



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

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Stratford Hall: An Early Garden Restoration Revisited

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Stratford Hall is the seat of the Lees of Virginia's Northern Neck. The family included two signers of the Declaration of American Independence, and generations later, Robert E. Lee, who was born at Stratford in 1807.¹ The main house was built for Thomas Lee and his wife Hannah Ludwell Lee in the late 1730s. It was inherited in 1750 by their son, Philip Ludwell Lee, sometimes known as Colonel Phil. He did not join his brothers, Francis Lightfoot and Richard Henry, in signing the Declaration of Independence. As noted, Stratford was also the birthplace of Robert E. Lee, and although he moved away as a toddler, the property was acquired in the early twentieth century as a memorial to the military leader of the Confederacy. The appropriateness of such memorials to Confederate leaders has been rightfully reexamined, as has the larger issue of commemoration of historic sites that owed their very existence to the institution of slavery. Explorations of these issues are essential to all historic sites, and Stratford is no exception. The focus of this article is to better understand the restoration of the Stratford garden as an important part of the record of garden history in America.

In the spring of 1929, when the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation, the organization created to acquire and preserve Stratford Hall, asked the Garden Club of Virginia to restore the Lee family garden, it was one of the largest and earliest undertakings of its kind in America. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union had sponsored the stabilization of the garden walls at Mount



Section of Stratford Hall East Garden, Oct. 2019. Note recently restored area in center of frame.

Photo credit to Rieley & Associates.

Vernon and maintained Victorian planting of its Upper Garden, among other stabilization efforts; but a scholarly investigation into Washington's gardens remained several years in the future. At Monticello, the house and a small

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Statement to the Membership

We, the officers and directors of the Southern Garden History Society, believe this issue of *Magnolia* provides the best means of sharing with the membership our concerns and hopes for the future at this moment of both pandemic and widespread concern about social justice for all Americans. The most evident impact of the former was the cancellation of our annual meeting at Mount Vernon, an event eagerly anticipated by so many. Members who might wish to gather at a local level also find such activities blocked, while meetings and programs of garden history interest have been cancelled or postponed across the country. While we hope to gather at Mount Vernon in 2021, we cannot know with certainty that can occur safely or when other events of interest will be able to welcome participants.

For the present, therefore, we will re-double our efforts to serve the membership through the various means open to us. Of course, you are reading this message in our acclaimed print publication, *Magnolia*, a source of pride for us all. We hope you enjoy the rich array of essays, reviews, news of fellow members, plus other stories and information found in each issue. Please note, too, that our editors continually seek articles telling the complex and

diverse stories of Southern gardens, gardeners, and landscapes.

Our website, www.southengardenhistory.com, plays an equally important role in telling our story, and it is our goal to expand and enliven its contents in ways to both complement *Magnolia* and to convey information to members and to other students of garden history in graphically dynamic and exciting ways. Our administrator, Rebecca Hodson, is keenly committed to making our website the best it can be, and of course she welcomes your input and suggestions. Rebecca and the *Magnolia* editors also will be working with our new board member Adam Martin, serving as digital media director, to make sure you regularly receive the latest news of impact and interest to Society members.

Thus, whether via *Magnolia*, the website, social media, possible Zoom meetings, or through other means, we will be exerting every effort to make the Society an organization that continues to be a vibrant resource for its members. For now, stay tuned, stay healthy, and join the millions of others who are taking even greater solace in their own home gardens and garden libraries. Together we are writing a new chapter in Southern garden history!

CALENDAR

Now through December 4, 2020. "Louisiana's Natural Treasures: Margaret Stones, Botanical Artist," on exhibition at the Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University Campus, Baton Rouge. The exhibition includes selected original watercolor drawings, photographs, letters, and other archival materials from the collection related to Margaret Stones' *Native Flora of Louisiana*, 226 watercolor drawings created between 1976 and 1989. For further information: <http://news.blogs.lib.lsu.edu/2020/02/10/louisianas-natural-treasure-margaret-stones-botanical-artist/>

July 1-November 1, 2020. "A Landscape Saved: The Garden Club of Virginia at 100" at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture in Richmond, Virginia. The Exhibition will feature many plans and photographs of the Garden Club of Virginia's

century of historic restorations. In addition, on September 16, the museum's Banner Lecture Series will feature Eric Proebsting of Poplar Forest and Matt Peterschmidt of Stratford Hall discussing their recent restorations and the impact that the GCV has had on the research and implementation of the projects. The lecture is open to the public. Details at virginiahistory.org

October 8-November 7, 2020. Preservation Society of Charleston presents the 44th annual Fall Tours, Monday-Thursday, 10:00 AM-2:00 PM. Venture beyond the garden gate and experience Charleston, South Carolina's history, architecture, and gardens up close. Guided history walking tours also available. For details, schedule and pricing, call (843) 405-1050, or visit: www.preservationsociety.org

Stratford Hall: An Early Garden Restoration... (continued from page 1)

part of the Jefferson property had been acquired by the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, and the Garden Club had donated funds for planting several trees, but no major restoration work in the landscape had been initiated. Boston landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff had been selected to serve on the design team for the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, in the spring of the previous year. So, when Shurcliff was approached by the Garden Club of Virginia about the prospect of assisting with the restoration of the landscape and garden at Stratford Hall, he was faced with developing the methodology for landscape restoration of a Virginia plantation on a scale not seen before.²

The story of the restoration of the Stratford Hall landscape over the following decades has been ably described in previous issues of *Magnolia* (Vol. XIX, No. 1, Winter 2004, Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter 2005, and Vol. XXV, No. 2, Spring 2012). I recount the beginning of this effort to emphasize that Shurcliff, Morley Williams, and later, Alden Hopkins were more than renowned practitioners—they were inventors of a new field of endeavor: the restoration of historic American landscapes.

Arthur Shurcliff was a natural choice for the work at Colonial Williamsburg, and a year later, that at Stratford Hall. Shurcliff was highly regarded within the profession of landscape architecture and had been elected president of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1928. His genial and polite demeanor made him an excellent collaborator; and his career-long affection for and study of old gardens aligned perfectly with these new design challenges in Virginia. Shurcliff was 59 years old and near the apex of his distinguished career when he began to study the garden at Stratford Hall as a consultant to the Garden Club of Virginia. He reported to Mrs. Fairfax (Hetty) Harrison, chairman of the Garden Club's Stratford Hall Committee.

He began his work there by initiating archaeological excavations. Between July and September of 1930 the archaeologists successfully located a ha-ha or fosse (a constructed declivity that keeps livestock out of the garden, but does not obstruct the view out from the garden as an upright wall or fence would) south of the house, and at the east end of the garden. They also found fragments of the garden's north and south walls that extended from the house to the ha-ha. By October of 1930 the work had progressed sufficiently that Shurcliff commissioned a topographical survey from Herbert A. Claiborne of the Richmond building firm of Claiborne and Taylor. He made a report of the findings to Mrs. Harrison and her committee. Shurcliff recommended a deliberate approach to the restoration itself, writing that it was important "to continue our patient study of the actual

facts of the old design before we attempt the restoration of the grounds." Even though this work formed a solid base for further archaeological and design work on the site and the fact that Shurcliff had donated half of his fees to the project, the cost of the work depleted the Garden Club funds. Hetty Harrison announced to the Garden Club that his work had to be discontinued.

Of course, there is no reason to suggest that this change was the result of lack of assiduity or commitment on Shurcliff's part, as this work was proceeding in the teeth of the Depression.³ It was not the last time that the Garden Club's officers would be dismayed at the cost of archaeological work. Nevertheless, this pioneering effort was essential in setting the boundaries and parameters for the restoration work that would follow.

The following year, members of the Garden Club's Stratford Hall Committee learned that one of the Harvard Design School's junior faculty members, Morley Jeffers Williams, had been studying antebellum plantations in the South, funded by a grant from the Clark Fund for Research in Landscape Design. An agreement was negotiated in which Williams was assigned to continue the archaeological work at Stratford Hall, funded by another Clark Fund grant. It was further agreed that he would be assisted by Harvard graduate student Charles Cotesworth Pinkney, who would, like the workers doing the excavation, be paid directly by the Garden Club of Virginia.

Morley Williams came to the field of landscape architecture by a more circuitous route than Shurcliff. Born in Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada in 1886, Williams' early training—two years of college—was in civil engineering. He began work as bridge construction inspector and soon rose to the position of resident engineer for the Canadian Northern Railway. Two years later, he left this position and acquired half ownership in a grain elevator and farmed three hundred acres of cropland. After eight years of this experience, Williams took over the farm operations of the president of the Massey-Harris Farm Machinery Company.

Then, in 1925, at the age of 38, Williams returned to college and completed a degree in horticulture from the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, Ontario. Immediately on completion of this degree, Williams entered the Master of Landscape Architecture program in Harvard's School of Design. (Arthur Shurcliff was on his thesis committee.) After graduation he was awarded a yearlong traveling fellowship in 1929, which he spent studying landscape design in Europe and North Africa. Then, by virtue of his experience in civil engineering, he taught courses in landscape topography and construction

