



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

Magnolia

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Masters of the Landscape

The Divergent Paths of Magnolia and Middleton Plantations

By Karen Padgett Prewitt

For English sons who could never expect to inherit family lands, the lure of owning their own land was the driving force that tested their courage to try new horizons in "Carolina." Land ownership represented power, authority, and mastery over one's prescribed lot in life and the potential for a new destiny.

When desirable land could not be acquired in the new world by outright purchase, there were other ways to gain ownership. Marriage to a wealthy heiress proved to be a lucrative option for acquiring an estate, and thus did two of Charleston's largest and oldest plantations devolve.

Seventeenth-century American plantations primarily focused on agricultural utility and financial remuneration. The cultivation of indigo and rice as cash crops became highly successful agrarian ventures in Charleston, and this new-found wealth created a landed aristocracy, whose members, in time, turned their attention to gardening for pleasure on a grand scale.

Both Magnolia and Middleton plantations share many similarities in their founding and history, yet they took very divergent paths that led to their unique landscape designs.



Magnolia

Thomas Drayton, scion of an ancient family dating to the Norman Conquest, arrived in Charleston via Barbados in 1671, joined by fellow passenger Stephen Fox. In July 1679 Fox purchased 402 acres along the Ashley River and continued improvements made by the land's previous owner. Stephen Fox's daughter, Ann, married Thomas Drayton, and Fox's estate was willed to Thomas and Ann's son, Thomas II, who subsequently willed the same property to Thomas Drayton III.

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Photo by Karen Padgett Pruitt

Oldest section of Magnolia Gardens known as "Flowerdale."

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CALENDAR

January 12-13, 2016. Landscape Design School, Course I, Founders Hall, Charles Towne Landing, South Carolina. Featured speaker is SGHS president Susan Haltom, author of *One Writer's Garden*, *Eudora Welty's Home Place*. Contact: Susanmcleodepstein@gmail.com

January 19-23, 2016. American Camellia Society National Convention, in Charleston, South Carolina. Tours include Magnolia and Oak Island Plantations, and Middleton Place. Conference headquarters at the Francis Marion Hotel. Contact: Miles Beach, milesbeach@comcast.net (843) 345-3453, Visit: www.americancamellias.com

January 20, 2016. "Native Plant Symposium," at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, Athens. This day-long program considers gardening with native flowers and trees along with related conservation issues, such as providing diverse sources of food and shelter for a wide variety of insects and birds, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, etc. in the complex web of life. Visit: www.botgarden.uga.edu

April 21-24, 2016. "Sowing the Seeds of Horticulture in America," the 34th SGHS Annual Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina. Meeting headquarters at the Francis Marion Hotel. For hotel reservations, call (843)722-0600 or (877)756-2121 by Thursday, March 24, 2016. Mention Southern Garden History Society for the group rate. Registration brochures will be mailed in January 2016. Visit: www.southerngardenhistory.org



Lowcountry Blue House, 2013 - Acrylic on WC Paper
© Jonathan Green

April 24-26, 2016. 70th Annual Colonial Williamsburg Garden Symposium, in partnership with the Garden Club of Virginia, featuring Joe Lamp'l (host of *Growing a Greener World*); nationally recognized author and lecturer Kerry Mendez; and the trendsetting horticulturists Brie Arthur and Kelly Norris. Lectures will discuss planting for architectural interest, plants with style, perennials, foliage plants, and foodscaping. Visit: www.colonialwilliamsburg.com

April 25, 2016. Historic Garden Week Event: "Garden Conversation with Andrea Wulf," at Monticello, in Charlottesville, VA. *New York Times* best-selling author Andrea Wulf will speak on her latest book, *The Invention of Nature*, which reveals the extraordinary life of German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), who corresponded with Jefferson for 21 years. Reception and garden tours precede the presentation. Visit: www.monticello.org

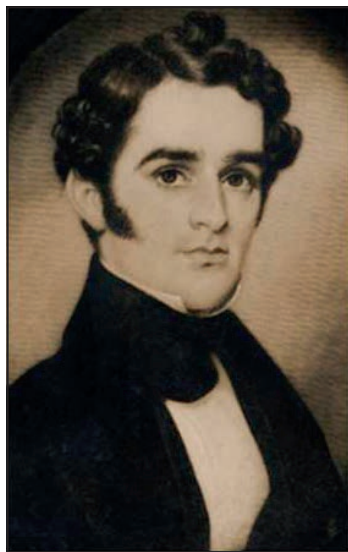
June 1-4, 2016. "Urbs in Horto – City in a Garden," 38th annual meeting of the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation (AHLHP), held in Chicago, IL. Meeting will include visits to Lincoln Park; Graceland Cemetery; Chicago's west side parks, including Garfield and Columbus, designed by Jens Jensen; Riverside, the garden suburb designed by Olmsted and Vaux; and Pullman, the town that President Obama designated as a National Historic Monument. Visit: www.ahlp.org

