



# MAGNOLIA

Newsletter of the  
Southern Garden  
History Society

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*"The Laurel Tree of Carolina"*  
*from Mark Catesby, 1733*  
(MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA)

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Distributed by  
Dr. Edgar G. Givhan II  
Montgomery, Alabama

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V. 2, no. 4 (Spring, 1986)

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## FROM THE EDITOR....

For the first time in the history of Magnolia, offerings for the newsletter exceed the space available -- a happy occasion, especially for an editor in the midst of a move back to her Ozark garden. (Please note address change above.)

Business conducted by the Society at our annual meeting in Montgomery included the election of new officers. A message from Catherine Howett follows.

## A NOTE FROM THE SGHS PRESIDENT....

Our annual meeting had such a full and exciting agenda, thanks to the hard work of Ed and Peggy Givhan, George Stritikus, and others of our stalwart Alabama members and friends, that I had little opportunity to say "thank you" to our gathered membership for the confidence placed in me in electing me president of this fledgling organization. I want to take the opportunity to do so now, and to assure each one of you that I intend to do my best to keep up the fine momentum that we have already achieved.

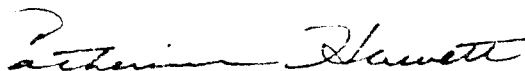
(continued --)

Even while we have been growing and spreading our wings over the last few years, the cause that brings us together -- our interest in encouraging study of the history and traditions that have shaped Southern gardens and gardening -- has matured in dramatic ways. The series of Old Salem/Stagville conferences and our own four annual meetings have helped to foster a growing awareness that all of us can contribute to the task of rediscovering the landscape history of the region that is our home, and sharing it with others.

There is so much practical and theoretical knowledge still to be recovered, gathered, sorted, interpreted, disseminated and celebrated that it will surely take all of us working together to get it done. Our society is dedicated to the support of scholarship of the highest standard, but we depend as well upon the active participation and help of those who garden and those who have memories of gardens, family historians as well as academic ones. The diversity of our backgrounds and interests constitutes one of the real strengths of this organization.

The officers and board of directors are anxious to work steadily and energetically to expand the scope of our activities and our services to members. Please let us hear from you; we need your ideas, and we want to know about the work that you are already doing.

As a landscape architect who also teaches history, I am frequently asked to recommend useful introductory books in American landscape history. There are very few, so my reply is usually to the effect that such a "big" history has still to be written, because it will have to build upon the work of bringing together the separate histories of the various regions of our country. The Southern Garden History Society hopes to contribute substantially to that task, each of us doing our part. We take a proper pride in hoping that the work we do may one day be a model for the entire nation.



