

Exedra

Closest to the building and steps from the patio, was the shaded lawn leading to the curved benches (exedra). A statue of Diana & a birdcage once marked the area. Currently, a peace pole and meditation benches provide a focus and a place of rest. The statue of Diana was sunk during WWII on its way to Rolling Ridge from Italy. Though recovered from the bottom, it was later removed from Rolling Ridge and abides in a North Andover Garden.

Bowling Green & Fountain

The sunken bowling green, edged with concrete curbs, was lined with beds of flowers and rhododendrons in a deliberate color succession- from pink to red to violet- to give a greater sense of distance, thus a larger garden. Steps led up to a fountain circle (25 ft. across) which was surrounded by a carved balustrade. The pool's powerful waterspout (currently under restoration), overflowed into a cascade and 3 small pools. Two curved staircases, with angel bas reliefs, led from the large pool to the path that turned toward a boathouse. The path once had six small fountains of which only a couple remain. Two years before Rolling Ridge, Steele had seen water staircases in Florence & Rome, and wide lawns & rhododendron forests in England.



Boathouse

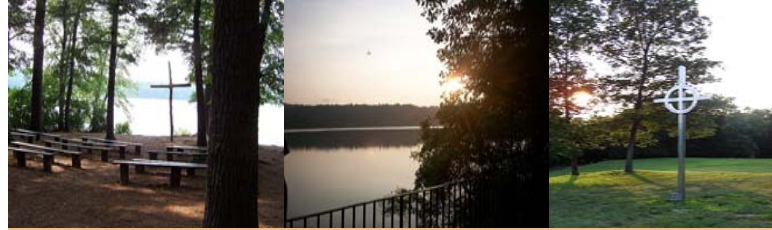
The path from the fountain leads to the foundation of the Boat House, also known as the Tea House or Sunset Lodge. It burned down in 1980 but the views of the lake from the wrought-iron railing are still cherished. Plans for a covered, open air meeting space remain to be fully developed.

Front Lawn, Point of Pines, Labyrinth

Dogwoods and pines line the open lawn vista leading to Lake Cochichewick. Trails extend both directions from the lawn giving nearly a half mile of shore line walking paths.

Nestled in the woods, is Point of Pines, an outdoor seating area that has been used for worship services, weddings, graduations, and special ceremonies. Simple benches and dramatic views make it a special place.

In 2002, two labyrinths were created in the woods near Point of Pines. The labyrinth is a circular single path filled with twists and turns that leads to a center place, a space for reflection, prayer and meditation. The seven circular rings are marked by stones, gathered from around the world.



Picnic Grounds, Pool, Fields

In 1956, Rolling Ridge added a pool and in 1963 the bathhouse and pool apartment was added.

Though half the 38 acres are covered with trees and vegetation, remaining open fields are used for many groups, activities, and summer picnics.

In 2005, a large Celtic Cross, donated by Tewksbury United Methodist Church was placed on a hill to welcome guests to this holy place.

Sources

1. Robin Karson, Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect. An Account of the Gardenmaker's life, 1885-1971. Sagapress, Inc. NY
2. Massachusetts Historical Commission. Rolling Ridge file, November 1986.
3. Stephen J. Roper, A Good In-Land Town. Three Centuries of Architecture and Landscapes in North Andover. North Andover Historical Society, 2001. 09/2008

The History Of Rolling Ridge



Rolling Ridge Retreat & Conference Center New England Conference, United Methodist Church

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The Beginnings

Ethan Allen, a wealthy New York wool merchant, purchased 38 acres on the southern shore of Lake Cochichewick in 1899. He eventually made plans to develop the gently rolling peninsula in 1915 by hiring landscape architect Fletcher Steele and architect Andrew H. Hepburn.

Allen wanted Steele to layout the whole property and build the gardens first, “to take advantage of all trees and views...so that (Allen) could walk out on finished grounds the day he moves in. Lawns, house, gardens and garage should all be properly disposed on the plan before the house is definitely located...each one properly related to the others”.

Construction on the grand estate began in 1919, though work on the landscape began earlier, and was essentially completed in 1923. Little is known about the years after construction and Rolling Ridge was sold in 1928 to Russell Tyson, a Harvard graduate and a successful Chicago real estate broker. Tyson “kept Steele on to advise and maintain” and in 1935 Rolling Ridge was awarded the Hunnewell Medal by the Mass. Horticultural society.

Tyson sold the property in 1948 to the New England Conference, United Methodist Church.



The Mansion

The formal design around the cobblestone courtyard bears stylistic influences of Italian Renaissance and American Georgian Revival details. Surrounding the courtyard are three distinct buildings in pink-grey stucco: the two story main house; the single story servant's quarters connected to the main house, reminiscent of Colonial farmsteads; the separate garage/guesthouse.

The center of the courtyard was once graced by a fountain, but now holds an old locomotive bell that came to Rolling Ridge from the former Silver Lake Evangelical Campground in Tewksbury. The high pitched gable roof, the slate shingles, blocky chimney tops and dormers are distinctly American Georgian. The patio, with its lake blue ceiling and the blue-green shutters on the exterior serve to connect the building to the lake.

Inside the Mansion



The floor to ceiling wood shelves and cabinetry define the formal Library room. The fireplace adds a warm glow for small groups meeting around the table.

The large living room, now called Tyson Hall after the second owner, features detailed crown molding and distinctive triangled cornices over double-sized windows overlooking the fountain, front lawn & lake. Most groups using Rolling Ridge have their meetings in Tyson Hall which can be set up many ways including lecture style for multi-media presentations or speakers.

Up the winding polished-wood staircase, are the six master bedrooms, five with fireplaces, and each distinctively painted. Views of the courtyard, fountain or lake make these the first choice for overnight guests. A hallway from the main wing, connects to eight additional bedrooms in the east wing.

Past the main staircase on the first floor, on oval shaped “family breakfast” room features curved doors and eastern facing windows. It is a bright, cheery place for small groups and conferences.

The former family dining room serves now as a gathering/ meeting area, set up with coffee and tea service throughout the day. A fireplace and leather chairs make it a popular place for conversation and relaxation. It is appropriately called the “sitting room”.

The lake view dining room, seating up to 100, was added in 1954 to accommodate the guests coming for retreats or conferences. The large picture window gives one the best views in the house.

Kitchen, offices, and massage room make up the rest of the first floor space in the east wing.

The Moses building is the former Guestrooms/garage. A grant from the Moses Foundation in 1960 enabled the conversion of the garage or carriage house into a meeting room and conversion of an attic space into a dormitory. Today the Moses sleeping spaces are used primarily for youth groups. The total number of beds at Rolling Ridge is 80 for youth and 45 for adults.



The Grounds

The Main road designed by Fletcher Steele moved through woodlands, beside the lake and turned to surprise the guest with a first view of the mansion. Two large pines established the end of the drive and the courtyard. Currently, the service road serves as the main entrance as Rolling Ridge seeks approval to redevelop the original main road.

The Landscape is dominated by a shady lawn and exedra (curved bench), a rhododendron-bordered bowling green terminating in a circular fountain overflowing into 3 cascading fountains, and a large front lawn leading to the lake. An article about Steele and Rolling Ridge stated, “this was a landscape to be walked, garden theater at its best”.