



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

Magnolia

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The Past is Present at the Historic Bamboo Farm: Tales of the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens in Savannah

By Melanie J. Ford, Athens, Georgia

It is difficult to understand the true nature of the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens (figure 1) without first understanding how it came to be. Its history is quite remarkable when coupled with the people who purchased and cultivated it and eventually let it go to make its own way, much like a parent raising their children and then sending them out into the world to grow into who they were meant to be. The story of the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens is one of the colonization of the United States, of plant introduction successes, of an agricultural crop trial and failure, and of a community's pride in a place as a tangible piece of its history, leading to an embracement of a landscape as an indispensable component of the telling of its story.

The property, currently known as the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens and Historic Bamboo Farm (CGBG), is a 51.2-acre site located at 2 Canebroke Road on the southwestern end of Savannah, Georgia. It is currently operated as a public botanical garden, owned by the Georgia Board of Regents (GBOR) and managed by the University of Georgia in conjunction with Chatham County. It encompasses 14 buildings and sheds, several of which date back to the first half of the twentieth century. The plentiful gardens, segregated by plant species, are home to the bamboo maze, the trustees garden, and to a few rather large ponds. (figures 2, 3, 4, 5) The CGBG is supported in large part by funds generated through admissions, donations, and facility rental fees.

Those are the facts of the current state of the facility and what most visitors see when they stroll through the gardens. Although there are various interpretive signs peppered throughout that provide little hints of the rich history of the facility, it is not possible to fully appreciate the garden without understanding the important story of the introduction of non-native plants into the United



Photo by Melanie J. Ford

Figure 1: Entrance sign of the CGBG.

States. It is made even more fascinating as seen through the eyes of plant explorers David Fairchild (1869-1954) and Barbour Lathrop (1847-1927) (figure 6) who are ultimately responsible for the government's purchase of the land that would become the CGBG. The purchase of this farm, resulting from its chance encounter with a wildly spreading stand of bamboo, allowed it, with its humble beginnings, to become a full-fledged plant introduction station, affectionately referred to by the locals as the

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CALENDAR

During this period of closures and modified events, many webinars are now available online. We encourage you to search for programs of interest.

February 6—August 1, 2021. “Virginia Arcadia: The Natural Bridge in American Art,” an exhibition at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts explores the artistic portrayal of this spectacular 400-million-year-old geological formation and natural landmark. The museum is located at 200 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd., Richmond, VA 23220. Visit: www.VMFA.museum.

May 1–September 1, 2021. “Beautiful Work: The Art of Greenwich Gardens and Landscapes,” an exhibition at the Greenwich Historical Society of original landscape design plans, artworks, furniture, gardening and farming tools, as well as photographs and archival objects documenting the story of a variety of Greenwich landscapes, from the gardens created for scions of industry who commissioned Greenwich’s Great Estates, to humble and hand-planted backyard vegetable gardens. Landscape designs of the Colonial Revival and the Country Life Movement by the Olmsted Brothers, Marian Cruger Coffin, Warren Manning, Ellen Shipman, and others are included. For more information or tickets call (203) 869-6899 or visit: www.greenwichhistory.org.



Elmer Livingston MacRae (1875-1953), “Back of the Old House.” Oil on canvas. Greenwich Historical Society, Gift of Bush-Holley Art Group.

Call for Papers—Landscapes in the Making, May

6-7, 2022. Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Landscape Studies Symposium, in partnership with the Mellon Initiative in Urban Landscape Studies.

This call for papers seeks to identify research that looks beyond canonical histories of design and architecture to include the people, particularly socially marginalized communities, who are involved day-to-day in its making and meaning, including commemorating its past and planning its future. This call seeks to engage projects that generate counternarratives that reveal how alternative views of the past shape visions of the present and the future.

This is the third symposium in a five-year series exploring what it would mean to curate histories of making landscapes. Building on symposia exploring landscapes of segregation and resistance in

2020 and the Land Back movement and Indigenous readings of land in 2021, this symposium seeks to interrogate stories of labor, craft, and stewardship as the work of making landscape, foregrounding those who have so often been silenced, including women, LGBTQ+ people, Black and Indigenous people, immigrants, and working-class laborers. We consider that the making of landscape engages ongoing social, cultural, and physical processes, including labor, craft, maintenance and stewardship, as well as materials and production.

