Dr. Henry Nehrling at his home in Gotha, Florida. Photo taken by Dr. Liberty Hyde Bailey, 1920s.

"Magnolia grandiflora! How charmingly poetical is thy name!" With these words horticulturist and educator Dr. Henry Nehrling (1853-1929) began a chapter about his favorite tree, in the posthumously published, two-volume study, My Garden in Florida. Henry Nehrling's name is relatively obscure today, though several of his children—particularly Arno Nehrling—went on to attain greater fame for their plant-related careers. He nonetheless had a vitally important impact on turn-of-the-century gardening in Florida—and on gardening in the remainder of the United States as well. Best known for his work with caladiums, Henry Nehrling actually introduced hundreds of plant species to his adopted state. Fortunately, oversight on the part of garden historians may soon be rectified. Efforts are now underway to preserve sites connected to Nehrling, and thus to draw public attention to the efforts of this highly influential plantsman.

Though he is now most closely associated with Florida and his work there, Henry Nehrling was born and grew up in Wisconsin. His career interests would later carry him to Texas, Missouri, and back to Wisconsin before his ultimate relocation to Florida. Aside from his teaching responsibilities, Nehrling focused his early interests on ornithology. By the mid-1880s he was able to devote his energies fully to this study finding employment as custodian of the Milwaukee Public Museum. (Nehrling's work Our Native Birds of Song and Beauty won him high praise among his peers, including comparison to his noted predecessor John James Audubon.)

Ornithology is a discipline never far removed from the world of plants. Reflective of this parallel interest, Nehrling recalled: "Beginning in 1879 when I first experimented with tropical and subtropical plants at Houston, Texas, my enthusiasm for this field of horticulture grew from year to year." He had accepted a position in Lee County, Texas in 1879, before moving to Houston late in the same year. His spare time was devoted to his work with birds and plants.

Apparently Nehrling saw his various moves as only temporary steps, planning ultimately to settle in Florida. In 1884 he began to purchase property, sight unseen, in Orange County. In 1886 he first visited the site, near the community of Gotha. Later he wrote in My Garden in Florida, "The beauty of the almost-untouched evergreen woodlands and the hundreds of

Continued on page 3...
CALENDAR

January 31st-May 31st, 1999. “From Botany to Bouquets: Flowers in Northern Art,” exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Brings together a magnificent group of 16th- and 17th-century flower still-life paintings by Dutch artists. Their works were esteemed for their extraordinary realism and valued for the philosophical issues they raised about the relationship of art to nature, to poetry, and to life itself. [See announcement in this issue.]


March 26th-28th, 1999. 17th annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, “Expect the Unexpected: The Greener Side of Texas,” in Houston, Texas. [See announcement in this issue.] For information, contact Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, P.O. Box 6826, Houston, TX 77265-6826; (713) 639-7750; fax (713) 639-7770.

April 17th, 1999. Landscape Preservation Symposium at Wave Hill: “If Only We Knew: Landscape Preservation in Context, 1890-1950.” Speakers include Charles Birnbaum, National Park Service; Catherine Howett, University of Georgia, Athens; Phyllis Andersen, Arnold Arboretum and others. [See article in this issue.] For reservations or information, call Chris Panos, Assistant Director of the CATALOG of Landscape Records, (718) 549-3200, ext. 204.

May 6th, 1999. “Historically Accurate or Bust,” Annual Garden Seminar at Gunston Hall Plantation. Horticulturist Denis Gray provides a forum for distinguished speakers who will discuss how recent information, learned from scientific and scholarly study, affects the future interpretation of historic landscapes. For information, contact (703) 550-9220; fax (703) 550-9480. [See article in this issue.]