June 6-10, 2016. "Changing Perspectives: Planning for the Future," American Public Gardens Association annual conference in Miami, FL. Visit: www.publicgardens.org

June 19-24, 2016. 20th annual Historic Landscape Institute, "Preserving Jefferson's Gardens and Landscapes," held in Charlottesville, VA. This one-week course uses Monticello and the University of Virginia as outdoor classrooms to study historic landscape preservation. Lectures, workshops, field trips, and practical working experiences introduce students to the fields of landscape history, garden restoration, and historical horticulture. Call (434) 984-9816 or visit: www.monticello.org/hli

"Masters of the Landscape".....(continued from page 1)

The Drayton property, later referred to as Magnolia-on-the-Ashley, was favored because of its abundance of beautiful trees. A Drayton family history written in 1817 by Governor John Drayton identifies these trees as "laurels," indicating that he was familiar with Mark Catesby's *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands* (1771) listing *Magnolia alliffima* as "The Laurel-Tree of Carolina." The name



Portrait of John Grimké Drayton.

Courtesy Magnolia Plantation & Gardens

"Magnolia" could only have been given to the plantation after the year 1753 when Carl Linnaeus published his *Species Plantarum* naming the tree *Magnolia grandiflora* after the French botanist Pierre Magnol.

The vicissitudes of wars, fires, and hurricanes have greatly altered the landscape of Magnolia's original rice plantation and the grounds of two fine mansions that once graced the site. The original house at Magnolia, thought to have been the oldest mansion built in South Carolina, burned in 1800. Since gardens are usually designed to complement existing architecture, it is difficult to surmise the exact original garden plan. Numerous garden historians have concurred, however, that the first house directly faced an existing avenue of ancient oaks, which was the standard Lowcountry approach for a grand entry. This theory is supported by landscape archeology and the discovery of pieces of old foundations.

Letters written by a tutor, who had been brought from England in 1797, document an early garden laid out in triangles of boxwood and roses at Magnolia, no doubt reflecting the prevailing formal French influence in English gardens of the period.¹

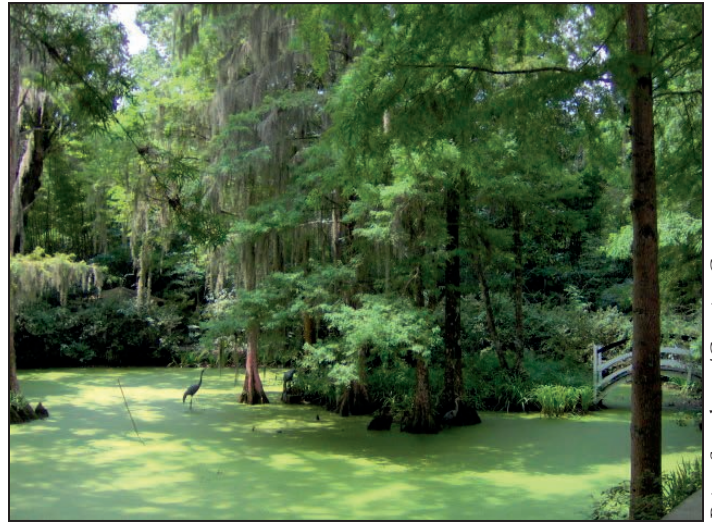
A second house, built of cypress, was constructed south of the first dwelling to secure a finer view of the river. In changing the house site the avenue of oaks axis was destroyed, necessitating the addition of new walkways and plantings to re-balance the garden design. Sadly, this second house was torched in the Civil War.

Magnolia's existing house is a pre-Revolutionary War summer cottage that was dismantled after the Civil War, floated down the Ashley River from Summerville by barge, and rebuilt. This third house incorporates a salvaged flight of brick steps from its predecessor that descended to a wide graveled path leading to the river.

Returning briefly to discussion of Drayton genealogy,

one discovers that perhaps "Fate" had the upper hand in predicting the final outcome of the design of Magnolia's gardens. Thomas Drayton III willed Magnolia to his daughter's two sons, Thomas and John Grimké, with the caveat that they change their name legally to Drayton. The line of succession came to Thomas Grimké, the oldest son, but he was tragically killed in a freak hunting accident. Thomas' younger brother John Grimké (1816-

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Pond with Bald Cypress at Magnolia.

Brian Stansberry/Creative Commons



Magnolia Gardens' picturesque White Bridge.

Courtesy Magnolia Plantation & Gardens

"Masters of the Landscape". (continued from page 3)

1891), who had no expectations of inheriting Magnolia, had decided to follow the calling of the church. In 1836, at the age of twenty-two, he suddenly found himself the owner of Magnolia's 1,872 acres. John completed his European travels and ordination. Then, after his marriage to Julia Ewing of Philadelphia, he returned to Charleston and took his mother's maiden name and possession of Magnolia. He also became rector of nearby St. Andrew's Church, one of the oldest Anglican congregations in the state.

