



Magnolia

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

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Winter/Spring 1999

Dr. Henry Nehrling – Plant Pioneer of Florida

by Ken McFarland, Associate Editor



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

*M*agnolia grandiflora! How charmingly poetical is thy name!" With these words horticulturist and educator Dr. Henry Nehrling (1853-1929) began a chapter about his favorite tree, in the posthumously published, two-volume study, *My Garden in Florida*. Henry Nehrling's name is relatively obscure today, though several of his children—particularly Arno Nehrling—went on to attain greater fame for their plant-related careers. He nonetheless had a vitally important impact on turn-of-the-century gardening in Florida—and on gardening in the remainder of the United States as well. Best known for his work with caladiums, Henry Nehrling actually introduced hundreds of plant species to his adopted state. Fortunately, oversight on the part of garden historians

may soon be rectified. Efforts are now underway to preserve sites connected to Nehrling, and thus to draw public attention to the efforts of this highly influential plantsman.

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

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

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

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CALENDAR

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

March 20th, 1999. "The Gardener's Palette," a symposium sponsored by the Garden Conservancy and The John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden. Speakers include garden editor and writer Margaret Roach, internationally known author Ken Druse, and Stephen A. Morrell, curator of the Humes Japanese Stroll Garden. For more information, call Lorraine Hertzog at Conservancy Headquarters, (914) 265-2029 or write: The Garden Conservancy, P. O. Box 219, Cold Spring, NY 10516.

March 23rd, 1999. "Three Centuries of Gardening," Weymouth Dirt Gardeners Workshop. Speakers include SGHS members Preston Stockton and Peggy Cornett. For more information, contact: The Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities, P. O. Box 939, Southern Pines, NC 28388; call (910) 692-6261.

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

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

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

May 14th-15th, 1999. Dumbarton Oaks Symposium in Studies in Landscape Architecture: "Bourgeois and Aristocratic Cultural Encounters in Garden Art." Examines three centuries of European garden history in light of processes of social change, 1550 to 1850. For more information, contact: Studies in Landscape Architecture, Dumbarton Oaks, 1703 32nd St., NW, Washington, DC 20007, or from the Internet at: www.doaks.org/LandscapeArchitecture.html

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

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

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

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Dr. Nehrling at "Palm Cottage Gardens," early 1900s.

lakes—glittering like mirrors—impressed me deeply.”⁵ Clearing efforts for a house and an orange grove commenced immediately. Because of Nehrling’s inability to spend long periods in Florida, however, it was 1890 before he could begin serious work on a ten-acre spot for an “ornamental garden.” In 1901 Nehrling realized what he was to term “the dream of my youth” by relocating full time to his Gotha-area property. The result of his efforts was Palm Cottage Gardens, a site that partially survives today. Surviving too is Nehrling’s two story frame house—itsself an excellent example of turn-of-the century Florida vernacular architecture.

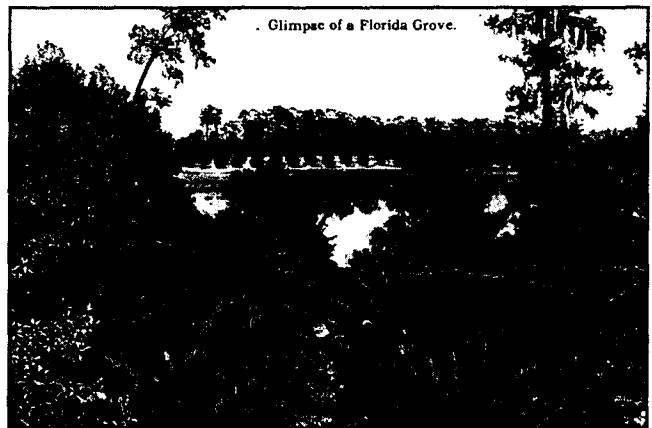
Nehrling’s work at Palm Cottage quickly included much more than careful site clearance (many trees and plants were left in place). By his own account, he also searched the area for miles around, often plodding through the densest vegetation imaginable, for material to transplant. He was to recall: “My kind neighbor and I repeatedly walked the ten miles, shouldering the heavy plants on the return journey. We collected small specimens of Magnolia, American Olive, Loblolly Pine, Wax Myrtle, American Laurel, Sweet May [sp.], and many other treasures.”⁶ These acquisitions were soon supplemented through the generosity of friends. He noted: “Kind folk sent me more and more tropical plant material, and I soon found myself surrounded with many rare and valuable palms, trees, ferns, shrubs, —in fact every type of growing plant.”⁷