May 19th-21st, 1999. “Bartram 300: A Gathering,” marking the birth of John Bartram in 1699. A symposium exploring the life, works and legacy of John Bartram, America’s first botanist. Keynote speaker is historian, award-winning author and PBS host David McCullough. For information, contact Nancy E. Hoffmann, Ph.D., Symposium Chair, c/o Historic Bartram’s Garden, 54th St. and Lindbergh Blvd., Philadelphia, PA 19143; (215) 729-5281, fax (215) 729-1047; e-mail: bartram@libertynet.org

May 22nd, 1999. Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants hosts its 7th Annual Open House at Tufton Farm. Featuring new collection of Noisette roses. Contact Peggy Cornett at (804) 984-9816, e-mail: pcornett@monticello.org

June 13th-25th, 1999. “Preserving Jefferson’s Landscapes and Gardens,” Historic Landscapes Institute sponsored jointly by the University of Virginia and Monticello. Summer program designed as an introduction to landscape history, garden restoration, and historical horticulture by using the landscapes of Monticello and the University as case studies and outdoor classrooms. Instruction provided by Monticello staff and UVa faculty. Check Monticello’s calendar of events page.

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Dr. Henry Nehrling —
Plant Pioneer of Florida...
continued from page 1

lakes—glittering like mirrors—impressed me deeply. Clearing efforts for a house and an orange grove commenced immediately. Because of Nehrling’s inability to spend long periods in Florida, however, it was 1890 before he could begin serious work on a ten-acre spot for an “ornamental garden.” In 1901 Nehrling realized what he was to term “the dream of my youth” by relocating full time to his Gotha-area property. The result of his efforts was Palm Cottage Gardens, a site that partially survives today. Surviving too is Nehrling’s two story frame house—itself an excellent example of turn-of-the-century Florida vernacular architecture.

Nehrling’s work at Palm Cottage quickly included much more than careful site clearance (many trees and plants were left in place). By his own account, he also searched the area for miles around, often plodding through the densest vegetation imaginable, for material to transplant. He was to recall: “My kind neighbor and I repeatedly walked the ten miles, shouldering the heavy plants on the return journey. We collected small specimens of Magnolia, American Olive, Loblolly Pine, Wax Myrtle, American Laurel, Sweet May [sp.], and many other treasures.” These acquisitions were soon supplemented through the generosity of friends. He noted: “Kind folk sent me more and more tropical plant material, and I soon found myself surrounded with many rare and valuable palms, trees, ferns, shrubs,—in fact every type of growing plant.”

Though a man who apparently found every plant interesting, his liveliest attention went to magnolias, bamboo, amaryllis, caladiums (the plant with which his name is most closely linked), and palms. Within a few years after serious work began on Palm Cottage Gardens, Nehrling began collecting magnolias, noting that in 1892 and 1893 he gathered “all the different varieties of the Magnolia [he] could obtain in the different parts of the country.” Many were raised from seed “procured from the finest trees in Louisiana and Florida.”

Nehrling’s interest in bamboo was directly linked to his views on the usefulness of the plant. Beginning with his 1897 importation of thirteen bamboo varieties from Japan, a collection began that, in the words of one recent observer, “became one of the most complete in the world.”

Similarly, Nehrling’s work with amaryllis has received acclaim. The plant was native to his Florida site, and his work with it was to have a lasting impact. One authority has written that “the Nehrling strains of amaryllis (Hippeastrum x hybridum), while never formally released commercially, have figured in the breeding of many of the modern commercial strains of Dutch amaryllis.” It was, however, the caladium that became the ornamental plant most closely linked to the name Henry Nehrling. His experiments with the plant began soon following his permanent move to Florida and after seeing caladiums for the first time at the 1893 Colombian Exposition in Chicago.

Nehrling’s efforts ultimately produced many varieties of caladiums, his work laying the cornerstone for today’s extensive Continued on page 4...
caladium production that is centered in Florida. Regarding his keen love of palms, the very name of Nehrling's garden speaks volumes. A colleague later noted that "palms almost hid his cottage from the public road which passed the gate."11

While the Palm Cottage collection grew tremendously, the respect being extended to the garden and to Henry Nehrling grew as well. Beginning in 1906 the U.S. Department Agriculture engaged Nehrling to propagate experimentally various plants at Palm Cottage. His colleague with the Department Agriculture, R. A. Young, later termed Nehrling "an outstanding personality in Florida horticulture." Young noted that Nehrling's "interest and zeal in the introduction of new kinds of ornamental plants from abroad, with endeavors to acclimatize and disseminate them, were unflagging."12 Nehrling also began to lecture at Rollins College in Winter Park, and Palm Cottage gardens became an extension of his classroom discussions.

