



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

Magnolia

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The Restored Eudora Welty Garden Ten Years On

Susan Haltom, Jackson, Mississippi

Since touring the Eudora Welty home site during the Southern Garden History Society's 1995 annual meeting in Natchez, Mississippi, many SGHS members have watched with great interest subsequent efforts to restore the author's garden. SGHS board member Susan Haltom—co-author of One Writer's Garden: Eudora Welty's Home Place—was a close friend of Miss Welty, and the following article is her personal account of her research and work to restore the gardens.

Eudora Welty, one of the most distinguished American novelists and short-story writers of the twentieth century, lived over seventy-five years in her family home in Jackson, Mississippi. Known far and wide for her wit, imagination, compassion, openness and tolerance, and sense of humor, she also loved the world outdoors; her family garden in particular. This flower garden was reminiscent of so many domestic gardens across America in the early twentieth century, and it served as Welty's refuge and inspiration.

Because Eudora Welty (1909-2001) survived most of her contemporaries, virtually no one alive knew about her personal involvement in the family garden in Jackson, Mississippi, until after her death. In fact, many who had become friendly with the author in her older years declared that her mother Chestina, not Eudora, was the *real* gardener. Eudora had said similar things to me, with the same emphasis, yet our conversations revealed that she possessed considerable knowledge about gardening. I began to suspect that her frame of reference was comparative, born of lifelong deference to her mother's skills. And, after Eudora's death, when her nieces searched the house and attic and looked through her papers and belongings, they discovered her personal correspondence about and photographs of the garden alongside her mother's garden journals. Those personal papers, in addition to those Eudora had previously donated to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, served as primary documentation for my garden research. For me, the most



Photo by Susan Haltom.

Eudora Welty House and Garden, Jackson, Mississippi. A National Historic Landmark property.

important excerpt from Welty's writings, which explained the significance she attributed to the garden, I discovered deep within the files. It was among the passages she omitted from her autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings*. "The sight of that garden, and its scent!" she wrote. "If work hadn't proved it real, it would have been hallucination; in this sense gardening is akin to writing stories. No experience could have taught me more about grief or flowers, about achieving survival by going, your fingers in the ground, the limit of physical exhaustion." Eudora went on to say that the first time she consciously placed herself "at

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CALENDAR

November 15, 2014–February 22, 2015. Flora Illustrata: A Celebration of Botanical Masterworks, an exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden. The renowned LuEsther T. Mertz Library of The New York Botanical Garden counts among its holdings many of the most beautiful and pioneering botanical and horticultural works ever created. In this sumptuous exhibition visitors are introduced to some of the Library's most fascinating works—exceedingly rare books, stunning botanical artworks, illustrated manuscripts, medieval herbals, exquisite garden prints and flower books, nursery catalogs, explorers' notebooks, and more. Visit: www.nybg.org/exhibitions/2014/flora-illustrata

2015 Stephen F. Austin State University Garden Lecture Series is held the first Thursday of every month. The series begins January 8 with Tony Lapollilo on "Why Solar is the Future of a Sustainable World." February 12 features Jared Barnes, "Reflections on the Plants, People, and Places of North Carolina." Visit: www.sfgardens.sfasu.edu

February 13–May 24, 2015. "The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement, 1887–1920," held at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. The exhibition and catalogue tells the story of American Impressionist artists and the growing popularity of gardening as a middle-class leisure pursuit at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, bringing together paintings, sculpture, books, and stained glass. *The Artist's Garden* will make a national tour to three additional venues: Chrysler Museum of Art (June 16 – September 6, 2015); Reynolda House Museum of American Art (October 1, 2015 – January 3, 2016); and The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens (January 23 – May 9, 2016). Visit: www.pafa.org/artistsgarden/

March 18–21, 2015. 37th Annual Meeting of the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation, "Continuity and Vitality," Savannah, Georgia. For meeting updates and registration information, visit: www.ahlp.org/annual-meetings

April 10–12, 2015. 69th Annual Colonial Williamsburg Garden Symposium, "Layers of the Living Landscape," Williamsburg, Virginia. Featured speakers include Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy, authors of *The Living Landscape*; Robert Lyons (University of Delaware); Peggy Singlemann (Maymont); and Peggy Cornett (Monticello). For more information contact Deborah Chapman at dchapman@cwv.org. Register online at: www.history.org/conted or phone (800) 603-0948

April 18–25, 2015. Historic Garden Week in Virginia. This statewide event provides a unique opportunity to see unforgettable gardens at the peak of Virginia's springtime color, as well as houses decorated with over 2,000 flower arrangements by Garden Club of Virginia members. Tour proceeds fund the restoration and preservation of Virginia's historic gardens; provide graduate level research fellowships for building comprehensive and ongoing records of the Commonwealth's historic gardens and landscapes; and support the mission of the Garden Club of Virginia. Visit: www.vagardenweek.org/

April 22, 2015. The Garden Club of Georgia's Annual

Historic Landscape and Garden Grant Fundraiser features a lecture by award-winning author Andrea Wulf on her book *Brother Gardeners, Botany, Empire and the Birth of an Obsession* at Ansley Golf Club, Atlanta, GA. Tickets include a reception and book signing. Visit: gardenclub.uga.edu/; phone (706) 227-5369; email: gcca@uga.edu

May 15–17, 2015. "Middle Tennessee—Harmony, Hills, and History," 33rd SGHS Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. The conference will include visits to the Governor's Residence, Travelers' Rest, Historic Carnton Plantation, Battle of Franklin sites, and private gardens. The meeting is organized by Justin Stelter (chair) and Ben and Libby Page. Meeting headquarters at the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt University, 2555 West End Avenue, Nashville, TN 37203. Make reservations early at Marriottvanderbilt.com; 615-321-1300