Though a man who apparently found every plant interesting, his liveliest attention went to magnolias, bamboo, amaryllis, caladiums (the plant with which his name is most closely linked), and palms. Within a few years after serious work began on Palm Cottage Gardens, Nehrling began collecting magnolias, noting that in 1892 and 1893 he gathered “all the different varieties of the Magnolia [he] could obtain in the different parts of the country.”⁸ Many were raised from seed “procured from the finest trees in Louisiana and Florida.” Nehrling’s interest in bamboo was directly linked to his views on

the usefulness of the plant. Beginning with his 1897 importation of thirteen bamboo varieties from Japan, a collection began that, in the words of one recent observer, “became one of the most complete in the world.”⁹

Similarly, Nehrling’s work with amaryllis has received acclaim. The plant was native to his Florida site, and his work with it was to have a lasting impact. One authority has written that “the Nehrling strains of amaryllis (*Hippeastrum x hybridum*), while never formally released commercially, have figured in the breeding of many of the modern commercial strains of Dutch amaryllis.”¹⁰ It was, however, the caladium that became the ornamental plant most closely linked to the name Henry Nehrling. His experiments with the plant began soon following his permanent move to Florida and after seeing caladiums for the first time at the 1893 Colombian Exposition in Chicago. Nehrling’s efforts ultimately produced many varieties of caladiums, his work laying the cornerstone for today’s extensive

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“Glimpse of a Florida Grove” postcard showing Dr. Nehrling’s homesite, 1908.



Dr. Nehrling with his famous caladiums at Gotha, Florida, 1908.

The Florida horticulturist ultimately did not limit his activities to one location in the state. After a severe freeze in 1917 devastated many of his plants, Nehrling “decided to move as many of [his] tender specimens as possible farther south, to a new place which [he] secured at Naples, on the lower West Coast.”¹³ Termed by Nehrling his “Tropical Garden,” though known more generally as Tropical Gardens and Arboretum, the site is still operated as Caribbean Gardens. At age sixty-six, Nehrling faced many new obstacles, noting: “The hardships I



Nehrling has provided a written record of his endeavors equally as impressive as his work at Palm Cottage and Tropical



Gardens. Between 1922 and his death in 1929, he wrote a weekly column in the newspaper *The American Eagle*, this material later being compiled in book form as *The Plant World of Florida*. During the mid-1940s there followed the publication of his *My Garden in Florida*, already discussed. Especially valuable to scholars is Nehrling's record of his correspondence with fellow plantsmen from both the United States and abroad.¹⁵ At least some of this is accessible in the Nehrling Collection at Rollins College's Mills Library. That collection includes nearly two thousand pieces of printed material and correspondence, as well as photographs.¹⁶

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

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became a highly respected authority on bromeliads, continuing to use Palm Cottage in a way that would have surely pleased Henry Nehrling. Much of the property, however, was developed after the death of Julian and his wife in 1977.

Yet, a core tract of six acres remains, and preservation of the property is still a possibility. There seems no better way to commemorate the efforts of a man who said that in "both the cultivation, and enjoyment of gardens, is peace, rest, and contentment. Pleasure is not a luxury of life, but one of its necessities, and ornamental horticulture is one of the truest and most stimulating pleasures in life, and may be enjoyed by him who possesses only a windowbox, as well as the favored mortal with acres in abundance."²⁰

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

Notes

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

² Sarah Van Arsdell, "The Gardener of Gotha," *Orlando Magazine*, September 1997, 12. Hereinafter cited as "Gardener."

³ *Garden in Florida*, xiv.

⁴ "Rev. Birkmann Writes of Noted Scientist Who Once Lived in Lee County," letter headed "Huffman, Texas, March 23, 1933," *The Giddings News* (unknown date), 2.

⁵ "Gardener," 12.

⁶ *Garden in Florida*, xiv.

⁷ *Garden in Florida*, xv.

⁸ *Garden in Florida*, 103.

⁹ Patricia Scullin, "Leaving a Legacy," *Orlando Outlook*, September 1998, 41. Hereinafter cited as "Legacy."