For further details and submission instructions, visit: <https://www.doaks.org/research/garden-landscape/scholarly-activities/landscapes-in-the-making>



“Gardens at labor homes add to incomes. Tulare migrant camp. Visalia, California,” ca. 1940, Arthur Rothstein, photographer. Image courtesy the Library of Congress, from the Farm Security Administration—Office of War Information Photograph Collection

The Past is Present... (continued from page 1)

Bamboo Farm.

The history of plant introduction into the United States is a long and rambling one and includes many statesmen, a host of individuals with a passion for plants and the future of their country, and finally an embracement of the concept by the United States government to create the plant introduction arm of the Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the plant introduction stations was to perform breeding experiments to develop desirable qualities in the plants, such as those that would make them resistant to diseases, thrive under certain weather conditions, increase their harvest season, or enhance or create other beneficial characteristics.

Well known leaders of the United States, such as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, made contributions to the field of plant introduction, but “Jefferson’s interest in agriculture was more profound and practical... in Jefferson’s philosophy, the agrarian way of life was the basis of national economic and political sanity.”¹ Jefferson himself dabbled in plant exploration and deemed plant experimentation necessary to find suitable crops for the United States. It was during

Jefferson’s presidency that the Federal Government began to take a more active role in plant introduction. Following a series of agricultural Acts, treasury circulars, naval expeditions, and other government supported initiatives stretching from 1802 through 1839, the Federal government finally made a significant achievement when they created the Agricultural Division of the Patent Office for “collecting and publishing agricultural statistics and for the collection and distribution of seeds.”² This division developed into the Department of Agriculture in 1862, with the branch of the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction being created in 1897. David Fairchild, a botanist and plant explorer, was named as the head of this office. This was not surprising, considering his affiliation with Barbour Lathrop, a wealthy philanthropist whose chance encounter with Fairchild many years prior had unknowingly groomed him for this post. Their friendship and Fairchild’s appointment to this position was the impetus for what would become the establishment of the plant introduction station that would eventually be named the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens.³

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Figure 2: Aerial view of western side of the CGBG.



Figure 3: Aerial view of eastern side of the CGBG.



Figure 4: Bamboo Maze.



Figure 5: Trustees Garden.

Photos by Jessica Cress.

The Past is Present... (continued from page 3)

Barbour Lathrop was born in Alexandria, Virginia into a wealthy family. Lathrop had a tempestuous relationship with his father, exacerbated by a difference of opinion regarding their alliances during the American Civil War. After being sent to the University of Bonn in Germany, Lathrop returned to the United States to attend Harvard Law School. Following graduation, Lathrop worked briefly for a law firm but angered his father when he left that firm to work as a penniless reporter in San Francisco. It seems likely that his real-life struggles with his father and the realization of his financial struggles heightened his instinct to work hard and increased his resolve to help others. Upon his father's death in 1887, he inherited a portion of his family fortune and became a philanthropist, indulging his passion for the introduction of non-native plants into the United States. A chance encounter in 1893 with David Fairchild on a passage to Naples, Italy, eventually led to an unusual working friendship in which Lathrop funded their plant exploration voyages across the world in exchange for Fairchild's working knowledge of plants.⁴

Fairchild and Lathrop had many adventures together traversing the world, and Fairchild is credited with introducing over 200,000 plants into the United States.⁵ However, one plant that Lathrop found especially intriguing was the tall grass, bamboo. Lathrop wrote, "I

want to finance a big shipment of the plants to America. We should have them at home. Bamboo is beautiful as well as useful. The Japanese use it for everything. It may take a long time before Americans learn how to use it, but they'll never learn if we do not introduce the plant. Don't spend so much time on other things that you can't study the bamboos."⁶

It is perhaps very serendipitous, then, that a 46-acre farm in Savannah, Georgia containing over an acre of bamboo, was offered for sale and brought to Fairchild and Lathrop's attention. This farm, owned by the Smith family (figure 7, 8), was situated



Photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden Archives.

Figure 6: Barbour Lathrop and David Fairchild.



Photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden Archives.

Figure 7: Joel F. Smith.



Photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden Archives.

Figure 9: Andres E. Moynelo.



Photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden Archives.

Figure 8: Smith Farm and Store c. 1902.

adjacent to the Vallambrosa rice plantation. Andrés E. Moynelo (figure 9), who married the owner of the Vallambrosa plantation, also enjoyed plant exploration and had obtained several clumps of Giant Japanese timber bamboo, *Phyllostachys bambusoides*, in his travels during the 1880s. He gave three small bamboo plants to the Smith family, and these were planted near a well on their farm.⁷ As is commonly known now, bamboo grows and spreads relatively rapidly in the South. Upon learning that the Smiths were planning to sell their farm, Colonel S.B. Dayton (figure 10), a worker on the farm who frequently harvested the bamboo to sell poles and bamboo shoots, sent a letter to Fairchild in May 1915.⁸ On July 15, 1915, having received no response, Dayton appeared in Fairchild's office in Washington, D.C. with samples of the bamboo. Dayton successfully convinced Fairchild to at least look at the property and consider its purchase. Fairchild sent Peter Bisset from his office to inspect the site and to determine its viability for investment. It was the latter's affirmation of the size of the bamboo grove that prompted Fairchild to action.¹⁰

The story of the Bamboo Farm purchase is best told in David Fairchild's own words, "I realized that unless someone bought it, America would lose one of its largest groves of timber bamboo. As I had spent some time in

Japan studying bamboos with that great world traveler, Barbour Lathrop of Chicago, and had made a large collection of bamboo plants for him, which he purchased and presented to the government, I half jokingly wrote to him, asking him if he didn't want to own this bamboo grove on the Ogeechee River. He replied

at once, authorizing the purchase of the whole farm of forty-six acres, and its presentation to the Office of Plant Introduction of the Department of Agriculture." Fairchild further clarified that the purpose of this Federal plant introduction garden would be for the "preliminary trying out of new foreign plants to see if they can be grown here,

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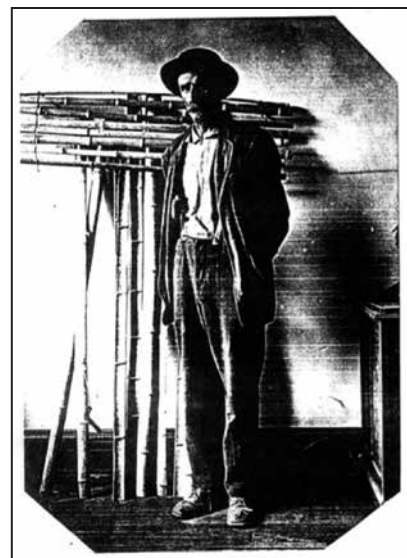


Figure 10: Colonel S.B. Dayton.

Photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden Archives.



Photo by Melanie J. Ford.

Figure 12: Bisset's Bamboo, *Phyllostachys bissetii*.



Figure 11: Bamboo Museum 1929.

Photo courtesy of Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden Archives.



Photo by Jessica Ford.

Figure 13: Citrange Orange Grove.

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and their propagation for distribution throughout the states wherever climactic conditions are believed to be suited for their cultivation.”¹²

The farm was purchased and named officially the Savannah Station. Fairchild himself traveled there in 1919 to hire a superintendent for the facility and to evaluate the assets. It seems there were three buildings already located on the property: two stores and a house. One of the stores was converted into a packing shed and the house was renovated to provide lodging for the station’s superintendent.

Lathrop’s vision for the bamboo was based upon observations he and Fairchild had made in China and Japan. They had seen many manual household and farm tools constructed out of the light, hollow stems, and had even seen them used for electrical conduits. The intent was to be able to grow so much bamboo that it could be used in the mass production of these items. They had visions of bamboo farms stretching for miles, “to encourage an industry that may some day represent hundreds of millions of dollars of investment and employ hundreds of thousands of people.”¹³ Indeed, they also commissioned the construction of a separate building on the bamboo farm in 1922 to serve as a museum to display specimens and photographs illustrating the usefulness of bamboo (figure 11).

