

# New Versailles

ON MANHASSET BAY

NORTH SHORE, LONG ISLAND

## **BACKGROUND: 1900-1920's – The Tumultuous Decade and the New Versailles of Manhasset Bay**

The 1900's was a period of great tumult and change. The decade began at a time of peace and prosperity. America found itself the richest nation in the world. Likewise, Long Island, with its easy access to New York City, water ways and bays, hosted yacht clubs, polo grounds, tennis courts and huge mansions became the playground for the wealthy.

During this decade, women won the right to vote (19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, ratified in 1920) and the enactment of Prohibition began (18<sup>th</sup> Amendment of 1917- a ban of the sale of alcoholic beverages, which was repealed in 1933).

From 1914 to 1918, Europe was embroiled in World War 1 – a conflict that would claim 9 million lives, and impact the world in the century to come. By the end of the 1920's, growing labor unrest, strikes and mushrooming hysteria over people thought to be communists or socialists plagued the American nation furthering political, social and financial instability.

The dramatic end to an era of unprecedented prosperity was the Stock Market Crash of October 29, 1929. This day dashed all hopes of creating the Dominion of Versailles, a unique home colony fronting Manhasset Bay, and suspended the development of the north shore Long Island playground for the wealthy.

## Dominion of Versailles



In 1916 a group of prominent individuals formed a corporation, called “Dominion of Versailles”, with the purpose of building a unique “home colony”, about 1,000 yards from the shore of Manhasset Bay, within forty-five minutes from Manhattan.

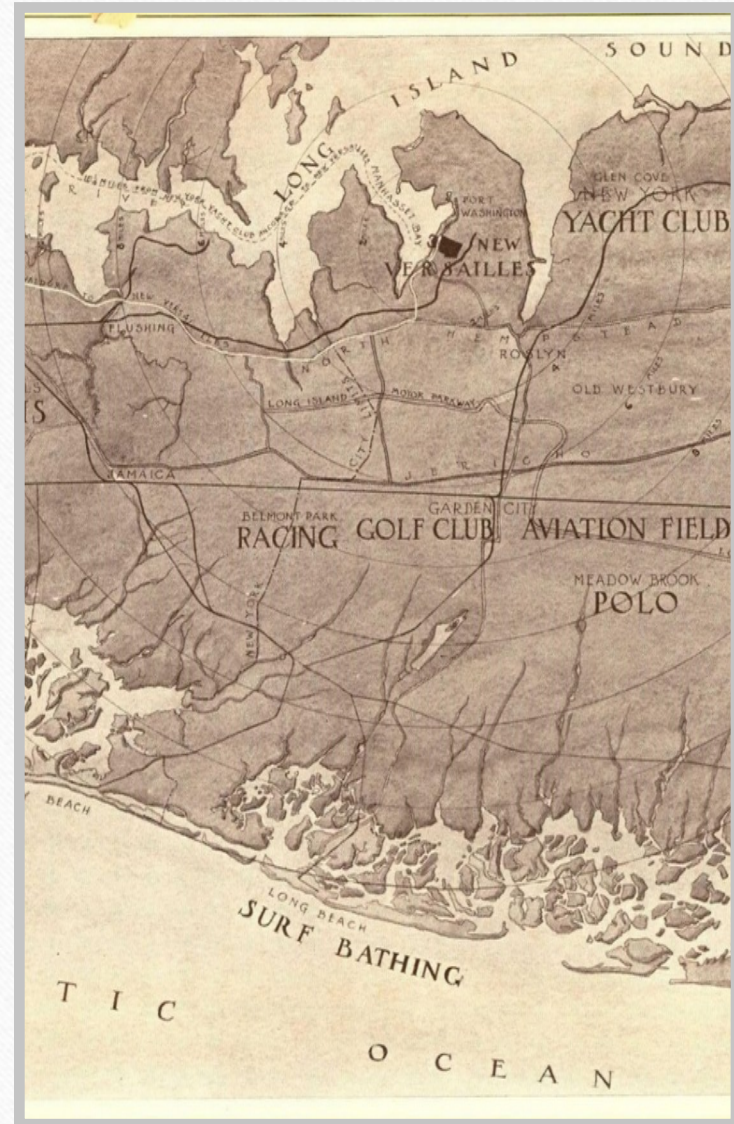
This colony was to be a “country residence with all the conveniences of city life overlooking the most beautiful Bay on Long Island.” The President of the corporation was J. Stuart Blackton, co-founder of the silent film studio, American Vitagraph.

## Location

Reminiscent of the opulent landscaped gardens and terrain of the original Versailles, the setting for the New Versailles off the Manhasset Bay was perfect.

