



# Magnolia

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

Bulletin of the  
Southern Garden  
History Society

Vol. XV

No. 1

Summer 1999

## Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman

by Mary Anne Pickens

[Presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, Houston, Texas, March 26<sup>th</sup>-28th, 1999.]

Houston horticulture in recent years has been greatly influenced by a quiet, unassuming man, a Southern gentleman, who truly became a legend in his own time. Lynn Lowrey was a horticulturist by training, a collector by nature. He



Lowrey Nursery - Westheimer Street, late 1950s.

collected plants and he collected people. A mentor to many, Lowrey left a horticultural legacy to Houston and to Texas. Who was Lynn Lowrey? What did he do? He published no books and only a few articles, yet other authors acknowledged him and dedicated books to him. None of his nurseries were grand successes, yet he influenced other

nursermen in their choice of plants. He collected and promoted many plants, yet only one rare *Camptotheca* tree that will probably never be seen outside China carries his name. He was the acknowledged leader in the native plant movement in Texas, yet he rarely attended the meetings of the Native Plant Society of Texas. He hated crowds, yet when he died those who attended his memorial service represented many branches of the Agricultural Extension Service, major universities, arboreta, wholesale and retail nurseries, landscape architects, and landscape design companies. Each of those attendees was his friend, each had a connection and a sphere of influence in the world of horticulture and gardening, and each had been touched by Lynn Lowrey.

Lowrey was born in Mansfield, Louisiana, on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1917. He graduated from Louisiana State University in 1940 with a degree in horticulture. After serving four years in the United States Army during World War II, he came to Houston in the 1950s where he took a job with Teas Nursery, an established Houston firm.

In a few years, he opened his own nursery, launching the career that would establish him as an internationally acclaimed horticulturist. Through the years his nurseries always carried unusual plants, which he deemed garden worthy. The sign in front of his first nursery on Westheimer Street in Houston advertised fruit trees and rare and native plants. Lowrey felt that natives were under used and were a source of readily adaptable flora for our gardens. His first

*Continued on page 3 . . .*

### Inside this Issue

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <i>Page 10</i> | <i>1999 "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" Conference</i> |
| <i>Page 11</i> | <i>Chatwood Garden Opens</i>                                       |
| <i>Page 12</i> | <i>"The Greener Side of Texas" Delights SGHS Members</i>           |
| <i>Page 14</i> | <i>Spring SGHS Board Meeting</i>                                   |
| <i>Page 15</i> | <i>A Southern Plant List</i>                                       |

Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...  
continued from page 1



Lynn Lowrey (far right) in Mexico with his mother, aunt and uncle, 1937. efforts at advertising native plants met with little success, however, and he recalled years later that when he put out a sign advertising wild azaleas that it must have brought in at least one car a week.

Reflecting about people's reluctance to use native plants, he said:

Maybe people thought that wild plants in Texas couldn't be very good for "civilized plantings." I have heard the statement in the past, "Why that grows wild" as if that was an indictment, and it couldn't be considered for planting.

Lowrey's bywords were: "This is a great plant. Take it and try it." Often he would say, "This is a Very Important Plant," but then all plants were VIP to Lowrey. Anxious to test the limits of plants, he gave them to friends across the state. Friends who lived in San Antonio recalled Lowrey's fascination with East Texas plants while friends who lived in East Texas recalled his fascination with South Texas plants. Lowrey was simply testing his favorites for adaptability beyond their normal range.

While others may recognize Lowrey as a pioneer in the native plant movement in Texas, he never acknowledged his role. He left it to others to do the organizational things and make the speeches to promote using native plants in the landscape. Lowrey pioneered in a unique way. He simply started using native material in his landscapes and encouraging others to do the same. He felt that formal design was inappropriate for most of our gardens and he encouraged a more natural look to soften the view of our buildings. He liked using native plants and seeing how they would perform in our gardens. Some of his first landscape jobs with their natural look raised some eyebrows. His landscaping was not always popular, but gradually he caused a shift in our collective thinking about our landscapes. Concerned that as the amount of pavement increases our

natural environment decreases, Lowrey believed that through our landscaping we could improve our environment. In one of his nursery newsletters, Lowrey said:

Landscape design is usually viewed as the art of arranging lawns, trees and shrubs on a site to make it more attractive. This view is expanding to include the functions that landscape design can perform to improve the environment of a site.

Today a garden style that is widely promoted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is one called Wildscape, which encourages using native plants in natural landscaping to provide cover and food for wildlife, particularly for birds and butterflies. That style was not widespread in the 1950s, but it was a style that Lowrey used.

At one of the first homes he landscaped in Houston's affluent River Oaks area, Lowrey planted a natural looking thicket of trees and shrubs to shield the house from the busy street. The landscape must have caused quite a stir and a good bit of discussion in the neighborhood. Here was a landscape without neatly clipped hedges, without azaleas,



Lowrey among palm trees in Brazoria County, Texas, 1960s.

and without the traditional expanse of front lawn. Ruth London, a prominent landscape architect whose portfolio included work at Bayou Bend for Ima Hogg, recommended Lowrey to the homeowner. London described Lowrey as a "nice young man who just knows every thing about plants

*Continued on page 4 . . .*

Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...  
continued from page 4



flowers. He was one of the first to use Central Texas mountain laurels, *Sophora secundiflora*, in Houston, as well as the rare South Texas Anacacho orchid, *Bauhinia lunarioides*. In spite of liking to use native plants, Lowrey never limited himself to just natives. William C. Welch, Professor and Landscape Horticulturist, A & M Extension Service, recalled in the early 1960s when he and Lowrey were in business together, they often used Bradford pears in their landscaping and recalls their plantings of Bradford pears in the esplanade in the Memorial Westchester subdivision during that time. Welch pointed out that Lowrey always wanted to enlarge our plant palette and was willing to try any plant. Welch also recalled that people trusted Lowrey and were receptive to his ideas. His quiet, gentlemanly manner won him many friends, including some who were quite influential in Houston. Today, plants all over Houston stand as silent tributes to Lowrey. A large ornamental pear tree on the grounds of St. John's School was a gallon-sized twig when Lowrey helped the neighborhood Bluebird group to plant it one Arbor Day in the 1960s.

Lowrey's travels and collecting in Mexico certainly enlarged our plant palette, and new landscaping around Houston today reflects his influence. The Contemporary Arts Museum has recently planted a row of one of his favorites, the Mexican sycamore, *Platanus mexicana*. Lowrey believed it to be a hardy sycamore, more resistant to anthracnose than our native species, more drought tolerant, and more attractive with its large, almost velvety leaves. He encouraged the use of this tree and planted several on the grounds of Festival Institute, Round Top, Texas, in the 1970s.

Perhaps the trees that are most identified with Lowrey are the Mexican oaks: *Quercus polymorpha*, *Q. risophylla*, and *Q. canbyi*. All are commonly used in Houston now. In addition to providing variety for us, these oaks seem resistant to oak wilt, which has become quite a problem in many areas of the state. Through the years, Lowrey made numerous trips to Mexico to collect acorns from specimens that he considered outstanding.

Another Lowrey plant commonly used in Houston gardens is a crape myrtle hybrid named 'Basham's Party Pink.' In about 1960, Lowrey obtained specimens of *Lagerstroemia fauriei*, a Japanese crape myrtle with attractive dark reddish brown bark, from the United States National Arboretum. *L. fauriei* is more resistant to powdery mildew than the traditional *Lagerstroemia indica* we have used for so many years. Lowrey began to grow *L. fauriei* and, of course, shared them with his friends. He gave one to Bill Basham, horticulturist for the city of Houston. Basham had specimens of *L. indica* in his garden, and eventually a seedling turned up that was a cross between the two.

Lowrey collected the seedling in 1963, began propagating it, and of course, encouraged others to try it. Greg Grant, of Stephen F. Austin University, believes this was the first *L. fauriei* hybrid introduction made anywhere. In 1967, the National Arboretum began using 'Basham's Party Pink' in their hybridization work. They released their first hybrid, "Natchez" in 1978, fifteen years after Lowrey's introduction of 'Basham's Party Pink.' In 1982 the National Arboretum released 'Tuscarora,' a coral-flowered selection resulting from crossing 'Basham's Party Pink' with *L. indica* 'Cherokee.' Today hybrids are quite common with new introductions each year from the National Arboretum, but Lowrey had been the pioneer in the field. 'Basham's Party Pink' is widely available and is marketed by Color Spot in San Antonio.



Lynn Lowrey picking seeds, late 1970s.

Although Lowrey's primary interest was woody material, there are a number of perennials that are quite common now in our gardens and can be attributed to him. *Ruellia brittoniana* var. 'Katie' is a popular little *Ruellia* with many gardeners and its popularity can be traced to Lowrey. Shortly after Lowrey sold his nursery in Conroe, Texas, to his friend Katie Ferguson, two employees, Herbert Durand and Nolan Guillot, discovered a little natural hybrid *Ruellia*. When it was brought to Lowrey's attention, he began testing it, sharing it, and promoting it. Commonly called 'Katie' Ruellia, it is now marketed widely and provides color in our long, hot, humid Houston summers. In subsequent work, Greg Grant used 'Katie' Ruellia as the female parent to cross with a standard pink Ruellia to produce the 'Bonita Dwarf Pink' Ruellia. Grant's pink selection is sometimes called 'Dwarf Katie Pink' Ruellia.

The Skulcap, *Scutellaria suffrutescens*, is another

continued on page 6...

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

## Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...

continued from page 6



elevations lower than that, the plants were more suitable for dryer climates.

In 1988, John Fairey, owner of Peckerwood Gardens and Yucca Do Nursery near Hempstead, was one of a number of people who accompanied Lowrey to Mexico. Fairey wrote:

This first expedition with Lynn made a marked change in our lives and would forever alter the future direction of Yucca Do Nursery and Peckerwood Garden. During the next four days, we saw everything from high-altitude cloud forest to desert—an intense introduction to a new way of seeing. Searching for plants began early in the morning and often continued by flashlight, until after ten at night. Lynn is a storehouse of hard earned knowledge from decades of wide-ranging travel throughout Mexico and Texas. He generously shared ideas and information about everything, from obtaining collecting permits on both sides of the border to timesaving tips, and methods of cleaning, storing, and germinating seed. He is a master of making the exhausting work of plant hunting an adventure in learning. This memorable expedition laid the foundation for our desire to further explore Mexican flora.

On one of his collecting trips to Mexico in 1982, Lowrey and his friends Emmett Dodd and Dr. Ray Jordan discovered a small tree that was classified later as a new legume and was named *Myrospermum sousanum*. A rare, usually multi-trunked small tree, *M. sousanum* has white pea-like flowers. Dr. Marshall Johnston and Alfonso Delgado, botanists at The University of Texas at Austin, wrote the description of the plant. The plant can be found in arboreta across the state. Lowrey felt that finding *Myrospermum sousanum* indicated the importance of looking for more plants in Mexico. The legume was named for Dr. Mario Sousa, an authority on the legumes of Mexico.

Lowrey's collecting skills were responsible for his one brief departure from his own nursery business. In the early 1980s, Joe Bradbury, President of Lone Star Growers (now Color Spot), a large wholesale nursery in San Antonio, offered Lowrey a position to collect and provide them with new plants. Jerry Parsons recalls that Bradbury had been impressed with a large Montezuma Cypress, *Taxodium mucronatum* in Parson's back yard, and upon learning that Lowrey had collected and grown it, Bradbury decided to embark on a native plant venture with Lowrey as his native plant specialists. This was the first time a major Texas wholesale grower showed any interest in native plants. According to Parsons, Bradbury had not met Lowrey before he hired him, but was willing to put forth a sizable investment because of Lowrey's reputation. Parson feels this says "quite a bit about the man [Lowrey] and his legend."

Mike Anderson recalls that Lone Star offered Lowrey a salary, a credit card, and a pick-up truck and said, "Go Collect." What began as a promising partnership proved to be unsatisfactory. Lowrey's nature did not allow him to fit

into the corporate mold. Coworker Agnes Hubbard remembers Lowrey saying he did not like turning out thousands of plants "looking like little soldiers." He was happier doing his own collecting, sharing with his friends along the way. A few of Lowrey's introductions are still marketed by Color Spot today, but most are available only through smaller wholesale growers who specialize in native plants.

Although Lowrey taught many people, he did not call himself a teacher. He referred to himself as a student, saying he would be a student all his life. His careful observation and research of his beloved plants certainly made him a student, but by sharing his knowledge with so many others, he became the consummate teacher. His influence on other horticulturists, nurserymen, and landscape architects was phenomenal. Jill Nokes, author of *How to Grow Native Plants*, called him "a gentle guru." Another friend, Agnes Hubbard, told of his teaching her to look at plants from the inside out. As they drove around, whether it was in downtown San Antonio or in the mountains of Mexico, he would quiz her about the Latin names of plants they were seeing. If she made an error in identification, he would



Lowrey in Mexico, late 1980s.

patiently stop, point out subtleties about the plant—the color of the bark, the angle of the branches, some little something that would distinguish it from something similar. By doing this, she acknowledges, he gave her a foundation in botany that would enrich her life and her career always.

Many other friends consider him their teacher and mentor. Sally and Andy Wasowski dedicated their book *Native Texas Gardens* to him, as did Mark and Mary Bowen with their book *Habitat Gardening for Houston and Southeast Texas*. University professors told their students about Lowrey and took them to gardens he had landscaped

continued on page 8...

Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...  
continued from page 8



Through his skill in connecting people, Lowrey played a part in providing the funds for that research. Shortly before he died, he also took the experimental drug Camptothecin as part of his own cancer treatment.

It seems fitting that Lowrey's last work was such an important one. His fascination with plants had ranged from their use in landscaping to their use in medical research. His love of plants knew no boundaries, no constraints. His generosity to others continues. Even those he will never meet will benefit from his love of plants. Lowrey died on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

In March 1999, two white oaks, two fringe trees, and a swamp chestnut oak were planted in the new Lynn R. Lowrey Arboretum on the campus of Rice University. Spearheaded by Charles Tapley, architect and landscape architect, and Jerald Mize, an attorney, businessman and plant enthusiast, the Arboretum will feature native Texas trees and shrubs. In addition to serving as a living memorial

to Lowrey, the Arboretum will be used as an educational resource for Rice University. Lowrey's legacy lives on. ♦



Camptotheca, *Tree of Joy*.

