



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

# Magnolia

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## “Welcome to the City of Flowers!”

### *A Brief Landscape History of Baton Rouge*

By John Sykes, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

You can learn a lot about a place by knowing what it likes to call itself. A catch phrase or slogan puts you immediately back into a moment in time in a city's history. Sometimes these phrases embody more than just a Chamber of Commerce dream slogan—but give us a real idea of an area's identity. New Richmond and West Florida are some of the many names we've called this place. At other times in our history you would have heard: Welcome to the City of Flowers! Greetings from the Camellia City! Ahoy! The Seventh Port!

The earliest European account of the area come from Iberville's expedition in March 1699 which they described: “We found here several cabins covered with palmetto leaves, made by the Houmas, who come here to hunt and fish. They have even planted a pole 30 ft high, on which were the bloody heads of fish.”<sup>1</sup> French settlement was sparse in this area, and in 1763, following the French and Indian War; this area became part of the British Empire. A new wave of Anglo settlers arrived, bringing English customs and religion. They renamed this place New Richmond and established a fort here. Taking advantage of the British preoccupation with those pesky thirteen colonies, Spanish Governor Bernardo de Galvez moved on the British forces here in September 1779—and successfully routed the British control. The area was then part of Spanish West Florida with a district headquarters here. The Louisiana Purchase left us out—the new territory included the west side of the Mississippi and the Isle of Orleans. Spain wanted to retain some control of the valuable Mississippi River. In 1805, the small town of Baton Rouge grew with a settlement for displaced



View of the North Boulevard Park looking East, about 1902.

Canary Islanders called Spanish Town. In 1806, General Beauregard subdivided his plantation into a grand scheme for a new suburb—Beauregard Town—with broad, tree-lined boulevards, squares for public parks, and government buildings. The basic street plan survives today, but with the loss of most of the public squares, which were later subdivided and sold.

With a mixture of French, Spanish and Anglo settlers, it was the English residents who especially chaffed over Spanish control. When the Spanish Empire was struggling against Napoleon, locals decided to strike out and form

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# CALENDAR

Please visit the SGHS Web site, [www.southerngardenhistory.org](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org), for a complete and more detailed calendar with links to individual Web sites.

**August 26–29, 2011. 63rd Garden Writers Association Annual Meeting**, Indianapolis, IN. [www.gardenwriters.org](http://www.gardenwriters.org).

**September 16-17, 2011. 5th Annual Heritage Harvest Festival at Monticello, co-sponsored by Southern Exposure Seed Exchange**, Charlottesville, VA. A family-oriented program on sustainable gardening, heirloom plants, seed saving, garden history, heritage foodways, and much more. P. Allen Smith is the keynote speaker. [www.HeritageHarvestFestival.com](http://www.HeritageHarvestFestival.com).

**September 22-24, 2011. 18th Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens & Landscapes, “A New World: Naturalists and Artists in the American South,” co-sponsored by Old Salem Museums & Gardens, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, and Southern Garden History Society**, Winston-Salem, NC. Speakers: Andrea Wulf, Joel T. Fry, Gary Mullen, Kathryn Holland Braund, Charles Williams, Peter Hatch, James Reveal, and Bob McCartney. Contact Sally Gant, [sgant@oldsalem.org](mailto:sgant@oldsalem.org), [www.oldsalem.org](http://www.oldsalem.org).

**October 12, 2011. The Cherokee Garden Library at the Atlanta History Center will host the traveling exhibition, *Nature’s Beloved Son: Rediscovering John Muir’s Botanical Legacy*, October 12-December 4, 2011, McElreath Hall, Atlanta History Center.** An Opening Event for *Nature’s Beloved Son*, featuring Muir authority and author Dr. Bonnie Gisell. *In every walk with Nature one receives far more than one seeks. - John Muir.* For reservations, (404) 814-4046 or [scatron@atlantahistorycenter.com](mailto:scatron@atlantahistorycenter.com); for more information, [www.AtlantaHistoryCenter.com](http://www.AtlantaHistoryCenter.com).

**October 14 & 15, 2011. 23rd Annual Southern Garden Symposium & Workshops** in St. Francisville, LA. Highlights include Birmingham’s floral designer Sybil Sylvester and old garden tools by Guillaume Pellerin of Normandy, France. Notable speakers include M. Lindsay Bierman, Editor-in-Chief, *Southern Living* and Linda Gay, Director, Mercer Arboretum, Houston, TX. Two private gardens, Wyoming Plantation and White’s

Cottage, will open for the Speakers’ Gala and Saturday Tea respectively. [www.southerngardensymposium.org](http://www.southerngardensymposium.org).

**October 20-21, 2011. “Always in Season: Ornamental and Edible Garden Design,” Winghaven 2011 Symposium**, Charlotte, NC, featuring Mary Palmer and Hugh Dargan, ASLA, Dargan Landscape Architects and Jennifer Bartley, American Potager, LLC. Two lectures, book signings, three garden studies, and a day-long garden design workshop with three distinguished pros! [www.winghavengardens.com](http://www.winghavengardens.com).

**October 22 & 23, 2011. “Reading the Landscape at Stratford Hall,” 4th Annual Northern Neck Cultural Landscape Symposium**, Stratford, VA. *A rich and beautiful book is always open before us. We have but to learn to read it—J. B. Jackson, 1951.* This two-day residential symposium features two distinctive approaches to landscape analysis. The annual symposium is a collaborative venture of Stratford Hall, the University of Georgia, College of Environment and Design, and landscape architects from The Jaeger Company. Contact Jon Bachman at 804-493-8038, ext. 7787.

