



Magnolia

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

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Caroline Dormon and the Gardens of Louisiana

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In her home state, Louisiana, where she is best known, Caroline Dormon (1888-1971) is recognized today as a pioneer environmentalist, forester, botanist, and illustrator, as a native plant enthusiast, a tireless conservationist, a mover and shaker. Seldom is she thought of as a gardener. That is largely due to the way she described herself and her work at Briarwood, the home and native plant sanctuary she often called her “hollow-tree in the wildwood.” Writing to Elizabeth Lawrence, in 1944, a few years after *A Southern Garden* had been published, Dormon offered a sketch of her place and her purpose:

We will have lunch under the pines and beeches, and—if the weather is like this—never set foot inside the house. You can see native Louisiana trees and flowers “as is,” with no landscaping. I have a few other attractive shrubs native to other parts of the South, but specialize in Louisiana flora. You see, I had to have things growing right at hand to paint.... We can look at my Louisiana iris, growing by our little stream, and see *Ilex longpipes* at the pond. There may be a few witchhazel blooms out.... There are so many things to talk about.¹

Years later, having cultivated Briarwood for over five decades, she wrote to A. J. Hodges, who was in the planning stages of his central Louisiana show piece, Hodges Gardens: “But, mercy! Let me hasten to disabuse your mind of the idea that I have ‘gardens!’ I have 120 acres of wildwood.... I do have many rare and beautiful things—but often you have to look through the briars to see them!” In “Wild Gardens” she wrote, “no one can equal nature as a landscape artist.” Nevertheless, from her “hollow-tree” Caroline Dormon campaigned not only to preserve but also to cultivate the flora of her part of the world. “The native trees and flowers of a state,” she once wrote, “constitute a natural heritage, one which should be protected and shared in common.”² Gardening was central to both protection and sharing.

Outdoors at Briarwood, Dormon studied, sketched, and painted the “wildflowers” that sprung up on her home place, but she also collected and cultivated plants from other parts of the South, indeed from all parts of the world. From



Caroline Dormon in her “wildwood”

the inner sanctum of her study, Caroline Dormon wrote botanical books the titles of which, taken together, tell of her interests—and even of her story: *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* (1934); *Forest Trees of Louisiana* (1941); *Flowers Native to the Deep South* (1958); and *Natives Preferred* (1965).³ In these books, and the hundreds of articles, lectures, newspaper pieces she wrote, we can trace a steadily increasing sense of urgency. The earlier books, primarily reference works, were written, as she claims in one foreword, for “those to whom the finding of a wildflower is a real adventure, and who cannot rest until they learn its name.”⁴ In these she emphasizes identification and appreciation. In *Natives Preferred*, she advocates a new environmental ethic

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CALENDAR

August 27-28, 2004. "Early American Nurseries and Nurserymen," Historic Plants Symposium at Monticello. This biennial event, sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, features some of the most prominent and influential plant and seed distributors in America, including Bernard McMahon, John and William Bartram, William Prince and the Prince Family Nurseries, Andre Parmentier, David Landreth and others. This year's meeting takes place at the Monticello's new Jefferson Library. For information, contact Peggy Cornett, pcornett@monticello.org or visit the Web site at: www.monticello.org.

September 20-22, 2004. The Landscape Design Course III, series XIX, presented by Texas Garden Clubs Inc. and the Texas Cooperative Extension and chaired by Dr. William C. Welch, will be held in College Station, Texas. This series of four courses is held at bi-yearly intervals and covers a gamut of topics of interest to garden designers and gardeners in general. Topics of the present course include: Development of Landscape Architecture from 1840-1940; Design on the Land—Regional Expression; Graphics Interpretation; Introduction to Urban Design; Guidelines for Evaluating Landscape Design; Color in the Landscape and Landscape Design Accessories (Dr. Neil G. Odenwald); Landscape Design for Maintenance; Parks, Playgrounds and Conservation Areas. For more information call (979) 845-7344 or visit the Web site <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden>.

October 7-9, 2004. "Building Bridges: Reaching Your New Audience," AABGA (American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta) Southeast Regional Conference. For information write Garvan Woodland Gardens, P. O. Box 22240, Hot Springs, Arkansas 71903, call (800) 366-4664, or e-mail info@garvangardens.org.

October 22-23, 2004. The annual Oktober Gartenfest Symposium, in Winedale, Texas, will focus on "Sustainable Gardens." SGHS vice president Mary Anne Pickens will be speaking about Adina de Zavala, the granddaughter of Lorenzo de Zavala, first vice-president of the Republic of Texas, and her work with the Texas Centennial of 1936. Adina de Zavala's detailed description of her grandmother's garden near Houston has been used by researchers of early Texas gardens. Other speakers will address a variety of topics, including Greg Grant on the "History of the Belgian Gardeners of San Antonio, Texas." The plant sale will emphasize both well adapted heirloom varieties of fruits and garden plants as well as interesting novelties. For more information visit the Web site: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/southerngarden>, or call (979) 845-7344.

February 17-18, 2005. Southern Garden Heritage Conference, co-sponsored by The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, the University of Georgia School of Environmental Design, and The Garden Club of Georgia. To receive a program and registration information, please contact The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, 2450 South Milledge Avenue, Athens, Ga. 30605; (706) 542-1244; garden@uga.edu

February 18-20, 2005. "Peering through the Keyhole: Transitions and Transformations," the Southeast Regional Meeting of ALHFAM (Association of Living History Farms and Museums) will be held at Old Salem. Submission deadline for papers and program proposals is October 15, 2004. Contact Sarah Chapman, 2005 Regional Conference Program Chair, Old Salem Inc., PO Box F, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108; (336) 721-7317; fax (336) 721-7335; schapman@oldsalem.org

April 3-5, 2005. The 59th Garden Symposium at Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia. This annual event, co-sponsored by *Fine Gardening* magazine and the American Horticultural Society, is a traditional rite of spring for gardening enthusiasts across the country. [See review of the 2004 symposium in this issue.] Consult Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Web site for further information as it comes available: www.ColonialWilliamsburg.org

April 15-17, 2005. "Colonial Meets Revival: Fredericksburg and the Northern Neck of Virginia," the **23rd Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society**. Plans are well underway for this meeting, which is co-chaired by Beate Jensen, head gardener at Belmont, the Gari Melchors' Estate and Memorial Gallery and former SGHS president and Stratford Director of Preservation and Education Ken McFarland. The meeting will be headquartered in Fredericksburg, and the first day will focus on the influence of the Garden Club of Virginia and the work of Alden Hopkins, as well as on the region's battlefield landscapes and battlefield preservation efforts. On Saturday the group will visit the landscapes of Virginia's Northern Neck, including an extended look at some of the 1700 acres that now comprise Stratford Hall Plantation, birthplace of Robert E. Lee and home to two signers of the Declaration of Independence. More information will be presented in future issues of *Magnolia* and on the SGHS Web site.

September 29-October 1, 2005. The 15th conference on *Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes* at Old Salem, Inc. in Winston-Salem. The Southern Garden History Society is one of the sponsors of this biennial conference along with the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, and Old Salem, Inc. The planning committee is co-chaired by Davyd Foad Hood, former SGHS board member, and Sally Gant, director of information for MESDA in Old Salem. For further information, contact Sally Gant at (336) 721-7361, sgant@oldsalem.org; or Kay Bergey at (336) 721-7378, bergeymk@wfu.edu; or write Ms. Bergey at: Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108.