## Awards Received by Lynn R. Lowrey

Southwest Chapter ASLA Honor Award

American Association of Nurseryman National Landscape Award to Lowrey Nursery in recognition of achievement in landscaping and beautification for North Loop Office Park.

The Houston Botanical Society Environmental Achievement Award for personal achievement to Lynn R. Lowrey in recognition of his success in preserving endangered plant species native to Texas in city, and in propagating and establishing such plants in other suitable locations; his relentless pursuit of collecting and introducing native and other rare plants to the Houston area; his generosity in always sharing his knowledge and time with others.

The Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Municipal Art Commission presents an award of distinguished achievement to Lynn Lowrey for an outstanding contribution to the environment of the city of Houston by

Tom Dodd, Jr., Award of Excellence Second Annual presented to Lynn Lowrey for his achievements in understanding, promoting and using native plants of North America.

The Native Plant Society of Texas presents the Nancy Benedict Memorial Award for an act of conservation/service in the field of Native Texas Plants to Lynn Lowrey for his work on the conservation, propagation, distribution of *Pistacia texana* Swingle. Eighth Annual State Conference, Dallas, Texas.

The Garden Club of America gratefully acknowledges the significant contribution to Horticulture by Lynn R. Lowrey for pioneering the use of native plants in the landscape and for generous sharing of his knowledge, time and plants. Garden Club of Houston, Zone IX.

Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter, Letter of Recognition for contributions to plant conservation in Texas, June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996, applauding Lowrey's "many years of collecting, propagating, planting and promoting plants native to Texas and the Southwest...your efforts have gone a long way toward building appreciation for the value of native plants and the habitat that they provide."

The Native Plant Society of Texas presents this Charles Leonard Weddle Memorial Award in recognition of a lifetime of service and devotion to the Texas native plants to Lynn Lowrey. Presented this 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, 1996, at the annual meeting of the Society, El Paso, Texas.



## 1999 "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" Conference ... continued from page 10

waterways into an attractive resource for local communities of humans, wildlife, and plants.

As the profession of garden restoration expands, certainly our attention will widen to include features such as urban streams. Another natural outgrowth of the evolution of our field will be to question the assumptions of earlier generations of garden historians. Accepted wisdom, passed down through the years, must be periodically reexamined to insure accuracy. Dr. Arthur Tucker will address some of these issues as they relate to the myths of the colonial herb garden. The final step to this process of identifying heirloom plants is insuring that what we grow today in a restored garden is in fact what our ancestors grew in their garden. The conference turns to William Woys Weaver to tackle this subject in his keynote address on Thursday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Weaver has never before spoken at the **Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes**, and we are delighted that he will bring his wealth of experience and expertise to share with us all. Anyone familiar with his recent work can attest to his impeccable research into the intricate histories of heirloom vegetable varieties. His insights into researching historic plants and his emphasis on accurately authenticating heirloom varieties set the standard for everyone else in the field.

Each lecture and workshop of the 1999 conference presents a unique perspective into a specific field of inquiry, and as a whole comments upon the present condition and future direction of the profession and its methodology. With such a diverse group of lecturers, covering a wide-range of issues, you can be assured that this, the twelfth **Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes**, will be one of the most insightful and entertaining. The Southern Garden History Society is a sponsor of the conference, and every society member will receive a brochure for the conference. For more information, contact Kay Bergey, the landscape conference coordinator, at (336)721-7328.

[Proceedings for the 1997 conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes are at the printers and are expected out in August. The 157-page soft cover book is composed of ten essays given at the October 1997 conference, developing the theme, "Breaking Ground: Examining the Vision and Practice of Historic Landscape Restoration." SGHS members will be notified when the proceedings go on sale. The book contains forty-nine illustrations. In addition, title pages are highlighted with historic landscape drawings.] \*

## Chatwood Garden Opens

by Flora Ann Bynum, Winston-Salem,  
North Carolina

**C**hatwood Garden in Hillsborough, North Carolina, was opened to visitors in April by its new owners, SGHS members Bruce and Susan Lueck. In the 1950s Helen Blake Watkins began developing extensive gardens around the circa 1808 house on the property, which had originally been used as a tavern and hostelry. Mrs. Watkins' garden became well known throughout the South for its extensive collection of old garden roses, featured in a three-room walled garden. By the time of Mrs. Watkins' death in 1993, the garden had grown to cover several acres and included multiple perennial and woody beds, a large woodland garden, and a stream bed added to provide a water feature.

The Luecks bought the property in 1997 and have worked for two years to renovate and restore the garden beds. There are currently 350 varieties of old garden roses, and thousands of species of other plants, especially featuring those varieties used in Southern gardens. The Luecks have added a one-hundred foot "Long Border" along the rose garden wall. A formal parterre garden of fruits and vegetables is under way.

Chatwood is now open spring through late autumn on Thursday afternoons at 2 p.m. by appointment. Reservations may be made by calling (919) 644-0791 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Helen Watkins (then Helen Blake) spoke at the first **Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes** conference in 1979 on old garden roses. In May 1982 the conference program included a tour of Chatwood. \*

## Of Interest

### Biltmore Portrait Graces New Olmsted Stamp

A new postage stamp set for release in September honors Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), founder of American landscape architecture and creator of Biltmore Estate's landscape plan. Biltmore, the home of George Vanderbilt, was the site of the Southern Garden History Society's 1998 annual meeting. The stamp features Olmsted's portrait, commissioned by Vanderbilt and painted by John Singer Sargent in 1895, which usually hangs in the Second Floor Living Hall of Biltmore House, but was on loan to the National Gallery of Art for its Sargent exhibition. Also in the stamp are a photo of Central Park and two architectural landscape plans, all designed by Olmsted.

• \* • \* • \*  
“The Greener Side of Texas”  
Delights SGHS Members ...  
*continued from page 12*



We are greatly appreciative of the edifying venues provided by the staff members at Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, the Menil Collection, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Special thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Smith, Laura Rice Neff, and Mr. and Mrs. W. McIver Streetman who opened their private gardens to society members, and to Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Avery, who hosted the annual dinner and business meeting, at which Allen Lacy, “Dean of American Garden Writers,” gave the keynote address.

Sunday's optional field trip took attendees northwest of Houston into the rolling Hill Country of Washington County.

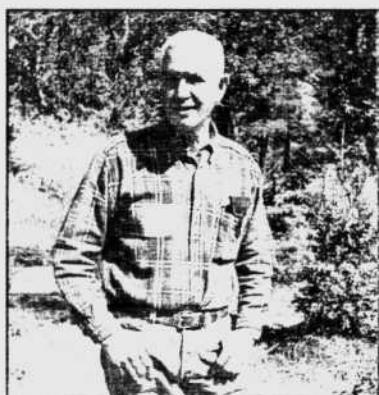


Peter Raarup with a cart-load of plants at the Antique Rose Emporium.

Peckerwood Garden, the home and nursery of noted plantsman John Fairey, was a real highlight. This Garden Conservancy property in Hempstead, Texas, with an outstanding collection of native rarities from Texas and Mexico, is described as “an artist's garden set in a natural landscape.” It was hard to pry participants away from the garden's dizzying collection of unusual specimens and the proprietor's adjacent business, the renown Yucca Do Nursery. A delightful picnic lunch at Margaret Shanks' garden antique shop in Brenham was

followed by a trip to everyone's favorite, the Antique Rose Emporium. There, owner Michael Shoup gave a brief overview of the ever-expanding nursery before turning us loose to enjoy the inspiring and often whimsical garden displays and myriad assortment of roses.

Of the outstanding roster of lectures, two



John Fairey, owner and designer of Peckerwood Garden.

will be reprinted in *Magnolia*. This issue contains the profile of plant explorer and nurseryman Lynn Lowrey, which was presented by Mary Anne Pickens, past president of the Native Plant Society of Texas, and member of the Winedale Historical Center and Advisory Council of the University of Texas at



Diane Welch, Liz Druitt, and Elizabeth Winston in a playful moment at Peckerwood Garden.

Austin and of the Pioneer Unit of the Herb Society of America. She also has been a frequent *Magnolia* contributor. Ms. Pickens' great-grandfather J. F. Leyendecker started Pearfield Nursery in 1876, and her grandparents continued to run the nursery through the 1950s. Her interest in the history of horticulture has evolved through research on her family's nursery and that of other nineteenth-century Texas nurserymen.

The fall issue of *Magnolia* will feature “A New Look at our French Gardening Roots: *Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane*,” an essay by Sally Kittredge Reeves, archivist of the New Orleans



Evening reception at Bayou Bend.

*continued on page 15...*

# A Southern Plant List

by Gordon Chappell,  
Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia



"The Greener Side of Texas"  
Delights SGHS Members ...  
*continued from page 13*

The Southern Garden History Society and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation are jointly sponsoring a project to compile a list of historic plants for the South. At the last board of director's meeting held in Houston in March, Gordon Chappell, landscape director at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, briefed the board on progress with the plant list project.

The plant list will be a compendium of plants mentioned in attributed historic sources. Thus far, Chappell and Larry Griffith, project coordinator, have collected about 15 lists, dating from 1732 until 1935.

Among the lists submitted to date are:

- Thomas Jefferson's Monticello list, submitted by Peter Hatch;
- Bernard McMahon's Philadelphia catalogue, William Booth's Baltimore catalogue, the William Faris Annapolis list, and the Sinclair and Moore nursery list from Baltimore, submitted by Barbara Sarudy;
- the William Byrd plant list, submitted by Colonial Williamsburg; as well as Colonial Williamsburg's own historic plant list;
- the plant lists from Bethabara gardens in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, submitted by Flora Ann Bynum;
- the list compiled from the Brothers of the Spade correspondence between Peter Collinson and John Custis, compiled and submitted by Peter Hatch;
- a colonial vegetable list compiled and submitted by Wesley Greene, garden historian, Colonial Williamsburg;
- John Randolph's Williamsburg list, compiled and submitted by Terry Yemm, garden historian, Colonial Williamsburg;
- the Middleton Place list;
- the Hardy Croom citations submitted by Goodwood Museum & Garden, Tallahassee, Florida;
- and the Jacob Smith list from Fayetteville, Arkansas, compiled by John Fitzpatrick and submitted by Harriet Jansma.

The composite list will include common and botanical names (if given), the date of each plant's appearance on each submitted list, the date and provenance of each original list, the submitter of the list, and the plant type, i.e.: perennial, tree, shrub, etc.

Gordon Chappell and members of the landscape department at Colonial Williamsburg are developing a standardized format so that the final product will have universal utility. Chappell encouraged all members of the Southern Garden History Society to participate in the project, emphasizing that the more diverse the lists the greater the use the combined list will have in the future.

In addition, a facsimile of each submitted list will append the document, so that a researcher can not only determine the date of the use of a plant but also determine the other plants that were used in the same garden.

If you have questions about this project please contact Gordon Chappell, (755) 220-7764 and e-mail at elcg@vt.edu, or Larry Griffith, project team leader, at (757) 565-8713. They will be pleased to discuss the project and lead you through the process of preparing a list. ♦



Peckerwood Garden's collection of unusual flora and garden statuary.



*continued on page 16...*

Membership Dues Notices were mailed May 14<sup>th</sup> for dues for the year beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 through April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2000. New members who joined after January 1<sup>st</sup> were not billed, but will receive their first renewal notice next May. Members who have questions about their dues may call the society's membership secretary, Paula Chamblee, at (336) 721-7328 in the Old Salem office.

## Annual Membership Dues

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

The membership year runs from May 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>. Members joining after January 1<sup>st</sup> will be credited for the coming year beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>. 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.



# Magnolia

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

Bulletin of the  
Southern Garden  
History Society

Vol. XV

No. 3

Winter 1999-2000

## "An Undebauched Mind:" Farmer Washington at Mount Vernon, 1759-1799

by G. Terry Sharrer, Mount Vernon, Virginia

**T**he more I am acquainted with agricultural affairs, the better I am pleased with them; insomuch, that I can no where find so great satisfaction as in those innocent and useful pursuits. In indulging these feelings, I am led to reflect how much more delightful to an undebauched mind is the task of making improvements on the earth, than all the vain glory which can be acquired from ravaging it, by the most uninterrupted career of conquests."

Washington to Arthur Young, December 4, 1788<sup>1</sup>

Washington was, before, during and after everything else, a farmer. He claimed that being a good farmer was his only lifelong ambition, though

perhaps he exaggerated a bit. His diaries and letters show a constant concern with agricultural matters, leaving the clear impression that he sincerely believed "the life of a Husbandman of all others is the most delectable." It would be difficult to prove that farming was the main source of the man's character, but just as hard to deny. The kind of farmer Washington was, however, may indicate why that occupation figured so persistently in his thoughts.

As every school child knows, the place Washington loved best was Mount Vernon. He acquired the mansion house and 2,100 acres after settling his brother's estates in 1761, although he had moved there with his bride, Martha Dandridge Custis, in 1759. Martha's inheritance from her first husband gave the couple enough money to develop Mount Vernon into one of the largest plantations under cultivation in Virginia. Shortly after his marriage, Washington wrote to his London agent asking for a copy of a book. Its title likely revealed his intention — *A New System of Agriculture: Or a Speedy Method of Growing Rich.*<sup>2</sup>

From the time he took over Mount Vernon until the end of his life, Washington acted out the role of "gentleman farmer." Considering the slightly derogatory connotation that term now has, an explanation of its eighteenth-century meaning seems

*Continued on page 3...*

courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association



George Washington at Mount Vernon.

### Inside this Issue

Page 9  
Page 12  
Page 15  
Page 16

*Old Salem Conference Review*  
*Gardens of Antebellum Columbia, South Carolina*  
*Book Review: Charles Eliot: Landscape Architect*  
*Georgia Chapter of SGHS*

Farmer Washington:...  
continued from page 1



deserving. In Fielding's Tom Jones (1748), the term first appeared in literature. Telling Tom and Mr. Partridge his story, "The Man of the Hill" recalled:

My father was one of those whom they call gentlemen farmers. He had a little estate of about £300 a year of his own and rented another estate of near the same value. He was prudent and industrious, and so good a husbandman, that he might have led a very easy and comfortable life, had not an arrant vixen of a wife soured his domestic quiet.