**November 3-4, 2011. “On the Ground: Putting Preservation into Practice,” 2011 Historic Landscape Symposium, a Regional Meeting of the American Public Gardens Association**, hosted by Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, FL. This symposium will provide you contact with the tools and resources needed to make informed decisions, develop a game plan, and then put those principles into practice. Keynote speaker, William Noble, Garden Conservancy. Visit [info@publicgardens.org](mailto:info@publicgardens.org) for updates.

**November 18, 2011. “Second Wave of Modernism II: Landscape Complexity and Transformation,” presented by the Cultural Landscape Foundation in concert with The Museum of Modern Art**, New York City, NY. To investigate this significant evolution of professional practice, three groups of thematic presentations have been assembled that will collectively explore landscape transformations at residential, urban, and metropolitan scales. For information visit: [tclf.org](http://tclf.org)



## "Welcome to the City of Flowers!".....(continued from page 1)

their own Republic of West Florida in September 1810. The little country had its own president, Virginia-born Fulwar Skipwith (and cousin to Thomas Jefferson), its own declaration of independence and a constitution. The Republic lasted only 74 days before President Madison put an end to our delusions of grandeur—and annexed West Florida as part of Louisiana Territory, which became the new state of Louisiana in 1812. Baton Rouge, as a town, was finally incorporated in 1817. In 1822, the town was described as “pleasantly situated on a high and handsome bluff, on the east bank of the Mississippi, about one hundred and twenty miles above New Orleans, and in the parish of East Baton Rouge, of which it is the seat of justice. The hill on which the town is located is the first high land which is met with upon ascending the river from

its mouth, and is universally admitted to be one of the healthiest spots on the lower Mississippi. The boulevard, on which is located the market-house and a branch of the Louisiana State Bank, is one hundred and twenty feet wide. The streets, which are fifty and sixty feet in width, are regularly laid out, crossing each other at right angles, and generally planted with rows of China trees, which not only adds much to the beauty of the village, but affords an agreeable and pleasant shade. A considerable portion of the inhabitants are Americans....the houses are principally frame buildings, many of which are neatly painted, and have handsomely enclosed and well cultivated gardens attached to them.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1846, the State Legislature named Baton Rouge as the capitol. The relative quiet and small town atmosphere gave newspaper editors hope that legislators would come to Baton Rouge and work, and not play. A new Capitol building, designed by architect James Dakin, was finished in January 1850.<sup>3</sup> In 1852, the legislature finally considered improving the grounds—the first effort being

a massive cast iron fence. By 1854, Thomas Affleck of Mississippi was hired to landscape the grounds with ornamental trees and flowers. The design included brick walks and a terrace leading down the hill towards the river.

In October 1852, the City council purchased 17 acres on the eastern edge of the city limits for a public cemetery. Named “Magnolia Cemetery,” the area was laid out in a rectilinear fashion for lots divided by paths and roads. The original surveyors encouraged the city to preserve the existing oak trees on the property and plant *Laurea Mundi* (or “wild peach”) to form an evergreen boundary around the enclosure.<sup>4</sup> Each path and street within the Cemetery was named appropriately—the main road being The Valley of the Shadow of Death,

which crossed paths named Path of the Blessed, Path of Thorns, Path of Flowers, and The Narrow Path. A picket fence was added in 1869, and an iron fence was added in installments, finally enclosing the cemetery entirely in October 1909.<sup>5</sup>

In May 1867, the Federal officials negotiated for land across Florida Street from Magnolia for a National Cemetery.<sup>6</sup> Within a year, the local newspaper praised the superintendent’s work: “Captain Fletcher is rapidly improving the National Cemetery at this place. Hundreds of evergreens, consisting of holly, wild peach, and bays are being carefully planted. The walks will be graveled and a mound raised in the centre.”<sup>7</sup> In February 1879, the large brick wall was constructed to enclose the cemetery.<sup>8</sup>

The most impressive private garden in post-Civil War Baton Rouge was at the Garig House. Built in 1874, the house was a raised house built of brick, covered in stucco which was incised and painted to resemble large blocks of stone. The original section had six large rooms on each

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*A Flower-themed postcard of Baton Rouge, ca. 1905.*

## "Welcome to the City of Flowers!".....(continued from page 3)

level—the principal story being the second floor. In 1883, an addition was added which gave the house 12 bedrooms, each with its own bathroom, two libraries, parlor, sun parlor, dining room, kitchen, and servant's wing. Most impressive was the terraced garden which was at the rear of the house. The owner, William Garig, a self-made millionaire, was a descendant of early German settlers in the area.

T. Sambola Jones, the editor of the *Daily Advocate*, bragged in April 1902 that: "Baton Rouge is the fairest spot in the South and North Boulevard is its Parlor floor."<sup>9</sup> The neutral ground of North Boulevard was the city's earliest park area. During the antebellum period, farmers and peddlers often spilled out from the nearby City Market to offer goods for sale. Most likely, you'd find cows and chickens grazing in the area. The construction of a U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in 1899 on the Boulevard led to a wave of improvements—new ornamental trees and band stand for concerts. The Women's Christian Temperance Union presented in 1914 a statue of Hebe with a fountain which had four drinking fountains that dispensed ice cold water. A circular pool surrounding the statue provided water for birds and animals. The use of Hebe, "the cup-bearer of the Gods," was an ironic choice for the city's temperance advocates. In October 1915, little Naomi Sterheim, the five-year-old daughter of Rabbi Sternheim, was given the honor of throwing the switch lighting the city's latest municipal improvements—lights along North Boulevard and a large electric sign to welcome visitors to the city. The sign read "Welcome to the Highlands—Baton Rouge," and to the uninitiated, which meant any who had ever lived among mountains, thought the Highlands must be the name

of a hotel, for they didn't see any high land to speak of. Actually the sign bragged of the fact that Baton Rouge was located on the first high grounds north up the Mississippi River.<sup>10</sup>

