



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

Magnolia

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Rosemont Preservation Society Purchases Historic Plantation Site in South Carolina

The year 2008 marks the 150th anniversary of the purchase of George Washington's Mount Vernon, initiating the national historic preservation movement in America. Ann Pamela Cunningham, a visionary South Carolina woman raised on her family's prosperous Rosemont Plantation on the Saluda River in Laurens County, pioneered this movement. With this in mind, a dedicated group of Laurens citizens formed the Rosemont Preservation Society, which has recently raised the funds to purchase four-and-one-half acres of the Rosemont Plantation site.

Members of the Rosemont Preservation Society are Doris Taylor, president; Faye Edge, vice president; Alvina Meeks, secretary; Randall Frye, treasurer; and board members Rebecca Crow, Libby C. Rhodes, and Dianne Culbertson. Niles Clark Jr., representing Rosemont Woods LLC, worked with the society to make the dream become a reality. By preserving this site, Ms. Crow believes that "we as citizens of Laurens County can write another chapter in the Cunningham family history."



Rosemont was built in 1790 by Patrick Cunningham near the banks of the Saluda River and was destroyed by fire in 1930.

Virginia, and settled on the banks of the Saluda River in South Carolina. The British Crown appointed him Deputy Surveyor General and he became a noted loyalist in the Revolutionary War. He initially received a grant for 100 acres and eventually aggregated hundreds of additional acres. He constructed the manor house circa

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A History of Rosemont Plantation and the Cunningham Family

Rosemont was the ancestral home of the Cunningham* family since 1769. [*Editor's note: the name Cunningham was originally spelled with one 'n', but later changed. For consistency, it appears as Cunningham throughout this article.] The family originated in Scotland, and ancestors of the South Carolina branch came to America around 1681. Ann Pamela's grandfather, Patrick Cunningham, ventured from Augusta County,

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CALENDAR

January 22-May 11, 2008. “Lee Friedlander: A Ramble in Olmsted Parks,” an exhibition in the Howard Gilman Gallery of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Features 40 photographs by Friedlander of parks and private estates designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), including Cherokee Park in Louisville, Kentucky. Visit www.metmuseum.org for details.

February 11-13, 2008. “Celebrating 75 years of Historic Garden Week,” the Garden Club of Virginia Symposium, at the Fredericksburg Expo and Conference Center, Fredericksburg, Virginia. Speakers include: Amy Stewart, author of *Flower Confidential*; Warren Byrd, principal in the Charlottesville landscape architecture firm Nelson Byrd Woltz and former chair of the UVA Landscape Architecture Department; Nancy Campbell, chair emeritus of the National Trust for Historic Preservation; Rudy Favretti, former landscape architect of the Garden Club of Virginia; Calder Loth, senior Architectural Historian at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Tom Savage, Director of Museum Affairs for The Winterthur Museum and Country Estate of H. F. Dupont; Phillip Watson, Atlanta based landscape architect. Register online: www.gcvirginia.org; for additional information, contact Rosie Marie Tronges, (804) 643-4137 or director@gcvirginia.org

March 3-4, 2008. “Herbaceous Havens: Creating Garden Sanctuaries,” the 24th Davidson Horticultural Symposium. This symposium offers Southeast gardeners an opportunity to experience garden designs for retreats and natural sanctuaries. The symposium’s featured speakers are: Tracy DiSabato-Aust, author of *The Well-Designed Mixed Garden* and *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*; Stephanie Cohen, author of *The Perennial Gardener’s Design Primer*; Tom Goforth, owner of Crow Dog Native Ferns and Gardens in South Carolina; John Hoffman, owner of Hoffman Nursery in Durham County, NC; and Mary Stauble, environmental educator and urban conservationist whose certified habitat garden in Charlotte, NC was featured in *Carolina Gardener Magazine*. For further information, contact Mary Wilson Stewart, DHS, PO Box 402, Davidson, NC 28036; phone (704) 655-0294; email: mwwstewart@bellsouth.net; and visit their Web site at: www.davidsonsymposium.org

March 7-8, 2008. “Ready, Set...Bloom!”—a garden symposium at the historic Old City Cemetery in Lynchburg, Virginia. Morning presentations by nationally known speakers Stephen Scanniello, Scott Kunst, and Dennis Whetzel will focus on antique roses, old-fashioned bulbs, four seasons of companion planting, and the practical necessities of early spring gardening, including pruning, planting, and propagation. Afternoon workshops on the beautiful and fascinating cemetery grounds will feature walks and talks with the experts. Please visit www.gravegarden.org, or contact Jane White, (434) 847-1465 for more information.

March 27, 2008. Cherokee Garden Library of the Atlanta History Center presents an evening with award-winning author Richard Preston, who will discuss his new book, *The Wild Trees: A Story of Daring and Passion*. [See details below] Admission for Atlanta History Center members, seniors, and students cost \$5; nonmembers, \$10. Lecture is at 8:00 p.m. in McElreath Hall, followed by a book signing. Reservations are required. To register, please call (404) 814-4150 or visit www.AtlantaHistoryCenter.com for more information.

April 11-13, 2008. “High Cotton and Tall Columns,” the annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, takes place in Athens, Georgia. [See details below] Registration will be limited to 150 people. For additional information, call, write or e-mail SGHS Annual Meeting, The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, 2450 South Milledge Avenue, Athens, GA 30605, (706) 542-1244, garden@uga.edu

May 24, 2008. Annual Open House at Tufton Nursery, Center for Historic Plants, Charlottesville, Virginia. Doug Seidel will give a presentation on “The Legacy of Léonie Bell” to mark the 10th anniversary of the Bell Rose Garden. For more information, call (434) 984-9816 or visit www.monticello.org

A History of Rosemont Plantation..... (continued from page 1)

1790 on the north side of Saluda River. Marion R. Wilkes' *Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter*, 1947, (reprinted by the Rosemont Preservation Society in 2007), includes detailed descriptions of Rosemont. The house stood two full stories with high cellars underneath, one of which was a wine cellar. There was a vast dormered attic above and tall, two-stepped brick chimneys at either gabled end. At the rear of the house, a two-story veranda overlooked the park and distant river. The front porch extended across the center of the first story and presented four graceful arches in front with a wide flattened arch at either end; the exterior of the house under this porch was finished in white plaster.