October 20-23, 2005. The Charleston Garden Festival at Middleton Place," sponsored by The Charleston Horticultural Society and Middleton Place Foundation in Charleston, S.C. More information will be forthcoming in future issues of *Magnolia*.

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Dormon with *Torreya*, collected in Florida

and a new landscape aesthetic—simple, naturalistic, and clean. Her last work, *Bird Talk*, published in 1967 when she was 81, is an elegy to the diminishing number and species of birds in her pine forests, victims to pesticides, clear cutting, and the sterile pine plantation system.⁵ At Briarwood, her voice deepened and matured; the tone changed from enthusiasm to advocacy, from caution to alarm.

Caroline Dormon claimed for herself “the gift of wild things,” by which she meant her ability to experience “a thousand things that no one else sees.” Her life and career—at Briarwood and throughout her home state—were efforts to offer this gift to others, to make us see. As Richard Johnson, her lifelong friend and the present curator of Briarwood, has said: “Caroline Dormon had some kind of agreement with nature.”⁶ She preserved, cultivated, illustrated; she educated, published, designed. Always the message was the same: “This unspoiled beauty must be preserved for future generations to enjoy.” Shaping the message was the gardening urge. Think of this beauty as our backyard, she said in a talk to the New Orleans Garden Society in 1935, “all this beauty of the fields and woods as mine, so that I will protect it.” The whole state will then “become a garden.”⁷

When one reads Caroline Dormon’s memoirs, one senses a childhood as idyllic as the name of her hometown, Arcadia.⁸ She was born in 1888, one of six children, into an active and well-situated family in this long-established cotton town carved out of the pine forests of north central Louisiana. She attributed her love of “wild things” to her parents. Her father, James, was an attorney and an amateur naturalist. Her mother, Carolyn Trotti, wrote poetry, supported a literary circle, and published a novel, *Under the Magnolias*, which celebrated a legacy of southern agrarian values. She seems to have had a particularly strong bond with her father, who took his favorite “Daughty” with him everywhere, to old cemeteries, patches of dogwoods in bloom, the courthouse in the parish seat, Minden. The two of them often sneaked away for fishing trips and “tramps”

through the woods—to collect, to sketch, to study. But from her mother, too, she inherited a love of the natural world, if a bit more cultivated. Mrs. Dormon assigned tiny garden plots to all the children, eventually giving over her own home garden, famous for its damask roses, to her daughter’s green thumb. Most importantly, each summer the entire family relocated 30 miles south, to a cabin sited in the longleaf pine forest, between the logging communities of Saline and Chestnut. These summer days at Briarwood, with Christmas holidays, were the highlights of young Caroline’s years.

At sixteen, and still something of a tomboy, Caroline entered Judson College in Marion, Alabama, a private college for young women. By the second year, she had learned to fit in: her wit and her knowledge of flora and fauna—useful for the field trips which were the core of the science curriculum at Judson—gained her friends and “a place.” In 1907 she graduated with a degree in Fine Arts (literature and art were her passions) and returned to Louisiana to teach. Within three years she had lost both of her parents. In 1913 the family home in Arcadia was destroyed by fire.



Dormon sketches of native flora

For several years, her future seemed uncertain, but by 1917 Caroline had arranged a life to her liking. First, she persuaded her older sister, Virginia, to settle with her permanently at Briarwood. *Smithsonian* writer David Snell calls Virginia the indoor Dormon. A teacher and important mediator, she made Caroline’s work possible.⁹ Secondly, Caroline persuaded the district supervisor to give her a teaching position in the parish as well. She had been teaching farther to the south, in Lake George, for three years. Situated

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Caroline Dormon...

again in her beloved piney woods, she rolled through hills in “the new Ford,” and her affinity for the place was fixed.

The name for the area that so enthralled Dormon at this point in her life, in her late twenties, was derived from a tribe of Kichai Indians of the Caddoan group:

Because of the heavy forests, on the oldest maps it is designated as the Kitsachie Wold....Immediately I began exploring this fascinating region—in a wagon, on horseback, on foot—later in a Ford car. I saw Kisatchie, Little Kisatchie, Sandy Creek, Rocky Creek, Odom’s Falls, and the tumbling waters of L’Ivrogrue. The great pines come right down to the water’s edge on these lovely clear creeks, with only an occasional magnolia—and masses of ferns and wild azaleas. There the idea was born.¹⁰

“The idea” was to save the beauty of this old forest for future generations. Dormon thrust herself into the forestry industry and community to ensure its preservation. Intertwined was her desire to develop Briarwood as a reflection of its natural beauty, as a research center and model for sandy hill, high pine gardening, the principles of which could be adapted to public grounds, state highway roadsides, and the backyard garden.

The longleaf pine became both a cause and an emblem for Dormon, and gardening became one way she could foster the stewardship to protect it. She spoke frequently of her spiritual connection to the largest specimen at Briarwood, “Grandpappy,” she named it. Her very soul, she once wrote, inhabited the old tree, a symbol of the “rugged survival” which matched the “independent, self-reliant” local hill farmers.¹¹



Promoting a state park system



As landscape consultant to the Louisiana Board Of Public Welfare

In a pen and ink sketch, “The Life of a Lady Forester As Told in Brief, by One,” Dormon neatly sums up her life once she fell under the spell of the Kisatchie. For three decades, Dormon held appointments that allowed her a hand in shaping the Louisiana landscape in broad, if sometimes indirect ways. In two terms with the state’s Department of Conservation, in the Division of Forestry (1921-23 and 1927-31), she created the state’s first program of conservation education and published the small pamphlet (later expanded), *Forest Trees of Louisiana*. Out the door on Monday mornings through late on Fridays, as the caricature suggests, she traveled the state talking about trees to whomever would listen. The first woman to work in the state’s forestry division, she visited parish schools (in the new Ford) with a stereopticon slide presentation and a mission for schools to teach forestry, plant trees and celebrate Arbor Day. She published and disseminated information on how to do each of those things—in tireless Dormon detail—as part of her job. Saturdays, during this period, she devoted to Briarwood and to family. Sundays, and many evenings, she wrote letters about her beloved forest.

As chair of forestry for the Louisiana Federation of Women’s Clubs, she helped to initiate the campaign to save the Kisatchie Wold, some 600,000 acres of “kingly longleaf pines” growing “to perfection in an idyllic setting” over seven parishes. In 1930, after nearly a decade of her tireless advocacy, the tract was designated the Kisatchie National Forest. The dream was realized. After leaving forestry work, she continued lecturing on conservation issues, campaigning for a state arboretum and park system. She also was instrumental in the designation of El Camino Real, the extension of the Natchez Trace through central Louisiana and into Texas. As a landscape consultant to the state’s Board of Public Welfare, Dormon designed native plantings on the grounds of hospitals in Pineville and Monroe (1938-41). Less successful was her effort in the early 1940s as consultant to the state’s Highway Department. Collecting photographs of naturalistic roadsides, she encouraged the planting of pines, oaks, magnolias, hollies, redbuds and crabapples

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With fellow "Irisiac," Ira Nelson, in bog garden At Briarwood

throughout the state. Unfortunately, nurserymen with non-natives to sell more frequently won bids, and Dormon was unable to fully convince the department of the advantages of setting up a series of native plant nurseries. She did manage to encourage thinking about native plant preserves in various places, often making her case in gardeners' terms: "When we can feel that the roadsides are our gardens, we will take a keener interest in keeping them beautiful."¹² Caroline Dormon focused the state's attention on its natural beauty, changing it one project at a time.