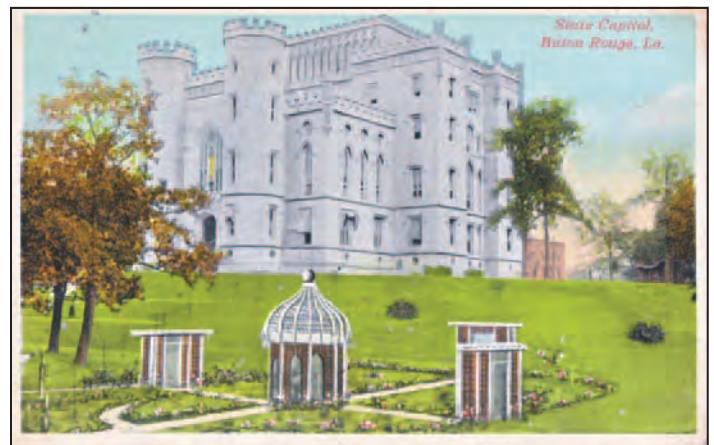
*Nineteenth-century postcards from the author's private collection.*

### (Endnotes)

- 1 Evelyn M. Thom, *The Baton Rouge Story* (Baton Rouge: Foundation for Historical Louisiana, 1967, 3)
- 2 *The Republic* (Baton Rouge) April 9, 1822, 3:1.
- 3 Carol K. Haase, *Louisiana's Old State Capitol*, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co, 2009.), 16-17.
- 4 *Baton Rouge Gazette*, October 2, 1852, 2:4
- 5 Edythe Gelpi, "Magnolia Cemetery," *Morning Advocate Magazine*, August 17, 1852, 6-7.
- 6 Charles East, "National Cemetery Graves Reflect BR History," *State-Times*, January 23, 1959, 1.
- 7 *Tri-Weekly Advocate* (Baton Rouge), January 8, 1868, 2:1.
- 8 *Weekly Advocate* (Baton Rouge), February 7, 1879, 3:1.
- 9 *Daily Advocate* (Baton Rouge), April 24, 1902, 2.
- 10 *State-Times*, October 21, 1915; *Morning Advocate*, November 2, 1961.



*The magnificent terraced garden of the 1874 William Garig House. Photograph is from the Elk's Souvenir of Baton Rouge (1901)*



*State Capitol and garden, ca. 1910.*



*National Cemetery, Baton Rouge, La., about 1907.*



# "River Capitol: Bridging Landscapes of the Old and New South," SGHS Annual Meeting Review

By Staci L. Catron, Atlanta, Georgia

For the 29th annual meeting, Southern Garden History Society members journeyed to the river capitol of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to learn about the medley of influences on the architecture and landscapes of the state's capitol as well as nearby St. Francisville and Pointe Coupee Parish. Baton Rouge has been shaped by a variety of cultural influences including Native American, Spanish, English, French, African American, Caribbean, Cajun, and Creole, as well as environmental factors—its location on the first bluff upriver from the Mississippi River Delta and its relationship with the petro-chemical industry since the mid-twentieth century. Annual meeting coordinators Marion Drummond, Anne Legett, and John Sykes worked with local colleagues and volunteers to offer an intriguing three-day educational experience coupled with the delightful openness, graciousness, and charm of the people of Louisiana.

The meeting began after the lunch hour on Friday, April 1, in the Heidelberg Ballroom at the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center (the Historic Hotel Heidelberg built in 1927). The session opened with the Society's annual business meeting led by President Dean Norton followed by six lectures, which provided attendees knowledge about the area's landscape history, some of the key players who shaped its history, and plants significant to the region. Louisiana State Museum's John Sykes shared an overview of the city's evolving landscapes from the late eighteenth century to the 1930s, using historic maps, postcards, photographs, and quotes to show Baton Rouge's transformation from a small river port town to a thriving State Capitol and later petro-chemical center. LSU's Associate Professor of Oceanography Richard Confrey, Ph.D., discussed the fascinating story of early ecologist, Jesuit scholar, and explorer Father Pierre François-Xavier de Charlevoix, who investigated and studied the principal plants of the lower Mississippi River on the eve of conquest in 1722. Charlevoix's detailed notes and scientific observations were eventually published in his seminal work, *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle-France* (Paris, 1744). Next, Senior Botanist Charles M. Allen, Ph.D., (Colorado State University stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana) gave a hands-on presentation with fresh and dried samples of edible and useful plants of the Gulf South. Participants rushed to sample freshly brewed teas (blackberry young stem tips, sassafras roots, persimmon leaves among them) and to graze on the salad plants, such as chickweed leaves, silver bell leaves, and sow thistle



Photo by Staci Catron

Meeting coordinators Anne Legett, John Sykes, and Marion Drummond.

leaves. Gaston Lanoux III gave the audience a glimpse into the amazing life and contributions of the self-taught botanist Margie Jenkins, whose love and devotion to Louisiana's native plants is known the world over. SGHS Members were fortunate to meet "Miss Margie" at the meeting who, at the young age of 90, is still propagating and promoting Louisiana's rich palette of native plants, including *Leucothoe axillaris* 'Margie Jenkins,' the best cultivar of coastal leucothoe for the south. Next, LSU Emerita of landscape architecture Suzanne Turner, FASLA, discussed the intriguing life of Steele Burden (1900-1995), an artist, a raconteur, and a landscape designer (self-proclaimed lifelong "yardman") who left a legacy throughout the Baton Rouge community, most notably at Windrush Plantation, in private residential landscapes, and on the campus of LSU. Three dimensional gardens that featured shade, axiality, and sculpture were hallmarks of a Steele Burden design. The afternoon closed with a talk by LSU professor of horticulture Jeff Kuehny, Ph. D., who discussed the history and restoration of Windrush Gardens—including the gardens riveting "come back" story since Hurricane Gustav ravaged the property in 2008. Friday evening culminated in a lovely evening social and supper at the Louisiana State Museum (and specialty cocktails of "Moonlight on the Mississippi" and "Art Hop Pop.")