Good husbandry, rather than great wealth or high social standing, was the original mark of a "gentleman farmer." Naturally, people of wealth had more opportunities to discover what good husbandry was. Still, "improved" farming drew attention in all but the meanest "neighborhoods" of Britain, Europe, and America. Voltaire quipped that in France, "the nation, satiated with verse, tragedies, comedies, novels, operas, romantic histories, and still more with romantic moralisings, romances and theological squabbles, began to discuss the question of corn." Later on, Arthur Young wrote that "the farming tribe is now made up of all ranks from a Duke to an apprentice." Actually, he should have said "from a King," as George III, who came to the throne in 1760, took great pride in his agricultural efforts, enjoyed being called "Farmer George," and published his own studies of crop husbandry under the name of his gardener Ralph Robinson. One might easily imagine an enlightened but dirty-booted plowman and a well-heeled aristocrat discussing a system of crop rotations in the eighteenth century. They were both "gentlemen farmers."<sup>3</sup>

Complicated economic forces lay behind the heightened interest in farming on both sides of the Atlantic. The same forces were generating the industrial revolution. But, in a nutshell, population was expanding faster than the area of cultivated land. Between 1740 and 1800, England's population grew from 6 to 9 million; France, 17 to 27 million; Germany, 18 to 24 million. More Europeans (including the British), demanding more goods, so created the consumption circumstances commercial farmers have always loved. In Virginia, Europe's wishes were measured out in more tobacco to England, more wheat to Southern France and Spain, and more cereals and livestock products to the West Indies.<sup>4</sup>

The expansion of farming into new lands was never very complicated. Intensifying agriculture on existing land, however, was always a problem of the most tangled order, wherever attempted, because it required that farmers understand more than a little about biology, soil chemistry, mechanics, and farm management. It was to these subjects that Washington paid considerable attention and much of what he learned came from books. In England, men such as Jethro Tull, William Marshall, Lord Townshend, the Earl of Leicester, and Arthur Young were writing about a number of

practices known collectively at the time as "the new husbandry." Actually, there were two branches of thought in this school, represented by Tull and Young. Jethro Tull, the author of *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry* (1731) based his advice on the theory that plants took nourishment from the soil by eating small particles of dirt through their "lacteal mouths."<sup>5</sup> All plants, he believed, subsisted on the same kind of food. The aim of horse-hoeing was to break the earth into small enough particles for the plants to eat. He was a lawyer. In spite of his mistaken premise, Tull's work on plows and grain drills represented an important advancement in agricultural technology.<sup>6</sup>

Young popularized "the Norfolk system," which held crop rotation and marling as the cornerstones of enlightened practice. Marl, a mixture of clay and lime, neutralized soil acidity, discouraged the growth of acid-loving diseases, and promoted the growth of nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Young became so devoted to its application that on his wife's tombstone he had inscribed: "Martha Young, the great-grand-daughter of John Allen, Esq. of Lyng House in the county of Norfolk, the first person, according to the Comte de Boulaivilliers, who there used lime." Young disapproved of Tull's horse-hoeing and had gotten into farming because



courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association  
An 18th century tobacco farm. (source Arens collections New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation.)

his mother refused to let him become a cavalry officer. Washington owned Tull's book and corresponded with Young for many years.<sup>6</sup>

On the basis of notes he took and new ideas he put into practice, Washington was particularly influenced by two other writers. The English edition of Henri Duhamel du Monceau's *A Practical Treatise of Husbandry* (1759) expanded upon Tull's ideas about agricultural implements and provoked Washington to try his own hand at devising a cultivator that both plowed and planted. Henry Home's (Lord Kames) *The Gentlemen Farmer: Being an Attempt to Improve Agriculture, by Subjecting It to the Test of Rational Principles* (1779) described harrows and a plan for crop rotations that Washington used. Both books actually covered

*Continued on page 4...*

## Farmer Washington:... continued from page 4



Washington owned, discussed Lucerne at length, but it is uncertain whether he read these works before he planted his first crop.<sup>11</sup>

Lucerne has several advantages, if properly handled. It is rich in totally digestible nutrients for livestock and, as a legume, is nitrogen fixing. To grow well, however, Lucerne requires neutral to slightly alkaline soil conditions, and the land at Mount Vernon tended toward slightly acidity. Marling corrected the chemistry for Lucerne, as the Norfolk improvers knew. Apparently, Washington had mixed results, though he never explained exactly why. In 1795, he wrote to Jefferson, "Lucerne has not succeeded better with me than with you, but I will give it another and fairer trial before it is abandoned altogether." (Probably, Washington's Lucerne crop died off because the plants' deep roots drowned during the winter season's high water table). Still, from beginning to end, his attempts with Lucerne spanned a period of over thirty-five years.<sup>12</sup>

It troubled Washington that much of what he read about farming was untried by its proponents. Tull worked in his fields, but Lord Townshend, the great propagandist for turnips, never did. Washington had good reason to be skeptical even of theorists who wallowed in mud. Eastern Virginia's climate and soil were more like Portugal's than Britain's. English technology was not entirely transferable to America, at least not without some adaption. As best he could, Washington tried to figure out the variables of biological control according to his own circumstances. With plants, he studied the depth at which seeds were sowed and the effect of different widths between the rows. With manure and lime, he experimented with top, side, and under dressings. He kept weather records and tried altering the planting dates of his crops. On fruit tree grafting, livestock nutrition, and animal diseases, Washington carefully recorded his experiences about what worked best.<sup>13</sup>

Every time Washington left Mount Vernon, he worried about his overseers keeping things in good order. And he was away part of every year. He took a seat in the House of



Washington the Farmer.

courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

Burgesses in 1759. Then, in April 1775, he started his most momentous trip. Writing to his brother John Augustine, he said "I am now to bid adieu to you, and to every kind of domestic ease for a while. I am embarked on a wide ocean, boundless in its prospect, and in which, perhaps no safe harbor is to be found. I have been called upon by the unanimous voice of the Colonies to take the command of the Continental army." The next time he returned home was a stop on the way to Yorktown.<sup>14</sup>

The Revolution altered the course of commercial agriculture for Washington as it did for practically all farmers in America. Britain directed its mercantile policy against the United States after the war and the effects were, in some places, devastating. The indigo industry in South Carolina and Georgia collapsed with the loss of its protected market and transportation subsidy. Dairymen in New England and the middle states were shut out of the British West Indies trade. In his *Observation of the Commerce of the American States*, Lord John Sheffield argued that the British Empire needed nothing of American shipping and little of its goods. Canada, he thought, could supply fish, wheat and flour, naval stores, and lumber to the Atlantic colonies and perhaps to the wine islands and Portugal as well. "The West India islands will then be under no necessity of drawing supplies from the American states, and the importation of their wheat and flour should be prohibited ...." But on this last point, Sheffield was wrong.<sup>15</sup>

In the first place, Sheffield overestimated Canada's strength as the empire's granary. The Canadians could not fill the gap. In fact, Canada was not itself self-sufficient in wheat. British farmers were in no position to help. Crop failures in England in 1782 and 1783 forced Parliament to prohibit all wheat exports. Even in good harvest years afterwards, Britain was only marginally self-sufficient in breadstuffs.<sup>16</sup>

Also, Sheffield poorly understood the physical peculiarities of the flour trade. Among the major commodities in Atlantic commerce, flour was the most perishable. Meats, wine, fish, rice, and even butter all had longer merchantable lives than flour and corn meal. Changes in temperature, from cool to hot, and humidity, from dry to damp, caused milled cereals to ferment. Simply, English flour rotted almost as soon as it arrived in the British West Indies, if not sooner. By contrast, American flour, especially that milled in the Southeastern states, kept sweet longer. Sir Humphrey Davy explained the problem, comparing Yorkshire and Maryland wheat's in *Elements of Agricultural Chemistry* (1803).<sup>17</sup>

In short, the British were unable to close the cereal trade between the United States and the West Indies. Crop failures in Spain and France during the 1780s did as much for those countries' Caribbean colonies. Later on, the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon worked to American farmers' benefit. As Jefferson figured, "this (war in Europe)

continued on page 6...



## *Farmer Washington:...*

*continued from page 6*



investment. There were usually more than 300 head of cattle and between 600 and 1,000 sheep at Mount Vernon.

Washington thought that the wool he produced was equal to the best in England, but he was probably mistaken. He had little luck with dairy cattle because the abundance of garlic and wild onions in his fields tainted the flavor of milk; most of his cattle were kept for meat. The size of Washington's herds was important, because heterosis had slim prospects among fewer than eighty animals. Washington kept alert for chances to buy good breeding stock in cattle and sheep whenever he could.<sup>24</sup>

Where Washington achieved singular distinction in animal breeding, however, was with mules. In 1785, the King of Spain sent to Mount Vernon a jackass (male donkey) named "Royal Gift" and the following year Lafayette sent a Maltese jack and two jennets (female donkeys). Attempts to mate them were unsuccessful at first. Washington wrote: "at present, tho' young, he [“Royal Gift”] follows what one may suppose to be the example of his late Royal Master, who cannot, tho' past his great climacteric, perform seldom or with more majestic solemnity than he does. However, I have my hopes that when he becomes a little better acquainted with republican enjoyments, he will amend his manners and fall into our custom of doing business ...." In time, "Royal Gift" proved himself with one of the Maltese jennets and sired "Compound," Mount Vernon's most famous stud. Washington had little luck getting his stallions to breed with the jennets, but he discovered that the jennets' ability to tease was sufficient to excite the jacks into mating with almost anything. By 1799, Mount Vernon had fifty-seven mules, descending mostly from "Compound" and twenty mares.<sup>25</sup>



*courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association*

*Mule at Mount Vernon*

Washington employed his mules for farm work even more than his oxen or horses. Mules were generally healthier, lived longer, and ate less than the horses and worked faster than oxen. Their only disadvantage was that they produced less manure. Whether or not he actually calculated it, Washington assigned mules to his farms at roughly one animal for forty acres. Because he was the first to be successful at mule breeding in the United States, Washington was centrally involved in the important shift from bovine to equine power on American farms.<sup>26</sup>

In 1875, the same year that "Royal Gift" arrived, Washington built a greenhouse on the North side of the flower garden at Mansion Farm. It was a large building with a forced hot air system (now reconstructed on its original site at Mount Vernon). In it, he raised oranges, pineapples, strawberries, and other exotics. A visitor described it as "a complete greenhouse, which at this season is a vast great source of pleasure. Plants from every part of the world seem to flourish in the neatly finished apartments ...." As with his field crops, Washington read what he could to direct his experiments. John Kennedy's *A Treatise upon Planting, Gardening and the Management of the Hot-House* (1777) and John Abercrombie's *The Hot-House Gardener* (1789) were in his library. Washington's diaries, however, give little indication that he had much success as a horticulturist. Still, the picture of Washington trying to raise seeds from China (he had no idea what the plants were) testifies to a sense of experimentation that ran the gamut of his day.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout his life, farming fascinated Washington. His aim, more than simply making a living from the land, was to put agriculture on a permanent footing at Mount Vernon, in contrast to the migratory tradition of farming until the soil wore out, then moving on. In the eighteenth-century sense of "scientific" (empirical experiments and observations), Washington was a "scientific farmer." He devised some of his own implements, and imported other "new models" from abroad. He kept in contact with the most prominent men in farming on both sides of the Atlantic. With attempts to raise over sixty field crops, he more than demonstrated his reluctance to be bound entirely to one. And, in at least one area of animal husbandry — mule breeding — he was a pioneer.

Yet, to assess Washington as a farmer is no simple matter. A catalogue of his shortcomings would include the fact that most of his experiments failed. His plow broke. His drill broke. His Chinese seeds sprouted and withered, and citrus growing never caught on in Virginia. Unlike Eliza Lucas or Eli Whitney, Washington's name was not associated with a dramatic change in agriculture during his lifetime. The list might go on to include that Washington never truly applied scientific principles to agriculture, nor had any literary influence on farming.

*continued on page 8...*

Farmer Washington:...  
continued from page 8



**End Notes cont. ...**

25. John C. Fitzpatrick, *The Writings of George Washington, 1745-1799* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), Vol. 28, p. 426; J. H. Powell, "George Washington and the Jack Ass," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 52 (April 1953): 238-252; James W. Whitaker, "A Venture in Jack Stock," *Agricultural History* 38 (October 1964): 217-225.
26. "General Washington's Jacks," *The Draft Horse Journal* 8 (February 1971): 16. Contains Washington's advertisement for jack stud service.
27. Mount Vernon Ladies Association, *Mount Vernon: An Illustrated Handbook* (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 1968), 28.

## "Plans and Plants of the Southern Landscape," A Review of the 12th Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes

by Keyes Williamson, Horticulturist, Old Salem, Winston-Salem

Each winter, as the gardeners at Old Salem begin putting together seed orders for the upcoming year, we have the opportunity to reassess the list of plants grown in Old Salem's restored family gardens. Bill Crow scours the pages of catalogues looking for vegetable varieties with introduction dates appropriate to our period. David Bare does the same for flowers, and this year he carefully reexamined our seed inventory, trying to justify each plant's place at Old Salem. We are fortunate to possess several good plant lists left behind by the Moravian settlers of this area and by the citizens of Salem. Philip Christian Reuter's two maps of the gardens of Bethabara (1759, 1761) provide lists of the vegetables, herbs, and flowers grown there. For specific varietal names, Old Salem relies on advertisements published in local newspapers and on the diaries and sketches that local residents left behind. Even with this information, we choose to grow varieties that we cannot positively place here at Salem from its founding in 1766 to 1859, the period presently reflected in the restored landscape. So we necessarily rely upon the lists of plants, compiled by various authors, that were known to be cultivated in America by the mid-nineteenth century. Although by no means a perfected science, this was exactly the topic of the Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes held this past October in Winston-Salem.

Every two years, leaders in the field of landscape restoration converge at Old Salem to discuss a topic pertinent to the profession. This year, speakers, representing disciplines across the spectrum, brought forth their ideas and opinions on a wide range of issues all built around the theme "Plans and Plants of the Southern Landscape." One participant remarked that the reoccurring theme of the Conference was "the pursuit of accuracy." Based on the three days of lectures and workshops, it is clearly evident that garden restoration is being actively supported by scholars whose research refine our understanding of our horticultural heritage. Dr. Arthur O.

