



MAGNOLIA

Newsletter of the
Southern Garden
History Society

"The Laurel Tree of Carolina"

from Mark Catesby, 1731

(MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA)

John B. Flowers, III, President
Catherine M. Howett, Vice-President
Flora Ann Bynum, Secretary-Treasurer

Newsletter edited by
Harriet H. Jansma
924 Commerce, Apt. 16
Little Rock, AR 72202

SOUTHERN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Old Salem, Inc.
Drawer F, Salem Station
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108

Distributed by
Dr. Edgar G. Givhan II
Montgomery, Alabama

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HEADLINE: Good Reading

British and American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: Eighteen Illustrated Essays on Garden History, co-edited by Dr. Peter Martin, was published by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia; in 1984.

Dr. Martin, garden historian at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and Associate Professor of English, New England College, Sussex, England, is an honorary member of the SGHS board of directors. He writes in the introduction to the book, "It is surprising that American garden history, especially in the eighteenth century, has been neglected. There are fine American garden historians, but they do not write much about their own country's gardens."

But later within the same remarks, Dr. Martin comments, "However, two recent and promising efforts in the United States to generate some intellectual and scholarly movement along these lines are the creation in 1981 of the Southern Garden History Society and the establishment of an American garden history section in the American Society of Landscape Architects."

Of the eight essays on American gardens, five are about Southern gardens, one of them written by John B. Flowers, president of the Southern Garden History Society, titled "People and Plants: North Carolina's Garden History Revisited."

Order the book from The University Press of Virginia, Box 3608, University Station, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903-3608, for \$15, plus \$1 postage.

PREVIEW: Annual Meeting 1986

Put us on your schedule for 1986. The Southern Garden History Society will hold its annual meeting at Montgomery, Alabama, on the weekend of March 14-16, Friday through Sunday.

This early announcement includes only a partial and imperfect list of events and delights that await us, but it is already an impressive array, one that should lure many members to join us for an early spring near the Gulf Coast in south central Alabama.

On Friday, March 14, the day of arrival and registration, participants will receive maps and guides for driving tours of the city, concentrating on its gardens and its history. Because members arrive at different times, these will be designed as self-guided tours; our host group and, we hope, visitors who drive to the meeting, will offer car space to those who are without vehicles.

Saturday's garden tours will include visits to private gardens and also to the Landmarks Restoration Village, a cluster of restored historic buildings where Ed Givhan, our board member and host, and George Stritikus, Associate Agent of the Montgomery County Cooperative Extension Service who has also been active in SGHS, will create a mid-19th century garden outside the tavern. The day's events will end at Jasmine Hill Gardens with a tour and dinner.

On Sunday, after holding our annual business meeting (always a brisk and pleasant event) we will join other sojourners at the nearby village of Lowndesboro for the Annual Pilgrimage.

Our speakers will include:

- *Dr. Ed Bridges, Director of Alabama Department of Archives and History;
- *George Stritikus, Associate County Agent, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service;
- *John Floyd, Horticulture Editor of Southern Living magazine.

Members will receive a printed announcement with a complete program before year's end, early enough for travelers to purchase low-cost plane fares or to arrange carpools from various corners of our region.

Please plan to join us in Montgomery on March 14 for another great Southern Garden weekend.

Membership Dues

Delinquent dues notices were mailed August 19 to members who have not paid dues for the year ending April 30, 1985. This is the third notice; members who do not pay will be dropped from the membership roster. By now members should also have received dues notices for 1985-86, the year ending April 30, 1986. If you have paid dues for this year already, you will not receive a notice.

Many Meetings

This issue will be mailed too late for members to make plans to attend some meetings that are listed. Many of you have been notified about them already. Nevertheless, we will list them, to make all our members aware of events in the fields of gardening, landscape, and horticulture, and to remind you to send your notices of future meetings as early as circumstances allow.

TRYON PALACE GARDEN SYMPOSIUM: Greenville, N.C., October 11, 1985.

This second annual event, sponsored by the East Carolina University Division of Continuing Education, includes lectures on Biltmore Gardens, great Southern gardens, the early English kitchen garden, and garden restoration activities in the Southern states, this last to be presented by William Lanier Hunt, co-founder and honorary president of SGHS.

To register, send \$40 (includes lectures, materials, luncheon) to Garden Symposium, East Carolina University, Greenville, N.C. 27834-4353. For further information call (919) 757-6143.

OLD SALEM: Winston-Salem, N.C., October 3-5.

