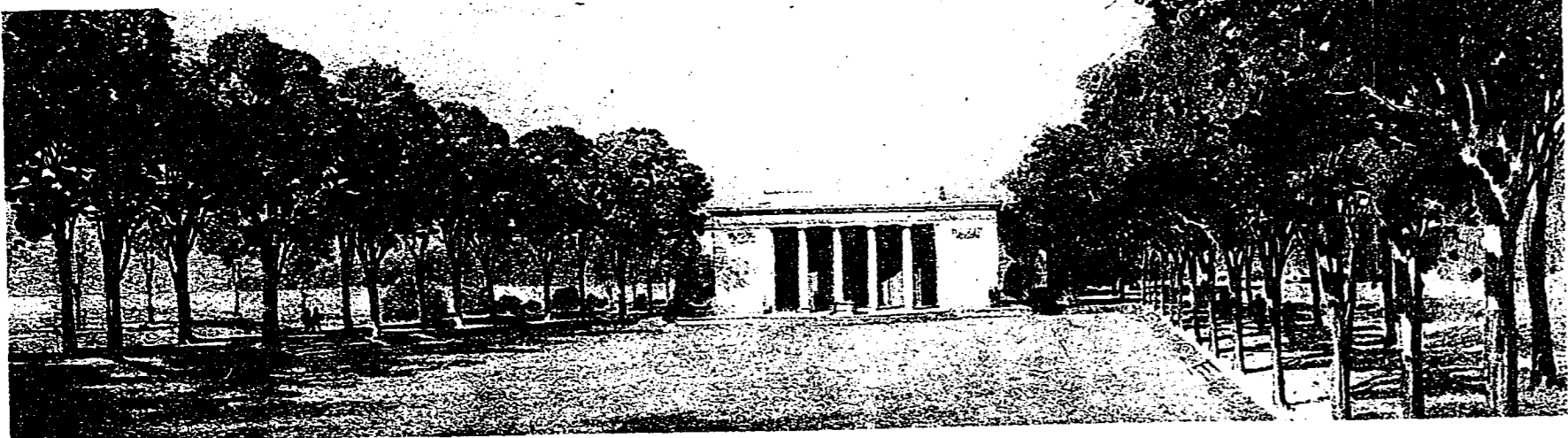


Plans for a Roosevelt Memorial at Oyster Bay: Half Mile of Shore with ...

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Forum Where the Proposed Discussions of National Questions Would Take Place.

Plans for a Roosevelt Memorial at Oyster Bay

Half Mile of Shore with Elms and Monumental Structures Would Become a Sort of National Grove of Academus

GIVE a really ingenious architect half a chance and he will not only plan a building, but he will tell exactly what to do with it when it is finished. In the case of memorial structures, it might be well if that were the rule, for many of them are poor reminders of the men whose names they bear. Electus D. Litchfield, friend and neighbor of Theodore Roosevelt, is determined that the Oyster Bay memorial shall express the Colonel in some degree.

"There are several projects," explained Mr. Litchfield, "looking toward an expression of the desire to honor Colonel Roosevelt. The national memorial will doubtless require some time for its realization. But the committee charged with doing something at Oyster Bay has determined to push this work through as rapidly as possible. Here the man lived, and fortunately we have a suggestion which he himself made and which is both feasible and characteristic.

"One of the finest sites in Oyster Bay is the unimproved strip along the waterfront. It has been used as a dumping ground. That made the Colonel unhappy.

"I wish," he used to say, "that we citizens of Oyster Bay could make here a breathing place for all the people of

this neighborhood, especially the less fortunate people."

"The committee has asked me to work out a realization of this expressed wish. With me are associated my partner, Mr. Rogers, and James L. Greenleaf, a leader among the landscape architects of the country and a member of the National Fine Arts Commission. We have been studying the project for months.