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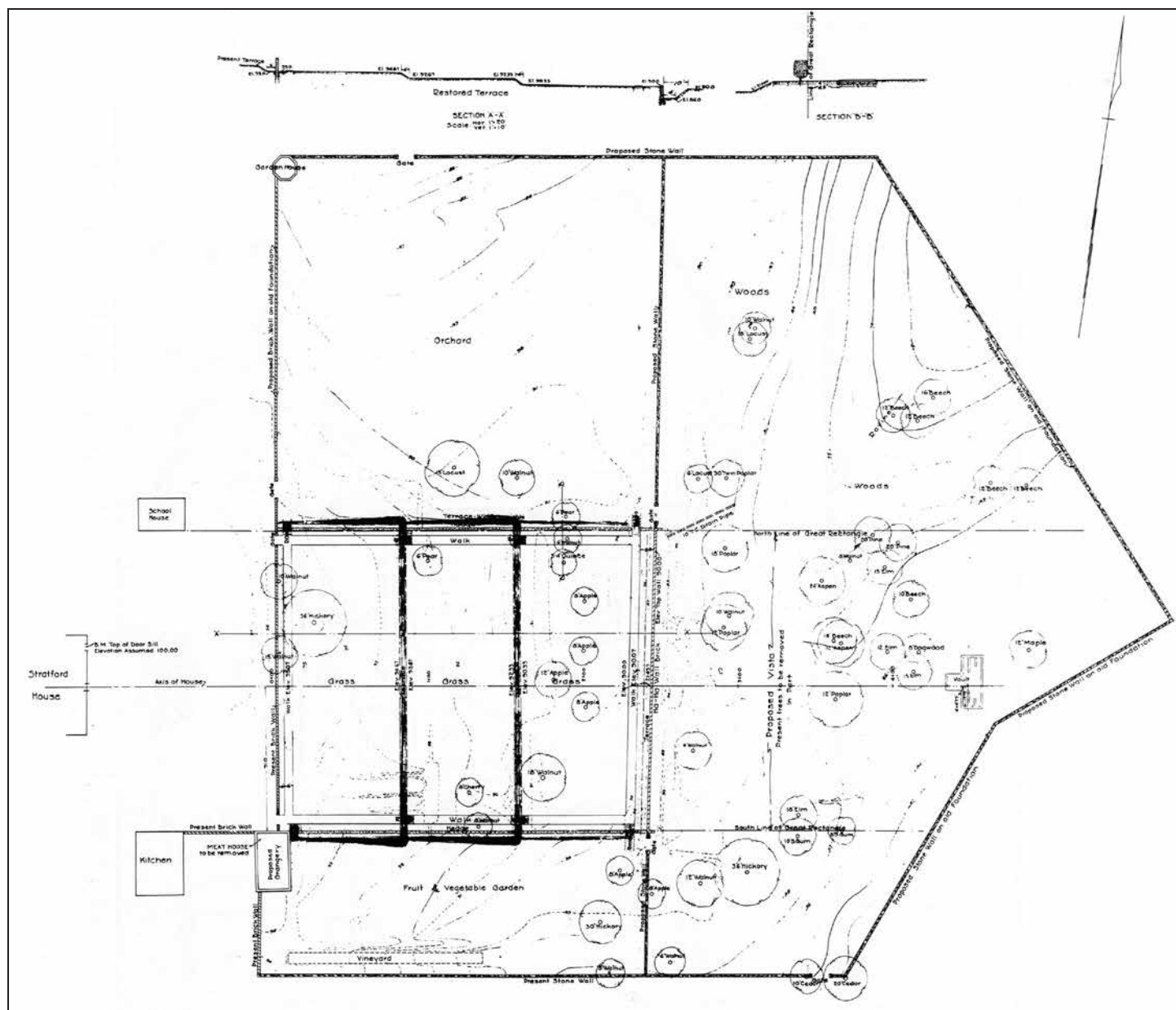
Stratford Hall: An Early Garden Restoration... (continued from page 3)

at Harvard; and in 1930 he was asked to join the faculty as an assistant professor.

In March 1931, Williams received his grant from the Clark Fund for Research in Landscape Design at Harvard to investigate "American Landscape Design as Exemplified by the Plantation Estates of Maryland and Virginia, 1750 to 1860." In May, he made a trip through Virginia to study historic plantations including Gunston Hall, Woodlawn, and Mount Vernon (where he made a detailed topographic survey of the Bowling Green). Though Williams was 46 years old in 1932, when he began the Stratford Hall project, he was a recent graduate of the landscape architecture program at Harvard and the summer trip to Virginia the previous year was his first exposure to historic landscapes in the South. Because of this limited experience, and the fact that his second grant

from the Clark Fund allowed him to work at no charge to the Garden Club, he was asked to follow through on Shurcliff's work.

Although Williams had neither the experience nor the professional standing that Shurcliff had brought, he did possess strong technical ability, superb graphic skills, and great energy. The archaeological investigations headed up by Pinkney went remarkably quickly—an indication, perhaps, of the coarse grain of landscape archaeology in this fledgling stage of development. A summary drawing and report outlined the conclusions that the garden was, as suspected, terraced, that it was terminated on its east end by a ha-ha wall of about four feet in height and was enclosed by walls on the north and south sides. [Illustration 1] While much of the site had been too disturbed to show detailed layout, one area on the second



Illus. 1. LaPrade topographical plan.

Illustration courtesy RELMA.

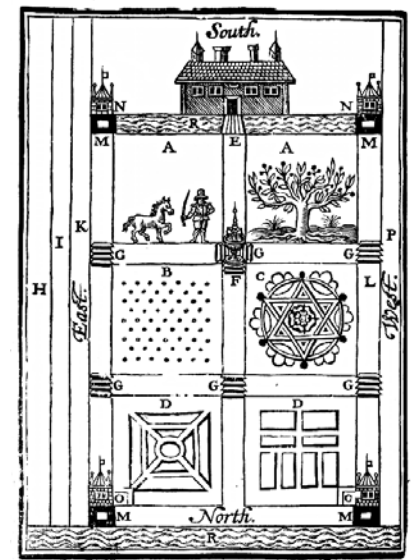
terrace from the house showed clear indications of rows of planting beds, some with broken brick under-drains.

At the end of July Williams presented his report to Mrs. Harrison and her Garden Club committee. His work was accepted, and he was asked to prepare plans for the garden, the approaches to the mansion, and the vista to the river. Williams worked at breathtaking speed. Plans were presented to and approved by the Garden Club of Virginia's Board of Governors on October 5, 1932, and then on October 13 to the board of the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation, who also approved them.

These designs came under the scrutiny of the recently appointed restoration architect for Stratford Hall, Fiske Kimball. Kimball was, in addition to being an architect, the Director of the Philadelphia Museum. He was opinionated, irascible, egocentric, and brilliant—a force to be reckoned with. Within weeks Williams and Kimball were jockeying for position about who had authority over the reconstruction of the walls near the house. They eventually reached an accommodation on this point, but when a board member at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, several years later, suggested that Williams might be consulted on the Monticello landscape, Kimball's

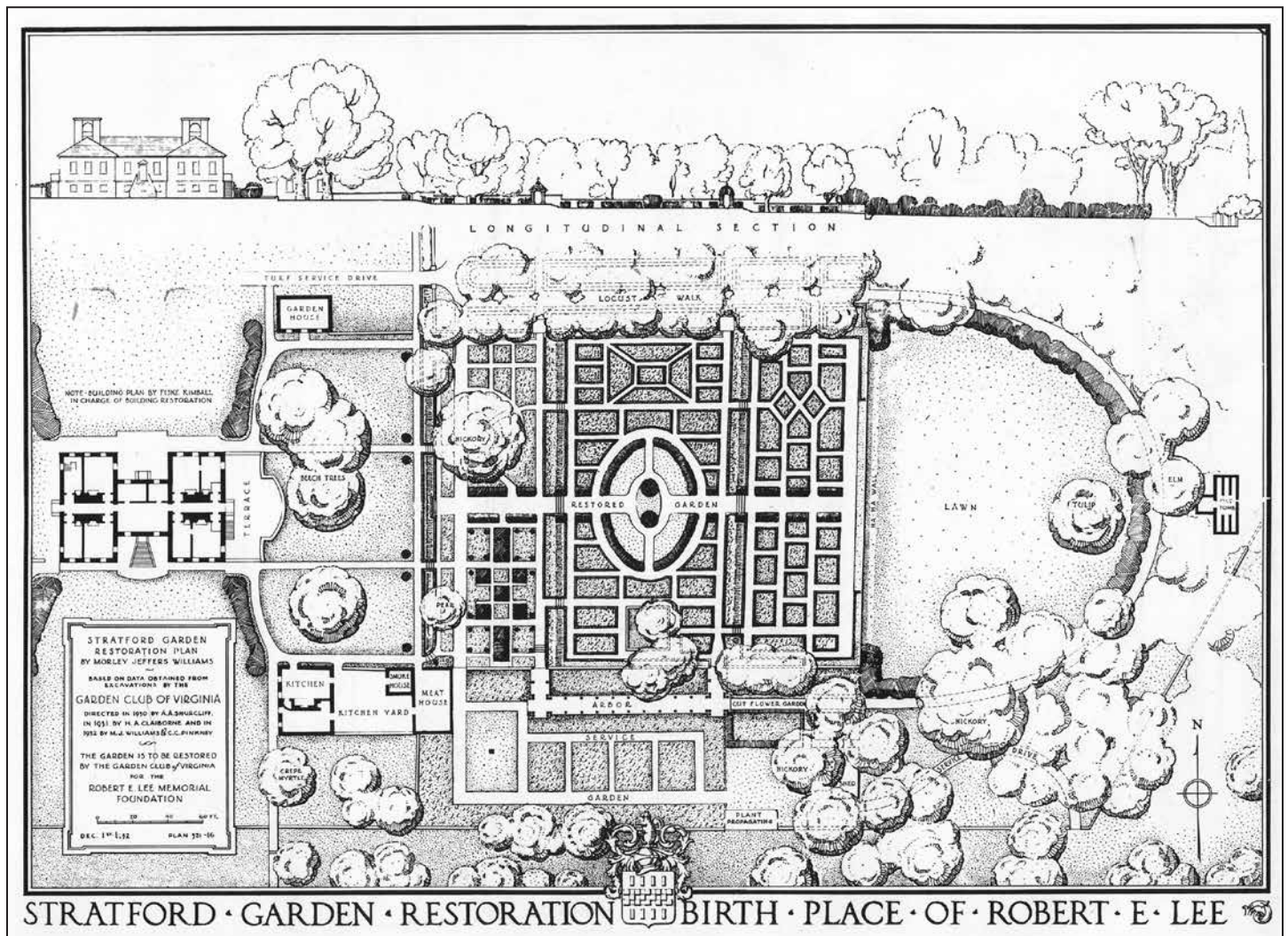
response suggested that their association at Stratford Hall was not one of undiluted harmony. Kimball acknowledged that it was important to have professional guidance and wrote that "I am perfectly willing to forget my grudge against Morley Williams, and have him, if that is wisest."

The plan that Williams drew between July and October of 1932 was crisp, elegant, and beautifully rendered [Illustration 2]. It was also—except for the boundaries of the garden identified by Shurcliff, and the terracing confirmed by Pinkney—almost totally



Illus. 3. Illustration from Lawson's A New Orchard and Garden (1618).