The Florida horticulturist ultimately did not limit his activities to one location in the state. After a severe freeze in 1917 devastated many of his plants, Nehrling "decided to move as many of [his] tender specimens as possible farther south, to a new place which [he] secured at Naples, on the lower West Coast."13 Tended by Nehrling his "Tropical Garden," though known more generally as Tropical Gardens and Arboretum, the site is still operated as Caribbean Gardens. At age sixty-six, Nehrling faced many new obstacles, noting: "The hardships I had to overcome and the disappointments that I met were legion."14 Nehrling persisted, building a greenhouse at the new forty-acre site, moving his caladiums from Palm Cottage, and subsequently transplanting numerous other plants as well.

Nehrling has provided a written record of his endeavors equally as impressive as his work at Palm Cottage and Tropical Gardens. Between 1922 and his death in 1929, he wrote a weekly column in the newspaper The American Eagle, this material later being compiled in book form as The Plant World of Florida. During the mid-1940s there followed the publication of his My Garden in Florida, already discussed. Especially valuable to scholars is Nehrling's record of his correspondence with fellow plantsmen from both the United States and abroad. At least some of this is accessible in the Nehrling Collection at Rollins College's Mills Library. That collection includes nearly two thousand pieces of printed material and correspondence, as well as photographs.

Near the end of his life, Nehrling was finally to receive formal recognition from those colleagues, being given the Meyer Medal from the U. S. Department of Agriculture at a Florida Federation of Garden Clubs' convention in Miami. Then seventy-six, Nehrling was presented the award by Dr. David Fairchild, himself then termed "perhaps the greatest living plant specialist."15 Sadly, Nehrling died November 21, 1929 shortly after receiving this honor. Yet his vigor and enthusiasm seem never to have wavered. Earlier in the same year he had accepted the responsibility "of building and preserving the National Park at Royal Palm Hammock" in the Everglades. The heart condition that was to soon cause his death must surely have troubled Nehrling, yet according to a related news story he immediately and energetically set himself to the task.16

In addition to the plant and print legacy Henry Nehrling has provided, his Gotha home and a section of the Palm Cottage site are also intact, as noted earlier. In the early 1930s the Nally family purchased the house and Palm Cottage Gardens. Many of the plants that had survived at that site until 1929 had sadly been removed following Nehrling's death. Nonetheless, the property still so impressed Julian Nally, son of the president of RCA, that he went on to a career in horticulture. Indeed, Nally

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became a highly respected authority on bromeliads, continuing to use Palm Cottage in a way that would have surely pleased Henry Nehrling. Much of the property, however, was developed after the death of Julian and his wife in 1977. Yet, a core tract of six acres remains, and preservation of the property is still a possibility. There seems no better way to commemorate the efforts of a man who said that in "both the cultivation, and enjoyment of gardens, is peace, rest, and contentment. Pleasure is not a luxury of life, but one of its necessities, and ornamental horticulture is one of the truest and most stimulating pleasures in life, and may be enjoyed by him who possesses only a windowbox, as well as the favored mortal with acres in abundance."

[Henry Nehrling’s grandson Richard Nehrling is now seeking to have the Gotha property—both house and garden area—listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He has also created a foundation to help in his attempt to protect the site in perpetuity. He can be reached at the H. Nehrling Foundation, 2700 Liberty Lane, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250, or contacted by e-mail at Rnehrling@aol.com]

Notes
1 Dr. Henry Nehrling, My Garden In Florida and Miscellaneous Horticultural Notes (Estero, Florida: The American Eagle, 1944), I, 99. Hereinafter cited as Garden in Florida.
3 Garden in Florida, xiv.


October 15th-16th, 1999. Southern Garden Symposium & Workshops, P. O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775. Phone (504) 635-6330.
“The Greener Side of Texas” Awaits SGHS Member

Registration is high for the upcoming annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, which convenes March 26th-28th, 1999 in Houston, on the Texas Gulf Coast. The meeting opens with dinner at Bayou Bend, the former home of Ima Hogg, which now houses the American decorative arts collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Bayou Bend is one of the most noteworthy of the suburban house and garden combinations built in the Gulf Coast region during the first half of the twentieth century. Ima Hogg and her architect, John Staub, created an architectural style that responded to the specific climate and location of Buffalo Bayou, while referring at the same time to regional Southern traditions. The gracious fourteen-acre gardens feature a lush Southern plant palette in the formal areas, surrounded by the native bayou woodland. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to visit some of the Gulf Coast’s finest gardens and don’t forget to “Expect the Unexpected.”