June 14–19, 2015. 19th Annual Historic Landscape Institute, "Preserving Jefferson's Gardens and Landscapes." This one-week course uses Monticello's gardens and landscapes and the University of Virginia as outdoor classrooms to study historic landscape preservation. Lectures, workshops, field trips, and practical working experiences provide an introduction to the fields of landscape history, garden restoration, and historical horticulture. Visit: www.monticello.org/lbi

June 22–26, 2015. American Public Gardens Association Annual Conference, "Watering our Roots to Grow our Communities," Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota. Botanic gardens and arboreta, historically and scientifically rooted in horticulture, are challenged to transform and stay relevant in a changing culture. Can gardens make a more meaningful impact on public life? Visit: www.publicgardens.org; contact: info@publicgardens.org; phone (610) 708-3010

September 11–12, 2015. 9th Annual Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello, in Charlottesville, Virginia. This family-friendly event celebrates Thomas Jefferson, who championed vegetable cuisine, sustainable agriculture, and plant experimentation by featuring heirloom fruits and vegetables, organic gardening, seed saving, and more. Co-hosted by Southern Exposure Seed Exchange. Visit: www.heritageharvestfestival.com

October 1–3, 2015. 20th "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" Biennial Conference, held in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Conference is co-sponsored by Old Salem Museums & Gardens; Reynolda House Museum of American Art; and the Southern Garden History Society. For program and registration information, contact Sally Gant, sgant@oldsalem.org or visit: www.oldsalem.org/landscapeconference

Upcoming SGHS Annual Meetings

April 21–24, 2016. 34th SGHS Annual Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina. Meeting headquarters at the Francis Marion Hotel.

The Restored Eudora Welty Garden.....(continued from page 1)

a storyteller's remove" was there, in the garden.

These and other stories unearthed during the garden restoration make the Eudora Welty House and Garden a unique place, fully connected to the author. As my coauthor, Jane Roy Brown and I reveal in *One Writer's Garden: Eudora Welty's Home Place* (University of Mississippi Press, 2011), the story of this garden captures not only the experience of Eudora and her mother in the garden, but also the parallel story of the American home gardening movement during the first decades of the twentieth century.

When Eudora's mother Chestina Welty laid out the garden at her new home in 1925, she was mirroring the creative aspirations of many women across the South. Chestina formed a garden club, seeking to use that group for education and improvement of her community. She studied garden design, believing it was truly a fine art. She worked with color and height combinations, strove for a succession of bloom, and laid out her garden with regard to views from inside the house.

During the 1930s both mother and daughter worked side by side in the garden, weeding out grief over the loss of husband and father, seeking beauty during years of the Great Depression. They tended a "rock garden," so popular in other areas of the country but a challenge in Mississippi where there are very few natural rock formations. Their solution was to bring back a few small rocks from other parts of the state and to also use concrete rubble. According to Eudora, "We had a rock garden under the big cedar. Roman hyacinths among the roots, and candytuft." In the garden journal entry from April 1, 1939, Chestina wrote, "Rock garden looks nice with oxalis, alyssum, Bird-foot violets, pansies and Daylilies blooming. Red-pink verbenas blooming luxuriously but do not like it where I have it – in front of the yellow day lilies. Plan to put lavender verbenas there next year."

During the late 1930s Eudora and North Carolina garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence kindled a friendship that lasted until Lawrence's death. More research is needed to

fully appreciate their relationship and how Lawrence influenced both Eudora's garden and her prose. For example, both women professed a love for white narcissus and shared the "Silver Bells" (*Narcissus moschatus*) sold by farm women in the *Market Bulletins*. Later Eudora used this plant as a floral stand-in for the deceased mother, Becky, in her Pulitzer prize-winning novel *The Optimist's Daughter*. Today Silver Bells bloom again in the Welty garden, a gift from North Carolina garden designer Edith Eddleman.

In the 1940s correspondence between Eudora and her Irish literary agent Diarmuid Russell (1902-1973), also

an ardent gardener, revealed the highest humor and deepest dreams of like-minded individuals. Eudora told Russell that she liked simple forms of flowers, not "Glamour Girls of the Modern Border," which were becoming all the rage in the popular press. When worried about loved ones, Eudora spent most of her days tending the garden. She seemed especially intrigued by various bulbs, both native and imported, and ordered from near and far. During these years she patronized nurseries from



More Time for Garden JOYS

Anything that tends to diminish work and worry gives greater opportunities of rest and joy. Judging from this standpoint, of all the garden helps available, none are a greater blessing than labor saving tools. And of scores of tools available, none reduce work to a greater extent and make remaining work to be done easier than

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Ad for tools aimed at women, *The Garden Magazine*, May 1923.

California to the eastern coast: Oakhurst Gardens in Arcadia, California; Carl Purdy nursery, Ukiah, California for native bulbs; S. S. Berry in Redlands, California, and Julia E. Clark in Oregon for lilies; Bobbink & Atkins of Rutherford, New Jersey; Wayside Gardens in Mentor, Ohio; Berkeley nurseries of Aldie, Virginia for daffodils (Eudora wrote their name in her copy of Lawrence's *A Southern Garden*); and with G. G. Gerbing of Florida and Fruitland Nurseries of Augusta, Georgia for her beloved camellias.