Tucker, in his lecture "The Myth of the Colonial Herb Garden," reminded the audience of garden historian Rudy Favretti's warning that "visitors to historic sites ? accept what they see as authentic. We do them a great disservice to exhibit untrue concepts."

A stroll through our gardens with vegetable historian and noted author William Woys Weaver illustrated just how difficult it is to be historically accurate. Weaver's remarkable knowledge of historic plant varieties enables him to recognize anachronistic plants and to verify if what we grow today is similar to what was grown in the past. Weaver's keynote address walked the audience through the steps he takes to identify an heirloom variety and then how he obtains an example of that plant today. At his 1830s *jardin potager* near Philadelphia, Weaver carefully grows thousands of heirloom plants. Showing several slides he made with the latest digital technology, Weaver demonstrated how he compares his own produce with historic botanical illustrations to verify a variety's identity. Weaver also encouraged historic sites to be



Conference participants touring Old Salem gardens.



## Plans and Plants...

continued from page 10

how Southerners' interest in horticultural and ornamental gardening found expression in an enormous variety of architectural styles and agricultural practices. Additionally, for an evening session, Cothran showed a video introduction to the Cherokee Garden Library in Atlanta, a valuable repository of primary and secondary research material, which houses the archives of the Southern Garden History Society.

Peter Joel Harrison's research has led him around the country examining, photographing, and drawing historic fences and other garden features. He shared his personal experience trying to find a publisher for his exquisite renderings. Thankfully, with the advice and help from friends, he did get them published and several of his books were available and sold well at the Conference. This year the Conference returned to Old Salem and The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts after several years of being held on the campus of Salem College. Participants particularly enjoyed the more intimate setting of MESDA, commenting that the location helped facilitate conversation during the brief program breaks. Participants also toured Old Salem's gardens, and this year John Larson, vice president of Restoration for Old Salem, lead a walking tour of Tanner's Run. At one time, Tanner's Run stream ran through the heart of Salem, providing water and power. In recent decades, this much-neglected stream had become overgrown and filled with trash. Old Salem, in conjunction with Pilot View RC&D and the City of Winston-Salem, engineered a

bioremediation of this important habitat for native flora and fauna. A highlight of the conference was the panel discussion, "How to Develop an Authentic Plant List." Moderator Gordon Chappell of Colonial Williamsburg, led the discussion on ways to produce an accurate, thoroughly referenced list of historic plants of the South. All agreed that great care must be taken to document the source of the information and to correctly identify the plants on the lists. Chappell has, to date, received numerous historic lists, and conference participants were encouraged to become involved in the collection of material. Those interested in providing information for the project should contact SGHS headquarters or Gordon Chappell directly. The goal, of course, is to further the mission of providing accurate information for garden researchers and restorers. While it will likely take some time to collect and organize this enormous amount of information into a usable form, we anxiously await its arrival and applaud Colonial Williamsburg's leadership in this effort. The 1999 Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscape Conference did produce immediately gratifying lessons. We personally came away with several ideas about researching our plants and organizing our inventory. William Weaver's mandate to grow our own seeds and to carefully identify what we grow leads us into the growing season excited about the possibilities and responsibilities of gardening at a historic site. \*

## "ORIENTAL LUXURY": BERGHOLZ, SUMMER, AND THE GARDENS OF ANTEBELLUM COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

by James Everett Kibler, Hardy Plantation, South Carolina

In the midst of war, William Summer's agricultural and horticultural periodical, *the Farmer and Planter* of Columbia, South Carolina, began an ambitious series entitled "Visits to Columbia Gardens." It was written for the journal by W. R. Bergholz, an unheralded landscape architect of Columbia, who was overseer of Summer's Columbia branch of Pomaria Nurseries. Bergholz was a European, a replacement for two earlier European gardeners at Pomaria: James Crammond and William DeHines. He had special expertise in varieties of ornamentals currently introduced to Europe from Asia. His specialties were evergreens, conifers, roses, and perennials. Summer described him in 1861 as being "an accomplished Horticulturist and Floriculturist, who will spare no pains to make this

establishment superior to any in the Confederacy." Bergholz was also an able and well-received horticultural writer. Before *The Farmer and Planter*'s demise in or shortly after October 1861, he was a regular contributor to the periodical on such topics as ornamental trees and shrubs, roses, fuchsias, verbenas, geraniums, lantanas, heliotropes, "The Flower Garden," "The Study of Botany," and "The Color and Odor of Flowers." In a June 1861 advertisement in *The Farmer and Planter*, Bergholz offered his services as "Landscape Gardener and Rural Architect." He states in this ad that he will "devote particular attention to the improvement and laying out of country and city residences, public parks, cemeteries, and all kinds of ornamental and flower gardens, and garden architecture, the construction of green-houses,

continued on page 12...

# Oriental Luxutry...

continued from page 12



grandeur and beauty, so essential to the charm of landscape. The seat of Col. Preston is one of the most interesting in this neighborhood. The house is a large and respectable mansion of stone, [Actually brick stuccoed and scored to look like stone. Bergholz's European eye, accustomed to stone, was successfully fooled.] surrounded by pleasure grounds of fine Evergreen and deciduous trees. The most conspicuous ornament of the grounds, however, is a magnificent specimen of the *Cedrus Deodara* [the deodar cedar was one of the most popular trees ordered from Pomaria Nurseries in the 1850s by Upcountry South Carolina gardeners.] of large size, over thirty feet high, whose wide stretched branches give an air of dignity to the whole place.

The lover of the expressive in nature, will find, by promenading through the extensive grounds, innumerable subjects for his study, very instructive to the amateur of landscape gardening and the naturalist.

Among the sylvan features here most interesting, are the following handsome Evergreens. The *Araucaria excelsa* (Norfolk Pine,) has already obtained the height of twenty feet, remarkable for its graceful branches and noble carriage. The *Cryptomeria japonica*, fifteen feet high, *Araucaria brasiliensis* twenty-five feet high, *Abies excelsa*, twenty feet high, *Cupressus Funebris* (Funerary Cypress) [a rare evergreen tree just introduced to England in the previous decade. Pomaria had been selling it as early as 1853.] *Thuja aurea* (Golden Arbor Vitae,) *Taxodium baccata*, and many other fine varieties. Near the mansion are several large specimens of the *Magnolia grandiflora*, from thirty to fifty feet high, *Magnolia macrophylla* with its magnificent large and soft green foliage, *Magnolia purpurea* and the so highly esteemed *Magnolia fuscata* [The *Michelia figo*, or banana shrub,] *Magnolia tripetala*, *M. cordata*, are all to be found in the best state of cultivation, and when we consider the size and fragrance of their blossoms, or the beauty of their large and glossy foliage, we hardly can think of a more magnificent and showy genus of trees in the world.

Among the deciduous trees, our attention was arrested by a fine specimen of that curious tree, the Japanese Ginko (*Salisburia adianifolia*) twenty feet high; the *Paulonia imperialis*, forty feet high, and many others of great excellence. Many of the large old trees, are now venerable specimens, over eighty feet high, whose huge trunks and wide spread branches are, in many cases, densely wreathed and draped with masses of English Ivy, forming the most picturesque sylvan objects, so rarely met with.

The lawn in front of the house is well decorated with specimens of *Cycas revoluta*, *Phoenix dactylifera*, *Strelitzia reginae*, *Maranta zebrina*, and others in fine cultivation, adding very much to the beauty of the whole.

All over the grounds are dispersed the finest ornamental trees and shrubs, fine collections of roses and other flowering plants. Among many other interesting points of this spirited place are some pretty rustic bark and moss houses, covered seats, etc. After passing through many fine walks and a neatly arranged flower garden we came to an extensive range of glass, and through the kindness of Mr. Scholz, the present intelligent gardener, were admitted to see the exotic treasures of the charming greenhouses. Here our attention was first attracted by a collection of Pelargoniums in full bloom, some fine Fuchsias, and well-grown specimens of *Acacia pendula*, *Inga Pulcherrima*, *Musa Cavendishii* and *Paradisiaca*, *Nepenthes Destillatoria*, *Ficus Elastica*, *Maranta Zebrina*, with its beautiful variegated leaves, *Caladium Bicolor*, the interesting *Dionaea Muscipula*, and some fine species of *Lycopodium*, etc. The rear walls the green-houses are beautifully decorated with the finest species of Passifloras, among which, we discovered the quite rare *P. Decaisneana*, in full bloom. The collection of Camellias and Azaleas, composed of many old and fine varieties, is represented in quite large plants.

After leaving all the richest treasures of the exotic flora, we were kindly invited to visit a glass structure, erected for the purpose of bringing the finer varieties of foreign grapes to the height of perfection; the structure, itself, is good, but the grape vines, we are sorry to say, were not in a condition to bring about a satisfactory result the present season. In repassing the Flower Garden, the attention of the visitor to this place is now arrested by a fine group of native and foreign Rhododendrons,

Azaleas, Kalmias and other rare shrubs, beautifully arranged in the natural style, quite picturesque in appearance.

The grounds - a specimen of the ancient school - are laid out strictly in the geometrical style. All the symmetry, uniformity, of the old school, introduced in Europe several centuries ago, are displayed here, in formal walks and small figures, mixed plantations, trellises, grottoes, artificial water, etc. The effect of this garden is striking, and its liberal proprietor, Col. Preston, by opening it freely to the public, no doubt, greatly increased the popular taste of the city.

At least some of the "artificial water" Bergholz describes in "No. I" played in a marble fountain carved by the famous sculptor Hiram Powers, whose patron the Hampton family was. Powers also did the mantels of the house.

Bergholz's "No. II" details a visit to the Crawford house in Columbia. The essay appeared in the August 1861 issue of The Farmer and Planter (p. 248). The Crawford house was built in 1837 by John A. Crawford, a Columbia banker, at the corner of Blanding Street and Bull, just a few blocks from the Hampton-Preston Mansion. It still stands there today as the Crawford-Clarkson house. The entire "No. II" is printed here in its entirety from the only known extant copy of the August 1861 issue. This unique copy is in the library of Pomaria Plantation, Pomaria, South Carolina.

## VISITS TO COLUMBIA GARDENS.

### No. II.

To the residence of J. A. Crawford, Esq., is attached a very neat and beautifully kept flower garden, decorated with many choice and rare plants, among others we noticed some fine specimens of the Oleander tribe in full bloom, the Chinese Tea plant, (*Thea viridis*), a large and beautiful plant of the *Erythrina crista galli*, some fine Chinese flowering shrubs, and a very fine collection of Roses, containing all the leading varieties. During the summer the whole place is kept gay with perennial and annual flowering plants, fine Dahlias, etc. The extensive range of green-houses, quite ornamental, contain some of the finest collections in Columbia.

At the time of our visit we could not help admiring a beautiful collection of Gloxinias, then in full bloom, of the most brilliant colors, from the snowiest white to the deepest blue and red. We also noticed a fine specimen of the *Astrapaea Wallichii*, *Acacias*, *Musa*, *Cavendishii*, *Maranta zebrina*, and others of great attraction. The Camellias and Azaleas are the finest in our city, represented in well grown specimens and the most showy sorts.

The collection of Geraniums, Fuchsias, etc., is quite extensive, and very attractive when in bloom. The place is well worth a visit by every admirer and lover of beautiful flowers.

continued on page 14...



## Book Review

**Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect**, by Charles W. Eliot. Introduction by Keith N. Morgan. (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst: 1999). ISBN 1-55849-212-7. Hardcover, \$50.

In 1999, in celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the American Society of Landscape Architects launched its Centennial Reprint Series, a collection of ten books that have become classics in the field of American landscape architecture. *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect*, published in association with the Library of American Landscape History, is the first in the series and has been reissued with a new introduction by Keith N. Morgan, professor of art history at Boston University.

Charles Eliot (1859-1897) achieved a remarkably influential position in the history of American landscape architecture in a career that lasted but eleven years and ended before the organization of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899. His life and professional career as a landscape architect was the first in America to be documented in book form, a loving tribute published in 1902 by his father, Dr. Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard College. Charles Eliot was exceptionally well educated and well-traveled when he began his practice; in 1883-85 he was the first unpaid apprentice in the Brookline office of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., and he spent the following year in Europe on a series of travels from which he reported back to Olmsted. Invited to join the Olmsted firm in 1886, he declined, in part on his father's advice, and opened his own office on Park Street in Boston. He practiced alone until 1893 when the firm, faced with Olmsted, Sr.'s declining health, issued him a second invitation to join it and its work on the World's Columbian Exposition. Eliot was a partner in Olmsted, Olmsted and Eliot until his death of spinal meningitis on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1897. Individually and with the firm, Eliot designed private estates, public parks, and other projects in his native New England. He is better remembered, however, as an environmentalist and advocate for public land preservation, for his leadership in the formation of the Trustees of Public Reservations, and for the critical early direction he gave to the formation of the Boston Metropolitan Park System.

Keith Morgan's excellent new introduction provides a useful contemporary perspective on Eliot, the landscape architect, and on the book, *Charles Eliot, Landscape Architect*. He places both in the context of an emerging profession in which the young Eliot, destined to follow the example of his mentor Frederick Law Olmsted, achieved renown in but a few short years and left an important legacy to his profession, his community, and the nation. As Dr. Eliot was preparing the manuscript for print, he oversaw the organization of a professional program in landscape architecture at Harvard College, which was inaugurated in 1900 under the direction of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Arthur Shurcliff. Of all that

he accomplished in life and all that his father championed on his behalf for a quarter century after his death, this, Morgan notes, was perhaps his finest achievement.

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

## In Print

*Natural History Investigations in South Carolina from Colonial Times to the Present*, by Albert E. Sanders and William D. Anderson, Jr. University of South Carolina Press. ISBN 1-57003-278-5. Hardcover, \$45.00.

This book relates the largely untold story of South Carolina's distinguished professional and amateur investigations of natural history, especially in the fields of zoology and botany. The authors describe the lure of the state's diverse flora and fauna; the impact of social, political, and economic events on work in natural history; and the pivotal role Charleston has played in the making of the state's remarkable scientific heritage.

