

Ogawa Jihei VII

Ogawa Jihei VII (1860–1933) was a prominent landscape designer of the Meiji era (1868–1912). He was renowned for his work with rocks and water and is considered a pioneer of the modern Japanese garden. He created three of the four gardens at Heian Jingu: the West Garden (Nishi Shin'en) in 1895, the Middle Garden (Naka Shin'en) in the same year, and the East Garden (Higashi Shin'en) in 1916.

The gardens are bright, open spaces with large ponds that draw water from the Lake Biwa Canal, constructed in 1890 to bring water to the eastern part of Kyoto from 10 kilometers away.

Ogawa Jihei created the stream flowing from the Middle Garden to the West Garden in 1897. The rocks are positioned carefully to suggest a naturally occurring stream. The path follows the stream in the opposite direction to the flow of the water, a deliberate design decision made to encourage enjoyment of the surroundings at a leisurely pace.

Look for stones that have been recycled from bridges and other structures in the shrine gardens. They are a trademark of Ogawa Jihei VII's work and feature in many of the gardens he designed.