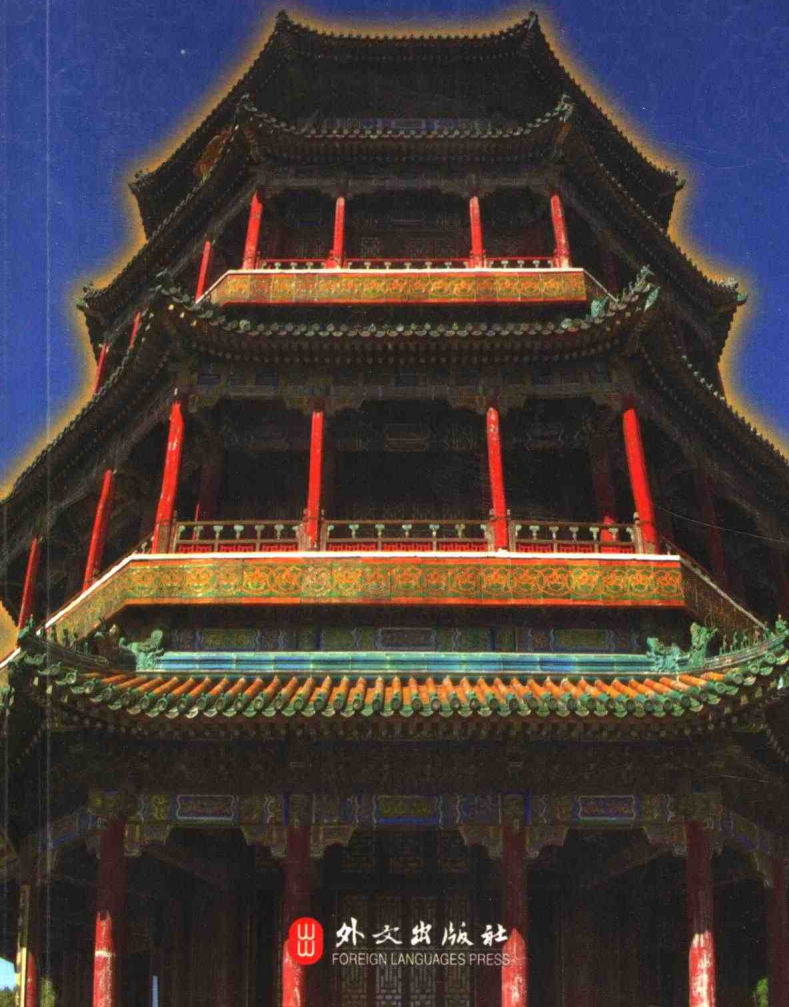


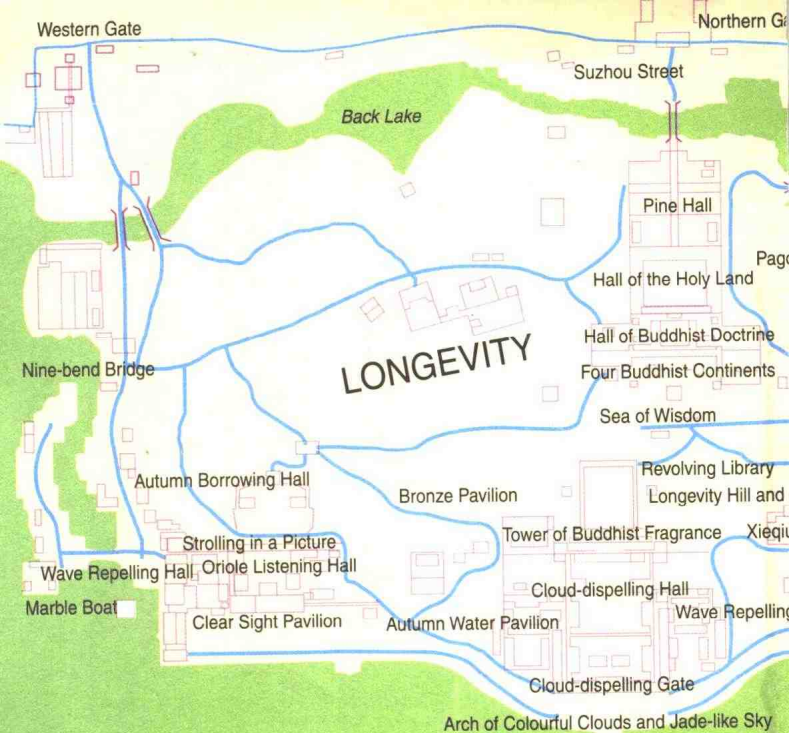


THE SUMMER PALACE

and Its Background Stories



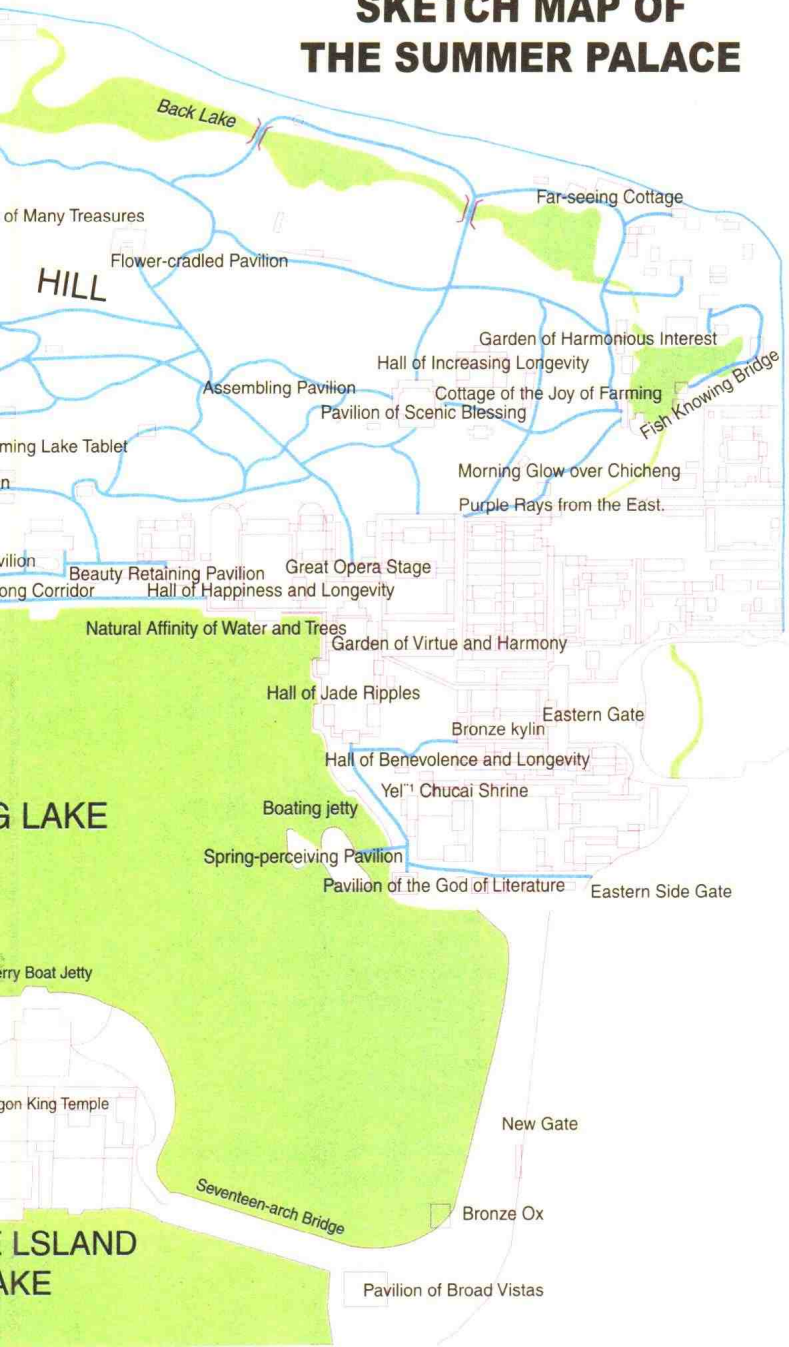
外文出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



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SKETCH MAP OF THE SUMMER PALACE



