



1930s as a Works Progress Administration [WPA] project. Originally called simply the Rose Garden, it was created for the enjoyment and education of the general public who, unable to afford the luxury of private gardens, would otherwise have been deprived of enjoying such horticultural pleasures. The garden represents the collaboration of three designers: architect Richard Koch, landscape architect William Wiedorn, and sculptor Enrique Alferez. Each played a prominent design role in the New Orleans community during the twentieth century.

HISTORY

The New Orleans Botanical Garden was part of a larger Master Plan for City Park. The City Park Board of Directors solicited Master Plan proposals in 1930, ultimately selecting the Chicago firm Bennett, Parsons, and Frost of Chicago over the Olmsted Brothers firm of Brookline, MA. Unfortunately, the City Park Board had no money at that time to implement the plan. Nevertheless, the plan had been prepared: when Federal money became available, the Park Board was able to solicit funds from the Federal government to begin construction. One of the major reasons why City Park received such massive funding — \$13million in the 1930s — was that Federal administrators and their State coordinators considered landscape projects to be ideal for relief work. Such projects could profitably employ a large amount of hand labor: during the 1930s, there were times when over 14,000 men were employed building City Park.

The New Orleans Botanical Garden thus was built during the WPA era as part of this larger City Park project. The Garden itself represents the collaboration of three designers: architect Richard Koch, landscape architect William Wiedorn, and sculptor Enrique Alferez. Each played a prominent design role in the New Orleans community during the twentieth century.



Koch served on a City Park Board committee that was charged with recommending aesthetic improvements to the Park. While Koch designed most of the park buildings, Weidorn was in charge of landscape improvements. Alferez was brought in later for artistic embellishments.

One of the major features of the New Orleans Botanical Garden is its Rose Garden. In the landscape plan for the original Rose Garden, Koch's architectural framework gave the spatial skeletal structure to the plan, Wiedorn's planting design defined the landscape character, and sculptural focal points designed by Alferez gave the garden its iconography (references to classical mythology as well as to the native flora and fauna). This garden is a rare and significant example of a landscaped space whose detail and ornament are representative of the Art Deco movement in architecture and sculpture. The predominant materials of the garden's features are concrete, brick, wood, and steel, placing the design squarely within the idiom of the WPA that utilized common, inexpensive materials to produce buildings and spaces for the common workers in America.

Today, the New Orleans Botanical Garden is one of the very few surviving examples of garden design from the WPA and Art Deco periods. Despite ongoing economic hardship and neglect, the garden has retained its integrity for more than a half-century. The garden also continues to fill a critical need for people living in the New Orleans area, especially those who are avid gardeners. Prior to Katrina, the New Orleans Botanical Garden was the center of horticultural activity for the region; it will continue to be important as New Orleans recovers. The WPA era buildings and Enrique Alferez's sculpture all



Peole wishing to donate to the New Orleans Botanical Garden should make checks payable to:

New Orleans Botanical Garden Foundation
c/o Genevieve Trimble, President
P.O.Box 993
St. Francisville, LA 70775

Site Address

New Orleans Botanical Garden
1 Palm Drive
New Orleans, LA 70124

Visit the Website