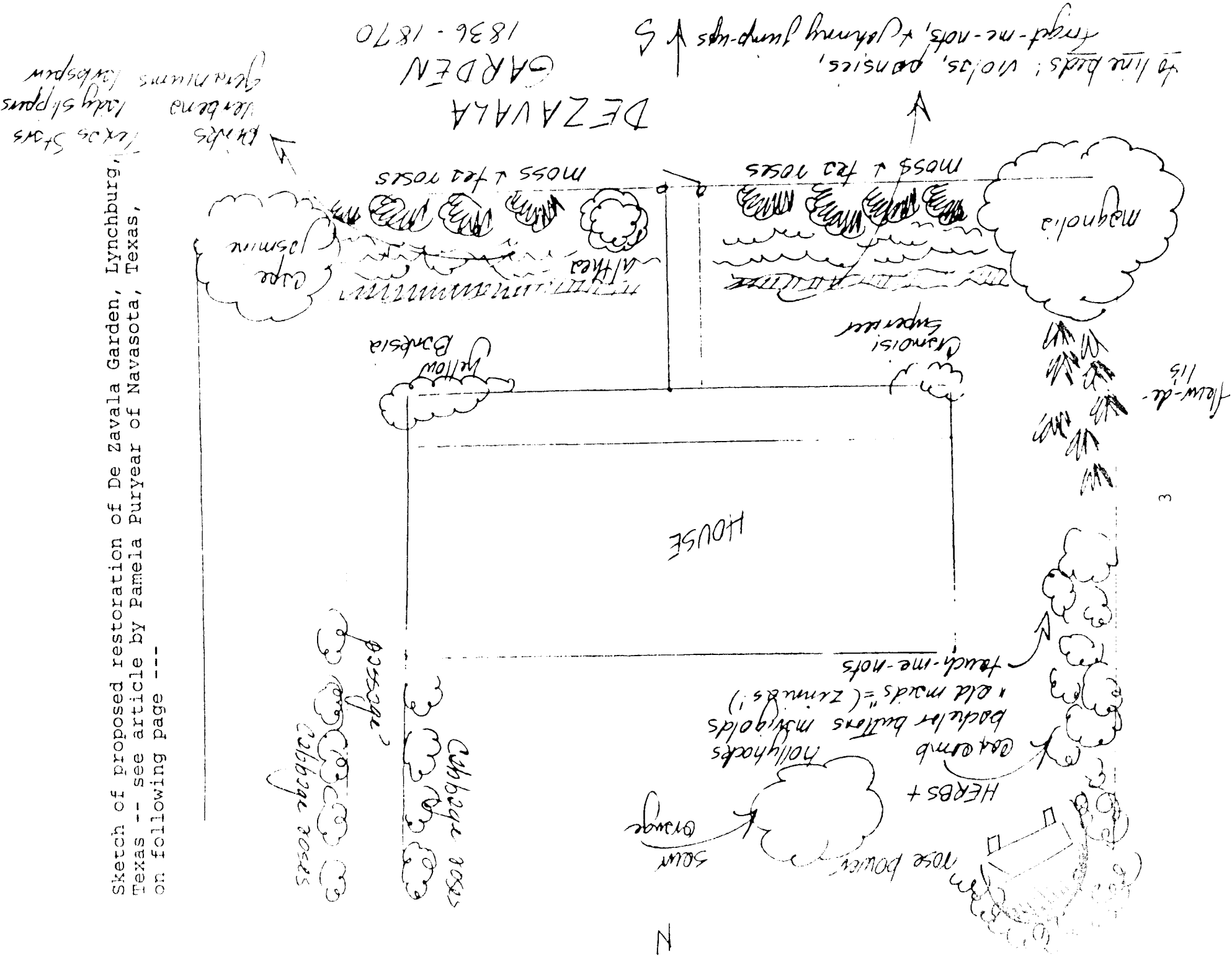
Catherine Howett  
Athens, Georgia

#### MORE NEWS OF OLD ROSES IN TEXAS

The Yellow Rose, a publication of the Dallas Area Historical Rose Group, began in 1984 and has developed a following in Canada, England, New Zealand, and Australia, as well as throughout the United States. Subscriptions to the informative publication are \$10 per year, from Mr. Joe Woodard, editor, 8638 Sans Souci Drive, Dallas, TX 75238.

The Dallas group has located, identified, and returned to commerce 25 old roses.

Sketch of proposed restoration of De Zavala Garden, Lynchburg, Texas -- see article by Pamela Puryear of Navasota, Texas, on following page ---



## DE ZAVALA GARDEN, 1835-1870

Emily West DeZavala (Falks) made her first Texas garden in the bitter spring of 1836 at Lynchburg, Texas, around a Classical Revival house bought from her husband's kinspeople. She saw the Battle of San Jacinto won from her front porch in April of that year, and saw her husband buried in November. But the cottage garden that she planted there went with her as she remarried and moved in later years, for she took the plants with her and recreated the garden, with some later roses as additions.

Emily's granddaughter, Miss Adina DeZavala, later recalled a beautiful Althea which stood on the right of the gate as one entered, to the south of the house. "It was a delicate pink, double, almost like a rose."

On the east side of the small veranda was a yellow climber, the Yellow Banksia; on the west, was a dark crimson, double cupped climber, Cramoisi Superieur. It appeared to be a continuous bloomer.

Adina also remembered a passageway on the east which was lined with roses, "of every hue, form, and fragrance," especially the Roses of Provence. The newly-bred French roses had been given to the DeZavalas in 1835 when they left the French Court, where he had served as Minister to France, to return to Texas. Adina wrote, "I believe that the crimson Glorie des Rosamanes[?], the Louis Phillippe [sic], the rosy flesh-colored Madame Bosanquet, and perhaps others came from the gardens of St. Cloud.