In 1924, David Bisset, Peter Bisset’s son, was appointed as the second superintendent of the facility, and instructed to “assemble here as many species of bamboo as possible, build up permanent plantings of them, and propose bamboo for distribution throughout the South.” The letter further revealed that there was also interest in possible future plant propagation of other species and varieties of plants, but the bamboo was the priority.¹⁴ The name of the Savannah Station was officially changed in 1927 to the Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden to honor Lathrop following his death in that same

year. The correspondence between Bisset and Fairchild throughout the years of Bisset’s employment by the USDA details bamboo introduction successes and failures, as well as dealings with other interested cultivators and business people, botanists, and plant collectors. Bisset worked tirelessly to promote bamboo cultivation in the United States and was honored in 1956 by having a species, *Phyllostachys bissetii*, named after him (figure 12).¹⁵

Records in the archive of the Fairchild Botanic Gardens indicate that at one point there were at least 180 species of bamboo planted on the farm; in addition to the bamboo, however, the garden hosted a variety of other plants upon which research and experimentation occurred. Many of these are still visible in the garden today, such as the orange tree garden (figures 13, 14), which Fairchild wrote in one of his 1928 reports contained the “collection of the hardy citranges, those remarkable hybrids produced by the plant breeders Swingle and Webber, between the hardy trifoliate orange of Japan and the real orange, and while the fruits have, in general inherited too much of the objectionable character of the Japanese parent to be good eating, their large fragrant flowers and highly colored fruits make them most attractive dwarf trees for small gardens.”¹⁶

One of the more notable crops that the farm researched was that of the goldenrod, *Solidago*. During the 1930s and well into the 1950s, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, and Thomas Edison were able to persuade the USDA to work with goldenrod and other chemurgic plants for the extraction of rubber. Unfortunately, the invention of synthetic rubber eventually ended the research.¹⁷

Following David Bisset’s death in 1957, the garden continued the work it had initially set out to do – to find a use for bamboo. The new superintendent, W.O. Hawley, provided bamboo for the Herty Foundation in Savannah, which funded research working with bamboo as a source for making paper. But in 1965, after more than 20 years of



Photo by Jessica Ford.

Figure 14: Citranges, which are a cross between Trifoliate and Sweet Oranges.



Photo by Jessica Ford.

Figure 15: Historic entrance gates at US Highway 17.

attempting to make bamboo become a productive American crop, the Herty Foundation discontinued their funding for this research effort, citing, among other reasons, the unsatisfactory nature of a 25-year return on investor's money.¹⁸

There may perhaps have been a little foreshadowing by Fairchild of the end of the bamboo research when he advocated for the plant introduction station initially: "The introduction of plants is just as much of a gamble and just as dependent on the whims of popular taste as is the established agriculture of this country. That we must be prepared to shift from one crop to another with changing demands is beyond question, for it may be as much of a gamble to continue to grow the old crop as it is to take up a new one."¹⁹ And unfortunately, as social and political interests shifted during the late 1950s and beyond, as discontent in the United States began to grow with the Vietnam War struggles, the facility likewise struggled to find a purpose. The vision that Fairchild and Lathrop had seen with the possibility of bamboo had failed to materialize. The Federal government lost interest in the facility and was eager to close it to re-direct funds to other, more pressing needs. It closed in 1979.

That might have been the end had it not been for the local community rallying to save the garden, and in 1983, the University of Georgia (UGA) accepted the deed to operate it as a research and education center. In 1984 this deed was transferred to the GBoR and the facility was renamed the Coastal Area Extension Center.²⁰

While this might have seemed like a happy ending, the facility was unfortunately a relative anomaly under the UGA umbrella of facilities. With prompting from UGA, a community advisory committee, the Friends of

the Coastal Garden (FoCG), was established to provide financial and volunteer support for the garden.

Budget challenges continued to plague the facility, however, and constant threats for closure kept the community engaged in volunteer efforts to save it. In 2003, additional budget cuts forced the transfer of the garden to a unique partnership between Chatham County, where it is located, and the UGA Cooperative Extension Service, which allows both entities to share expenses. The garden has been operating under this partnership agreement since, with support from the FoCG. In 2007, a strategic plan was created to set the stage for a more public garden, and in 2012, the name was changed to its current name of the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens at the Historic Bamboo Farm. Its mission was defined to "provide education, public outreach, and applied research in the horticultural and environmental sciences."²¹ In 2019, the garden proudly celebrated 100 years of hard-fought existence.