Because earlier sessions of this conference resulted in formation of our Society, and because all SGHS members received announcements in July of the 5th conference on "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes," many have surely made plans to attend. There may still be time for others to register.

Theme for this year's conference is "400 Years of Southern Gardens and Landscapes," conceived as a part of the 3-year-long birthday celebration of North Carolina, and commemorating the Roanoke Voyages.

In past years the Salem conference has emphasized the garden and landscape history of the Upper South, but interest in the subject among participants from the Deep South has proved so strong that this year's program includes the entire region.

Consult your brochure for information, or call (919) 723-3688 to be certain that registration is still possible at this date. If so, send registration fee of \$115 (including major meals) to Conference Registrar, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108.

The Salem conference is a wonderful place to meet people who know and love gardens and their history, and Old Salem is itself a wonderful environment for reflection and discussion of our past. Not least, the conference is superbly organized and graciously overseen by our own Secretary-Treasurer, Flora Ann Bynum, who has researched thoroughly the plants and landscapes of Old Salem.

Exhibit Still Open

The exhibit on "The Art of Gardening: Maryland Landscapes and the American Garden Aesthetic, 1730-1930" announced in our last newsletter, will continue on display at the Museum of the Historical Society of Talbot County in Easton, Maryland, through October 15.

One member of SGHS who visited the exhibit has described it as "outstanding, well worth making a trip to see." Hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

An illustrated catalogue of the exhibit, which includes historical photographs, garden furniture, rare books and letters among its 150 items, may be obtained for \$2.00 from the Historical Society of Talbot County, P.O. Box 964, Easton, MD 21601.

Another Catalogue

The Garden Seed Inventory, edited by Kent Whealy, is "An Inventory of Seed Catalogs--Listing All Non-Hybrid Vegetable and Garden Seeds Still Available in the United States and Canada." It has been described as a valuable aid for sources of heritage seeds suitable for restored gardens.

Mr. Whealy comments in the book: "The Garden Seed Inventory dramatically illustrates that most commercially available non-hybrid garden seeds are in grave danger. But few people realize that nearly as many heirloom varieties exist that are equally as valuable and just as endangered. All across our country and around the world, elderly gardeners and farmers are keeping unique garden seeds which they have bred up for a lifetime...." The Seed Savers Exchange, publishers of this book, is working to insure the survival of such heirloom seeds.

Order the catalogue from Seed Savers Exchange, 203 Rural Avenue, Decorah, Iowa 52101. Cost in paper cover is \$12 postpaid; in hardcover, also postpaid, \$20.

SGHS Board

The Board of Directors of Southern Garden History Society will meet at Winston-Salem on Thursday, October 3, in conjunction with the conference announced later in this issue. If you have ideas for the Society to pursue, or organizational items to suggest for discussion, please contact us by writing to Southern Garden History Society, Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108, or by telephoning a member of the board.

AMERICAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY: 40th annual meeting, Chicago, September 11-15.

This year's theme is "Plants and People: the Renewal of Life," intended to emphasize such topics as horticultural therapy, the restorative powers of urban gardening, and the conservation of our endangered plants.

LeCONTE-WOODMANSTON SEMINAR: Hinesville, Georgia, September 11-12.

Georgia's, and even America's, economic, agricultural, ecological, botanical, and cultural history were affected by two brothers, John and Joseph LeConte, whose grandfather began acquiring land in Liberty County, Georgia, in 1760 and was cultivating rice successfully by 1779. Their father, Dr. Louis LeConte, a physician and scientist, created an internationally known floral and botanical garden there at Woodmanston Plantation, which thrived from 1810 until his death in 1838.

The two brothers became professors at the University of Georgia and later at the University of South Carolina. They were instrumental in the establishment of the University of California; John became its first President at Berkeley, and Joseph became Professor of Geology and was one of the founders of the Sierra Club.

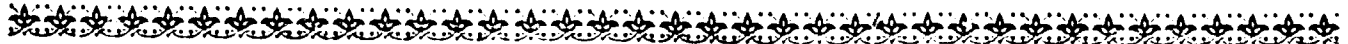
Woodmanston, located on the route of the naturalists John and William Bartram, lay neglected and forgotten after the destruction of the Civil War period, until 1971, when a small group of people in the area began efforts to rescue the site. In 1977, heirs of the C. B. Jones Estate and the Brunswick Pulp Land Company deeded 63.8 acres of Woodmanston to The Nature Conservancy, which in turn conveyed title to The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., for the purpose of preservation and restoration.

