



HISTORY

Jl Holcomb

James Irving Holcomb was born in LaSalle, Illinois on May 1, 1876. He attended the University of Michigan, and, at the age of 20 started his first business in Sullivan, Indiana. Partnering with Fred Hoke, they formed Holcomb and Hoke Manufacturing Company and manufactured cleaning brushes. JI bought out Hoke in 1901 and in 1905 moved the company to Indianapolis. He re-partnered in a second concern with Hoke in 1903 reforming Holcomb and Hoke Manufacturing Company - this time manufacturing a variety of products including popcorn wagons, commercial refrigerators, coal stokers, and folding doors. Holcomb and Hoke Manufacturing Company still manufactures folding doors in its original location in Indianapolis. J1 died in his home April 8, 1962.

Jl was married to Musetta Black Beaver (died November 10, 1957) in New York City on February 4, 1897. They had one child, Jessie Mae, who died in 1938.

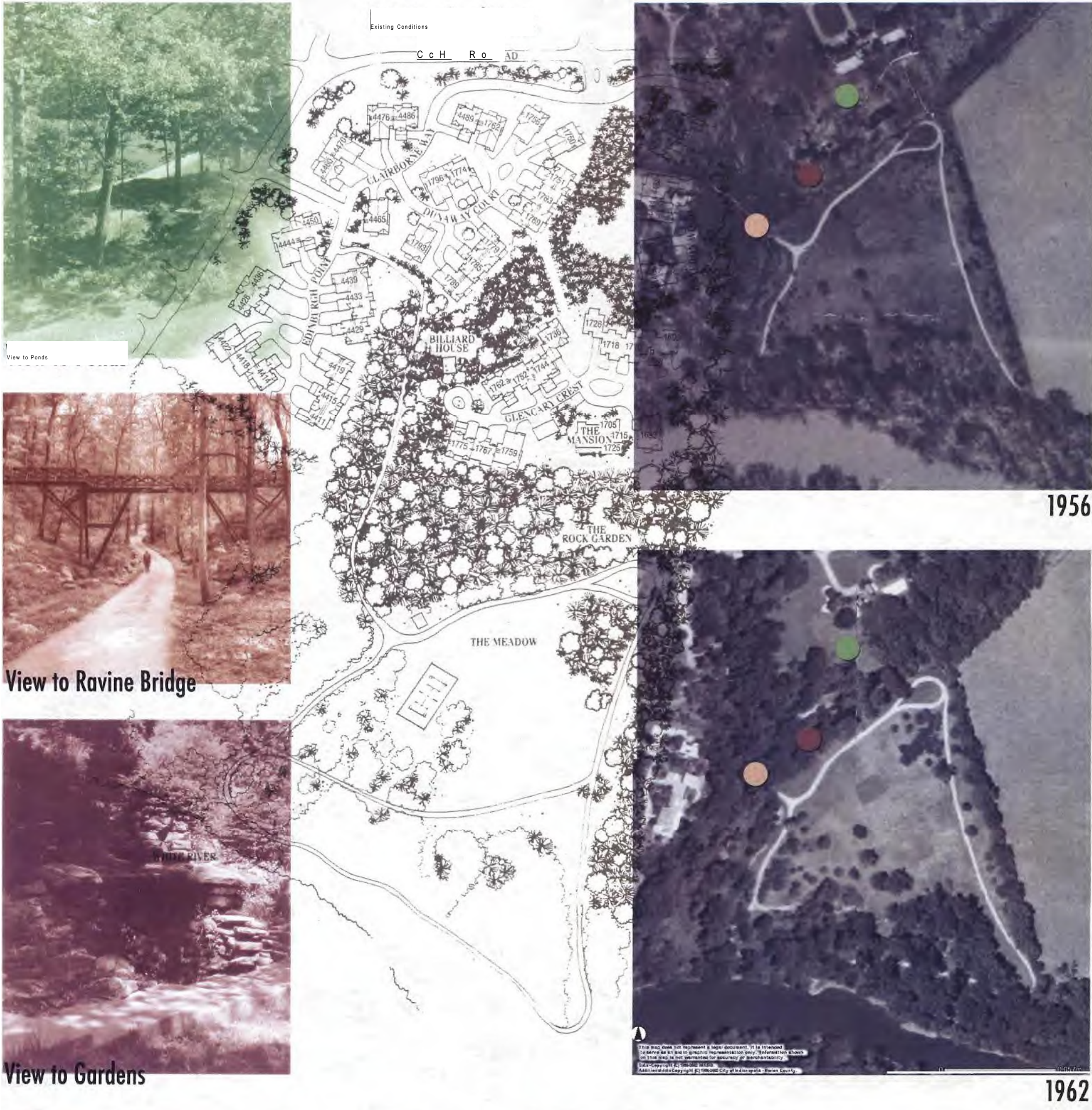
Jl was civically active during his life in Indianapolis and served on the board of multiple financial, professional, and philanthropic institutions. His most notable gifts were to Butler University and include the Holcomb Research Institute, The Holcomb Observatory, and Holcomb Gardens.