When Patrick Cunningham died in 1796, he left Rosemont Plantation and property to his wife Ann and his three sons, John, William, and Robert. Ann did not survive him long and died in Charleston in 1799 at the age of 52. Their son, Captain Robert Cunningham became master of Rosemont Plantation in the early 1840 when the site was at its zenith. Captain Cunningham's wife, Louisa, a daughter of Colonel William Bird of Pennsylvania, also had ties to the prominent Dalton family of Alexandria. She had a passion for flowers and gardening. A family friend from Greenville, former Governor Benjamin Perry, described her as "the pioneer florist in the upcountry," and, in his "Reminiscences of Mrs. Louisa Cunningham," written in 1874, he portrayed her landscaping efforts as the work of a master gardener:

"Her flowers and shrubbery covered acres of ground around 'Rose Monte', which she watched over and cultivated with the care of a mother for her infant children. She had the honor of being the pioneer florist of the up country. Soon after her marriage and settlement at her husband's old family mansion, now more than one hundred years old, she had the honor and great pleasure of receiving a collection of rare flowers from Mount Vernon, sent her by Judge Bushrod Washington [George Washington's nephew who inherited Mount Vernon estate after Martha's death in 1802]. Years afterwards, they were surpassingly beautiful, and laid off with great taste and artistic skill. She was most generous, too, in the distribution of her rare and beautiful flowers and plants amongst her friends and acquaintances."

In the spring 1993 issue of *Magnolia* ("Rosemont Plantation... The Upcountry Home and Garden of the Cunningham Family," Vol. IX, No. 3), landscape historian and SGHS member Christy Snipes' article indicates that Louisa Cunningham was particularly active in improving her formal gardens, citing numerous examples of Mrs. Cunningham's efforts. Louisa Cunningham exchanged plants with relatives and friends on many occasions, and

in 1837, made a trip to the Seabrook family's Oak Island Plantation on Edisto Island to collect flowers from this low country garden. In 1842, she received "rare French roses" from Mr. Gourdine of Charleston in exchange for the "yellow rose trees" she gave to him. She received also from a Charleston friend: "single oleanders," roots of Live Oak and Palmetto, and a "cluster of sour oranges." In 1847, she sought direction from family friend and notable horticulturist Joel Poinsett on the building of a greenhouse at Rosemont. Even more significantly, in the 1860s, Louisa ordered ornamental and food producing plants from nurseryman William Summer's Pomaria Nurseries in nearby Pomaria, South Carolina.



A Portrait of Ann Pamela Cunningham taken out of The Laurens County Advertiser.

Ann Pamela Cunningham (1816-1878), daughter of Captain Robert and Louisa, consequently inherited her mother's interests in gardening. In 1835, at age 19, Benjamin Perry described her as "handsome, talented, & aristocratic in her notions—but a charming little girl." Her life might have played out very differently if not for a seemingly inauspicious turn of events. According to Marion R. Wilkes:

"Destiny in the form of an accident...played a part in the preservation of Washington's home. Upon her return to Rosemont from school near Columbia at the age of seventeen, she entered into the social life of her home county. She was an accomplished horsewoman but was thrown from her mount one unfortunate day, suffering

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A History of Rosemont Plantation..... (continued from page 3)

a severe injury to her spine. The accident made her a lifelong invalid, often subject to excruciating pain.”

Ann Pamela underwent treatment in Philadelphia by a celebrated doctor, but she never returned to her formerly active self. Her mother often traveled to Philadelphia to visit Ann Pamela and, in 1853, upon sailing past George Washington's Mount Vernon estate on the Potomac River, she penned the letter that would set the course of Ann Pamela's life forever. Mrs. Cunningham was dismayed at the dilapidated condition of the once stately mansion and wrote, “I was painfully distressed at the ruin and desolation of the home of Washington, and the thought passed through my mind: Why was it the women of his country did not try to keep it in repair, if the men could not do it? It does seem such a blot on our country!”

Louisa Cunningham's letter greatly moved Ann Pamela, and in 1854, she began organizing what would become the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. She led a grassroots effort through letters to the “Laurensville Herald,” which she signed anonymously as “A Southern Matron.” Her appeals struck a chord in the local community, who soon circulated a subscription list with the heading:

“We, the undersigned Ladies, having heard the laudable and patriotic appeal of ‘A Southern Matron’, to the ladies of the South, and desiring no higher honor than to bear some humble part in dedicating the sacred spot of Mount Vernon—‘the Grave of WASHINGTON’—perpetually to the South, do subscribe the sums annexed to our names, to be applied as shall hereafter be made known by the Mount Vernon Liberty Spring Association.”



While the Mount Vernon movement began as a Southern enterprise, the newspapers of the North and West took up the theme and by July 1854, there was enough active interest to lead an overture to John Augustine Washington III, the owner of the property. The Virginia legislature enacted a bill on March 19, 1856 to charter “The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union,” which gave the movement a legal status. Initially, John Augustine did not agree with all of the provisions in the charter, but after much negotiation and Miss Cunningham's resolve to “charm the bear,” John Augustine Washington III signed a contract that transferred Mount Vernon to the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.

Although Ann Pamela's work with the preservation of Mount Vernon kept her away for extended periods, she sporadically spent time at her South Carolina home. Captain Robert Cunningham died in 1859 and, with the ensuing Civil War, Rosemont Plantation began a downward spiral. Ann Pamela and her mother struggled to manage the plantation during these difficult war years and

Reconstruction, but the gardens suffered much decline. Louisa Cunningham died in 1873, with Ann Pamela following shortly after on May 1, 1875.



Another generation of the Cunningham family lived at Rosemont into the twentieth century, but the home-site and gardens declined greatly as early as the 1890s. A newspaper account of Rosemont printed in 1904 describes the site:

“Beautiful avenues, making a cross, led from the front of the house into the park. Remains of the great park are seen today in a few gigantic magnolias, rare trees and a wilderness of shrubbery.”

