



MAGNOLIA

Bulletin of the
Southern Garden
History Society

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

v. 5, no. 1 (Summer, 1988)

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT:

Dear Members:

Once again our annual meeting has proven to be a highlight of my year. We were welcomed into the oldest and loveliest homes in Nashville and treated to some of the most scholarly talks on garden history heard since the Society's beginning. Particularly worthy of note was our host Ben Page's paper on the career of Bryant Fleming.

Talking with those who attended the meeting, I was impressed that so many of our members have published works in the fields of historical horticulture and historic landscapes and gardens. I for one would like to know just who has published what.

It has occurred to me that by making a list of our publications we might better share our common interests and stimulate even more research. I am therefore asking each of you to provide us with a bibliography of your works that have been published, and talks that are available in written form, on the subjects of interest to our Society. I intend to print a bibliography of the publications of our membership and to distribute it to all of you. Our secretary, Flora Ann Bynum, says that such a list would be useful as a first mailing to every new member.

I am happy to announce that Peggy Newcomb, Assistant Superintendent of Gardens and Grounds at Monticello, has consented to chair our publications committee. Peggy, a published author, brings enthusiasm and expertise to the job as we strive to expand our publishing activities. Harriet Jansma, our new Vice-President, has agreed to continue to edit Magnolia. This is no small undertaking; I urge you to support Harriet by contributing articles, news, and inquiries.

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REMARKS OF DR. ED GIVHAN, OUR NEW PRESIDENT, continued:

The idea of a group united by a common interest in Southern gardens has always excited me. I hope to provide leadership that will make the Society meaningful to each of you. Please share your ideas with me.

Sincerely yours,
Ed Givhan
6912 Taylor Road
Montgomery Alabama 36117

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG AT BETHABARA AT SITE OF 1759 VEGETABLE GARDEN
by Flora Ann Bynum, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

An archaeological excavation project has been underway this spring at the site of the Upland Garden or Vegetable Garden at Bethabara, the original Moravian settlement in North Carolina. Bethabara today is within the boundaries of Winston-Salem and is operated by the city as Historic Bethabara Park.

John W. Clauser, Jr., archaeologist with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, has conducted the dig, which began the first of March. He has concluded his field work and prepared a written report with maps and drawings. Mr. Clauser's mission was to determine the original fence lines of the garden and the paths and layout of beds so that these could be reconstructed. Historic Bethabara Park and the Garden Club Council of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County plan to reconstruct the fences, paths and beds to give a conception of this large community garden to aid in better interpretation of the site. Because maintenance is not available, the beds will not be planted, but the original layout of the garden will be apparent.

Bethabara was begun in November, 1753, by a group of Moravian settlers from Pennsylvania, and was operated under a communal system until the inhabitants moved in 1772 to Salem, about six miles southeast. Salem is restored today as Old Salem, and was built by the Moravians as their permanent settlement in North Carolina.

Christian Gottlieb Reuter, surveyor for the Moravians, drew two plans for the community gardens of Bethabara, one for the Upland Garden or Vegetable Garden, dated May 1, 1759, and another for the Medical Garden, dated June 23, 1761. These two plans, showing beds laid out in the ancient geometric style of gardening, are thought to be the earliest drawn garden plans with complete plant lists in America.

[Flora Ann Bynum is writing a book about Moravian horticulture which will be published by the University of North Carolina Press. Her publications were listed in Magnolia, v. 4, no. 3 (Winter, 1988). For further information, write to the Society's office at Old Salem.]

MY MOTHER'S GARDEN

by Jo Nichols Evans

(Mrs. U. B. Evans, Haphazard Plantation, Inc.,
Route 1, Box 102, Ferriday, Louisiana 71334)

[A biographical note at the end of this memoir was provided by our Board Member in Mississippi, Glenn Haltom, who obtained permission from Mrs. Evans to reproduce it. It was first printed in a small illustrated booklet, which may still be available from the author. As the text will reveal, the garden described was located in Bardwell, Kentucky, near Paducah.]

My Mother moved into a new house in 1886 and soon started a garden and orchard of ten acres. The front yard was planted with Kentucky Blue Grass.

My Mother's garden had a beautiful fence around that part of the garden where the flowers grew. It had a base of three red bricks with a white paling fence on top. This joined a wire fence that enclosed the orchard.

In the spring when you entered the flower garden through the front gate, on the right side a large bed of Lilies of the Valley filled the air with fragrance.