Adina's commentary continues: "In the front of this yard were moss and tea roses of different colors and delightful perfume. Outlining the beds were violets, pansies, forget-me-nots, and Johnny-jump-ups. Along the fence were pinks, verbenas, and geraniums of many kinds and colors, and beautiful pink Texas stars...." She also remembered lady slippers [moccasin flower] and larkspur, and explains, "the former are the terrestrial orchid which probably grew wild along the San Jacinto River in those wonderful days."

On the west side of the house were the iris beds. Adina says it is the French flower of chivalry: "a sword for its leaf, and a lily for its heart." Further along in this west bed were "Cox Combs, Bachelor Buttons, Old Maids (Zenias), Touch-Me-Nots (sensitive plants), Hollyhocks, Marigolds, etc.," followed by a bed of herbs and a rose bower.

Emily Falk's second garden contained her favorite roses, Marechal Neil, a pale yellow; Catherine Mermet, a light pink; Ducher, Paul Neyron, LaFrance; and Salet, a rosy pink moss, double and fragrant.

Thanks to the DeZavala clan's love of gardens and memories of their grandmother and her beautiful roses, the plan of this garden, a watercolor illustration of the original house, and portraits of Emily and her husband survive--testaments to past beauty amid the bloody conflict of revolution.

### OUR MEMBERS TRAVEL

Two members of the society recently retraced a tour of English gardens which Thomas Jefferson and John Adams made in the spring of 1786. The suspiciously Anglo-sounding duo of Allen Smith and Allan Brown visited some twenty gardens on the bicentennial of the visits made by the presidential pair.

Carrying a copy of Thomas Whately's Observations on Modern Gardening (1770), the guidebook used by Jefferson and Adams, Smith and Brown noted the changes evident in 200 years. Some of the gardens have changed relatively little (Hampton Court, Stowe, Blenheim); others have almost completely vanished (Twickenham, Esher Place, Enfield Chase). Two of the gardens are currently undergoing impressive restoration efforts (Painshill, Claremont).

Smith and Brown are graduate students at the University of Manchester and University of Virginia, respectively. The tour experience will contribute to their thesis research on related garden history topics. A slide presentation of the tour is planned for the June, 1987, meeting of Southern Garden History Society in Charlottesville, Virginia.

### SUMMER STUDY IN ENGLAND

Barbara Paca Steele, who described her work at Annapolis to members of our society at the 1985 meeting there, has sent announcement of the West Dean Summer School Programme, July 4-10, 1986. The school is held annually at West Dean Estate in West Sussex, England, for professionals and experienced amateurs in landscape-related fields. The topic is "The Protection and Conservation of Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens."

The school includes, in addition to lectures by speakers of eminence in the field, visits to landscapes and historic parks and gardens of the area. The West Dean Estate, consisting of 6000 acres of farm and woodland, includes 30 acres of landscaped gardens and the 42-acre St. Roche's Arboretum, containing trees renowned for their size and stature.

Both resident and non-resident arrangements are offered. For information contact West Dean College, West Dean, Chichester, West Sussex, PO 13 0QZ, England. Telephone Singleton (024363) 301.

### ANNOUNCED -- A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF NATIONAL SCOPE

Quarterly publication of The Bulletin of American Garden History has been announced by Ellen Richards Samuels. Price is \$7.00 for 4 issues. The next issue will include news of California period gardens, and of events and resources in the field of garden history on the west coast. Orders and news items should be sent to the Bulletin, P.O. Box 397A, New York, N.Y. 10024.

## REPORT ON A RESTORED SOUTHERN GARDEN

The history and restoration of the gardens of Middleton Place plantation, near Charleston, South Carolina, are discussed in an article in the April, 1986, issue of Historic Preservation, the bimonthly publication of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Entitled "The Enduring Mystery of Middleton Place," the article is by Charles Fenyvesi, whose gardening column appears weekly in the Washington Post. The article calls the garden of Middleton Place, laid out in 1741, "the North American continent's first great French-style formal garden."