Tragically, a fire destroyed the manor house in August 1930 and the owner, Hugh Banks Cunningham, died in the fire. Rosemont Plantation remained in the family, with some of the land farmed, until 1947, when Niles Clark Sr. purchased the property, which has since remained in the Clark family.

Today only chimney falls and remnants of the Rosemont garden, considered one of the first formal gardens in Upstate South Carolina, remain. Ms. Snipes believes that, while the natural succession of the Piedmont forest has claimed much of the landscape, the garden area close to the home site still exhibits considerable integrity, with huge American boxwood avenues, towering magnolias, and tremendous crape myrtles.



James C. Rees, executive director of Mount Vernon, and Virginia Lane of Charleston, South Carolina, vice regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, along with members of the Clark family and Rosemont Preservation Board recently visited the Rosemont site. Because Rosemont was one of the most important



The Rosemont Preservation Society, From left, front row, Doris Taylor, Attorney Reid Cox, Niles Clarke Jr., back row, Fay Edge, Libby Rhodes, Alvina Meeks, Randall Frye, Diane Culbertson and Rebecca Crow.

Federal-period houses constructed in the interior of South Carolina, and because of the historical significance of its large formal garden, the site definitely deserves safeguarding for future generations.

The Rosemont Preservation Society has recently received tax-exempt status. To raise funds, the society re-printed "Rosemont and Its Famous Daughter," a book written in 1947 by Marion R. Wilkes, and is reprinting "Rosemont Plantation, A History of the Cunningham Family and its Life on the Land," published in 1992 by Christy Snipes.

~Peggy Cornett, editor

[Material for this article was taken from articles by Libby C. Rhodes, staff writer for *The Laurens County Advertiser*, Laurens, South Carolina; Christy Snipes' 1993

article in *Magnolia*; and the 2007 reprint of Marion R. Wilkes "Rosemont and its Famous Daughter," 1947. Alvina Meeks generously supplied additional background information and material.]

**The Rosemont Preservation Society
welcomes donations, which are tax deductible.**

Mail to:
PO Box 82, Laurens, SC 29360.
For more information about the society,
contact Alvina Meeks, (864) 230-5664;
bullhillranch@charter.net

SGHS Annual Meeting in Athens, Georgia

Join us for the 2008 Southern Garden History Society's Annual Meeting, April 11-13 in Athens, Georgia. *High Cotton and Tall Columns* will explore the influence of cotton on the architecture, gardens and landscapes of middle Georgia. The meeting, hosted by The State Botanical Garden of Georgia at the University of Georgia, will take place at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education Conference Center & Hotel on the University of Georgia campus, and meeting rooms and lodging are reserved.

James Cobb, Spalding Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Georgia, will give the keynote address, *Was Cotton Really King? Wealth and Power in Nineteenth-Century Georgia*. Other speakers and topics include Jim Barfield (*Greek Revival Architecture in Middle Georgia*), Jim Cothran (*Antebellum Gardens of Middle Georgia*), Jeff Lewis (*P. J. Berckmans and Fruitland Nurseries*) and Carleton Wood (*Cotton Farming, Mill Villages and Fancy Parterres: The Woven Landscapes of LaGrange, Georgia*).

Area tours will include the University of Georgia's historic north campus, the Garden Club of Georgia's state headquarters (a house museum), and The State Botanical Garden of Georgia where a reception and dinner

will take place the first evening. The second day will feature a morning of lectures and afternoon tour of gardens in nearby Madison concluding with dinner at the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center. An optional post-conference tour on the final day will visit gardens in Milledgeville, Georgia's fourth capital.

Programs and registration information will be mailed in January; current members will automatically receive a copy. (You must be a member of the Southern Garden History Society to register.) Registration will be limited to 150 people. For additional information, call, write or e-mail SGHS Annual Meeting, The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, 2450 South Milledge Avenue, Athens, Georgia 30605, (706) 542-1244, garden@uga.edu.

*Southern Garden
History Society*

ANNUAL MEETING

April 11- 13, 2008

The University of Georgia
Center for Continuing Education
Conference Center & Hotel

Sponsored by
The Southern Garden History Society in cooperation with
The State Botanical Garden of Georgia and the
Friends of The State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

Review:

“Lost Landscapes/Preserved Prospect: Confronting Natural & Human Threats to the Historic Southern Landscape,” The Sixteenth Biennial Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes, September 27-29, 2007

Staci Catron-Sullivan, Atlanta, Georgia

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

– Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax* (1971)

In the closing days of September, professionals and laypersons assembled in Old Salem to address the ever-increasing natural and human threats to the historic Southern landscape. Conference attendees heard from land trust leaders, curators of historic sites, property owners, archaeologists, horticulturists, and activists, who are answering the Lorax’s call to care. The speakers, in their various roles, spoke to a common goal: to conserve, preserve, and restore landscapes in the South and their distinctive qualities of place. Over the course of three days, speakers from a variety of perspectives challenged attendees to recognize a series of historic southern landscapes; and, more importantly, to preserve places, both large and small, which remain.

After enjoying a pre-conference tour of the Single Brothers’ Garden led by Matt Noyes, Old Salem Director of Horticulture, and a luncheon in the Single Brothers House, attendees gathered to hear Dr. David Jones, the Flora Ann Bynum Keynote Speaker, who provided a global perspective about the importance of protecting natural resources and the historic environment. Dr. Jones set forth an overarching analysis that resonated throughout the conference: stewardship of our natural resources and landscapes will only succeed if people realize the connections between their well-being, the economy, and the environment. In short, impending changes and problems on the global scene will have corresponding effects on landscapes and humankind at the local level. The severe drought experienced in the Southeast through 2007 underscores his critical message.