Soon after Charleston's founding in 1670, local collectors began sending specimens to such internationally renowned English naturalists as James Petiver and Hans Sloane. These plants, along with the illustrations of Mark Catesby and specimens sent by Alexander Garden to Carolus Linnaeus, brought South Carolina plants and animals to the attention of scientists throughout Europe. Sanders and Anderson document the findings of natural history's golden age in South Carolina from 1830 to 1860, and profile the people who formed a scientific community superseded only by those in Philadelphia and Boston. ♦

## Now Available:

**BREAKING GROUND, Examining the Vision and Practice of Historic Landscape Restoration**, proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes. To order, call Old Salem, Inc., (800) 822-5151. \$12.95 plus \$3.50 shipping and handling.



## Oriental Luxury... continued from page 13



It is indeed unfortunate that this second piece is Bergholz's last known garden visit essay. As for Columbia itself, even its destroyers were impressed by the beauty of the streets and gardens they burned. The news correspondent of the *New York Herald* wrote on 13 March 1865 that Columbia was "famed for its fine public buildings, its magnificent private residences, with their lovely flower gardens which savored of Oriental ease and luxury," but had now become a place of cinders and starvation.

My own personal favorite glimpse of the antebellum city that epitomizes for me its garden atmosphere involves the very Crawford house described by Bergholz in his essay. The house still sports its original pair of hollow four-sided slender glass columns at its front door, close enough to the city to display exotic plants in the winter to passers by. These mini-greenhouse columns could be sufficiently heated with candles during Columbia's mild winters to display a welcome bit of living color to flower-hungry eyes. Bergholz described Mr. Crawford's extensive greenhouse in 1861, which no doubt supplied the columns with a variety of exotics. It was this sort of elegant gardening touch that must have given the *New York Herald* correspondent his inspiration for calling Columbia's gardens places of "Oriental ease and luxury."

William Summer, in his *Southern Agriculturist* for September 1853, had described Columbia as being "celebrated for her beautiful avenues of triple-rowed willow oaks" (*Quercus phellos*). Summer continued that the city's nickname was fast becoming established as "The City of Magnificent Oaks." He applauds this title and calls Columbia, in his opinion, "that loveliest city of the South,"

owing to its location on its high bluff over the Cogaree River, and its many street trees and fine private gardens. He gave the town his blessing: "we hope its trees will flourish, and its princely and hospitable mansions arise until in the language of admiration it will always be known by the beautiful title - 'The City of Magnificent Oaks'." (*Southern Agriculturist*, 1 [September 1853], 259).

Such, unhappily, was not to be Columbia's fate. In the next decade, photographs made after the February 1865 sack and destruction of the city showed the charred trunks of these rows of oaks. Eye-witness diarists like Emma LeConte, in her *The Day the World Ended*, described the seared and blasted vegetation of gardens in which sat chimneys and gutted walls. Col. Preston's house was looted, then used as the headquarters for Union General Logan. The house was itself saved by Ursuline nuns. From a city nicknamed "The City of Magnificent Oaks" just a decade earlier, it was now called "Chimneyville," owing to all the houseless chimneys in its 84 burned city blocks.

But, a knowledge of Pomaria's Columbia Nurseries contributes a few brush strokes to the picture of a place of garden beauty. The enigmatic Mr. Bergholz's nursery-order ledgers of 1861-1863, and his two essay "visits" offer a glimpse of the sophistication of that pre-war garden scene. Such documents provide a start for an exploration of yet another significant facet of antebellum Southern garden history - a story yet to be told.

[James Everett Kibler is author of the recently published *Our Fathers' Fields*.] ♦

## Of Interest

The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. is exhibiting, through May 7<sup>th</sup>, the first retrospective in thirty years of the work of Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904), widely recognized as one of America's greatest romantic painters. Seventy-four paintings - including landscapes, seascapes, still lifes, and botanicals - are presented, many in their original frames. Heade's last series of works were painted in Florida, and included *Giant Magnolias on a Blue Velvet Cloth*, a haunting image of the Southern magnolia with voluptuous white flowers. Members attending the annual meeting of SGHS at Mount Vernon may want to take in this exhibit.

## Annual Membership Dues

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

The membership year runs from May 1<sup>st</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>. Members joining after January 1<sup>st</sup> will be credited for the coming year beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>. 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.**



conservatories, graperies, etc." He says that his garden plans will be drawn up to "position every tree and shrub" and give a "list of the kind and quantity of plants required."

At the Columbia branch of Pomaria Nurseries, which Bergholz and Summer were developing in 1861, the newly-erected glass house for tender plants already measured 22 by 200 feet long, and contained "the choicest and rarest Exotics" (*Pomaria Nurseries Catalogue for 1862*). It was situated on the thirty cultivated acres of the nursery, which Bergholz was laying out in what he describes as "the natural or English style" to be both a display garden for the plants sold at the nursery and an arboretum and strolling grounds for the people of South Carolina's capital city. Summer described the landscape as being in the "Modern English Landscape Style," and to "contain specimens of all the rarest and finest Conifers and other Ornamental Evergreens, Deciduous Trees, and Flowering Shrubs, Roses, Herbaceous Plants, etc., which will make it at all times instructive and attractive to visitors." Summer concludes: "All the newest and most desirable species of latest introduction have been ordered from the first establishments in Europe, a Catalogue of which will be published early in 1862." No copy of this list has surfaced.

Perhaps owing to the war, Summer may have abandoned his publication plans. In a short article for his *The Farmer and Planter*, Summer described the new arboretum as "a model" of the English Style, "where visitors can see the superiority of this style over that so commonly used" (July 1861, pp. 215-216.) He promised them "a pleasant and instructive conversation with Mr. B. upon their visit."

This garden-nursery was situated adjacent to the South Carolina State Agricultural Society's State Fair Grounds, off what is now Elmwood Avenue, at the northwest corner of the grid that comprised the formal late eighteenth-century layout of the city. The buildings of the Society are, in fact, pictured in the inset of the cover page of *The Farmer and Planter*. I conjecture that the garden-nursery's thirty-plus acres lay where Elmwood Cemetery is located today. From the extant ledger of the Nursery's sales (kept from 7 November 1861 to 21 September 1863), we can gauge the impressive variety and volume of plants purveyed. Here we also can assess the great sophistication of local gardeners, their tastes, and their habits.

For a year (beginning in January 1863), Bergholz was listed as one of the six editors of the Augusta, Georgia *Southern Cultivator*, in company with D. Redmond, C. W. Howard, M. W. Phillips, Robert Nelson, and William W. White. With the January 1864 issue, the *Cultivator* is edited by Redmond and White only, and Bergholz's name disappears from the journal.

We know that when Sherman burned Columbia in February 1865, he put the torch to the nursery, its grounds, and greenhouses. Summer describes his losses in an 8

April 1867 letter to a friend as being "my entire Nursery in Columbia which estimated in detail amounted to \$114,000"—a very large sum at the time. At the parent nursery itself, some thirty miles distant, he wrote that his house was several times set on fire and put out by house servants,

but the barn and stables, gin house with 35 bales of cotton — the corn houses all burnt down — leaving us not a blade of fodder or a grain of corn. The next day — all my horses were taken away, 18 in all and many of them the best in the state. Provisions of all kinds taken — armed men going through the house every hour in the day taking what they chose, plundering the house from basement to garret — the only consolation we had after the destruction was over was that they did none of the family any personal harm, though cursed and abused by them all the time—reason and entreaty was alike of no avail with such a merciless army. (Unpublished manuscript, manuscripts division, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.)

By the time of Summer's letter in 1867, Bergholz seems to have disappeared from South Carolina; and no reference is again made to him. Did he return to Europe, or was he destroyed with his Columbia Nursery? Perhaps by 1864, he had put on the uniform of gray. Was he killed in battle? The answers to such questions might provide a good story.

In the meantime, we have two important essays in his planned series of "Visits to Columbia Gardens." The first is in *The Farmer and Planter* of July 1861 (p. 222). The garden described in "No. I," called the "seat of Col. Preston," is that city-block-sized walled garden surrounding the residence of Col. John C. Preston, son-in-law of Wade Hampton, and today called the Hampton-Preston Mansion, a museum house at 215 Blanding Street owned by Historic Columbia Foundation. By 1970, the garden was long since gone from this block and modern intrusions (including small modern buildings and a gasoline station) ran up close to the house. About that same year, the state of South Carolina acquired the surrounding property as a tricentennial gift to the people of the state. Since 1970, the house has been restored, the garden walls have been rebuilt, and some planting in the garden itself has begun. The garden again now takes up its entire original city block. "No. I" is printed here in its entirety from the issue of July 1861.

#### Visits to Columbia Gardens. No. I

Throughout the South, the city of Columbia has gained a high reputation in point of Horticulture. The interest in the products of the garden, manifested by the citizens generally, is well exhibited in the surroundings of their residences, remarkable for trees of unusual

*continued on page 13...*



## Plans and Plants...

*continued from page 9*

vigilant about authenticity, encouraging historic sites to develop their own seed production projects in order to protect the future of these varieties. Historic gardens often rely on only a few sources for their seed, and we should all support new seed suppliers who are careful to verify a plant's identity and to document the plants introduction into American cultivation.

Peggy Cornett, director of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello, examined the many steps needed to identify a historic flower variety, from deciphering sometimes cryptic notations to matching popular names with botanical names. Using her research into the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century plant lists of Thomas Jefferson, Lady Skipwith, William Faris, and John Custis, Cornett discussed the characteristics and popularity of the flowers that appear on these lists. Interestingly, only China pinks, tuberose, and hollyhocks are mentioned in each of these four lists. George Stritikus has extensively studied period plants in his state of Alabama, using sixty-one primary and secondary source documents to compile several lists of plants. As a county extension agent, Stritikus has been researching Southern gardens since 1970. His presentation examined the limitations and obstacles to developing an accurate historic plant list, and specifically tackled the ambiguity of "introduction dates." Stritikus has computerized his research, creating comparative indexes that show the relative popularity of different trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants.

William Rieley, landscape architect and principal of Rieley & Associates, demonstrated a very different way that computers can help garden restoration. Rieley used Monticello and Poplar Forest as examples of how the newest computer technology analyzes historic photographs, maps, and surveys. Rieley showed how the computer can process the information in these photographs and maps, creating three dimensional models and lines of perspective to accurately locate a now lost landscape feature.

Delaware State University research professor Dr. Arthur O. Tucker, dressed in colonial garb and equipped with various garden tools, discussed the myth of the colonial herb garden, once a standard feature of a restored colonial landscape. Tucker explained that rather than being common in colonial America, gardens devoted exclusively to herbs were exceedingly rare, and those that did exist were medicinal gardens. "I have searched and searched," Tucker said, "but I have never found an instance in history where an entire [vernacular] garden was devoted to all variety of herbs by the average gardener." His presentation stressed the practical realities of gardening today and in yesteryear.

We relearn this lesson every year at Old Salem. The gardeners discover the nuances of the site, finding the wet spots or the hot spots, and move plants to find a more

favorable location. As a garden matures, or as is the case with our Miksch garden, that young saplings become robust trees, a garden changes and the attentive gardener changes with it, finding good selections and combinations from experience rather from pre(mis)conceptions. Taking a practical approach to garden restoration was also the subject of Camilla Wilcox's workshop. Wilcox discussed her experience as curator of education and research in the restoration of the Reynolda Garden, designed by Thomas Sears in 1917. Even with a detailed landscape plan that used twentieth-century plants, the staff of Reynolda Gardens needed to make several difficult decisions about how to restore the formal gardens of the Reynolds family. While trying to "remain faithful" to the 1917 plan, the Reynolda staff found that unavailable plants and present growing conditions justified making occasional substitutions. Wilcox shared with us Reynolda's method of organizing and keeping records during the restoration process, stressing that restoration is an ongoing research process.



William Woy's Weaver giving tour through Old Salem gardens.

Perry Mathewes discussed his continuing research into the plant lists of eastern North Carolina. As curator of gardens at Tyrone Palace Historic Sites and Gardens, Mathewes developed a new interpretive garden, showcasing plants documented in New Bern during the nineteenth century. Using slides of photographs and paintings, Mathewes discussed some of the pleasant discoveries found along the way, including an 1885 list of roses. Several presentations discussed the distribution of historic plants, emphasizing that the availability or popularity of particular varieties varied across the region. Perhaps no speaker more thoroughly illustrated the great diversity of the South than did Atlanta landscape architect and author James Cothran. Using a great number of slides from around the South, Cothran examined

*continued on page 11...*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Farmer Washington:...*  
*continued from page 7*



In an ironic way, however, Washington's failures in farming may hold his enduring importance. Experimentation is, by nature, risky and often doomed to a high failure rate. Insofar as change in agriculture partly rests on an accumulation of knowledge drawn from failure as well as success, Washington's sense of experimentation represents an essential element of agricultural development. Furthermore, he was persistently experimenting from the time he acquired Mount Vernon until his death, and the extent of his practice with plants and animals was perhaps unrivaled in the world. Washington may or may not have been an agricultural

visionary, but he wrestled with the greatest problem of his or any day — that of bringing permanence to farming. In this, as Henry Lee said, "he was second to none in the humble and endearing scenes of private life."