Proposals are now being accepted for Volume 8, the 2000 issue of the Journal of the New England Garden History Society. Subjects are not restricted to New England and can include all facets and time periods of the field of North American landscape history: gardens and parks, horticultural practice, landscape literature, profiles of individual landscape architects, garden designers or significant patrons, landscape preservation, or any interdisciplinary topic. The Journal welcomes proposals from members of the academic and museum communities, independent scholars, practitioners, and interested lay-persons. Proposals should be one page (approximately 250 words) and include an indication of proposed illustrations and a brief biography of the author. The deadline for proposals is October 15th, 1999, and they should be sent to the Editor, NEGHS, Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston MA 02115 or FAX 617-262-8780.

Members in the News

On February 2nd, 1999, the National Committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) awarded J. Dean Norton, director of horticulture at Mount Vernon, the prestigious DAR Conservation Medal for his extensive contributions and accomplishments in the area of conservation. Dean Norton currently serves on the board of SGHS.

Isabel Bartenstein, 1923-1998

Loyal and faithful member Isabel Anderson Bartenstein died this past November at her home in Mendham Township, New Jersey. She and her husband Frederick shared a life-long love of history and were a quiet presence for most of the society’s annual meetings over the years. A native of Lexington, Virginia, Mrs. Bartenstein majored in history at Wellesley College. She was active in her home state of New Jersey, serving on the Mendham Township Board of Education, as well as on the boards of Historic Speedwell, Historic Morven, and the board of associates of the New Jersey Historical Society. Mr. Bartenstein remains active in SGHS and plans to attend the 1999 annual meeting in Houston with their son, Arthur.

Formal Gardens at Bayou Bend.
The Exceptional Garden: Past, Present, and Future" is the theme of the Garden Conservancy’s tenth anniversary celebration. The organization’s national membership will convene for the conference at the Westin Francis Marion Hotel and the Sottile Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina, from October 21st - 24th, 1999.

The keynote address will be delivered by the distinguished American landscape architect Laurie Olin, whose restoration of the grounds of the American Academy in Rome has won praise from preservationists around the world. Mr. Olin’s firm completed the major restoration and renovation of Bryant Park in New York City in 1992, and provided all landscape architecture design for the J. P. Getty Center in Los Angeles in 1998. Currently, Olin Partnerships is working on the redesign of Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.

An impressive roster of speakers including noted author Jamaica Kincaid, Martha Stewart Living garden editor Margaret Roach, and leading horticulturist and Garden Conservancy founder Francis H. Cabot will join other Garden Conservancy members for this weekend of talks, presentations, panel discussions, and tours of the finest private gardens in the Charleston area.

The conference registration fee is $325 for members, $360 for nonmembers (which includes an individual membership). Garden tours will be registered separately.

For more information on attending the anniversary conference, and other Conservancy programs, please contact public relations and events coordinator Diane Botnick at (914) 265-2029.

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**Annual Membership Dues**

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

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

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"From Botany to Bouquets: Flowers in Northern Art"

This exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, on display through May 31st, 1999, brings together a select group of paintings of flower bouquets by many of the great Dutch and Flemish still-life artists from the Golden Age of the seventeenth century. These Dutch artists, including Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, Jan Brueghel the Elder, Jan Davidsz de Heem, and Jan van hysum, were highly esteemed for the extraordinary realism of their works and for their ability to convey the delicacy of blossoms, the organic rhythms of stems and leaves, and the varied colors and textures of each and every plant. The exhibition also tells the story underlying the origins of flower painting. Thus, it examines a number of botanical treatises, manuscripts, and watercolors by outstanding sixteenth- and seventeenth-century print-makers and draftsmen. Botanical treatises, manuscripts, and watercolors from both private and public collections present the story underlying the origins of these flower paintings, which provide some of the best means for garden historians today to document flowers of the period. A catalog of this exhibition can be purchased from the National Gallery of Art for $17 plus $4 shipping. On-line ordering is possible at: www.nga.gov

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Jacob Marrel, Admiral d'Holland from Tulpenboek, 1642, Collection of Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, VA.

