



Magnolia

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

Bulletin of the
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Spring-Summer 2000

The Garden Mount in Early Carolina Landscape Design

By: Elise Pinckney, Charleston, South Carolina

Within a radius of twenty miles of Charleston, there survive three rare examples of the garden mount. They are easy to overlook or to confuse with other earthworks. Very popular in English landscaping of the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries, the mount was appropriately transferred to the rice-growing flat lands of Carolina in the prosperous 1730s and 40s. All three local survivors — Crowfield Plantation, Middleton Place, and Cedar Grove — were in the elaborate designs created by the connected Izard and Middleton families. These three mounts were built in the same era, have the same simple outlines, and are surprisingly good survivors.

Basically, the mount has been defined in English usage as “an artificial hill from which one could

view the garden.”¹ But in addition, from it one could transcend the confines of the garden wall, contrast the vision of distant nature, and broaden the un-obscured horizons of contemplation. The garden mount is mysterious. It has not one, but many origins and a long history. The early mountain peoples of the Middle East — Hittite, Mede, and Persian — who descended in turn on the alluvial plain of the Euphrates Valley, brought with them not only the custom of worshiping their gods upon high places, but also a nostalgic longing for the hills. The Sumarians had their ziggurats; the Assyrians their temple-topped mounts. Garden mounts also were recorded in ancient China.²

There seems to be no direct line of continuity from, for instance, the hanging gardens of Persia to the long tradition in Western civilization. But inspiration may have referred to the innovative artificial mount that King Nebuchadnezzar built for his Medean wife, who pined for the landscape of her youth. His garden was a man-made rectangular hill on a base a quarter of a mile square. From this base the terraces ascended like steps, each storey built upon arches, so that beneath each terrace was a cool covered promenade or series of rooms. Upon every terrace — the floor of which was the roof of the room below — were planted trees and shrubs. The whole effect was a great tree-covered mountain. The scale

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The mount, at Middleton Place, showing its vista across the Ashley River

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CALENDAR

July 28th, 2000. “The Future of Garden History,” Annual Garden Seminar at George Mason’s Gunston Hall Plantation. For more details, call (703) 550-9220; toll free (800) 811-6966. Web site: www.Gunstonhall.org; e-mail: historic@GunstonHall.org

August 10th-12th, 2000. North American Fruit Explorers 2000 Conference. Organization devoted to the discovery, cultivation, and appreciation of fruits & nuts, including Southern heirlooms. On the grounds of the University of Virginia. For general information, call (804) 752-6508; e-mail: munson@erols.com; web site: www.nafex.org

August 25th- 26th, 2000. “Historic Plant Hunting: Process & Discovery,” the 2nd biennial Historic Plant Symposium of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello. Speakers include Christy White, horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village; former CHP director John Fitzpatrick; landscape historian C. Allan Brown; rosarian Doug Seidel; flower historian and author Greg Grant; and Monticello’s Peter Hatch and Peggy Cornett. For more information, call (804) 984-9816 or (804) 984-9821; pcornett@monticello.org

September 20th, 2000. Colonial Williamsburg Garden History Seminar, “The Plantation Garden: Its Aspects, Influences and Evolution.” This one-day seminar will look at the Southern plantation through time, exploring the influences of Italian garden design, of Williamsburg’s nurseryman Peter Bellett, and the prevalence of the orangerie. For more information, contact the Williamsburg Institute, P. O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776; (800) 283-9486; fax (757) 565-8630; dcountryman@cwf.org

October 13th-14th, 2000. “Exploring Southern Gardens,” the annual Southern Garden Symposium. Speakers include SGHS past president Dr. William C. Welch on “The Bountiful Flower Garden.” Other topics include “Modern Floras: The Frenchwoman’s Garden in this Century,” “Sculpture in the Garden,” and “The Role of Landscape Design in Hollywood Films.” For more information, contact the symposium registrar at: P. O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775 or call (225) 635-6330.

November 16th-18th, 2000. “The Colonial Revival in America,” co-sponsored by the National Park Service and the University of Virginia’s departments of Landscape Architecture and Architectural History. This conference will explore new ideas and perspectives on the Colonial Revival, which, in all its manifestations is one of the most persistent elements in American culture; as design, it may be our national idiom. For information, contact Richard Guy Wilson at (804) 924-6462; rgw4h@virginia.edu

May 4th-6th, 2001. “Pocosin to Parterre: Landscapes of the Carolina Coastal Plain,” the 19th annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society at Tryon Palace, New Bern, North Carolina. This meeting will explore the varied landscapes of the coastal region, from unique natural features to high style gardens. The program also includes a visit to historic Edenton. The meeting coordinators are Carlton B. Wood and Perry Mathewes. For more information, contact Tryon Palace Historic Sites and Gardens, (800) 767-1560.

September 27th- 29th, 2001. 13th Biennial Conference on Restoring Southern Landscapes and Gardens at Old Salem in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The theme will explore historic horticultural practices in the South. For more information, contact Keyes Williamson, conference chair, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108, telephone (336) 724-3125; e-mail: facilities@OldSalem.org [see article below].

October 14th-18th, 2001. 9th International Heritage Rose Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. This conference will focus international attention and educate the public on the historic contributions of Charleston as the source of the Noisette rose, the first class of rose to be developed in America. Hosted by Ruth Knopf; honorary chairs: Mrs. Joseph H. (Patti) McGee and Mrs. Alexander Sanders. Contact Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, P. O. Box 975, Charleston, SC 29402. Phone (803) 853-8000.

April 18th- 21st, 2002. 20th Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society in Natchez, Mississippi. Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, meeting chair, is planning a special anniversary event.

*Garden Mount...
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that this pyramidal hanging garden of Babylon presented to a wondering ancient world was far beyond anything repeated subsequently.³

Within monasteries of Europe, mounts served a dual purpose: allegorically representing the hill of Calvary, and in practice allowing the monks an occasional overlook to the vistas beyond. During the Renaissance, the mount apparently was used in limited fashion in Italy and France either as an ornament or as a practical use of limited space. A mount in Padua's 1545 Botanical Gardens offered ascent up a spiral path, and from the top the viewer could look across the squared beds to the canal below.⁴



Near the base of the mount: unobstructed view across the marsh and Ashley River. The terraces of Middleton Place are seen in the center distance.