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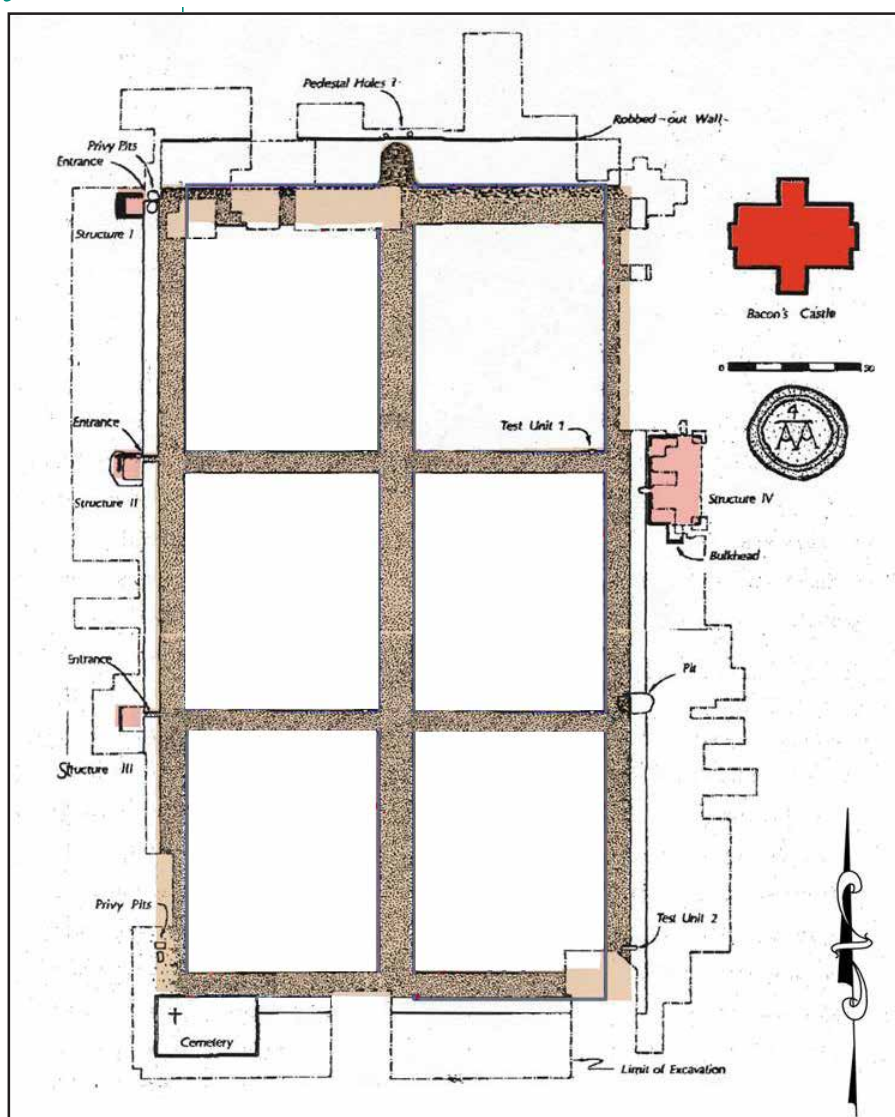
Illus. 2. Morley Jeffers Williams plan for the Stratford Hall Garden.

Illustration credit to the Garden Club of Virginia.

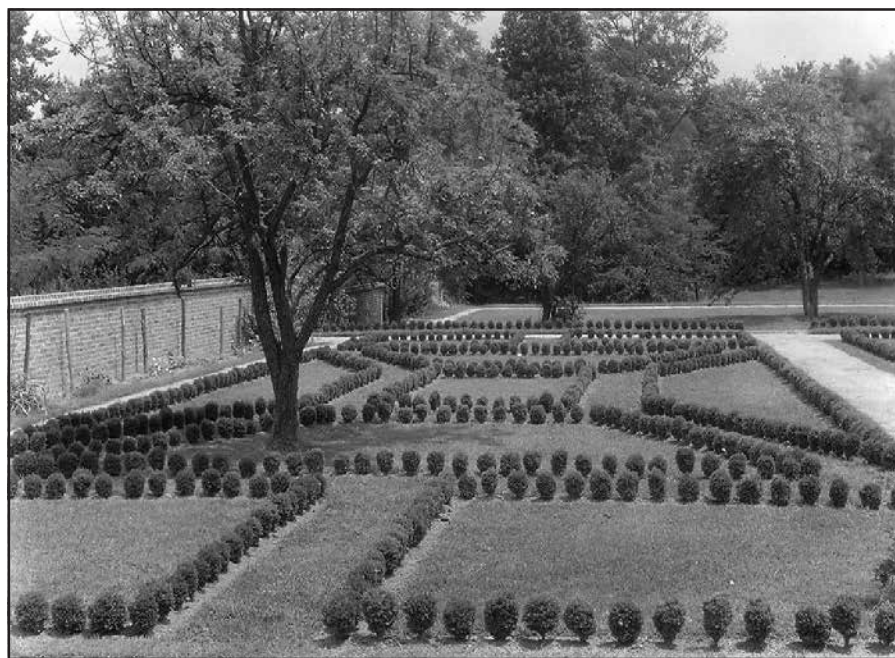
Stratford Hall: An Early Garden Restoration... (continued from page 5)

invented. Virginia gardens of the mid-to late-eighteenth century were highly conventional. They were generally rectangular in shape (or *oblong squares* in eighteenth century parlance). They were divided into “squares”⁴ that were symmetrically arranged along a central, wide path. The number of squares might vary, from four to eight being the most common. Six squares, like one illustrated in William Lawson’s *A New Orchard and Garden* (London, 1618), [Illustration 3] and the Bacon’s Castle garden [Illustration 4] were quite prevalent. Williams’ design, on the other hand, included a mélange of garden motifs that look as if they were lifted from English or other European gardening books from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁵ Most surprising, perhaps, is that Williams’ plan shows planting beds and paths in direct conflict with the archaeological record as uncovered by Pinkney (and recorded by Williams).

The Williams plant palette is equally mystifying. The eighteenth century was a period of an explosion of interest in plant varieties. The trade and correspondence between European (especially English) and American gardeners are well documented. Also, the mixture of plants in Virginia gardens is described in many sources, from John Randolph’s *Treatise on Gardening* to Philip Fithian’s observations in his *Journal*. These gardens contained fruits, vegetables, simples,⁶ flowers, and ornamental shrubs. The Williams plan, on the other hand, was dominated by one genus—*Buxus*. [Illustration 5] Inside the garden walls, his plan included no vegetables, no fruit, no simples, and no flowers. While this plan was executed at a time when much of the knowledge of eighteenth-century gardens of the region now in current circulation was not easily accessible, it is hard not to attribute at least some of its misconceptions to the fact that this design was rushed into completion by a talented but inexperienced designer. Shurcliff’s caution “to continue our patient study of the actual facts of the old design before we attempt a restoration of the grounds”



Illus. 4. Nick Lucchetti plan for Bacon's Castle excavation.



Illus. 5. Boxwood planting in Morley Williams' plan.

seems to have been supplanted by the desire for quick results.

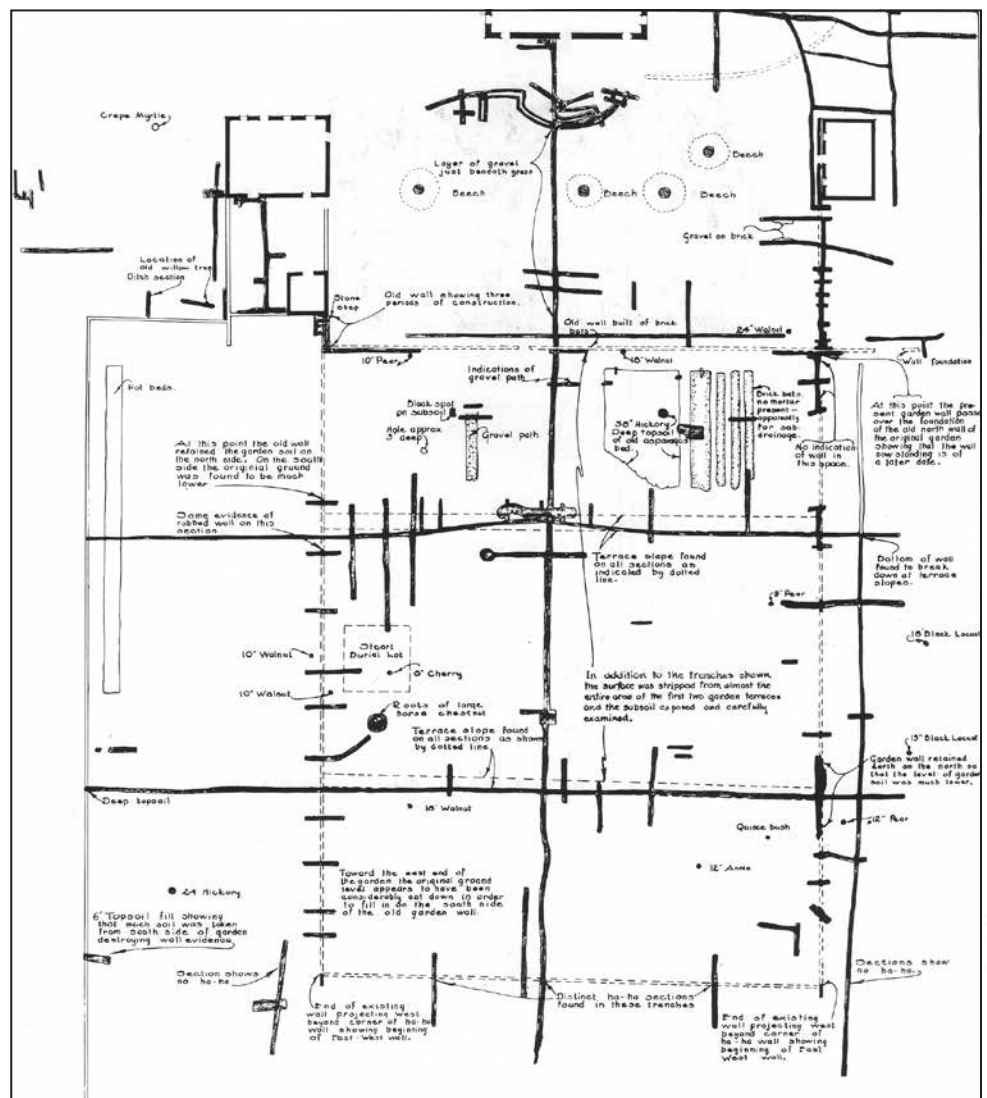
It did not take long for cultural problems to emerge. The extensive plantings of boxwood with no shade began to suffer almost immediately. In the 1950s, under the direction of Alden Hopkins, who had succeeded Arthur Shurcliff as landscape architect for Colonial Williamsburg, the Garden Club offered an amended plan to Stratford Hall—one which added the third dimension of tree plantings along with shrubs and flowers to add color to the predominately green composition. Hopkins recommended removal and pruning of overgrown boxwood and the realignment of some of the paths, including the central one, which had become misshapen over time.⁷ His redesign also addressed some of the horticultural monotony of the Williams plan, but his additions were all within the basic geometric scheme that Williams had drafted. The addition of trees substantially helped the health of the boxwood beneath. Over the succeeding decades additional refinements and adjustments to the plan were made with the guidance of Rudy Favretti⁸ and, more recently, our office; but these modest modifications were generally deferential to the Williams/Hopkins Colonial Revival scheme.

In 2010, Stratford Hall joined with the University of Georgia's Cultural Landscape Laboratory to produce a comprehensive cultural landscape report to guide the decision-making process for the future of the overall landscape, including the garden. Judy Hynson and Ken McFarland of Stratford Hall did yeoman's work in researching and documenting the complex history of the Lee Family and their use of the property for inclusion in this report. The pivotal question brought to light by the cultural landscape report was whether to interpret the gardens and grounds as Colonial Revival landscapes or to recreate a landscape more reflective of the property during the Lee tenure.