Over 70 early risers met John Sykes and Marion Drummond on Saturday morning for a stroll to the gardens of the famous Louisiana State Capitol (1932) and through the city's oldest neighborhood, the Spanish Town Historic District. Special offerings in Spanish Town were the delightfully eclectic garden of June Burwell Peay (1922 Arts and Crafts bungalow) and the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

## River Capitol:..... (continued from page 5)

Classical Revival style town house, the Stewart-Dougherty House, whose owners have embarked on a restoration of the twentieth-century garden designed by Steele Burden. Next up was a trip to Magnolia Mound Plantation, situated on a high ridge along the Mississippi River. The main house (c. 1790s) is one of the few surviving French plantation houses in the Baton Rouge region. The Baton Rouge Recreation and Parks Commission owns and operates the 16-acre property. The rare furniture, decorative objects, and artifacts shown in the main house and outer buildings are owned and maintained by the Friends of Magnolia Mound Plantation, Inc. This group also provides financial and advisory assistance in the care of the Kitchen Garden and the many educational offerings at the site in concert with the plantation staff in the implementation of the master plan. Magnolia Mound's mission is to illustrate and interpret the lifestyle of not only the French Creoles who formed the fascinating culture which still influences and pervades life in southern Louisiana, but also to demonstrate how slaves lived from day-to-day during this time. Following an extensive tour of this historic site, members lunched in the open air and were given a kind parting gift from the Friends, a booklet entitled *A Year in the Garden: a Monthly Gardening Guide for the Gulf South*. Next was a drive through a section of the impressive Louisiana State University campus followed by a visit just two blocks from the south gates of LSU to one of the oldest cemeteries within the city limits—Highland Cemetery, dating to c. 1813. The Sexton Kenny Kleinpeter, was our tour guide. Historic Highland Cemetery, Inc. is the friends group working to restore and document this rare cemetery. The day then led members to Chêne Vert. The exquisite private property, owned and cared for by Wayne and Cheryl Stromeyer, features a restored Creole plantation house (c. 1825-1830, built by Benoit Vanhille) originally located in the Opelousas-Washington area about 60 miles away where it had been



Photo by Peggy Cornett

*The elaborate parterre gardens at Chêne Vert, the home of Wayne and Cheryl Stromeyer.*

abandoned for over 35 years. The home contains the owners' exceptional collection of early Louisiana antiques. Attendees were given special tours inside the home by renowned art historian H. Parrott "Pat" Bacot, one of the authors of the 2010 volume, *Furnishing Louisiana: Creole and Acadian Furniture, 1735 to 1835*, and his wife, Barbara SoRelle Bacot. Outer buildings near the main house include an early nineteenth-century Acadian type house that serves as a garçonnière and a late-nineteenth-century kitchen. The centerpiece of Chêne Vert is its elaborate parterre garden filled with antique roses and pass-along plants. The formal garden is viewed from the upper gallery of the plantation house as well as along the gravel paths. The design was partially based on a c. 1845 New Orleans Notarial Archives drawing of a house and garden in the French Quarter.

Saturday afternoon brought participants to the LSU Rural Life Museum to hear lectures by landscape designer Michael Hopping and author Randy Harelson. Harelson, a horticulturist and writer, discussed the landscape history of Pointe Coupee Parish, including the division of the land in the early 1700s into long lots by the French and the critical role sugar cane continues to play in the parish. Harelson also shared his personal quest to restore the LeJeune House, a nineteenth-century plantation home and grounds in the New Roads area of the parish in recent years. Hopping, an Oklahoma native and horticulturist, discussed his journey from the Oklahoma prairie to Louisiana in 1971 to attend graduate school at LSU. Landscape designer Steele Burden and architect A. Hays Town taught Hopping about the Louisiana landscape, and greatly influenced his landscape design work. His work was also shaped by exploring the back roads of Louisiana to study old plantation houses, gardens, and cemeteries. Hopping has completed a major restoration of an antebellum home in German influenced St. James Parish



Photo by Linda Askey

*Sunday tours to Pointe Coupee Parish included a visit to Suzanne Turner's 1830 early Creole house, Chez Coteau.*



and continues to develop his garden there.