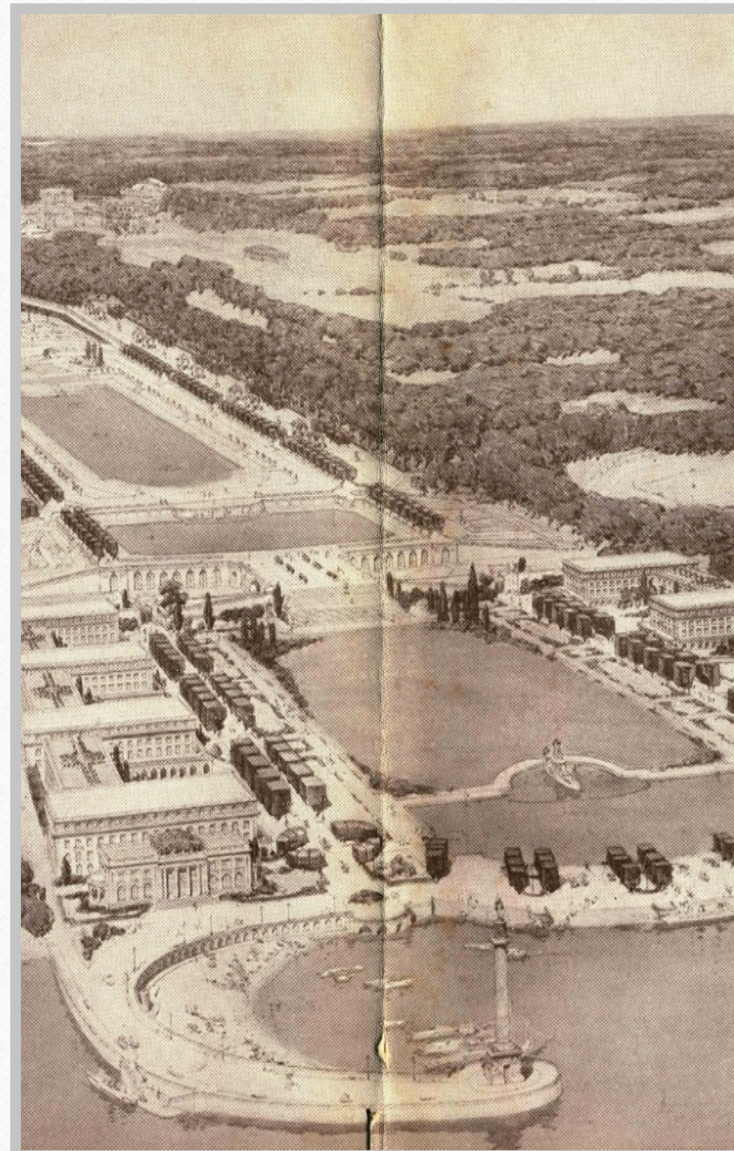
The Bay lent itself to the purposes of the architects and artists. The terrain, gradually sloping downward from a height of 150 feet to the shore, where it met a harbor, nearly one-quarter of a mile wide.

New Versailles would have exquisitely landscaped gardens leading to the harbor where yacht club docks would accommodate the pleasure crafts of the members.



**Birdseye view of  
New Versailles**

The New Versailles was to feature two luxury groups of residences, “The Chateau on the Hill and the Chateau on the Bay,” surrounded by gardens, some two hundred acres in extent, resembling the famous gardens of Versailles. The complex, situated on 186 acres of land, was to encompass a club house with ball rooms, club houses, co-operative stores, garages, dining rooms, tea rooms, swimming pools and restaurants that would seat 2,000 persons. A school, theatre, casino and a yacht club were also included in the plans. New Versailles was to be the center of a circle with a fifteen-mile radius, embracing Huntington, Oyster Bay, Meadow Brook, Sands Point, Roslyn, and Westbury while the same circle continued across the sound covering portions of Westchester County.

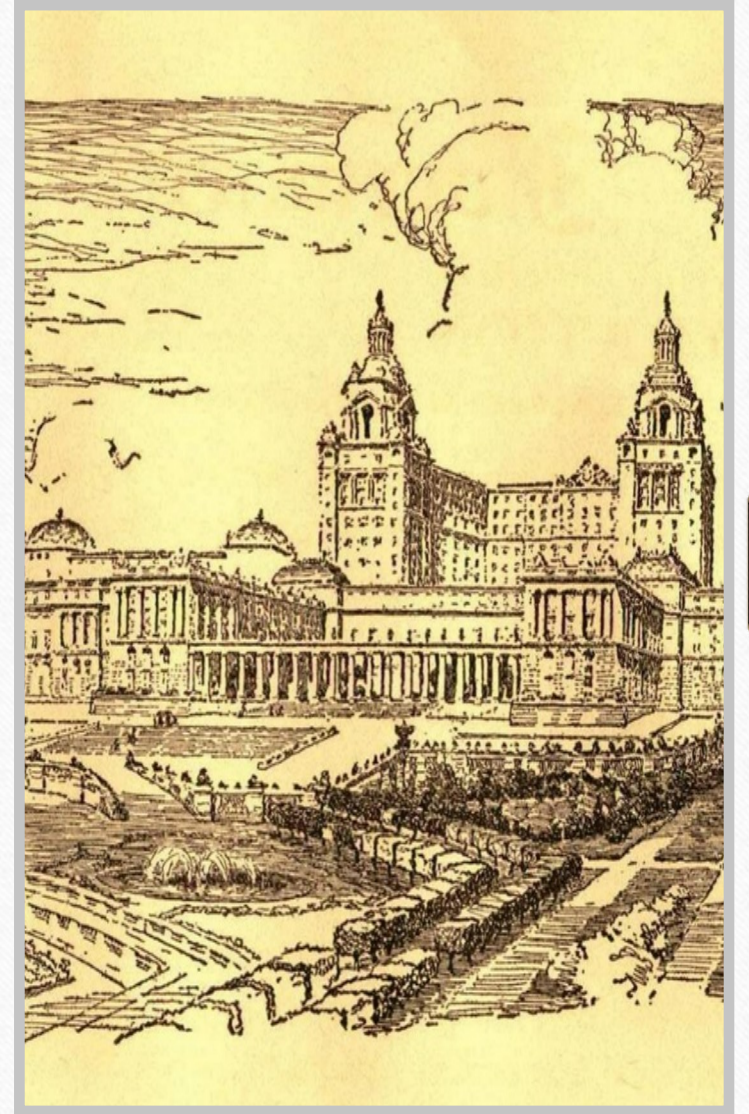


## Potential Residence at New Versailles

Perspective buyers submitted applications which were vetted by 'committee' that functioned like a Board of Governors of an exclusive club.