Advocating native landscaping in lectures and publications, Dormon significantly influenced home gardening in the South, especially in her home state. In the 1920s Dormon caught the enthusiasm for native Louisiana irises, collecting widely. The new Ford propelled her into numerous adventures in the bogs of south Louisiana. Dormon herself introduced several important cultivars and was among the founding members of the Louisiana Iris Society. Her enthusiasm and expertise placed her within the network of passionate collectors and cultivators she termed "Irisiacs." This group was somewhat far flung, including the botanist John K. Small of the New York Botanical Garden and Mary DeBaillon of New Orleans. Small visited Briarwood twice and kept up a correspondence with Dormon. And Mary DeBaillon left more than half of her own extensive collection to Dormon in the late 1930s. Other "Irisiacs" within the state—and there were many others—included Edith Stern; Inez Conger of Arcadia (one of the most celebrated backyard gardeners in north Louisiana); Mrs. Claude Shehee of Shreveport, an important figure in the garden club movement; Mrs. U.B. Evans who gardened at Haphazard Plantation near Ferriday; and Cammie Henry at Melrose Plantation

This network was important in galvanizing Louisiana gardening, for bridging the great divide between the north and the south of the state, and for bringing the backyard

gardener together with the country estate. Garden Club members (whom Dormon called on good days "COMPANY" and on bad "ARRANGERS") frequently popped in at Briarwood to see the irises, and got introduced to the native plant aesthetic along the way. There is an especially comical account written by Dormon to Elizabeth Lawrence in which she tells of astounding her garden club visitors by plucking the leaves off of a beauty berry (exposing all those spectacular magenta berries) and putting together a wildflower arrangement on the spot.¹³ It is, of course, impossible to know or follow all the strands of this network, to know all of the ways in which coming together over irises changed gardening in the state and the South, although some can be gleaned.

Significantly, Ruth Dormon, wife to Caroline's brother, James, was among the enthusiasts. Her place, Felicity Wild Garden, just south of Shreveport, Louisiana, was another refuge for irises and native wild flowers. Caroline, Ruth, and Virginia worked together for almost fifteen years operating a mail-order business offering an extensive list of, as their advertising flyer promises, "native plants and shrubs and rare Louisiana irises."¹⁴ The invoices show that frequently when customers ordered the rare irises (Caroline and Virginia's expertise), they included a few of the other natives—the wood violet that Ruth had discovered and then propagated—or asters or crinums. Most of the trade, though not all, was



Fellow artist, Clementine Hunter, at Melrose

with other southern gardeners. The nursery trade, in turn, made Ruth something of a local gardening celebrity in the Shreveport area. She reports, at one point, of her triumph at setting up a native plant display at the fairgrounds one fall. The interest in Louisiana irises and other natives grew in

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Caroline Dormon...

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such ways.

Equally influential, and closely linked to this network, was the publication of *Home Gardening for the South*, a handsome journal published by the New Orleans Garden Society between 1940 and 1952. Increasingly, southern gardeners were becoming, as the editor of *Home Gardening* surmised, interested in native plants, conservation programs, and solid tips for their own yards. Or, in Dormon's words in her piece for the inaugural issue (tellingly entitled "Louisiana, Our Garden"), this growing number of gardeners wanted "practical advice, clearly given."¹⁵ Dormon published over thirty articles in this one journal—on topics from bog plants to Native American bulbs to southern shrubs and trees. Eventually she joined its editorial board, which cemented her position at the center of a web of southern gardeners and garden writers. In a piece on William Hunt, another faithful contributor to *Home Gardening*, Elizabeth Lawrence captures the moment:

Camilla [Bradley] was the editor and moving spirit of that remarkable and short-lived magazine, *Home Gardening for the South*, for which we both wrote along with Caroline Dormon and her sister-in-law, Mrs. James Dormon, and Inez Conger and their friends in Shreveport and Jo Evans from her garden at Haphazard Plantation. And we all wrote to each other, all of the Confederacy united as in the War. Contributor and subscribers were practically the same.¹⁶

Decidedly neighborly in tone, this effort was, as Bradley said in its last issue, an important "part in this great garden movement that is a heritage of the South."¹⁷

Dormon's writing, and her years of advocacy for the use of native plants, drew her into garden consulting and design. One of the many Louisiana gardeners with whom Dormon established a sustaining relationship was Cammie Henry of Melrose Plantation, a neighboring sanctuary in Natchitoches Parish, though of a slightly different kind.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Mrs. Henry developed the grounds of Melrose into an artists' colony, a safe haven for Louisiana writers and artists. It was legendary. Among the frequent guests were Lyle Saxon and Ada Jack Carver, two regionalist writers devoted to preserving the stories and customs of the Delta South. William Faulkner was said to have visited there on one or many of his trips from New Orleans to Oxford.

Renowned African-American artist Clementine Hunter, a worker on the plantation, began her own career at Melrose. Cammie Henry encouraged self expression in all of her guests; the one condition of a stay at Melrose was that at dinner in the evenings, when guests gathered from the various cabins and quarters of the grounds, each was to report on what progress had been made during the day.

Dormon was a frequent visitor and shared in Cammie Henry's love of gardening. Long after Cammie Henry's

death, Dormon was asked to write of her recollections. She wrote, "The Melrose scene most vividly etched in my memory is that of 'Miss Cammie' gardening: With three or four of the plantation hands to do her bidding, there was activity in every corner of the tremendous garden...No rhythmic cotton-chopping, no leisurely plowing here!"¹⁸ In a short time after taking up the task, the middle-aged Mrs. Henry, by Dormon's account, had turned the "marvelous fertility of Cane River soil," aided by her own green thumb and loyal workers, from the "usual arrangement"—a small fenced flower garden in front of the house in a vast lawn—to a garden paradise. She "got plants from everywhere"—from nurseries, from friends (whose cuttings were rooted in bottles of water, hung on a sunny porch), from the Department of Agriculture, which would send plants to favored constituents. Dormon herself introduced Louisiana iris, a hedge of native *Ilex* and other indigenous shrubs. In fertile soil, and with what she describes as "lavish use of water and constant care," Cammie Henry made everything grow "amazingly."

Dormon's work in two other gardens—at Hodges Gardens near Many, Louisiana, and at Longue Vue, in Metairie—was similar, a consultancy primarily about plants and sources. A plantswoman first, Dormon typically found the beauty of a wild spot, framing it by laying a path of straw or with stones and moss, then making a clearing to give the view the needed margin. Or she would suggest adding an under story of wildflowers or give advice about the shades and bloom time of various native ornamentals. The collaboration between Edith Stern, Ellen Shipman, and Caroline Dormon is typical of her work as a garden and landscape consultant. Edith Stern was, in fact, the most



Cammie Henry's "amazing" garden at Melrose

generous of a group of New Orleans "angels" who helped to finance the publication of the first two works, beautifully illustrated botanical books: *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* and

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Caroline Dormon...