The exertions of maintaining two demanding careers culminated in John's illness. Doctors diagnosed tuberculosis and advised a restful outdoor life. Taking his doctors' advice seriously, John Grimké Drayton began to create his garden in 1841, and this date marks the beginning of the transition from working plantation to pleasure garden.

Unknowingly, it was perhaps Julia Ewing who most influenced the romantic garden seen today. Family correspondence reveals that Julia did not envision herself as mistress of a great plantation with hundreds of enslaved laborers. One letter gives us the best description for the basic plan for Magnolia's gardens. John Drayton expressed his wish "to create an earthly paradise in which my dear Julia may forever forget Philadelphia and her desire to return there."² It has often been noted that there is no evidence that an actual plan was ever drawn for the design of Drayton's "paradise." In fact, Drayton Hastie, a lineal descendant once remarked "that even after hours spent studying the fourteen miles of paths comprising the garden, it is not possible to accurately draw a plan of the place."³

There is also no evidence that while on his European tour Drayton was influenced by the changing fashions of eighteenth-century English garden styles espoused by William Kent (1685-1748) and Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-1783). It seems clear that his plan for Magnolia's landscape was a natural response to the character and constraints of the land, the climate, and the need to find work for slaves once involved in rice production. Drayton's deftly managed design was more a process of elaboration rather than elimination of the landscape's original features and embodied unusual artistic ability, as well as a rare sensitivity to the environment.

The trees of Magnolia's gardens have always been the strength of the place. Glades of tall cypresses and tupelos created the bones of Drayton's design, reflecting mirror-like in the tannic-stained backwaters that had previously been impounded for rice culture. The bone

structure was embroidered with native laurels, dogwoods, bay, spirea, syringea, and festooned with wisteria, Cherokee roses and drifts of yellow jessamine.

Although The Rev. Drayton seems to have been less influenced by fashion than his neighbors, he was the first to be credited with introducing the vivid beauty of azaleas (*Azalea indica*) into American gardens and being the first to use camellias (*Camellia japonica*) in an outdoor setting. Change is an inherent part of any natural landscape, and the Picturesque Movement of landscape design endorsed some forms of exoticism in gardens. Drayton's first azaleas arrived in 1843 from Philadelphia, and additional specimens were acquired from India, England, and France in the 1850s. Magnolia's azalea and camellia collections are considered to be the finest in the world, numbering nine hundred varieties of azaleas and three hundred varieties of camellias.

By 1870, Drayton saw the economic necessity of finding some way to keep a small army of workers gainfully employed, so he opened his garden to the public, creating America's first tourist attraction. Baedeker's Travel Guide listed only three places to visit in America: the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, and Magnolia's gardens!⁴

Succeeding generations have each added their personal stamp on the landscape or their business acumen to the ever increasing need to accommodate tourists. Magnolia now includes: an herb garden, a Biblical garden, a topiary garden, a swamp garden, and a replica of the Hampton Court maze created from three hundred camellias.

Perhaps The Rev. Drayton's efforts can best be described by a quote from E.T.H. Shaffer's (1937) book, *Carolina Gardens*, "Rev. Drayton's poetic and understanding soul conspired with nature to form pictures with trees and flowers."



Middleton

An original land grant for 764 acres on the Ashley River was received by Jacob Wayte in 1676. Six hundred of Wayte's acres were sold to Richard Godfrey, who built a large three-story house on the site in 1705, before convey-



Sketch of Middleton by Countess Paolina Bentivoglio Middleton (wife of Arthur Middleton) ca. 1842.

Courtesy Middleton Place Fnd.

ing the property to John Williams.

Like their Drayton neighbors, the Middleton family came to Carolina via Barbados, and like the Draytons' land, the acquisition of Middleton's land came via a marriage. Henry Middleton (1717-1784) married Mary Williams, John Williams' daughter and heiress, in 1741.

The early plantations along the Ashley River were famed as far away as England. London's *Gentleman's Magazine* in July 1753 describes them thus: "Here Drayton's seat and Middleton's is found...Delightful villas! Be they long renown'd."

Like neighboring Magnolia, Middleton Place was originally a large agrarian plantation devoted to indigo and rice culture. The wealth generated by those successes created a colonial aristocracy that wielded great power.

Henry Middleton had chosen a career in politics, and was elected as the second president of the Continental Congress. He also continued to add to his domain and eventually amassed fifty thousand acres and eight hundred slaves.

Perhaps it was the need to entertain other politicians on a grand scale that inspired Henry's 1755 addition of two flankers to Godfrey's original brick house. The construction of these north and south flankers necessitated a re-design of the original garden, of which there is no record.

Henry sent to England for a landscape designer to create new gardens befitting his enlarged residence, and it has been suggested that the designer was a disciple of French landscape designer André Le Nôtre (1613-1700). It has been said of Le Nôtre's gardens that he translated power into parterres. In a similar vein, the gardens at Middleton took on a French formality that exuded "power" and the view that nature is at her best when ordered by human hands.