¹⁰ Alan W. Meerow to Richard Nehrling, 16 May 1997, letter in possession of Richard Nehrling. Also quoted in "Legacy," 41.

¹¹ R. A. Young to C. W. G. Eifrig, 29 October 1930, copy of letter in possession of Richard Nehrling. Hereinafter cited as "R. A. Young Letter."

¹² "R. A. Young Letter."

¹³ *Garden in Florida*, xv.

¹⁴ *Garden in Florida*, xv.

¹⁵ "Legacy," 44.

¹⁶ Hedwig Michel, "Henry Nehrling: The Patron Saint of Florida Gardens," *The American Eagle*, May 9, 1965.

¹⁷ "Dr. H. Nehrling to Build National Park: Royal Palm Hammock in the Hands of Noted Plant Specialist," *Collier County News*, June 20, 1929, 1. Hereinafter cited as "Nehrling—National Park."

¹⁸ "Nehrling—National Park," 1.

¹⁹ "Nehrling—National Park," 1.

²⁰ *Garden in Florida*, xv. +

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www.monticello.org or contact Peter Hatch, (804) 984-9836, phatch@monticello.org

September 30th-October 1st, 1999. "Plans and Plants of the Southern Landscape" has been selected for the theme of the twelfth biennial *Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes* conference at Old Salem. It is hoped that the development of this theme will help those involved in landscape restoration by providing historic plans, documents, and plant lists that can be useful as guidelines. For more information contact conference coordinator, Kay Bergey, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108. Phone (336) 721-7378.

October 15th-16th, 1999. Southern Garden Symposium & Workshops, P. O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775. Phone (504) 635-6330.

October 21st- 24th, 1999. "The Exceptional Garden: Past, Present, and Future," the Garden Conservancy's tenth anniversary celebration in Charleston, SC. [See article in this issue.] For more information, contact PR & Events Coordinator Diane Botnick at 914) 265-2029.

May 13th-15th, 2000. 18th annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, Mount Vernon, Virginia. Meeting chair is J. Dean Norton, director of horticulture at Mount Vernon.

May 4th-6th, 2001. 19th annual meeting of the Southern Garden History Society at Tryon Palace, New Bern, North Carolina. Details to be announced.

October 14th-18th, 2001. 9th International Heritage Rose Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. Contact Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, P. O. Box 975, Charleston, SC 29402. Phone (803) 853-8000.

"The Greener Side of Texas" Awaits SGHS Member

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



Formal Gardens at Bayou Bend.

Call for Papers

Proposals are now being accepted for Volume 8, the 2000 issue of the *Journal of the New England Garden History Society*. Subjects are not restricted to New England and can include all facets and time periods of the field of North American landscape history: gardens and parks, horticultural practice, landscape literature, profiles of individual landscape architects, garden designers or significant patrons, landscape preservation, or any interdisciplinary topic. The *Journal* welcomes proposals from members of the academic and

Members in the News

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



Dean Norton receives DAR award.

Isabel Bartenstein, 1923-1998

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

museum communities, independent scholars, practitioners, and interested lay-persons. Proposals should be one page (approximately 250 words) and include an indication of proposed illustrations and a brief biography of the author.

The deadline for proposals is October 15th, 1999, and they should be sent to the Editor, NEGHS, Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston MA 02115 or FAX 617-262-8780.

Garden Conservancy Celebrates a Decade of Preserving America's Exceptional Gardens

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

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

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

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

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

Annual Membership Dues

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

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



"From Botany to Bouquets: Flowers in Northern Art"

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

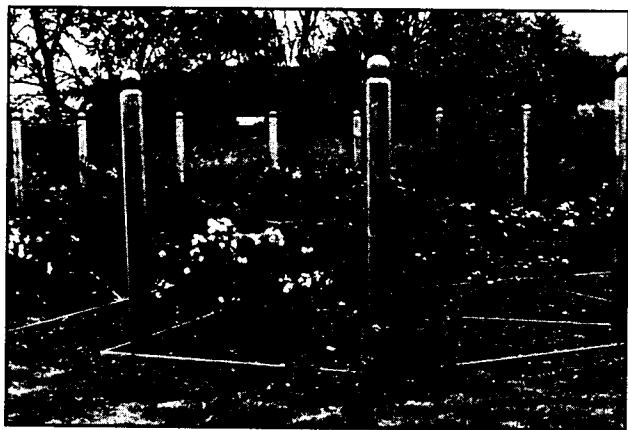


Jacob Marrel, *Admiral d'Hollande from Tulpenboek*, 1642, Collection of Mrs. Paul Mellon, Upperville, VA.