To add to the body of information, the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association contracted with Dennis Pogue to undertake archaeological excavations in the East Garden from April through October of 2013. The purpose of the effort was to determine the

condition of the features that had been revealed during the Shurcliff/Pinkney/Williams excavations in the 1930s and to assess the potential for them to yield additional evidence that could be useful in reinterpreting the space.⁹ Of particular interest was the presence of linear features mapped by Williams ranging between three and one-half feet and seven feet wide and approximately 45 feet long, at least one of which exhibited a significant quantity of embedded brick bats, which he interpreted as "drainage trenches." Pogue's excavations confirmed the presence and locations of these features, and others mapped by Williams. [Illustration 6] Oddly, however, Williams' plan did not conform to the features that were exposed by the excavations. Specifically, the rows of planting beds illustrated in Williams' summary drawing conflicted with the paths on his proposed plan. Nevertheless, Pogue's conclusion was that the suppositions from the 1930s excavations were essentially sound and that "a new interpretive plan for the upper terrace might include reestablishing the five beds in the northern portion of the space, as their similar orientation and length, and

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Illus. 6. Garden beds uncovered in Williams and Pinkney excavations.

Drawing courtesy RELMA.

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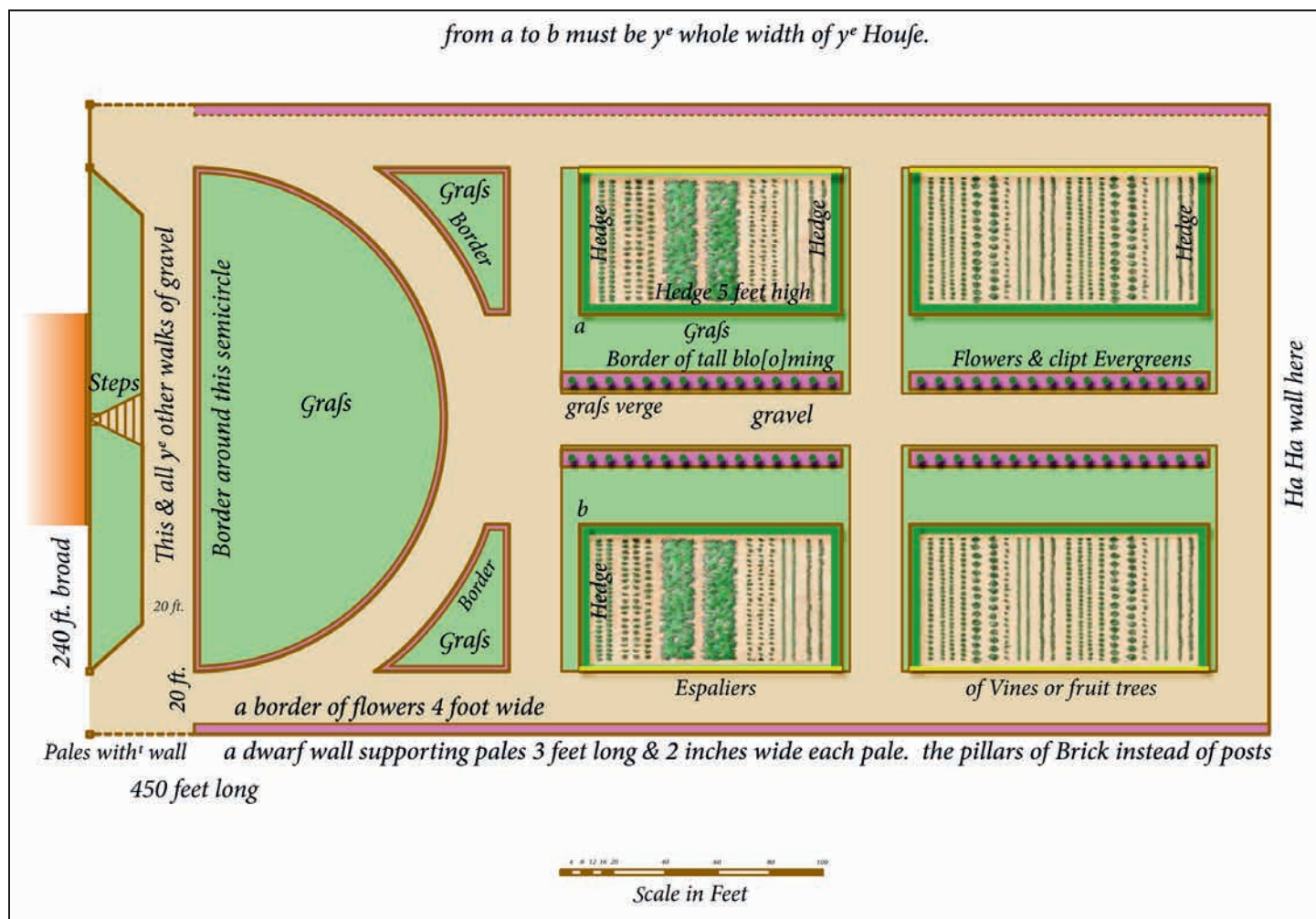
their general conformance with similar features found in other gardens of the period, argues forcefully for their association with the 18th-century garden plan.”

Stratford Hall executive director Paul Reber, after consultation with Pogue and Stratford Hall horticulturist Matt Peterschmidt, inquired of the Garden Club's Restoration Committee whether it felt as if a plan could be developed for the first terrace that would be more in keeping with current scholarship of a mid-eighteenth-century garden and more consistent with the archaeological record. The question, of course, was “What do you do about the rest of the garden?” Wouldn't it be inconsistent, and even confusing, to have one part of a garden restored under one set of assumptions and the rest of it remain organized under an earlier and altogether different set? Reber argued that such a relationship would be no different than the treatment of the inside of the Stratford house, in which some of the rooms are configured as they would have been originally built by Thomas Lee, and others are shown as they would have looked after the remodeling done by successive generations of Lees. The key, contended Reber, was to interpret such a revised composition

aggressively and honestly.

Members of the Restoration Committee acknowledged that garden scholarship had advanced enormously since the summer and fall of 1932 when the excavations and design of the Williams plan were done, and asked our office to illustrate how a fresh look at more than eighty years of accumulated knowledge of eighteenth-century gardens might suggest a revision of its configuration. Of course, restorations that had occurred in the intervening years that were instructive included the interpretive restoration of the Prestwold garden near Clarksville by the Garden Club of Virginia, which included extensive review of Jean Skipwith's garden plan and journal, the Paca House garden in Annapolis, and more recently, the Upper Garden at Mount Vernon. Writings by Peter Martin, Barbara Sarudy, Wesley Greene, Peter Hatch, Andrea Wulf, Dean Norton, Gordon Chappell, Kent Brinkley, and others shed new light on the period and the region.

We consulted a wide range of documents including early plans and descriptions—all of which were useful; but one garden plan was particularly intriguing. [Illustration 7] The plan was among the Thomas Jefferson papers donated by the



Illus. 7. "Mystery" garden plan.

Coolidge family to the Massachusetts Historical Society. It is clearly not in Thomas Jefferson's hand. It has no title, no date, and no north arrow. Garden scholars have speculated about where this garden was (or was planned) for decades. Its original or intended location remains a mystery. We thus refer to it as the "Mystery Plan."

A graphic scale is delineated on the drawing, showing that the scale is one inch to forty feet. The plan is liberally dimensioned, which, along with the scale, makes determining the size of its various components quite straightforward. The garden illustrated is a rectangle 450 feet from left to right and 240 feet from top to bottom. At once, an important fact is apparent: This is not a plan of the Stratford garden. It is much larger. The corresponding dimensions of the Stratford Hall garden are 360 feet by 190 feet, making the Mystery Plan about 1½ times the size of the Stratford garden in area. Even though the two gardens are different in size, however, the proportions of the sides of the respective enclosing rectangles are the same.

Many of us remember from elementary geometry the trick of making a right triangle by combining multiples of three, four, and five to create a right or 90-degree angle where the "three" and "four" sides meet. The "five" side forms the hypotenuse of the right triangle. This kind of triangle is a staple of Western proportions from ancient times and is called a Primitive Pythagorean Triangle—a triangle whose dimensions are whole numbers and in which one of the interior angles is exactly 90 degrees. But the 3-4-5 triangle, handy as it is, is not the only Primitive Pythagorean Triangle. There are many of them. 5-12-13 is a very useful one for laying out a longer triangle; 21-20-29 gives one in which the two shorter legs are nearly equal; and 8-15-17 gives us a triangle whose longest "square" side is a little less than double the shortest "square" side. Of course, if two matching triangles are aligned along their hypotenuses, the result is a rectangle with four 90-degree corners. In the case of the Mystery Plan, if a rectangle is formed with 240 feet on one side (8 x 30) and 450 feet on the adjacent side (15 x 30), then the corner to corner dimension will be 510 feet (17 x 30). In the case of the Stratford Hall plan, 192 feet is the width (8 x 24), 360 feet is the length (15 x 24), and the diagonal would be 408 feet (17 x 24). That the Stratford plan

is in the same proportion as the Mystery Plan is the first of several remarkable similarities.

While the Mystery Plan is undated, there are several conventions that give at least a broad conception of the era in which the plan was drafted. One example is the use of the long "s" in the cursive notes. The long s was a lower-case letter that was used except at the end of words. In cursive, the letter looks a lot like an "f." (A round or short "s" is used before and after an "f" for this reason.) "Grass," with a long "s" looks like this: *Grafs* (first "s" is long; ending one is short). The long "s" was used from the late seventeenth century; it fell out of use in printed material in the 1790s and lingered in handwriting for several decades. From as early as the 1760s, Thomas Jefferson used only the short or round "s." He was probably typical of well-educated Virginians born during or after the middle of the century in this regard.

Similarly, the capitalization of nouns began in the early eighteenth century and had faded from use by the end of that century. Also, the use of the thorn contraction for "th" as in *y^e* for "the," which is also used on the Mystery Plan, fell out of practice from the middle of the eighteenth century, though vestiges of this use lingered until the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ While dating a document from these kinds of conventions alone is imprecise, they are consistent with usage in the mid-to late-eighteenth century—the same period in which the garden would have been built by Thomas Lee and embellished by his son, "Colonel Phil."

Thomas Lee's wife, Hannah Ludwell Lee, was born

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Illus. 8. Stratford Hall garden ha-ha.

Photo credit to Rieley & Associates.

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and grew to adulthood at Greenspring, near Jamestown. The house was originally built by Governor Berkeley, and it was famous for its garden. Because a garden was such an essential component of a plantation complex, along with a collection of plantation buildings that made these farming seats look like small towns, and because the garden held such an important place at Greenspring, it is unlikely—really unthinkable—that Thomas and Hannah Lee would not have included a garden in their initial designs for the new plantation house complex at Stratford. During Philip's tenure, which ended with his death in 1775, the grounds were under the care of Thomas Carter, identified in Philip's ledger as the gardener from 1766 to 1772. The ledger also identifies an enslaved man, Anthony, as a gardener.