The master plan development for the garden, commissioned by the FoCG, necessarily incorporated the orderly scientific and systematic fashion in which the original Savannah Station had been organized. The segregation of plants into their corresponding parcels was retained and soft-edged trails tied them together for transitions from one group of plant species to another. The meandering, rather subdued main entry was relocated from US Highway 17 to Canebrake Road to accommodate a more centrally located axial entrance (figures 15, 16).

While there are many notable features of the CGBG, of particular significance is that it is home to ten state champion trees. A champion tree is the largest of their species in the state in which they are located, and one of

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Figure 16: New Entrance Drive off of Canebrake Road centrally located on Andrews Visitor's Center.

Photo by Melanie J. Ford.

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these champion trees, the Lord's Holly, *Ilex rotunda*, (figure 17) stands guard near the entrance to the Barbour Lathrop Bamboo Grove.

What began as a farm, providing sustenance for those that lived and worked on it, was transformed because of three clumps of bamboo into an agricultural breeding ground for the United States. It became a place where visions were realized and discoveries of viable economic crops for the nation were born. The research and experimentation that occurred resulted in the dissemination of seeds and ideas out into the world. But social climates change and economic interests shift and while the old 'farm' is no longer serving the same function, the past is imprinted upon it. It can still boast of its accomplishments and display its beauty for the world to see, but its stories are hidden among the branches and leaves of its flora, shining amidst the bamboo stalks, enticing you to find them. Fairchild himself said, "But have we not been taught from childhood that there are things more valuable than money, and is not one of these things beauty? Is it possible that any American who wanders through this bamboo grove can so have outgrown his childhood as not to realize what a romantic playground for children is afforded by its deep green shade and shifting sunlight? If the score or more of bamboo groves now growing up in this country should serve no other purpose than to please the eyes of men and women and live on in the hearts of little children, perhaps their greatest object will have been obtained."²² (figure 18) It seems very apropos that the Savannah plant introduction station, having lived out its useful life in that occupation, would transform into a public botanical garden, with plans for a children's garden on the horizon.

Notes

- 1 Nelson Klose, *America's Crop Heritage; the history of foreign plant introduction by the Federal Government* (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1950), 16.
- 2 Klose, *America's Crop Heritage*, 38.

- 3 Marjory Stoneman Douglas, *Adventures in a Green World* (Coconut Grove, FL: Coconut Grove, FL Field Research Projects, 1973), 52.
- 4 Douglas, *Adventures in a Green World*, 15-16.
- 5 Anna Diamond, "America's 'First Food Spy' Traveled the World Hunting for Exotic Crops," *Smithsonian Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2018, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/small-talk_fairchild-180967508.
- 6 David Fairchild, *The World Was My Garden: Travels of a Plant Explorer* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 249-250.
- 7 David Fairchild, "Report of Southern Trip," January 18 to April 18, 1919.
- 8 Janet Mosely, "Bamboo in America," *Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden*, <http://archive.fairchildgarden.org/Science-Conservation-/Archives-Natural-history-Collection/Whats-New/Bamboo-in-America>.
- 9 Fairchild, *The World Was My Garden: Travels of a Plant Explorer*, 449.
- 10 Mosely, "Bamboo in America."
- 11 David Fairchild, *The Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), 3.
- 12 Fairchild, *The Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden*, 3.
- 13 Fairchild, *The Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden*, 11.
- 14 Wilson Propenoe to USDA Bureau of Plant Industry, March 5, 1924, USDA Bureau of Plant Industry, Washington, D.C.
- 15 Mosely, "Bamboo in America."
- 16 Fairchild, *The Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden*, 13-14.
- 17 Frank Linton, "A Stroll Through the History of the Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden," July 1992.
- 18 Linton, "A Stroll Through the History of the Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden."
- 19 Fairchild, *"The Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden,"* 15.
- 20 University of Georgia, "Historic Preservation Master Plan," 2018, 749.
- 21 University of Georgia, "Historic Preservation Master Plan," 750.
- 22 Fairchild, *"The Barbour Lathrop Plant Introduction Garden,"* 16.



Photo by Jessica Ford.