图书在版编目(CIP)数据

颐和园趣闻 / 徐凤桐, 兰佩瑾编. — 北京: 外文出版社, 2005

ISBN 7-119-03808-7

I. 颐… II. ①徐…②兰… III. 颐和园—简介 英文

IV. K928.73

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2004)第 104304 号

编 辑: 徐凤桐 兰佩瑾

撰 文: 徐凤桐 等

摄 影: 余志勇 高明义 刘春根 兰佩瑾 董瑞成

汤博文 子 浩 元 青 袁 莉 等

翻 译: 汤博文 丛 仁

责任编辑: 兰佩瑾

设 计: 吴 涛 等

颐和园趣闻

© 外文出版社

外文出版社出版

(中国北京百万庄大街 24 号)

邮政编码: 100037

外文出版社网页: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

外文出版社电子邮件地址: info@flp.com.cn

sales@flp.com.cn

北京京都六环印刷厂

中国国际图书贸易总公司发行

(中国北京车公庄西路 35 号)

北京邮政信箱第 399 号 邮政编码 100044

2006 年(48 开)第 1 版

2006 年第 1 版第 1 次印刷

(英文)

ISBN 7-119-03808-7

04200 (平)

7-E-3630P

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Preface

As China's economy developed and the livelihood of the people improved in the last decade, there has appeared a tourist upsurge, in which the Summer Palace (Yiheyuan – meaning Garden of Harmonious Peace), the most famous classical imperial garden in the world, has become a tourist hot spot.

Statistics show that since 1995 the Summer Palace has been visited by as many as 10 million people every year. The increase by several hundred thousand visitors to a garden on a city's outskirts every year is unprecedented anywhere in the world.

There are three reasons for the Summer Palace to become a tourist hot spot:

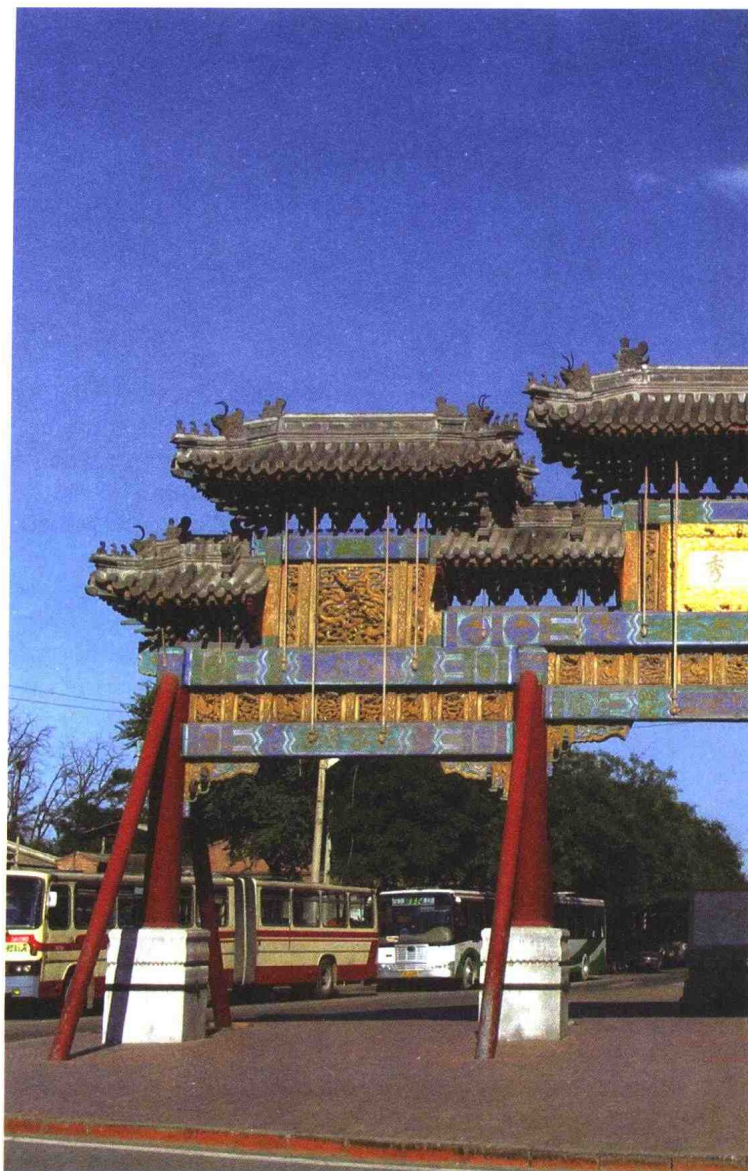
1. Outstanding Landscape Architecture

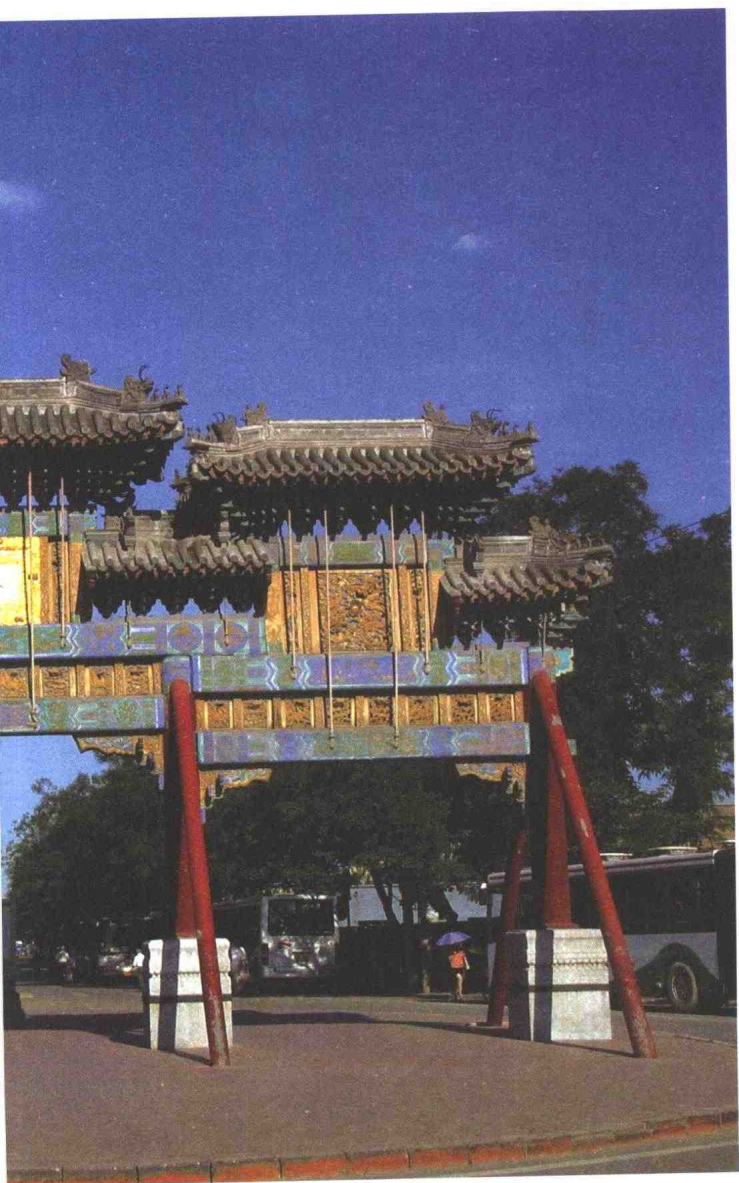
The Eastern art of landscape architecture occupies a unique place in the world history of landscape gardening. The Summer Palace is an outstanding example of the classical Eastern art of landscape architecture. Its vast scale, architec-



The three gilded characters for the name of the Summer Palace above the Eastern Gate of the Summer Palace are in the calligraphic work of Emperor Guangxu.

The archway outside the Eastern Gate of the Summer Palace, with its name "Yanxiu" (Subdued Elegance) written by Emperor Qianlong, is the largest street-straddling archway intact of the Qing dynasty.





tural magnificence, ingenious design and scenic beauty are rarely paralleled in the whole world. By cleverly combining the green hills, clear water and building structures into a continuous series of picturesque views where natural beauty and artificial beauty are organically merged into one and where visitors beholding it will feel relaxed both in heart and in spirit. As they feast their eyes on endless scenic marvels, they may wonder if they have walked into a wonderland. As a palace is often enshrouded in a mysterious air, people both in China and abroad are curious to see it for themselves.