Eudora wrote to Russell on June 20, 1942, "Something I did turned out to be smart. I wrote to Oakhurst Gardens in California, one of the strange bulb clip joints, and offered to exchange with them – I would send them spider lilies and they could send me something wonderful out of their catalogue. I made it casual and unsuspecting. They wrote back that they would do it but doubted if I wanted to bother since they would only allow me a \$5

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The Restored Eudora Welty Garden.....(continued from page 3)

[per] hundred in exchange, up to 1500 bulbs. I can send him two or three hundred bulbs this year so imagine my delight."

She had written in an earlier missive dated September 30, 1941, "I just bought a magnolia tree and two new camellias – sort of an orphanage, the air base is taking over land where a nursery grew and somebody had to buy the plants or the steam roller would get them. All in all now, counting our old ones, I have 26 camellias, ranging from 10 feet high to seeds, and I intend to cover them all this winter & have an enchantment of bloom." These same camellias grace the Welty garden today, constituting an important collection and a direct link to Eudora.

The Welty garden went through changes after WWII, declining as the author's literary career blossomed. And as Eudora was forced to give less attention to the garden, it began to mirror the concept that many were considering: the garden was meant for peace and ease, not as a time-intensive place for work.

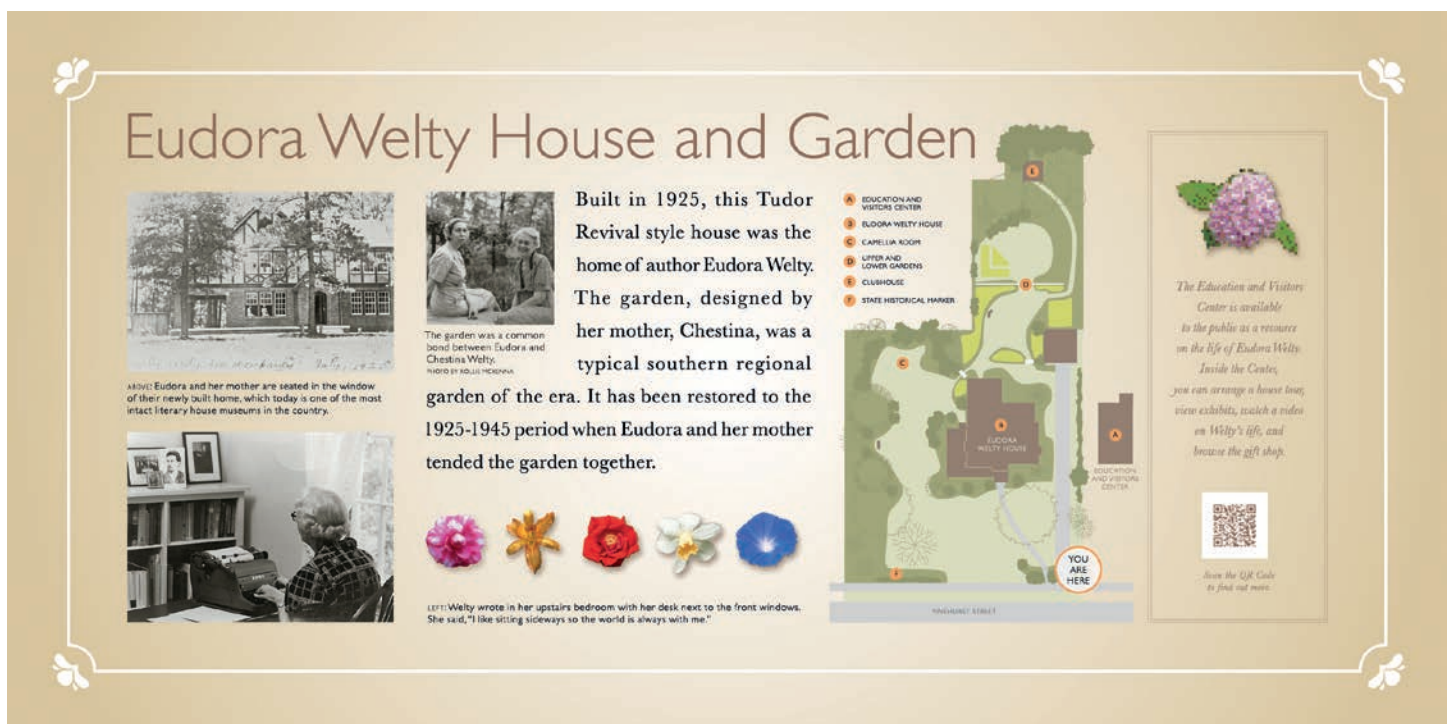
The Washington Post carried articles about Eudora written by her friend, garden columnist Henry Mitchell (who died in 1993). Mitchell was from Memphis, and understood the real reason they both gardened. In "The Dawn Lies

in Wait," Mitchell's last "Essential Earthman" column for the *Post*, he wrote, "The gardener must acquire plants, but amassing treasures is not the aim or the goal. The aim is to peer intensely at all of them, to enjoy the way in which they sprout up and in due season die down." Truly, Eudora

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Garden Blox image from Wayside Gardens Catalogue, 1944.



One of seven new outdoor educational signs.



Photo by Langdon Clay

Upper and Lower Gardens in April 2010.

Eudora Welty: Rose Garden Realist, Storyteller of the South

By Henry Mitchell, the Essential Earthman Garden Column

From *The Washington Post*, August 13, 1972 (written after *The Optimist's Daughter* was published, the novel for which Eudora won the Pulitzer Prize).

She still lives in the new Welty brick house (built scarcely 50 years ago), with spacious 1920-generous halls. Some of the walls have cracked – Miss Welty says Jackson is built on marl over shifting sands. It is somewhat like a time-lapse earthquake. You resign yourself to repairing cracked walls.