The next speakers, Michael and Martha Hartley, looked to a local area of concern: the Wachovia Tract. In the mid-eighteenth century, the Moravians established a system of communities in the backcountry of North Carolina, of which Salem was the centerpiece. In selecting the nearly 100,000-acre tract, the Moravians contemplated a wide range of factors, including water sources, soil types, viability of trade and communication, and varieties

of flora and fauna, all seen as necessary support for a successful new colony. Within twenty years, they created a central town, Salem, surrounded by outlying farming communities—Bethabara, Bethania, Friedberg, Friedland, and Hope. The management of resources throughout the Wachovia Tract was understood as a vital responsibility in the Moravian community. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Moravians nurtured these resources as foundations for what would later become Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, but in the mid-twentieth century, the important physical and visual linkages in the network began to disappear with a proliferation of suburban growth, interstate and regional highways, industrial parks, strip malls, and a general decentralization of the community. Today, communities of old Wachovia face the same challenges as many other places in America, an unsustainable paradigm of sprawl. Concerned members of the community are working to reengage outlying agricultural communities as support for the urban center. Activists are trying to save historic buildings, farmscapes, and habitats—to mitigate the ongoing erosion of the Wachovia heritage. Inventorying historic resources and applying conservation easements are the two primary tools used in the area.

Following the Thursday afternoon lectures, attendees enjoyed the gardens at Reynolda, designed in the early twentieth century by landscape architect Thomas W. Sears, and the opening reception and dinner. The Thursday evening Sharing Session at Reynolda renewed our acquaintance with past projects and introduced us to new initiatives. Jim Wooten summarized the recently completed work on Capitol Square in Richmond, Virginia, while Tyler Potterfield discussed efforts to revitalize the city’s historic Monroe Park. Doris Taylor introduced Rosemont, in Laurens County, South Carolina. Ann Pamela Cunningham (1816-1875), founder of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, which supported the first garden restoration project in the Southeast, cultivated the gardens at Rosemont. Photographer Ginny Weiler presented images of her work from “Forever These Lands,” a celebration of local conservation easements and an exploration of natural

places throughout the North Carolina Piedmont. Paula Locklair showcased the paintings of Pauline Bahnson Gray (1891-1955), who created picturesque images of “old” Salem from her privileged vantage point. Val Libby and Terumi Watson presented projects involving early-twentieth century gardens. Ms. Libby highlighted the private gardens at Oxmoor Plantation near Louisville, Kentucky, designed by Marian Cruger Coffin (1876-1957), while Ms. Watson introduced a virtually unknown work in Knoxville, Tennessee, designed in the 1920s by Jens Jensen (1860-1951).

The session on Friday drew attention to land conservation efforts in four locales. Bob Lee of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) highlighted a number of Virginia’s renowned cultural landscapes, which are protected in perpetuity for residents of the Commonwealth and the nation. Created by the General

Assembly in 1966, the VOF’s mission is “to promote the preservation of open space lands and to encourage private gifts of money, securities, land or other property to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, open-space and recreational areas of the Commonwealth.” Virginia has the strongest tax inducements, including the transferable income tax credit, for permanent voluntary conservation of heritage landscapes of any state in the nation. With the next presentation, attendees journeyed to South Carolina with Will Haynie of the Lowcountry Open Land Trust. Founded in the 1980s, this organization has over 168 protected properties amounting to approximately 45,000 acres. Based in Charleston, South Carolina, the Lowcountry Open Land Trust primarily uses conservation easements to protect fragile coastal treasures.

Beth Boggess took us west to Natchez, Mississippi,

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The remains of the standing cedars along The Hermitage carriage drive after the tornado.



The Hermitage mansion after the tornado. Large cedars remained standing near the house, but most of the carriage drive had to be replanted with trees about five feet tall at planting time.

Photos courtesy of The Hermitage Foundation



The Hermitage carriage drive after partial tornado clean-up, May 1998. All debris but the trunks of the cedar trees had been removed, showing the haphazard pattern in which the trees fell.

Review.....(continued from page 7)

a major cultural crossroads in nineteenth-century America. As both an experienced archaeologist and preservationist—and as a homeowner—Ms. Boggess explained how owners of three significant antebellum estates are using various combinations of preservation and conservation easements to protect invaluable historic resources in Natchez from development threats. With Kate Dixon, attendees returned to North Carolina to learn about the efforts of Land for Tomorrow, a growing statewide partnership of organizations and citizens urging the General Assembly to provide \$1 billion over five years to protect North Carolina lands, waters, and historic properties before they are irreversibly lost.

Jason Walser, executive director of The Land Trust for Central North Carolina, presented the day's closing remarks as a preview to our visit to Cooleemee, an eighteen-hundred-acre antebellum plantation maintained by the Hairston Family. Located on the Yadkin River, Cooleemee Plantation features a Romantic Revival plantation house, completed in 1855 and based on a design from W. H. Ranlett's *The Architect* (1847), reprinted in Godey's *Lady's Book* in 1850, as well as extensive hardwood forests and farmlands. The grounds retained many historic features, including broad terraces descending to the bottomland and double walks of English boxwood. Through the kindness of Peter Hairston, conference goers enjoyed a delightful evening including drinks and a buffet supper at Cooleemee. This important site shows how a wise property owner worked successfully with a regional land trust to protect an outstanding agricultural landscape in fast-growing Davie County.



Pre-Katrina photograph of New Orleans Botanical Garden Conservatory



Post-Katrina photograph of New Orleans Botanical Garden Conservatory



Volunteers, staff, and National Guard replanting New Orleans Botanical Garden after Katrina



National Guard replanting podocarpus hedge

NOBG photos courtesy of Paul Soniat

The Saturday morning session addressed natural threats to the historic landscape in the Southeast. Paul Soniat, founding director of the New Orleans Botanical Garden, took participants on a stirring journey from the site's WPA roots as the City Park Rose Garden in the 1930s to its rebirth as the New Orleans Botanical Garden in the early 1980s. He detailed the garden's quarter-century of accomplishment prior to the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, and the unbelievable reclamation of the site during the past two years. Mr. Soniat, an accomplished musician and composer, concluded with a tribute to New Orleans from his CD, "Below the Water Line," which played over a montage of images showing the very personal impact of Hurricane Katrina on the Big Easy. Next, Marsha Mullin discussed an "ill wind" that struck the Nashville area on April 16, 1998 and inflicted heavy damage to The Hermitage, the 1,120-acre historic site that was home

to President Andrew Jackson. Like Soniat, Ms. Mullin was on the staff at the time of the destruction. Both speakers were present at every stage of the replanting and renewal process, and spoke with an engaging personal perspective. Miles Beach introduced another, different horticultural effort occurring at Magnolia on the Ashley near Charleston, South Carolina. Mr. Beach, Drayton Hastie, and their colleagues are working with local and national Camellia organizations on a major restoration and mapping project of Magnolia Gardens' important nineteenth-century plant collection.

