



MAGNOLIA

Newsletter of the
Southern Garden
History Society

"The Laurel Tree of Carolina"
from Mark Catesby, 1731
(MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA)

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

V. 3, no. 1 (Summer, 1986)

FROM THE EDITOR....

This summer issue would be thin except for several fine contributions from our Georgia members, including Catherine Howett, our president, who comments again about our plans for the near future, and sends also a query.

In spite of attempts made by correspondence to clarify details of the story of Emily DeZavala's garden in Texas, two significant mistakes marred it: Emily's name after marriage was Folks rather than Falks. And the illustration should have been defined not as a proposal for restoration, but rather as a conjectural site drawing, since the site now lies in the Houston ship channel! The Editor extends apologies to Miss Puryear and other readers.

A REPORT FROM THE SGHS PRESIDENT....

The Publications Committee of the SGHS Board of Directors has recently been exploring ways to increase the scope of the society's services to its membership through publication of expanded news items and articles on a broad range of topics related to Southern garden history. Magnolia has gotten us off to a fine start, thanks to the contribution that Harriet Jansma has made as editor, and it seemed to the committee that any enlargement of our present publishing activities might best begin in a small way, by trying to enlarge the format of our newsletter to include short essays, reviews, and perhaps reprints of some

historically interesting materials. The previous three-person composition of the committee has been enlarged to five, with the editor of Magnolia serving ex officio. Current committee members are John Flowers, chair; Florence Griffin; Harriet Jansma; Flora Ann Bynum; and myself. The agenda for the October meeting of the Board will include a discussion of how we might proceed in enlarging Magnolia. It would help us very much to hear the views of interested members, especially if they would like to suggest or submit written and/or graphic material to be considered for future publication.

Catherine Howett

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Southern Garden History Society fall board meeting:
Charlotte, North Carolina, October 24-25, 1986.

SGHS Annual Meeting for 1987: Charlottesville, Virginia,
June 12 through 14.
Don't miss it!

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

SGHS Annual Meeting for 1988: early May, Nashville, Tennessee.
Exact dates will be set at the 1987 meeting at
Charlottesville.

A QUESTION FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP

In response to this very difficult season for gardeners of our region, with its seemingly unprecedented heat and drought, comes this question from Catherine Howett: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if someone in our group knew something about the historic droughts in our region, against which this one could be measured? I have countless times come across mention of severe drought in nineteenth century accounts; how I wish I'd made notes on them each time. Any ideas on who might be an expert in this department? Even one comparison would be interesting..."

Readers are urged to respond by sending any references they have found.

From Mary Helen Ray, who serves as Chairman of LeConte Woodmanston for the Garden Club of Georgia and as Historic Preservation Chairman of the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc., come the following articles:

CLAUDE AUBREY BLACK

A few members of the Southern Garden History Society may remember a presentation made at one of the early Old Salem Symposiums by Colonel (Retired) Claude A. Black on the subject of his dream, the restoration of an 1810 internationally famous botanical garden at Woodmanston, a plantation in Liberty County, Georgia.

The Savannah historian and landscape architect, Clermont Lee, had introduced Col. Black to the fact that this garden had been developed by Dr. Louis LeConte, a graduate of Columbia College in New York, whose sons, John and Joseph, became outstanding educators of their time. John became the first President of the University of California at Berkeley, and Joseph was a distinguished professor there as well as a founder of the Sierra Club.

Col. Black was so impressed with the story of this distinguished family and its garden that he set in motion the activities which have resulted in the ambitious restoration of the LeConte-Woodmanston botanical garden and plantation site.

Early in 1971, Col. Black was one of three concerned citizens who submitted the application for national recognition of the site, which was entered on the National Register of Historic Places on June 18, 1973. From 1973 until 1977, he worked persistently to aid a dedicated group in its efforts, which resulted in the grant of the 63.8-acre home site to The Nature Conservancy. The Conservancy, in turn, presented the site to The Garden Club of Georgia.

Col. Black was a charter member of the Committee of Trustees appointed for local management of LeConte-Woodmanston. He recognized the need for professionals experienced in the preservation of historic and natural areas, to give advice and direction to the committee. He set forth plans for the conduct of a very successful two-day seminar which was held on March 1-2, 1978; from this seminar evolved a Master Plan for the garden.

Failing eyesight required Col. Black to retire early from the army, and he applied himself thereafter to the study of ornamental horticulture under his good friend and professor, Dr. Francis Johnstone, at the University of Georgia. This training prepared Col. Black well for the dedication he brought to the LeConte Woodmanston restoration project. In recognition of his interest and work on this project, he received a Certificate of Merit from The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., its highest award and honor.