“You wouldn’t know it,” she said, “but this garden was once beautiful. My mother really kept after it.” Both mother and daughter were fine gardeners – the ones that really know, as distinct from the ones that just have masses of color. They used to read V. Sackville-West in the Observer and Elizabeth Lawrence and so on. And from those excellent rungs they went right on up, to a garden that really meant something.

*The year the nematodes came things mainly died. Mrs. Welty was ill – she died in recent years – and Miss Welty was writing *Losing Battles* at home with her and two nurses and laughing a great deal (the book is beyond grief and funny as owls in heaven) and the nurses did not approve of anything.*

And right in the middle of it the nematodes did in the roses, which had been packed in that garden tight as a trunk, but nothing that could be tried availed at all. Miss Welty planted a crabapple at the beginning rose bed to keep her mother from being too much aware of disasters in the main planting.

Ordinarily an attack on her roses would have brought Mrs. Welty right out of the kitchen, as they say, but she was past those battles then. Many treasures went. The old ‘Gloire de Dijon’ and ‘Fortune’s Yellow Climber’ succumbed, and so did even the great ‘Mermaid’. But ‘Saf-rano’, the old tea rose, is blooming yet, and ‘Silver Moon’ pulled through and so did ‘Lady Banks’.

Her characters in her stories are like the roses – some make it, some don’t....

The Restored Eudora Welty Garden.....(continued from page 5)

was a plantswoman, curious and attentive.

Over the past twenty years, I have followed Eudora's strong dictate to me as researcher and garden director: "Don't make the garden something it wasn't." Old garden roses and early hybrid teas have been replanted, and the search is always on for appropriate plants. Identification of original old daylily cultivars, all of which are so similar, is also an ongoing project. The camellia collection is being preserved through cuttings and air layers, assisted by Mississippi State University. Direct seeding of appropriate heirloom annuals is being undertaken as trials by the Garden Club of Jackson, a Garden Club of America member club.

In March of 2014 the Eudora Welty Garden celebrated the tenth anniversary of its opening to the public with a special event and tours highlighting new outdoor educational signs. These signs were donated by SGHS members Evelyn and Michael Jefcoat of Laurel, Mississippi, the major sponsors for every aspect of the garden's restoration.

In the past two years an association with the Landscape Architecture Department of Mississippi State University has instigated a draft management plan, one which will be a living document, edited yearly. I continue to direct the restoration and management of the Welty garden, along with a committed core group of volunteers: The Cereus Weeders.

Finally, my book tour for *One Writer's Garden* has given me the opportunity to be a positive ambassador for Mississippi and to tell the story of Eudora and her garden. I have given over 160 talks since the book's publication, and people have responded with genuine interest and love of early twentieth-century gardens. Reflecting Eudora's passion for learning, our research continues. Mirroring the southern way of passing along flowers, Welty flowers have been shared with local Jackson

hospital patients as well as with parents of pediatric brain tumor patients at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. For after all, as Luther Burbank once commented, "Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful. They are sunshine, food, and medicine to the soul."



Eudora Welty watering her garden.

Printed with permission from Eudora Welty LLC.



Welty Garden camellias.

Photo by Susan Holton

In Print

FLORA ILLUSTRATA: Great Works from the LuEsther T. Mertz Library of The New York Botanical Garden, edited by Susan M. Fraser and Vanessa Bezemer Sellers / Yale University Press, 2014 / hardcover, 320 pages / ISBN-10: 0300196628; ISBN-13: 978-0300196627 / list price \$50

More than eight centuries of knowledge, from the

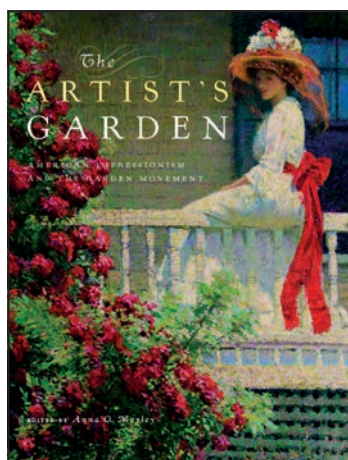
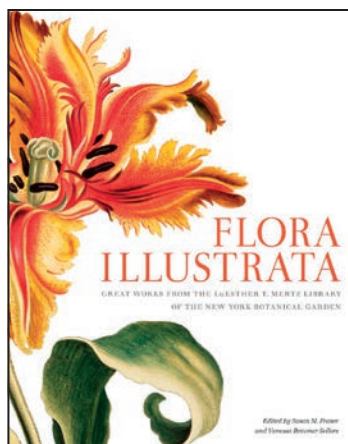
twelfth century to the present, are represented in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library of The New York Botanical Garden collection of over one million items. In this sumptuously illustrated, landmark volume, international experts introduce some of the library's most fascinating works—exceedingly rare books, stunning botanical artworks, handwritten manuscripts, Renaissance herbals, nursery catalogs, explorers' notebooks, and more. The contributors hold

these treasures up for close inspection and offer surprising insights into their histories and importance.

The diverse materials showcased in the volume reflect the creative efforts of eminent explorers, scientists, artists, publishers, and print makers. From the rare, illuminated pages of Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* (1483), to the earliest book ever published on American insects (1797), to lovely etchings of the water gardens at Villa Pratolino in Florence (1600s), the Mertz Library holdings will inspire in readers a new appreciation for the extraordinary history of botany and its far-reaching connections to the worlds of science, books, art, and culture.