Figure 17: Lord's Holly, *Ilex rotunda*.



Photo by Jessica Ford.

Figure 18: Bamboo Grove.

Book Review

Our Days Are Like Full Years: A Memoir with Letters from Louis Kahn, by Harriet Pattison, Yale University Press | 438 pages, Hardcover | ISBN: 978-0-300-22312-5, 2020 | list price \$45.00

Magnolia editors approach their work believing readers wish to broaden their knowledge of gardens and landscapes. Such are obvious subjects for this publication. Taking a small leap of faith, this reviewer presumes you also appreciate architecture in general and the fine arts broadly. Thus, he

would like to recommend Harriet Pattison's *Our Days Are Like Full Years: A Memoir with Letters from Louis Kahn*, a book that evokes both joy and pathos as one examines the relationship between landscape architect Pattison (1928-) and the famed Louis I. Kahn (1901-1974), one of America's most prominent 20th-century architects. A third central character is their son Nathaniel Kahn (1962-), an Oscar-nominated filmmaker, whose 2003 documentary *My Architect: A Son's Journey* addresses his father's life and career.

Chicago native Pattison had briefly encountered Kahn, always known as Lou, in 1953 when she was a drama student at Yale. Only in late 1958, however, were they formally introduced in Philadelphia by mutual friend Robert Venturi. The city was Kahn's base, where he lectured and worked, while Pattison had moved there to study piano. Though Kahn was long married, the two quickly formed a strong and intimate bond. A series of often-illustrated letters to Pattison from the globe-travelling architect form a rich core of this book. Kahn's quickly rendered drawings give important insights into his work and thinking, but he was also highly clever with words and turning a phrase. The facsimile letters, in addition, offer a sense of the moment that cannot be captured in the adjoining typescript versions, though the latter do offer ease of reading.

Kahn's exhausting schedule often left the peripatetic architect wearily frustrated, being frequently confounded by government officials, fellow architects, and others who in ways large and small could stall his efforts. "Everything is square foot and \$," Kahn bemoaned in January 1970, describing work on the Ayub National Hospital in Dhaka

(then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). Pattison became a sympathetic sounding board, someone who deeply appreciated Kahn's talents. And the extent and significance of his endeavors resound from the pages as he shares news of such major projects as California's Salk Institute for Biological Studies, the Indian Institute of Management, and the National Assembly in Dhaka.

His Jewish heritage must figure in any account of Kahn's life as well, and the communication with Pattison about synagogue projects, never to be realized, significantly broadens our understanding of the man. Underlying all, the affinity Kahn had developed for the strength and solidity of the buildings of antiquity shows through repeatedly. It comes as no surprise that his favorite structure in Rome was the Pantheon.

Frustration bedeviled Pattison as well. She deeply loved Kahn, yet he ultimately was to prove unwilling to break from his marriage and move into the monogamous relationship Pattison so desired. A 1961 Museum of Modern Art function clearly reveals the rough circumstances of any Kahn relationship. An opening for an exhibition on his Richards Medical Research Laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania, the guest list included not only Harriet Pattison but also Lou Kahn's wife, Esther, their daughter, Sue Ann, as well as the woman preceding Pattison in Kahn's life, architect Anne Tyng, the mother of Kahn's other daughter, Alexandra.

Also attending the reception was Kahn's proud elderly father, Leopold. The family had emigrated from Estonia when Lou was a child, and he grew up in Philadelphia under straightened circumstances. (Kahn was born Leiser-Itze Schmulowsky, his name being changed after his 1906 arrival in America.) Absence of funds would haunt the architect for his entire career, despite professional successes and widespread acclaim. More to the point, this seems at least one reason for remaining with his financially astute spouse. By contrast, Pattison had lived more comfortably, her family holdings including a Maine coast house and small island that were to offer Harriet an invaluable retreat. These factors along with friends who could offer support and places of security aided her greatly in coming challenging moments.

Pattison's poignant description of the pregnancy announcement exemplifies her treatment of Kahn in this book. A love for the man and his achievements is powerfully portrayed, but she does little to mask his weaknesses and less-endearing characteristics, along with her unhappiness about it. Kahn's blunt "not again" response to the pregnancy, was a hammer blow, with few softening words to follow up. Lou Kahn would come to

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love his only son, Nathaniel, though initially visits were infrequent. Clearly Pattison would have not only to bear a child on her own but also seek out a career to provide both a livelihood and personal gratification.