Plantations along the Ashley were designed to be approached from the river, and visitors to Middleton first observed a landscape whose terrain had been manipulated by man into hundreds of acres of rice fields and dikes and backwaters. Further up river the first views of the gardens exhibited typical hallmarks of French formality, radial and axial paths intersected by classical statuary, then twin lakes whose waters had been becalmed, then multiple terraces of *tapis vert* with grass so perfect that it appeared to be a green carpet stretched tautly over the landscape. Finally there was "the mount" where the magnificent mansion complex inspired awe in all who beheld it. The view from the house toward the river also reflected a classic Le Nôtre scheme and was designed with a long visual vanishing point creating the impression that the owner was the master of all he surveyed in the distance. Since the natural elevation of the Lowcountry lacks any significant variations in height, the impression of a "mount" created by the terraces was a masterpiece of *trompe l'oeil*. Legend maintains

that it took ten years and the work of one hundred slaves to alter the original landscape into gardens.

Henry Middleton's son, Arthur Middleton II (1742-1787) inherited the plantation in 1763 and continued his father's legacy in politics, succeeding him in the Continental Congress and becoming a signer of the Declaration of Independence. During the American Revolution, British troops occupied Middleton's plantation and amused themselves by breaking heads off the statues adorning the gardens. Arthur maintained the existing gardens and passed them on to his son Henry II (1770-1846) who had been born in England. Henry II became the American envoy to the Russian court and was an avid horticulturist and friend of the French botanist and explorer André Michaux (1746-1802). Often a guest at Middleton's plantation, Michaux is said to have brought the first *Camellia japonica* plants to Middleton in 1786, and of the four plants he brought, one allegedly is still alive. Henry II's library contained a copy of Thomas Walter's, *Flora Caroliniana*, with the flyleaf inscription that it was Michaux's personal copy.

Henry II's son, Williams Middleton (1809-1883), became the plantation's next owner and pursued agricultural diversification with the hopes of increasing plantation profits. He was responsible for the 1851 construction of a small accessory building near the butterfly lakes, long referred to as a "rice mill." Its design bears strong similarities to a small mill building at Chateau De Courances in Essonne, France, which was used in the production of hemp, causing us to ponder the possibility that Williams experimented with hemp production at Middleton. Williams is also credited with bringing color into the previously verdant formal gardens by introducing azaleas in 1846 ... three years after John Grimké Drayton brought his first azaleas from Philadelphia.

In the last days of the Civil War, Middleton Plantation's house was burned by Union troops. The north

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Middleton Place aerial view.

Photo courtesy Middleton Place Foundation

"Masters of the Landscape".....(continued from page 5)

flanker was a total loss, but the walls of the main house and south flanker remained until the earthquake of 1886 further damaged them. The now reconstructed south flanker only hints at the glory of the once-grand scheme, yet the beauty of the gardens remains. The Middleton family struggled into the twentieth century to maintain their grounds and like the Draytons saw the necessity of opening their gardens to the public. Today's gardens are a testament to their valiant efforts to maintain Middleton Place as the finest example of an eighteenth-century landscape garden in America.

Comparing and contrasting Magnolia's and Middleton's gardens is an undertaking that cannot be accomplished properly without understanding the differing personalities, obstacles, and dreams of their owners throughout successive generations.

The famous English landscape designer Gertrude Jekyll once remarked that "a garden must fit its master just as his clothes do." The divergent paths taken by the Draytons and Middletons to master their similar landscapes are

as differing as parsons and politicians. The final outcome of their legacies was perhaps best explained by American author DuBose Heyward who said of South Carolina's gardens: "Even the most formal intentions failed to achieve the same results here, amid the wistful live oaks and Spanish moss where forests are fragrant with Magnolia and jessamine ... so the English-planned gardens of Carolina grew and mellowed into gardens unlike any others in the whole world."

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Karen Padgett Prewitt is a leading authority on Charleston landscape architect Loutrel Briggs and second vice president of The Garden Club of South Carolina.

Endnotes

- 1 Loutrel Briggs, *Charleston Gardens* (University of South Carolina Press, 1951), 124.
- 2 Kyra Kuhar, "The Most Beautiful Gardens in the World," *Gateway Magazine* (Sept. 1979): 18
- 3 Catherine Oglesby, "Magnolia the Magnificent," *HOLLAND'S, The Magazine of the South*, (August 1929): 34.
- 4 Oglesby, 34.

Catherine Howett Receives Award of Merit

On August 13, 2015, a small group of Southern Garden History Society members gathered at a restaurant in Atlanta to present the Award of Merit to Catherine M. Howett, FASLA. Howett has been involved with the Society from its inception as a founding board member and continued her service on the Society's board for fourteen years. During that time, she also served as President of the Society from 1986-1988 and editor of *Magnolia Essays*.