## AND MORE PRAISE FOR THE RESTORATION AT ANNAPOLIS....

The May/June, 1986, issue of Historic Preservation gives deserved credit to SGHS board member St. Clair Wright for the great success of historic preservation efforts in Annapolis, Maryland. Michael Olmert, author of the article, "How Annapolis Keeps Its Charm," describes the town this way: "as fine an example of a still-active 18th-century city as you'll see anywhere," and Mrs. Wright, Board Chairman of Historic Annapolis, Inc., as the person without whom "Annapolis today would be just another waterfront assemblage of condos and fern bars."

Historic Annapolis, an organization of 70 employees, 180 volunteers, and 3000 members at large, manages 13 historic properties and instructs the 90000 visitors who come to Annapolis each year. (In 1985 they included the delighted members of Southern Garden History Society.) Mrs. Wright's greatest triumph, Olmert asserts, is the restoration of the William Paca house and gardens. (As SGHS members learned, the gardens were replanted after removal of more than nine feet of backfill dirt--a task, involving archeological work as well as the skills of many other professionals, whose results will inspire the restorer of any Southern garden.)

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR

SGHS fall board meeting: Charlotte, North Carolina, Oct. 24-25, 1986. Send us your suggestions.

SGHS Annual Meeting, 1987: June 12-14 at Charlottesville, Va.

Sixth conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes, Old Salem, North Carolina, Oct. 29-31, 1987 (The fall board meeting of SGHS is held in alternate years in conjunction with this meeting.)

SGHS Annual Meeting, 1988: Early May, at Nashville, Tennessee; exact dates to be set in 1987 at Charlottesville.

## CONFERENCE ON LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., at Monticello and the University of Virginia will conduct a 2-day conference on landscape archaeology at the University of Virginia and Monticello, September 25-27, 1986.

The program will include presentations of current research on the scientific method and theory of local and regional landscape studies worldwide as well as studies of town and country gardens in the South. The on-going research and restoration of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello landscape will serve as the conference's on-site focus.

Archaeologists, other interested scholars, and the members of the public interested in this field should contact Dr. William N. Kelso, Director of Archaeology; Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 316, Charlottesville, VA 22902, or telephone (804) 296-5245 for further information.

## A VERY SIGNIFICANT DISCOVERY

The New York Times reported on December 26, 1985, the discovery at Bacon's Castle, a manor house 12 miles south of Williamsburg, Virginia, and across the James River, of a garden dating from 1680. According to Nicholas M. Luccketti, the state archeologist involved in the project from its inception, the find is "the largest, earliest, best-preserved, most sophisticated garden that has come to light in North America." It comprises six rectangular planting beds and outlying brick garden pavilions, and covers an area 360 feet long and 195 feet wide, adjacent to the 1665 high-Jacobean manor house.

The six raised rectangular beds, three on each side, are separated by a 12-foot-wide central walk on the north-south axis and 8-foot-wide paths on the east-west axis. All of the paths, including a 10-foot-wide perimeter path, were of compacted sand. Bordering the sides of the garden are 6-foot-wide planting beds. There is additional evidence of a frame structure that may have been used in connection with garden maintenance, and of an arbor along the eastern perimeter path. Soil samples are being examined at the University of Pennsylvania for seed and pollen that will indicate what flowers and herbs were grown in the garden.

Before the discovery of this garden, the garden at Middleton Place, near Charleston, South Carolina [mentioned on page 6], was considered the earliest documented American landscaped garden. Catherine Howett, commenting to the Times on the significance of the discovery, said: "The English Renaissance tradition that the Bacon's Castle garden represents was the dominant model for the high-style gardens that persisted in the South well past the middle of the 19th century. This garden's discovery dramatically illustrates the importance of landscape archeology to the restoration of historic landscapes."

## BEYOND BOXWOOD? -- A QUESTION FOR RESTORERS OF SOUTHERN GARDENS

Past and present members of the Friends of Montpelier, a non-profit group of volunteers who recently considered a landscape master plan for Montpelier Mansion, in Laurel, Maryland, have wrestled with a problem often mentioned by restorers of Southern gardens at the meetings of Southern Garden History Society: to keep or not to keep the boxwoods.