In England, it was flamboyant young King Henry VIII who, ascending the throne in 1509, brought the "frivolities of horticulture" to his land. In gardening taste, it was he who pulled England into the Renaissance movement. Spurred by his rivalry with French King Francis I and encouraged by his ally Cardinal Wolsey during the almost forty years of his reign, Henry VIII made gardening a kingly pastime and was a great patron of those arts. He anglicized the traditions brought from France and Italy.

His reign was a time for building fine new country houses with new gardens around them. The example King Henry himself set was his splendid Hampton Court. Here he continued the traditional maze, the turf seat, the bower and fountain; and he incorporated also the newer imports: topiary, knots, raised beds, and the mount. Henry's mount was a pile of a quarter-of-a-million bricks covered with earth. Its spiral path was wide enough for four to walk abreast and the summit was crowned with a three storey banquet house with a lantern-arbor.

The king's elaborate example (1534) naturally generated popularity for a variety of these experimental garden ornaments. Mounts could be of any shape or size;

they were often planted with clipped shrubs and scented herbs and flowers. The path of one was described as "writen about in degrees like turning of cokilsheels ... and comes to the top without payne." From another, which overlooked a park, one "might shoot a buck."⁵

Reflecting the nobility's pleasures in horticultural diversions, a 1618 illustrated book, *A New Orchard and Garden* by William Lawson, recommended a mount for each of the four corners of a large patterned rectangle. From such elevations the viewer would feel he had been "Magically transported into a new Garden." The practical Lawson even gave instructions for construction: "To force earth for a Mount or such like, set it round with quicke [quickset or fast growing shrubs], and lay boughes of Trees strangely intermingled, the tops inward, With the Earth in the middle."⁶

Within a few years there were two mounts incorporated in the college grounds of Oxford University. The centerpiece of the formal walled garden at Wadham College was a large conical mount with a broad stair facing the halls. The square mount at New College, completed by 1648, is now the largest surviving example in England. From the high summit the walker could look down on famous knot gardens; and beyond the discipline of the college wall, view the park with deer and grazing sheep.⁷

The early Georgian gardens of England retained some formal features and they reflected also the new central purpose of landscaping: the imitation of nature. "That the slopes of mounts be laid in a moderate reclination," advised



Cedar Grove

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Garden Mount:...
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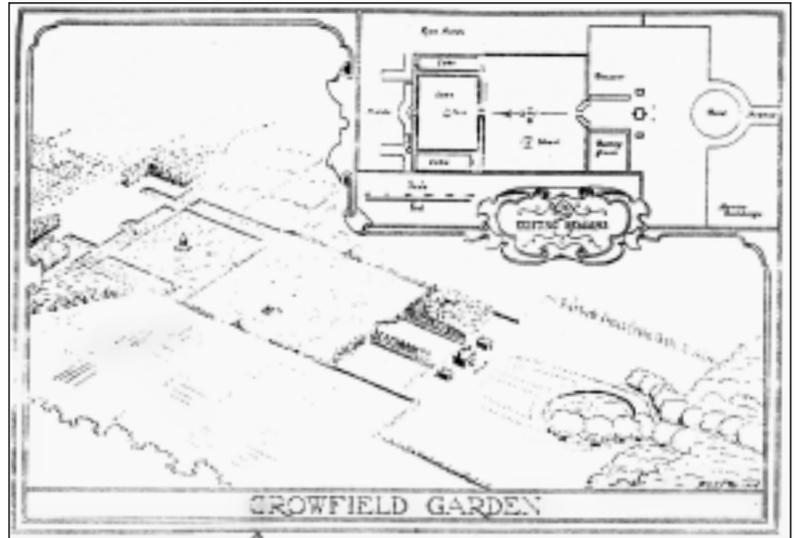


Batty Langley, “and planted with all sorts of evergreens in a promiscuous manner, so as to grow all in a thicket, which has a prodigious fine effect.”⁸

One of the most influential owners in this prospering age was the poet Alexander Pope, who designed his own garden beside his Palladian villa on the bank of the Thames at Twickenham in Middlesex. He began his five-acre rectangular garden lying behind his house by 1719, and varied and enhanced it over twenty years. Some innovative solutions were required because of the shape of the land. A grassy lawn lay along the riverside before the villa, but just behind it, as the tract widened, lay the public road from London to nearby Hampton Court. For access from the house area to his garden across the road, Pope devised an underground passage, which surfaced on the garden side. Here a succession of open lawns was laid out, punctuated by thickets, shrubbery, serpentine or angular paths, a bowling green — and a large mount. It was “covered with Bushes and Trees of a wilder growth, and more confused order, rising as it were out of clefts of Rocks, and Heaps of Rugged and mossy stones; among which a narrow intricate path leads in an irregular spiral to the top, where is placed a forest seat or Chair.” One of Pope’s guests would describe his garden as a “retreat equal to the muses’ own Parnassus, atop its Great Mount with a vista to the Thames.”⁹

Across the River, a few miles down stream, lay the estate of Richmond Gardens, now incorporated in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. The massive house had been built as early as 1714 by the Duke of Ormonde. It passed to King George II, who settled it on his Queen Caroline, and she engaged Charles Bridgeman, the busy designer of the twenties and thirties. Near the River’s edge, Richmond had its mount — a circular, turfed one, with the path winding around its symmetrical tiers. It was topped by a domed temple, purely classical, and similar to others designed then.¹⁰

Adjoining Kew is Mortlake, famous for its vegetable



1938 conjectural drawing based on the remains

farming. In the eighteenth century it was the home of the Eccleston family, relatives of the Middletons who had settled in Carolina. It was here that young William (1710-1776), son of the first Middleton in Carolina, stayed when he went to school in England. The lad William must have been noticing English gardens even then, as subsequently, in 1751, he brought over to his established Crowfield estate on the upper reaches of Goose Creek, the son of the Mortlake gardener he would have known.