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Flowers Native to the Deep South. She well knew that “wild” and “native” and “preserve” were the key words in her design vocabulary, and that Dormon’s tendency was from naturalistic toward natural, in the tradition of Jens Jensen, the landscape architect she most admired. By 1935, as Longue Vue was underway, Dormon had established her knowledge of native plants and their cultivation in the



Old Roses at Hodges Gardens

“wild,” as well as her ability to find or to supply nursery stock.

A few passages from Caroline Dormon’s correspondence from the late 40s, as the garden continued to develop long after the second stage had begun in 1942, suggest the process and some of the beauty, which has since been replaced. One of the most important changes from the first plan to the second was made possible by the Sterns’ acquisition of adjacent property, opening a grander approach to the house from Bamboo Road. In 1947, Edith Stern wrote to Dormon:

Do you really think you could locate the three types of crabapple trees that you mentioned that will give us a succession of bloom? Mrs. Shipman is simply delighted with the idea of using these throughout the entrance drive from Bamboo Road. We will need a mass planting of evergreen shrubs on the boundary lines and our next thought was an underplanting of all the different violets. Doesn’t it sound heavenly?¹⁹

The different violets mentioned are natives supplied by Dormon’s Felicity Wild Gardens. Receipts show that Dormon flung her collecting net as far as Nik Nak Gardens in Raleigh, North Carolina, for the crabapples.

The commitment to planting detail and use of traditional southern plants, frequently natives, would not have been possible without the involvement of Dormon. Similarly a sketch of the “outdoor living room” to be achieved in the Wild Garden indicates the degree to which Dormon’s decisions about the number and placement of native ferns and wild iris were part of the plan from the

outset. Even when Stern and Shipman rejected an idea by Dormon—for instance, the use of smilax along a fence—the tone was respectful. Her contributions to the wild gardens at Hodges Gardens similarly offered a significant counterpoint to the beds of annuals and rose gardens that dominate the grounds even today. In a 1965 essay, Dormon celebrated the increasing use of natives in places such as Long Vue, Hodges, and Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia.

In her work in these gardens and landscapes throughout Louisiana, Caroline Dormon made clear the ways in which the natural and the naturalistic could and should be adapted to all garden styles, that native plants could play a key role in all design decisions. The changes she advocated were subtle, showing how to create beauty in the natural landscape “as is.” Dormon always included the quotation marks as though direction for the invisible or near invisible hand she used to shape her green world. Environmentally responsible, her ambitions for gardening in her state and in her region evoke the mid-twentieth-century



Dormon’s “invisible hand” at Briarwood

movement to preserve traditional southern ways and, at the same time, helped to shape the native plant movement of the current moment. No place is this garden aesthetic and environmental ethic more apparent than at Briarwood today, where Richard and Jessie Johnson carry on the mission of preservation, education, and deep ecology of Caroline Dormon.²⁰ Southern gardeners in the twenty-first century should heed her warning and continue her reverence for “the gift of wild things.”

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Caroline Dormon...

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All photos and documents are from the Cammie G. Henry Research Center,

Eugene Watson Library,
Northwestern State University,
Natchitoches, Louisiana.

End Notes...

¹Caroline Dormon to Elizabeth Lawrence, 26 October 1944, Elizabeth Lawrence Collection, Cammie Henry Research Center, Eugene Watson Library, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches.

²Caroline Dormon to A. J. Hodges, 13 January 1955; "Wild Gardens" (n.d., typescript). All manuscripts and letters cited are from the Caroline Dormon Collection, Cammie Henry Research Center, Eugene Watson Library, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches.

³Dormon's published books include *Wild Flowers of Louisiana* (New York: Doubleday-Doran, 1934; rept. Baton Rouge: Claitor's, 1994), *Forest Trees of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State Forestry Commission, 1941), *Flowers Native to the Deep South* (Baton Rouge: Claitor's, 1958), *Natives Preferred* (Baton Rouge: Claitor's, 1965), *Southern Indian Boy* (Baton Rouge: Claitor's, 1967), and *Bird Talk* (Baton Rouge: Claitor's, 1969).

⁴"Foreword," *Wild Flowers of Louisiana*, 3.

⁵See Benay Blend, "Caroline Dormon: A Louisiana Writer and Her Environmental Ethic," *Louisiana Literature* 14:1 (Spring 1997) for a discussion of Dormon's response to DDT and Rachel Carson's work.

⁶Dormon quotation from "Adventures of a Naturalist at Home" (n.d., typescript); Richard Johnson cited in Elona Boggs, "The Legacy of Caroline Dormon," *Forests and People: Office Publication of the Louisiana Forestry Association* (52:1, 2002), 4.

⁷"Talk to the New Orleans Garden Society," (typescript, n.d.)

⁸A detailed account of Dormon's life can be found in Fran Holman Johnson, *The Gift of Wild Things: The Life of Caroline Dormon* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1990).

⁹Snell, "The Green World of Carrie Dormon" *Smithsonian* 2:11 (1972), 30. Snell, the son of

Louisiana novelist Ada Jack Carver, recalls from childhood visits to Briarwood that Virginia was "darkly beautiful with her deep auburn hair, peering through her horn-rims...trying to focus to the distance if she had just laid down Shakespeare or Milton, or drying her hands on her apron if she had just come from her own theater of artistry, the kitchen." Miss Carrie he describes as "all whipcord and piano wire—with fresh earth on her hands and apron."

¹⁰"The Story of Kisatchie" (n.d., typescript).

¹¹"Farewell Hill Farms" (n.d., typescript). Still standing, "Grandpappy" at its most recent measure, in late 2003, continues as the largest and possibly the oldest longleaf pine in Louisiana. It is 106 feet high, 126 inches in girth, and somewhere around 300 years old.

¹²"Highways Plus Trees," *Holland's Magazine* (April 1923), 34.

¹³Dormon to Lawrence, 7 May 1952.

¹⁴Ruth Dormon to Caroline Dormon, 14 June 1938.

¹⁵Dormon, "Louisiana, Our Garden," *Home Gardening for the South* 1:3 (March 1941), 4.

¹⁶Lawrence, "William Lanier Hunt" in William Lanier Hunt, *Southern Gardens, Southern Gardening* (Durham: Duke Univ Press, 1982), 23.

¹⁷Bradley, "Editor's Note," *Home Gardening for the South* 12:3 (March 1942), 3.

¹⁸"Gardening at Melrose" (n.d., typescript).

¹⁹Edith Stern to Dormon, 22 April 1947.

²⁰In 1966 Briarwood was named a "sanctuary for the flora of the South" by the American Horticultural Society. Through the hard work and devotion of a band of Dormon's friends, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve was established. For additional information about Briarwood and the work of the Foundation, visit the website: www.cp.tel.net/dormon/ or write or call: 216 Caroline Dormon Road, Saline, La. 71070, (318) 576-3379.