The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement, edited by Anna O. Marley. / University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014 / hardcover, 264 pages / ISBN-10: 0812246659; ISBN-13: 978-0812246650 / list price \$45

The Artist's Garden, both publication and exhibition (see Calendar, page 2), is organized around themes of American Artists and European Gardens; the Lady in the Garden, Leisure and Labor in the American Garden; the Urban Garden: the Artist's Garden; and the Garden in Winter/Garden at Rest. Among the artists included are: Hugh Henry Breckinridge, Cecilia Beaux, William Merritt Chase, Charles C. Curran, Maria Oakey Dewing, Frederick Carl Frieseke, Daniel Garber, Philip Leslie Hale, Childe Hassam, Violet Oakley, Jane Peterson, Jessie Wilcox Smith, John H. Twachtman, Robert W. Vonnoh, and J. Alden Weir. The book includes representations of gardens across both the United States and Europe, with special emphasis on the importance of the Philadelphia area, which served as the originator of the Colonial Revival Garden movement with the Centennial Exhibition in 1876 and the Garden Club of America, established in 1913. Moreover, the Philadelphia area was



Philip Leslie Hale (1865-1931), *Crimson Rambler*, ca. 1908, Joseph E. Temple Fund, 1909.¹²

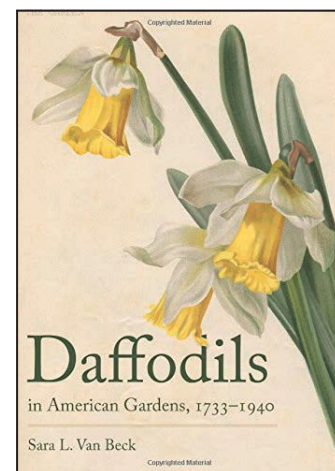
the center of the publishing industry in the early twentieth century, which led to the creation of magazines aimed at middle class suburban gardeners like *House and Garden* (founded in 1901).

Daffodils in American Gardens, 1733-1940, by Sara L. Van Beck / University of South Carolina Press, February 2015 / Hardcover, 360 pages / ISBN-10: 1611174015; ISBN-13: 978-1611174014 / List price \$44.95

This new book by Sara Van Beck examines gardening by era—from the European beginnings; to Colonial, Federal, Antebellum, and Victorian periods; to World War II—with a comprehensive chapter for daffodils in cemetery plantings. Van Beck combines the disparate disciplines of archaeology and plant science to discover and recreate important gardens in the United States. Combining primary research from a variety of rare publications, especially nursery catalogs and seed lists, she integrates old and new scientific botany by correlating older, uncertain scientific terms, common names for the daffodil, and modern taxonomies. Historic and modern botanical illustrations embellish the volume and complement Van Beck's narrative. Case studies of surviving historic gardens from the early Republic era to the twentieth century examine how old daffodils have survived the vagaries of time. Van Beck surveys historic properties in Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Sara Van Beck, horticulturist and plant historian, is an officer of the American Daffodil Society and serves on the board of the Cherokee Garden Library at the Atlanta History Center. Van Beck has worked as a museum curator with the National Park Service and is the former president of the Georgia Daffodil Society. She is co-author of *Daffodils in Florida: A Field Guide to the Coastal South* and has written articles for the *Daffodil Journal* and *Florida Gardening*. Beck is a long-time member of the Southern Garden History Society. She was a presenter at the 2014 SGHS annual meeting in Savannah, Georgia and is a frequent contributor to *Magnolia*.

[Editor's note: a review of *Arthur A. Shurcliff: Design, Preservation, and the Creation of the Colonial Williamsburg Landscape*, by Elizabeth Hope Cushing will appear in the upcoming issue of *Magnolia*.]