While studying in England, William also would have been intimate with his Middleton relatives north of London at Crowfield in Suffolk. The steward’s record book for this extensive mid-eighteenth century estate retains a notation that he stocked fish in the canal “by the mount.”¹¹

Today in England few mounts survive. Even the king’s at Hampton Court and Pope’s at Twickenham are completely obliterated. Two early ones are in northern counties: a multi-tiered one at Dunham Massey in Cheshire and another at Rockingham Castle in Northamptonshire. The best survivor is the large seventeenth-century example at New College, Oxford, and that one owes its longevity to the undaunted efforts of an alumnus who persevered in its restoration in the 1990s.¹²

Today across the Atlantic, a few mounts do survive.

The three examples in the Carolina lowcountry represent a transfer of several characteristics: the positioning within the formal patterned garden, the siting with a river or ornamental pond, and the enhancing of vistas in a low-lying terrain. In their present varying states of deterioration, the three mounts appear to have been about the same size and with limited or unobtrusive paths of ascent, as that surface configuration has not survived the years of attrition. A “spiral path” is noted for



Crowfield Plantation

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only one.

Assuming that all three date from the 1730 and '40 period, it is probable that the initial one was that of William Middleton at Crowfield, who had lived with his Twickenham aunt near Richmond and Kew Gardens and had visited his relatives at their Crowfield estate in Suffolk. His father, Arthur Middleton of The Oaks plantation, Goose Creek, was a planter and Governor of Carolina. In 1729, about the time young William would have been returning from his schooling abroad, Governor Middleton gave his nineteen-year-old son a large plantation, Crowfield, and ample funding with which to improve it. The next spring William married Mary Izard, daughter of another Goose Creek planter, Ralph Izard of The Elms. This family also had Twickenham and Surrey connections in England. Mary lived only a few more years,

but it is reasonable to assume that the young couple, soon after their marriage, began the landscaping design of a "gentleman's seat" amid their extensive rice-growing acres.

The formal grounds of Crowfield were laid out on an exact North-South axis, the entrance being on a now-obiterated road to the South. The avenue, straight as an arrow, was bordered by live oaks, a few of which can still be identified more than two centuries later. The earliest description of Crowfield dates from the spring of 1743 when Eliza Lucas visited there and recorded: "The house stands a mile from, but in sight of the road and makes a very handsome appearance." She marveled to an English friend: "a spacious bason in the midst of a large green presents itself as you enter the gate that leads to the house." She describes the view of the formal gardens and the rigid line of the continued

central axis on the opposite side of the dwelling as being "a thousand foot long" with ponds defining the sides of the prospect, a bowling green, and a mount. The vista terminates in a large fish pond with a Roman temple rising from its center. The mount is positioned half way down the West court of the main axis. Thus, from its summit, it provides a view of the garden patterns as well as the natural declivity of the land falling eastward to a pond.

Distinct reflections of Hampton Court and other early eighteenth-century English gardens are noticeable in the straight avenue, interrupted by a basin, and by the apsidal terminus of the garden view, as still can be seen in the remaining far bank of the last pond.¹³

William Middleton remarried and in 1753 returned with his growing family to claim the holdings in Suffolk. Unoccupied consistently and gradually allowed to go to ruin, the Carolina Crowfield house and grounds, surrounded by unprofitable fields, were further destroyed in the earthquake of 1886 and subsequently by logging and vandalism.

For the past several decades Crowfield has belonged to Westvaco, careful stewards of much land in the lowcountry. In the late 1970s, the company began their plans for the extensive community development that presently exists and conducted some archeological studies. A planned golf course would by-pass the house ruins, but the fairways would cross the garden. Persuaded



Crowfield Plantation

View from the top of the mount across the garden site.



On the entrance side: view of the ruins across the round lake.



Looking from the remaining oak trees, across a fairway and the round lake to the ruins of the house.

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*Garden Mount ...
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by a group of preservationists and landscapist, Westvaco realigned the greens and dedicated almost twenty acres to the historic site. The garden strip is maintained, undisturbed, and protected, but not restored or groomed.¹⁴

William Middleton's brother Henry, seven years younger, also was probably educated in England. By 1741 Henry Middleton was back at his home, The Oaks on Goose Creek, where he married Mary Williams and they settled at her family's location that was henceforth known as Middleton Place. On this fine house site overlooking the Ashley River from a high narrow bluff, Henry and Mary established their now famous gardens. The terraces and ornamental ponds were laid out by an English landscape gardener.

Their design for the original formal garden was a triangle imposed on the level crest of land extending beside the house. The patterned beds were laid out with geometric precision, linking the irregularity of the northside bluff with the strictness of the rectangular reflection pool and with the main axis across the greensward, the house, and the terraces.

It took the Middletons ten years, with the labor of one hundred workers during the off-season from the rice crops, to landscape the grounds. It is possible that some of the experienced Crowfield workers from the previous decade helped transform the Middleton Place bluff in the 1740s.

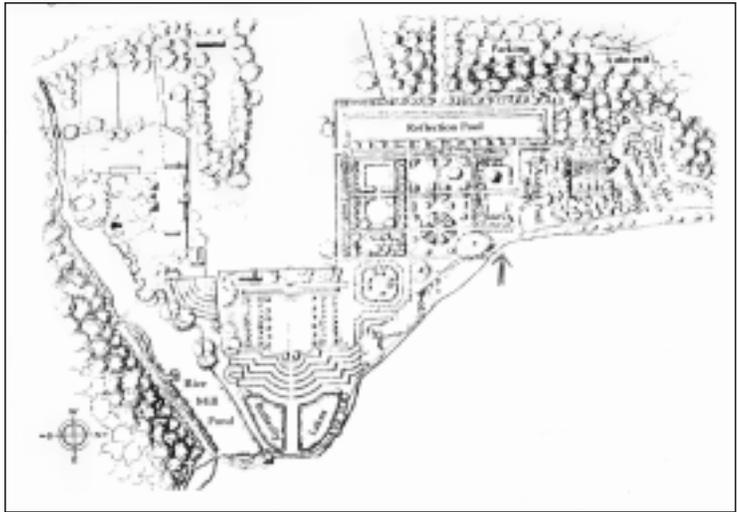
When it was completed, the mount stood there on the diagonal. It overlooked the Ashley River from its upstream vistas southward to the square bordered "secret gardens," and eastward to the sundial pattern and the bowling green.