The purchasers selected apartment spaces with customized interior arrangements and finishes. Apartments were duplexes with bedrooms placed on the second floor for enhanced comfort.

To insure the privacy of the residence, amenities included numerous passenger elevators. For the household work staff, separate service elevators along with full provisions for behind the scene housekeeping were built.



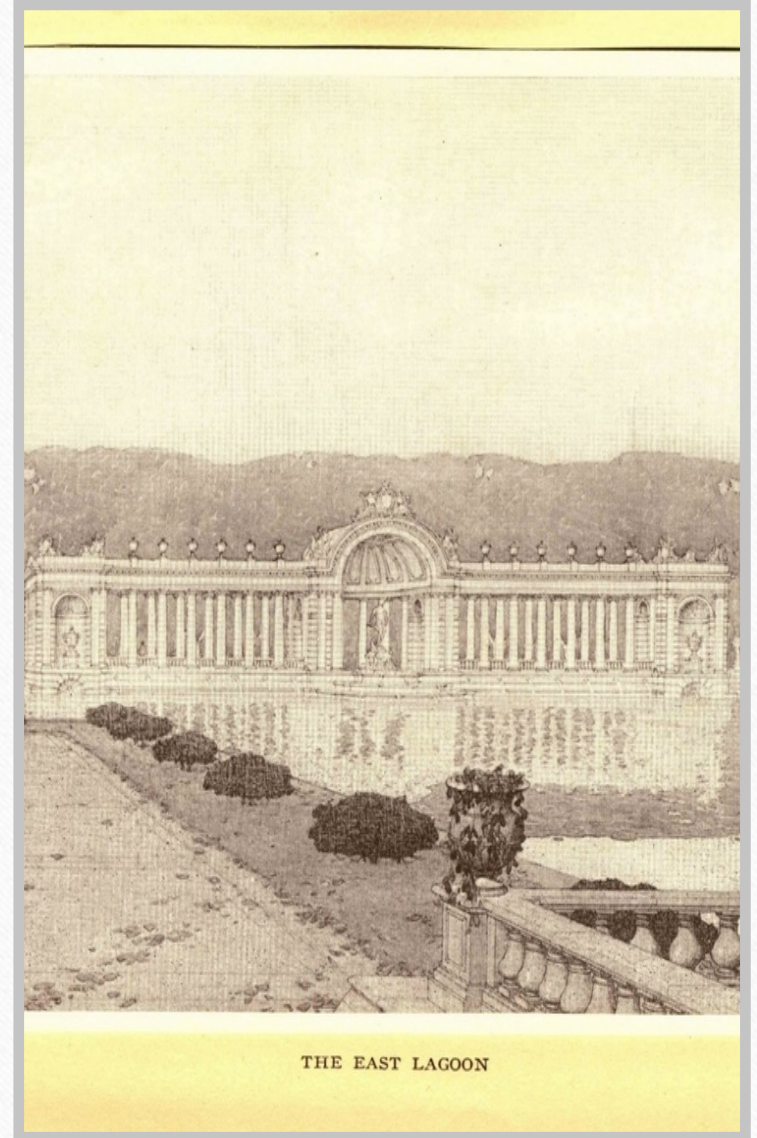
# inNOvation in housing

## The East lagoon

Walter Bowman Russell first conceived the idea of cooperative ownership of residential space and, with the help of Penrhyn Stanlaws, developed sketches for New Versailles.

Stanlaw's idealized luxury sketches were taken to Thomas Hastings, of Carrere & Hastings, architects, who designed the buildings and grounds.

The East Lagoon was the waterfront masterpiece.



THE EAST LAGOON

## Walter Bowman Russell & Penrhyn Stanlaws



Walter Bowman Russell was an impressionist American painter (of the Boston School), sculptor, and author. His lectures and writing place him firmly in the New Thought Movement. Born in Boston on May 19, 1871, to Nova Scotian immigrants, Russell left school at age 9 and went to work, then put himself through the Massachusetts Normal Art School. He interrupted his fourth year to spend three months in Paris at the Académie Julian. At age 29, he attracted widespread attention with his allegorical painting *The Might of Ages* in 1900. The painting represented the United States at the Turin International Exhibition and won several awards. Russell made his mark as a builder, creating \$30 million worth of cooperative apartments. He is credited with developing "cooperative ownership into an economically sound and workable principle." The Hotel des Artistes on West 67th Street in Manhattan, designed by architect George Mort Pollard, has been described as his masterpiece. As World War II approached, he moved into a top-floor studio at Carnegie Hall, where he lived alone until his death on May 19, 1963.



Penrhyn Stanlaws was born Stanley Adamson on March 19, 1877, in Dundee, Scotland, UK. He was a film director, known for *Singed Wings* (1922), *At the End of the World* (1921) and *Over the Border* (1922). After his last film was released, he burned all his bridges with the film colony by penning an eight-page article for the January 1923 issue of *Screenland* magazine titled "What's the Matter With Our Hollywood Women?" In it, he raked many of the era's most popular actresses over the coals for their most minor physical imperfections. He said that most Hollywood actresses had too-short legs, claiming that the length of a properly proportioned woman's legs from the soles of her feet to the base of her pelvic bone should be the same as the length from the base of her pelvic bone to the top of her head, but that most movie stars' midpoints were at their waistlines. He also claimed that a properly proportioned woman should be "seven-and-a-half heads high" but that most Hollywood actresses were only about six heads high. In 1914, Penrhyn Stanlaws and Walter Russell were among a group of artists who purchased a parcel of land on the west side of Central Park and built Hotel des Artistes. Stanlaws was reported to have died in his Los Angeles studio after falling asleep while smoking in a chair on May 20, 1957.