The Léonie Bell Noisette Rose Garden at Monticello

by Peggy Cornett, Editor

During the spring of 1998 a significant collection of Noisette roses was added to the nursery of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants (CHP), in Charlottesville, Virginia. The mission of the Center is to collect, preserve, and distribute plants documented in American gardens before 1900. Established in 1987, the program is sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., which owns and operates Monticello. The Center's headquarters and nursery are located at Tufton farm, which is adjacent to Monticello and where collections of Dianthus, iris, and other heirloom roses are already established. This new garden was made possible by a generous grant from Louis Bell, in memory of his wife, the late rosarian and illustrator Léonie Bell. Mrs. Bell's contributions to the knowledge and identification of old roses was well known in her lifetime, as she wrote countless articles for the Heritage Roses Group, The American Rose Annual, and The Royal National Rose Society, and authored *The Fragrant Year*, 1967. She was also mentor to many prominent experts in the field of heirloom plants, including Southern Garden History Society member Dr. Arthur O. Tucker of Delaware State University and the Rev. Douglas Seidel of Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Many of the most rare specimens in this garden were donated from Doug Seidel's personal collection. The garden, designed by Charlottesville landscape architect and historian C. Allan Brown, is reflective of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Rosary Gardens, which were planted



Léonie Bell Garden, fall 1998.

generally in a circular design creating an intimate enclosure of roses either festooning as garlands or freely flowering as shrubs. Tufton's garden is octagon shaped, one of Thomas Jefferson's favorite forms, with paths bisecting the center and surrounded by eight-foot posts connected with English-style spiked chains for the climbing sorts.

Seidel wrote the following account for the Heritage Rose Newsletter of his visit to the Tufton nursery last November when the garden was still in bloom. ♣



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

by Rev. Douglas Seidel, Emmaus, Pennsylvania

On November 3rd, 1998 I was treated to two superb old rose experiences in Charlottesville, Virginia. First, I had the opportunity to work in the Léonie Bell Memorial Noisette Garden for the better part of a day. This collection of early-style Noisettes, Léonie Bell's favorites and the subjects of much of her research, was officially inaugurated last May at the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants (CHP) Annual Open House on the grounds of Tufton Farm, a stone's throw from Monticello mountain. The project was made possible by a generous grant from Louis Bell and the Bell family, with additional gifts from the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Rose Society, from members of the Heritage Rose Group, and other interested individuals. Some thirty-five Noisettes, mostly pre-1840, now are established there, along with forms of the musk and China parents of the class. In the Bell garden's first summer of growth, the plants bloomed prolifically. The beginning of November saw almost every one of the varieties with a number of clusters of flowers. This collection will serve as a preserve for the first class of roses to be developed on American soil through crosses that occurred in John Champneys' garden outside Charleston, South Carolina. It will also be a place where the Noisettes can be studied, where foundlings can be identified, and where synonyms in nomenclature can be ascertained. There is still room for more treasures to be included in this collection. Those who are aware of any old, small-flowered Noisettes not in any current nursery list, should contact CHP or myself. The garden will be open to the public this spring on May 22nd for the Center's Annual Open House.

Late on the day of my visit, Peggy Cornett, the Center's director, mentioned the existence of a venerable specimen of the musk rose (*Rosa moschata plena*) on the grounds of Bremono Plantation near the James River. Ms. Cornett had seen the plant in mid-October, but no buds were open. Would there be time to make the forty-minute drive to see and photograph this rose before sunset? Would this prove to be a clone of *Rosa moschata* different from any previous discovered? (I always have my hopes that 'Fimbriata' or 'River's Musk' may turn up in some old spot.) With great anticipation Ms. Cornett, Diane Lowe (CHP's nursery manager), and I made the pilgrimage and arrived with time to spare. The rose in question was growing in the remnants of an early nineteenth-century boxwood knot garden on the

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North side of the Recess, a gothic-style residence within the extensive Bremono Plantation complex.