SEIDEL WROTE THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT FOR THE HERITAGE ROSE NEWSLETTER OF HIS VISIT TO THE TUFTON NURSERY LAST NOVEMBER WHEN THE GARDEN WAS STILL IN BLOOM.

__Leonie Bell Garden, fall 1998.__

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**Progress Report on the Bell Garden and Documentation of an Ancient Musk Rose**

By Rev. Douglas Seidel, Emmaus, Pennsylvania

ON NOVEMBER 3RD, 1998 I WAS TREATED TO TWO SUPERB OLD ROSE EXPERIENCES IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA. FIRST, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IN THE LÉONIE BELL MEMORIAL NOISETTE GARDEN FOR THE BETTER PART OF A DAY. THIS COLLECTION OF EARLY-STYLE NOISETTES, LÉONIE BELL'S FAVORITES AND THE SUBJECTS OF MUCH OF HER RESEARCH, WAS OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED LAST MAY AT THE THOMAS JEFFERSON CENTER FOR HISTORIC PLANTS (CHP) ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE ON THE GROUNDS OF TUFTON FARM, A STONE'S THROW FROM MONTICELLO MOUNTAIN. THE PROJECT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GENEROUS GRANT FROM LOUIS BELL AND THE BELL FAMILY, WITH ADDITIONAL GIFTS FROM THE PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN ROSE SOCIETY, FROM MEMBERS OF THE HERITAGE ROSE GROUP, AND OTHER INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS. SOME THIRTY-FIVE NOISETTES, MOSTLY PRE-1840, NOW ARE ESTABLISHED THERE, ALONG WITH FORMS OF THE MUSK AND CHINA PARENTS OF THE CLASS. IN THE BELL GARDEN'S FIRST SUMMER OF GROWTH, THE PLANTS BLOOMED PROLIFICALLY. THE BEGINNING OF NOVEMBER SAW ALMOST EVERY ONE OF THE VARIETIES WITH A NUMBER OF CLUSTERS OF FLOWERS. THIS COLLECTION WILL SERVE AS A PRESERVE FOR THE FIRST CLASS OF ROSES TO BE DEVELOPED ON AMERICAN SOIL THROUGH CROSSES THAT OCCURRED IN JOHN CHAMPNEYS' GARDEN OUTSIDE CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA. IT WILL ALSO BE A PLACE WHERE THE NOISETTES CAN BE STUDIED, WHERE FOUNDINGS CAN BE IDENTIFIED, AND WHERE SYNONYMS IN NOMENCLATURE CAN BE ASCERTAINED. THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR MORE TREASURES TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS COLLECTION. THOSE WHO ARE AWARE OF ANY OLD, SMALL-FLOWERED NOISETTES NOT IN ANY CURRENT NURSERY LIST, SHOULD CONTACT CHP OR MYSELF. THE GARDEN WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC THIS SPRING ON MAY 22ND FOR THE CENTER'S ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE.

LATE ON THE DAY OF MY VISIT, PEGGY CORNETT, THE CENTER'S DIRECTOR, MENTIONED THE EXISTENCE OF A VENERABLE SPECIMEN OF THE MUSK ROSE (_Rosa moschata plena_) ON THE GROUNDS OF BREMO PLANTATION NEAR THE JAMES RIVER. MS. CORNETT HAD SEEN THE PLANT IN MID-OCTOBER, BUT NO BUDS WERE OPEN. WOULD THERE BE TIME TO MAKE THE FORTY-MINUTE DRIVE TO SEE AND PHOTOGRAPH THIS ROSE BEFORE SUNSET? WOULD THIS PROVE TO BE A CLONE OF _Rosa moschata_ DIFFERENT FROM ANY PREVIOUS DISCOVERED? (I ALWAYS HAVE MY HOPES THAT 'Fimbriata' OR 'RIVER'S MUSK' MAY TURN UP IN SOME OLD SPOT.) WITH GREAT ANTICIPATION MS. CORNETT, DIANE LOWE (CHP'S NURSERY MANAGER), AND I MADE THE PILGRIMAGE AND ARRIVED WITH TIME TO SPARE. THE ROSE IN QUESTION WAS GROWING IN THE REMNANTS OF AN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY BOXWOOD KNOT GARDEN ON THE

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Progress Report on the Bell Garden and Documentation of an Ancient Musk Rose…
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North side of the Recess, a gothic-style residence within the extensive Bremo Plantation complex.