# Thomas Hastings

Thomas Hastings was born in New York City on March 11, 1860. He was an American architect, a partner in the firm of Carrère and Hastings until his death on October 22, 1929.

Hastings abandoned his college preparation courses to work with the chief designer at Herter Brothers, the premier New York furnishers and decorators. He later traveled to Paris to study in the atelier of Louis-Jules André, returned to the U.S. to found the firm of Carrère and Hastings with John Mervin Carrère.

The firm's most famous project was undoubtedly the New York Public Library at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street—not only an important example of its type but one of New York's most recognizable landmarks. They were also instrumental in creating the profession of urban planning, with Carrère's influential designs for Cleveland, Hartford and Atlantic City. Their varied work included the Manhattan Bridge (1899), the House and Senate Office Buildings in Washington, and Blairsden, the C. Ledyard Blair estate in Peapack, New Jersey (1896), one of the nation's greatest country houses.

After Carrère's death in 1911, Hastings went on to design the Arlington National Cemetery Tomb of the Unknowns and the Henry Clay Frick House on Fifth Avenue, as well as residences for such distinguished names as Guggenheim, DuPont, Harriman, even a 'poultry cottage' for William K. Vanderbilt. He also designed the Fort Washington Presbyterian Church (1913). He designed the 435-foot (132.59 m) tall Tower of Jewels, the centerpiece of San Francisco's 1915 Panama–Pacific International Exposition. After WWI, Hastings designed Kumler Chapel at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1917-18, and designed the American Monument in Meaux, France, that memorialized the defeat of Germany at the Second Battle of the Marne, finally completed in 1932 after Hastings' death.



## Chateau-on-the-Hill

The slope from the Chateau-on-the-Hill was to be terraced, and featured with shrubbery, fountains and lagoons.

An employees' club was also part of the plan. There was to be an aviation field nearby, a golf course closely accessible, tennis courts, archery course, baseball field, running track, athletic field and gymnasium.



# The Chateau-by-the Sea

Erected close to the bay, the planned Chateau-by-the-Sea had similar accommodations as the other clubhouse Chateau.

It would contained a restaurant, billiard rooms, swimming pool, bowling alleys, game rooms and seating areas.

All purchasers of apartments were automatically members of the club.

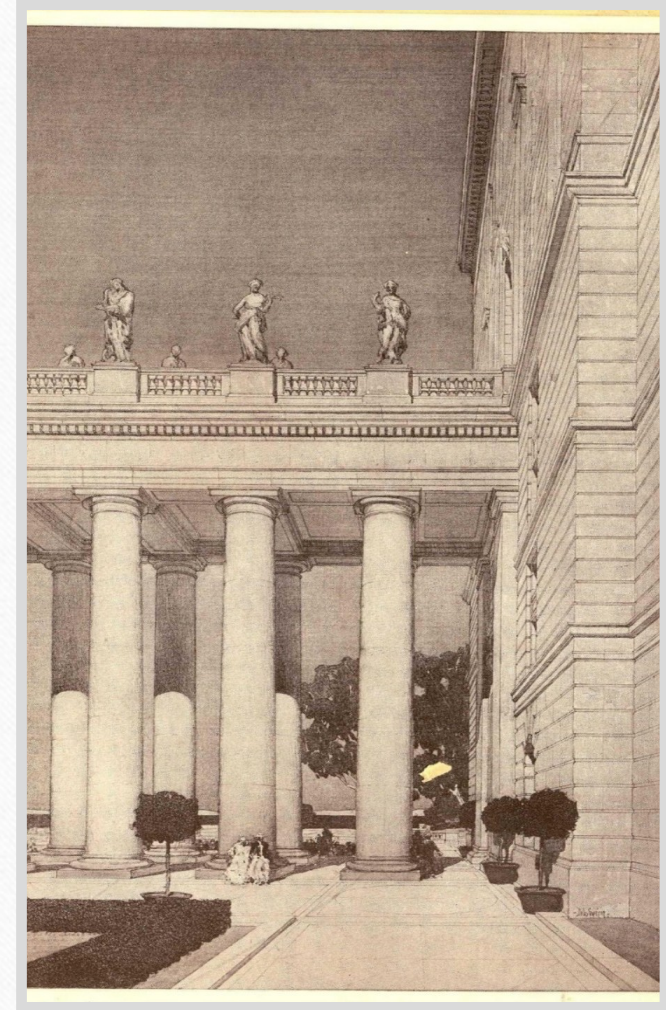


## Entrance to gardens- The Colonnades

Like its namesake, the New Versailles was envisioned as the residence for American Royalty embellished by master architects, sculptors, decorators and landscape architects.

The architectural planning and the majestic composition of the landscape formed a close symbiosis, and were meant to serve as a setting for the potential grandeur of the interior apartments.

The Colonnades consisting of pilasters, columns, arcades and sculptures framed the entrance to the magnificent gardens.