The Sixteenth Biennial Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes brought into sharp focus the many human and natural threats to the historic Southern landscape and gave participants valuable tools to take forth and help protect these irreplaceable resources for future generations.

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Greenhouse at Reynolda Gardens



Hyacinth Bean (Dolichos lablab) on the fence of the late Flora Ann Bynum's garden in Old Salem

Photos by S Catron-Sullivan & P Cornett



Old Salem Director of Horticulture, Matt Noyes, leading a pre-conference tour in the Single Brothers' Garden



SGHS Members arriving at Cooleemee Plantation

Book Review

Norah Lindsay: The Life and Art of a Garden Designer

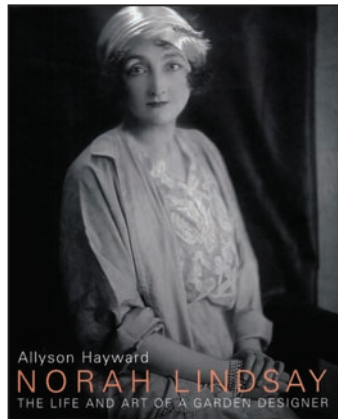
by Allyson Hayward; Frances Lincoln, Limited; 288 pages, 300 black and white photographs and illustrations; hardcover, 2007; ISBN: 9780711225244



In *Eminent Gardeners: Some People of Influence and their Gardens, 1880-1980*, published in 1990, garden historian Jane Brown described Norah Lindsay as “a naturally brilliant gardener,” who “left little but her memory behind.” That said in the opening paragraph of her sketch, she began the second with an equally apt summary. “The trouble was that Norah really had too much social life, as the names that glitter through this chapter will show.” Even so, Norah Lindsay remained a fascinating figure for Ms. Brown, “the one I would most like to be able to write a book about.” In 1990, she settled for using a photograph of Norah Lindsay and her husband standing at the gates to their estate, Sutton Courtenay, ca. 1904, for the front cover of *Eminent Gardeners* and a smaller photograph of Mrs. Lindsay in her garden on the back of the book.

In the event it was not Jane Brown but Allyson Hayward who has written a biography of the socialite gardener. *Norah Lindsay, The Life and Art of a Garden Designer* is a handsome book, beautifully produced, and evocative in its text, illustrations, and commentary of both garden and social history in England in the first half of the twentieth century. Norah Mary Madeline Bourke was born in India in 1873, some fourteen months after her father’s older brother, then serving as Viceroy and Governor-General of India, was assassinated. The Bourke family moved back to England in 1875, to London, and to a house in Montagu Square, which the Bourkes vacated in about 1885 for a grander residence at 25 Great Cumberland Place.

During those years, and the decade leading up to her marriage in 1895, Norah Bourke and her family enjoyed the society of important families and friends who, as Mrs. Hayward writes, “eventually kept her in business when she most needed work to survive in her later years. They were a constant source of referrals and commissions.” The friendships of the Wyndhams, with Petworth House and Clouds as residences, and Lady Desborough at Taplow Court were valuable, and particularly so was that of Violet Lindsay, who married Henry Manners, the Marquis



of Granby, who in 1908 succeeded as the 8th Duke of Rutland. In 1892, Norah Bourke joined a house party at Belvoir Castle, the Rutland seat, and met Violet’s younger brother, Henry Edith Arthur Lindsay (1866-1939), known to all as Harry.

Three years later Norah and Harry Lindsay were married at St. George’s Church, Hanover Square, London. Among those who attended the wedding was a devoted cousin of the groom, Lord Wantage (1832-1901). His wedding present to Harry Lindsay was the Manor of Sutton Courtenay, which included six separate houses on fifty-four acres. Lord Wantage made a gift of £5,000 to Norah Lindsay. The couple made the Manor House their home and rented the other properties for income. What experience Norah Lindsay had of gardening on her arrival at Sutton Courtenay is unclear, however, she soon absorbed the theories and advice put forth by William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll, among others, the underlying principles of Italian and French garden design, and a constantly refreshed knowledge of country house gardens in both England and Scotland into a lush synthesis that was uniquely hers, and unique to Sutton Courtenay. The Long Garden, punctuated with yew topiary, and the Persian Garden, overflowing with a lavish abundance of bloom, were its signature features. She would later characterize her gardening at Sutton Courtenay as “a lesson in beauty.”

An article on Sutton Courtenay appeared in *Country Life* in 1904 and another in 1931. Between those years Norah Lindsay’s life took dramatic turns, much of which she recorded in letters that Mrs. Hayward wisely quotes at length. By 1905 the underpinnings of their luxurious life at Sutton Courtenay, shared with family and friends, was strained. Nevertheless, the couple pressed ahead. Harry Lindsay joined the war effort in 1914 and remained an officer in the Royal Air Force until 1919. Norah resided at Sutton Courtenay, tending its gardens, and adding vegetable gardening to her repertoire—by necessity. But retrenchment was required, and in the summer of 1918 Sutton Courtenay was let for a few months. The couple’s growing separation was confirmed at war’s end when Mr. Lindsay settled in London, leaving Norah at the manor. But not, perhaps, for long. The Manor of Sutton Courtenay was put up for sale at auction in July 1920. The Elizabethan Manor House, its outbuildings, long river frontage, and “Gardens of an enchanting description,” altogether comprising about thirty-two acres were offered as lot one of nine parcels. Under circumstances left unexplained, lots of the manor were sold but not the Manor House. It would remain Norah Lindsay’s residence until the end of her life.

