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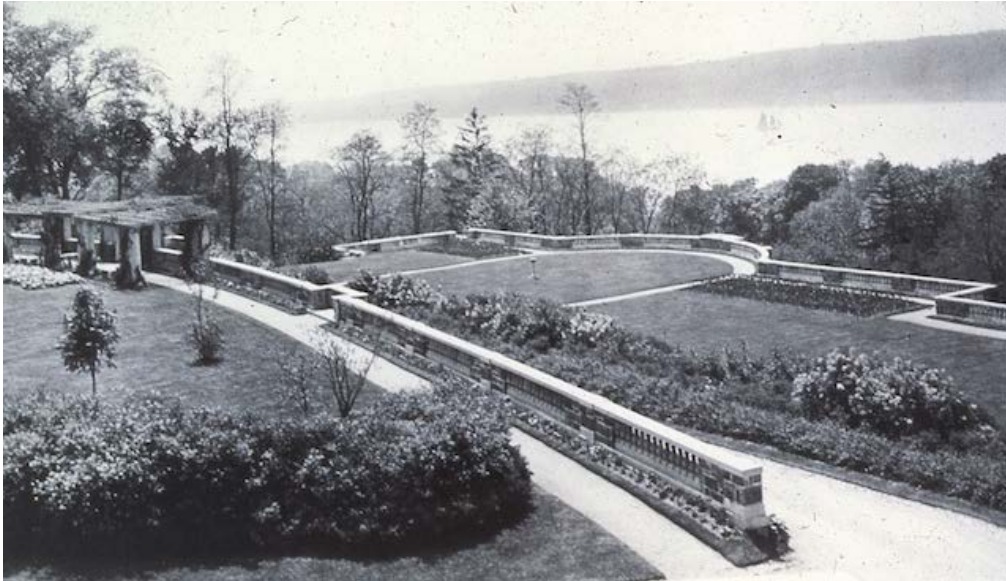
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## Wave Hill: A Historic Villa in the Bronx Where Nature and Art Collide

Posted In [Architecture](#), [Then & Now](#)

by: [laura itzkowitz](#)

If, upon arriving in New York City for the first time, someone had told me that there was a scenic villa in the Bronx, I wouldn't have believed them. Let's face it, the Bronx is not exactly the most desirable borough. But when I heard about [Wave Hill](#), perched up in Riverdale, just a few minutes away from the end of line 1, I had to go investigate. And it turns out that Wave Hill is far calmer and more picturesque than I ever thought the Bronx could be.



Wave Hill House was built in 1843 by William Lewis Morris, grandnephew of Lewis Morris, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Amazingly enough, the panoramas of the Hudson River that the Morris family enjoyed in the 1800s are still undisturbed today. When Morris's wife died in 1851, he and his children moved back to Manhattan. His nephew Edward managed the estate until 1866, when it was sold to William Henry Appleton, a New York publisher with an interest in science, nature and social issues. He leased the house to Theodore Roosevelt for two summers, who brought the young asthmatic Teddy Roosevelt up to the villa, where he benefitted from the fresh air and bucolic setting. Those summers spent at Wave Hill likely inspired Teddy Roosevelt's contributions to the conservation of national parkland.



Other famous residents of Wave Hill include Mark Twain, who entertained guests in the large living and dining rooms. The great Italian composer Arturo Toscanini stayed there as well, when he visited New York. The last family to own Wave Hill was the Perkins family, who bought up various pieces of the estate between 1893 and 1911. George Walbridge Perkins especially loved the gardens and added a greenhouse to the grounds. He was also instrumental in saving the Palisades across the Hudson, which were being blasted during construction of the railroad. Preservation of the natural surroundings has always been important to residents of Riverdale. When the streetscape of Manhattan was being divided up into the grid, the residents of Riverdale fought against the grid, and had Frederick Law Olmsted on their side. To this day, Riverdale looks more like a suburb than a part of New York City with winding streets leading from Van Cortlandt Park up to Wave Hill. The Perkins family especially appreciated nature, and lived in the house they called Glyndor, where Wave Hill now features rotating exhibitions.



*Foregrounding the Palisades* just opened in Glyndor Gallery, with work by Isidro Blasco, Blane de St. Croix and Paula Winokur. Each artist was commissioned by Wave Hill to create a sculpture inspired by the Palisades. Blasco, a Spanish artist with architectural training, created three sculptures that look almost like abstract architectural models, but are actually layered with photos of the Palisades. De St. Croix constructed a life-size rock wall that has been installed in the middle of a room, giving visitors the impression of a natural formation that has been displaced inside the gallery. Winokur recreated the texture of the Palisades with clay. In the Sunroom Project Space, Yeon Ji Yoo installed what seems like a magical forest that intrigues guests as they peer at it through a window before going into the sunroom.



*Clockwise from top right: Unnecessary Memorial I (Palisades) by Blane De St. Croix, Flow System by Isidro Blasco, and Palisades Pinnacle (Porcelain) by Paula Winokur*



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*The Fight* by Yeon Ji Yoo

Of course, no visit to Wave Hill would be complete without a stroll through the gardens, which its many residents have loved so much over the years. The Aquatic Garden is notable for its reflecting pool with waterlilies, and flowers bloom in the garden surrounding the greenhouse as well as inside it. During the winter months, the greenhouse with its tropical plants provides a respite from the cold weather and barren trees outside. During the warmer months, Wave Hill organizes a range of programs from Sunset Wednesdays to Honey Extraction Demonstrations. Refer to their [events page](#) for a full listing of events.









[Wave Hill \[map\]](#)

675 W 252nd Street

Bronx, NY 10471

A shuttle picks up visitors near 242nd Street Van Cortland Station at 10 past every hour.

*All historic photos have been provided courtesy of Wave Hill.*

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