of a fish whose mouth she is holding open is a gay and clever design for a fountain jet.

Pool and Victory Column, in the Morning Garden

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The topiary boxwood in the borders of the Inclosed Garden was brought from Holland, and the ancient myrtle trees in boxes by the Tea House pool came from an old French villa. The color scheme of the flower borders in this garden is yellow and white, dwarf pansies and snapdragons alternating spring and fall.

Topiary Box Trees and Arcade in the Inclosed Garden

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

The crowning glory of the "Kijkuit" gardens is seen when the Rock Garden is in fullest bloom. The margins of the brook are planted profusely with every variety of iris overshadowed with flowering dwarf fruit trees and pink and white dogwood against a background of white lilacs and cedar trees. Thus the color scheme ranges from white to pink and lavender and palest yellow. The brook takes its course from a grotto constructed against an original ledge of rock. Water drips from stalactites in the roof, which were imported from Genoa for this purpose, and falls on an ancient bronze Chinese water drum, filling the air with low-toned music.

Stalactite Grotto in the Rock Garden

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

Steps ascend to a table rock above the grotto where seats are placed and here one overlooks the Tennis Court and Inclosed Garden

Alleys of White Lilacs

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

Descending other steps to the westward, one comes upon the Aphrodite Temple. The style of this little edifice is Graeco-Roman. Monolithic columns of Vermont marble support a dome, decorated after the fashion of the portico niches in the Massimi Palace. The cornice carries a bronze gutter, and the attic supports a classic roof of copper and bronze. Beneath this canopy, upon a high pedestal decorated with her emblems, stands "Aphrodite," the most notable work of art in the garden.

The Aphrodite Temple

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

Sculptured by a master of antiquity the statue resembles the Venus de Medici in Florence, but is so superior in line and proportion that many critics believe it to be the original from which the Venus de Medici was clumsily copied. There is much evidence to indicate that it may be the work of no less a master than Praxiteles himself.*

*A book has been printed setting forth all that is known about the statue

Aphrodite

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The pedestal is fitted with a revolving pivot permitting the figure to be easily turned about as sculptors do when they create them, watching the lines and contours melt and reform over the graceful surfaces.

"Profil Perdu"

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

At the foot of the steps, in the side of the rock ledge, and half hidden by overhanging branches, may be seen Miss Janet Scudder's bronze wall fountain of a youthful faun playing on pipes.

Temple from the Upper Level

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

Returning toward the house under the linden alley or through the latticed arbor to the centre opening on to the Upper Terrace, one is surprised by the beauty of the view.

Centre opening of Arbor on Upper Terrace

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The extent of this view in relation to the foreground is here fully disclosed.

Foreground, middleground and distance

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The foreground sweeps away down a majestic lawn, kept closely clipped by a flock of ever moving sheep with shepherd and sheep dogs.

A pastoral foreground

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

From the valley below, the middleground is formed by thickly wooded hills uniting Mr. William Rockefeller's estate which adjoins that of Mr. John D. Rockefeller. It continues without visible boundaries till it reaches the Hudson at the castle-like house of the former some three miles to the north. Beyond the river on a clear day one can identify in the remote distance the mountains toward West Point. At all seasons of the year this view is equally inspiring. The Renaissance vase on the parapet is the one framed by the iron work arch shown in a previous picture and is here seen against a background of orange trees.

From the centre of the Upper Terrace

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

These are the largest orange trees of their kind known and are perhaps the oldest. They were brought from France especially for this place from a chateau dating back to the time of Francis I, near Le Mans, and are said to be not less than two hundred years old.

The Orange Tree Terrace

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

A winter house or orangery, the length of a city block, was built for the orange trees near the garage, and their removal each spring and fall is an interesting operation.

Entrance to the Orangery

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The Elm Trees of the Swimming Pool Terrace were planted there to screen the house and gardens from the glare of the afternoon sunlight reflected from the river.

A glimpse of the Swimming Pool and screen of elm trees

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The overflow from the pool spills down waterworn inclines—spanned by monolithic bridges of rustic stone—into circular basins at either end. These are lined with patterns of mosaic formed of black and white pebbles imported from Italy.

Swimming Pool and Overflow Basin

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

The pool is fed from a stalactite grotto, and by a system of jets which fill it with a misty spray, evanescent with rainbows when the sun is shining. At the end of the terrace there are graceful lattice summer houses flanked by great jasmine trees, splendid specimens from England, and rare in this country. On the lowest and outermost terrace a tall vase of terra cotta stands on a high pedestal. It is an ancient oil jar, the largest one known, brought from Italy by the late Stanford White.

A procession of mammoth orange trees with Swimming Pool below

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

There is in the niche at the centre of the orange tree terrace a little fountain, one of the last works of Karl Bitter. Mr. Bitter described his motive as taken from a young girl, who, while bathing, has snatched up in her arms a sputtering gosling. The mother goose defends her young by bitting at the heels of the girl who is filled with laughter at the scene, the other goslings scattering in fright. The fountain was designed and modeled for this place.