A long concrete walk reached from the front gate to the front steps. In the center it divided and formed a flower bed. During the summer this bed was filled with red geraniums. These were kept in a pit during the winter along with other plants.

On the right side of the front steps were two tubs. One was planted with a gardenia and the other with an oleander. Little did my mother realize that the oleander leaves were poisonous. These plants had to be kept in the house during the winter.

On the left side of the steps was a bed of English Ivy. As a child, my job was to cut the ivy leaves and wire them to toothpicks that were stuck into wet moss that filled wire wreaths. Berries or blooming flowers from the flower pit were stuck into the center of the ivy leaves. These wire wreaths were used again and again for funerals and Memorial Day. No one ever thought of buying flowers for special occasions.

A brick walk led from the wide front steps to the side steps. This walk was laid about two feet from the house. No shrubbery was ever planted next to the house because of the danger of rotting the lattice work.

About ten feet from the front gate was a large weeping mulberry [sic] tree which served as my playhouse. Close by was a sweet gum tree. I soon learned to use the sap for chewing gum. My mother had a problem getting the gum off my teeth.

There was a bed about two feet wide along the base of the front and side fence. Mother planted spring flowering shrubs such as flowering quince, different varieties of spirea, pink and red weigela,

deutia [sic] and forsythia. Narcissus bulbs were planted at the front of the shrubbery. For summer color, bunches of tiger lilies and perennials that my mother grew from seed were planted through-out the bed. Near the corner of the garden there was an old lilac bush that spread its fragrance through-out the area. Close by was a bed of double pink hyacinths that bloomed at the same time.

My mother was very generous with her plants except with her hyacinths. Rather than share them she always said, "the bulbs were too deep to dig".

Peonies were not planted in a bed, but were spotted through the garden and treated as small shrubs.

Mother was very proud of having a crepe myrtle. However, it froze to the ground every winter and grew about three feet every summer. It had small pink blossoms.

Closer to the house was a big arborvitae. Due to not having red spiders the leaves were always a dark green. This bush was a beautiful sight when covered with snow and filled with red birds.

Looking from the front steps toward the gate about twenty feet from the walk was a tremendous black gum tree that gave glorious fall color.

My father hung a big swing between this tree and a post. Everyone could sit here and enjoy the garden. Halfway between the tree and the front gate and five feet from the walk were several plants of Yucca Filamentosa, sometimes known as desert candles.

Side Yard

There was an entrance from the family room into the side yard where we ate such things as cold watermelon. We grew our own melons and often put one in a pillowcase tied with a rope and lowered it into a brick cistern that was always full of cold water.

This area was shaded by an old hickory tree under which we had a wire cage filled with squirrels. One day while I was feeding the squirrels, one bit me through the finger. My father never killed the little animals. He trapped them and took them to the woods and turned them loose.

The children and grandchildren often played in this area. A path led to a gate in the side yard. Just outside was an iron hitching rail where visiting horses were tied. There was also a water trough that was filled from a well inside the yard.

All of this area was shaded by a tremendous buckeye tree where people came to get buckeyes because they believed the buckeyes protected them from rheumatism.

Back Yard

A large rose bed separated the backyard from the side yard. The back yard was a "swept yard" and a working area.

A cherry tree was planted at the east entrance to the back yard and many mornings when the cherries were ripe I would climb up and eat the cherries for breakfast. I would then have dew poisoning. My mother would find a poke berry bush, dig the large root, wash it clean, and rub it on my hands. The poisoning was immediately cured.

The family wash was done under an old peach tree using lye soap. Later the water was poured on the tree and around it to kill the borers.

In the far corner of this yard was a huge barrell [sic] filled with water and fresh manure. This water was poured on the rose bed as fertilizer.

My father smoked a pipe and grew his own tobacco. Tobacco was hung in bunches to the rafters in the barn. When cured, the leaves were stripped and the stems were added to water to use on the roses. No one ever thought of buying fertilizer or spray material.

I well remember the Paul Neyron roses with their large blossoms and tall straight stems that my mother rooted.

A path led from the kitchen door to a smoke house that was filled with a year's supply of meat--smoked ham, sausage, bacon. One shelf was reserved for home-made lye soap.

Another house that opened into the backyard was filled with wood and coal along with sacks of hickory nuts and walnuts. Every afternoon when my father came home from his office, he cracked a bowl of nuts to eat at night as we sat around the fire.