We found the musk rose – a thicket of stems some four feet across – erupting from an embankment carpeted with English ivy, boxwood seedlings, and unusual forms of chrysanthemums. Its branches reach up over ten feet, into an American holly. Although much of Bremo Recess’ garden is fading, the present occupants, Frances and Raymond Orf, still carefully maintain this shrub, which the family has called the “Musk Cluster” for generations.

We studied and photographed the one remaining cluster of buds and open blooms. This “Bremo Musk” is identical to the specimens of the famed double musk rose in Richmond’s Hollywood Cemetery, and the plant Thomas Christopher wrote about on the grounds of the Burwell School in North Carolina. It was the Burwell material that Léonie Bell sent to the Pickering Nursery in 1982, and which Pickering still makes available on its species list of Rosa moschata plena.

Was there any way of determining how long the musk rose had grown at Bremo? Peggy Cornett’s research led her to the papers of the plantation’s owners, the Cocke family, preserved at the University of Virginia. In a letter from Long Island nurseryman Benjamin Prince to General John Hartwell Cocke dated September 4th, 1815 the following item occurs, “I have a great number of very handsome Roses … The white musk or cluster rose is very ornamental. It flowers in clusters of Roses all the Fall (till Winter).” Prince’s letter was in reference to an order that would be sent to Bremo in November of 1815. The rose before us had endured for 183 years along with the next best thing: its original sales receipt! The documentation of this ancient musk specimen at Bremo can now be added to the finds of Graham Thomas in Great Britain, and to those of John and Marie Butler, Carlo Cato, and Helen Blake Watkins on this side of the Atlantic as evidence of this rose’s importance in old gardens and its ability to survive.

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Book Review


May Brawley Hill brings an art historian’s perspective to the history of gardening in Furnishing the Old-Fashioned Garden: Three Centuries of American Summerhouses, Dovecotes, Pergolas, Privies, Fences & Birdhouses, a book which follows in the wake of her Grandmother’s Garden, published in 1995 and reviewed in these pages. [Magnolia, Vol. XII, no. 1, Winter 1996]

Now, as then, her background in American art proves critical to the collection of paintings, watercolors, lithographs, and documentary photographs that she selected to illustrate this personal sampling of architectural features erected in American gardens from the mid-eighteenth century to the present.

A number of important Southern gardens are featured as illustrations in the chronological narrative, beginning in the Colonial period of pre-Revolutionary America, carrying through the nineteenth century to the Colonial Revival in the opening years of the twentieth century, and on to the post-Modern colonialism of home builders and garden makers at the end of the century. The earliest image in the book is Charles Willson Peale’s ca. 1769 miniature of Parnassus in Baltimore, where the approach to Dr. Henry Stevenson’s five-part Palladian house is simply lined by a rail fence and complementing rows of trees. Peale’s portrait of William Paca, painted in 1772, includes the two-story octagonal garden house that originally graced his garden in Annapolis and provided views from its windows into a garden that was long lost but restored in the 1970s. A third example of eighteenth-century Southern garden furnishings is the four-seat bench from Somerset County, Maryland, now in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

A series of estate views reflects American taste for

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Neoclassical art, architecture, and gardening in the opening years of the nineteenth century, appreciations that would give way in mid-century to the sumptuous Romanticism embodied at Gaineswood, the lavish Greek Revival seat of General Whitfield at Demopolis, Alabama. Some seventy years of estate making are reflected in Augustus Weidenbach’s great painting of Belvedere, also in Baltimore. Dated to about 1858, his view portrays the late-Georgian house built by John Eager Howard in 1783-86, soon embellished by Neoclassical figural sculpture along the edges of its veranda roof and at the edges of its lawn, expanded by a fully-glazed conservatory and cold frames, and later enriched with cast iron urns, fencing and seat furniture. A detail of the painting appears on the front dust jacket. One aches to read an antebellum description of the estate and its improvements seen here on the eve of the Civil War. An 1852 lithograph of Henry Clay’s Ashland is more austere and features stands of rather melancholy evergreen trees flanking the main block while screening its wings from one’s approaching view. Its conical roof ice houses, while not strictly garden buildings, ornamented the grounds as they did at plantation houses in Virginia, Tennessee, and other Southern estates, as well as at the Githens farm in Burlington County, New Jersey. The village-like appearance of so many Southern plantations, with numerous frame, brick, stone, or log buildings to house the owner, his slaves, their various activities, and the produce of the plantation, is conveyed in Marie Adrien Persac’s 1861 watercolor view of the Olivier Plantation in Louisiana.