Though this mailing will arrive too late for members to attend this seminar, information for later visits may be obtained from LeConte-Woodmanston, P.O. Box 356, Hinesville, GA 31313.

Preview: Fall Newsletter

To whet your appetite for a trip next spring to our meeting in Alabama, our next issue will include information from two articles published some years ago in The Alabama Review: "Decorative Plants Around Historic Alabama Homes," by Henry P. Orr, published in 1958; and "Ornamental Plantings in Eufaula," also by Mr. Orr, published in 1963 (Eufaula lies on the banks of the Chattahoochee River, which flows between southern Alabama and Georgia.)

Other news to be included? That will come from you, dear members. Please do not fail to send it promptly.



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SGHS -- ALABAMA BOUND

Members who live near academic libraries or other likely sources of state historical journals may want to prepare themselves for the trip to Montgomery for our 1986 spring meeting by consulting two articles published some years ago, both written by Henry P. Orr:

"Decorative Plants Around Historic Alabama Homes," in The Alabama Review, January, 1958; and

"Ornamental Plantings in Eufaula," printed in October, 1963, in the same journal.

Although a few notes can hardly do justice to the riches of information available in them, excerpted below are a few items of interest to travelers into Alabama's garden and landscape past, along with comments from Mr. George Stritikus, an active member of the Society and a county agent residing in Montgomery, about the present condition of the Alabama places described by Dr. Orr.

1. Dr. Orr begins his "Decorative Plants" article appropriately with mention of William Bartram, the American naturalist, and the glowing descriptions of native plants that Bartram wrote when he traveled in Alabama late in the 18th century ("What a sylvan scene is here! the pompous Magnolia reigns sovereign of the forests...").

Mr. Stritikus says: The Garden Clubs of Alabama have developed The Bartram Arboretum at Fort Toulouse, just outside Wetumpka (just northeast of Montgomery, in conjunction with the two rebuilt forts there. Wooden walks and overlooks, as well as educational plaques, are in place; native plant materials are being added to the site, and name plates are being installed on the trees.

2. At nearby Tuskegee , Dr. Orr states, "Around Alabama's most elaborate example of the columned T-plan mansion, the Varner-Alexander home, much of the original planting is intact. Post oaks older than the house shade the extensive plantings....The trifoliate orange hedge, originally entwined by the bride of the builder of this home, yet surrounds an intimate garden near the front entrance." Among other plantings he mentions Lady Banksia roses and Virginia creeper draping the columns which give the mansion its name, "Grey Columns", and tea olives, hedges of winter jasmine, banana shrubs, and others.

"In the beautifully maintained cemetery at the north end of Tuskegee," he continues, "there is a wide-spreading specimen of Magnolia grandiflora that is reported to have been a sizeable plant in 1833."

Mr. Stritikus says that although Tuskegee is largely undiscovered and has not yet seen many restoration efforts, the Varner-Alexander home is well worth a visit.

3. Dr. Orr makes reference to the founding of Chunnenugee Horticultural Society in 1847 and to the public garden that was founded by the group soon after they organized. He claims it is the first public garden in the United States (Does this claim hold true in 1985?).

Unfortunately, Mr. Stritikus tells us, nothing remains of the garden except a plaque commemorating the effort; but interested members should inquire at our meeting about its exact location.

4. Dr. Orr mentions two sites which members will visit as a part of the Society's organized tours: Lanark, on our Saturday tour; and Rosewood, built in Lowndesboro in 1855. From Dr. H. V. Wooten's diary concerning the latter, we read that in 1856 he planted mock orange (Prunus caroliniana), cape jessamine, 22 cedars, mulberry trees, scuppernong, and many other fruits, including nectarine, quince, pomegranate, and isabella and catawba grapes.

The "mock orange", or Carolina laurelcherry, was planted in a double U hedge (W for Wooten); and Dr. Wooten made three large round flower beds in the yard, one for each daughter. Some of the trees still grow on the property.

Mr. Stritikus adds: We will tour "Rosewood" on Sunday morning (March 16, 1986). The house, which has never before been seen by tour groups, will be opened by the present owner, Mrs. Williams, for the Society members. Much of the interior is just as Mrs. Williams's parents left it, and their parents before them. It is like stepping back in time.

5. Dr. Orr gives mention to the antebellum houses of Selma, and to a very old Lady Banksia rose that grows on the grounds of First Presbyterian Church there. Mr. Stritikus says the rose still grows.