"We have been thoroughly impressed with the suitable character of the site. From this half mile of shore one may look upon Sagamore Hill, the Roosevelt home; upon Centre Island, and also the shores of Connecticut. The bay itself is historic, since here came first the warships of Japan and Russia on their way to Portsmouth, where President Roosevelt completed his great service in the cause of peace. It should be remembered that much of his activity at that time and in other great crises of national and world history is related to Oyster Bay as well as to Washington."

Mr. Litchfield has taken suggestions from all sources and embodied them, together with his own ideas, in a report made to the Oyster Bay Committee. The paragraphs which deal directly with the larger outlines of the project are these:

"Among the features which Mr. Loeb and other members of the committee have definitely suggested as desirable were a playground equipped with swings and other ap-

paratus for the use of children, a baseball diamond and a grand stand, tennis courts, bathing beach, and possibly a public bathhouse. In addition to these recreational and more or less utilitarian features, it has been suggested that the park should contain an open-air forum, fountain, lagoons, and other features of a dignified memorial character.

"The great tendency of the moment is to make our memorials useful. There is danger, however, that this may be overdone and that we may sometimes be led into doing or providing something which it is our simple duty to provide for ourselves and perhaps deceive ourselves into thinking that we are doing it out of a high memorial sentiment rather than from selfish motives. Here, I am sure, we can do better than this.

"It seldom occurs, I presume, to any of us New Yorkers to think of Madison Square Park or Garden as a memorial to President Madison. * * * Can we not give to this park of ours a special character, that even those who run may read and be forced, at least for the moment, to thoughtful contemplation of the life and spirit of Theodore Roosevelt?"

"Colonel Roosevelt was a very practical man, but I think we all will agree that he was very spiritually minded as well. I do not know whether he was ever accused of having an artistic temperament, but I do know that he

was responsible for the great McKim-Burnham plan for the development and beautification of Washington, for the simple and charming restoration of the White House, and for the adoption by the Government of a new standard of artistic accomplishment in the design of our American money. It is appropriate, therefore, that we endeavor to make this memorial as beautiful and as dignified as art and our appropriation will permit.

"Aside from the playground and amusement space, which are separated from the rest of the composition by the existing canal, the scheme consists of an outdoor auditorium, the walls being formed by a double colonnade of high polished elms, between whose trunks one may look out upon the bay and toward Sagamore Hill, and whose foliage will cast beautiful shadows upon the green lawn carpet of the room.

"At the head of the auditorium there would be a rostrum, backed by a simple, dignified structure, having its west front built somewhat in the form of a Greek theatre, and providing a stage upon which may be seated the performers at open-air concerts. Within its walls I hope there may be a reception room, together with a small hall somewhat in the nature of the Supreme Court room in the Capitol at Washington, where would be

gathered from time to time, once every two or three years, or two or three times a year, as in the opinion of the Trustees of the Roosevelt Forum the occasion may justify, a few of the great men of the country, who shall there discuss before the whole nation grave questions affecting the future of America. The audience should be limited in the extreme, being sufficient perhaps only to provide reaction upon the speakers, and its personnel should be carefully selected.

"Provision would be made for a gallery of reporters, who would transmit throughout the country through the dailies which they represent the discussion which would be there presented. I would have the Trustees selected with the greatest care, so that, as far as may be, there would be no discrimination as to class or creed, political or otherwise, of those who should be asked to speak from the Roosevelt Forum, so that the people may have in the future as they had under Roosevelt in the past the council of great minds of great Americans, no matter what their social or political status may be. It seems to me that in this forum we can erect a memorial the influence of which will be incalculable, and through which the spirit of Theodore Roosevelt will go marching down the ages."