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

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

Was there any way of determining how long the musk rose had grown at Bremono? Peggy Cornett's research led her to the papers of the plantation's owners, the Cocke family, preserved at the University of Virginia. In a letter from Long



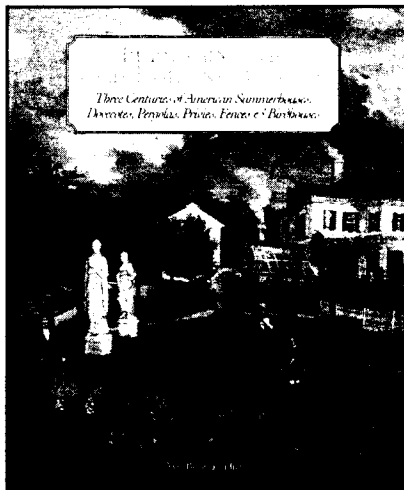
Frances Orf with the Musk Rose at Bremono.

Island nurseryman Benjamin Prince to General John Hartwell Cocke dated September 4th, 1815 the following item occurs, "I have a great number of very handsome Roses ... The white musk or cluster rose is very ornamental. It flowers in clusters of Roses all the Fall (till Winter)." Prince's letter was in reference to an order that would be sent to Bremono in November of 1815. The rose before us had endured for 183 years along with the next best thing: its original sales receipt! The documentation of this ancient musk specimen at Bremono can now be added to the finds of Graham Thomas in Great Britain, and to those of John and Marie Butler, Carlo Cato, and Helen Blake Watkins on this side of the Atlantic as evidence of this rose's importance in old gardens and its ability to survive. +



Book Review

Furnishing the Old-Fashioned Garden: Three Centuries of American Summerhouses, Dovecotes, Pergolas, Privies, Fences & Birdhouses, by May Brawley Hill. Abrams, 1998. Hardcover. 160 pages, 127 illustrations, 51 in full color. ISBN 0-8109-3335-7. \$39.95.



May Brawley Hill brings an art historian's perspective to the history of gardening in *Furnishing the Old-Fashioned Garden: Three Centuries of American Summerhouses, Dovecotes, Pergolas, Privies, Fences & Birdhouses*, a book which follows in the wake of her

Grandmother's Garden, published in 1995 and reviewed in these pages. [*Magnolia*, Vol. XII, no. 1, Winter 1996] Now, as then, her background in American art proves critical to the collection of paintings, watercolors, lithographs, and documentary photographs that she selected to illustrate this personal sampling of architectural features erected in American gardens from the mid-eighteenth century to the present.

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

A series of estate views reflects American taste for

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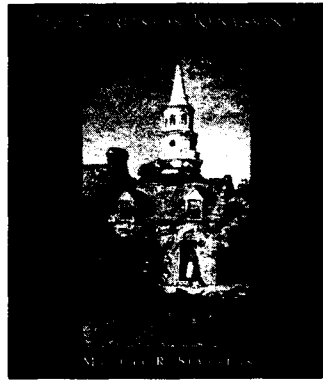
Neoclassical art, architecture, and gardening in the opening years of the nineteenth century, appreciations that would give way in mid-century to the sumptuous Romanticism embodied at Gaineswood, the lavish Greek Revival seat of General Whitfield at Demopolis, Alabama. Some seventy years of estate making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

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

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

The Charleston Renaissance

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



In 1919 Alfred Hutton, a member of the art colony at Woodstock, New York, was in Charleston, South Carolina, for the first time, looking about the South for a winter home. On arrival he is said to have wired back to his wife in New York, "Come quickly, have found heaven." She did; and for the next thirty-five years, until his death in 1954, Mr. Hutton wintered in Charleston. Some

variant of that good advice, reflecting an infatuation with the city soon to be described by DuBose Heyward in *Porgy* as "An ancient, beautiful city that time had forgotten before it destroyed," has been penned since to friends back home by thousands of visitors.

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

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

The "Charleston Renaissance," as portrayed in the book and

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the exhibition, represented a flowering in the arts and literature that both celebrated Charleston's past and the character of a city on the edge of change. Artists including Alfred Hurty, Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, Anna Heyward Taylor, Elizabeth O'Neill Verner, Antoinette Rhett, and Edward von Siebold Dingle, recorded the city, its people, its flora, and fauna in oil, watercolour, wood-block prints, etchings, drawings, and sculpture. Reflecting a rare sensitivity to all that made up the landscape of the city and country, the evocative works of these artists portrayed views that were appreciated by resident and tourist alike. As intended, they were carried away by visitors as souvenirs of their stay and the pleasure taken in a sojourn. Art was an important means to a larger end; these artists also saw their work as a critical encouragement of tourism to a city with little industry, a way of bringing outside money that could be invested in the preservation and renewal of place.