Historic Squares of Brunswick, Georgia

By Jerry Spencer*, Brunswick Georgia

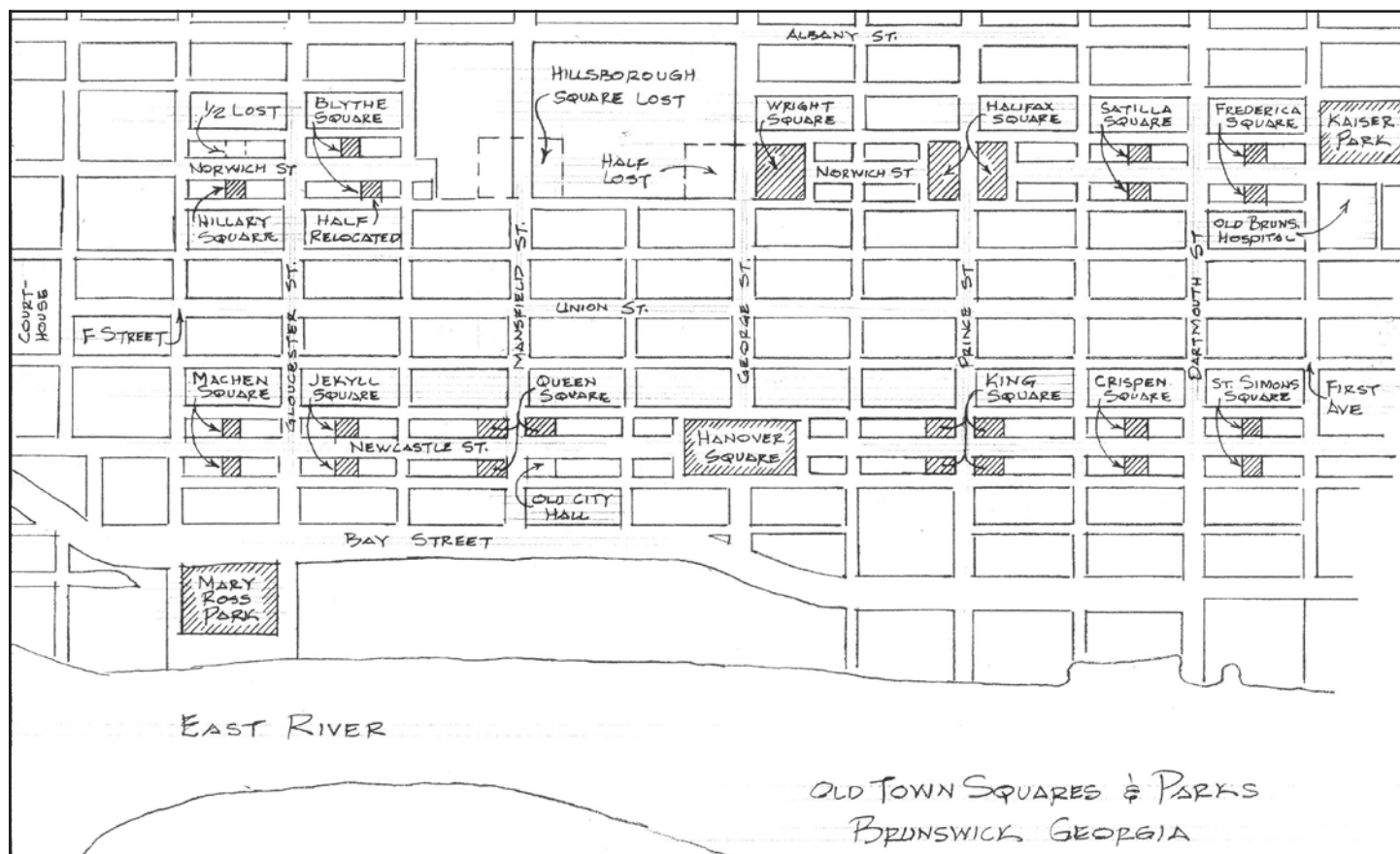
The plan and squares of Savannah (founded 1733) are well known. Few know, however, of the 1771 establishment of Brunswick with a similar plan and squares. Mia Knight Nichols has summed up their story: "The squares of Brunswick have been used, abused, and are now being recognized for their unique place in the history of urban planning. As an evolution of General James Oglethorpe's "London Plan" they are unique in the state of Georgia. The system of squares, grids, and wards was revolutionary in colonial town planning. Their value as public spaces has greatly increased over the last decade as the relevance of the city plan has returned to public prominence."¹

Brunswick has suffered a checkered history, being abandoned during the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. Before residents escaped Union forces, they even burned waterfront facilities. Only at war's end did Brunswick finally become a permanent town. What is now the Old Town Brunswick Historic District was built in a fifty year period from about 1870 to 1920. Pre-Revolutionary street and square names honored the King and House of Hanover, those names surviving revolutionary conflict.

Savannah has twenty-two squares and Brunswick four-

teen; twelve-and-a-half remain. Savannah's squares average about three-quarters to one acre, except the two-acre John-son Square. Brunswick's squares are located on two parallel north-south streets near the East River that connect with St. Simons Sound. Unlike Savannah, sizes of Brunswick's squares varied considerably. There were two four-acre squares in the center of the town plan with remaining squares diminishing in size moving outwards. The smallest squares are ninety-by-ninety feet, in pairs, on opposite sides of the street. Two medium-size squares are divided into four quadrants by two intersecting streets.

More attention was given the four-acre Hanover Square than all other squares combined. The Ladies Park Association led the way in its beautification and, along with later garden clubs, fought for years to keep highways, trolley tracks, and a variety of other public uses out of the square. Hanover Square had a courthouse, a jail, and Masonic Chapel. In the 1880s, the Association successfully petitioned the city to remove these facilities and develop the square as originally intended. Subsequently, the ladies proceeded with construction of a new Victorian "Three Crane" cast iron fountain built in the center of the park, brick walks laid out in Savannah square style, an ornamental iron fence around the perimeter (originally intended to keep roaming livestock out), light fixtures, benches, a bandstand, extensive tree cover, and elaborate landscaping



Map of a portion of Old Town Historic District showing the squares.

in the fashion of the day. With great fanfare, a Confederate monument was built in 1904.

Unfortunately by mid-century the picture was changing. The famous Oglethorpe Hotel built in 1888 was demolished, along with several other historic Brunswick buildings. As well, fences were removed from the squares and, except for sporadic efforts by garden clubs and other citizen groups, maintenance of the squares and parks declined. The fountain in Hanover Square ceased working, and city efforts to salvage it were unsuccessful.

In 2005, however, a turnabout began. With City Commission support, local citizen Julie Martin founded the non-profit organization Signature Squares Inc. devoted to raising private funds to be matched by the city for historically appropriate improvements to Brunswick's squares. (The author joined Signature Squares in 2005 to apply fifty years' experience as a landscape architect to this important community effort.)

Since Signature Squares provided at least half of construction funding, working closely with City Public Works, the organization assumed responsibility for project implementation. Signature Squares' agreement with the mayor of was to make improvements as historically appropriate as could be determined and to build to last fifty years or longer. (Based on those conditions and now "retired," the author donated his services for design, preparation of construction documents, and supervision of construction, thus serving as both designer and general contractor.) The city was already using a prison crew for various construction activities, and they would supply most labor for hard construction on the squares.

Fortunately the correctional officer supervising prisoner labor was highly skilled at construction trades, giving prisoners opportunities to learn related skills. Prison labor made the projects possible due to the limited budgets. For skills beyond the ability of the prison crew, subcontractors came in. Other than large trees planted by nurseries, most planting was done by Signature Squares volunteers. For the first time in a century, light fixtures were installed that were accurate reproductions of the city's late 1800s street and park lights, not a one of which remained when the project began in 2006. Added too were benches, pave-

ment, and plants popular in the Victorian period. All improved squares received irrigation. With Julie Martin taking the lead, Signature Squares received a grant for display panels for each square, showing before and after photos, a summary of a square's history, and the process of restoration.