Though a handful of books on gardening were available by the second quarter of the eighteenth century, two were truly canonical: Philip Miller's *The Gardener's Dictionary* and John James' English translation of Frenchman Antoine-Joseph Dezallier-d'Argenville's *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*. While Miller's work was

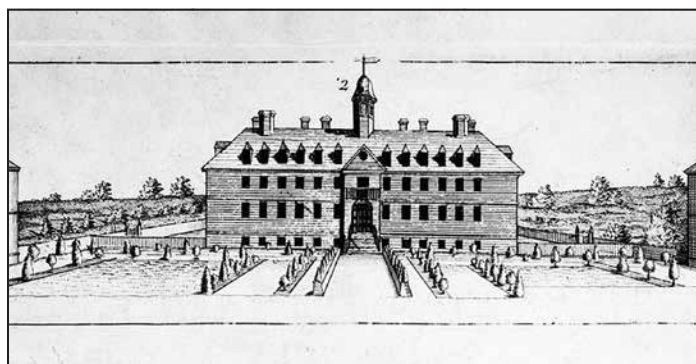


Illustration credit to Colonial Williamsburg.

Illus. 8a. Garden at Wren Building from Bodleian plate.

an important horticultural reference, the d'Argenville tome was a design manual, copiously illustrated by Jean-Baptiste-Alexandre Le Blond. Though the designs displayed highly geometric compositions, he also illustrated, described, and even named one emblematical device of what would come to be known as the English landscape movement: the ha-ha.¹¹

Art and architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner called the revolution in garden design, begun in England

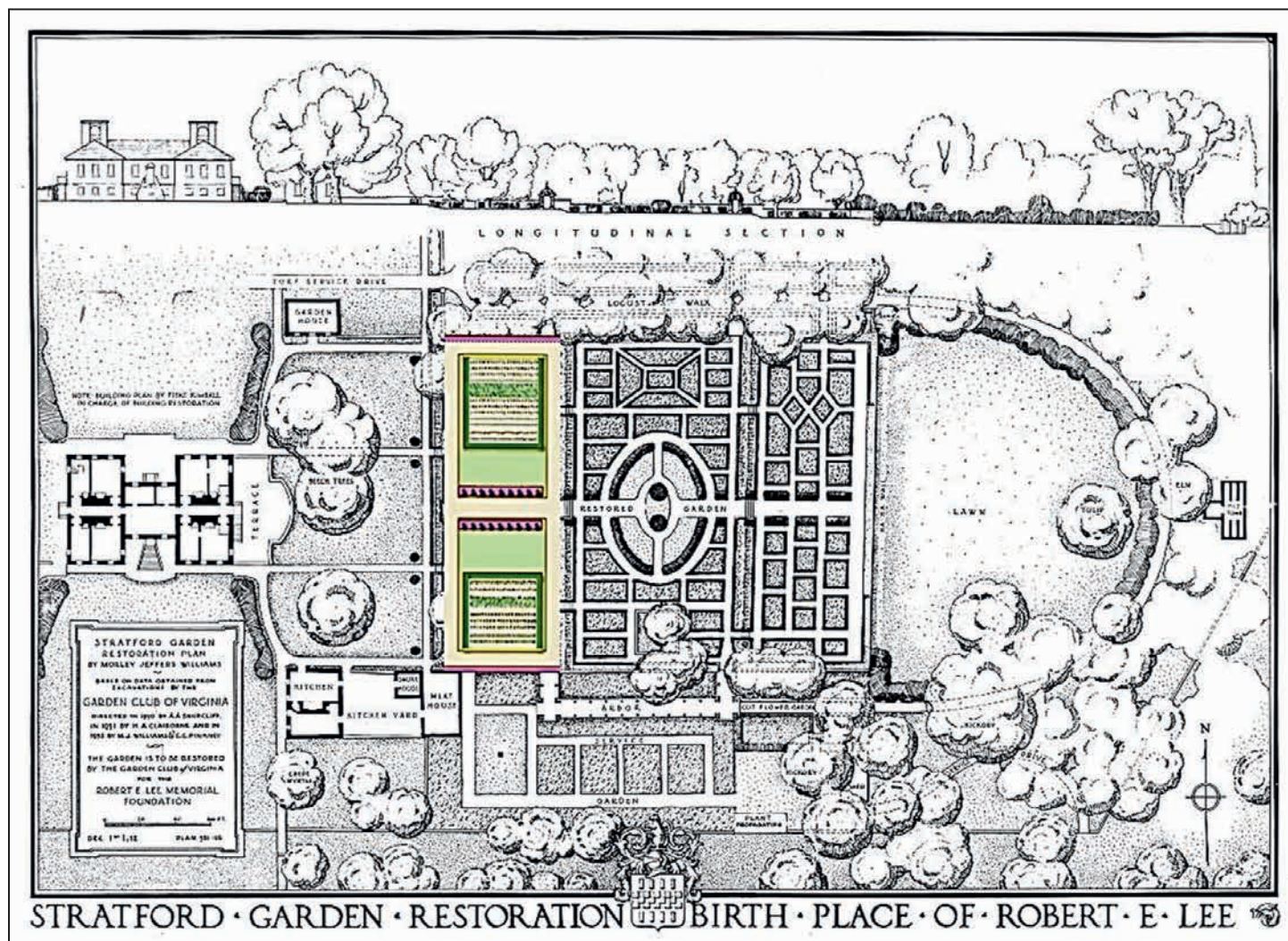


Illustration credit to Rieley & Associates.

Illus. 9. Schematic garden plan.

during the eighteenth century, “the greatest contribution England has made to aesthetic theory.”¹² In the American colonies, however, by the middle of the eighteenth century this movement had generated hardly a ripple. Gardens were geometric and highly orthodox; they were insular and enclosed—functionally and visually. The ha-ha was a mechanism specifically intended to break this insularity and allow a view into the extended surrounding landscape. The presence of the ha-ha in both the Mystery Plan (specifically labeled “Ha-Ha wall here”), and the Stratford plan distinguish both designs and associate them in this very early exercise in American gardens embracing the broader landscape. Alden Hopkins’ 1955 planting plan shows two Southern magnolias just beyond the ha-ha. These trees have grown into large specimens and they effectively curtail much of the view from the garden, a solecism crying for correction. [Illustration 8]

At the opposite end of the Mystery Plan garden from the ha-ha was the house. Only the face of that building fronting the garden is shown; it is 80 feet in length. Since the overall width of the garden is 240 feet, the central position of the house effectively divides the garden into thirds (80 feet from garden wall to house corner, 80-foot length of house, and 80 feet from house corner to opposite garden wall). While the Stratford Hall house is not precisely centered on the garden, the general configuration and proportions correspond with those in the Mystery Plan. The lines extending from the corners of the house in the Mystery Plan establish the internal line of hedges enclosing the garden squares on each side of the plan—squares which could have accommodated the kinds and variety of vegetables, fruits, simples, and ornamentals that we know grew in eighteenth-century Virginia gardens.

In the Mystery Plan, we have a design that is, generally at least, from the same historical period as the early Stratford Hall garden, whose extent or limits are in the same proportion, that has a ha-ha on the opposite side of the garden from the house, and in which the proportion of the house to the width of the garden is the same. While we know that the Mystery Plan is not a design for the Stratford garden, the proportions and configuration are remarkably similar.

The Mystery Plan has a central walk flanked by flowers and clipped evergreens in an arrangement very similar to the illustration of the garden in front of the Wren Building at the College of William & Mary, shown on the Bodleian Plate—a garden of a similar date, which all of the Lee patriarchs would have known well. [Illustration 8a] So, if we have a plan which, unlike the Williams/Hopkins plan, is a good chronological, proportional,

and horticultural fit with the Stratford Hall enclosure, would it align in a comfortable way with the Williams plan? Illustration 9 shows one part of the Mystery Plan adapted to the first terrace of the East Garden at Stratford Hall. The existing steps align nicely with where a walk was found archaeologically and with the face of the hedge that surrounds the vegetable plots. Four rows of flowers run the full length of the terrace, bringing seasonal interest.

While no records survive indicating specific plants known to have been grown in the Stratford garden, Philip Ludwell Lee’s brother, Richard Henry Lee, kept a journal with many entries of his plantings at his Chantilly garden, adjacent to, and formerly a part of, Stratford’s acreage. Judy Hynson, Stratford Hall’s Director of Research and Library Collections, transcribed R. H. Lee’s journal so that Director of Gardens Matt Peterschmidt and his able assistant, Lindeve Hostvedt could make selections for the vegetable squares that would be appropriate to the mid-eighteenth century.

With the support of the Garden Club of Virginia’s Restoration Committee we began the reconfiguration of the first terrace in the Stratford Hall garden in May of 2018. Charles Funk, Inc. began the work with moving the paths that changed [Illustration 10] and grading the terrace to its final form.

With the bones of the garden in place, attention turned to the plants and to achieving Stratford Hall’s goal of incorporating native and period plants to be more representative of an eighteenth-century garden and to create seasonal interest. While many gardens in England—especially those associated with the aristocracy—had, by the middle of the eighteenth century, begun to segregate the plants into different parts of a garden, or even different

(continued on page 12)



Illus. 10. Construction of new walks.

Photo courtesy RELMA.

Stratford Hall: An Early Garden Restoration... (continued from page 11)

gardens (e.g., the flower garden, the vine-yard, the orchard or fruit garden, vegetable garden, etc.), in America the older and simpler method of growing ornamental and comestible crops within one discrete enclosure was the predominant pattern. Medicinal herbs, called at the time “simples,” were invariably incorporated with the other plants in the garden. The ubiquitous herb garden of Colonial Revival restorations was not an accurate reflection of the general pattern.¹³

Grelen Nursery began planting work in the spring of 2019. Vegetable beds were prepared inside the areas defined by clipped yew hedges and espalier fences with vintage apples underplanted by strawberries. Varieties such as Early Jersey Wakefield cabbage are in place today, selections based in part on specific plants mentioned in Richard Henry Lee’s journal, which include Early York cabbage. Most will be familiar to today’s gardeners. [Illustration 11]

Beds along the north and south walls and the central beds surrounding the large, shaped yews feature a collection of perennials. [Illustration 12] Their colorful names – toadflax, catchfly, turtlehead, etc. – foreshadow a rainbow of colors from early spring into fall. Bachelor’s buttons, iris, flax, and woodland phlox add a swath of blue to the spring garden, which also includes yellow, white, and violet. The summer garden heats up with the yellows, oranges, and reds of selections like coreopsis, poppies, and beebalm. Asters and turtlehead are among the autumn-flowering varieties that flesh out the garden palette with deep purple and white. Plants that are evergreen such as the border of pinks along the central beds and the cranesbill provide winter structure. Seed pods from the false indigo and butterfly-weed add ornamental interest when nothing is blooming.

King Garden Designs began the process of shaping the large yews in the central beds in the spring of 2019, [Illustration 13] a process that will be continued by Stratford Hall staff. Their finely shaped configuration [Illustration 14] will add winter interest, as will the clipped yew hedges which surround the vegetable gardens.