During the earlier Kahn correspondence Pattison had shown a good eye for design and beginnings of an interest in landscape matters. (Among her experiences, she had benefited greatly from extensive travels in Europe.) These were to come together at the time of Nathaniel's birth in a way that has shaped the rest of the author's life. In her own words, "During the darkest time of my pregnancy, two books had fallen into my hands like a blessing: Sylvia Crowe's *Garden Design* and Russell Page's *Education of a Gardener*." ...I took them with me to the hospital when I was in labor, and they were to become talismans of the great changes to my life, starting that day with the birth of my son."

This November 9, 1962 event preceded a February 1963 trip to Vermont marking the start of Pattison's new direction. Pulling in favors, Lou Kahn had convinced landscape architect Dan Kiley to give a home and apprenticeship to Harriet at his Wings Point establishment in Charlotte (pronounced Char-lotte, stressing the second syllable), Vermont. Kiley apparently was not expecting baby Nathaniel, however, and was none too happy. Still, mother and son created a cozy home from a drafty garage apartment with a fine view of Lake Champlain. Pattison never undertook significant work there, but the Kiley office experience allowed her to get the feel for a superb landscape architecture practice, plus the isolated Wings Point property was just the spot to give Nathaniel a hale and hearty start in life, his daytime caregiver riding in on a horse. Additionally, the beloved Maine home offered restful variety to their lives.

Pattison nonetheless knew she could advance but so far at the "kind of utopia" that was Wings Point. Kiley was to force the issue, however, with a time-to-move-on nudge. While a blow, this was also a crucial turning point, as it pushed the author to take the logical next career move. Fall 1964 saw her enroll at the University of Pennsylvania School of Landscape Architecture, Philadelphia again becoming the rotation point of her life and her relationship with Lou Kahn.

The rigors of such programs are fully depicted here, with the all-night work, project frustrations, and simple grind they entail. Of course, rearing a son added to the pressures, though Kahn was becoming more of a presence in his son Nathaniel's life. He was also to become a professional presence for Pattison following her graduation and acceptance into the Philadelphia landscape architecture office of George Patton.

While the two had shared concepts for projects that

never came about, Fort Worth's Kimbell Art Museum offered the first opportunity for major collaboration. It was to be one of Kahn's greatest American achievements, art in its own right, which he believed suitably complemented the works contained therein. As per usual the Kimbell Museum did not come into being worry free and without cutbacks, but structure and landscape today nonetheless offer us an exemplary statement of the joining of Kahn-Pattison talents. Going to the problematic core of the relationship, however, Pattison was excluded from the October 1972 opening, an event Kahn attended with wife Esther. Ten years passed before Pattison visited.

It would not be the final time she was excluded from events celebrating Kahn, though Nathaniel and his older half-sister Alexandra would jointly step in to attend Philadelphia functions for their father even though uninvited. Similarly, when Pattison achieved the dream of actually working in Lou's office, starting in mid-1972, she would be relegated to a tiny space, set apart to avoid wife Esther during her occasional visits. Sadly, this came less than two years before the end of Kahn's life. Remarkable opportunities for collaboration remained, however, the most outstanding being the FDR memorial on Roosevelt Island in New York City. Once again, they faced numerous roadblocks, and decades passed before a modified form of their initial scheme materialized. It is moving, however, to read Pattison's description of the dedication ceremony in 2012, a moment when her contributions were actually acknowledged.

Louis I. Kahn died suddenly in New York's Penn Station on March 17, 1974, having just returned from India. Pattison's account of those days and the pain suffered by family and associates captures events movingly. Her description of Kahn's funeral, moreover, illuminates once more her personal plight as she and Nathaniel were sidelined and thus again not directly recognized for their vital role in Lou's life.