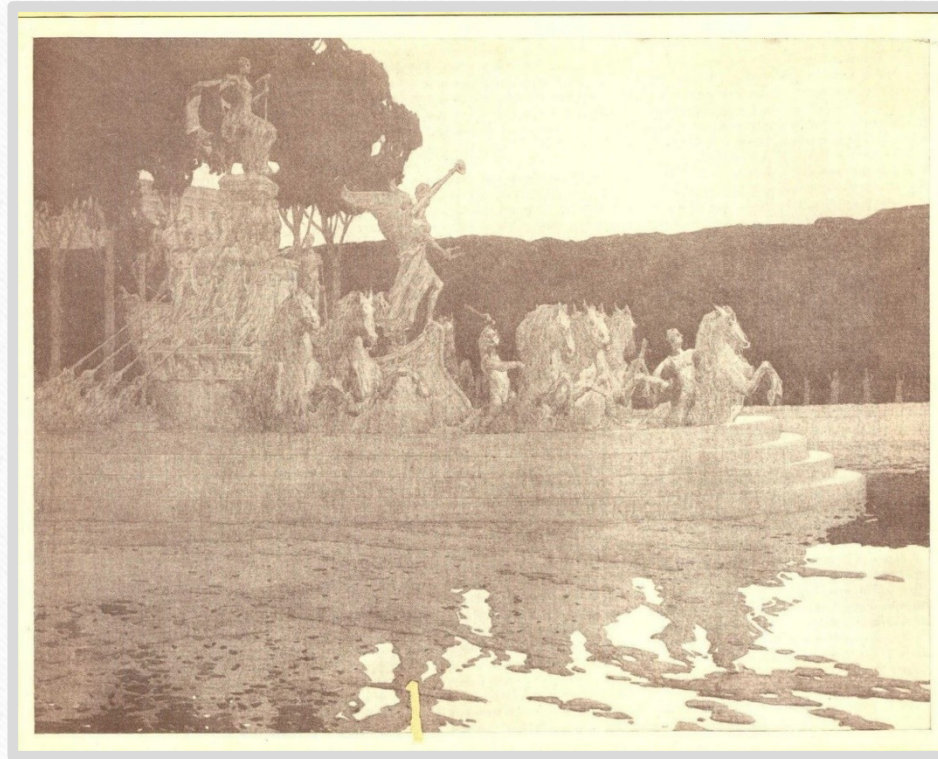
## **WORLD RENOWNED Artisans**

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Frederick MacMonnies, Paul Bartlett and Robert Aitken created the three largest fountains and acted as a committee in control of all sculptural features.

The mural and interior decorations were done by J. Alden Weir, Edwin Blashfield, Jules Guerin and Frank V. DuMond.

## Frederick MacMonnies fountain



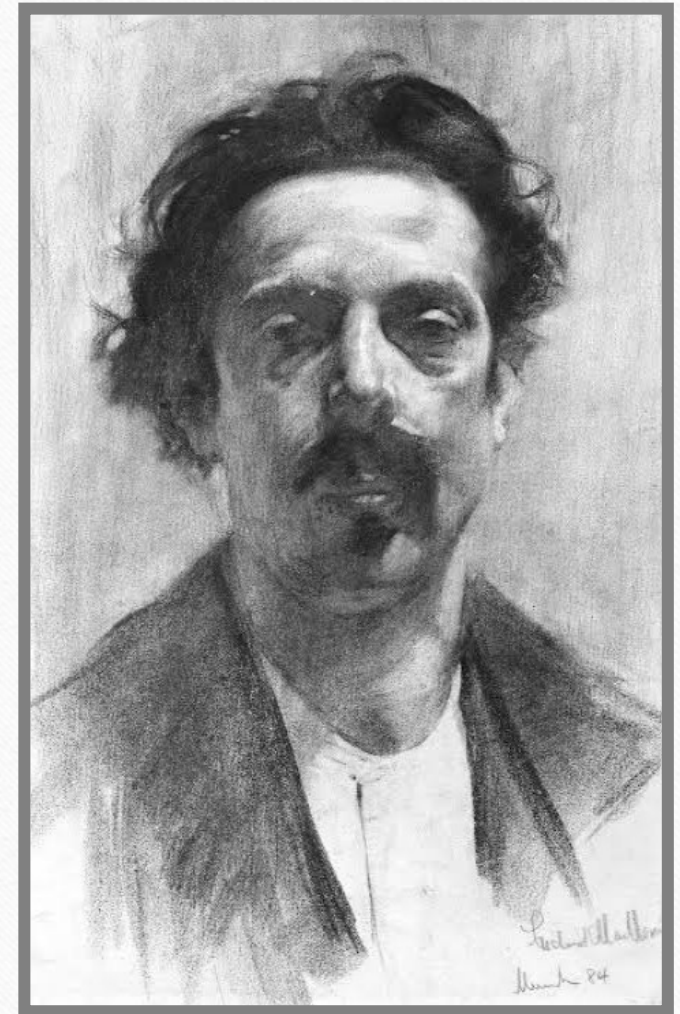
# Frederick William MacMonnies

Frederick William MacMonnies was the best-known expatriate American sculptor of the Beaux-Arts school, as successful in France as he was in the United States. He was also a highly accomplished painter and portraitist. He was born in Brooklyn Heights, on September 28, 1863, and died in New York City on March 22, 1937.