Colonial Williamsburg's 58th Garden Symposium Featured Heirloom Gardening

Like dogwoods and tulips in early April, the Williamsburg Garden Symposium is an essential part of spring in Virginia. Now approaching its sixth decade, this time-honored event continues to provide a first-class



Photo by P. Cornett

Colonial Williamsburg's Colonial Nursery and Garden Shop

experience for a wide-ranging audience of garden enthusiasts and historic landscape professionals.

This year's symposium, held April 5-7, with its focus on heirloom gardening, was particularly relevant for SGHS members. The symposium's planning committee, chaired by former SGHS president Gordon Chappell, assembled an impressive roster of speakers for this three-day program, from food historian William Woys Weaver, who is contributing editor of *Gourmet* and author of several successful books including *Heirloom Vegetable Gardening*, to the legendary Kent Whealy, director of Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa and founding father of our modern-day



Photo by P. Cornett

Colonial Williamsburg Garden Shop

heirloom vegetable preservation movement in America. Outstanding talks were given by several of our most active and long-standing members of the Southern Garden History Society. Dr. William C. Welch of Texas A&M gave the keynote talk on "The Intrigue and Importance of Heirloom Gardening," drawing on his knowledge and years of experience in gardening with antique plants in the Deep South. Scott Kunst, owner of Old House Gardens in Ann Arbor, Michigan, gave a lively and fascinating presentation on "Heirloom Bulbs: Four Seasons, Forty Centuries," which was packed with useful information. J. Dean Norton, director of horticulture at Mount Vernon, gave us an often humorous look at the trials and triumphs of restoring the grand estate of George Washington in "Still Working on It After All These Years: A Case Study in Garden Restoration."

Lectures were held in the Hennage Auditorium at the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum, a superbly equipped, modern underground facility, completely invisible yet easily accessible to the nearby historic district. Organized tours were available for those who wished to visit Bassett Hall or to view the rare books of the John D.

Rockefeller, Jr. Special Collections Room; and ample time was allotted for attendees to tour the town on their own. While the gardens throughout Colonial Williamsburg are designed for a variety of purposes—from the ornamental floral displays at the Governor's Palace to the utilitarian kitchen gardens for the taverns—the most impressive collections of period plants can be found in the colonial nursery on Duke of Gloucester

Street maintained by Wesley Greene, Colonial Williamsburg's garden historian, and the research plots created by Larry Griffith, curator of plants. Both Greene and Griffith are striving to present the most accurate species of the 18th-century, based on careful study of the period documentation. A devout student of *Philip Miller's Dictionary*, Greene is steeped in the details of the times he attempts to portray. Not content to accept the documentation at face value, Greene goes so far as to test the very tools illustrated in the early texts and to grow



Photo by P. Cornett

'Duc Van Thol Rose' Tulip, a rare miniature tulip dating to 1700. Scott Kunst is one of the few suppliers for such rare heirloom bulbs today.

Colonial Williamsburg...

every crop using authentic methods, including bell jars and glass-covered frames heated with decomposing manure. Griffith, who also gave a presentation for the symposium on “The New American (Suburban) ‘Heirloom’ Cottage Garden,” is collaborating with Wesley Greene and Don

Mckelvey to develop a database of plants from the historical records as part of a grant from the Mars Foundation for Rare Plant Species. Their on-going research will result in a comprehensive plant list and database of 1,500 plants with specific documentation to early American and European

Members in the News

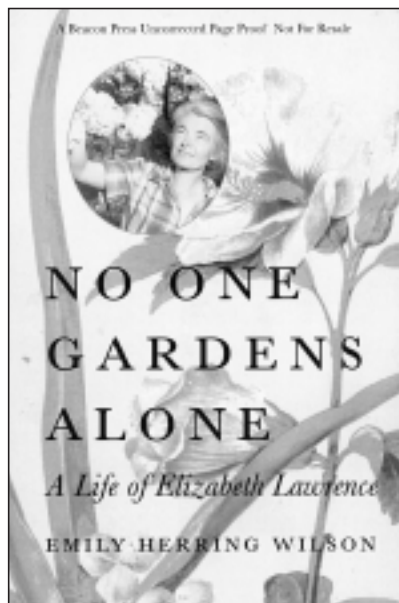
SGHS president **Jim Cothran**'s recent book *Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South* won the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries' 2004 Annual Literature Award in the General Interest category. Jim also has received the 2004 Award of Honor in the Communications Category from the American Society of Landscape Architects. The gardens of **Mount Vernon** and **Monticello** were featured in the July 4th issue of *USA Weekend*, a Sunday news supplement carried in many newspapers across the country.

In Print

Publication date set for October 2004:

No One Gardens Alone, A Life of Elizabeth Lawrence, by Emily Herring Wilson, who first edited the letters between Miss Lawrence and Katharine S. White in *Two Gardeners*.

Now, 100 years after Elizabeth Lawrence's birth, Ms. Wilson offers the first biography of this beloved southern garden writer. Here is an excerpt from Wilson's book: "Small, thin, and fair, Elizabeth Lawrence always seemed too delicate for heavy work, until she lifted rocks; quiet and reticent, she seemed shy, until she argued; kind and well-mannered she did not tolerate fools gladly. Young or old she always looked like a girl, and to the end of her mother's life (in 1964), she was a dutiful daughter. But her story has surprises, too, as unexpected as those at Misselthwaite Manor in Lawrence's favorite book, *The Secret Garden*. And Elizabeth Lawrence, like Mary Lennox in *The Secret Garden*, found the key that unlocks the garden's surprises. And of course, friends come in through the gate, and we will find them, too."



Symposium to Focus on Horticulture in Jefferson's Day



The major figures and organizations of horticulture in early 19th-century America will be the focus of *Early American Nurseries and Nurserymen*, the 2004 Historic Plants Symposium sponsored by Monticello's Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants.

The biennial symposium will be held Friday, August 27, and Saturday, August 28, at Monticello and the Center for Historic Plants headquarters at nearby Tufton Farm.

The roster of speakers will include horticultural consultant and ornamental plant expert Denise Adams; Robert "Rob" Cox, keeper of manuscripts at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia; Elizabeth

McLean, a research associate in botany at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia; Therese O'Malley, associate dean of the Center for Advanced Study of the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington; Roland "Chuck" Wade, former executive director of the Queens Botanical Garden in New York City; Peter Hatch, director of Gardens and Grounds at Monticello; and Peggy Cornett, director of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants.

The topics of discussion will include the American home nursery around 1800, John Bartram's garden and nursery, the Prince Nursery of Long Island, the professionalization of landscape design in 19th-century America, Bernard McMahon and the politics of horticulture in Jefferson-era Philadelphia, and the use of antique plant catalogs as research tools. The symposium also will include tours and receptions at Monticello and the CHP nursery.

Advance registration is required for the symposium; the deadline is August 20. Additional information and registration forms for the 2004 Historic Plants Symposium can be obtained by calling (434) 984-9816, sending an e-mail to pcornett@monticello.org, or visiting the Web site www.monticello.org.

Elizabeth Lawrence Resolution on her 100th Anniversary

Presented by Patti McGee on behalf of the Southern Garden History Society board of directors.