Following the afternoon lectures, Society members toured the fascinating holdings at the LSU Rural Life Museum that houses the largest collection of Louisiana vernacular architecture and most extensive collection of material culture artifacts from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century. Attendees saw a dogtrot house, stoker barn, corncrib, jail, 4-hole outhouse, sick house, blacksmith's shop, smokehouse, commissary, sugarcane grinder, slave cabins, grist mill, and a split cypress barn, among many others. Inside the visitor's center and large barn, members viewed displays of tools, utensils, furniture, farming equipment, carriages, funerary objects, clothing, quilts, artwork, and much more that tell the story of the diverse cultures that settled and farmed preindustrial Louisiana. Adjacent to the Rural Life Museum, members also had the pleasure of touring Windrush House and its unique, serene, and extraordinary Windrush Gardens, the life's work of designer and artist Steele Burden, who started the garden in 1921 and expanded it until his death in 1995. Burden and his sister, Easter Ione Burden donated over 450 acres of Windrush to LSU over time along with his immense collection of rural objects to tell the story of the vernacular rural agriculture life of the region. Curator of Windrush Gardens Peggy Cox has worked passionately and diligently since 2002 to care for these gardens. With the guidance of a Cultural Landscape Report prepared by Suzanne Turner and Associates, a small team (Peggy Cox, Jeff Keuhny, Jane Paccamonti, and others) have been implementing the master plan for Burden Center even with the devastation of Gustav in 2008. The evening concluded with an energetic talk by renowned Chef John Folse followed by a sumptuous supper that highlighted the regional cuisine. A few minutes were also given for the Society's President Dean Norton to award Jim Cothran the Society's prestigious Certificate of Merit for his lifetime of dedication to the study of southern garden history and the preservation of historic gardens and landscapes in the South.

Sunday morning led members to either Pointe Coupee Parish or St. Francisville to explore more of the region's stunning architecture and landscapes. Randy Harelson coordinated a delightful day in Pointe Coupee. Highlights from the Pointe Coupee Parish outing included the 1830 early Creole house, Chez Coteau, with its fruit orchard and kitchen garden created by Suzanne Turner and based upon nineteenth-century measured drawings from the New Orleans area; and a drive through Alma Plantation, an operating sugar mill, producing raw sugar and black strap molasses (David Stewart, owner, opened one of the sugar houses so we could see the mounds of raw sugar.); the Pointe Coupee Museum on the edge of the False River; a quick stop at Madeline and David Breidenbach's to view the Randall Oak, one of the largest and most grand oaks



Photo by Linda Askey

*The Randall Oak, one of the largest live oaks in the South, at the home of Madeline and David Breidenbach.*

in the South and the site of poet John Ryder Randall's "Maryland, My Maryland" (1861); the extensive gardens (bald cypress trees, lush beds filled with native plants, playful flower beds, and round herb garden) of Ms. Sarita Bouanchaud's and a visit to her daughter's nearby grand home (Her daughter Sara and Kevin Gummow live in the "old Bouanchaud Home" ca. 1913.); and exploring the property at the grand Lejeune House and dining for lunch in high style as well (not to mention being spoiled with parting gifts with local treats).

## *The St. Francisville Outing*

*By Dean Norton, Mount Vernon, Virginia*

A second Sunday tour left the Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center for St. Francisville. The group was led and entertained by LSU-educated landscape architect Wanda Chase. On our way to the first destination, Chase shared wonderful stories about her rich family history and the fascinating history of that region of Louisiana. The first stop was a developing botanical garden being created along the back wash banks of the Mississippi by her uncle Walter Imahara. The Imahara Botanical Garden features a four-tier pond and collections of crape myrtles, magnolias, and hollies. Waving goodbye to the very proud Imahara family, we were off to lunch at the beautiful and romantic style bed and breakfast nestled in remote St. Francisville called Rosemound Gardens. We were treated to a lovely lunch and had the opportunity to learn more about the property and gardens from the owners Jim and Susan Roland. The tour ended at the intriguing and beautiful gardens of Afton Villa. There, we were treated to a personal tour by the owner Genevieve Munson Trimble. The trip back to Baton Rouge was quiet with a few nodding off, but all of us reflected on the adventure to St. Francisville and the thrill for all of us to have experienced Baton Rouge, Louisiana through the stellar 29th annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society.

# Book Reviews

***Houston's Silent Garden: Glenwood Cemetery, 1871-2009***, by Suzanne Turner and Joanne Seale Wilson, with photographs by Paul Hester. Texas A&M University Press, 304 pages, ISBN-10: 1603441638; ISBN-13: 978-1603441636; 2010, list price \$60

For far too long the South's important nineteenth-century garden cemeteries have remained a peripheral interest of its landscape historians. The causes of this inattention are not unlike those which affect American garden and landscape history generally, namely the small number of scholars addressing a field in which cemetery design is low on the hierarchy of scholarly interests. There is also the matter of survival--and integrity. Although virtually none retain the horticultural richness they enjoyed at the height of their popularity, reflecting both changes in taste and reduced expenditures for replanting and maintenance, a relatively small number retain both their plans, significant plant materials, and furnishings, while others, like Oakland in Atlanta and Spring Hill in Lynchburg to name but two, have been systemically diminished by the decisions of their stewards and the forces of nature. A small, rare group of survivals, including Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Cave Hill in Lexington, and Oakdale in Wilmington, have long been recognized. Another small number, including Thornrose in Staunton, Virginia, have remained locally appreciated but little-known beyond their area. Until now, Houston's Glenwood Cemetery, has languished in that category of historic landscapes deserving study and recognition.

A splendid new book, *Houston's Silent Garden: Glenwood Cemetery, 1871-2009*, altogether satisfies that need. Its authors, Suzanne Turner and Joanne Seale Wilson, bring a remarkable combination of skills to their collaboration, those of a landscape architect, an architectural historian, historic preservationists, and landscape historians. Their erudite, easily readable text is supplemented by handsome color photographs by Paul Hester, apparently commissioned for this publication, and a wealth of documentary plans, black and white period photographs, and a series of twelve postal views made in about 1907-1908 of Glenwood by a photographer known only as "Allen."