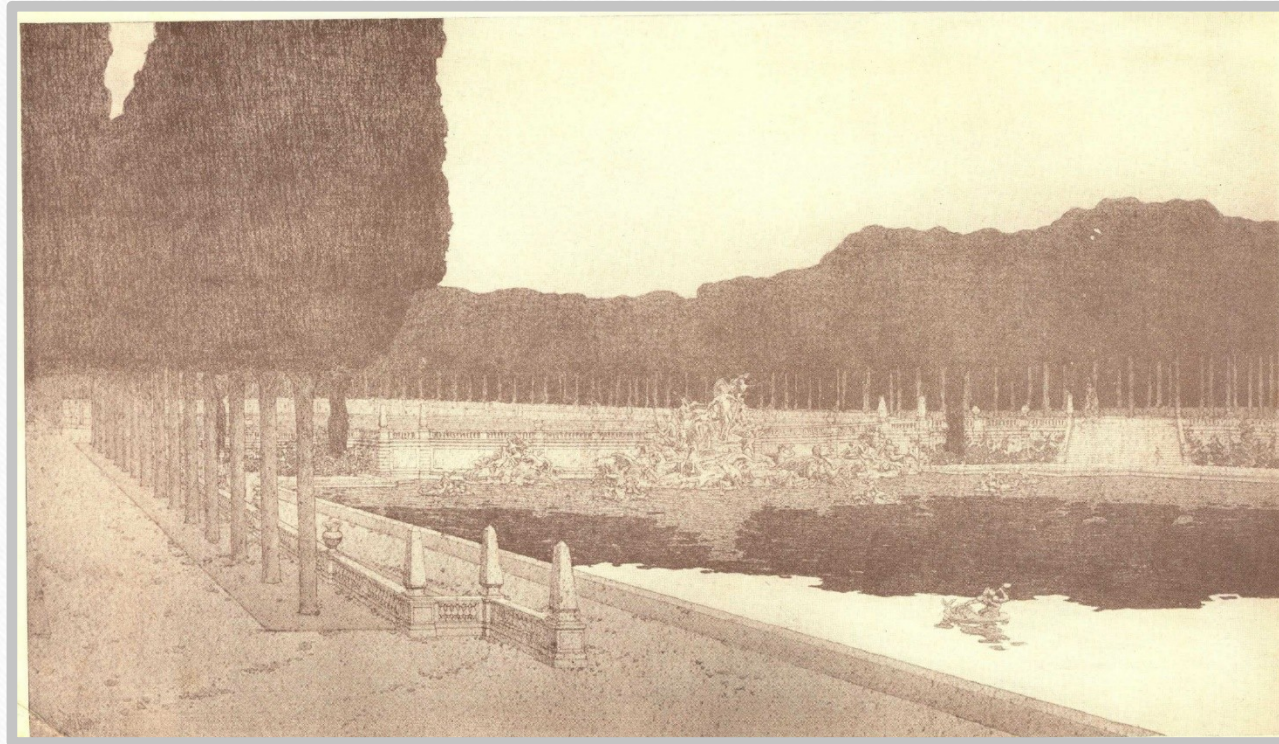
From humble beginnings in Brooklyn, Frederick William MacMonnies emerged as a leading Beaux-Arts sculptor at the turn of the twentieth century. The son of an imports dealer bankrupted by the Civil War, MacMonnies left school at a young age, taking odd jobs to contribute to the household income. After an introduction to clay modeling by sculptor John Rogers, MacMonnies began work in 1880 as an assistant, and later an apprentice, in the Manhattan studio of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, then developing as the nation's most prominent sculptor. The artist won the 1890 competition for Nathan Hale (City Hall Park, New York); a monument honoring the Revolutionary War hero who was hanged for treason against Great Britain in 1776.

At the turn of the twentieth century, MacMonnies regularly tended to large-scale sculpture commissions, notably monumental bronze groupings for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch in Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza, firstly Quadriga, and then The Army and The Navy.

Distinguished on both sides of the Atlantic, MacMonnies was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a commandeur in the French Legion of Honour.