2. Important Historical Value

Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, the last feudal dynasty in Chinese history, it was Empress Dowager Cixi who actually held the supreme power. Both Emperor Tongzhi and Emperor Guangxu (1862-1908) were mere puppets. It was, however, against the feudal tradition for Cixi to hold power because the Qing impe-

The Eastern Gate of the Summer Palace



Emperor Qianlong Rebuilds the Gardens

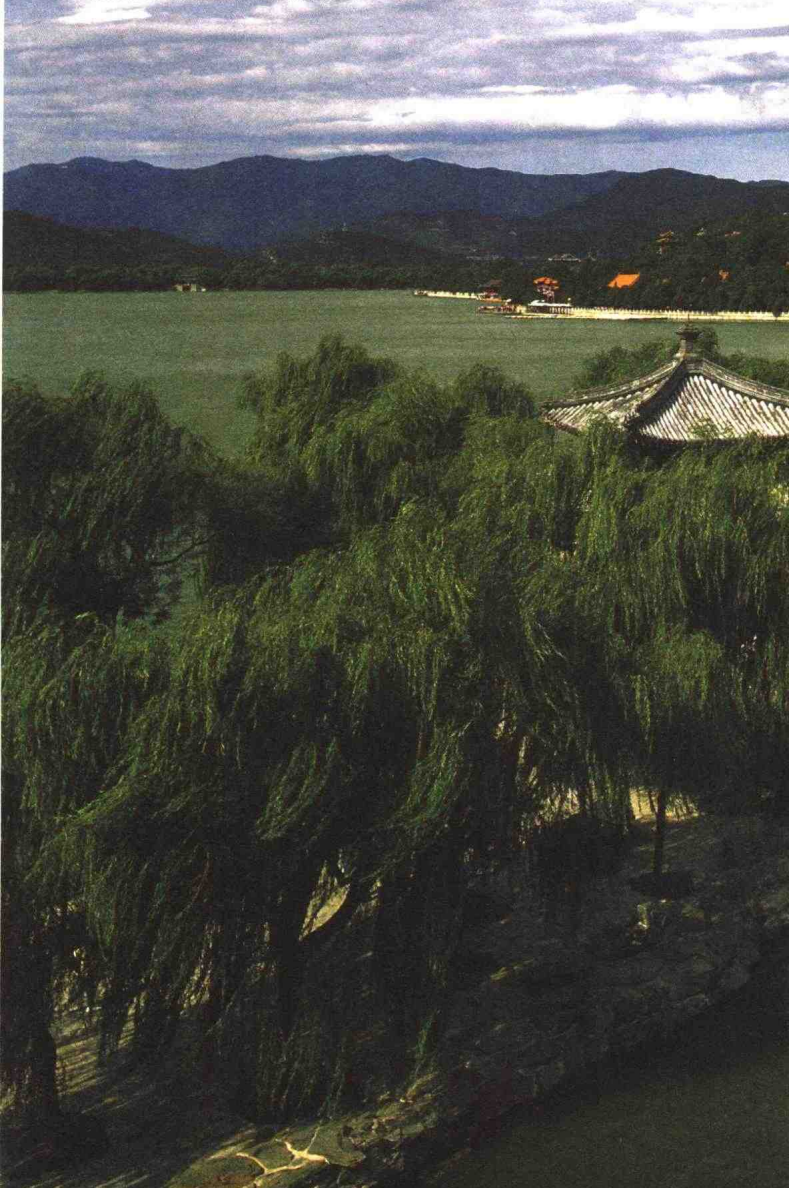
The Summer Palace was built on the former site of the Garden of Clear Ripples (Qingyi Yuan), a garden built at the time when the art of classical landscape architecture was at the zenith of its development and when Emperor Qianlong was holding the supreme power of the Qing dynasty and had claimed that he “cannot forget the joy brought to him by a beautiful landscape.”