Washington's persistence in the face of failure, his resourcefulness and self initiative, and his optimism and limited ambition apply almost equally to his agricultural, military, and political careers. His writings, however, give the impression that these qualities originated in his aspirations to be a good farmer and translated elsewhere rather than the other way around. \*

#### **End Notes**

1. Franklin Knight, ed., *Letters on Agriculture from His Excellency George Washington* (Philadelphia: W. S. Martien, 1847), 24-25.
2. William McDonald, *George Washington: A Brief Biography* (Mount Vernon: Mount Vernon Ladies Association, 1973), p. 12; Cecil Wall, "George Washington: Country Gentleman," *Agricultural History* 1 (January 1969): 5.
3. Voltaire quoted in Wilhelm Abel, *Agricultural Fluctuations in Europe from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 204; Young quoted from Sir E. John Russell, *A History of Agricultural Science in Great Britain, 1620-1954* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), 53; Rodney C. Loehtz, "Arthur Young and American Agriculture," *Agricultural History* 1 (January 1969): 45. See also Paul Haworth, *George Washington, Country Gentleman: Being an Account of His Home Life and Agricultural Activities* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1925).
4. B. H. Slicher van Bath, *The Agrarian History of Western Europe, A.D. 500-1850* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1963), 80; Jonathan D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution, 1750-1880* (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), Ch. 2.
5. The best survey of "the new husbandry" is Naomi Riches, *The Agricultural Revolution in Norfolk* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937); Jethro Tull, *The Horse-Hoeing Husbandry or an Essay on the Principles of Tillage and Vegetation ...* (London: the author, 1733), 4; Sir E. John Russell, *History of Agricultural Science*, 42.
6. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, eds., *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), Vol. 21, p. 1273; George Edwin Fussell, *Crop Nutrition: Science and Practice Before Liebig* (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1971), 89.
7. For a list of agricultural books in Washington's library, see Alan and Donna Fusonie, *A Selected Bibliography of George Washington's Interest in Agriculture* (Davis, California: Agricultural History Center, 1976).
8. Kenneth D. White, *Roman Farming* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), 140.
9. Charles E. Hatch, Jr. *Popes Creek Plantation: Birthplace of George Washington* (Washington: National Park Service, 1979), 32; Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1933), Vol. I, p. 272; Donald Jackson, ed., *The Diaries of George Washington* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), Vol. I, p. xxx; see also Aubrey C. Land, "The Tobacco Staple and the Planter's Problems: Technology, Labor and Crops," *Agricultural History* 1 (January 1969): 69-81.
10. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Diaries of George Washington, 1748-1799* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1925), Vol. 1, pp. 153-154, 158.
11. Lyman Carrier, *the Beginnings of Agriculture in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1923), 244.
12. Walter E. Brooke, *The Agricultural Papers of George Washington* (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1919), 92. The first American book on alfalfa was Jacqueline Ambler, *A Treatise on the Culture of Lucerne* (Richmond, Virginia: the author, 1800).
13. For more description of Washington's plant experiments, see David M. Matteson, *Washington the Farmer* (Washington: George Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1931).
14. Joanne Young, *Washington's Mount Vernon* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1973), 5.
15. John Baker Holroyd, Lord Sheffield, *Observations on the Commerce of the American States with Europe and the West Indies ...* (Philadelphia: n. p., 1783), 64-68; Elinor Oakes, "A Ticklish Business: Dairying in New England and Pennsylvania, 1750-1812," *Pennsylvania History* (Summer 1980): 195-212; G. Terry Sharrett, "The Indigo Bonanza in South Carolina, 1740-1790," *Technology and Culture* 12 (July 1971): 447-455.
16. Elizabeth B. Schumpeter, *English Overseas Trade Statistics, 1697-1808* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 56; Stephen Dowell, *A History of Taxation and Taxes in England* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1884), 10.
17. G. Terry Sharrett, "Flour Milling and the Growth of Baltimore, 1750-1830," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 71 (Fall 1976): 323.
18. Ibid., 324.
19. Jackson, *Diaries of George Washington*, Vol. I, p. xxviii; Knight, ed., *Letters on Agriculture*, 15; Loehtz, "Arthur Young," 49; Willian C. Abbott, *Adventures in Reputation, With an Essay on Some "New" History and Histories* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935) discusses the career of John Bloxham.
20. Harry Snyder, *Bread: A Collection of Popular Papers on Wheat, Flour and Bread* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1930) 273-275. Has discussion of "Washington as a Wheat Farmer;" Moncuse D. Conway, *George Washington and Mount Vernon* (Brooklyn, NY: Long Island Historical Society, 1889), 282. (This source contains letters between Washington and his manager at Mount Vernon, William Pearce, 1793-1796). See also Bordley's *Sketches on Rotations of Crops and Other Rural Matters* (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1797).
21. Washington to William Pearce, Dec. 18, 1793 in Conway, *George Washington at Mount Vernon*, 11. For more description of agricultural problems and practices in Fairfax County, see "Dr. David Stuart's Report to President Washington on Agricultural Conditions in Northern Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 61 (July 1953): 283-292.
22. Washington to Arthur Young, Dec. 12, 1793 in Knight, *Letter on Agriculture*, 114-122. This letter contains Washington's most complete description of farming going on at the Mount Vernon farms.
23. Greville Bathe and Dorothy Bathe, Oliver Evans: *A Chronicle of Early American Engineering* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1935), 27.
24. Washington to Arthur Young, Dec. 12, 1793 in Knight, ed., *Letters on Agriculture*, 120; Catherine C. Coblenz, "George Washington's Animals," *National Historical Magazine* 73 (1939): 31-34.

*continued on page 9...*

\* \* \* \* \*

## *Farmer Washington:...*

*continued from page 5*



we cannot help, and therefore we must console ourselves with the good prices of wheat which it will bring us. Since it is so decreed by fate, we have only to pray that their soldiers may eat a great deal."<sup>18</sup>

On December 4, 1783, Washington gave a farewell to his officers at Fraunces' Tavern in New York and returned to Mount Vernon. Lund Washington had managed the plantation during his absence, though perhaps not to the General's satisfaction. In June 1785, he wrote to George Fairfax in England to ask for help in finding a new manager who knew the best methods and "above all, Midas like, one who can convert everything he touches into manure, as the first transmutation towards Gold." Fairfax asked Arthur Young for a recommendation, and with that, Young and Washington began a thirteen-year correspondence. In his first letter to Young, Washington said "agriculture has been amongst the most favourite amusements of my life, though I never possessed much skill in the art; and nine years total inattention to it has added nothing to a knowledge which is best understood from practice; but with the means you have been so obliging to furnish me, I shall return to it (though rather late in the day) with hope and confidence." Over time, Young sent to Mount Vernon plans for buildings, English plows, books and seeds, though his first favor must have given Washington some misgiving. James Bloxham, Young's choice for Mount Vernon's manager, turned out to be an alcoholic.<sup>19</sup>

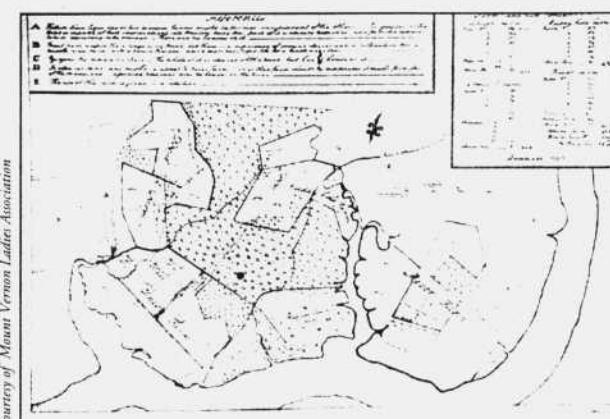
In his "Notes and Observations" for 1786, Washington recorded planting peas, turnips, oats, clover, barley, carrots, cabbage, flax, millet, potatoes, orchard grass, timothy, rye, pumpkins, corn, and wheat, though he elaborated more on wheat than on anything else. Indeed, it was in the context of wheat production that most of his agricultural practices fit together.

Washington knew, like farmers everywhere, that crop rotation had several benefits, including higher yields, lower incidence of weeds, and less soil erosion. His problem was to figure out what rotation worked best at Mount Vernon. Even before the Revolution, he had broken with the customary rotation of wheat, clover, and fallow. In Henry Home's *The Gentleman Farmer* (1779), he studied a six-year plan and modified it to run for seven: wheat, turnips, barley, hay, oats, fallow, and pasture. Washington may have taken some inspiration for his field system from John Beale Bordley's *A Summary View of the Courses of Crops in the Husbandry of England and Maryland* (1784). And, certainly, Arthur Young had a great deal to say on the subject.<sup>20</sup>

Crop rotation was the key to farming systematically, the aim to which Washington aspired. To get the best yields, however, crop rotation had to be carried out with close attention to seed-bed preparation, marling to neutralize soil acidity, and greater application of animal manure. In Washington's plan, wheat was the only crop not returned

to the soil, in part, as manure. As he wrote to his manager in 1793, "my object is to recover the fields from the exhausted state into which they have fallen, by oppressive crops, and to restore them, if possible by any means in my power, to health and vigor. But two ways will enable me to accomplish this — the first is to cover them with as much manure as possible, winter and summer — the second a judicious succession of crops."<sup>21</sup>

Of course, Washington wanted greater harvests as well as higher yields per acre. To that end, he bought more land and



*Washington's five farms*

put more under the plow. His original estate of 2,100 acres grew to over 8,000 by 1787. In all, he had 3,260 acres of cultivable land, divided among five farms: Mansion House Farm, Union Farm, Dogue Run Farm, Muddy Hole, and River Farm. For wheat, he allocated about 700 acres at the different sites.<sup>22</sup>

Besides raising wheat, Washington saw advantage in milling it himself. On Dogue Run, he owned a gristmill that had fallen into disrepair during his wartime absence. Then, on his tour of the United States in 1791, he saw a mill being built near Wilmington, Delaware that kindled the notion of rebuilding his own. Washington had his secretary, Tobias Lear, contact Oliver Evans who was responsible for designing the mill in Delaware and Evan Evans, Oliver's brother, went to Mount Vernon and supervised the construction. What the Evans's created was not simply a remodeling, but rather an entirely new set of mechanisms that allowed flour to be milled automatically, with little human labor. In fact, it was the beginning of industrial automation. Oliver Evans, of course, could hardly have found a more prominent wheat farmer among his first clients.<sup>23</sup>

Though wheat husbandry and all it involved probably occupied more of Washington's attention than anything else, he wrestled with other farming problems too. He was always concerned about his livestock, in which he had an enormous

*continued on page 7...*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Farmer Washington:... continued from page 3



a variety of subjects: soils, fertilizers, plant physiology, livestock, and equipment.<sup>9</sup>

Much of the information about "the new husbandry" was newly rediscovered rather than entirely new. In fact, a good share of the advice was ancient. "We ought to imitate others and attempt by experimentation to perform some operations in a new way, following not chance but a systematic program" was Varro's counsel to farmers in 37 B.C. He also stressed the interdependence of crops and livestock husbandry. Colmuella's twelve-book, *De Re Rustica* (50 A.D.), even quantified farm production in terms of man-hours to land. What brought the ancient advice into vogue during the eighteenth century was the recurring need to expand production on existing farms. Experimenting with new ways was the key, but experimentation risked a high degree of uncertainty. Some practices succeeded, some failed, some succeeded physically but failed economically, and so on. Farmers like Washington, who tried new ideas, took ridicule in failure and skepticism in success from their more traditional neighbors. Either way, the role of demonstrating experimental agriculture served a useful purpose in expanding the scope of knowledge about farming.<sup>10</sup>

If any crop symbolized traditional agriculture in Virginia at the time Washington took over Mount Vernon, it was tobacco. From about 1612 to 1660, tobacco was a bonanza crop and the tobacco trade was what drew John Washington to the colony in 1657. George's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father had all raised tobacco, though not extensively. At the time of his death in 1743, Augustine Washington (George's father) owned 10,000 acres in Westmoreland County on which he raised cereals, flax, peas, and beans, garden and orchard produce and a variety of livestock. He had only five acres in tobacco. Price fluctuations made tobacco sometimes profitable, but often not. By 1759, however, Washington learned that prices were higher than they had been for many years and so he planted and brought in a crop of over 34,000 pounds. He continued, raising 89,079 pounds in 1763. Prices collapsed in 1764. Two years later, Washington said that he had given up tobacco altogether, and he repeated the assertion in 1768. Off and on, though, he made a little tobacco for the rest of his life. Actually, it is somewhat surprising that he paid so little attention to tobacco, as his diaries indicate. It was certainly worthy of some scientific curiosity. There were several sub varieties (e.g. Pryor, Long, Green, Townsend, and Little Frederic) of the main Sweet-scented and Oronko types. Horse-hoeing was readily applicable. On the other hand, marl did nothing for tobacco and manure only made it taste bad. Drilling tobacco was impossible. Perhaps, especially important, Washington could find no guidance for improved practice in the literature he owned or could buy. If

Washington saw tobacco as a symbol of anything, it was probably of backwardness. And, if so, he was right.<sup>9</sup>

The first agricultural experiments that Washington recorded were in the spring of 1760. In April, he built a box with ten compartments for testing different fertilizers. Each compartment had soil from one of his fields, to which he separately added river sand, creek mud, marl, clay, black



Farm site at Mount Vernon.

mold, and manure of cattle, sheep, and horses. Perhaps thinking of Tull's advice, he "reduced the whole to a tolerable degree of fineness and jumbled them well together in a cloth." Then, "in each of these divisions were planted three grains of wheat, 3 of oats, and as many of barley — all at equal distances in rows and of equal depth (done by a machine made for the purpose)." Later on, he noted that the grains raised in the sheep dung were the strongest, but more had sprouted in the compartment with the black creek mold. What this proved, if anything, was that the best fertilizers were those that were the hardest to come by.<sup>10</sup>

In May, Washington planted Lucerne (alfalfa). Where he got the seed or how he knew about its cultivation can only be guessed. Lucerne was scarcely known in America, although in 1739 Eliza Lucas had tried raising it along with indigo in South Carolina and John Bartram in Philadelphia kept Lucerne in his botanic garden at about the same time. Samuel Hartlib was the first Englishman to write about Lucerne in his *Legacy of Husbandry* (1655), a copy of which Washington owned. Tull, too, discussed it in *Horse-Hoeing Husbandry* and took a surprisingly positive attitude in contrast to what he thought about clover (i.e. "foul feed for horses and injurious to cattle"). He remarked that "Lucerne is the only hay in the world that can pretend to excel or equal St. Foin" and went on to discuss how Columella had raised it in the first century. Duhamel du Monceau's book, Thomas Hale's *A Complete Body of Husbandry* (1759), and Robert Maxwell's *The Practical Husbandman* (1757), all of which

continued on page 5...