Col. Black died July 11, 1986, following a prolonged illness.

THE RESTORATION OF LE CONTE-WOODMANSTON

In 1977, nearly 64 acres of the LeConte-Woodmanston site were given to The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. On these historic lands, John and Joseph LeConte, whose scientific research laid the groundwork for the atomic age, enjoyed a wealth of learning and training. In turn, they eventually shared this wealth with the world. America's economic, agricultural, ecological, botanical, and cultural history have been affected by these two men.

Both LeConte brothers became professors at the University of Georgia, then at the University of South Carolina, and finally at the University of California at Berkeley. John was the first President at the Berkeley campus, and Joseph was Professor of Geology; Joseph also was a founder of the Sierra Club.

Louis LeConte, their father, a graduate of Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, assumed full responsibility for the family rice plantation at Riceboro, Liberty County, Georgia, in 1810. His own brother John, resided in New York and later in Philadelphia, but spent much time in the South gathering materials for his scientific studies; he became a foremost authority on the natural history of Georgia.

Joseph LeConte, in his autobiography, writes of his father as a gardener and scientist: "His beautiful garden became celebrated all over the United States, and botanists from the North and from Europe came to visit it." In another reference he describes the botanical garden from a closer perspective: "Always fond of nature and science in all departments, he now devoted himself more and more ardently to the making and cultivation of a botanical garden. About one acre of ground was set apart for this purpose, and much of his time was spend there....His special pride was four or five camellia trees --I say trees, for even then, they were a foot in Diameter, snow-white and double to the center."

The three important steps in the rescue of this historic site were:

1. The listing of the site on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.
2. The transfer of ownership of the property to The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., on June 6, 1977.
3. The appointment of a committee of Trustees to manage the project.

The trustees immediately launched an educational program by presenting a seminar, "Introduction to LeConte-Woodmanston," on March 1, 1978, with the assistance of Georgia's Department of Natural Resources and the University of Georgia. Grants subsequently received from the Department of Natural Resources and from the Coastal Highway District of Georgia have made possible archeological study of the site as well as execution of a master plan by an Bron Cleveland Associates of Atlanta.

EARLE S. DRAPER To Be Subject of Video Documentary

The design works of Earle S. Draper will be the subject of a video documentary, the first in a proposed series to be entitled: "In Search of Excellence in Community Design." The documentary will introduce Draper as a pioneer in the professions of both city planning and landscape architecture and will recognize the importance of his works, especially as they contributed to improved living conditions for employees of the textile industry throughout the southeastern United States.

The video project was conceived by Charles E. Aguar, Professor of Landscape Architecture in the School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia, and planning consultant with the Institute of Community and Area Development (ICAD). Aguar first developed an interest in Draper during the early 1950s when he was involved in projects with several cities in Tennessee and Virginia at a time when Draper's legacy -- as the first Director of Land Planning and Housing for the Tennessee Valley Authority -- was still strong.

Having researched Draper's works for a number of years, Aguar has documented some 275 projects in a master list: "The Works of Earle S. Draper, 1915-1965." Estates and gardens designed by Earle Draper were widely published in the 1930s and frequently were listed as "showplaces" on special tours. They extend from Paces Ferry Road in Atlanta to Georgetown in Washington, D.C. A list of his private clients reads like a "Who's Who for the Southeast" of the period and includes executives such as Sam Dobbs (Coca Cola), Fuller Callaway, Sr. (textiles), Moses Cone (clothing), Richardson family (Vick Chemical), Duke family (electric power), North Carolina Governor Morrison, Virginia Governor Thomas B. Stanley, and Mrs. Robert Todd Lincoln, daughter-in-law of the President.

Draper's master plans for college campuses include those for Millsap, Memphis State, Fisk, Vanderbilt, Duke, Appalachian State, Western North Carolina, Davison, and Agnes Scott.

In 1985, Professor Aguar was sponsored by ICAD to conduct a two-day interview with Draper, and this raw video footage is on file for use in the proposed documentary. Jointly sponsored by ICAD and the National Endowment for the Arts, Aguar is currently conducting library research in the special collections of Draper papers housed at Cornell and Duke Universities and in the TVA archives; he is also traveling throughout the Southeast to experience personally as many as possible of the environments created by Earle Draper. Particular landmark projects are being scouted for inclusion in the documentary, and possible interview subjects screened.