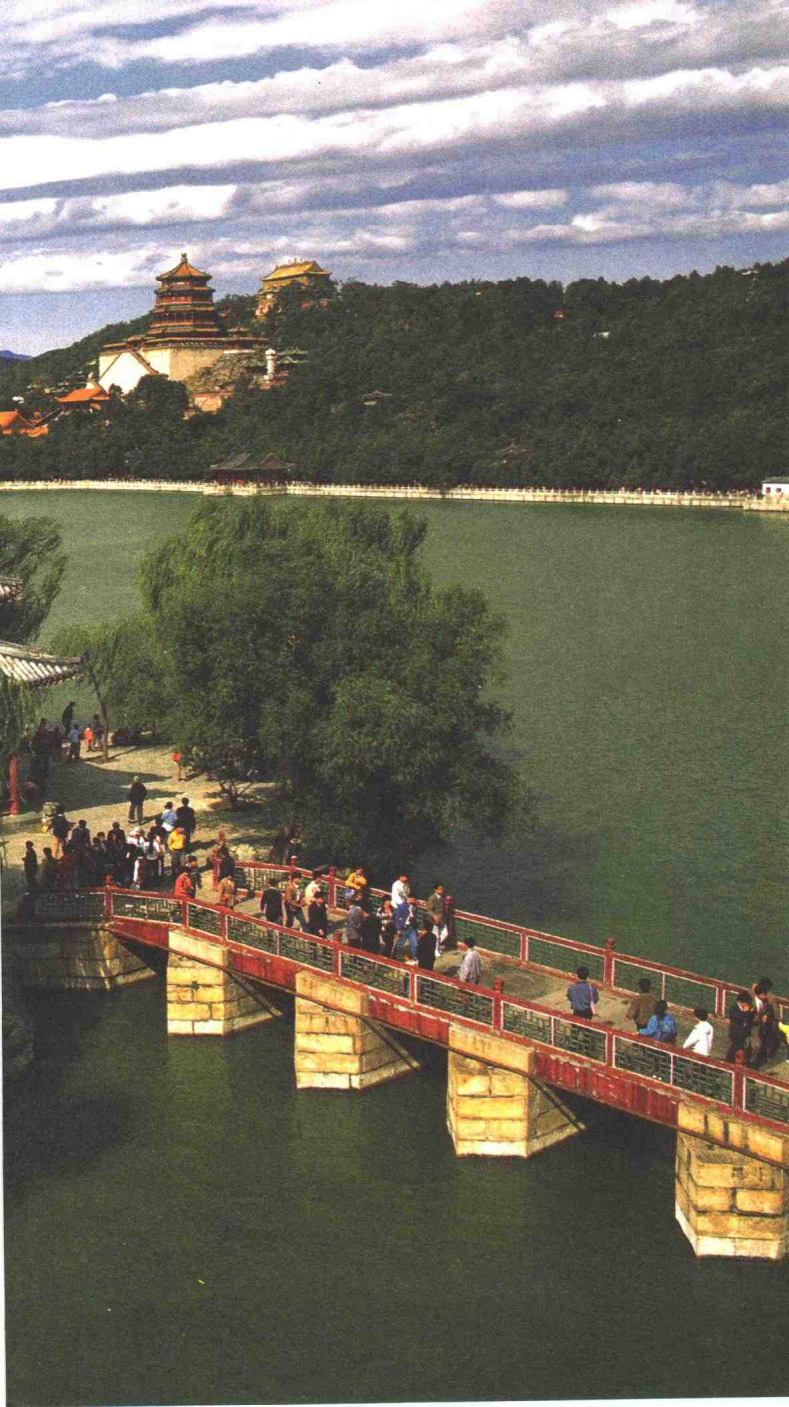
Emperor Qianlong (1711-1799), named Hongli and the fourth emperor of the Qing dynasty, was in the throne for 60 years. It was a period when the country became unified and the rule of the Qing dynasty became more or less stabilized. As economy, science and culture progressed greatly, the period became known as “the Golden Age of Qianlong,” the most prosperous period in the several thousand years of Chinese feudal society. There was a great upsurge for building parks and gardens in the whole country. The art of classical landscape architecture in the imperial and private



A portrait of Emperor Qianlong by Giuseppe Castiglione

A beautiful view of Kunming Lake and the Tower of Buddhist Fragrance from the Pavilion of the God of Literature.





gardens and religious sites reached the zenith of development and formed a prominent and independent school in the world history of landscape architecture.

In order to establish its effective rule over the vast areas inhabited by the Han people, the upper Manchu ruling class studied the Han culture most diligently. The three generations of emperors, from Shunzhi to Qianlong, were all admirers of the Han painting, calligraphy, poetry, drama and gardens. Among them, Emperor Qianlong was the most earnest devotee.