Over the years, the mount has not reflected the stylish designs of the times. More than two centuries of natural attrition and the regular raking around the base have worn the sides down evenly and probably taken a foot or so from the crest. The cone now rises six feet and has a base circumference of eighty-eight feet. Thousands of sightseers a year pass this tenacious vestige of the past, oblivious of its specific relation to early eighteenth-century English influences.¹⁵

Upstream across the Ashley River lies the long-neglected plantation of Cedar Grove, which fronts on the now heavily traveled Dorchester Road. A few years ago the inland strip was developed as the pleasant Whitehall residential property. But beyond the site of the long-demolished mansion and at the edge of the marsh rises the remainder of its mount. "Affectionately called The Mountain by us children," recalled the youthful occupant of the 1840 period, who also made reference to its "spiral path."

Ownership of this desirable Ashley River plantation dates back to 1684 when Francis Turgis took up a tract of land for himself and twenty-one English settlers. When his daughter Mary married a young Goose Creek gentleman, Walter Izard,

the Cedar Grove property fell solely into their possession. Since Walter's step-mother was the widow Middleton, this in 1713 again linked the bond of kinship and cultural association that these two families had brought with them from the counties of Middlesex and Surrey.



Plan of Middleton Place

Their son Walter married Elizabeth Gibbes in 1739, and he inherited Cedar Grove from his father a decade later. Before too long the total holdings there were more than 1600 acres.¹⁶

No date has been put on the extensive layout of the grounds and elegant mansion at Cedar Grove, but its characteristics, described before its destruction in the Civil War, would indicate that it was accomplished during the ownership of Walter and Elizabeth. An avenue led three-quarters-of-a-mile straight from the Dorchester Road. The mansion, which "has two fronts," was two stories, with a high basement, and a spacious piazza on the river side. It stood two hundred yards from the edge of the marsh. Facing the avenue was "the great hall, a chamber 22 by 21 feet in dimensions, with a chimney place, as wide as the church door and as deep as the well The mantelpiece is high and composed of various and variegated marble, and over it, is set in the wainscoting a pictorial representation of an old Roman arch ... enclosed in a richly carved frame-work." The journalist of the 1850s continues in his exuberant phrasing: "The grounds about the house are very beautiful, being elevated and gently sloping down to the river." Their quality by the time of that writing was greatly diminished as the current owner had recently sold off a considerable quantity of live oak timber to a Connecticut firm for ship building.

"Once laid out with great elegance and beauty," the journalist continued, "in a style of magnificence and finish

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Members in the News

rarely surpassed, at least, in America ... a beautiful flower garden and bower of ornamental trees bloomed at the sides and on the river front; and in the Southern border of the grounds, there is yet a beautiful mall or walk between a double row of the noblest live oaks, with occasional magnolias, and at its extremity an artificial mound now crowned with several well grown forest trees, as well as with woodbine and other jewels of the forest flora, from which is enjoyed a fine and extensive view of river and forest scenery, including that of the beautiful plantations in the vicinity.¹⁷

This description would apply particularly to Middleton Place. Disclosed across the Ashley River and the sweep of marshes, are the terraced open bank below the mount and also the broad opening of the butterfly lakes.

To emphasize the relationship of the two families further, in 1764 Mary Izard of Cedar Grove married Arthur Middleton from across the River, who in the next decade would sign the Declaration of Independence. The Izard place remained in the family connection until 1820, then had two different owners before the double destruction of the Civil War and the earthquake of 1886. Thus abandoned, Cedar Grove seems to have just rested, neglected, until recent entrepreneurs moved in.¹⁸

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Susan Hitchcock, James Cothran, Suzanne Turner, and SGHS vice-president **Gordon Chappell** were on the program for the “Southern Garden Heritage Conference: Personal Gardens and the Community,” June 23rd- 24th, 2000. The purpose of this program, sponsored by the Georgia Center for Continuing Education and the University of Georgia in Athens, is to develop better understanding and appreciation of the methodologies and techniques of identification, appraisal, restoration, and management of historic gardens and landscapes.

Husband-and-wife landscape architect team **Hugh and Mary Palmer Dargan**, currently of Atlanta, Georgia, were featured in Charleston, South Carolina’s *Post and Courier*, April 20th, for their recent donation of a collection of important documents on Charleston’s small gardens to the South Carolina Historical Society. The Dargans, who have designed or redesigned many area gardens during the early 1980s until the mid-1990s, hope to ensure that this work will remain a well-understood component of 20th-century preservation efforts. Their donations include working drawings, plats, photographs, and magazine articles covering almost 150 gardens, including work on the remaining 3 1/2-acre core of the gardens at Crowfield Plantation.

On January 15th, 2000, at the Georgia Chapter ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects) Millennium Gala and Awards Banquet, SGHS member **Dan Franklin** was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award.



photo by Philip Crauford

Dan Franklin



Members gather at Hillwood.

Plans Underway for 2001 Conference at Old Salem

The dates and theme have been selected for the thirteenth biennial conference on *Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes*, which is held in Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, with the Southern Garden History Society as one of the sponsors.

The next conference will be September 27th- 29th, 2001, and the theme will be historic horticultural practices in the South. The conference committee felt that how the land was cultivated shaped the development of the South, and the land itself determined its cultivation. Cotton plantations, tobacco farms, rice fields, mountain homesteads all created the South of today. The conference will explore *how* the land was cultivated and how people gardened and will cover such topics as: tools, fences and walls, compost heaps, garden beds, and agriculture fields. Some of the questions to be raised will include: were gardens edged, were beds raised? was mulch used? and how can modern restorations today reflect early horticultural practices?