The publication of American garden scenes and landscape views in *Furnishing the Old-Fashioned Garden* is welcome. They enrich our appreciation for gardens and garden-makers whose accomplishments are often, otherwise little known. But time and again, as I turned the pages of this book, I wondered just what, if anything, survives of so many of these places. Does the dovecote in Accomack County, Virginia, photographed by Jack Boucher, still stand as it did in 1960, alone in a traditional plantation house yard, the usual location of frame dairies, smokehouses, wash houses, flower houses, and related domestic out-buildings? Or has it suffered the fate of the more ephemeral garden lyres whose loss was lamented by Alice Morse Earle in *Old-Time Gardens* in 1901? These “quaint and universal furnishing(s) of old Southern gardens,” she noted, “are rotting on the ground in old Virginia gardens, and I fear they will never be replaced.”

— by Davyd Foard Hood, Book Review Editor, Insinglass, Vale, North Carolina

**The Charleston Renaissance**

by Davyd Foard Hood, Book Review Editor, Insinglass, Vale, North Carolina

In 1919 Alfred Huty, a member of the art colony at Woodstock, New York, was in Charleston, South Carolina, for the first time, looking about the South for a winter home. On arrival he is said to have wired back to his wife in New York, “Come quickly, have found heaven.” She did: and for the next thirty-five years, until his death in 1954, Mr. Huty wintered in Charleston. Some variant of that good advice, reflecting an infatuation with the city soon to be described by DuBose Heyward in *Porgy* as “An ancient, beautiful city that time had forgotten before it destroyed,” has been penned since to friends back home by thousands of visitors.

But in 1919, Alfred Huty was nowhere near alone in his sentiments. Nor was he the first of many from the Northeast who came to Charleston and to South Carolina, bought houses in the city or old plantations in the Lowcountry, and made winter residences or hunting estates. Edwin Parsons, president of the New York Railroad, acquired The Oaks near Goose Creek Church in 1897 and built a new house at the head of the plantation’s legendary oak avenue, which had been described in *Harper’s* in 1875. Edward F. Hutton combined the Marsh Plantation and adjoining plantations into a vast winter sporting estate. Later, in 1929, Solomon Guggenheim acquired the William Roper House on East Battery, one of Charleston’s most prized residences.

While Mr. Parsons, Mr. Hutton, and Edward Luce, among others, revived the rural lowcountry agricultural landscape, bringing new energy, wealth, and investment, Alfred Huty brought the talents of an artist. He saw an extraordinary beauty in the decrepit buildings and landscapes that for most of their history had been the stage of a prosperous cultivated society. Alfred Huty figured prominently in the renewal of South Carolina cultural life in the inter-war period, joining forces with far-sighted Charlestonians of like mind; they created a revival in the fortunes of the city now known as “The Charleston Renaissance.” A handsome book by that title has been published as a companion to an exhibition by the same name that opened at the Greenville County Museum of Art and travels to other venues in South Carolina and Georgia. The exhibition was organized by Martha R. Severns, curator at the Greenville Museum. She is also the author of the book handsomely published by Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., through his Saraland Press.

The “Charleston Renaissance,” as portrayed in the book and

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The Charleston Renaissance ...

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part of the exhibition where it is joined by George Biddle’s masterful “Fruit Market, Charleston,” and the work of other artists including Edwin A. Harleston, a descendant of both slaves and their Ball family owners.