When Emperor Qianlong was in the throne, he rebuilt and enlarged one after another the Garden of Cheerful Spring (Changchunyuan), Garden of Perfection and Enlightenment (Yuanmingyuan), Garden of Serenity and Brightness (Jingmingyuan) and Garden of Serenity and Delight (Jingyiyuan) in Beijing's northwest, and the Eight Outside Temples at the Mountain Resort in Chengde, which were first built during the period of Emperors Kangxi and Yongzheng at great expenses. Even shortly after he had declared that he

"The bubbling of a spring outside the bamboo grove attracts cranes; the shadowy bridge in the sun props up a rainbow." — a couplet on the door of a building.





to build the area around Longevity Hill into the large Garden of Clear Ripples in the middle of the four imperial gardens already in existence, so that the imperial gardens on the northwestern outskirts of Beijing would be linked together to form a huge complex of Qing imperial gardens, the only one of its kind in the world.

The construction of the Garden of Clear Ripples started in 1750 and was completed in 1764, taking as long as 15 years and costing a total of 4.48 million ounces of silver. A construction work like that of the Garden of Clear Ripples which involved so much elaborate work and huge expenses and went on uninterrupted in one attempt was unprecedented in the world history of landscape architecture.

The completion of the Garden of Clear Ripples not only linked the best of classical Chinese gardens together. More importantly, it had joined the imperial gardens on the northwestern outskirts of Beijing into one to form the Three Hills and Five Gardens (Fragrant Hill, Jade Spring Hill and Longevity Hill; Yuanmingyuan, Changchunyuan, Qingyiyuan, Jingyiyuan and Jingmingyuan). These hills and gardens summed up the finest tradition of classical Chinese landscape architecture, displayed the talent of the best architects and craftsmen from all parts of the country and represented the distinct style of classical Chinese landscape architecture.

Among the Three Hills and Five Gardens, Yuanmingyuan was the most outstanding. Emperor Qianlong once proudly exclaimed, "Between heaven and earth and among places for emperors and kings to spend their leisure, none can compare with this place." But in natural scenery, the Garden of Clear Ripples was above all the others. Qianlong wrote in a poem, "Where

This large stone carved with two dragons toying a pearl and with stone steps on either side comes from Yuanmingyuan.

is the most relaxing and cheerful place in Beijing? Kunming is unparalleled in natural scenery." Kunming here referred to Kunming Lake, which represented the Garden of Clear Ripples. The poems in which Emperor Qianlong praised the beautiful scenery of the Garden of Clear Ripples are preserved today on carved stones and plaques. The poems show that Emperor Qianlong cherished highly the Garden of Clear Ripples.

After the completion of the Garden of Clear Ripples, Emperor Qianlong came every year to joy the cool summer there. As Yuanmingyuan was near, he usually came from there in the early morning and, after spending a day there, returned to Yuanmingyuan in the evening. Sometimes, he also came directly from the Forbidden City. Every time he came, he was followed by a large group of civil and military officials and members of the imperial family. Together, they drank wine, composed poems and enjoyed the beautiful lake scenery.

Although Emperor Qianlong was very fond of the Garden of Clear Ripples and there was a sleeping hall built for him, written materials show that he rarely spent the night there. He said that he had made it clear before many people that he had the large imperial garden built at great expenses not for his own enjoyment. He probably thought that since he did not live in it, people would forgive him for the extravagance. In fact, in the feudal, autocratic society no one dared to criticize an emperor for whatever he said or did whether it was right or wrong.

After Qianlong, during the reigns of Emperors Jiaqing (1796-1821), Daoguang (1821-1851) and Xianfeng (1851-1862), the Garden of Clear Ripples remained to be an affiliation to Yuanmingyuan.

In October 1860, when Beijing was invaded by the Anglo-French Allied Forces, the Garden of Clear Ripples was burned and destroyed by the invaders.

Changing the Name of the Urn Hill

The Longevity Hill gained its name more than 230 years ago when Emperor Qianlong celebrated the birthday of his mother, Empress Dowager Xiaosheng.

The Longevity Hill was originally named Urn Hill. It is said that because an old man found a stone urn at the foot of the hill, the hill was named Urn Hill. By the time of Emperor Jiajing's reign (1522-1567) in the Ming dynasty, the urn became lost, but people continued to call the hill Urn Hill.

A stone tablet carved with the names of Longevity Hill and Kunming Lake stands in front of the Revolving Library.