# Paul Bartlett fountain

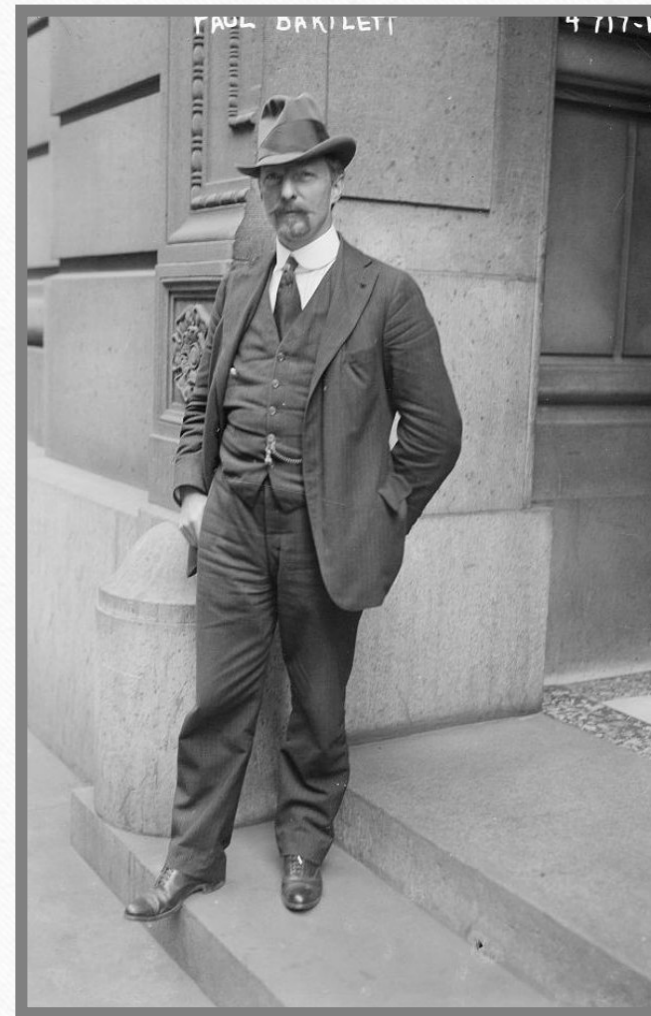


# Paul Wayland Bartlett

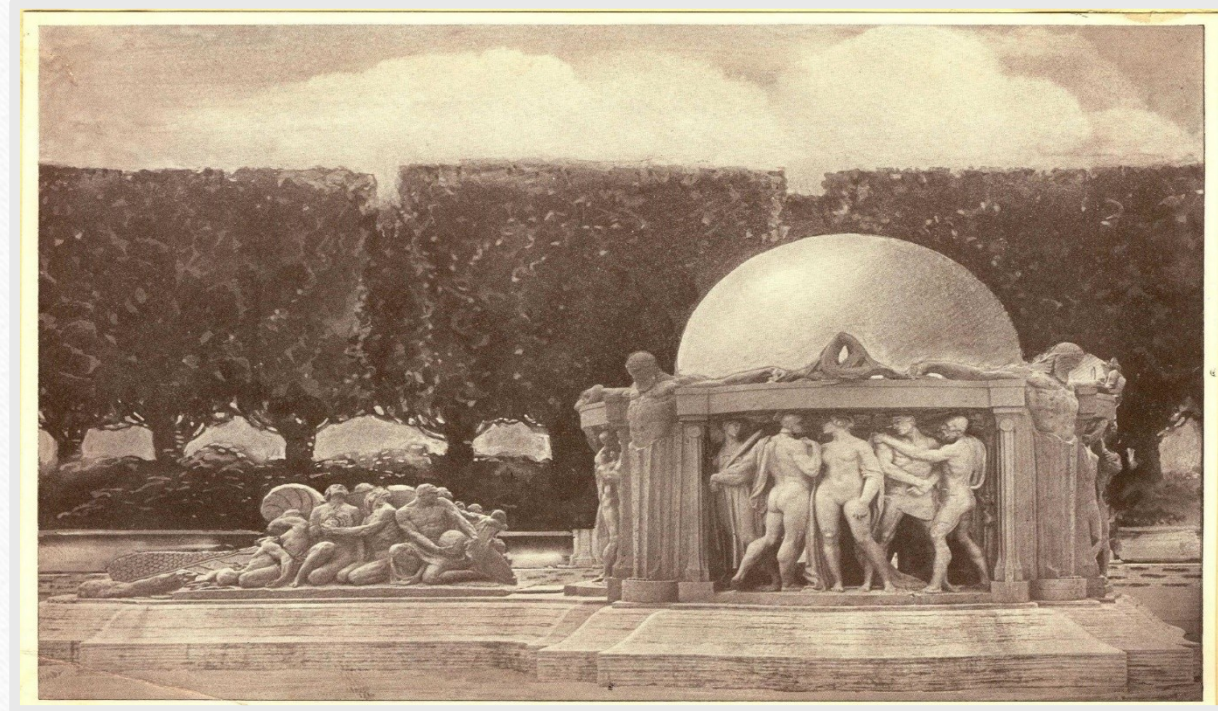
Paul Wayland Bartlett was an American sculptor working in the Beaux-Arts tradition of heroic realism. Bartlett was born on January 24, 1865, in New Haven, Connecticut and died on September 20, 1925.

At fifteen he began to study in Paris under Emmanuel Frémiet, modelling from animals in the Jardin des Plantes. He won a medal at the Paris Salon of 1887 and was elected as a member of the jury for the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889 and again at the Exposition of 1900, each time sacrificing his own opportunities of receiving medals. Bartlett's masterwork was the House of Representatives pediment at the U.S. Capitol building, *The Apotheosis of Democracy*, begun in 1908 and completed in 1916. Among his other principal works are *Bohemian Bear Tamer*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In 1895, he was named a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor. In 1916 he was admitted to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was also a member of the National Sculpture Society and the International Society of Sculptors, Painters and Gravers. In the mid-20th century, Bartlett's step-daughter, Caroline Ogden-Jones Peter worked to ensure that examples of Bartlett's sculpture were distributed to museums throughout the United States. Additional examples of his sculpture, including many plaster studies as well as his personal papers are found at Tudor Place, Caroline's former home with husband, Armistead Peter 3rd; a historic house museum open to the public since 1988.