A renowned scholar, she served on the faculty at the University of Georgia, College of Environment and Design, for over twenty years, where she taught a wide range of classes and studios, including "History of the Designed Landscape." Howett made a profound impact on the field by encouraging and training a new generation of scholars including SGHS Treasurer Gail Griffin (Dumbarton Oaks), Susan Hitchcock (National Park Service), and countless others. In the words of Susan Hitchcock: "...her 'History of the Designed Landscape' course showed me that there was an entire world that I longed to know more about. I was lucky enough to eventually become her teaching assistant ... I cannot express the influence that Professor Howett had on my eventual career as a historical landscape architect for the National Park Service." During her tenure, she received numerous teaching awards and was ultimately

honored with the title Professor Emerita.

Her contributions to the university and the Society were eclipsed by a large portfolio of scholarly publications, lectures, and exhibition catalogs, toward a better understanding of our landscape heritage. Included in her body of work is the acclaimed *A World of Her Own Making: Katherine Smith Reynolds and the Landscape of Reynolda* published in 2007.

We are pleased to honor Catherine M. Howett and to express our sincere appreciation and admiration for her tremendous contributions to the Society and the scholarly study of Southern landscapes. She is truly "primus inter pares."



Left to right: Susan Hitchcock (Former Board Member), Carleton B. Wood (President), Catherine Howett, Lee Dunn (Board Member), and Staci Catron (Immediate Past President).

A Personal Plea for Camellia Preservation

By Florence S. Crowder, Denham Springs, Louisiana

"Sister, where are those japonicas Grandma had right there?"

"I don't know, what were their names?"

"I don't know, where can we get some more?"

These are questions that are asked too frequently. Do you want your grandchildren to ask these same questions regarding your garden? Vintage gardens are being abandoned, neglected, sold, and destroyed too often. Beautiful camellia varieties are being lost, and some are never recovered.

The purpose of camellia preservation is to continue the order so that future generations can appreciate the heritage in order to build to the future. New varieties, naturally, come from the oldies. But, once germplasm is lost from a link in camellia heritage, it is gone forever. The goal is to protect the past for the future.

In the nomenclature books of the American Camellia Society approximately 460 pre-1900 camellia varieties are listed. Now, only three hundred of these can be located. To re-balance these figures enthusiasts throughout the camellia growing world are seeking like-minded others. The general public, gardening enthusiasts, and camellia groups, must assist in locating public and private gardens to document varieties. This task cannot be accomplished by only a few!

Once gardens are located, identification and documentation must take place. This can be challenging. If one has not seen a specimen before, or has not seen visuals of the variety, how can we know what it is? Today, more than ever, we have access to a world of information that makes identification more likely. There is growing enthusiasm among "camellians" to assist one another, compare ideas, and attempt to reach conclusions as to identification of these wonderful blooms. Sometimes you are lucky enough to find an old identification tag.

Of those specimens located, many fewer examples are being propagated to protect the variety from loss and to make it available for others to enjoy. For example, an owner may not want his or hers reproduced, have the ability to do so, or know of those willing to assist in this effort. This can cause a variety to be lost forever. I have quite a collection of garden inventories and have been asked, many times, to locate a particular variety for someone. Often I am successful, but other times I am not, concluding that only one of a particular variety existed.

Do we have the ability to preserve every one of the 34,000+ camellia varieties in the world today, or should we? No, but each individual or group can determine what

is important to them and what is available to be preserved. One group or person might attempt to preserve those registered in their city or state or in a particular garden, such as Susan Haltom is doing with the Eudora Welty garden in Jackson, Mississippi, and Marianne Salas with the G. G. Gerbing garden in Amelia Island, Florida. Or one may want to work with only identification and documentation. The options are endless, and everyone can play a part.

There are many threats to gardens. 'Alice Allen' was the only listing of a camellia in the nomenclature books in

my area. I began trying to locate it. The site of the home where it was registered is now in a subdivision. I asked neighbors, friends, and relatives of the person, now deceased, who registered it if anyone had the same plant. No one, however, knew of it, and so this variety is lost forever.

How do we go about the preservation effort? I began my own program while attempting to identify the camellias in our family garden, planted in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Discovering that several

were scarce, I wondered how to remedy that problem and puzzled if others could be in the same situation. It was then that my research began in other gardens attempting to identify varieties. Later I helped with propagation of scions for sale and related distribution with the Baton Rouge Camellia Society. These valuable varieties, therefore, should not be lost.

Subsequently, I determined to focus on pre-1900s camellias, several of which grew in our garden. Much research, in turn, indicated some came from France. Were others still in France but *not* found here now? What other varieties were there? If I could not locate those missing from our native soil, foreign soil could be the best alternative. Thus I consulted contacts in Europe, finding all willing to help. Thereafter, three trips to France, one to Belgium, Italy, and England, have proven successful. Success, however, has come *only* with the assistance and contributions of others.

In the two volumes of *Antiche Camelie* by Piero Hillbrand there are seven varieties located in Italy, once found in the United States but absent now in our nomenclature books. As another example, Emilia Faria wrote of "Emiliana Alba" in the 2009 journal of the International Camellia Society, originating in the United States and existing in Portugal. Yet we have no listing of it in our literature. We need to bring those varieties back home. Are there others there not identified? In further research in over fifty-five documents including newspapers, books, and catalogs, many with multiple issues from the 1800s, I have found over two hundred varieties no longer in our present no-

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'Punctata Boutourlin' Camellia in author's garden.