Another four years of indecision, part of it spent resident in Italy, would pass before Norah Lindsay launched her professional career as a garden designer, capitalizing on her achievement in the manor gardens and her friendships. One senses in part a hesitation to start charging friends for advice she had freely given, so often, over so many years as a houseguest. But she did! And Sir John and Frances, Lady Horner, became her first clients. Work for them at Mells Manor was soon followed by commissions from the Astors at Cliveden, Lady Howard de Walden at Chirk Castle, and from her constant, devoted friend Philip Sassoon (1888-1939) at Trent Park and Port Lympne, among others. Simultaneously, she undertook the renewal and replanting of the gardens of Sutton Courtenay, which showed to glorious advantage in photographs of 1930-1931, some of which accompanied her account in the later year in *Country Life*. Many of these hauntingly beautiful images appear in *Norah Lindsay*. They convince its readers of her gardening genius, now, just as the photographs and visits to the garden inspired her clientele in 1930s to seek the lustre of her hand for their gardens.

As the Duke of Windsor, another of her clients, later remarked, “if you had money she was the one to spend it. I think now that her use of roses alone was worth the tuition fee.” Others agreed with the man who would reign briefly as Edward VIII. Norah Lindsay did not disappoint her clients, but alas, surprisingly few of her signature gardens survive, even in period photographs. One assumes Mrs. Hayward looked high and low, and that the images included in the monograph are the bounty of her efforts. Contemporary views of the gardens at Mells Manor reflect obvious similarities to Sutton Courtenay—and not unexpectedly so. The choice documentary garden photographs appearing in the pages of *Norah Lindsay* are those of the gardens she created for Philip Sassoon at Trent Park and Port Lympne. Rare color period images of Trent Park’s gardens in the 1930s reflect a dazzling richness in its borders. Black and white views of the gardens at Port Lympne appear in counterpoint with present-day color photographs. Here, one feels on sure footing in the view that, whatever becomes known regarding other projects, the gardens at Port Lympne, and especially the double herbaceous border descending to the Romney Marsh, together with its architectural hedges and topiary, are Norah Lindsay’s finest surviving achievement. Like pairings of period and present-day photographs reflect the survival of important Lindsay-era garden features at Cliveden and Kelmars Hall, where topiary loggias are a remarkable feature—and reminder of her imagination. Other gardens, particularly those at Chirk Castle and Blickling Hall, retain her signature topiary forms, soft cones resting on round drums, which she called Welsh hats and used to great effect.

Norah Lindsay’s life was blessed with the fortune of generous, loving, and wealthy friends. Their names appear both in a client list and in a separate, thirteen-page addendum under the heading, “Biographical Notes: Norah Lindsay’s Circle of Friends.” Lawrence Johnston’s name appears among the friends and in a smaller select compilation of gardens “Influenced by Norah Lindsay,” but whose owners were “Not paying clients.” Even after two recent books on Hidcote, and this one, a full understanding of her happy collaboration with Johnny Johnston at Hidcote and Serre de la Madone remains elusive. Edith Wharton was another of her friends, whose garden at Sainte-Claire le Chateau in France, figures among those Norah Lindsay influenced during visits with the writer. One such visit occurred in winter 1937, a half year prior to Edith Wharton’s death. Norah recounted the pleasure of her stay in a letter to her sister Madeline.



Photo from the Country Life Picture Library

Norah and Harry Lindsay at the entry gates of the Manor House of Sutton Courtenay, ca. 1904.

“It was wonderful to wake up yesterday in sunshine and see the white almonds all in flower, masses of roses, iris, crocus, sweet scented geraniums, violets in quantities, mimosas, and yellow buddleias. All bursting forth under a blue sky ...we sat on the broad tiled terrace planted with trees and shrubs, overlooking all the red roofs of Hyères, with the flat silver sea beyond, and the mountains each side.”

This quote, among dozens of others extracted in this new book, causes one to yearn for a published volume of her letters. Then, the loss of the manuscript for *Garden Idyll*, on which she worked from 1927-1931, and the lament of architect Philip Tilden, for more of her writings, could be assuaged.

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

A World of her own Making: Katharine Smith Reynolds and the Landscape of Reynolda, by Catherine Howett, University of Massachusetts Press with Library of American Landscape History, 2007; 416 pages, 150 illustrations; \$39.95 cloth; ISBN 978-1-55849-520-3



It was only a few years after marrying tobacco magnate R. J. Reynolds that young Katharine Smith Reynolds (1880–1924) began to plan a new home for her family. Not many young women of the day found themselves with almost unlimited wealth to construct their dream home, but Katharine’s sense of purpose for her vast resources was even more unusual. She envisioned the

founding of a model community that would emphasize health, modern technology, mixed-crop scientific farming, education, and rural beauty. To realize this dream, she drew on the liveliest and most progressive ideas of her era.

Catherine Howett, a longtime SGHS member, begins her analysis of Katharine’s unusual achievement with her childhood in Mount Airy, North Carolina, and the defining southern values that framed her experiences there. Howett follows Katharine through her transformative education at the state Normal School, founded and run by Charles Duncan McIver and his ardently feminist wife, Lula. The values instilled in Katharine during these early years guided her, a new woman of the New South, in all that followed.

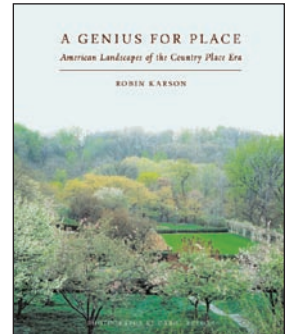
In 1904, when Katharine embarked on her estate project in Winston (now Winston-Salem), North Carolina, the South was still feeling the effects of the Civil War and a century of single-crop farming. After conducting exhaustive research, which included wide-ranging reading in agricultural journals and trips to other American estates and model farms, she began to lay out her property, Reynolda. Her plan was inspired, in part, by the rural landscapes of England that had captured the imagination of Frederick Law Olmsted.