The interpretation of this garden has grown more complex over the years. Stratford Hall was originally acquired as a memorial to the memory of Robert E. Lee, who was born there. Over the years, the desire to interpret all of the Lee occupation of this place, including two signers of the Declaration of Independence, was recognized by the property’s stewards. More recently, it is acknowledged that the important contribution of the enslaved population to the plantation needs to be recognized and fully and clearly interpreted.

This fresh look at an early restoration of the Garden Club of Virginia has resulted, we believe, in an

opportunity to contrast the Colonial Revival approach of the early 1930s with more contemporary understanding of eighteenth-century gardens in Virginia. Comparisons with the Mystery Plan make apparent that this garden was at the forefront of American gardens embracing the broader landscape—an initiative that would not see a full and lasting expression until the following century. By embracing the order and components of earlier gardens with the expansive views implied by the ha-ha, this garden marks a watershed moment in American landscape design.

Author’s Note: A debt of gratitude is owed to Judy Hynson, Ken McFarland, John Bacon, Matt Peterschmidt, and Lindeve Hostvedt not only for the groundwork they laid for this article, but for their scholarship and continued stewardship.

Editors’ Note: In December 2014, before the recent work at Stratford was begun, Tommy Jordan from the Center for



Photo credit to Ridley & Associates.

Illus. 11. Vegetable garden with espalier fences expertly crafted by Jay Holloway and Andy Fitch of Habilis Construction.



Photo credit to Ridley & Associates.

Illus. 12. Flower border.

Geospatial Research at the University of Georgia flew a drone over Stratford to create an aerial video montage. Tommy's work, which was in collaboration with Cari Goetcheus and the UGA Cultural Landscape Laboratory, illustrates the relationships between the Great House, East and West Gardens, outbuildings and garden structures, areas of lawn to the south, and forested areas to the north. Portions of the flight follow the Potomac shoreline and hover above the grist mill and cliffs. Tommy, who is also a musician and president of the Athens Folk Music and Dance Society, added improvised music by his acoustic duo, MrJordanMrTonks (Athens, Georgia), to accompany the flight.

Enjoy the drone video at this link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15I1apGVyn-iIZMT5wEQw66u1OrJtWKq9/view?usp=sharing>

Endnotes

- 1 The Lees called their plantation "Stratford;" "Stratford Hall" emerged much later and was used during the restoration period. I generally use Stratford when referring to the Lee period and Stratford Hall when referring to the later era,



Photo credit to Rieley & Associates.

Illus. 13. Charles King Sadler pruning yews.

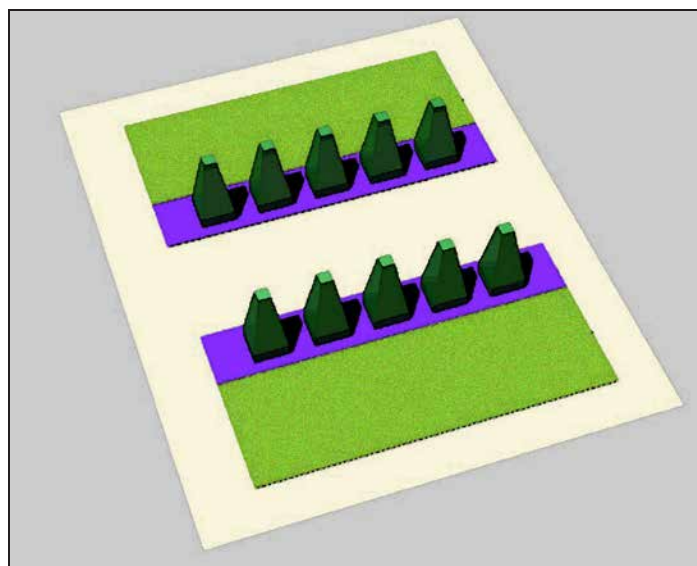


Illustration credit to Rieley & Associates.

Illus. 14. Yew-pruning diagram.

- when that term was used.
- 2 Shurcliff had made suggestions for the development of the grounds at Carter's Grove for Mr. and Mrs. Archibald McCrea, and he had begun a study of old gardens in Virginia in preparation for his work at Colonial Williamsburg; however, neither of these efforts had the specific and immediate goals of that at Stratford Hall.
- 3 It seems unlikely that there was any connection between Shurcliff's dismissal and his decision to change the spelling of his last name in the same year, from Shurtleff to Shurcliff.
- 4 "Square" in the eighteenth century meant a figure with four ninety-degree corners—four-square, which we today call a "square," or an oblong square, which we now call a "rectangle." So, a garden "square" might be either square or rectangular, in modern terminology.
- 5 Some of these motifs would be repeated in Williams's redesign of George Washington's Lower Garden at Mount Vernon in 1936.
- 6 Medicinal herbs.
- 7 Dorothy Hunt Williams, *Historic Virginia Gardens*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1975, p. 20.
- 8 Landscape Architect for the Garden Club of Virginia, 1978—1998.
- 9 Dennis J. Pogue, PhD., "Archaeological Excavations in the East Garden, Stratford Hall Plantation, Westmoreland County, Virginia," June 2013, p. 2.
- 10 *y*^e was not pronounced "yee." The "y" was a stand-in for the old *thorn* letter (þ), which carried the "th" sound. *y*^e was simply and only a written contraction for the word "the"—not to be confused with the pronoun *ye*, as in "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may." The thorn-form of *y*^e regularly included a superscript "e."
- 11 d'Argenville (and James) spelled the term "Ah-Ah!" I use the more familiar Anglicized version.
- 12 Nikolaus Pevsner, "Twentieth Century Picturesque," in *The Architectural Review* 115 (April 1954), p. 229.
- 13 As Rudy Favretti pointed out in an *Arnoldia* article Volume 31 Number 4 - July 1971, except for farmers who grew herbs to sell, like the Shakers, herbs were generally to be found in the garden with other plants not in a separate garden.

The Old-fashioned “Piony” in the South

By Peggy Cornett, Charlottesville, Virginia

Each spring, in my home flower border, I enjoy the luminous deep red, perfectly double blossoms of an old-fashioned European peony, *Paeonia officinalis rubra plena*, which I planted at least two decades ago. The double and single flowered forms of this heirloom species were often known as “piony” or “piny” in early American plant lists and literature, possibly referencing a vernacular pronunciation. I cannot recall where I obtained this long-lived, carefree, well-behaved herbaceous perennial, but it is a perfect specimen for my laissez-faire style of gardening. My biggest concern is preventing encroaching suckering stems of a native *Clethra* from overtaking it and making sure the peony’s tender buds stay close to the surface when I apply an occasional dressing of mulch or compost.

The European peony is a particularly venerable garden plant. First described by the Greek philosopher and scientist Theophrastus (370-287 BC) in his botanical treatise *Inquiry into Plants*, the species peony had traveled to England before the sixteenth century, when the double flowered form was cultivated. Prior to 1800, however, very few specific references to peonies in American gardens exist. One of the earliest published observations was made in a Southern state by Irish naturalist and physician John Brickell, who first recorded “peony, male and female,” in his self-published book, *The Natural History of North Carolina* (1737). (Brickell, it should be noted, was reputedly influenced by the writings of early New World naturalist John Lawson’s *A New Voyage to Carolina* [1709] and the letters of John Custis of Williamsburg, who corresponded with John Bartram, Mark Catesby, and Peter Collinson). According to current Bartram’s Garden Curator Joel Fry, Philadelphia naturalist and plant explorer John Bartram, Sr. (1699-1777), was known to have traded the common peony with several Charleston, South Carolina, gardeners in the 1760s, and his nursery, on the banks of the Schuylkill River, listed the common peony, *Paeonia officinalis*, and some varieties as “exotic” garden flowers by the mid-eighteenth century.

Thomas Jefferson included peonies at Monticello as early as 1771 when he was making plans for the “Open Ground on the West,” a naturalized shrubbery with hardy perennial flowers. By 1806, when Jefferson was envisioning his retirement garden at Monticello, he was following Philadelphia nurseryman and author Bernard McMahon’s directions for transplanting peonies as detailed in *The American Gardener’s Calendar*, 1806.

By 1829, William Prince began offering woody and herbaceous peonies through his famous Linnaean Botanic Garden on Long Island, New York. His catalogue of trees

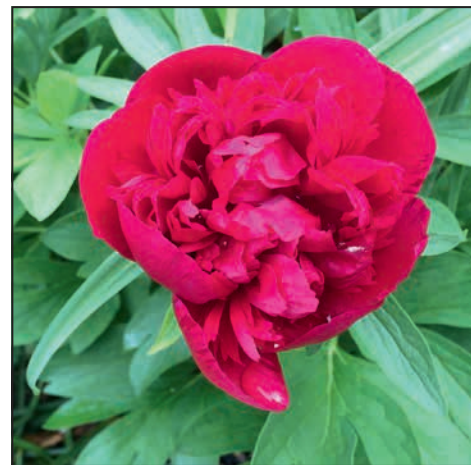
and plants claimed: “No class of flowers has recently attracted more attention in Europe than the peonies.... anticipating that a similar taste would be evidenced in this country, the proprietor has, by great

exertion, obtained every variety possible from Europe and a number from China.” The Prince catalogue reached a wide-ranging audience much beyond the North Eastern states. In 1836, in the small Louisiana town of St. Francisville, Martha Turnbull ordered from the William Prince Nursery twenty-seven different varieties of dahlia and eleven varieties of peonies for her gardens at Rosedown, an antebellum plantation home in Feliciana Parish.

During the mid-nineteenth century, a craze for newly-introduced “Chinese Peonies” (*Paeonia lactiflora*), coincided with the expansion of the nursery trade and means of transportation during the Industrial Revolution. These hybrid types offered many desirable qualities—fragrance, hardiness, sturdier growth habit, and a great variety of colors and flower forms. Nursery catalogues across the United States greatly expanded their selections of peony offerings. By 1858, William Robert Prince, who had inherited the Flushing Nursery from his father, was offering thirty varieties of *Paeonia lactiflora* sorts. During this period several American breeders and growers were raising and introducing many new varieties, including H. A. Terry of Crescent, Iowa, and John Richardson of Dorchester, Massachusetts.

Herbaceous peonies are generally happier in Northern climates. An 1878 essay on peonies in *James Vick’s Monthly Magazine*, out of Rochester, New York, states: “No flowering plants capable of enduring our northern winters are more satisfactory than the Paeonies. Massive without being coarse, fragrant without being pungent, grand without being gaudy, various in form and color, beyond the possibility of being successfully superseded, they stand in the first rank of hardy flowers.”

It is notable, therefore, that many nursery establishments in the Upper and Deep South also sold herbaceous varieties by the mid-1800s. William Welch,



Double European Peony in the author’s garden.

Photo by P. Cornett.