Within this broad movement to record the life of Charleston and to promote its preservation, equal enthusiasm was given to portraying plants, wildlife, and landscape scenes in the city and throughout the Lowcountry. Views of town and country, seen in both the exhibition and the book, are poignant reminders of why this society co-sponsors the biennial conference “Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes.” While preservation and restoration were long-term goals of Alice Smith and her father, Susan Pringle Frost, Alfred Hutty and others, an immediate purpose of the artists was to record the golden, dreamlike, and sometimes abandoned landscape of a place and society once based on rich culture, verging on loss in many instances, and then being adapted to modern purposes. One of the stars of the exhibition is Alfred Hutty’s “White Azaleas—Magnolia Gardens,” painted in 1925 on the picturesque, lavishly planted grounds of the old Drayton Plantation, which was recommended to tourists by Baederker in 1900 and described by Mrs. Severens “as the first area plantation to become a destination for visitors.” Alice Smith, a descendant of Henry Middleton, painted views of Middleton Place, which experienced its own renaissance when J. J. Pringle Smith took possession of his ancestral home in 1916. Those views comprise a part of the thirty watercolours, including “Ready for Harvest,” used as illustrations in A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties, published in 1936. The combination of art and landscape gardening extended far into the Lowcountry. Near Georgetown, Archer Milton Huntington and his wife Anna Hyatt converted abandoned rice fields to gardens as the setting for their collection of figural sculpture at Brookgreen Gardens.

Simultaneously, these artists and others including Birge Harrison, Alson Skinner Clark, Childe Hassam, James Montgomery Flagg, and Anthony Thieme, executed views and streetscapes of Charleston that inevitably focused on the spires of St. Michael’s or St. Philip’s Churches, rising above houses, gardens, or the rector’s kitchen in Alice Smith’s painting, which

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Elizabeth O’Neill Verner (1883-1979)
Seated Flower Seller Smoking Pipe
Pastel on silk, 18 1/2x 14 inches
Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., Inc./The Charleston Renaissance Gallery

Antoinette Rhett (1884-1964)
Crab Apple Blossoms, circa 1930
Hand-colored etching, 7 ¼x 5 inches
Private collection; photo courtesy of Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., Inc./The Charleston Renaissance Gallery

Porgy, a work that encouraged Henry Botkin, an artist and cousin of George Gershwin, to paint scenes of “Negro Life” in Charleston, and resulted in Gershwin’s “Porgy and Bess,” which opened on Broadway in 1937. Botkin’s work forms a significant
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appears on the book cover. The colored wood-block print was a favored medium of Anna Heyward Taylor, and her small-scale flower pictures, including "Macrophylla" (the native Magnolia macrophylla) and "Gaden on He Head" have a freshness, immediacy, and charm that define the best works of the period.

While all of these artists were of stature in their profession and in their native or adopted city, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith (1876-1958), born of a long, distinguished lineage, holds a presence above that of her contemporaries. Her sympathy for the history and physicality of the land shines in her paintings and watercolours. Toward the end of her life, when she was about seventy-five, she undertook writing an autobiography. "Reminiscences" remained in manuscript until 1993 when it was first published in a biography by Martha R. Severens. She was an astute judge of her life and her art, writing:

"Circumstances beyond my control prevented me from going to a large city where Art Schools and Galleries might help the traveler on his way, and so I reasoned to myself that if I could not see the great art of the great cities, I might follow the fable of the young men who dig in their fields for treasure but not finding it they made wonderful crops out of their spaded land. So I knew that my own lovely flat country of rice fields, of pinewoods, of cypress swamps, of oaks, lotus and all their attendant feathered folk would yield me a full harvest if diligently spaded."

Alice Ravenel Huger Smith and her contemporaries worked long and hard in the streets and fields of the South Carolina Lowcountry. The rich harvest of their labors, scenes of Charleston life and landscapes of an earlier age, are preserved in The Charleston Renaissance. I must follow Mr. Hutty's example of seventy years ago; buy the book and see the show!

["The Charleston Renaissance" will be on view at the Columbia Museum of Art, April 3rd through June 6th; at the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia, September 9th through November 7th; and at the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, November 23rd through January 30th, 2000. The Charleston Renaissance, published by Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., is available through Hicklin's gallery at 103 Church Street in Charleston. Copies may also be ordered through Hicklin's Spartanburg gallery by calling (864) 583-9847.]

Deadline for the submission of articles for the spring/summer issue of Magnolia is April 30th.

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