Whereas, Elizabeth Lawrence was the quintessential gardener, whose knowledge of horticulture and whose passion to grow many different plants, was an inspiration for generations of southern gardeners, and

Whereas, Elizabeth Lawrence established a wide network of gardening friends with whom she shared her considerable knowledge of horticulture as well as the plants that she grew and

Whereas, her small gardens in Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina, were both laboratories for determining what could be grown and also intimate places of pleasure and beauty, and

Whereas, Elizabeth Lawrence invited into her gardens family, friends, and strangers, alike, for conversations along the garden paths, for sharing of plants and to provide refuge and pleasure, and

Whereas, Elizabeth Lawrence was a writer whose books are regarded as classics in the field of American and British garden literature, and

Whereas, Elizabeth Lawrence's first book, *A Southern Garden*, has remained in print for more than a half-century since its publication in 1942, when its practical, literary, and philosophic discussions of gardening made it a healing respite from the tragedies of war, and

Whereas, Elizabeth Lawrence's life and work had a permanent and far reaching influence on gardening and horticulture in the South.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the members of the Southern Garden History Society meeting in New Orleans, May 7, 2004, hereby unanimously express our abiding admiration and love for Elizabeth Lawrence on the occasion of her 100th anniversary. Born May 27, 1904, Elizabeth Lawrence died June 11, 1985, but her legacy lives on in our professional and personal devotion to her accomplishments and her ideals. We embrace her credo, "No one can garden alone."

Of Interest

AABGA NetGuide Update

The American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta and its Historic Landscapes Committee are pleased to announce the recent unveiling of an exciting new resource, the Networking Guide to Historic Landscape Resources. Also known as the NetGuide, this is a fully-searchable, online database designed to inventory the entire spectrum of historic landscape resources within the AABGA. Resources range from actual historic landscapes and their associated plant and archives collections, to the expertise of design and stewardship groups, to suppliers of materials used by historic site managers. This breadth of coverage makes the NetGuide a valuable application to site managers, home gardeners interested in historic plants, researchers, and to heritage tourists. To explore the NetGuide, simply visit <http://216.197.100.201>, or access the site through www.aabga.org by clicking on the HLC's NetGuide link from the main page.

The NetGuide became a public application in April, when the Web site was completed and the survey was finalized and distributed to all of the nearly 1,600 members of the AABGA. Already, over 110 institutions and organizations have submitted their surveys, which are viewable online at the NetGuide Web site. These surveys represent a wide variety of archives and libraries, stewardship organizations, and many other organizations offering and maintaining historic landscape resources throughout North America. The historic landscapes represented include farms, former presidents' homes, estates, cemeteries and vernacular

sites; they cover historical periods from pre-contact indigenous, to colonial, and on to modern/environmental 20th-century gardens. A NetGuide Forum used to discuss the practical issues of historic preservation was also recently added to the Web site. Goals for the NetGuide are to maintain and enhance the site, potentially through the development of new, specialized surveys, such as one to inventory historic plants within AABGA institutional member gardens.

To create the NetGuide, AABGA collaborated with two other project partners: Bloom, Inc. (www.bloominc.org, a non-profit corporation that supports conservation efforts through the use of information technology), and Filoli Center, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which is committing staff for administrating and maintaining the project, computers, and interim Web hosting. The Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust provided funding for the project development and made it possible to employ the NetGuide intern. For further information about the NetGuide or the HLC, contact the NetGuide Administrator: Lucy Tolmach, Director of Horticulture, Filoli, Cañada Road, Woodside, California 94062, (650) 364-8300 x214, NetGuide@filoli.org or AABGA Historic Landscapes Committee Chair: Susan Greenstein, Director, Kykuit Program for Historic Hudson Valley, (stgreenstein@hudsonvalley.org).

Submitted by Alison Blake, NetGuide Intern and Lucy Tolmach, NetGuide Administrator

New Orleans Welcomes Annual SGHS Gathering “Native Plants and Creole Gardens”

The city of New Orleans was the setting for this long-anticipated 22nd annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, May 7-9, 2004. The meeting’s planning committee and hosts—Betsy Crusel, Sally Reeves, Carole Pettit and Lou Hoffman, with Shingo Maynard as honorary chair—successfully orchestrated one of the most memorable gatherings of the society’s history. Due to the meeting’s intimate location and restricted lecture spaces, registration was necessarily limited and filled quickly, to the disappointment of many who were closed out. But, New Orleans’ French Quarter, by all accounts, can be a logistical nightmare for a group of over 150, and the committee’s efforts to create a unique and quality experience were extraordinary; requiring months of planning and negotiating with various venues and hotels in the historic districts.

The opening lectures were held at the Williams Research Center, a short walk from the meeting’s headquarters at the Hotel St. Marie. The WRC, the research arm of The Historic New Orleans Collection, is located in a 1915 Beaux-Arts-style structure designed by architect Edgar Angelo Christy. Sally Kittredge Reeves began with an overview of French and Anglo-American-style horticulture in New Orleans, drawing on the wealth of early paintings, sketches, and illustrations from the collections of the Notarial Archives. Sally Reeves was the founding Archivist of the New Orleans Notarial Archives in 1988 and currently

is serving as the first woman president of the 170-year-old Louisiana Historical Society. She also serves as a board member of SGHS and, in 2001, she published her translation and introduction to French horticulturist Jacques-Felix Lelièvre’s *Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane*, 1838, which was an SGHS sponsored project. Ms. Reeves was followed by Anne H. Abbott, who gave a detailed account of “The Lost Garden” of Jean Prat, *médecin du roi*, an important 18th-century physician and botanist in New Orleans. Ms. Abbott helped recreate the nuns’ garden at the Old Rusuline Convent, where the royal physician functioned and helped care for the sick along with the nuns at the nearby Military Hospital. The walking tours of the



Photo by Ed Shull

French Quarter garden of the Dolliole-Masson House on St. Philip Street

walking tours of the French Quarter, which followed the talks, were a highlight. Members were provided a map with directions to about a dozen sites scattered throughout the district and were allowed the freedom to view these gardens at their own pace, without being herded by guides and formal tours. Amid the madness of Bourbon Street, members discovered a rich variety of magnificent Creole architecture and were given a rare opportunity to look at some of the city’s finest private garden gems and meet many of the owners. The day closed with a festive cocktail buffet at an elegant 1830s building on Conti Street; only two blocks from Hotel St. Marie.

On Saturday the meeting’s venue left the heart of the French Quarter. Members were bused to the Old U. S. Mint building on Esplanade, one of the eight New Orleans properties of the Louisiana State Museum, which was built in 1836 to designs of Philadelphia architect William Strickland. SGHS out-going president Gordon Chappell began with the society’s business meeting followed by two talks focusing on two very remarkable women who, each in her own way, significantly influenced Southern gardening during the first half of the 20th-



Photo by Ed Shull

Hermann-Grima, 820 St. Louis St.

Photo by Ed Shull



Gallier House wooden cistern as seen from the Clay-Scalia/Melton House on Governor Nicholls Street in the French Quarter.

New Orleans Welcomes...

