

T. C. Steele State Historic Site

A Self-guiding Map of GARDENS, GROUNDS & HIKING TRAILS



In 1907, Theodore Clement Steele (1847-1926), noted Indiana artist and member of the Hoosier Group of Impressionist Painters, bought a partly wooded, abandoned farm in Brown County. The beauty and solitude of the forest and hilltop vistas served as his artistic inspiration.

The scenic 211 acre site includes five hiking trails, partially restored gardens, and historic buildings containing original furnishings and paintings.

In 1945, the artist's widow Selma Neubacher Steele, donated the property to the State of Indiana to be preserved for future art and nature lovers.

Guided tours of the historic house and studio are available year-round.

Hours:

Tuesday-Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, 1 to 5 p.m.

Closed Mondays

T. C. Steele State Historic Site
Selma N. Steele State Nature Preserve
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T. C. Steele State Historic Site is part of the Indiana State Museum and State Historic Sites Division of the Department of Natural Resources.

DEWAR LOG CABIN

The Dewar Log Cabin was built by early Brown County settler Peter Dewar, five miles south of its present site. The cabin faced destruction in the early 1930s, but feeling it was part of Brown County's heritage, Selma Steele bought the cabin, moved it and filled it with natural history displays. This "Trailside Museum" was dedicated in 1934 in memory of her brother Walter, an amateur naturalist. Today the cabin houses natural history displays and information on local flora and fauna.



CEMETERY

The white oaks shading the cemetery have broad crowns, indicating they grew in an open sunny location. The Steeles chose the "oak grove" as their eventual resting places because of its inspirational setting. Mrs. Steele's parents, brothers and sisters were buried here after Mr. Steele's death.

SELMA'S GARDENS

Mrs. Steele's creative outlet began as a "few packages of flower seeds from the city" and a "handful of Scotch daffodils" that grew into acres of flowers, orchards and vegetable gardens. For inspiration, Mrs. Steele studied the informal perennial borders popularized by English garden designer Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), the "wild garden" advocated by William Robinson (1838-1935), and Arts and Crafts traditions, which encouraged techniques and materials that blend with the surrounding landscape and emphasized relationships between house and garden. Information for restoration was gleaned from old photos, paintings, gardening scrapbooks, letters and journals.

LILY PONDS

The lily ponds served a practical and decorative purpose. Water was directed from the large studio roof into the ponds, which served as an emergency water supply. Today, goldfish swim among such aquatic plants as arrowleaf and hybrid water lilies.

ROAD OF MEMORIES

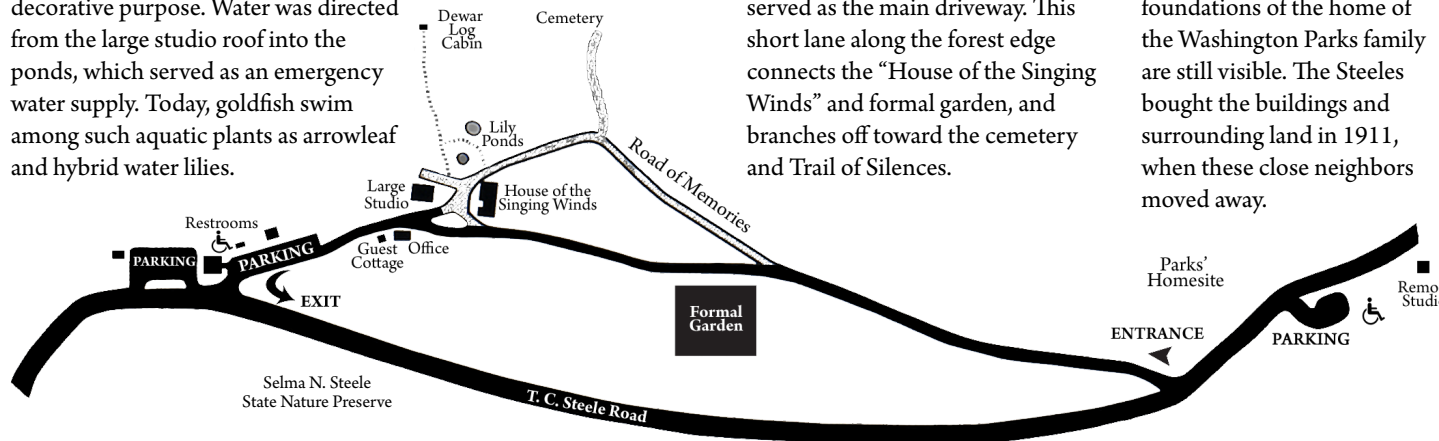
Until 1910, the Road of Memories served as the main driveway. This short lane along the forest edge connects the "House of the Singing Winds" and formal garden, and branches off toward the cemetery and Trail of Silences.

PARKS' HOMESITE

West of the stone arches, foundations of the home of the Washington Parks family are still visible. The Steeles bought the buildings and surrounding land in 1911, when these close neighbors moved away.

REMOTE STUDIO

In 1911, Mr. Steele had two temporary structures built to provide shelter when he painted outside during bad weather. With the help of the Rotary Club of Brown County, one of these studios was reconstructed, based on historic photographs.



SELMA N. STEELE STATE NATURE PRESERVE

This 92 acre preserve was dedicated in 1990, in keeping with Mrs. Steele's wish that the property remain 'a tribute to natural beauty.' It contains a diversity of community types. Deep ravines with seasonally flowing streams cut through soft bedrock. Rich undergrowth provides a wealth of wildflowers throughout the spring.

FORMAL GARDEN

The formal garden was once filled with specimen trees, hedges and perennial borders. The garden combines formal and rustic elements, and contains herbs and vegetables as well as flowers. The layout is roughly symmetrical, with rose arbors sheltering the north end of the main axis. Stately white spruces at the south end were planted just before Mrs. Steele's death in 1945, so she could only have speculated on the dramatic backdrop they would provide. The original sundial marks the crossing of a secondary east-west axis. Under the small east arbor, a plaque lists contributors to the garden restoration.

HILLSIDE & PERENNIAL GARDENS

Each year, visitors enjoy the sweeps of daffodils naturalized on the hillsides by Mrs. Steele. Irises, peonies and other old-fashioned flowers follow this early spring display. Garden beds sprawl in informal planting schemes popular in the 1910s and 1920s, while stone borders, terraces and rock walls keep plantings in place on the slope and visually unify the gardens. Pergolas and arbors attached to the "House of the Singing Winds" continue the plan of the house into the garden.