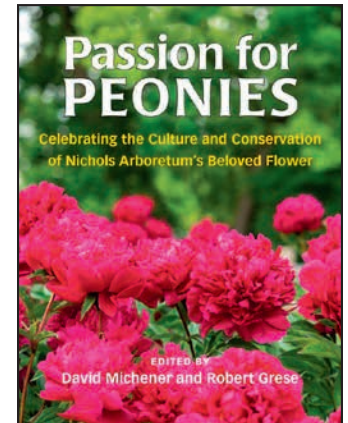
in *Heirloom Gardening in the South* (2011), maintains that herbaceous peonies “are generally better adapted to the region North and East of a line drawn from Dallas, Texas, to Shreveport, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi.” The Southern Garden History Society’s “Southern Plant Lists” includes many nursery sources for peonies during the nineteenth century (<http://southerngardenhistory.org/resources/plant-lists/>). In Fayetteville, Arkansas, Jacob Smith’s 1844-59 catalogues listed: “P. Humei [Humei]; P. Whitleyi Major; *Violaria Tricolor*, Single Paeony; Double White Paeony; Crimson Paeony; Rosecoloured Paeonie.” In 1851-52 Thomas Affleck’s Southern Nurseries in Washington, Mississippi, offered “a few of the finest... paeonies...” and his nursery near Brenham, Texas, later offered “Paeonias Several varieties of blush, rose, pure white, and other colors, very double, and some of them quite fragrant” in 1860.

By the Colonial Revival Period of the early twentieth century, when Grandmothers’ Gardens surged in popularity, the old “pionies” were especially esteemed. Louise Beebe Wilder, in her book, *Colour in my Garden*, 1918, recalled her childhood garden in Maryland: “I remember that there were many clumps of these [May-flowering peonies in crimson, pink, and white] massed against the evergreens that formed a windbreak for my

mother’s Rose garden.” The peony’s great appeal, then and now, lies beyond the beauty of its magnificent blossoms. Throughout garden literature they are inestimably esteemed for their hardiness and longevity, resistance to bugs, blights, and diseases, and their clean, tidy, classic form. As Joseph Breck pronounced in *Breck’s Book of Flowers*, 1859, peonies are “familiar with everyone as a household friend.”

This article is modified from a chapter by Peggy Cornett, “Historic Peonies in Early America,” in the recently published book:

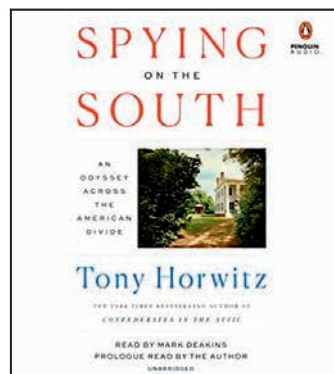
Passion for Peonies: Celebrating the Culture and Conservation of Nichols Arboretum’s Beloved Flower, edited by David Michener and Robert Grese, University of Michigan Press, 2020 | paper, 159 pages, color photos throughout | ISBN: 978-0-472-03780-3 | List Price: \$24.95



In Print

Spying on the South: An Odyssey Across the American Divide, by Tony Horwitz | Penguin Press, 2019 | hardcover, 496 pages | ISBN-10: 1101980281, ISBN-13: 978-1101980286 | List Price: \$30

Readers may recall my Fall 2006, Vol. XX, No. 4, *Magnolia* article on Frederick Law Olmsted’s trips through the South, 1852-1854. In turn, that essay grew from a talk given at the 2003 Olmsted-focused Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes conference in Winston-Salem. Thus, not surprisingly, any publication relating to this subject is of special interest to me.



Such a publication is *Spying on the South: An Odyssey Across the American Divide* by the late Tony Horwitz and published in 2019 by Penguin Press. A Pulitzer Prize winner, Horwitz may be best known for his *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Pantheon, 1998). Sadly, Horwitz died suddenly last year while on a *Spying on the South* tour in his hometown,

Washington, DC.

While the author’s latest work does venture a bit into discussing a specific Southern garden, St. Francisville, Louisiana’s Rosedown, landscapes on a larger scale are one of its core elements. Here, he echoes the writings of his travelling predecessor, as he follows many of the paths Olmsted took by steamboat, train, stage, horseback, and on foot.

Olmsted students know that he made two lengthy trips through the South, writing on assignment with *The New York Daily Times* and submitting pieces about his experiences under the name “Yeoman.” Later, he would publish his accounts in several books, these being subsequently summarized in *The Cotton Kingdom*.

While Horwitz references “spying” in his title, one wonders if Olmsted saw his travels in that light, at least not at the outset. Instead, he seemed genuinely to believe that regional reconciliation was possible if slaveholders could be brought to see a free labor system as superior to that of using enslaved African Americans.

There might be some disappointment here for readers who recall the Connecticut native’s first journey, with his travels to East coast Southern states and several in the deep South. Instead, Horwitz’s explorations cover the areas visited on trip two. Travelling first by train, car,

(continued on page 16)

and coal tow boat (no steamboat available) the author moves through Maryland, West Virginia, and down the Ohio River to Cincinnati. Beginning with his next major stop in Lexington, Kentucky, Horwitz touches down in spots familiar to Society members as meeting sites. After a visit to Nashville, he was able to board a modern-day steamboat and travel down the Mississippi, becoming acquainted with the people and landscapes of towns such as Natchez, St. Francisville, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Natchitoches.

For a number of reasons Olmsted found Texas particularly fascinating, and Horwitz gives it special attention as well. Along with exploring a variety of landscapes, the author finds the one-time independent republic an apt place to examine the *American Divide* component of his title. Stop-off spots include Nacogdoches, Austin, San Antonio, and even a short foray into Mexico, Horwitz always establishing enlightening local contacts. Like his 1850s “mentor,” however, the author is particularly drawn to communities settled by German immigrants and to their descendants today.

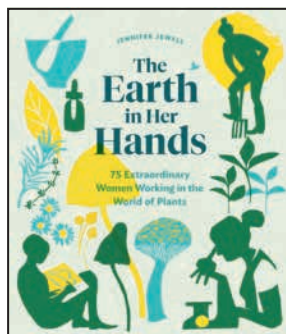
Further details will be left for readers to explore, including a disastrous mule-back expedition in the Sisterdale, Texas area. Should those readers be serious students of Frederick Law Olmsted as imminent landscape architect they will likely not find *Spying on the South* a must-have addition to their library. Yet, for those who enjoy knowing Olmsted as a person of many facets the Horwitz book is a worthwhile complement to previous readings. If they recall, moreover, how Olmsted struggled mightily to understand forces rending the fabric of antebellum society they will also appreciate how Horwitz grapples with today’s seemingly unbridgeable differences tearing away at the foundations of our nation.

Kenneth M. McFarland, *Magnolia* editor
Brandon, Vermont



The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants, by Jennifer Jewell | Timber Press, 2020 | 323 pages | Hardcover ISBN-13: 978-1604699029; \$35

In her informative and empowering book, Jennifer Jewell—host of public radio’s award-winning program and podcast *Cultivating Place*—introduces 75 inspiring women. Working in wide-reaching fields that include botany, floral design, landscape architecture, farming, herbalism, and food

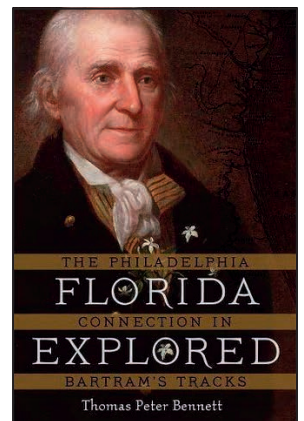


justice, these influencers are creating change from the ground up. Profiled women from the South include our own Peggy Cornett, Historic Gardener and Curator of Plants, Monticello, Charlottesville, Virginia; Andrea DeLong-Amaya, Director of Horticulture, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin, Texas; Mary Pat Matheson, President and CEO, Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta, Georgia; Ira Wallace, writer, educator, worker/owner of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, and cofounder of the Harvest Heritage Festival at Monticello; and Kristen Wickert, plant pathologist and doctoral candidate, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia. Rich with personal stories and insights, Jewell’s portraits reveal a devotion that transcends age, locale, and background, reminding us of the profound role of growing green things in our world—and our lives.



Florida Explored: The Philadelphia Connection in Bartram’s Tracks, by Thomas Peter Bennett | Mercer University Press, 2020 | 544 pages | Hardcover ISBN-13: 978-0881466935; \$40

Dr. Thomas Peter Bennett, biologist, author, scholar, professor, and SGHS member brings his passion for and in-depth knowledge of American natural history to his latest book, *Florida Explored: The Philadelphia Connection in Bartram’s Tracks*. His volume is based on his work at Harvard University, Philadelphia’s Academy of Natural Sciences (president, 1976-1986), Florida State University, University of Florida, Florida Museum of Natural History (director, 1986-1996), and the South Florida Museum as well as his own extensive travels following Bartram’s tracks.



Through the lens and interpretation of members and correspondents of America’s first research natural history museum—Philadelphia’s Academy of Natural Sciences—Bennett shares the scientific explorations of Florida for almost three centuries. Early naturalists, including Thomas Say, John James Audubon, John LeConte, Asa Gray, Francis Harper, among others, were inspired to explore Florida in the footpaths of William Bartram, naturalist, artist, and author of the famous *Travels* (1791), who was elected to the Academy just after its founding in 1812 by his students. Bartram and those plant collectors and other naturalists who came after him explored, collected, and recorded the splendor of Florida’s flora and fauna, adding to the study of Florida’s natural history and ecosystems.

Savannah Garden Designed by Pioneering Landscape Architect Clermont Lee Demolished

By Ced Dolder, Atlanta, Georgia*

The parterre garden of the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace (JGLB), designed in 1954 by female landscape architect Clermont Lee, is no more. The Savannah, Georgia garden has been deemed inappropriate for the needs of the Girl Scouts USA (GSUSA) organization, who owns the property. Despite pleas for reconsideration by such entities as the Southern Garden History Society (SGHS), the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation (GTHP), The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF), and numerous highly respected local and national landscape architects and historians, the Girl Scouts have proceeded with their decision to remove the existing garden, a garden they initially commissioned Lee to design.

In the early 2000s, the Girl Scouts planned a major renovation at JGLB to encompass both the interior and exterior of the Regency house sited on the prominent corner of Savannah's historic district at Oglethorpe and Bull Streets. Though repairs and maintenance are always ongoing on any historic house museum, these changes became controversial. Many patrons who had been supportive of the Girl Scouts organization, and JGLB in particular, were disgruntled at what was seen as a wholesale disregard for their concerns. The GSUSA, to garner a more modern identity, had installed an interactive space inside the historic home's library, and removed the antiques and family memorabilia previously located there. They also revealed plans to renovate the Victorian-inspired garden to provide a maintenance-free area for events such as Girl Scouts ceremonies. This preliminary design included bluestone paving, centered with the Girl Scouts emblem in paler stone and surrounded by tropical plantings such as palms and banana trees in planters.