## Robert Aitken fountain

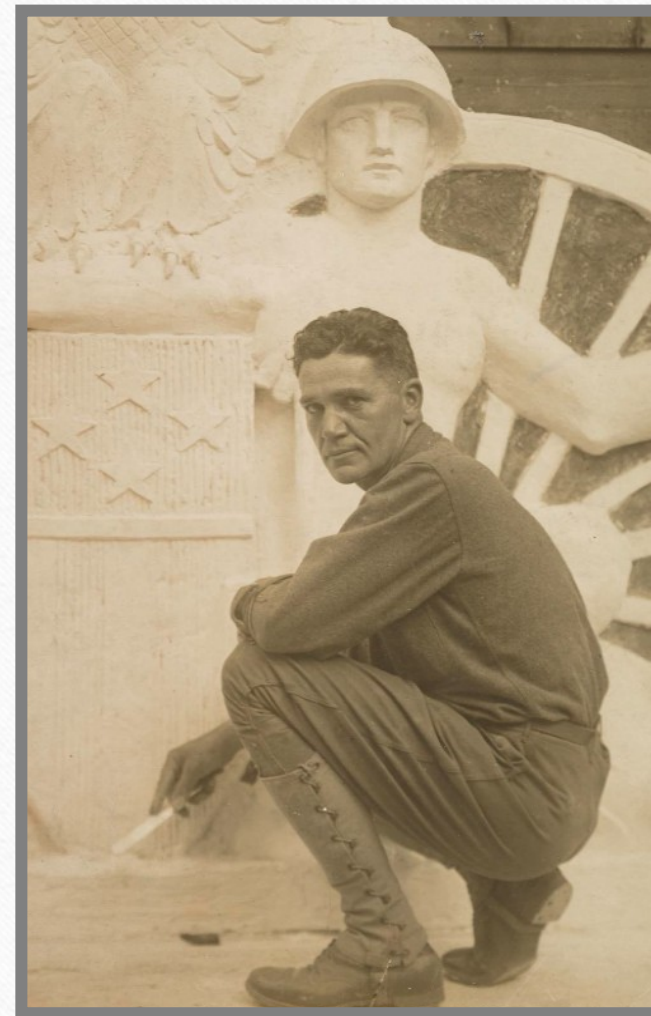


# Robert Ingersoll Aitken

Robert Ingersoll Aitken was born in San Francisco, California, on May 8, 1878. He died in New York on January 3, 1949. Aitken was an American sculptor and studied at the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art [also called the California School of Design – now the San Francisco Art Institute] with Douglas Tilden. In 1900 Aitken designed San Francisco's original municipal flag; the design was in use from 1900 until sometime in the early 1920s. In 1903, he sculpted the Victory figure for the top of the Dewey Monument, which still stands in San Francisco's Union Square. In 1904, Aitken carved a 15-foot (4.6 m) statue of a female figure, representing the Republic for the William McKinley Memorial, which still stands in the San Francisco Panhandle Park.

In 1904, Aitken moved to Paris where he continued his studies. He returned to New York City after his sojourn in Paris and was employed as an instructor at the Art Students League. Perhaps his most famous work is the West Pediment of the United States Supreme Court building, which bears the inscription "Law". The sculpture, above the entrance to the Supreme Court Building, is of nine figures—Lady Liberty surrounded by figures representing Order, Authority, Council, and Research. These allegorical figures were in fact sculptures of real people who had a role in the creation of the building. Aitken himself is depicted in the pediment, seated to the proper left of Liberty with Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes. Many of his works were carved by the Piccirilli Brothers, including the pieces for the National Archives Building.

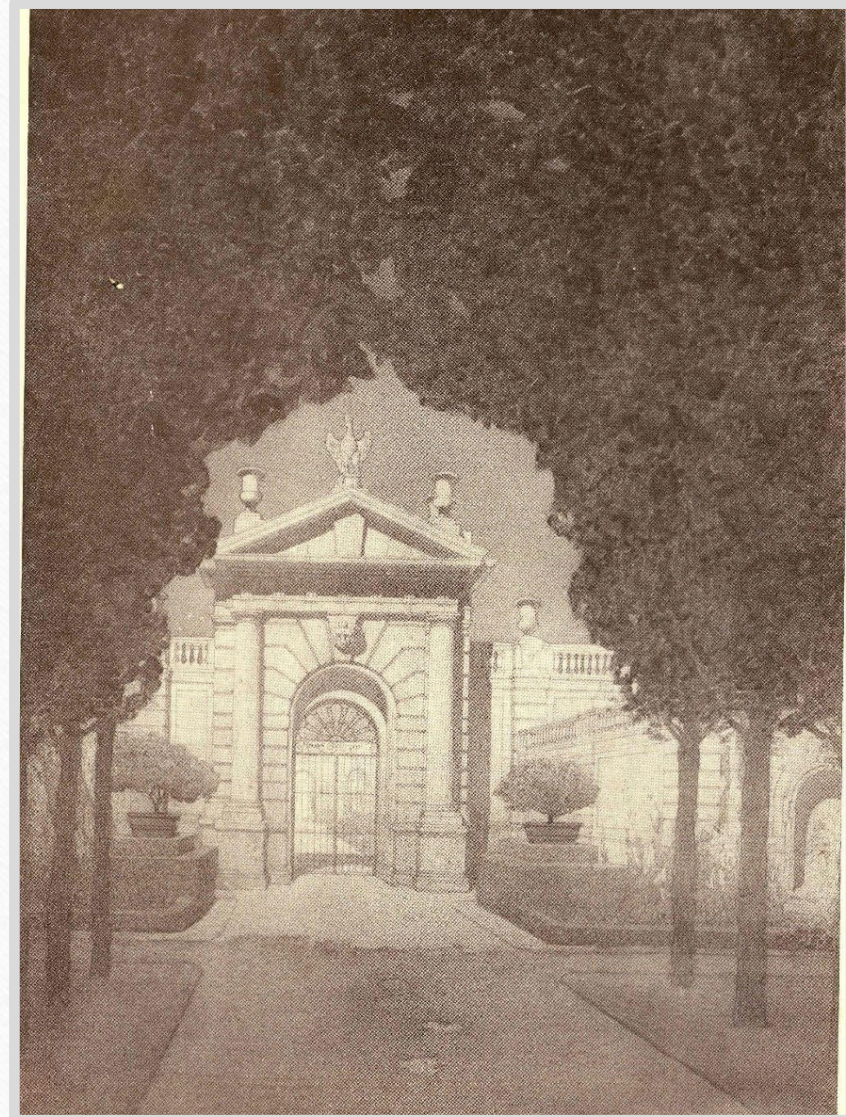
Aitken also enjoyed success as a designer of coins and medals. He sculpted the \$50 gold commemorative for the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915, as well as the official medal of the event. He also created the Missouri Centennial half dollar of 1921, following it a decade and a half later with the California Pacific International Exposition half dollar of 1935–1936. In the medallic arena, Aitken sculpted the American Numismatic Society's 1921 medal commemorating Marshal Foch's visit to the United States; the 15th issue of the Society of Medalists *Omnia Vincit Amor*, 1937; the Medal of the National Academy of Design; and the Medal of the National Sculpture Society.



## A lost dream

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New Versailles was to be the greatest milestone in American Art. Unfortunately, once the United States entered the war on April 6, 1917, lack of funding made the New Versailles a project on paper only.



At present, the Manhasset Bay Estates occupies the area which would have been the location of the New Versailles.