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Photo by Bill Welch

Sally Reeves

century. Karen Cole discussed Caroline Dormon (see lead article), a tireless environmentalist who was celebrated for her botanical illustrations and her mission to establish the Kisatchie National Forest near Natchitoches, Louisiana. Ms. Cole was a member of the faculty of Northwestern State University of Louisiana in Natchitoches, where Caroline Dormon lived and worked, and she has published articles about Ms. Dormon in *Louisiana Cultural Vistas* and in the second volume of *Pioneers of American Landscape Design: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Charles Birnbaum. The Southern garden designs of Ellen Biddle Shipman (1869-1950) were the focus of Judith Tankard's presentation. This body of work during the 1920s and '30s proved significant on a national level, defining the Shipman legacy. An active member of SGHS, Ms. Tankard served as founding editor of *The Journal of the New England Garden History Society* and is author of four books, including *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman* (1996).



Photo by Ed Shull

Parterre at Longue Vue

The meeting continued with a full afternoon of activities, beginning with tours and lunch at Longue Vue Gardens, the estate of the late Edith and Edgar Stern. The 1935 gardens were designed by Ellen Shipman, who also persuaded the Sterns to build an entirely new home to take better advantage of the site and to compliment her garden design. The well-maintained gardens and house are open to the public and feature a mixture of Ms. Shipman's original formal designs, rectangular gardens and reflecting pool, and a kitchen and wild garden installed in

1940 with native plants and a *pigeonnier*. Mid-afternoon was spent at the City Park Botanical Garden, a 1,500 acre urban park originally purchased by the city in 1850. The day ended with walking tours of four magnificent private homes and gardens in the city's famous Garden District. Members will not soon forget the elaborate Baroque interiors of the Reuben Harper home, an 1856 mansion built formerly as a Catholic chapel, where we were greeted by the current, very colorful owner. The dinner,



Photo by Ed Shull

The Spanish Garden at Longue Vue

which featured Bayou country crawfish etouffée and blackened chicken with Cajun sausage, took place at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Adatto, an 1851 Greek Revival style building with ample room for the many weary but still enthusiastic guests.



Photo by Bill Welch

Greg Grant stands in the middle, flanked by Flora Ann Bynum and Greg's mother Jackie Grant on the right and Mary Beth Hagood and Sand Marmillion to the left at Laura Plantation.

Sunday's post-conference tour of three significant River Road Plantations was limited in size to a much smaller group of registrants. Buses left the city early and traveled along the West bank of the Mississippi River, where, despite extensive development by the state's enormous petrochemical industry, the classic but rapidly disappearing landscape of the antebellum South is still quite evident in its allees of live oaks draped with

New Orleans Welcomes...

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Photo by Bill Welch



Visitors gather in front of slave-cabin dependency at Laura Plantation.

Spanish moss and still-standing dependencies, slave buildings, and pigeoniers. The first stop was Evergreen Plantation in St. John the Baptist Parish. Originally built in the 1790s, it was completely rebuilt in 1832 in the Greek-Revival style by the Pierre Bechnel family. The grounds contain 37 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, and feature a French-style parterre garden. Laura Plantation in Vacherie, was built in 1805 in the Creole style, presenting a sharp contrast to the white-colonnaded antebellum plantations of the River Road. The day ended at Houmas House, once one of the great sugar-producing plantations of the state.

—Peggy Cornett

REVIEW...

The Royal Horticultural Society: A History, 1804-2004 by Brent Elliott. Phillimore & Co LTD, publishers, 2004. ISBN 1 86077 172 2

Arguably no institution in the English-speaking world of gardening has had the wide, cumulative influence exercised by the Royal Horticultural Society since its founding in 1804. Through its sponsorship of horticultural education, training, and examinations, important scholarship, research, collecting, and plant propagation programs; the issuance of journals, magazines, books and handbooks, including the Royal Horticultural Society Dictionary of Gardening, its new edition of 1992, and other publications; a series of research, trial, and display gardens, which reaches its zenith at Wisley; the flower, fruit, and garden shows including the spring Chelsea Flower Show; lectures, public programs, conferences, and numerous other initiatives over the course of two centuries, its effect has been nothing short of extraordinary. This presence has been seen not just in what constitutes the United Kingdom but throughout the parts of its old empire and colonies including the United States, and beyond.

This year marks the bicentennial of the Royal Horticultural Society. As would be expected, a wide range of programs, shows, lectures, tours, and other events have been held and are on schedule in the coming months to celebrate the anniversary. Participation in virtually all of these, except one, would require travel to London and other venues. This exception is *The Royal Horticultural Society: A History, 1804-2004* by Brent Elliott. And, exceptional it is! Mr. Elliott, the librarian and archivist of the Society since 1982, has had the enviable position of direct access to the papers and documents of the society—and the charge of their stewardship—together with strong institutional support. This proximity to historical

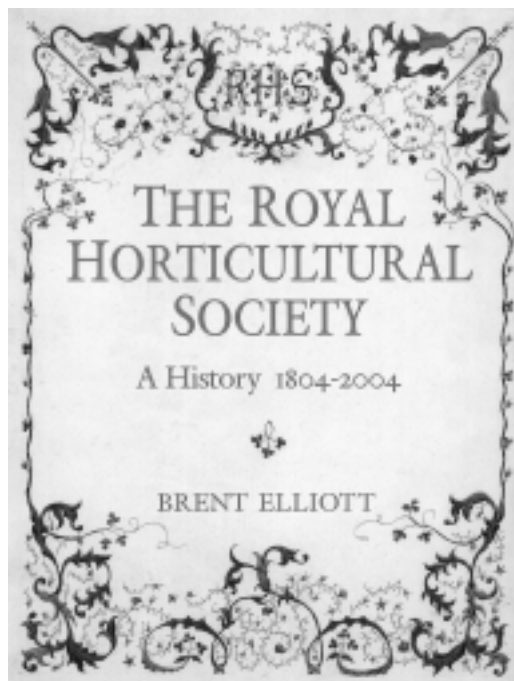
records and sustained backing has encouraged his production of an exemplary history of the institution, the figures in its administration and long life, and the wealth of endeavors that have brought it to both advanced age and unparalleled prominence.

Having undertaken the histories of two Episcopal churches, books to have been published in their anniversary years, the 175th and 250th,

respectively, this writer knows the advantages accruing to works written in-house. That situation affords the writer a unique, invaluable perspective as well as the ever-present pitfalls of closeness to material and the bias that can weaken such a work. Brent Elliott has used the first to his favor and altogether avoided the latter. In turn he has produced an important book that is both a history of the RHS and that of many significant, necessarily-related parts of the horticultural and gardening life of Great Britain. It can be recommended to members of our Society for both reasons.

The Royal Horticultural Society was actually formed as the Horticultural Society of London; it was re-chartered in its new and present form in 1861. On the 7th of March 1804 seven men gathered in a meeting room at Hatchards bookshop in Picadilly on the invitation of Sir Joseph Banks, who organized the meeting following up on a proposal for just such a society made by John Wedgewood. Mr. Wedgewood (1766-1844), the son of Josiah Wedgewood, chaired the meeting. He and Sir Joseph (1743-1820) were joined at Hatchards by two gentlemen amateurs (Charles Francis Greville and Richard Anthony Salisbury), two royal gardeners (William Townsend Aiton and William Forsyth), and a nurseryman (James Dickson).

Through the years preceding their meeting these men had witnessed important advances in agriculture occurring as a result of the successful work of many agricultural societies through Great Britain.



Review...