A welcoming bungalow for her family was surrounded by a landscaped park, set amid thriving farm fields and pastures, with a village of homes and gardens, a church, and a school for farm employees. Beginning in 1915, Thomas W. Sears, a highly regarded Philadelphia-based landscape architect, aided Katharine. The estate eventually expanded to cover more than 1,000 acres. The process of planning Reynolda paralleled similar efforts in other parts of the United States, as new towns, parks, campuses, and

country estates were laid out during the century’s first decades.

Illustrated with 150 photographs, plans, and drawings, Howett’s study analyzes the singular convergence of influences that occurred in the imagination of a highly unusual woman. The book provides welcome insight into the culture of the New South and into a richly inventive period in the history of American landscape architecture.

A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era, by Robin Karson, University of Massachusetts Press in association with LALH; 424 pages, 483 duotone illustrations; \$65.00 cloth; ISBN 978-1-55849-636-1



In this lavishly illustrated volume, Robin Karson traces the development of a distinctly American style of landscape design through an analysis of seven country places created by some of the nation’s most talented landscape practitioners.

In the mid-nineteenth century Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York’s Central Park, developed an approach to landscape design based on the principles of the English Picturesque, which also emphasized a specifically American experience of nature and scenery. After Olmsted’s retirement in 1897, these precepts continued to ground a new generation of American landscape architects through the next four decades, a period known as the “country place era,” a time of rapid economic, social, and cultural change.

In the early twentieth century, new fortunes made it possible for wealthy Americans to commission country estates as a means of aggrandizing social status. These private havens also offered their owners respite from crowded cities and a way to preserve and celebrate places of distinctive landscape beauty. The commissions provided burgeoning numbers of landscape architects with opportunities to experiment with stylistic influences derived from Beaux-Arts, Arts and Crafts, and even Asian principles.

The chapters in this book trace a progression in the period from the naturalistic wild gardens of Warren Manning to the mysterious “Prairie style” landscapes of Jens Jensen to the proto-modernist gardens of Fletcher Steele. Other practitioners covered are Charles Platt, Ellen Biddle Shipman, Beatrix Farrand, Marian Coffin,

and Lockwood de Forest Jr. The projects profiled follow a broad geographic arc, from Stockbridge, Massachusetts, to Santa Barbara, California. All seven landscapes are now open to visitors.

Analyzing these designs in context with one another and against the backdrop of the professional and cultural currents that shaped larger projects—such as parks, campuses, and planned communities—Karson creates a rich and comprehensive picture of the artistic achievements of the period. Striking black-and-white

images by landscape photographer Carol Betsch illuminate the transporting spirit of these country places today, while hundreds of drawings, plans, and historical photographs bring the past to life.

Robin Karson also is author of *Fletcher Steele, Landscape Architect* and *The Muses of Gwinn*, and coeditor of *Pioneers of American Landscape Design*. She is the founder and executive director of the Library of American Landscape History.

Review..... (continued from page 9)

At the end of the Conference, attendees bought and carried away over \$1,000 in stock from the Department of Horticulture's heirloom and native plant shop. Sweet Williams, Red Valerian, and Blackberry Lilies were the favored selections among both herbaceous and woody plants.

Old Salem Museums and Gardens, Inc., the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, the Southern Garden History Society, Reynolda House Museum of

American Art, and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office sponsor this biennial event. The conference committee is comprised of representatives from each institution and co-chaired by Sally Gant and Davyd Foard Hood. We applaud the extraordinary efforts of this dedicated committee, whose expertise and uncompromising standards continue to raise the level of discussion and scholarship on garden preservation and restoration in the South.



*Frances Inglis
strolling in
the gardens at
Reynolda*



*Davyd Foard
Hood at
Reynolda
Gardens*



*University of Tennessee Graduate Student Terumi
Watson and Mary Anne Pickens*



*Staci Catron-Sullivan and Val Libby exploring the boxwood garden at Cooleemee
Plantation*

Garden Conservancy Awards Preservation Project Status to Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden, Bishopville, South Carolina

The Garden Conservancy, a national nonprofit garden preservation organization, has added Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden in Bishopville, SC to its roster of Preservation Projects. Pearl Fryar began work on the three-acre garden in 1984 in an effort to win "Yard of the Month" for his home on the outskirts of town. The well-manicured, sculptural plant forms that comprise Fryar's living vision of peace, love and goodwill often began as salvaged seedlings from a local nursery. Recognized by art and botanical enthusiasts, the visually whimsical garden is maintained year-round by Fryar for visitors from around the world. "Pearl has created a garden of originality and personal expression," says Garden Conservancy Preservation Projects Director Bill Noble, "and he uses it to inspire and educate people, especially kids, to achieve their creative potential. His work has brought new civic pride to a town that is the county seat of the poorest county in the state of South Carolina. He has brought his community together and helped to erase boundaries of race, economic background, and gender. Few gardens stake so bold a claim as to be about effecting social change. But, that's what Pearl Fryar aims to do. By helping to preserve his garden, the Garden Conservancy also aims to help Pearl continue his mission of using the garden to teach and inspire."

Pearl Fryar sees his achievement and the world's interest in his garden as an opportunity to make a statement about the power of "average" individuals to do great things. "I was an average student academically," he says. "I worked 36 years in industry and made a fairly good living. But, then I created this garden that's internationally known. It demonstrates that a kid who is average academically can still make important contributions to our society. I talk about that when I give lectures. I want people to be aware of that." A documentary about Pearl Fryar and his garden, *A Man Named Pearl*, had its theatrical release on August 31 in Charlotte, North Carolina, Knoxville, Tennessee, and Indianapolis, Indiana, and won an Audience Choice Award when it premiered at the Heartland Film Festival in Indianapolis in October of 2006.

The newly formed Friends of Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden, headed by president Polly Laffitte, is engaged in a long-range planning process and fund-raising to hire a gardener to help Mr. Fryar. To learn more about Pearl Fryar and his garden, visit www.fryarstopiaries.com. Tax-deductible contributions can be made to: The Garden Conservancy/Friends of Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden. P.O. Box 219, Cold Spring, New York 10516.