While Draper's name is closely associated with the expansion of more than eighty textile mill villages, less is known about several entirely new towns and major residential communities and garden suburbs. Chocopee, Georgia is perhaps America's best

example of a small-scale Garden City, as developed in Great Britain, where workers are provided with comfortable housing, extensive open spaces, gardens and recreation, traffic separation and employment within walking distance of their dwellings. The same features were incorporated by Draper in the design of Silvertown, Georgia, but this once "freestanding" community was not protected by a greenbelt buffer and has now been absorbed by the older city of Thomaston. Draper later was responsible for the TVA model village of Norris, the first rural freeway, and management controls for the protection of lakeshore development; he was also consultant to the three New Deal Greenbelt Cities constructed in Maryland, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

Some city planning texts credit Draper for his new communities, and recent cultural histories mention his contributions in forming the quality environments that remain from the public works of the Great Depression years. Aguar feels that a great gap in the history of environmental design is to be filled by retrieving the knowledge about Draper and his works. Interpreting Draper's ability to work out efficient, beautiful, and time-tested design solutions for a client's land use, resource or land management problems will be the main objective of the video and perhaps of future publications as well.

Hubert B. Owens, founder of the South's first degree program in landscape architecture, will be the subject of another documentary in the series. In conjunction with the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. and the School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia, Dean Emeritus Owens has been interviewed on videotape in several garden locations which he designed; studio and editing work is in progress.

Any members of SGHS who know the whereabouts of plans, photographs, or other original materials or works of Earle S. Draper or Hubert B. Owens are asked to contact Charles E. Aguar, School of Environmental Design, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602; telephone (404) 542-1816.

ARTICLES IN PRINT

"The Uncommon Bodark," by C. Allan Brown, has been published by Arkansas Times Magazine, May, 1986 (v. 12, no. 9). The Times introduction says, "The bois d'arc tree, named early by French explorers, has been highly valued since the time of the Indians. In the mid-nineteenth century it was one of Arkansas's most celebrated exports."

"The Benton County Horticultural Society: Its Cultural Role," by Harriet H. Jansma, was published by The Arkansas Historical Quarterly, vol. XLV, no. 2 (Summer, 1986). The Ozark region was the site of large commercial apple orchards after the Civil War, with the arrival of rail transportation. Benton County was the main shipping county of Arkansas apples, and the Horticultural Society was made up of the growers. Records are for 1893-1913.

The Master Plan follows five themes in its presentation. The first is a reconstructed botanical and floral garden. (Although no plan for the garden has yet been found, a significant discovery by Dr. George A. Rogers (Ret.) of Georgia Southern College, of a list found in the John Eatton LeConte II papers at the library of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, of 39 bulbous plants of the years 1813-1815 gives restorers some knowledge of plants that may have been grown there.) The second is a presentation of the rice growing operations and the hydraulic system upon which it depended. The third is the natural area, which will include the Black Water Swamp and the adjacent upland forest. The fourth interpretation calls for the creation of a separate garden which will be devoted to the propagation of protected and endangered plant species. The fifth theme is the LeConte family. (Trustees are in contact with many LeConte descendants.)

The first phase of the work has been completed with efforts by the Liberty County Commission, the City of Hinesville, the Coastal Utilities of Hinesville, the Fort Stewart Army Engineers, and many generous volunteers. The site has been cleared, a nature trail prepared along a rice dyke, a parking area cleared, and the entrance avenue planted with live oak trees and wildflowers. A water well has been constructed, and a historic marker commemorating the visit to the area by William Bartram, the noted botanist and ornithologist, has been installed. (John and William Bartram discovered the *Franklinia alatamaha* a few miles south of Woodmanston on the Old Barrington Road in Liberty County.)

The most recent educational effort of the Trustees of LeConte-Woodmanston was another seminar, "LeConte-Woodmanston On the Threshold of Its Third Century," held in September 1985. Lectures from both seminars have been printed in booklet form and are available for \$5.00 plus \$1.50 postage from LeConte-Woodmanston, P.O. Box 356, Hinesville, GA 31313.

Trustees have raised funds for the restoration by means of the sale of porcelain boxes and by selling limited edition prints of the LeConte Sparrow drawn by Richard A. Parks, a well-known artist of Atlanta. In a supreme effort to raise funds to match a grant to finance phase two of the project, The Garden Club of Georgia is planning to stage a "Celebration Auction" on April 14, 1987, at the Desoto Hilton Hotel, Savannah, Georgia. This event will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the project. Information is available at the address above.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

are needed and solicited for the fall issue. Our deadline for receiving these is November 15.



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