



Magnolia

Magnolia grandiflora
The Laurel Tree of Carolina
Catesby's *Natural History*, 1743

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The Road to Historic Landscape Preservation at Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens

by Jane A. Curtis, Associate Curator, Gardens, Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens



The entry drive to Bayou Bend, 1945, from A Garden Book for Houston, 1950 edition.

The field of historic landscape preservation has grown substantially over the past decade, while guidelines for the treatment of cultural landscapes (preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction, as appropriate) have been both defined and refined. While the road map developed by the National Park Service, particularly at the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, has given shape and order to the process, the initial steps can be the most challenging. In the case of a modern, twentieth-century construction, the first step is determining that a landscape is indeed historic and worthy of such efforts.

That first step was taken carefully on behalf of Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens in Houston,

Texas, now the American decorative arts wing of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and host to the 1999 annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society. Constructed in 1929, at the tail end of the American Country House Movement, with gardens that were developed over a period of forty-plus years, the cultural value of Bayou Bend's integrated house/garden composition is not immediately obvious. It may seem, at first glance, too recent to be "historic"—only one generation old, the private home of Miss Ima Hogg, sited in a city with a poor reputation for historic preservation. This context, however, is exactly why Bayou Bend is significant, as it speaks beautifully to Houston's recent past, which is ever more threatened by the current economic boom. It is the story of Miss Hogg, her family, and their contributions to the city of Houston and to Texas, which give life, substance, and meaning to the gardens.

The 14 1/2-acre estate was set aside by Michael D. and William C. Hogg in 1928 as they acquired and subdivided land for River Oaks, a planned garden suburb modeled after similar developments in Kansas City, Chicago, and Denver. It was a large lot with a distinctive land form in the otherwise flat coastal plain — a sloping point of land defined by an acute bend in Buffalo Bayou. The Hogg's intent was to build a private family home in close proximity to downtown Houston. Their sister, known to most as "Miss Ima" and then a mature woman of 44, worked closely with architect John Staub on both the design of the house and its

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Sir John Hill (1714-1775)**