## CALENDAR

**March 4<sup>th</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup>; 11<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** River Oaks Garden Club 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Azalea Trail, includes tours of Bayou Bend, Rienzi, and private gardens. Call (713) 523-2483; [www.riveroaksgardenclub.org](http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org)

**April 2<sup>nd</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** "A Focus on Plants - History, Culture and Future," the 54th Williamsburg Garden Symposium. Features garden historians, nurserymen, and educators, including John Elsley of Wayside Gardens; Robert E. Lyons, director, J. C. Raulston Arboretum; Greg Grant, Austin State University; and Peggy Cornett of Monticello as keynote speaker. For more information on Williamsburg Institute programs, call (800) 603-0948, or visit their web site: [www.history.org](http://www.history.org)

**April 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** The Florence Hand Lecture, Flower Show and Tour, at Hills and Dales, the home and garden of the late Mr. and Mrs. Fuller E. Callaway, Jr. in LaGrange, Georgia. The first annual Flower Show will benefit the Florence Hand Home Charitable Trust. For information, call (703) 845-3600 or visit: [www.wghs.org](http://www.wghs.org)

**April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** Georgia Historic House and Garden Pilgrimage. Tours include the homes and gardens of J. Neel Reid and Philip Trammell Shutze in Atlanta. Contact the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. at: P. O. Box 767732, Roswell, GA 30076-7732.

**April 29<sup>th</sup>- 30<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** 10th Anniversary Celebration of the Leesburg, Virginia Flower & Garden Festival. Call Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department, (703) 777-1368.

**May 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** *18th Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society*, Mount Vernon, Virginia. Speakers include Lucy Coggins, Laura Viancour, Tom Burford, Libbey Oliver, and William Seale. Meeting chair J. Dean Norton, director of horticulture at Mount Vernon has organized a thoroughly delightful extravaganza of events, including breakfast on the Potomac via an authentic paddle wheel boat. For more information, contact Dean Norton at (703) 799-8661; [dnorton@MountVernon.org](mailto:dnorton@MountVernon.org)

**July 28<sup>th</sup>, 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](http://www.Gunstonhall.org); e-mail: [historic@GunstonHall.org](mailto:historic@GunstonHall.org)

**August 10<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:munson@erols.com); web site: [www.nafex.org](http://www.nafex.org)

**August 25<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** "Historic Plant Hunting: Process & Discovery," the 2<sup>nd</sup> biennial Historic Plants 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, contact Peggy Cornett at (804) 984-9816; [pcornett@monticello.org](mailto:pcornett@monticello.org)

**November 16<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup>, 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](mailto:rgw4h@virginia.edu)

**May 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2001.** "Pocosin to Parterre: Landscapes of the Carolina Coastal Plain," the 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

**October 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 2001.** 9<sup>th</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002.** 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society in Natchez, Mississippi. Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, meeting chair, is planning a special anniversary event.

## Members in the News



*"The Greener Side of Texas"  
Delights SGHS Members ...  
continued from page 15*

SGHS members are featured on the next three programs of the New Orleans Old Garden Rose Society.

- **Liz Druitt** speaks in June on "Gardening with your Dog," featuring her dog, Henna Moon. Liz is now assistant garden editor for *Southern Living* magazine in Birmingham, Alabama.
- **Greg Grant** of Center, Texas, will speak in July on "Guns & Roses (Cool Plants)." Greg is co-author of *The Southern Heirloom Garden*.
- In August, **Rosemary Sims** of New Orleans presents a program on the art of combining plants of different sorts, illustrated with examples from recent visits to great gardens. ♦

Notarial Archive, who has done a careful translation of Jacques-Felix Lelievre's 1838 *New Louisiana Gardener*. Her work with this important early book on French horticulture in New Orleans was sponsored by the Southern Garden History Society and is slated for publication by LSU Press later this year. ♦



Avenue of live oaks through Houston's River Oak district.

Peter J. Hatch,, President

Kenneth M. McFarland, Vice-President  
Flora Ann Bynum, Secretary-Treasurer

*Magnolia grandiflora* reproduced by courtesy  
of Rare Book Division, Special Collections  
Department, University of Virginia Library.

Editor:

Peggy Cornett  
Monticello, P.O.B. 316  
Charlottesville, VA 22902  
(804) 984-9816  
Fax (804) 977-6140  
pcornett@monticello.org

Associate Editor:

Kenneth M. McFarland  
Historic Stagville, P.O.B. 71217  
Durham, NC 27722-1217  
(919) 620-0120  
Fax (919) 620-0422  
stagvill@sprynet.com

Book Review Editor:

Davyd Foard Hood  
6907 Old Shelby Road  
Isinglass, Vale, NC 28168  
(704) 462-1847  
Fax (704) 462-2491

Deadline for the submission of articles for the fall issue of *Magnolia* is July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Southern Garden History Society  
Old Salem, Inc.  
Drawer F, Salem Station  
Winston-Salem, NC 27108

FIRST CLASS  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Charlottesville, VA  
Permit No. 345





## Spring SGHS Board Meeting

reported by Flora Ann Bynum, secretary-treasurer

A possible web site for the society was discussed at the spring SGHS board meeting held in Houston March 26<sup>th</sup>. Kenneth McFarland will chair a committee—including Harriet Jansma, Perry Mathewes, and Peggy Cornett—to investigate the possibilities.

Three board members were approved by the board for a second term: Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, Dr. Edgar G. Givhan, and Barbara Wells Sarudy. These board members were re-elected at the society's annual meeting held the following day. Ms. Jansma, who will not be returning to the board, served as chair of the nominating committee. A committee to present nominees for the next annual meeting will be chaired by Gail Griffin and includes Peter Hatch and Flora Ann Bynum.



Allen Lacy, keynote speaker at the annual meeting dinner.

The date for the upcoming eighteenth annual meeting at Mount Vernon, Virginia has been changed from May 13<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>- 7<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Dean Norton, SGHS board member and director of horticulture at Mount Vernon, is meeting chair. Carleton B. Wood is chair of the nineteenth annual meeting, to be held in New Bern, North Carolina, May 4<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001 at Tryon Palace and Gardens. Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, chair of the twentieth annual meeting in Natchez, Mississippi, has set the date for April 18<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002.

A special committee for a twentieth anniversary commemoration was appointed, composed of Peggy Cornett, chair, Nancy Haywood, co-chair, Harriet Jansma, and Peter Hatch.

Dr. William C. Welch, publications chair, reported that publication of the French gardening book, *Nouveau Jardinier*, translated by Sally Reeves, was moving forward. It is being published by the LSU Press under the sponsorship of the society.

Gordon Chappell, chair of the historic plant list for the South, which the society is sponsoring, asked board members to seek out historic plant lists and encourage others to do so. He hopes to have the list ready by the twentieth anniversary of the society in 2002. [See article on the plant list in this issue.] ♦

## Garden History Seminar, “The Evolution of the Williamsburg Landscape,” September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999

Colonial Williamsburg will be sponsoring a one-day Garden History Seminar, Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Members of the landscape and archeological research departments will explore 18th-century Williamsburg through the eyes of the early gardeners, the seminal landscape architects and the modern professionals who have contributed to the beauty that is Williamsburg.

The seminar will take place in the Hennage Auditorium of the DeWitt Wallace Gallery. Laura Viancour, manager of garden programs, will welcome guests to the seminar at 9:00 a.m. The roster of speakers includes Kent Brinkley, landscape architect for the Foundation, who will be speaking on “The Evolution of the Macro-Landscape.” Kent will examine the profound changes to the landscape encompassing Williamsburg during the last three hundred and more years.

Terry Yemm, garden historian for the Foundation, will follow with, “A Discourse on Gardening by John Randolph, An Avid 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Gardener.” Terry will bring to the seminar both his experiences in character interpretation and his work on John Randolph’s plant diaries.

Following the morning break, Gordon Chappell, director of Landscape and Facilities Services, will present “Contrasting Rural & Urban Gardens in Colonial Virginia,” an examination and comparison of historic sites both within and outside of Colonial Williamsburg.

The afternoon session will feature “Brothers of the Spade,” Wesley Greene’s study of the plant exchange between John Custis and Peter Collinson. Wesley Greene, with Terry Yemm, was a founder of the very successful colonial nursery site at Colonial Williamsburg.

Kate Meatyard, research fellow in the Department of Archeological Research, will conclude with “Arthur Shurcliff’s Early Landscapes of Colonial Williamsburg.” Arthur Shurcliff, Colonial Williamsburg’s first landscape architect, studied gardens both in the Eastern United States and in England in order to identify precedents for the gardens and landscapes he would recreate for the restored city.

Registration fee is \$40 per person and interested persons should contact the registrar at The Williamsburg Institute, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P. O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187. Or call at (757) 220-7255, or 1-800-603-0948. Or e-mail Deb Chapman at dchapman@cwf.org. ♦



## *"The Greener Side of Texas" Delights SGHS Members*

by Peggy Cornett, Editor

**S**outhern Garden History Society annual-meeting participants enjoyed once again the gracious hospitality of our Texas hosts. Conference coordinators Nancy Haywood, Linda Hughes, Susan Keeton, Jayme Ponder, Betty Schoolar,



photos by Ken McFarland and Peggy Cornett

Nancy and Ted Haywood with Jane Symmes at Bayou Bend reception.

and Bill and Diane Welch are to be commended for producing an outstanding meeting in Houston on March 26<sup>th</sup>- 28<sup>th</sup>. Their months of preparation and hard work was certainly evident in their selection of high quality speakers, their careful arrangements for interesting field trips, and their meticulous organization of fabulous after-hour receptions and dinners.

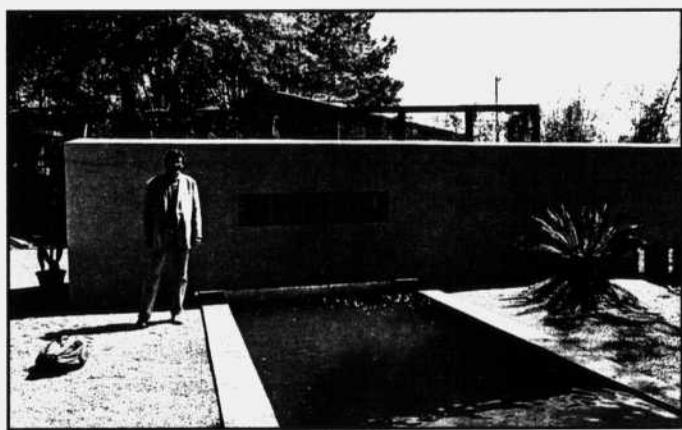
SGHS board members Louise Gunn, Ken McFarland, Peggy Cornett, Bill Welch, Jim Cothran, and Gordon Chappell at Bayou Bend.



Immediate past-president and conference speaker Bill Welch with Louise Gunn.

From Bayou Bend to the Antique Rose Emporium, meeting attendees were delighted every step of the way.

A handsome and informative, seventy-page conference booklet supplied the participants with a detailed account of the lectures, speaker biographies, and activities for the weekend. This valuable program was enhanced by archival photographs and illustrations from the early Houston landscape, making it a great meeting memento.



Ken McFarland enjoying the gardens at Peckerwood.

*continued on page 13...*





## 1999 "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" Conference

by Keyes Williamson, Old Salem, North Carolina

**P**lans and Plants of the Southern Landscape will be the theme of this year's Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscape, to be held at Old Salem in Winston-Salem from September 30<sup>th</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1999. Southern Garden History Society members will be familiar with this biennial conference, an important forum for leading scholars to present their recent work on garden history and landscape preservation. Documenting historic plants and garden plans has long been the goal of the Southern Garden History Society; and this conference is, in many ways, a product of the ongoing conversation captured here in the pages of *Magnolia* calling for an accurate, referenced list of historic plants of the South.

This conference will appeal to both private individuals interested in historic gardens and to professionals involved in garden restoration. Each often find themselves eagerly searching for primary materials, those precious windows into our horticultural past. And even with so much recent progress in collecting information in the form of published scholarship and in archives like the Cherokee Library, we should continue to bring together all the extant material presently scattered around at various historic sites and in private collections.

The upcoming conference will cover a wide range of issues confronting researchers of historic landscapes—where to look for information, how to interpret this information, and how to make the transition from research to restoring a garden. While locating a contemporaneous drawing of a garden is immeasurably helpful, locating the drawn garden on the physical site remains a challenging feat. William Rieley, presently the landscape architect for the Garden Club of Virginia, will examine how recent computer technology assists the identification and explanation of historic landscapes. Computers promise to be a valuable tool in the future, accompanying the trusty trowel of the archaeologists.

Landscape restoration has long depended upon archaeology to locate garden features; and establishing the boundaries of a garden, as delineated by a fence-line, is often the important, first step. Peter J. Harrison, calling upon his extensive research into historic garden features, will remind conference participants of the functions and styles of garden fences. Camilla Wilcox, as curator of education for the Reynolda Gardens of Wake Forest University, researched the plant listed on Thomas Sears'

1917 plan for the gardens of Reynolda, and Mrs. Wilcox will lead a workshop outlining her experience finding a practical approach to restoring garden plantings.

While restoring a historic garden combines the work of many fields, perhaps no single element of a restored garden captures the attention of a visitor as much as the plants themselves. An accurately restored garden must include appropriate plants, and at this conference several leading plant authorities will discuss documenting period plant varieties. Peggy Cornett's work on popular nineteenth-century annuals is well known, and she will expand upon this subject to examine documented flower varieties of the South. James Cothran, a SGHS board member, will focus upon the antebellum South and the plants Southerners used in their gardens and groves. North Carolina's rich horticultural heritage, complete with illustrious plant explorers and gardens of every variety, serves as the background for Tyron Palace's Perry Matthews' examination of the plant lists of Eastern North Carolina.

As our list of appropriate plant varieties expands, the need to organize this body of information in a useful form becomes increasingly important. George Stritikus, having compiled extensive lists of historic plants appearing through the years in Alabama's gardens, will lead a workshop on using computers to collate this information. At the heart of this year's conference will be a panel discussion, led by Colonial Williamsburg's Gordon Chappell, which will discuss the need for and the best ways to develop an accurate plant list for Southern historic gardens. Perhaps the most useful product of a conference of this kind is open discussion, to share ideas and elucidate the potential obstacles that inevitably exist in such an ambitious project. By including several conference participants in the panel discussion, we are sure to hear a wealth of opinions and will learn how each interested individual can contribute to finally realizing this long, sought-after goal.

Other familiar features of the Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes conference remain on this year's agenda. Thursday night we will share in an open discussion of *What's New in Old Landscapes in the South?*, where conference attendees are encouraged to share details about recent garden restoration projects. This is a great way for us all to learn about what is happening throughout the region. Tours of Old Salem's gardens will again be offered; and this year, John Larson, vice-president of restoration for Old Salem, will lead a walking tour of Tanner's Run, a recently restored historic stream in Old Salem. This bio-remediation of a long abused urban stream should serve as a model for communities wanting to convert neglected

*continued on page 11...*



## Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...

continued from page 7



so they could see his work.