The conference committee welcomes suggestions for the program; contact Keyes Williamson, conference chair, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108, telephone (336) 724-3125, e-mail: facilities@OldSalem.org

New SGHS WEB Site

A web site is underway for the Southern Garden History Society, after consideration by the board of directors at the board's last three meetings. Kenneth M. McFarland, newly-elected society president, is organizing plans for the site, a contract has been signed with a professional web site designer, and obtaining a domain name and web space is underway. Designs for the site will be approved by the board's executive committee. At its May meeting, the board felt a web site was important to the society to serve as a link to the membership as well as to other organizations in the historic landscape community. Serving on the web site committee with Ken McFarland are Peggy Cornett and Harriet Jansma.



New Editor of *Magnolia Essays*

Board member Barbara Wells Sarudy of Monkton, Maryland, has been appointed editor of *Magnolia Essays*, replacing former editor Catherine Howett, who resigned. Sarudy is executive director of the Maryland Humanities Council. Her research interests are in seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century American gardens as planned personal environments, settings for social and political activities, and symbols of thoughts and beliefs. She has written and spoken frequently on Maryland gardens and is author of *Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake 1700-1805*, published in 1998 by The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Magnolia Essays was planned by the publications committee of the society as an occasional paper; a means of publishing research articles on Southern garden history that were too lengthy for the news bulletin, *Magnolia*. The first *Magnolia Essays* was published in spring, 1993, "Residential Work of the Olmsted Firm in Georgia, 1893-1937," by Lucy Lawliss.

Members who have articles they feel might be appropriate for *Magnolia Essays* may contact Barbara Sarudy at P. O. Box 247, 1919 Monkton Road, Monkton, Maryland 2111-0247; e-mail: mhcbws@aol.com

Annual Spring Meeting of SGHS Board

report submitted by Flora Ann Bynum, Secretary-Treasurer

New officers and directors for the society were elected at the board meeting and the society's annual business meeting, both held in Alexandria, Virginia, May 5th, 2000. The elected officers are: Kenneth M. McFarland of Hillsborough, North Carolina, president; Gordon W. Chappell of Colonial Williamsburg, vice-president; and Flora Ann L. Bynum of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, secretary-treasurer. Peter J. Hatch of Charlottesville, Virginia, is immediate past president and ex-officio board member. These four will serve as the executive committee.

New members elected to the board are Mrs. Joseph H. McGee (Patti) of Charleston, South Carolina; M. Edward Shull of Catonsville, Maryland; and Mrs. William Robert Pickens (Mary Anne) of Columbus, Texas.

Retiring from the board after serving a second term of three years were Mrs. Cornelius C. Crusel (Betsy) of New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mrs. Robert H. Gunn (Louise) of Atlanta, Georgia. (Members go off the board after serving two three-year terms, but are eligible for re-election after a year off the board.) Mrs. William W. Griffin (Florence) of Atlanta, Georgia, also went off the board after serving one term as she did not wish to accept nomination for a second term.

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At the society's annual meeting Peter Hatch, retiring president, praised the work of Betsy Crusel, Louise Gunn, and Florence Griffin as board members and thanked them for their "invaluable service."

Also retiring from the board after many years of service was Dr. William C. Welch, who was immediate past president for two years, president for two years, vice-president for two years, and a board member for many years. ♣

SGHS Returns to Mount Vernon

The 18th Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society launched the new millennium by celebrating the eighteenth-century home and gardens of George Washington, America's most illustrious statesman. Conference coordinators Dean Norton, Mount Vernon's director of Horticulture, and Gail Griffin, director of gardens at Dumbarton Oaks, provided a repeat performance of the magical meeting hosted by Mount Vernon in 1990. At that time, Dean and his wife Suzanne had just had their first

daughter Penelope. Ten years and four daughters later, Norton sought to exceed the success and accolades of the last effort. By all accounts, those in attendance — a record 170 or more — would agree that this gathering surpassed all expectations.

The meeting convened on the afternoon of Friday, May 5th, at the George Washington Masonic Temple with talks focused on the application, use, and fascinating history of the transport of fruits, herbs, and flowers. Because Washington himself never lived beyond the 1700s, the initial day's lecture topics, presented by Lucy Coggins, Laura Viancour, Sarah Becker, Tom Burford, and Libbey Oliver, were well-rooted in the eighteenth century. Members later gathered at the



Dean Norton with daughters preparing to load the "Potato Shooter".



Mary Hughes (left) and Conference co-coordinator Gail Griffin at River Farm.



Enjoying light opera on the lawn at Mount Vernon.



Tom Burford, Bill Welch, and Perry Mathewes

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Gatsby's Tavern in Historic Old Town Alexandria for dinner and entertainment.

Saturday began with a two-hour excursion down the Potomac River aboard the *Cherry Blossom*, an authentic paddle wheeler. Participants enjoyed an elaborate breakfast while listening to a presentation by Terry Sharrer on "Biological Thought and Agricultural Practices of the 18th Century." The day's activities at Mount Vernon included tours of the new pioneer farm site on the banks of the Potomac, lectures at the Ann Pamela Cunningham building and lunch at River Farm, one of Washington's best farms and home of his personal secretary Tobias Lear in the eighteenth century. River Farm is now the site of the American Horticultural Society. The final lecture of the afternoon, "The Landscape of America's Home, the White House," by William Seale, enhanced and expanded the meeting's presidential theme. As the day concluded, we had the "place to ourselves" and were treated to an evening of spirited festivities on the grounds of Mount Vernon. Activities included horse and mule drawn carriage rides, musical entertainment, and rides in a hot air balloon. As we relaxed on the lawn overlooking the magnificent expanse of the Potomac, each would agree with George Washington that "no estate in the United America is more pleasantly situated than this."

The optional Sunday field trips were well attended and included exclusive tours of the British Embassy gardens, Hillwood Museum (home of Marjorie Merriweather Post built in 1922), a barbecue lunch on the grounds of the National Cathedral, and an afternoon at Dumbarton Oaks and Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown. Hats off for a job well done to all who made this a delightful and memorable annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society. ♣



Members aboard the Cherry Blossom.



Ken McFarland, Mr. Washington and Tom Burford (left to right)



View from the hot air balloon at Mount Vernon, overlooking the Paddock and Hog Island Sheep in background.