Goose Girl Fountain

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

Below this terrace, and farther to the north, a brook carries off the overflow from all the fountains.

A classic Japanese Waterfall with Prayer Stone

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

This brook has been designed and planted in Japanese style by two native Japanese gardeners, Mr. Takshashi and Mr. Uyeda, from the Emperor's gardens in Tokio.

A Waterfall arranged by Japanese

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

The waterfalls, miniature mountains, dwarf planting, bridges, lakes and the Tea House itself, built of mahogany, are all according to the best Japanese traditions and of themselves constitute an extensive garden.

The Japanese Tea House, Bridge and Pool

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

Weather-beaten rocks, carefully transported from the neighboring woods so that the marks of time should not be obliterated, are here composed in harmonies and contrasts unknown to European art. A variety of stone lanterns ornament these gardens.

"Requiescat in pace"

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The watercourse forms a beautiful pond with an island reached by picturesque stepping stones, and after meandering through the hollows along the entrance driveway, tumbles at length into a rocky gorge overshadowed by drooping willow trees.

The End of the Brook

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The whole hill-top is surrounded by a fine golf course, several of the putting greens being on the terraces of the gardens.

A Verona Well Curb at edge of the Putting Green

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

One of the golf greens is passed on the way from the Swimming Pool Terrace to the Circular Garden at the north of the house. Here pergolas covered with wistaria form the base of the semi-circle and the garden plantations are filled with roses of red and white. High standard rose trees from England give dignity to the borders. The north of the garden is bound by a double row of clipped plane trees. The fountain at the centre is a facsimile of the one in the Pitti Palace at Florence said to be the work of Donatello.

The Wistaria-covered Pergolas in the Circular Garden

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

A pavilion or summer house forms a shelter on the Axis, from which one looks down rustic stone steps, ornamented with ancient oil jars, to a “tapis vert,” where a marble reproduction of the Borghese Vase stands sentinel. From this lovely spot the lawn stretches down under old apple trees. To the west a grassy walk leads round the semi-circle bordering the garden, through a shady alley which in spring is decked with myriads of jonquils and narcissi.

The Donatello Fountain

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

Great numbers of large trees were transplanted to connect this part of the garden with existing groups of trees farther down the hillside thus forming a shaded walk nearly all the way to Abeyton Lodge, the home of Mr. Rockefeller, Jr.

Shelter in Circular Garden

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

Looking back toward the house from the Circular Garden the vista is framed by trellises terminating in a niche of lattice work containing a statue in bronze by Mr. Rudulf Evans. The figure represents a young girl, described by the sculptor, "as just coming forth into the unknown world of young womanhood."

Lattice Niche and Statue

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Italian well curbs from Verona and Venice are seen to the right and left.

Ancient Well Curb with running spring water

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

One is surprised to learn that the “boat fountain,” a basin fashioned after the lines of a classic trireme, covers a room or vestibule beneath the terrace into which the service entrance of the house opens. Its existence would never be surmised.

The Trevi Fountain—with pond lilies

THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT

The horse trough is fed from a bronze head of Orpheus, the charmer of animals, modelled by Mr. Tonetti, and the wall fountain, on the landing behind, is of the Italian Renaissance period and stood for a long time in the residence of the late Stanford White.

The Horse Trough

• THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT •

The service exit road is tunnelled and emerges through a grotto in the hillside several hundred feet farther on, thus concealing all evidence of service from the approaches to the house as well as from the house itself. A picturesque path leads up and down over this grotto and around to the eastern terrace, beneath the John of Bologna fountain.

Service Entrance

•§ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT §•

Here broad flights of steps connect the upper and lower levels and form a great central niche for the fountain of Adam and Eve by Mr. George Grey Barnard. The Zodiac signs for the summer months are worked out in the marble floor.

One of the Grand Stairways

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At either end of this terrace are statues, "Woman" and "The Hearer," by Mr. Barnard. The ceilings of the pavilions above were painted by Mr. Edward Simmons; the statue at the end of the plane tree alley leading from the landing on the south is a copy, by Mr. Frederick Roth, of the "Sleeping Ariadne" in the Vatican.*

*All the vases, statues and fountains are protected in the winter season with specially designed covers of lattice work and canvas or wood, so that they form objects of interest the year round.

The "Hearer"

❧ THE GARDENS OF KIJKUIT ❧

But to know this enchanting hill-top one must experience the early morning with its long shadows and dewy freshness, its fragrance, and song of birds; or late evening when all is peacefully eloquent of aloofness from the busy world; when the glimmer of the lights of Tarrytown and Nyack far across the Tappan Zee lend a fairylike charm, enhanced now and then by the brilliant search lights from the river steamboats as they silently move along; or when moonlight caresses the marble statues and makes phosphorescent glint and glitter in the splashing fountains. The impressions left from these and countless similar experiences enrich the memories of those who know the gardens at "Kijkuit."

Late afternoon

A last glimpse of Kijkuit

TEXT BY WELLES BOSWORTH
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General Plan of House and Gardens

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