A Personal Plea..... (continued from page 7)

menclature books. Thus, we cannot account for some four hundred varieties that were once here.

Research documents include Charles M. Hovey's *Magazine of Horticulture* of over twenty volumes, *American Gardening Magazine* by M. Floy and Son Nursery, and Thomas Hogg's *Hogg's Nursery Catalogue*. Other documents can be found in rare book libraries such as the University of South Carolina in Columbia; Pennsylvania Horticulture Society Library in Philadelphia; and the American Camellia Society in Fort Valley, Georgia. Information can be found online at <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/> and <https://archive.org/stream/magazineofhortic81842bost#page/n5/mode/2up>, to name but several Web sites.

Because of these preservation efforts, the author was asked in 2010 to become the United States representative of the International Camellia Society Preservation Working Group. Enthusiasts abroad are discovering their countries are also losing varieties, and we are working together, worldwide, to cooperate in this quest for the lost. One friend in Pescia, Italy recently gave a presentation related to preservation on "The Future begins with the History." Another in Tuscany recently wrote, "The gardens of the great collectors and makers of new varieties are disappearing because they have been forgotten for so many decades." Reciprocating across the Atlantic, I have sent lost

varieties present here to a friend in Belgium. A reporter in Charleston dubbed me the "Indiana Jones" of the camellia world, searching for lost varieties.

Images of several interesting examples are included with this article. 'Punctata Boutourlin' grows in our family garden. Our father apparently bought it from Edward Avery McIlhenny's camellia nursery at Avery Island in the late 1940s. According to his records, McIlhenny imported it from France. I have not seen it any other place. Being such a rare variety, we will propagate it beginning in January. 'Ne Plus Ultra' was listed in the 1837 issue of Hovey's *Magazine of Horticulture* in Piero Hill-ebbrand's book, *Antiche Camelie del Lago Maggiore* (2003), and at the Quinta De



'Ne Plus Ultra' Camellia listed in Charles M. Hovey's 1837 *Magazine of Horticulture*.

Santo Inácio De Fiães in Portugal. It is not listed in the American Camellia Society nomenclature books.

The American Camellia Society in Fort Valley, Georgia is now forming a camellia preservation group and asks that all gardening and garden history groups join this effort and to aid in this preservation work. This cannot happen, however, with only one or two groups working. Instead, it will take the entire camellia growing world to succeed. May each person and gardening group pledge to support this effort. Will you join the camellia cause?

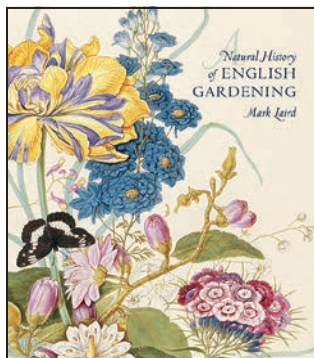
Florence.crowder@cox.net

[Ed. Note: see Calendar, page 2]

Book Review

A Natural History of English Gardening, 1650-1800, by Mark Laird | Yale University Press, 2015 | Hardcover, 440 pages | ISBN: 9780300196368 | List price \$75

In the "Acknowledgements," with which he opens *A Natural History of English Gardening*, Mark Laird recounts the genesis of this important new book. It lies in a series of papers, presentations, journal articles, and research projects, including "Climate, Weather and Planting Design in English Formal Gardens of the Early 18th Century" a seminal paper presented at a conference in Germany and subsequently published. These three considerations, critical to gardeners in every age, carry through each of the chapter-length essays and link his writings into a rich coherent whole.



Weather, he later notes, is both "an unsung artist, as well as the despoiler of gardens." At the same time he expresses his usual, gentlemanly appreciation for the influential role his professional colleagues exercise on his research and writing as a garden historian. His gratitude is warm and introspective, never perfunctory.

Laird greatly expands the bounds of English garden history, acknowledging anew the known and introducing the reader to a further host of figures who excelled at the edges of conventional garden history and its representation to the present. He illuminates, so to speak, the actors and their stages in scenes that constitute the "myriad 'theatres' of English gardening." Laird's "Introduction" serves his readers as a guide to the six chapters at the heart of this book. He defines the thesis of each, outlining the reader's path through their scholarly documentation and handsome illustrations and giving notice of what we are to expect. Altogether they address three overarching themes: "the contribution of women to gardening and natural history; second, the role of amateurs, women as well as men,

to natural sciences before they were professionalized as distinct disciplines; and third, the split sensibilities innate to gardening, which prove to have some gender dimensions.”

Each chapter holds a place in the narrative chronology advancing from 1650 to 1800. The effects of weather are at center stage in the essay on John Evelyn (1620-1706) and his gardening at Sayes Court. The bitter winter of 1683-84 added its own cruelty to his personal sadness: it claimed both his prized rare and exotic plants and his tortoise, who was “obstructed by a Vine-root, from mining to the depth, he was usually wont to interr, is found stark dead, after having for many years escaped the severest Winter.” This John Evelyn recorded on 14 April 1684. Cold weather remained a concern and culminated, again, with the Great Storm of 1703.