*Houston's Silent Garden* is well-designed, handsomely produced, and an important contribution to American landscape history. Its achievement is two-fold: it serves its subject well, introducing readers to a landscape that was little known nationally until now and gaining their admiration, and it accomplishes this in a format that is a model for the successful treatment of like cemetery landscapes in the South and beyond. The narrative history of the cemetery is told in four opening chapters that comprise about one-half of the book's pages. The design and planting of the cemetery beginning with its concept as a picturesque landscape, is addressed in the fifth chapter, "Glenwood's Landscape Character: Styles of the Times." Glenwood's distinguished monuments, funerary art, and sculpture, making the graves of some 16,000-plus burials are represented in a long separate chapter with large-format illustrations. The concluding section, "A Houston Community," comprises biographical sketches of many of Houston's leading citizens interred in its lush green grounds. The text is preceded by a valuable, multi-page chronology, which begins in 1794 with the publication of Uvedale Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* and carries to the adoption of a cemetery master plan in 2007. It traces Glenwood's development in a larger historic context and, appropriately, in a timeline that effectively parallels the evolution of Houston from its roots as an agricultural and small-scale manufacturing center to its long twentieth-century history as a metropolis of the international petroleum industry.

Established in 1871, Glenwood Cemetery is one of the youngest of America's important garden cemeteries, but no less significant for its late status. The authors first outline the development of the rural cemetery movement, paying homage to Père Lachaise opened in 1804 in Paris, and then address the creation of the three major American garden cemeteries in the 1830s: Mt. Auburn in Cambridge/Boston, Laurel Hill in Philadelphia, and Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn/New York. Individually, and collectively, all had an extraordinary impact on American landscape and municipal history, and they were soon joined by like burying grounds in both smaller and Southern cities. Leading citizens in Baltimore succeeded first, in 1839, with Greenmount Cemetery. Local initiatives in Richmond, Louisville, and Washington, D.C., supported the creation of Hollywood Cemetery in 1847, Cave Hill in 1848, and Oak Hill Cemetery in 1849, respectively. These three, others in the 1840s, and many more organized in the 1850s enjoyed the literary underpinnings of Andrew Jackson Davis's *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* (1841) and John Claudius Loudon's *On*



*the Laying Out, Planting, and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards* (1843).

Houston's "silent garden" also reflects the cosmopolitan background of the garden cemetery movement. So, too, do its organizers. While Houston traces its origin as a place to 1836, its growth as a city came with the influx of enterprising settlers from other states and nations, including Germany, England, Scotland, and Ireland, in the mid-nineteenth century. Their success attracted yet others, and Houston was a sizable, prosperous city by 1901, when the Spindletop oil discovery was made. This discovery and others in the 1900s forever changed the fortunes of Houston and its residents. This unmatched prosperity also found expression in the landscape and monuments of Glenwood Cemetery.

Although several residents of the then young city had voices in the organization of the Houston Cemetery Company in 1870, those of two men, John Haywood Manly and Alfred Whitaker, were primary. John Haywood Manly (1820-1874), the eldest son of Charles Manly (1795-1871), migrated to Texas from Raleigh in the early 1850s, soon after his father's term as governor of North Carolina ended in 1851. He settled first in Galveston and opened a law practice, but relocated by 1858 to Houston, where he continued to practice law, invested in real estate, and found further profit in the management of market gardens and orchards to feed Houston's growing population. Alfred Whitaker (ca. 1832—after 1910) was an experienced English-born gardener who came to Houston in about 1858 and established garden and nursery operations that greatly prospered in the 1860s. By 1870, Mr. Whitaker's household included not only his wife, five children—the youngest of whom was a son named Manly Whitaker, and two servants, but also four employees in horticultural operations. The 1870 Census identifies Finley McIvor as a Scottish-born "Nurseryman," while the French-born \_\_\_\_\_ Aleck, the English-born \_\_\_\_\_ Dunn, and Frank Kemp, a Texas native, were listed as "Gardener(s)."

John Haywood Manly and Alfred Whitaker are believed to have collaborated on the design of Houston's new cemetery that was laid out on grounds of 54.25 acres located about one-and-a-half miles west of Houston's center. Like its distinguished antecedents, Mt. Auburn, Laurel Hill, and Hollywood cemeteries, the acreage was held in the embrace of a major river, here Buffalo Bayou. As for specific Influences on the cemetery's design, the authors have identified Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh, North Carolina, as a source for its layout featuring a curvilinear pattern of lanes. Comparative maps of the two cemeteries strongly support this attribution. There is also the fact that John Haywood Manly probably visited Oakwood Cemetery in 1871, as the design of the Houston cemetery was being resolved, when he is known to have

returned to Raleigh. Whether Mr. Manly attended his father's funeral at Christ Church and burial in Raleigh's older City Cemetery in early May or came later to attend to the settlement of his estate is unconfirmed. However, the picturesque cemetery, newly laid-out and attracting burials in spring 1871, would have drawn his attention, and he would have known many of the men who established Oakwood.

John Haywood Manly was the founding president of the Houston Cemetery Company and served until 1873, when ill health forced his retirement. He died in New York City in December 1874. The matter of his later burial in Glenwood Cemetery and that of his wife, who died in 1876, in unmarked graves, is unresolved. Alfred Whitaker served both as secretary of the Houston Cemetery Company and the first superintendent of Glenwood Cemetery. He both oversaw operations at the cemetery and the plantings during its first sixteen years of existence, until being discharged by the cemetery board in 1887. In that period he effectively established the landscape character of the cemetery that survives in a measurable degree to the present. His critical contributions, those of his contemporaries, and others, who followed as superintendents, including his immediate successor, Frank Perry Noland, are well told in the closing pages of the historical narrative and the chapter, "Glenwood's Landscape Character," that specifically addresses the plantings on its grounds.