Photos by Ken McFarland and Peggy Cornett

Book Review



“Perfectly Delightful”: The Life and Gardens of Harvey Ladew, by Christopher Weeks. (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD: 1999). ISBN 0-8018-6122-8. Hardcover, \$32.50.

In 1971 the Garden Club of America presented its Distinguished Achievement Award to Harvey Smith Ladew for his creation of “the finest topiary garden in America made without professional help.” The qualifying phrase, “made without professional help,” was soon eliminated in the literature promoting Ladew’s gardens at Pleasant Valley Farm, a 200-plus acre estate in the hunt country north of Baltimore. In scale, architectural structure, and imagination, the Ladew Topiary Gardens have no peer in the United States, although “Green Animals” in Rhode Island and the Hunniwell garden at Wellsley also are richly-fashioned and fascinating examples of topiary gardening. All three were created by exceptional people of special circumstance, and they survive today as distinguished examples of American gardening art.

Harvey Smith Ladew (1887-1976) was born to wealth and privilege and he lived his life in a manner that prompted both envy and admiration. Named for his grandfather, who had established the family’s leather business - the source of its wealth, he grew up in the townhouse at 3 East 67th Street in New York City built by his father, Edward R. Ladew, and in a country place, Elsinore, near Glen Cove, Long Island. The senior Mr. Ladew died in 1888, a year after his grandson’s birth, leaving his two sons substantial fortunes, which were handsomely spent on houses, furnishings, travels in Europe, winters in Florida, and other Gilded Age entertainments at the turn of the twentieth century. The death of Edward R. Ladew in 1905 and that of his wife, Louise Berry Wall, in 1912, left their children, Harvey and his sister Elsie, fortunes of their own and the ability to enjoy

them with unusual freedom and intelligence. Their uncle E. Berry Wall proved influential, especially on Harvey Ladew, who followed his stylish example. Harvey took up riding at an early age; hunting and gardening remained his passions until the end of his life. He remained a bachelor. In 1914, however, his sister married William Russell Grace, a great horseman and the scion of a larger industrial fortune.

The details of Ladew’s lavish and expansive social life, particularly from the 1910s through the 1950s, will prove as fascinating for many readers as they did for his biographer, Christopher Weeks. Others might be less interested in a life lived on an international scale, his friendships with royalty and English and Continental nobility, and the costume balls, house parties, and other amusements of their society. Disinterest would be mistaken, as Weeks demonstrates in his chapter on Ladew’s creation of the gardens at Pleasant Valley Farm, which he entitled “The art of personality.” In 1929, when Harvey Ladew left Brookville, Long Island, and bought the Scarff farm in Harford County, Maryland, he was seeking better opportunities to hunt. The region had a strong hunting tradition and a long gardening history; and Harvey Ladew

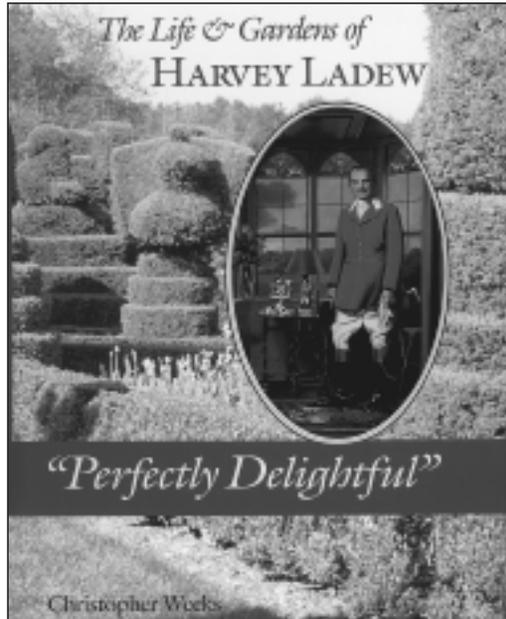
injected a spirited cosmopolitan outlook and energy into both, becoming the master of fox hounds of the Elkridge-Harford Hunt Club in 1935 while developing his garden.

Although Christopher Weeks identifies a series of visits to country houses and gardens, particularly in England and Italy, as influences on Ladew’s garden design, and convinces us of their corporate significance in shaping his horticultural ambition, one episode remains critical. Ladew recalled the

event, occurring about 1920 while riding with the Beaufort Hunt in England, in his unfinished autobiography:

Hacking to an early meeting, I rode along beside a very tall yew hedge bordering a large estate. As I looked

up, I saw an astonishing sight that made me rein my horse abruptly and continue to gaze in amazement. On the top of the hedge about 100 feet above (beyond) me I saw a whole Topiary fox hunt, beautifully modelled and trimmed, the fox running for his life closely pursued by a marvelously sculpted pack of a dozen hounds.



Around 1971, an octogenarian Ladew began a second topiary huntsman, straightened out the hedge, and reworked the hounds. Finally, more than forty years in the making, his masterpiece was complete.

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Book Review...

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The hedge belonged to Lady Blanche Scott-Douglas, a sister of the Duke of Beaufort, the master of the Beaufort Hunt. Ladew resolved then and there to replicate the scene in his garden in Brookville. He did, and when he moved from Brookville to Harford County, the hedges forming his hunt scene were dug up and carried south to Pleasant Valley Farm where they were replanted and remain one of the most memorable scenes for visitors.

Nearly one-fifth of *"Perfectly Delightful"*: The Life and Gardens of Harvey Ladew is given over to the creation of the garden at Pleasant Valley Farm, its design, planting, replanting, and maintenance over the long period from 1930 until Ladew's death in 1976. Throughout these years, Harvey Ladew was on the ground and in the garden, directing the efforts of his gardeners and trimming the yew hedges that enclosed the great bowl garden, the terraced plantings linking it with the house, and those which enclosed the fifteen "garden rooms" comprising its twenty-two acres. Most of the photographs, in color and black-and-white, show the garden in its maturity or in recent years; however, illustrations of the garden as it developed in the 1930s and 1940s would have underscored an appreciation of Ladew's remarkable achievement in such a relatively short time. In the 1960s, Harvey Ladew wrote, "I think I have managed to create something beautiful and worthwhile in my life." Visitors to the Ladew Topiary Gardens, this one in the late 1970s, and readers of *"Perfectly Delightful"* know that he did.