The freeze of 1683-84 and the Great Storm of 1703 were likewise devastating to the gardens of Mary Capel Somerset (1630-1715), the Duchess of Beaufort. Laird’s essay on her gardening, her employment of William Sherard as a botanist/tutor to her grandson, her patronage of Everhard Kick/Kickius, and the production of a twelve-volume herbarium and the two-album *Badminton florilegium* comprise chapter two. Its pages are illustrated by many of Kick’s numerous botanical illustrations for the *Badminton florilegium* and other contemporary works.

Botanical illustration and flower painting accompany the rise of plant collecting as the subject of Laird’s third essay in natural history, which incorporates the role of the coffee house as a place of intellectual exchange and commerce. The career of Mark Catesby (1683-1749) as a naturalist and artist, and the legendary publication of his *Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, between 1729 and 1747, effectively defines this period in the first half of the eighteenth century. Illustrations feature Catesby’s works, those of Georg Dionysius Ehret, the watercolours and oil paintings of Jacobus van Huysum, and others by the rising host of botanical artists.

“Cornucopia,” the fourth chapter of this book, embraces the period from 1748 when Ehret began publication of *Plantae et papiliones rarioris*, to 1783. This essay is essentially a celebration of the artistry of Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708-1770) and Thomas Robins the Elder (ca. 1716-1770) and is beautifully illustrated by the works of both including Robins’ handsome, self-framed prospects of country houses, their gardens, and grounds. These extraordinary topographical views reflect the “interdependence of culture and nature” that defines the era, a period of genius that leads up to Gilbert White’s publication of *The Natural History of Selborne* in 1789.

One’s earlier wish for an image of John Evelyn’s favored tortoise is satisfied in part in “Fair Play For Their Lives,” wherein the eighteenth-century quest for exotic plants finds its complement in the pursuit of animals from foreign lands for private menageries and aviaries. William Barram’s “A View of the underside of the great Mud Tortoise from Pennsylvania,” drawn in 1759 and sent to Peter

Collinson, is a reminder of another tortoise supplied by Israel Pemberton to Collinson that gave great delight to the English plant collector. The natural relationship of plants and animals was articulated by Sir William Chambers, the chief architect of Kew Gardens, in *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* in 1772. By that time the menagerie established at Goodwood by the 2nd duke of Richmond was well known and then maintained by the 3rd duke, who received a bull moose from the governor general of Canada. Its portrait was painted in 1770 by George Stubbs who had produced the celebrated painting of Queen Charlotte’s zebra in 1763. Both appear in these pages, as does his 1771 painting of the lion and lioness owned by Lord Shelburne. This mid-century period also saw wide interest in the aviary established by Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales (1719-1772) at Kew and housed in a Chinese-style building designed by Chambers and recorded in 1763 in a watercolour by Thomas Sandby (1721-1798).

In “Virtù,” the penultimate chapter in *A Natural History of English Gardening*, Mark Laird reflects on the long, close friendship and natural history pursuits of two remarkable women in eighteenth-century Britain: Mary Granville Delany (1700-1788), known through history as Mrs. Delany, and Mary Cavendish Bentinck (1715-1785), the wife of the 2nd duke of Portland. Their shared passion for the natural world, dating to at least the early 1740s, deepened after the deaths of their respective husbands in 1768 and 1762. It was centered at Bulstrode, the Portland country seat in Buckinghamshire, where the two resided from early summer to late autumn. Mary Delany is the better known, largely because of the survival of nearly one thousand of her mosaic-like flower pictures, collages composed of snippets of colored paper, which she described as *hortus siccus*. Her life and flower pictures were the subject of books, Ruth Hayden’s *Mrs. Delany: Her Life and Her Flowers* (1980), which was reissued in 1992 as *Mrs. Delany and Her Flower Collages*, and *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle* (eds. Mark Laird and Alicia Weisberg-Roberts), which was published in 2009 as the catalogue for an exhibition of the same name at the Yale Center for British Art. Portraits of both women and over twenty of Mrs. Delany’s collages, worked in color on black paper, illustrate the essay.

In “Aftermath” Mark Laird re-examines the themes of his book, the personalities who people its pages, and revisits the places and circumstances of their contributions to natural and garden history. An elegant meditation, enhanced by observations on ornithology and illustrated by more of Mary Delany’s collages and works by her contemporaries including William Curtis and Sarah Stone, it ends, appropriately, with an elegiac journal entry penned by Gilbert White on Sunday, 29 May 1791. *A Natural History of English Gardening* is a splendid achievement.

Davyd Foard Hood
Isinglass
Vale, North Carolina

In Memoriam

Paul C. Reber, Ph.D

July 23, 2015 marked the accidental death of Stratford Hall/Robert E. Lee Memorial Association executive director Dr. Paul Reber. An avid bicyclist, Paul passed away doing what he loved. But Paul's passions included much more than cycling.