These particular box plants, forming a large informally trimmed hedge leading to the front entrance of the 18th-century house, were criticized by some members of the Friends as not authentic to the front walk in the early period proposed for the garden restoration, and for obscuring the view of visitors approaching the lovely house itself.

Defenders of the box hedge, among them a past president of the Friends of Montpelier, cited the beauty and health of the planting and the known age of the boxwood at Montpelier. (Historians have documented that cuttings from the Montpelier boxwood were used by George Washington to start his boxwood at Mount Vernon, according to articles in The Laurel Ledger, on October 17, 1985, and February 27, 1986, sent to us by SGHS member Ed Shull of Catonsville, Maryland.)

The Prince George's County Planning Board approved the landscape master plan and the removal of the boxwood from the entrance to Montpelier at its meeting on Feb. 20, but only on condition that attempts be made to transplant the hedge to another location on the property. If that attempt fails, the Board's decision mandates that cuttings be taken to propagate and thus perpetuate the plants somewhere on the property.

Mr. Shull has not reported whether the County's Historic Preservation Commission, which must also give approval to the plan, ratified the Planning Board's decision at the Commission's meeting on March 18. A similar proposal to move boxwood from its central location to another at the Arkansas Territorial Restoration, in central Little Rock, a few years ago brought about quick approval of its landscape plan. We are guessing that the compromise suggested by the Maryland board has had the same result.

## SUMMER NEWSLETTER

We appreciate your items and correspondence sent to Magnolia.

Please send your news items, comments, and suggestions for the summer issue to the editor's new (old) address in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Deadline for receiving news is August 15.



## THE DELIGHTS OF MONTGOMERY

Your editor is left with the impossible task of summarizing the events of our March weekend in Montgomery in the space of one short page. What follows are a few very personal responses; in mentioning one garden or experience, she intends no slight on other events of the very lovely weekend.

This meeting was extremely well planned, as even members who could not attend must have noticed as they received information about it, early and late. But the enthusiasm that carried it out was equal to the good planning: the combination of skills in Ed and Peggy Givhan and George Stritikus rewarded us with a time of learning without a touch of difficulty. We were taken care of, and we were taught about Alabama gardens and history.

Members who arrived early or stayed late were provided with a self-guided tour of private gardens. Because the Board met on that Friday afternoon, our tours were shorter than those of other members. The experience of glimpsing these gardens proved so inspirational for this writer that she insisted on returning Sunday to several of them. Particularly memorable were the whimsical ironwork garden structures of Montgomery architect John Shaffer.

Friday night's dinner meeting gave us a taste of the enthusiasm of George Stritikus, who also created the Alabama garden history exhibit that we saw the next day at Hull Street Historic District. "Alabama -- Her Successive Waves of Development," a lecture by Dr. Edwin C. Bridges, Director of Alabama Department of Archives and History, set the scene for our visitations the next day in Montgomery and its area. George's slide-lecture, "Fine Tuning the Period Garden: Six Tools to Help Localize Plant Material Recommendations," enumerated examples of information sources from oral history, archeology, and written documents (letters, nursery catalogues, journals and diaries, and collections of pressed flowers) that he has found in Alabama. Thus we were properly informed and inspired.

After a breakfast lecture on the history of Southern Living magazine by Mr. John Floyd, its editor, we toured gardens and exhibits in Montgomery, with a luncheon break in the beautiful setting of the Givhans' home garden. Afternoon visits ended at Jasmine Hill Gardens, where Benjamin and Mary Fitzpatrick built in the 1930's a garden of magnitude adorned with copies of classical Greek sculptures. We dined in the Jasmine Hill house restaurant after leisurely tours of the gardens.

Our business meeting on Saturday morning resulted in election of officers and board members listed on the following page. Most of us were able to stay on for a delightful visit to the pilgrimage at the nearby village of Lowndesboro on Sunday.

Those who missed the meeting may want to request written materials from it from Mr. Stritikus through the editor.

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SOUTHERN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY  
May 1, 1986 to April 30, 1988

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