Referring to the flagpole with monumental base which forms, in a way, the centre of the formal scheme, Mr. Litchfield suggested that some day the base might be the final resting place of the great man's mortal part. Over his quiet head would float the flag he loved, and about him little children would play. But this is only one of the many possible de-

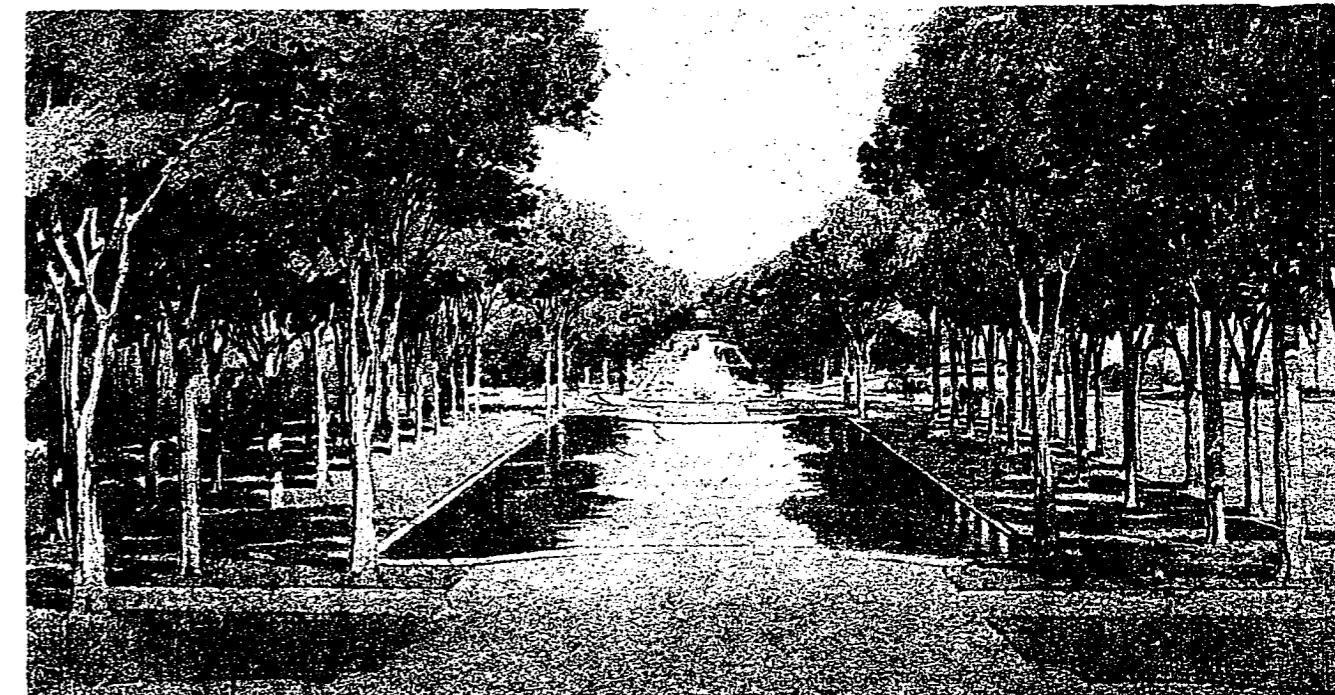
velopments. A more immediate suggestion is that the elm trees be contributed by farmers of Long Island or Connecticut. It is the architect's plan to use elms of fifty feet in height. He has found it possible to move trees of this growth without too great difficulty or expense.

To furnish the lower foliage which forms the approach to the fountain American shrubs and smaller trees will be thickly planted. These include laurel,