Along with a strong attachment to his family, he also had an unmatched love of history. At Stratford, Paul melded an academic, nuanced, and deep knowledge of the past to an unwavering commitment to sharing that knowledge with the public at large.

This led him to push for new ways to study the plantation landscape and gardens at the Lee home, to highlight but one area his work.* Thus, Paul led the way in establishing a partnership with the University of Georgia's College of Environment and Design in 2010, which helped lead to the creation of the Cultural Landscape Laboratory. (*Magnolia* XXV, No.2, Spring 2012) There has followed a cultural landscape inventory; identification of character areas; several cultural landscapes symposia and workshops; training for a number of graduate students; various papers and theses; GIS mapping; and a series of recommendations for Stratford's nearly 2,000 acres along the Potomac River...to highlight but some outcomes of the Stratford-UGA partnership.

Paul came to Stratford Hall in 2006 well prepared, having served as president of Old Salem Museums and Gardens, while also teaching at UNC-Greensboro. Earlier, he worked as executive director of Decatur House (a National Trust property) in Washington, D.C., and was employed at the White House and George Washington's Mount Vernon. Deeply proud of his Pennsylvania roots, Paul received his undergraduate degree from Gettysburg College, going on to earn a master's degree from George Mason University and a Ph.D from the University of Maryland.

A memorial service for Paul took place on August 21, 2015 in the area just south of the Stratford Great House. A large tent was required as the attendance was so great that no Stratford building could suffice. On October 17, moreover, Paul posthumously received the Lee Integrity Award, the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association's highest form of recognition.

Wherever Paul might now be, let us hope it greatly

resembles his much-loved Adirondack Mountains, that all the denizens are Lutheran, and that they speak that variant of German known as "Pennsylvanish." –KMM

**Editor Peggy Cornett chaired Stratford's Historic Landscapes Advisory Panel, while co-editor Ken McFarland was Stratford staff Panel liaison until his 2010 retirement and a Panel member thereafter*

Doug Seidel

On October 3, 2015 the community of historic rose enthusiasts and preservationists lost a great champion. Reverend Douglas T. Seidel died at his eighteenth-century farmhouse in Emmaus, Pennsylvania,



Ruth Knopf with Doug Seidel at the dedication of the Bell Garden.

Photo by P. Cornett

surrounded by his family, after a long struggle with cancer. Doug was an invaluable authority on old roses and his extraordinary gift of identifying them and enthusiastically recounting their fascinating histories was legendary. For those of us who knew him well, and who so often sought his expertise, his loss is indeed immense.

Doug's fascination with heirloom plants began at age fourteen when he tried to recreate a Shakespearian garden after visiting The Cloisters in New York City. In 1968 he wrote a fan letter to noted rose historian, author, and illustrator Léonie Bell. A long friendship ensued that continued until her death in 1996. Soon after, Doug approached the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello with a proposal to dedicate a collection of Noisette Roses to honor his friend and mentor. This would become the Léonie Bell Rose Garden at the center's Tufton Farm headquarters. Doug arranged for many of the more rare Noisette specimens to be included and even contributed prized "found" roses from his personal collection, such as his "Aunt Louisa Rose" from the garden of President Garfield's aunt, and "Faded Pink Monthly," from Mrs. Frederick Love Keays, a pioneer old rose collector. She originally acquired her plant from the descendant of a freed African American woman who had rooted a slip from the plantation where she labored before the Civil War.

Doug's considerable knowledge of rose history informed preservation efforts at many private and public gardens, historic sites, and cemeteries throughout the country, including Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia,

Wyck Historic House in Germantown, Pennsylvania; Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery and Lynchburg's Old City Cemetery in Virginia; and Noisette Rose collections in Charleston, South Carolina. He published articles in the *Heritage Rose Foundation Newsletter* and other journals. He was a frequent speaker at the Center for Historic Plants' annual open house in May, at the peak of rose season, where he identified mystery roses brought by guests. This popular workshop became known as the "Antique Rose Show," and Doug led it for more than a decade. His

friends at Lynchburg's Old City Cemetery hoped that he could be their guest of honor at its twentieth Annual Antique Rose Festival, May 9, 2015, but sadly, he was too ill to attend.

Doug's garden contained hundreds of roses—many of which he had nurtured from a single cutting—with histories dating to the seventh century. And his greatest joy was sharing his plants and their histories with people and places that would ensure their survival for generations to come. —PLC

Southern Garden History Society

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

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

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. 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 2015-2016 year. Membership categories:

Benefactor	\$500
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For more membership information, contact:
Virginia Hart, Membership Coordinator
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Peggy Cornett
Monticello, P.O.B. 316
Charlottesville, VA 22902
(434) 984-9816
Cell (434) 465-5297
pcornett@monticello.org

Editor:

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

Associate Editor:

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

Book Review Editor:

Davyd Foard Hood
Isinglass
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