Like other important nineteenth-century cemeteries, Glenwood Cemetery contains a distinguished collection of funerary art, monuments, and plot enclosures that span its period of existence. The authors examine these as types or forms of monument design and as reflections of successive styles in mortuary art and architecture. The figurative sculpture, mostly in the form of angels, is particularly noteworthy. Many of the grave markers, monuments, and other stone furnishings of Glenwood dating from its first half-century were the work of local stone carvers and marble yards. Houston Marble Works, operated by members of the Byrnes family, and Teich Monument Works, most often in the sculpture of Frank Teich, produced remarkably handsome works of gravestone art.

Biographical accounts of prominent men and women interred in Glenwood Cemetery appear in the book's final chapter, "Some Glenwood Biographies." These include the expected worthies who figured in the founding of Houston and its political, religious, commercial, professional, and civic life, as well as the petroleum industry that dominated its twentieth-century history. The last entry is for a man who achieved fame in Houston, in Texas, and the nation, and world-wide notoriety: Howard R. Hughes, Jr. (1905-1976). He also made an important contribution to the landscape of Glenwood Cemetery. As

*(continued on page 10)*

## Book Reviews..... (continued from page 9)

the authors recount, in 1935 he engaged architect William Ward Watkin to design a family memorial for his parents who had died in the 1920s. Following Mr. Hughes's death, the memorial was redesigned to its present appearance by Charles Tapley and Ralph Ellis Gunn. Its incorporates a simply-curved stone arcade, featuring six bronze trumpets mounted in recessed arches, that stands at the back of the landscaped plot, where it embraces a large, ground-level stone memorial medallion. The redesign is a work of genius and a handsome complement to memorials of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that ornament Glenwood's grounds.

A Caveat. Readers and users of the index to *Houston's Silent Garden* will find it frustrating. Some of the page references are correct while numerous others are off by a page, or two, or three. The references to Mr. Watkin, whose work intrigued this reviewer, are a case in point. Five page references follow his name in the index: "97, 141, 190, 219 cap., 237 cap." His name does appear in the text of page 97 and in the captions on pages 219 and 237, however, the citation of page 141 should read 143 and 190 should be 192.



***Cemeteries***, by Keith Eggener, W. W. Norton and Company, 320 pages, ISBN-10: 0393731693 ISBN-13: 978-0393731699; 2010, list price \$75

In recent years the Center for Architecture, Design and Engineering and the Publishing Office of the Library of Congress have joined with W. W. Norton & Company to publish seven volumes in a series entitled the Norton/Library of Congress Visual Sourcebooks in Architecture, Design and Engineering. These books are intended to serve as thematic introductions to the rich holdings of the Library of Congress and provide a valuable representative sampling of the images it houses in the form of books,

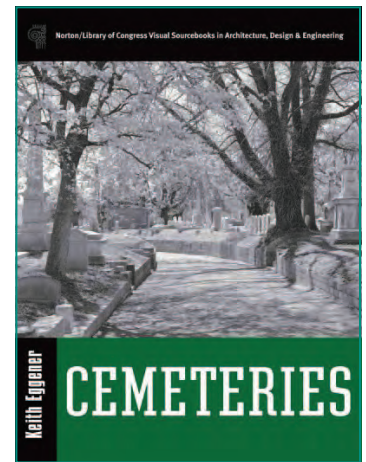
photographic collections, maps, manuscripts, and other documents. Past titles in the series include *Barns*, *Lighthouses*, *Theaters*, and *Public Markets*.

In December 2010 the partnership published *Cemeteries*. Written by Keith Eggener, *Cemeteries* contains over 600 archival photographs reflecting the extraordinary diversity of burial places and practices in the United States, the wide range of gravestone, memorial, and monument design, and the richness of plot enclosures, fencing, furnishings, and mortuary architecture seen in American cemeteries from the colonial period into recent years. This spectrum includes military cemeteries and the rich iconography of their memorials with particularly good coverage of Arlington National Cemetery. Separate chapters, including "The Rural Cemetery Movement" address cemetery design and landscape treatments. Except for the many images of Arlington National Cemetery, and the photographs appearing in "Tombs of U. S. Presidents," of the graves of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe and John Tyler (both in Hollywood Cemetery), Andrew Jackson, and James Knox Polk, representation of Southern cemeteries is relatively thin. The most notable is the series of sixteen handsome photographs of cast-iron fences, gates, and plot enclosures in Magnolia Cemetery in Mobile, Alabama shot in 1936 by E. W. Russell. They reflect the patterns of fencing erected in cemeteries throughout the antebellum South.

Davyd Foard Hood

Isinglass

Vale, North Carolina

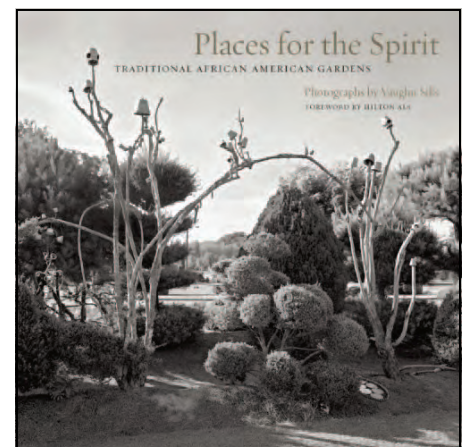


## In Print

***Places for the Spirit***, by Vaughn Sills, photographs by Lowry Pei and Hilton Als. Trinity University Press, 2010, hardcover, 160 pages; ISBN-10: 1595340645, ISBN-13: 978-1595340641; list price 29.95.