The author's evocation of her pain will touch many readers, and perhaps some will be as angry as her brothers who could not forgive Kahn for what they perceived as mistreatment of a sister. Clearly, however, that is not Pattison's true reason for giving us this book. Instead, we have a story of a unique love and a sharing of genius that spanned far too few years. This was also the period when a seemingly tireless Kahn was at his peak, and Pattison brings us an inside perspective on those often- hectic moments. Regrettably, Pattison's letters were not at hand to complement Kahn's, but we join in her hopes, noted in the final paragraph, that they "may still survive somewhere." Fortunately, the author has survived to visit, and be astounded, by projects that Kahn never lived to see completed. As well, she has gone on to success and

recognition in her chosen profession, being named an American Society of Landscape Architect Fellow in 2016.

Richly arrayed with sketches, family pictures, plans, images of building models, exemplary photographs of Kahn structures, and illustrations of Pattison-Kahn projects, this book will provide enduring enjoyment. Please enhance the reading experience through watching, or re-watching, Nathaniel Kahn's *My Architect*. Cap this

with the Cultural Landscape Foundation's *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* Harriet Pattison interview series for even greater insight on these exceptional lives and careers.

Visit: <https://tclf.org/pioneer/harriet-pattison>

Kenneth McFarland
Brandon, Vermont

Towards a Garden History Canon

Judith Tankard on *Gardens of Colony and State* (1931)

As some of you know, I have an extensive garden history library that I have been assembling since the 1980s that focuses on British and American garden design from the 1890s to the 1930s. In some cases, I've collected every book and edition by favorite authors, such as Gertrude Jekyll and William Robinson, some with inscriptions, tipped-in photographs and other ephemera. Other treasures include oversize folios with superb photographs. One of my all-time favorites is Alice Lockwood's two-volume *Gardens of Colony and State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons for The Garden Club of America, 1931). Years ago, I spotted a pristine two-volume set at a garden library discard sale and quickly snapped it up. The only problems were getting the heavy volumes in my small roll-on luggage for that afternoon's flight back home. . . and what to do with the well-used set I already had. This new acquisition was special since it was a subscribers' copy listing all the sponsors who made the costly publication possible. The six pages of names represent a roll-call of dedicated garden club leaders nationwide as well as Ellen Shipman and some of her clients. It quickly became apparent that the two volumes provide evidence of a group of dedicated women (to be fair, Fletcher Steele is the lone male contributor) and their support of this important project.

Gardens of Colony and State is often the first book

I pull off the shelf when I'm beginning a new research project because of its scholarship, even if it is somewhat outdated. From there, I consult more up-to-date books and periodicals or explore the Internet, but neither option is as satisfying as savoring the pages of *Gardens of Colony and State*. Sadly, the days of quality subscription volumes has waned, to be replaced by snappier layouts and glossy (but distracting) photographs.

Another significant accolade for *Gardens of Colony and State* is the number of important books it has inspired, including publications focused on individual states, such as *Garden History of Georgia* (Peachtree Garden Club, 1933) which in turn inspired *Seeking Eden: A Collection of Georgia's Historic Gardens* (2018) by Staci Catron and

Mary Ann Eaddy. It's also worth mentioning books that may have inspired *Gardens of Colony and State*, especially *Historic Gardens of Virginia* (James River Garden Club, 1923), edited by Edith Tunis Sale.

The runner-up for *Gardens of Colony and State* is *The Golden Age of American Gardens: Proud Owners, Private Estates, 1890-1940* by Mac Griswold and Eleanor Weller (1991) based on the Garden Club of America Collection of glass lantern slides at the Smithsonian Institution. For me, this attractive, information-packed book opened up a new world of images and research on the diversity and richness of America's historic gardens.

Judith B Tankard, Boston, Massachusetts.





Southern Garden History Society

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The *Flora Ann Bynum Medal* is awarded to recipients who have rendered outstanding service to the Society. Nominations may be made at any time by any member.

The *William Lanier Hunt Award* recognizes members, non-members, and/or organizations that have made an exceptional contribution to the fields closely aligned with the goals of the Society. Nominations may be made by any member.

The title *Honorary Director* (Board of Directors) may be bestowed on individuals who have rendered exceptional service and made significant contributions to the Society.

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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 and to new professionals in the field.

Details, requirements, and directions for submitting applications are posted on the SGHS website: www.southerngardenhistory.org. For those without internet access, a copy of this document can be mailed. Contact Rebecca Hodson, SGHS Administrator.

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