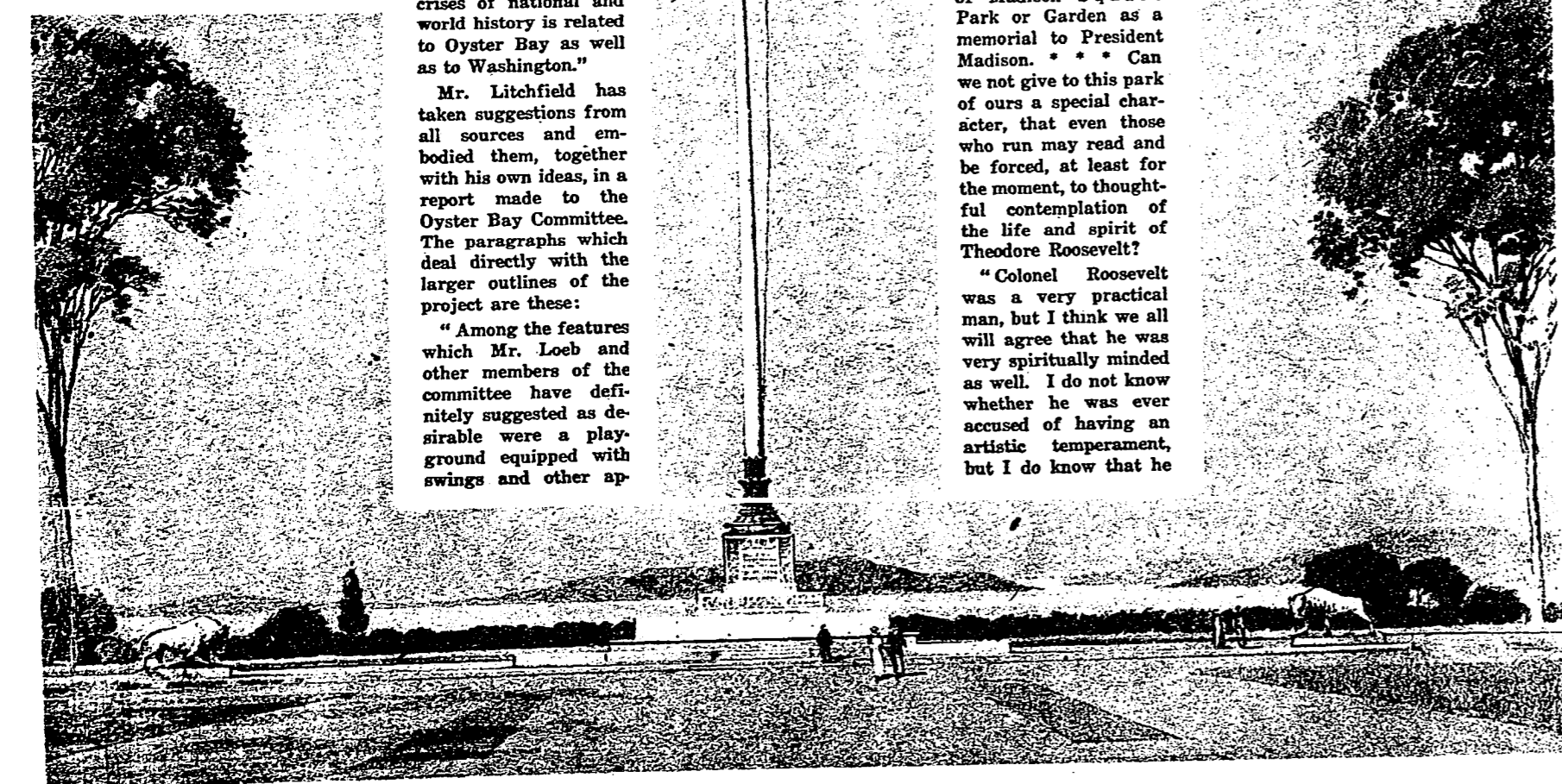
wild honeysuckle, dogwood, beech, and ash, "forming," as the architect says "a dense, dark foliage in brilliant contrast to the gravel walks, the reflection of the sky in the lagoon, and the bright, deep blue of the bay itself."

The cost of the memorial has been variously estimated, beginning with sums less than \$1,000,000. But those who have studied the plan feel that \$1,500,000 should be raised to assure its complete realization. Although the memorial is

to some extent local, in a larger view it concerns the whole nation. The sum given is very small, if it be distributed over the population. School children alone could and would give an appreciable part of it. Indeed, since Oyster Bay stands for the Roosevelt home life, it is peculiarly appropriate that the nation's children should take a special interest in such a memorial, as they did in the restoration of Washington's home at Mount Vernon.



Lagoon and Fountain, with Rows of Elms, to be Contributed by Long Islanders.



Plaza Overlooking Oyster Bay with Tall Flagpole in the Centre.