This is a stunning collection of over 80 documentary photographs of African American folk gardens — and their creators — in the South (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina). These landscapes have a unique historical significance due to the design elements and spiritual meanings that have

been traced to the yards and gardens of American slaves and further back to their prior African heritage. These deceptively casual or whimsical foliage arrangements are subtle and





symbolic reminders of the divine in everyday life, the cycles of nature, and implied right and wrong ways to live. In the spirit of “outsider” art traditions, blues musical roots, and other such folk manifestations, these gardens have a unique aesthetic and cultural significance. Over

20 years in the making, this is the first collection of fine art photography to document this subject and, as such, it adds greatly to our understanding and appreciation of this disappearing element of African American culture.

## Two SGHS Members Receive Major Awards

Long-time Southern Garden History Society member and past president **James R. (Jim) Cothran** received the society’s Certificate of Merit at the 2011 annual meeting in Baton Rouge. Cothran, a landscape architect and urban planner with over 30 years experience, was cited for his work in urban and regional planning, landscape architecture, site planning and historic preservation for both public and private clients throughout the southeast. An adjunct professor at the University of Georgia and Georgia State University, he has traveled extensively and lectured widely on garden history and historic preservation. Active with many organizations and professional societies, he is the author of three books, *Gardens of Historic Charleston*, *Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South*, *Charleston Gardens and the Landscape Legacy of Loutrel Briggs*, and was instrumental in the publication of Mary Lion’s *Ladies Southern Florist: A Facsimile of the 1860 Edition*. Cothran served as president of the Southern Garden History Society from 2004-2006.

Monticello’s **Peter J. Hatch** was recognized for his life-long devotion to restoring Thomas Jefferson’s gardens and landscapes at Monticello. His significant contributions to historic preservation and gardening were recognized

on Saturday, April 30, by the Garden Club of America at its annual Medal Awards Dinner, held in Indianapolis, Indiana. Peter was awarded the Garden Club of America’s Historic Preservation medal for his outstanding work in the field of preservation and restoration of historic gardens. A past-president of the Southern Garden History Society and long-time member, Peter currently serves on the SGHS board. He is author of *The Fruits and Fruit Trees of Monticello*, and his forthcoming book, *Thomas Jefferson’s Revolutionary Garden*, is scheduled for publication in 2012. This past March Peter was invited once again to participate in the third annual planting of the kitchen garden with First Lady Michelle Obama and children from area Washington, DC, elementary schools. Alice Waters, author and proprietor of Chez Panisse, has written of Peter Hatch: “His vibrant and enthusiastic passion for preserving Thomas Jefferson’s farming legacy at Monticello reminds us all of the time-tested continuity and historical root of this kind of agriculture—a pastoral and self-sufficient tradition at the very heart of American culture.... Hatch’s efforts as a gardener of this stunningly beautiful and historically invaluable garden have ensured that we not forget the precious treasure passed down from this visionary Founding Father.”

## Spring 2011 SGHS Board Meeting

*Report submitted by Mollie Ridout, Secretary*

The Board of Directors of the Southern Garden History Society met in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on April 1, 2011. Highlights of the meeting included the good news that membership is increasing, now at 529; and that the society is in good shape financially. Traffic on the Web site, [www.southerngardenhistory.org](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org), has increased significantly; particularly in visits to the *Magnolia* postings and to the calendar of events. The society is now able to provide a student scholarship to attend the annual meeting and this year’s recipient, Raffi E. Andonian, is a graduate student from the University of Georgia, Athens. The board hopes to offer several scholarships in future years. The executive committee has updated the guidelines for annual

meetings, which are available for future meeting hosts. Plans are well underway for the two upcoming annual meetings in Ft. Myers, Florida, **April 27-29, 2012** (note the new date), and Lynchburg, Virginia, May 3-5, 2013. Two board members rotated off the board this spring, Davyd Foard Hood of Vale, North Carolina, and Susan Urshel of Fort Worth, Texas. Their outstanding service was acknowledged and their leadership will be greatly missed. The board welcomed two new members: Greg Grant, a Texas horticulturist and author, and Lee Bynum Schwall of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, daughter of the late Flora Ann Bynum, and a landscape architect who has been deeply involved in the biennial Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes conference over the years.



Southern Garden History Society

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Your annual membership expires August 1.  
Please renew now to continue receiving *Magnolia*.

## Awards and Scholarships

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.

The **Certificate of Merit** is presented to a member or non-member, whose work has advanced the mission and goals of the society. Awarding of certificates will be approved by the Board of Directors and will usually be announced at the annual meeting.

Society **Scholarships** assist students in attending the society's annual meeting and are awarded to bona fide students enrolled in college and university majors relevant to the mission and goals of the society. The scholarship provides a waiver of registration fees plus \$500 to assist with travel and lodging.

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

## 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 2010-2011 year. Membership categories:

<b>Benefactor</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Patron</b>	<b>\$250</b>
<b>Sustainer</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<b>Institution or Business</b>	<b>\$75</b>
<b>Joint</b>	<b>\$50</b>
<b>Individual</b>	<b>\$30</b>
<b>Student</b>	<b>\$15</b>

For more membership information, contact:  
Virginia Hart, Membership Coordinator  
Post Office Box 15752  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27113  
Phone (336) 770-6723

Email: [membership@southerngardenhistory.org](mailto:membership@southerngardenhistory.org)  
**Memberships can now be made electronically on our Web site!**  
[www.southerngardenhistory.org](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org)

*Deadline for submitting articles for the Fall issue of Magnolia is August 19, 2011.*

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