Lynn Lowrey made Anderson Nursery in Houston his headquarters during the last part of his career. Owned by his son-in-law and daughter, Mike and Patsy Anderson, the nursery specializes in flora of the traditional Lowrey vein: native and unusual plants, many of Mexican origin. Working primarily alone as the propagator in the nursery, Lowrey continued his associations with numerous horticulturists and nurserymen. He corresponded with many foreign horticulturists as well as those from across the United States. His daughter, Patsy Anderson, said it was



Lynn Lowrey cleaning seeds in the San Madre Oriental Mountains of Mexico, 1988.

not unusual for Lowrey to get calls from all over the world. Often when foreign visitors came to Washington, D.C. to visit the United States National Arboretum, they were advised there to detour by way of Texas for a visit with Lynn Lowrey.

In the last few years of his life, Lynn Lowrey became actively involved in growing *Camptotheca acuminata* trees for cancer research. Although research on *Camptotheca* sp. had been carried on for many years, a revival of interest in it and a shortage of available trees for research purposes prompted one researcher to call Lowrey. Until then, the only source of available trees for research purposes was

California. Lowrey remembered years ago he had obtained some plants from his friend Tom Keeter, horticulturist for the city of San Antonio, and then had given one to another friend who lived north of Houston. Upon checking that tree, he found seedlings growing prolifically, so he collected some, brought them back to Anderson Nursery and began propagating them. Mike Anderson said they soon had 600 trees growing and had definitely cornered the market on *Camptotheca*. The trees were subsequently donated for research to the Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research at St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston and to Xylomed Research in Monroe, Louisiana.

*Camptotheca acuminata*, called the "Tree of Joy" or the "Tree of Love" in China, had been introduced into the United States in 1911 by the USDA. In 1991, after Lowrey began propagating *Camptotheca* trees for research, he took some plants to David Creech for the Stephen F. Austin Arboretum. He gave Creech instructions to plant most of them outside but to keep a few in the greenhouse. Creech had not done anything with them when a few days later, Dr. Li Shiyou, visiting professor in the Stephen F. Austin University Department of Forestry, came knocking on his door inquiring if Creech happened to know where he could get *Camptotheca* trees. Creech recalled that he had helped Dr. Li previously with various materials such as mulch or extra pots, but it seemed almost ironic that Dr. Li knocked on the door at this particular time, hunting *Camptotheca* trees. Creech shared Lowrey's seedlings with Dr. Li and shortly afterwards was able to introduce him to Lowrey. Through Lowrey's contacts, Dr. Li received a grant for his research from the Houston Livestock Association, enabling him to go to China to study *Camptotheca* species in the wild.

Dr. Li invited David Creech to accompany him along with another friend of Lowrey's, Katie Northrup. In December 1996, they made a five-week tour of China, surveying existing *Camptotheca* trees. They found a new species in the Sichuan province, which Dr. Li named *Camptotheca lowreyana*, thereby immortalizing Lowrey in the plant world. *Camptotheca* trees have now been declared endangered in China and no longer can be exported.

In March 1995, while actively involved in *Camptotheca* propagation, Lowrey was concerned about funding for additional cancer research on the trees. He wrote in the *American Nurseryman*:

*Camptotheca acuminata* illustrated the importance of further studying plants for medicinal uses. Although much less is known about the healing properties of this plant than those of *Taxus*, it is one of the most promising plants in cancer research. Despite the need for evaluation of different strains and content of camptothecin in different parts of the tree, funds for this basic research have been insufficient.

continued on page 9...

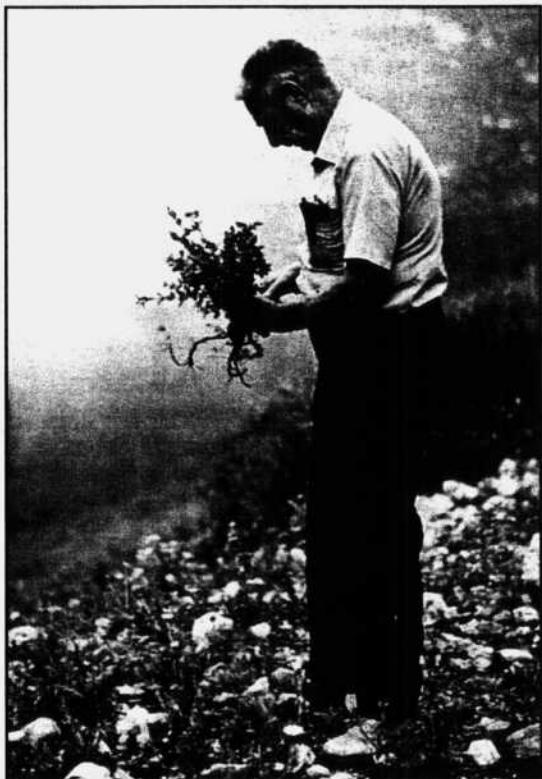


## Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...

continued from page 5



popular Lowrey plant. David Creech, Director of Stephen F. Austin Arboretum, recalls being with Lowrey on a trip to Mexico in 1988 and asking Lowrey about the name of the plant with the red flowers. Lowrey responded, "What red flowers?" Lowrey had not seen it because he was red color blind. At the end of the day, however, he told Creech that the *Scutellaria* would probably turn out to be the most important plant of the day. Its current popularity in many gardens supports his remarks.



Lowrey in Mexico, 1980s.

When we think of the glorious days of plant collecting, we may remember Robert Fortune in China, or David Douglas in the Pacific Northwest or even Ferdinand Lindheimer in Texas. Lynn Lowrey joins their ranks as a twentieth-century plant collector, collecting not for Kew Gardens or Asa Gray, but for us in our gardens. Although most of the plants Lowrey collected were not new to science, he always watched for the good forms: the yaupon with the slightly larger leaf, the maple with a bit brighter color, the persimmon with the attractive bark, the azalea with the best flower, or the agave with the deepest blue blade. From these, Lowrey would collect seeds or cuttings to propagate and he always shared them with his friends. He loved the "thrill of the chase" of plant collecting. He collected from the pine woods of East Texas to the limestone ledges of the Hill Country, from the brush land

of South Texas on to the Big Bend and the Chihuahuan Desert, and perhaps most importantly, into Northern Mexico and the mountains around Monterrey. In a memorial tribute to his friend Benny Simpson, Lowrey described the excitement of those collecting trips with friends:

Plant hunting with Benny, Carroll Abbott and Barton Warnock was like an expedition looking for gold nuggets. While a trip through an East Texas forest might be boring to some, to locate a chalk maple and validate its occurrence in Texas was a big discovery to Benny and me. To see a field of new-to-us flowering shrubs in the Brush south of Freer and realize these were the rare *Coussetia axillaris* (Baby Bonnets) was great excitement.

During the 1960s, Lowrey collected what he considered one of the rarest plants in Texas and the United States, the Texas pistachio, *Pistacia texana*. The Texas pistachio grew near Del Rio, Texas in an area where Amistad Dam was being constructed. Lowrey knew that when the dam was complete much of the plant's natural habitat would be covered by Amistad Lake. Lowrey was concerned that the plant was already so rare and might become extinct in the wild. He worked diligently to get a gene pool established. He worked primarily from seeds but also experimented with grafting Texas pistachio onto the rootstock of Chinese pistachio, *Pistacia chinensis*. Today Lowrey's *Pistacia texana* can be found in nurseries specializing in native Texas plants.

Another of his early interests was *Sabal louisiana*. Robert A. Vines, author of *Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southwest*, showed him a stand of these palms in Brazoria County, Texas in the mid 1960s. Lowrey began propagating them. The botanical description of the palms has been a matter of debate for many years. Some feel that the palms are hybrids of between *Sabal minor* and *Sabal mexicana*. Dr. Ed McWilliams, Professor, Texas A & M University, said that Lowrey believed *Sabal louisiana* was a true species. Lowrey worked with the palms for many years, compared their growth with that of *Sabal minor* and had, as McWilliams said, long term knowledge of the plant that few other people had.

Lowrey was fascinated with the plants in Mexico. He made his first trip to Mexico in 1937, while still a student at Louisiana State University. Through the years he made more than sixty to collect plants. His friend Benny Simpson would never accompany him and would tell him there was enough material in Texas to occupy anyone for a lifetime. Collecting in Mexico became almost an obsession with Lowrey. His son-in-law, Mike Anderson, recalled that Lowrey liked to collect in the mountains around Monterrey at elevations between 3000-6000 feet because he felt these plants would adapt to Houston's growing conditions. In

*continued on page 7...*



## Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman... continued from page 3



and he is so inexpensive." Through the years, Lowrey had many patrons in the River Oaks. Many examples of naturalistic landscaping can be found in River Oaks today, including Lowrey's first.



Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, in Texas Hill Country, 1960s.

In Lynn Lowrey's mind, Houston was the land of opportunity for gardeners. He knew that Houston could accommodate a wide range of plants. In one of his newsletters he wrote an article, which he titled "Houston: Crossroads of East and West, Temperate and Subtropics." He said:

Houston, despite soil and moisture problems is a crossroads of plant types. We can grow maples and palms, pines and acacias. The Southeastern pine forests find their southwestern limit in Houston. The western prairie with huisache and mesquite comes up to Alief on the west side of Houston. The temperate forest trees come right down to Buffalo Bayou, and the mild Gulf coast climate lets us grow bananas, cycads and oleanders. Also our different soil types: gumbo-clay, concrete hard sand-clay, and humus poor deep sand make gardening more demanding and interesting. Still we can grow such a great variety of plants that Houston can be one of the most interesting places to garden.

In the early 1970s, Lowrey installed a commercial landscape for Clark Southline Equipment Company on Cavalcade, near I-45 in Houston. Today, nearly 30 years later, the lush landscape stands as a testimony to Lowrey and his bent towards using unusual combinations of plants. The owner of the company loved palms, and Lowrey obligingly incorporated them into the landscape, along with

plants from various sites in Texas, the South, Mexico, and Asia. Garden writers Sally and Andy Wasowski describe the planting:

In the tradition of classic botanic gardens that plant according to taxonomy instead of by habitat, he also planted a few foreign versions of plants in the same family, such as *Clethra macrophylla* from Mexico along side *Clethra alnifolia* from Alabama and *Berberis thunbergii* from Asia along with agarito, *Berberis trifolia*, from the Texas Hill Country.

Many plants that seem quite common today were not being used in our Houston landscapes when Lowrey started in the nursery business. As he encouraged others to try new plants, he often gave away more plants than he sold. Arboretums and public gardens, public schools, college campuses, and private gardens across the state are botanically richer today because of his gifts. The Houston Arboretum, Mercer Arboretum, The Robert A. Vines Environmental Science Center Arboretum, Bayou Bend, San Antonio Botanical Gardens, Stephen F. Austin Arboretum, and many other lesser known gardens all house plants from Lowrey. Paul Cox, San Antonio Botanical Gardens, said that it wasn't uncommon to have "mystery" plants appear at the arboretum's doorstep and he would always know that Lowrey had been by.

In the 1950s when most people were satisfied with clipped privet or ligustrum, Lowrey was using wax myrtle, *Myrica cerifera*, and wild olive, *Cordia boissieri*. When his



Lowrey Nursery in Conroe, Texas, 1970s.

customers wanted nothing but the new fashion azalea, Lowrey would persuade them to also find a place for parsley hawthorn, *Crataegus marshallii*, to provide additional spring

*continued on page 5...*



## CALENDAR

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup>, 1999.** "Newport and the Art of Gardens and Landscape," the Third Salve Regina University conference on Cultural and Historic Preservation, to be held in Newport, Rhode Island. Conference will address the evolution of Newport's landscape and the creation of gardens and the art of those gardens during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Speakers include Richard Guy Wilson of the University of Virginia and John Simonelli, president of the Victorian Society in America. For more information contact: Salve Regina University, Sponsored Conferences & Programs, 100 Ochre Point Avenue, Newport, RI 02840-4192, or call (800) 351-0863.

**September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1999.** Garden History Seminar, "The Evolution of the Williamsburg Landscape," with lectures by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation staff on topics of landscape archaeology, garden history, and garden restoration. [See article in this issue.] For more information contact: The Williamsburg Institute, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P. O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187, (757) 220-7255, or 1-800-603-0948, or e-mail Deb Chapman at dchapman@cwf.org.

**September 30<sup>th</sup>-October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999.** "Plans and Plants of the Southern Landscape" is the theme of the twelfth biennial *Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes* conference at Old Salem. [See article in this issue.] It is hoped that the development of this theme will help those involved in landscape restoration by providing historic plans, documents, and plant lists that can be useful as guidelines. For more information contact conference coordinator, Kay Bergey, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108. Phone (336) 721-7378.

**October 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>, 1999.** Southern Garden Symposium & Workshops, P. O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775; phone (504) 635-6330.

**October 21<sup>st</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup>, 1999.** "The Exceptional Garden: Past, Present, and Future," the Garden Conservancy's tenth anniversary celebration in Charleston, SC. [See article in this issue.] For more information, contact PR & Events Coordinator Diane Botnick at (914) 265-2029.

**May 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, Mount Vernon, Virginia. Meeting chair is J. Dean Norton, director of horticulture at Mount Vernon. Dean is planning an exciting venue for SGHS members, and promises to top the last meeting hosted by Mount Vernon.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This is a different date from the one printed in the last issue of *Magnolia*. Be sure to check your calendar.

**August 26<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup>, 2000.** 2<sup>nd</sup> biennial "Historic Plants Symposium" of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello. Details to be announced.

**May 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 2001.** 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society at Tryon Palace, New Bern, North Carolina. Carlton B. Wood, meeting chair. Details to be announced.

**October 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, 2001.** 9<sup>th</sup> International Heritage Rose Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. Contact Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, P. O. Box 975, Charleston, SC 29402. Phone (803) 853-8000.

**April 18<sup>th</sup>- 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002.** 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society in Natchez, Mississippi. Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, meeting chair.



*Peckerwood Garden's collection of unusual flora and garden statuary. [See article and more photos in this issue beginning on page 12.]*