Woodvale

The Holcomb estate, or Woodvale as it was known, was built in 1926 on Cold Spring Road along the banks of the white River. Jl lived here until his death and made a life long pursuit of art and landscape architecture. He collected art from around the world for display in his home including Louis the 13th tapestries, Asian artifacts, and an English stone fireplace from the 13-15th century. His gardens were also influenced by world culture and included Japanese gardens, a ravine garden, a meadow, a lit cave network, greenhouses, ponds and waterfalls, and a collection of rocks from his world travels. The bank of the White river contained boat docks, landing spots, and fishing holes. He was an avid collector of plants and his gardens included many evergreens, flowering trees and shrubs, and other plants J1 used the estate for extensive entertaining during his life, and, upon his death willed it to Butler University. Butler sold the estate to a private developer and in 1986 the current Holcomb Estate condominiums were constructed.



Holcomb Estate



Holcomb Estate



Holcomb Estate

Overlay - Holcomb Estate Condominiums Plan & Aerial Photo

Existing Conditions

May 20, 2004

Nol fo Soh





Ravine

An asphalt pathway runs from the Gorden Level to the Meadow through the Ravine. A large waterfall, and a complex of pools and small streams characterize the Ravine. At one time this area also included a Japanese garden. Remnants of this garden remain. The Ravine once displayed woodland wildflowers along with ornamental trees and shrubs. The existing landscape is overrun with Euonymous and Japanese Honeysuckle (invasive species). Holcomb had a penchant for hand selecting boulders from around the country and having them shipped to Woodvale for use on the grounds. Groupings of these boulders can be seen in the Ravine.

Adjacent Property

Property adjacent to the Ravine shows evidence of a supporting wetland and some areas of standing water. The drainage from the Ravine and the adjacent wetlands may have some connection, but that has not been confirmed. A transitional landscape between the Estate and this property should be maintained unless adjacent property owners prefer to integrate their perimeter landscape with the landscape treatment of the estate grounds.

Riparian Zone

The riparian zone is the area that lies directly adjacent to the White River. At one time Holcomb had constructed a boat launch, docks and created several fishing spots along the banks of the White River. A pathway through the area is flanked to the left by a landscape of trees and turf. All remnants of Holcomb's riverfront development are gone. A great deal of the area is covered by Euonymous, the predominant invasive species here and throughout the estate grounds. Rolling terrain provides low spots that are suitable for wetland restoration. The riverbank is ever changing and could be enhanced by naturalizing the landscape in the riparian zone allowing it to revert to a bottomland habitat.

Garden Level

The Holcomb Estate was originally named Woodvale. Today the landscape within the Garden level is a highly maintained collection of ornamental trees, shrubs and perennials with street tree plantings, entryway landscape beds, and perimeter plantings. Property owners also maintain private gardens.

Rock Gardens

Remnants of the once elaborate gardens of Woodvale are most evident within the rock garden area. Originally these gardens included a series of interconnected ponds and waterfalls powered by a recirculating pump. Rock gardens with unique artifacts, including a large totem pole and souvenir rocks were originally located in the garden called the World Court. The Rock Garden also included a large cave created by Holcomb for which he imported a collection of stalactites and stalagmites salvaged from other caves. Originally a pathway led from the mansion directly to the series of ponds and gardens. The landscape at one time was full of ornamental trees and shrubs including Magnolias, Redbud, Dogwood and Rhododendrons. Large yews are the only noticeable remnant still visible within the tangle of Japanese Honeysuckle that now covers the gardens.

Meadow

A reference in a garden tour brochure published in 1958 is made to the Meadow of the Holcomb estate calling it a Kentuckian Landscape. This term is thought to be in reference to the character of the area as a large open mowed lawn, reminiscent of large horse pastures in the rural Kentucky. Holcomb established an apple orchard in the northern part of the meadow, visible on the historic air photo. It is no longer present. The pathway that meanders through the meadow is also visible in the historic air photos, indicating they are original features of the designed landscape.

Landscape Buffer

The new construction associated with the International School resulted in the removal of much of the fencerow landscape buffer along the Meadow. Replacing the buffer is necessary to maintain the quality of the Meadow and buffer the site from the adjacent school grounds. Additional trees and shrubs be planted directly in front of the existing fence line to replace those that were removed will be needed for buffer reconstruction. A memorial grove of mixed evergreens could be used to build the buffer. Trees within the memorial grove could be donated and marked with small commemorative plaques,



Holcomb Estate