With enthusiastic support from recently elected Mayor Bryan Thompso, Signature Squares hit the ground running with restoration of the Hanover Square Three Crane fountain and rebuilding 6,000 square feet of original brick walks. Robinson Iron Foundry in Alexander City, Alabama, cast a new Three Crane iron fountain to match the non-salvageable original. Dedication of the completed fountain, brick walks, planting, and irrigation occurred on July 4, 2006. But this was just the beginning. Since Hanover Square was so large, remaining improvements had to spread over several years, during which work on three small squares and related improvements in historic downtown were completed. From 2006 to 2014, phased work occurred in Hanover Square, including tree planting, installation of a well and irrigation system for all four acres, and the addition of twenty light fixtures and twelve benches. The handsome iron fence installed in the 1880s, and relocated to a cemetery in the 1950s, was salvaged and stored at Public Works. Plans are underway to install the entire original perimeter fence to complete the restoration of this historic park.

Signature Square's long-term objective was to concentrate on the squares of a struggling downtown to support the revitalization effort and then move to the edges of the district as resources allowed. In the absence of documented history, volunteers searched for anything of historical importance at each site. Over the years, garden clubs, the Park and Tree Commission, and City Public Works would randomly plant favorite trees or shrubs with no particular order in mind. Signature Squares realized the importance of a strong, simple concept for each square and, when possible, incorporated existing historical elements that were salvageable and worth saving.

The 8,100 square-foot Jekyll Square West was project two. When the Hanover Square fountain was restored,

(continued on page 10)



Photo by Jerry Spencer

Jekyll Square East.



Photo by Jerry Spencer

Hanover Square.

Historic Squares. (continued from page 9)

the lower, century-old bowl of the original three-bowl fountain could be saved, so it was used in Jekyll Square West. There a new fountain was created from the six-foot diameter bowl. Surrounded by herringbone brick pavement, it became this small square's central feature. Victorian light fixtures, benches, and plantings filled out the edges. The Jekyll Square *East* project was an easier undertaking because a hundred-year-old live oak survived at the center. The ground was left undisturbed in a forty by forty foot square around the tree, and then the design carefully wrapped pavement, benches, and lights around the oak.

Blythe Square East, also ninety-by-ninety feet, was located next to the handsome historic First Methodist Church. The square had actually been taken over by the church as a chain-link fenced playground for many years, and few knew it was a public square. When an adjacent car dealership became available, the church bought the property and now owned an entire city block. As a part of their property master planning, church members wanted to bring the square back to public prominence and donated \$10,000 towards its re-creation. There was no known history of how this square looked in the late 1800s. It was decided, therefore, to remove the fence and play equipment and create a simple plan with crossed diagonal walks and a central space for a special feature. Installed too were lights, benches, and planting. (The church now holds many receptions here.)

While Signature Squares was seeking inspiration for the ninety-by-ninety-foot Machen Square East, a woman attending an exhibit at Brunswick's historic Ritz Theater saw a small picture of an old bank and realized some of its remains lay in the saltwater marsh at her house. The Romanesque Revival-style bank, built in 1894 on the edge of Machen Square, featured an elaborate granite façade designed by well-known architect, Albert Eichberg (1859-1921). It was torn down in the 1950s, the granite being used as riprap for marsh erosion control. The exhibit visitor generously offered the stones to Signature Squares. Those rescued included no columns but did encompass three column capitals and three three-foot-square solid granite column bases. Using an octagonal-shaped pool surrounded by brick pavement, the granite bases were placed in a triangle with the column capitals set atop. Water flows from above and cascades down the stones. Additional stones were used for seating, while artifacts from that historic bank were returned to the square. As well, a beautiful, sixty-year-old Southern Magnolia was tucked in the back corner of this small square, a tree planted to honor Bernice Echols Grant upon her retirement (1928-60) as University of Georgia Brunswick Extension Agent.²

Machen Square West encompassed everyone's favorite tree planted over the years. Significant, however, was a forty-foot Canary Island Date Palm with a two-foot diameter trunk. Signature Squares removed the forest surrounding

it and featured the palm. Slightly off center, it was balanced by a cluster of cabbage palms, all being surrounded with brick pavement. Still lacking local history, good fortune appeared again. A local family had rescued one hundred eight-by-eight inch and ten-by-ten inch marble tiles from the grand rotunda of the demolished (in the 1950s) Oglethorpe Hotel and held them for sixty years, hoping to find a good community use. Signature Squares had proved its ability to incorporate valuable historical artifacts in Brunswick's public spaces, and thus the family donated the Oglethorpe tiles. In turn, Julie Martin sold them for \$100 each, with engraving as desired by donors. Proceeds then funded more improvements to the squares. A generous \$165,000 grant from the Delong-Sweet Foundation, moreover, made improvements to Machen Square possible.