SGHS Fall Board Meeting—September 2007

The Board of Directors of the Southern Garden History Society met September 29, 2007 at 12:30 in MESDA (Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts), at Old Salem, North Carolina. The meeting took place immediately following the Sixteenth Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes, which ten board members attended. The board was pleased to have as special guests, Virginia Hart, our webmaster and Becky Lebsock, our membership chair.

Treasurer Gail Griffin gave the financial report and requested that the board consider postponing the mail out time of the membership notices until September 1 of each year. By doing so, the incoming dues will fall within the fiscal year in which the expenses occur. The board approved the change.

Ken McFarland and Virginia Hart gave a Web site committee report. Virginia provided statistics on the number of "hits" on the site. Plans for the Web

site include adding additional historical material from SGHS archives and enlarging the number of links. [Members are encouraged to visit the site often at: www.southerngardenhistory.org]

Gail Griffin and Becky Lebsock gave the membership report. The membership has stayed relatively stable with about 500 members, even though Texas, Georgia, and North Carolina, which have the greatest number of members, have all had a slight decrease in their membership.

Publicity chair Susan Urshel reported on her investigation of the cost of running ads in magazines. The board unanimously decided not to purchase ads at this time.

The next annual meeting takes place April 11-13, 2008 in Athens, Georgia [See *Calendar*, page 2]. SGHS vice president Jeff Lewis and former president Jim Cothran chair the meeting. Marion Drummond has

invited the board to hold its 2008 fall meeting at the Mobile Botanical Gardens on September 26-28.

The board agreed to propose a minor change in the by-laws, to be voted upon at the annual business meeting in Athens, Georgia on April 12, 2008.

In the society's current bylaws, Section 5.1 reads:

The Board shall govern the property, affairs, and business of the Society. It shall have the power to hire an executive director or other agent, and shall have the power to acquire movable or immovable property. Official actions of the Board shall be by majority vote (half plus one) at a meeting in which a quorum is present, or by polling if between scheduled meetings. A quorum shall consist of a majority (half plus one) of the total number of Board members. The Board, excluding honorary members and officers, shall number 12 directors all of whom must be members of the Society.

The board believes that this wording does not express the fact that honorary members cannot count towards a quorum and does not clearly define the exact number of board members. Therefore, the board recommends the following minor changes shown in bold print:

*The Board shall govern the property, affairs, and business of the Society. It shall have the power to hire an executive director or other agent, and shall have the power to acquire movable or immovable property. Official actions of the Board shall be by majority vote (half plus one) at a meeting in which a quorum is present, or by polling if between scheduled meetings. A quorum shall consist of a majority (half plus one) of the total number of Board members, **not counting honorary members.** The board, excluding honorary members, **exofficio members**, and officers, shall number 12 directors all of whom must be members of the Society.*

Wing Haven to purchase Elizabeth Lawrence House and Garden

The Wing Haven Foundation is delighted to announce that an agreement has been reached to purchase the Elizabeth Lawrence House and Garden. Lindie Wilson, the owner and wonderful steward of this property, will sell to Wing Haven, giving conservation easements to the Garden Conservancy. Thus this historic landmark will be preserved and a program honoring Lawrence's seminal contributions to southern horticulture and garden writing will be developed.

Linking Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary and the Lawrence Garden under one mission will mark an exciting new chapter in the life of these two properties, located within footsteps of one another in Charlotte,

North Carolina. Wing Haven is grateful to the Belk Foundation and the D. F. Halton Foundation whose generosity provided the foundation for this vision.

The \$50,000 for the Garden Conservancy's Stewardship Fund is being raised by The Friends of Elizabeth Lawrence. There are many in the Southern Garden History Society who recognized the importance of preserving this property and honoring the Lawrence legacy, not to mention recognizing the long care and stewardship Lindie Wilson has given. Contributions may be sent to "The Elizabeth Lawrence Stewardship Fund" % The Garden Conservancy, PO Box 219, Cold Spring, New York, 10516.

The Wild Trees author to speak at the Cherokee Garden Library of AHC

In *The Wild Trees: a Story of Passion and Daring*, award-winning author Richard Preston, acclaimed writer for *The New Yorker* magazine since 1985, tells the story of the largest organisms the world has ever sustained—the coastal Redwood trees, *Sequoia sempervirens*. His latest work is a radical departure from his previous bestsellers on catastrophic diseases (*The Hot Zone* and *The Demon in the Freezer*). In *The Wild Trees: A Story of Daring and Passion*, Mr. Preston journeys into the perpendicular universe of the California redwoods—the world's tallest trees. This is a spellbinding story of Steve Sillett and Marie Antione, who discovered a vertical Eden filled with hanging gardens of fern, reefs of lichens, small animals

and all sorts of plants, including thickets of huckleberry bushes and small trees actually growing on the branches of these ancient giants. Humans move through the deep canopy suspended on ropes, far out of sight of the ground, knowing that the price of a small mistake may be a plunge to one's death. Preston's account of this world, by turns terrifying, moving, and fascinating, is an adventure story told in novelistic detail by a master of nonfiction narrative. Preston became an expert tree climber, and learned the techniques of super-tall tree climbing to tell the story in *The Wild Trees*—the story of the fate of the world's most splendid forests and of the imperiled biosphere itself.



Photo by Paul Soniat, director, NOBG

Post Katrina view of the New Orleans Botanical Garden after it was replanted.

Annual Membership Dues

The society's membership year is from **August 1—July 31**. The membership secretary will mail renewal notices in the summer for the 2008-2009 year. Membership categories:

Benefactor	\$250
Patron	\$150
Sustainer	\$75
Institution or Business	\$50
Joint	\$40
Individual	\$25
Student	\$10

For more membership information, contact:
 Becky Lebsack, SGHS Membership Secretary
 Old Salem Museum and Gardens, Inc.
 Drawer F, Salem Station
 Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108
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Deadline for the submission of articles for the spring issue of Magnolia is February 15, 2008.

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