"At Magnolia Hall," Dr. Orr says, "magnolias were alternated with live oaks to border the avenue, which was interrupted on each side by a circular planting of cedars with a violet bed at the center of each." Mr. Stritikus adds that Sturdevant Hall, also at Selma, is magnificent and well worth the visit. Though the landscape is relatively modern in style, it is very well-kept and does not detract from the beauty of the house.

6. About Eufaula Mr. Stritikus says, "A spring trip to Eufaula is worth the effort!" It is only 88 miles SE of Montgomery, too far to take the entire Society as a part of our weekend meeting. Dr. Orr mentions the Governor Sparks home there; its destruction, George Stritikus tells us, prompted a now-powerful restoration movement in Eufaula.

Kendall, an Italianate mansion completed in 1864, has been restored and is presently on the market. It rests in a lovely setting of spreading oaks, American hollies, and magnolias. Until about 1936 more than 15,000 roses were grown in the gardens in the rear of this home, says Dr. Orr.

Fendall Hall, often known as the Young-Dent home, lost many of its age-old plantings to the severe weather of last winter; they included *Laurus nobilis*, *Spiraea cantoniensis*, *Clerodendron trichotomum* (harlequin glory-bower), and the first India azaleas planted in Eufaula. The house is now owned by the State of Alabama and open by appointment. It has magnificent double parlors with stencilled walls.

Dean Hall is also well-maintained. It was built in the Southern tradition of large rooms with tall ceilings, and a porch extends around three sides. The yard was planted with Carolina laurel-cherry on two sides, with a picket fence across the front. Red oleander and red crapemyrtle extend up to the very high porch on the south side.

Society members: visit Eufaula, but please plan also to visit Montgomery either before or after, and attend our annual meeting.

BOARD MEETING

The Board of Southern Garden History Society met on Thursday, October 3, 1985, at the Single Brothers Workshop, Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, just before the Fifth Conference there on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscape (perhaps the best conference any of us has ever attended! The newsletter welcomes your comments on it, or contributions from it.). The Board decided to provide financial support for an exhibit on Alabama gardens which Mr. Stritikus will create and show at our annual meeting in Montgomery. In conjunction with the exhibit, a printed brochure will inform members about Alabama landscape and garden history. Discussion of this project resulted also in the appointment of John Flowers, Florence Griffin, and Catherine Howett to a committee to investigate other publishing ventures which the Society may want to consider, such as the publication of "Occasional Papers" of the Southern Garden History Society. We welcome your comments and ideas.

ANNAPOLIS

Members of the Society who were not able to attend the 1985 annual meeting in Annapolis, Maryland, have another chance to see the landmark houses and gardens of the town.

On Saturday, 26 April 1986, a special tour of the notable homes and buildings of Annapolis will be conducted. The Paca house and garden and the nearby London Town Publick House will be included. Because the tour is limited to 300 persons, reservations are advised.

For information: Historic Annapolis, Inc., Tours and Events, Old Treasury, State Circle, Annapolis, Maryland 21401. Telephone: (301) 267-8149 (Annapolis); or (301) 269-1910 (Baltimore)

IN PRINT

Peggy Cornett Newcomb, Popular Annuals of Eastern North America, 1865-1914, available from Dumbarton Oaks Publishing Service, P.O. Box 4866, Hampden Station, Baltimore, Maryland 21211. Price: \$15.00. (Ms. Newcomb, assistant to the superintendent of grounds at Monticello, has provided us a very thorough compendium of Victorian annuals.)

Catherine M. Howett, "Notes Toward an Iconography of Regional Landscape Form: The Southern Model," in Landscape Journal, v. 4, no. 2 (1985). (This essay was originally presented as a paper at the Third Annual Wave Hill Conference in American Garden History, on October 15, 1983.)

William B. O'Neal and Christopher Weeks, The Work of William Lawrence Bottomley in Richmond, published by the University Press of Virginia, Box 3608, University Station, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903. (\$24.95) The Press telephone number is (804) 924-3468. (Mr. Weeks writes that Mr. Bottomley, a New York architect who specialized in Georgian revival houses and built many of them across the South, was also much involved with the development of the landscapes of those houses. He kept a close watch on garden form and layout and design, and also recommended period plant materials to his clients, urging them to visit older gardens of their areas.)

ON HAND

Members of Southern Garden History Society may request membership brochures by writing to the Society's address: Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108. Ample supplies are on hand, and interested persons should be informed about our activities.

NEEDED: Information and contributions for our winter issue. Send them to the editor now, or until about mid-February.