Concluding with the most current project, Wright Square makes clear how amazing it is when some unexpected piece of history influences square development. In the center of the town plan were two four-acre squares, Hanover Square, previously described, and Wright Square, only recently available. As noted by William Weeks: "Between 1913 and 1920 Wright Square was bisected with the opening of George Street, deviating from the original 1771 town plan."³ In 1953, the City Commission unwisely deeded the North half of the square to the Board of Education (BOE) on which they built a middle school. Used for sixty years, it was demolished and the land deeded back to the city in 2012. After demolition, it was confirmed the school had been built on a burial ground (not a planned cemetery) dating to the late 1700s and used until 1840 when an official city cemetery was established. Brunswick's city manager, an avid archaeologist, guided preliminary investigation of this burial ground. Of the approximately sixty-five to seventy-five graves, thirty-seven were precisely located by GPS and will now be featured in this large square.⁴

Unfortunately the adjacent Glynn Academy High School was completing improvements that affected the edges of Wright Square.⁵ Reflecting careful coordination between the mayor and BOE superintendent, however, the BOE architect in order to reestablish original square boundaries sensitively recreated the road that had been removed from two sides of the square. The BOE is now building this road, which will serve both the school and the square. As of 2014, planning for the square is just beginning with the intent of removing the bisecting road. Ultimately it will feature the old burial ground and create a central element in scale with the size and importance of Wright Square.

Signature Squares has worked for nine years to complete four squares, and plans are on the drawing board for more. The organization's objective is to complete all eight-and-a-half remaining squares. The community has received

the improved squares well received, and there has been full support of the city administration. For more information and photos, visit: www.signaturesquares.org/ Look forward to more articles in *Magnolia* as work progressed.

**After graduating from Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1964, Jerry Spencer practiced in Boston four years, Savannah twenty years, and for the last twenty-one years with the Sea Island Company, a resort on the coast of Georgia.*

The author thanks Leslie Faulkenberry for her expertise in researching history and editing skills.

Endnotes

- 1 "The History of the Development of the Six Major 'London Plan' Squares in Brunswick GA and a Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Proposal for Hanover Square," Mia Knight Nich-

- ols, Savannah College of Art and Design, May 2003, page 73.
- 2 Bernice Grant was a leader in establishing 4-H clubs, had created three new garden clubs, had chaired the Brunswick Park and Tree Commission for twenty-three years, was active in saltwater marsh preservation, and was instrumental in getting 1949 state enabling legislation passed to create and protect the "Marshes of Glynn Park" near downtown. This included the Live Oak under which poet Sidney Lanier was inspired to write his famous poem, "The Marshes of Glynn." Bernice Grant died at age ninety nine and at her request; her ashes were spread in the Marshes of Glynn Park.
- 3 "Wright Square Burial Ground, Brunswick, GA," [9GN407], William M. Weeks, Research Associate, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, February 2013, page 2.
- 4 Ibid. page 35.4.
- 5 The High School is itself a historic complex on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Arcadian Gardener

Greg Grant, Arcadia, Texas

Roots run deep in the South. Eudora Welty once said "A place that ever was lived in is like a fire that never goes out. It flares up, it smolders for a time, it is fanned or smothered by circumstance, but its being is intact, forever fluttering within it..." My roots run especially deep through the time I spent with my maternal grandparents in their tin-roofed farmhouse in the rural Deep East Texas community of Arcadia. My grandmother, Georgia Marquette Emanis, and grandfather, Rebel Eloy Emanis, were poor but their farm was a treasure trove to me. It was on their porch swing where I was first intoxicated by the blossoming crinum lilies, cape jessamine, four o'clock, mimosa, and my beloved jonquils.

The love of my grandparents' home site is what brought me back to this place of my ancestors. I'm the seventh generation of my family to live in Arcadia, the fifth in the same house. I was determined to restore it to its original condition and eventually did.

I mostly grow old-fashioned cottage garden plants that have descended through my ancestors, pass-a-long plants from friends, and plants that I've developed and introduced to the Southern nursery trade. I'm especially fond of *Narcissus*, my first floral love.

Thanks to encouragement by past SGHS president Staci Catron and precedence by my late dear friend Flora Ann Bynum, I'm starting a new column for *Magnolia* that will cover the heirloom bulbs and other plants I inherited in Arcadia along with those I've collected throughout my convoluted horticultural career. This column will be far from scientific or scholarly, but it is my hope that it will drive conversations among SGHS members interested in preserving heirloom flowers.

Greg Grant is a horticulturist at the Stephen F. Austin State University Pineywoods Native Plant Center in Nacogdoches, Texas; co-author of Heirloom Gardening in the South; and a lifetime member of the Southern Garden History Society.



Emanis House front with quilts.



Arcadia 2014.

Photos by Greg Grant



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The **Flora Ann Bynum Award** is the highest award bestowed by the Southern Garden History Society. It is not awarded annually, but only occasionally to recipients who have rendered outstanding service to the society. Nominations may be made at any time by any member. The award will usually be presented at the annual meeting.

The title **Honorary Director** (Board of Directors) may be bestowed on individuals who have rendered exceptional service and made significant contributions to the society. Nominations for Honorary Director are made to the President by current Board members and are approved by the Board of Directors.

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Details, requirements, and directions for submitting applications are posted on the SGHS Web site: www.southerngardenhistory.org. For those without internet access, a copy of this document can be mailed or faxed. Contact Peggy Cornett, Magnolia editor.

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The society's membership year is from **August 1—July 31**. The membership secretary will mail renewal notices in the summer for the 2014-2015 year. Membership categories:

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Editor:

Peggy Cornett
Monticello, P.O.B. 316
Charlottesville, VA 22902
(434) 984-9816
Cell (434) 465-5297
pcornett@monticello.org

Associate Editors:

Kenneth M. McFarland
814 Marye Street
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
(540) 373-5029
kennethm.mcfarland@gmail.com

Staci Catron
Cherokee Garden Library, AHC
130 W. Paces Ferry Rd., NW
Atlanta, GA 30305
(404) 814-4046
scatron@atlantahistorycenter.com

Book Review Editor:

Davyd Foard Hood
Isinglass
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Vale, NC 28168
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