Their efforts succeeded, and all the more so, because of a remarkable spirit of cooperation throughout the city. Charleston-born Alice Ravenel Huger Smith, an artist whose beautiful work is all the more significant for its development through native intelligence rather than outside training or influences, collaborated with her father in the publication of *The Dwelling Houses of Charleston* in 1917. The book, with fascinating historical sketches by Daniel Elliott Huger Smith, was illustrated by dozens of contemporary and documentary photographs,



Antoinette Rhett (1884-1964)
Crab Apple Blossoms, circa 1930
Hand-colored etching, 7 1/2 x 5 inches
Private collection; photo courtesy of
Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., Inc./The
Charleston Renaissance Gallery

drawings by Miss Smith, and architectural drawings by Albert Simons. Mr. Simons later became a leader in the preservation movement and, with Samuel Lapham, produced *The Early Architecture of Charleston* in 1927. Meanwhile, in 1920, Susan Pringle Frost led the organization of the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (now the Preservation Society of Charleston), which had as its object "to save from destruction, sale out of the city, and unsightly alteration of those features which in the aggregate give to Charleston its architectural distinction and quality of interest." In 1925, DuBose Heyward published

Porgy, a work that encouraged Henry Botkin, an artist and cousin of George Gershwin, to paint scenes of "Negro Life" in Charleston, and resulted in Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," which opened on Broadway in 1937. Botkin's work forms a significant

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

Within this broad movement to record the life of Charleston and to promote its preservation, equal enthusiasm was given to portraying plants, wildlife, and landscape scenes in the city and throughout the Lowcountry. Views of town and country, seen in both the exhibition and the book, are poignant reminders of why this society co-sponsors the biennial conference "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes." While

preservation and restoration were long-term goals of Alice Smith and her father, Susan Pringle Frost, Alfred Hurty and others, an immediate purpose of the artists was to record the golden, dreamlike, and sometimes abandoned landscape of a place and society once based on rich culture, verging on loss in many instances, and then being adapted to modern purposes. One of the stars of the exhibition is Alfred Hurty's "White Azaleas-Magnolia Gardens," painted



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

in 1925 on the picturesque, lavishly planted grounds of the old Drayton Plantation, which was recommended to tourists by Baedeker in 1900 and described by Mrs. Severens "as the first area plantation to become a destination for visitors." Alice Smith, a descendent of Henry Middleton, painted views of Middleton Place, which experienced its own renaissance when J. J. Pringle Smith took possession of his ancestral home in 1916. Those views comprise a part of the thirty watercolours, including "Ready for Harvest," used as illustrations in *A Carolina Rice Plantation of the Fifties*, published in 1936. The combination of art and landscape gardening extended far into the Lowcountry. Near Georgetown, Archer Milton Huntington and his wife Anna Hyatt converted abandoned rice fields to gardens as the setting for their collection of figural sculpture at Brookgreen Gardens.

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

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The Charleston Renaissance ... *continued from page 11*



appears on the book cover. The colored wood-block print was a favored medium of Anna Heyward Taylor, and her small-scale flower pictures, including "Macrophylla" (the native *Magnolia macrophylla*) and "Gaden on He Head" have a freshness, immediacy, and charm that define the best works of the period.

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

"Circumstances beyond my control prevented me from going to a large city where Art Schools and Galleries might help the traveler on his way, and so I reasoned to myself that if I could not see the great art of the great cities, I might follow the fable of the young men who dig in their fields for treasure but not

finding it they made wonderful crops out of their spaded land. So I knew that my own lovely flat country of rice fields, of pinewoods, of cypress swamps, of oaks, lotus and all their attendant feathered folk would yield me a full harvest if diligently spaded."

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

["The Charleston Renaissance" will be on view at the Columbia Museum of Art, April 3rd through June 6th; at the Morris Museum of Art in Augusta, Georgia, September 9th through November 7th; and at the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, November 23rd through January 30th, 2000.

The Charleston Renaissance, published by Robert M. Hicklin, Jr., is available through Hicklin's gallery at 103 Church Street in Charleston. Copies may also be ordered through Hicklin's Spartanburg gallery by calling (864) 583-9847.] ♣

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