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They sought to apply a like model and means to the advancement of horticulture. By the time of the first general meeting of the Society three weeks later, on 28 March, sixty-one likely members had come forward. These men, called fellows, were all known to each other and membership in this society, like most others, was by personal recommendation. It was not until the 1830s that women were admitted as members, but their number would remain small until the 20th century. The third Earl of Dartmouth (1755-1810), elected the first president (1804-1810), was succeeded by Thomas Andrew Knight (1759-1838) whose tenure extended from 1811 until his death. By 1818 the membership had grown to 360 fellows and in 1819 the Society acquired a house in Regent Street that served as its offices until 1859. The Duke of Devonshire's offer of thirty-three acres at Chiswick was accepted in 1822 and the Society thereby gained its first permanent grounds as a repository for the hundreds of plants that quickly came its way for experiment and promotion. The Chiswick holding, accessible to the public, would remain the principal gardens of the Society throughout the 19th century, although they were subsequently reduced to some ten acres and joined in 1861 by the short-lived garden in Kensington.

Important figures abound in the history of the Society and many of their names are well-known to the present. John Lindley (1799-1865) was engaged in the work of the Society for forty-two years and during that period "did the work now carried out by five departments." John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) was an ardent champion for the Society, in person and in print as editor of *The Gardener's Magazine*, from 1826 until his death. William George Spencer Cavendish (1790-1858), the sixth, "Bachelor" Duke of Devonshire, advanced the efforts of the Society from 1838 until his death when he was succeeded by the Prince Consort. Prince Albert's term as president was short, ending with his own death in 1861, the year he presided over the opening of the Society's new garden in Kensington. And then there was Joseph Paxton (1803-1865) who trained as an under-gardener at Chiswick, went on to become head gardener at Chatsworth, founded the *Gardener's Chronicle* with Mr. Lindley in 1841, and designed the Crystal Palace. The list goes on and on.

The fortunes of the Royal Horticultural Society, which rose, fell, and rose again through the course of the 19th century, gained stability and a firm footing during the long presidency of Sir John James Trevor Lawrence (1831-1913), which began in 1885. Lawrence essentially oversaw the transition of the Society to the organization we know today. The premises at Kensington were abandoned and the Society offices relocated to 111 Victoria Street where they remained until 1904. The centenary year was marked by two important events that have remained critical to the Society's success. In 1903 its officers decided to acquire the George Fergusson Wilson estate at Wisley, and having relocated plants from Chiswick that fall and winter, the new gardens received visitors in 1904. The Laboratory opened in 1907. These facilities, expanded by new buildings, glasshouses, and increased acreage, continue as the principal research, trial, and display gardens of the Society, gaining world renown and importance. On 22 July 1904 King Edward VII opened the Society's new Horticultural Hall on Vincent Square that comprised modern offices, the library, and exhibition space. Since refitted and enlarged, and known as Old Hall after the building of New (now Lawrence) Hall in 1928, Horticultural Hall was renamed Lindley Hall in 2000. It remains the principal

offices of the Society and the home of the Lindley Library.

In the 20th century the Society has been equally fortunate in its leadership, with officers and staff matching the increases in membership and programming. Several merit mention. Frederick James Chittenden (1873-1950) came to Wisley as director of the Laboratory in 1907 and subsequently served as director of the Wisley Garden from 1919 to 1931. At the same time he was editor of the *RHS Journal* (1908-1939) and, later, editor of the *RHS Dictionary of Gardening*, which was published in five volumes in 1952. Arthur Simmonds (1892-1968), described as "the Society's greatest servant this century," had a brief stint at Wisley prior to becoming assistant secretary of the RHS in 1925. He held the position until 1956 when he advanced to secretary (1956-1962). His *A Horticultural Who Was Who* was published in 1948; however, a history of the RHS, the product of his retirement years, appeared in 1969 as *The Story of the Royal Horticultural Society* under the name of its editor/reviser Harold Fletcher. The presidency of the Society was held for forty-five years by father and son, the 2nd and 3rd Barons Aberconway. Henry Duncan McLaren (1879-1953) was president from 1931 until his death. His son, Charles Melville McLaren (1913-2003), succeeded him in both title and as chairman of the John Brown Shipyard in Glasgow, and later as president of the RHS (1961-1984).

In telling the history of the RHS Brent Elliott provides a concise overview of its chronological development in the book's opening three chapters. With this frame of reference established, he then treats important themes, endeavors, and fields of interest in a series of sixteen essays. The first three of these chapters, dealing with the gardens at Chiswick, Kensington, Wisley, Rosemoor, Hyde Hall, and Harlow Carr are followed by accounts of the Society's shows, horticultural halls, library, publications, plant introductions and other scientific initiatives, as well as garden design, floral arts, and the orchard and kitchen garden, etc. This arrangement, no doubt necessitated in part by the wealth of documentation available to Elliott and the need to produce a book of agreeable size and format, also produced a book that accommodates the reader. Weighing nearly four and one-half pounds, this history is not the type of book that one sits down to read from beginning to end, necessarily, but one to turn to for both pleasure and reference. Surely realizing that—and his knowing audience—Mr. Elliott has written short accounts on each topic, ranging from about fifteen to twenty pages each, which are well-organized, comprehensive, engaging, and satisfying to the reader. This said he is also to be commended for the critical use of endnotes that leaves us with confidence in what we read and the ability to follow up on particular points.

In the conclusion to the chapter "Wisley" Mr. Elliott quotes from an article appearing in the *RHS Journal* in 1971.

Perhaps the saddest and most chastening moment in a gardener's life is when he returns home from a visit to Wisley and contemplates his own feeble efforts, but no doubt the main purpose of Wisley is the distribution of seeds of discontent whereby we are goaded towards higher things.

Elliott's handsome new history of the RHS offers a like challenge to all garden historians and their readers.

Davyd Foard Hood, Book Review Editor
Isinglass, Vale, N.C.

Publications Available Through SGHS

The New Louisiana Gardener - *Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane*, 1838 publication by Jacques-Felix Lelièvre and translated into English by Sally Kittredge Reeves. Published by LSU press in cooperation with SGHS. Hardcover. 186 pages with color photographs and halftones. Specially priced for SGHS members at \$25 (plus \$3.95 postage). *NC orders add 7% sales tax.*

Bound Sets of Magnolia Back Issues. Includes Vol. I, No. 1 (Fall 1984) through Vol. XIV, No. 4 (Winter/Spring 1999), with index. \$50. Price includes postage and tax. (Individual back issues of *Magnolia* \$5.00 each)

NEW *Cultivating History: Exploring Horticultural Practices of the Southern Gardener* (2001 proceedings of the thirteenth biennial Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference held at Old Salem). \$10 (plus \$3.95 postage). *NC orders add 7% sales tax.*

Also available: *Breaking Ground* (1997 proceedings) and *The Influence of Women on the Southern Landscape* (1995 proceedings). Contact publications secretary for special SGHS member's pricing.

Send orders to: Kay Bergey, publications secretary, SGHS, c/o Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108.

NOTE: Checks payable to SGHS for *Nouveau Jardinier* and *Magnolias*. Checks payable to **Old Salem, Inc.** for conference proceedings. For information call (336) 721-7378 or e-mail: bergeymk@wfu.edu

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 to April 30. Members joining after January 1 will be credited for the coming year beginning May 1.

Write to membership secretary at:

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