- Davyd Foard Hood, book review editor,
Isinglass, Vale, North Carolina

Call for Papers

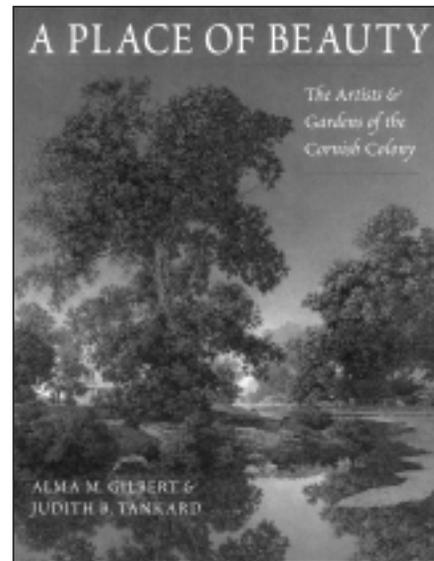
Proposals are now being accepted for the JOURNAL OF THE NEW ENGLAND GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY, an annual publication of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Subjects are not restricted to New England and can include all facets and time periods of the field of North American landscape history: gardens and parks, horticulture, literature, individual landscape architects and designers, preservation, or any interdisciplinary topic. The JOURNAL welcomes proposals from members of the academic and museum communities, independent scholars, practitioners, and interested lay-people. Visit their on-line site for the complete contents of back issues:
www.masshort.org/neghs.htm

Proposals should be one page (no more than 250 words) and include a brief biography of the author. Proposals are due October 31st, 2000, to be considered for Volume 9 (2001). Send proposals to Editor, NEGHS,

Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston MA 02115 or FAX 617-262-8780. Address queries to judith@tankard.net

In Print

Judith B. Tankard, SGHS member in Newton, MA, is co-author (with Alma M. Gilbert) of a new book, *A Place of Beauty: Artists and Gardens of the Cornish Colony*, published by Ten Speed Press (ISBN 1-58008-129-0; hardcover, \$29.95). The book celebrates historic Cornish, New Hampshire, highlighting the dazzling flower gardens and renowned landscapes and architecture that inspired the artists who called the Cornish Art Colony home. Tankard is the author of three books and serves as editor of the *Journal of the New England Garden History Society*. She also wrote an article in the current issue (Vol. V, No. 1) of *Traditional Gardening* on "A Baker's Dozen of the Century's Best Books on American Gardens."



Old Fashioned Flowers, Classic Blossoms to Grow in Your Garden, another of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden Handbook in the "21st-Century Gardening Series," edited by Tovah Martin. The booklet features interviews with Scott Kunst on "Classic Bulbs," Peter Schneider on "Old Garden Roses," Christie White on "Vintage Climbers," Peggy Cornett on "Antique Annuals," and Rachel Kane on "Perennials of Times Past." (ISBN 1-889538-15-9).

A membership directory for the society will be published this summer. Dues notices for 2000-01 were mailed the third week of June, and include a form requesting information for the directory. A member's name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address will be listed, along with a brief description of that member's involvement in garden history/landscape restoration. It is hoped the directory will stimulate a flow of helpful information and communication, letting members know of others who are working on similar projects. The directory will be strictly for members' use only, and only those whose dues are current will be included. Paula Chamblee, SGHS membership secretary in the Old Salem office, is preparing the directory.

Bound Sets of Magnolia Now Available



After much work on the part of Peggy Cornett, *Magnolia* editor; Kay Bergey, society publications secretary; and Flora Ann Bynum, society secretary-treasurer, a complete set of *Magnolias* was assembled and printed, and spiral-bound copies have been made. The volume is 672 pages in length and two inches thick. It includes all issues of the society's bulletins that have been published under the name *Magnolia* from Volume I, No. 1, (Fall, 1984) through Volume XIV, No. 4, (Winter/Spring 1999.) An index is included. Prior to the first issue of *Magnolia* in the fall of 1984, a news bulletin was published under the name of "Hoe and Tell." (The society was founded in the spring of 1982.)

For many years, the society has had requests for full sets of *Magnolia*, but these have been impossible to supply as only two or three copies exist for some of the earlier issues. Florence Griffin, former society president, worked with the Cherokee Garden Library in Atlanta to assemble for the society's archives a complete set of *Magnolias* and of the earlier news bulletins.

To Order:

The bound sets of *Magnolia* sell for **\$50.00** each and may be ordered by sending your name and address with a check payable to "Southern Garden History Society" to Kay Bergey, publications secretary, Southern Garden History Society, c/o Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108. The price includes any taxes due, plus handling and mailing. One-hundred bound sets have been printed.

Australian Garden History Society

Helen M. K. Page of Australia attended the SGHS annual meeting in May, and gave members a most impressive account of the Australian Garden History Society. The society was formed in 1980 and now has 1600 members. Ms. Page is chair of the Victorian branch, which has 600 members. There are eight active branches of the society, covering all the states of Australia.

Sally Williams of Boston, Massachusetts, editor and publisher of *Garden Literature Press* and a friend of Ms. Page, knew that she was visiting the United States and invited her to attend the SGHS annual meeting with her.

The Victorian branch's management committee meets monthly, and sponsors three weekend activities each year for its members: in March to visit gardens, in July (their winter) on garden history, and in October to visit a national park to study native plants. The branch also sponsors two lecture series, one in autumn and a winter lecture series in June, July, and August. The theme of the last winter series was on "The

Influence of Immigration on Gardens." Additionally, society members volunteer to work in historic gardens the last weekend of each month.

The national society publishes a journal titled *Australian Garden History* six times a year and holds an annual National Conference. The society also has published a book, *Kindred Spirits*, the story of a botanical correspondence between the flower painter Joan Law-Smith and the naturalist and writer Jean Galbraith.

Ms. Page wrote that she sent her thanks to "all the [SGHS] members who were at the meeting for their friendliness towards me — they made me feel very welcome."