As public outcry began to rise, and hoped-for funding declined from previous benefactors, the Girl Scouts organization was apparently surprised at the response. Offers of advice, assistance, and funding from historic landscape organizations were presented to them from both the TCLF and SGHS. A petition was produced, which garnered hundreds of signatures protesting the destruction of this garden. In the beginning, the directors of JGLB agreed to reconsider their decision and to meet with certain historians and landscape architects to learn more about the garden's importance and the offers of assistance.

Eventually GSUSA, amid internal personnel turnover, set up an advisory council of Low family members, local landscape architects, and Girl Scouts staff. It was hoped that this group of stakeholders would create a new design that answered all concerns, including access for disabled

visitors. Inadequate funding and staffing issues apparently slowed decisions. Several concerned individual professionals hired an independent firm to provide certain design concepts that would preserve the Lee design in a rehabilitative manner.

In March 2020, however, a new design, incompatible with historic preservation standards and guidelines, was presented by the Girl Scouts organization. This, moreover, occurred without communication with stakeholders outside the organization. Archeological digging was started, removing the original design and plantings of the garden. The site was surrounded by webbed construction fencing.

The concerned parties gathered in the chambers of the Savannah Historic District Board of Review (SHDBR) on March 11, 2020 seeking a halt to garden destruction. The chair of the Review Board, however, took no action on the protests, citing the limited extent of the SHDBR purview. Their only concern covered the request presented by GSUSA for a new gate and a green planted wall, which are considered structural changes. The board was not prepared to consider opposing design opinions or suggestions. The possibility of saving or restoring the 65-year-old garden, designed by a nationally recognized, female landscape pioneer, evaporated. The firm responsible for the architectural changes, Greenline Architecture, argued that landscape design choices were the sole concern of the property owner, GSUSA. There are no local historic ordinances covering landscape changes, even those such as this demolition. Additionally, Clermont Lee's JGLB garden was not included in the National Register listing, nor the National Historic Landmark listing. Subsequently, changes did not require any historic review board approval.

Unfortunately, non-registered landscape changes are not regulated in Savannah, whether historic in age, or on a National Historic Landmark property, or located in a historic district. In this listing process, a garden must be somehow extraordinary to protect its site in any way. This extraordinary garden was not protected and is now gone.

[*See *Magnolia*, XXVII, no. 2, Spring 2014, "Clermont Lee, Pioneering Savannah Landscape Architect," by Ced Dolder].



SGHS Virtual Board Meeting Report

Staci Catron, Atlanta, Georgia

Originally scheduled for April 24-26, the Southern Garden History Society (SGHS) 2020 annual meeting at Mount Vernon was postponed until next year due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic. The Society's board held a virtual meeting on April 25 to maintain the organization's stability during challenging times and to move forward on vital items, including budget approval, plans for future meetings, upcoming content for *Magnolia*, and more. Below is a brief report of the highlights from the board meeting and an introduction to the Society's new officers and directors.

Before the virtual meeting, the executive committee and committee chairs worked with administrator Rebecca Hodson to create and share reports and a consent agenda, all of which were board reviewed in advance of the meeting. On April 25 at 11:00 AM, President John Sykes called the virtual Zoom meeting to order. Twenty directors attended, providing the needed quorum. President Sykes asked if there were any items from the consent agenda that anyone wished to set out for further discussion. The consent agenda was approved unanimously by the board.

The nominating committee, chaired by Vice President Perry Mathewes, presented the following slate of officers and directors for 2020:

Officers:

President, Perry Mathewes (Virginia)
Vice President, Randy Harelson (Louisiana)
Secretary, Susan Epstein (South Carolina)
Treasurer, Gail Griffin (Maryland)

Directors:

First term expires after annual meeting 2023

Charles Bradberry (Texas)
Carla Foster (Texas)
Adam Martin (Georgia)
Peggy Singlemann (Virginia)
Derek Wade (South Carolina)

Second Term expires after annual meeting 2023

Ced Dolder (Georgia)
Kathleen Perilloux (Louisiana)

Term expires after annual meeting 2021

Robert Hicks (Tennessee) replacing Randy Harelson, who has been promoted to vice president.

According to Society bylaws, the election of officers and directors cannot be certified officially until the next annual meeting in 2021, as the bylaws allow the board to vote virtually but not the membership. There was discussion among the board members on how to handle this challenge and the suggestion to modify the bylaws in the future. The

slate of officers and directors was approved by the board unanimously and will be presented to the membership at the 2021 annual meeting for certification. President Sykes then thanked retiring directors Lee Dunn and Justin Stelter for their outstanding service to the Society.

Treasurer Gail Griffin gave an update on the 2020 canceled annual meeting on behalf of Dean Norton of Mount Vernon. She announced that Norton waited until the appropriate time to cancel when he heard from local authorities that it was unsafe to host the meeting. This ensured that most vendors refund deposits or roll them over to the 2021 annual meeting, which will be held at Mount Vernon on April 23-25, 2021.

Griffin also announced the three scholarship winners for the 2020 annual meeting, who will now have the option to attend the 2021 annual meeting. Jessica Russell works at the Eudora Welty House and Garden in Jackson, MS. Jody Wilken is the garden manager at Belmont in Fredericksburg, VA. Both are young professionals. Kendall Shaw is a student of Dr. William C. Welch from Texas A&M University and is the James R. Cothran Award recipient.

Randy Harelson announced the new schedule and location of upcoming annual meetings and they are:

2021 Mount Vernon, Virginia
2022 Wilmington, North Carolina
2023 Natchitoches, Louisiana

Harelson and Mathewes noted that they are looking at long-range plans and asking for suggestions for the 2024 annual meeting. There are ten states with membership over 15. They hope to engage one state that has a heavy concentration of members for the 2024 annual meeting.

Past President Susan Haltom spoke about the policies and procedures manual that she has been working on with Jeff Lewis and Gail Griffin over the past year. As members are forming their committees this summer and having virtual meetings, she requested any edits be shared with her. This manual will be especially useful for new directors as a guidebook as they serve on the board.

Kenneth McFarland and Peggy Cornett gave updates regarding the summer 2020 issue of *Magnolia*.

The directors thanked President Sykes for his devotion and service and wished President Mathewes and Vice President Harelson all the best for the future.

The board meeting adjourned at 12:15 PM.



Board Transitions

As happens each spring, we must express our gratitude to Society retiring officers and directors. Our deepest

thanks to John Sykes for his service as president during challenging times for the Society from changing of our administration following the retirement of Virginia Hart to the first cancellation of an annual meeting in thirty-seven years due to a global pandemic. In a beautifully written farewell statement to the Society's board of directors, John shared in his closing remarks: "Thank you for allowing me to serve the Society. I am grateful now to join that group of distinguished past presidents. I can look forward to the time we can gather again for it does not seem normal to have a year without being your company."

We also share our heartfelt thanks to Lee Dunn, who completed her second term as a director. Lee has done a stellar job in promoting our state's ambassadors' program, helping the Society to stay connected in new ways and reach new members. She has also given sound advice and helped with myriad efforts including revising the bylaws and promoting the Society far and wide. Big kudos go to Justin Stelter, who also completed his second term as a director. Who can forget the inspiring annual meeting he coordinated in Nashville in 2015? It's legendary! Justin

shared great ideas and guidance all along the way and has always helped the Society at every turn.

Finally, Susan Haltom's term as immediate past president concluded at this meeting. Never one to rest on her laurels, Susan continues making positive and significant contributions to SGHS, including facilitating a recent state ambassador program. Her ongoing involvement with the Society is essential and greatly appreciated.

We welcome the new officers and directors of SGHS and know they will lead us forward with strength and wisdom. Our new president, Perry Mathewes, shares, "I am looking forward to serving as the next president of the SGHS. I am fortunate to follow in the footsteps of many great leaders for this organization and hope to continue the tradition of service they exemplify. As we move ahead in uncertain times, I know this group will continue to find ways to come together to explore and share the gardening traditions of many great Southern gardens and gardeners." Visit our website www.southerngardenhistory.org to see photos and bios of the new officers.

Member News

The Garden Club of America awarded Mount Vernon's Director of Gardens **J. Dean Norton** the Elizabeth Craig Weaver Proctor Medal for exemplary service and creative vision in the field of horticulture and historic preservation. Norton received this 2020 GCA national medalist honor for his work to re-create an authentic eighteenth-century landscape at George Washington's Mount Vernon for the past fifty years. The GCA announcement cites Norton's tireless research and drive for historical accuracy, which has changed the contemporary understanding of horticulture, cultivation, and preservation of eighteenth-century American gardens. "He generously shares his extensive horticultural and historical knowledge with students, professionals, gardeners, and historic properties across the country." Because the award ceremony was canceled due to the coronavirus, Dean gave his acceptance speech in the Lower Garden wearing a tuxedo, which was posted May 9 on Mount Vernon's Facebook page.



Dean Norton

In 2019, Insignia Films released the documentary *Beatrix Farrand's American Landscapes*, created by SGHS member **Anne Cleves Symmes** and her filmmaker husband, Stephen Ives. The documentary, filmed over three years with a combination of interviews, historic photographs, and garden drawings, examines Farrand's background and her projects through the fifty years of her work. Narrator Lynden Miller talks with Farrand scholars Patrick Chassé, Judith Tankard, Paula Deitz, and John Beardsley in Farrand gardens, including the Rockefeller Rose Garden at the New York Botanical Garden; the Wyman Garden at the Graduate College at Princeton University; the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden in Seal Harbor, Maine; Bellefield in Hyde Park, New York; and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.

Anne, horticulturist and leader of garden restoration for twenty years at Bellefield, is the daughter of Jane Campbell Symmes, a charter member of Southern Garden History Society and an honorary board member. Anne grew up in Madison, Georgia, on Cedar Lane Farm and completed the landscape design program at the New York Botanical Garden. She currently serves as garden educator at Bellefield.



Anne Cleve Symmes

Photo courtesy of Anne Symmes.



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Awards and Scholarships

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.

The *Certificate of Merit* is presented to a member or non-member whose work has advanced the mission and goals of the Society.

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.

Annual Membership Dues

The Society's membership year is from *August 1—July 31*.
Membership categories:

<i>Benefactor</i>	<i>\$500 and above*</i>
<i>Patron</i>	<i>\$250</i>
<i>Sustainer</i>	<i>\$125</i>
<i>Institution or Business</i>	<i>\$100</i>
<i>Joint</i>	<i>\$60</i>
<i>(two individuals living in the same household)</i>	
<i>Individual</i>	<i>\$40</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>\$15</i>

***Contact the membership administrator if you would like to pay more than \$500 via credit card. For more membership information, contact:**

For more membership information, contact:

Rebecca Hodson, SGHS Administrator

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Phone: (336) 298-6938

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Memberships can now be made electronically on our website!
www.southerngardenhistory.org

Deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of Magnolia is August 31, 2020.

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