The Australian Garden History Society is sponsoring a tour in 2001 for members of American garden history societies. In 1998, The Australian Society sponsored a tour for members of the English Garden History Society, and it was such a success, Ms. Page said that the society has organized a tour for American garden history societies in the fall of 2001. The three-and-a-half-week tour will look at the history and development of Australia's gardens from the earliest colonial gardens to contemporary and native gardens. As 2001 is a very special year for Australia — the celebration of the centenary of Federation — the tour will coincide with the National Australian Garden History Society Conference which has as its theme "Federation—a celebration," and will look at the development of gardens between 1901 and 1927.

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Annual Membership Dues

Benefactor	\$250	Joint/husband-wife	\$30
Patron	\$150	Individual	\$20
Sustainer	\$75	Student	\$5
Institution/Business	\$30		
Life membership	\$1,000 (<i>one time</i>)		

The membership year runs from May 1st to April 30th. Members joining after January 1st will be credited for the coming year beginning May 1st. Write to membership secretary at: **Southern Garden History Society, Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108.**
phone (336) 721-7328.

Australian Garden History Society

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The tour is offered in three components: Tour 1, October 1st to November 6th, 2001, will be the full tour, which begins in Sydney and includes the National Conference of the Australian Society and the Tasmanian tour. Tour 2, October 11th - 27th, begins in Sydney and includes the Blue Mountains, Canberra, part of Victoria, and concludes with the National Conference. Tour 3, October 26th to November 6th, begins with the National Conference and includes a few days in Victoria and the Tasmanian tour. The tour will visit many private gardens and homes not usually open to the public, so will be limited to a maximum of 25 people.

For additional information about the Australian tours, contact Ann Cripps, tour co-ordinator, 552 Sandy Bay Road, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 7005, Australia, Fax:03 62243 179, e-mail: anncripps@hotmail.com ♣

SGHS Revisited - The First Regional Chapter

The Winter 2000 issue of *Magnolia* (Vol. XV, No. 3) cited the newly formed Georgia Chapter of SGHS as being "the society's first." In fact, the first regional chapter of the society was formed in 1984 in Natchez, Mississippi as the Jo Evans Chapter. Although this chapter was short lived, when Glenn Haltom, a former charter board member, pointed out the error, we saw it as an opportunity to reflect on the society's own history as we approach its twentieth anniversary.

The Natchez chapter was formed in honor of Jo N. Evans, an author and nationally known horticulturist born in Bardwell, Kentucky in 1896. She met her husband, U. B. "Bob" Evans, in 1911 and they bought Haphazard Plantation near Frogmore, Louisiana in the mid 1930s. Jo Evans continued to live there after her husband's death in 1967 and was still publishing books on the flora and fauna of the region at the age of 91. She wrote a monthly column called "Garden Gossip" in the Louisiana Electric magazine, *Rural Life*, for over twenty years beginning in the 1950s. In 1988, over two hundred of the articles she had written for the magazine were discovered and passed on to Glenn Haltom, who was interested in having them re-printed. The following is a 1957 installment of "Garden Gossip" in the *Natchez Democrat* by Jo N. Evans.

Think of a garden with twenty two miles of garden walks. These walks bordered with old narcissus, thousands of them. That is a description of an early garden in Natchez. Today that garden still has thousands of these old narcissus.

When the gardens of Natchez were planted there was little or no nursery stock available in this part of the country. Most of the flowers were brought over from France and Italy by foreign landscape architects, who were brought over to design these early gardens. That was before man had started to hybridize and produce the big named varieties of narcissus and daffodils that we see in catalogues today. They brought old species bulbs and most of them adapted themselves so well that they have multiplied and are still blooming in quantity. In places they have escaped and are blooming in old fields and along ditch banks. The early Tazettas, or cluster type narcissus, are not hardy in the North but are perfectly at home in our Southern gardens. They began blooming in December and are through by February. Then jonquilla simples, the little fragrant yellow narcissus, and the campernelles carry on the parade of blossoms. 'Sir Watkins', the first known hybrid, blooms in March along with other short cupped varieties. The little white trumpet 'Swan's Neck' is one of the rarest of the old bulbs. These bulbs were brought to Natchez gardens before any work was done in nomenclature and such names as 'Pearl', 'Star', and 'Christmas' narcissus were used. 'Gold Dollars' is a nice name given to a yellow Tazetta. Among the azaleas you will see some old species scillas, I am not sure which ones they are. The old fashioned hyacinths are one of the nicest flowers you will see in Natchez gardens. Single blue, white and pink, some called 'Southern Bells'. A double pink and dark blue, then a real grey and delicate pink that really belongs together. In the old church yard at Pine Ridge these hyacinths have seeded and wandered off down the hill into the woods.

You can see wisteria more than one hundred years old. They have climbed to the top of the highest trees as well as covered parts of some of the old houses. I believe that in old gardens in Natchez is one of the few places that you will ever see the old

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SGHS Revisited
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white amaryllis with its purplish-red marks. This old *Amaryllis macropodastrum* was identified for me by Dr. Harold Hume of the University of Florida.

Old roses are everywhere, 'Lady Banksia' in both white and yellow. The little red 'Louie Phillippe' Macrophylla rubra and the fragrant white macrophylla 'Roger Lambdin', the old moss roses and others that I am not familiar with.

Camellias more than one hundred years old, were planted a long time before the present interest in camellias developed. They, too, had nice local names, 'Chandleri elegans' was known as "Delight of the Queen's Garden." You will see camellia trees as tall as the second story windows in some of the old houses. These growing along with enormous old sweet olives. When gardens were planted in the early

years of the 1800's their owners thought of and planned for fragrance. There are large, old bushes of meratia, the bush our grandmothers called, "wintersweet," still growing and blooming. Winter blooming honeysuckle was planted for fragrance.

[Permission for the reprinting of "Garden Gossip" from the March 1957 Pink Edition issue granted by *The Natchez Democrat*.]

Glenn Haltom is interested in re-forming the Jo Evans Chapter. All those interested should contact her at: 108 Dana Road, Natchez, MS 39120; (601) 445-8488; ghaltom@iamerica.net ♣

Kenneth M. McFarland, *President*
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