North Yard

A path led from the cherry tree into the north yard where my mother had a bed of "Mountain Phlox" and I had a bed of wild flowers that I collected when walking in the woods with Father. My father always insisted that these flowers were planted by God for everyone to enjoy and not destroy.

Orchard

There was no fence between the flower garden and the orchard. However, a path led through an arbor into the orchard. The arbor was planted with purple Clematis Jackmani on one side and an old red rambler rose on the other. This made a beautiful combination as they bloomed at the same time.

A wire fence joined the paling fence that was around the yard. This separated the orchard from the public road. Next to the wire fence was a berry garden planted with strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries. My job every morning was to gather the strawberries. Any that were not used were sent to the neighbors.

The blackberries were my mother's favorite. She used them to can make [sic] jam and jelly. She always put up enough to divide with family and friends. She had a very famous recipe for jam cake.

At the head of the berry bed was a long narrow bed filled with gooseberry, rhubarb, sage, and other herbs and seasonings. My job was to pick the sage leaves, spread them out in the sun to dry and later store them for winter seasoning.

Pies were made from the goose berries and rhubarb. Red pepper was planted annually. When ripe it was strung on heavy string and hung in the kitchen to dry.

Next to the berries were many varieties of peaches, apples and plums. One variety of peach that matured last was the Indian. They had red leaves and red fruit. They were pickled. The other varieties were made into preserves, canned, and dried. These were put up in quantities so mother could divide them.

Apples were used to make jelly and apple butter. Special varieties of the apples were stored in a "fruit room" upstairs in our home where the temperature was never too cold.

A double row of wire was strung from one end of the garden to the other. This was hung with grapes. My job was to gather the grapes to make juice. The juice was heated, bottled and sealed with sealing wax to keep the juice from fermenting. My mother put up enough of this juice to give churches in town to use for communion services.

At least a dozen pear trees of different varieties were next to the grapes. Some of the pears were canned, some were wrapped individually and put on shelves in the fruit room. Mother had a fruit closet where she put all of her jellies, jams and canned fruit. This closet had a beautiful etched glass door that opened into the dining room.

I am thankful that I grew up in an era when people were taught to be self sustaining. Making money was not the "top priority". My father took time from his law practice to teach me the love of wild flowers and little animals. Mother taught me to love garden plants and many necessities. For instance, she raised turkeys and chickens. How well I remember the large pans of cornbread filled with black pepper to feed the young turkeys.

I am glad that I lived a part of my life in Bardwell, Kentucky, a community where everyone was friendly and helped each other.

In the later part of my life that was filled with lectures and writing, I always tried to teach the love of flowers and how to grow them. No matter how large or how small your area is, you can make it a spot of beauty. Remember if you make a better mouse trap, the world makes a beaten path to your door.

A garden without friends is no garden at all.

[A family could travel by buggy to Paducah and back in a day from Bardwell, Kentucky, where Jo Nichols grew up. Her father was John Mahlon Nichols; her mother was Joanna Fore Nichols. She had three brothers and three sisters. (continued--)]

(Jo Nichols Evans, continued--)

After the death of her father, Jo Nichols went with her mother to live in Decatur, Alabama. She met Mr. U. B. Evans in Alexandria, Louisiana, where she worked as his secretary in an electrical contracting business. Her sister purchased Haphazard Plantation and gave it to Jo.

Jo Nichols Evans was voted Woman Horticulturist of the United States in 1956.

CALENDAR

October 14-16, 1988: Board of Southern Garden History Society will meet in Charleston, South Carolina. Send any suggestions or proposals to the Secretary at our office in Old Salem.

May 11-13, 1989: Annual meeting of Southern Garden History Society, in Savannah, Georgia. Mary Helen Ray (SGHS member and co-author with Robert P. Nicholls of The Traveler's Guide to American Gardens-- see notice below) is planning this meeting for us now.

October 5-7, 1989: Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes, Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108.

NEW SGHS BOARD ELECTED AT ANNUAL MEETING IN NASHVILLE

In order to achieve the broadest possible geographical representation on our Board of Directors, the SGHS Board, meeting in Nashville on May 20, 1988, decided, in keeping with our by-laws, to nominate three new members, and to count the three officers of the Society as separate from the twelve members allowed. The new members, approved by the Society at its annual meeting at Belmont College on May 21, are:

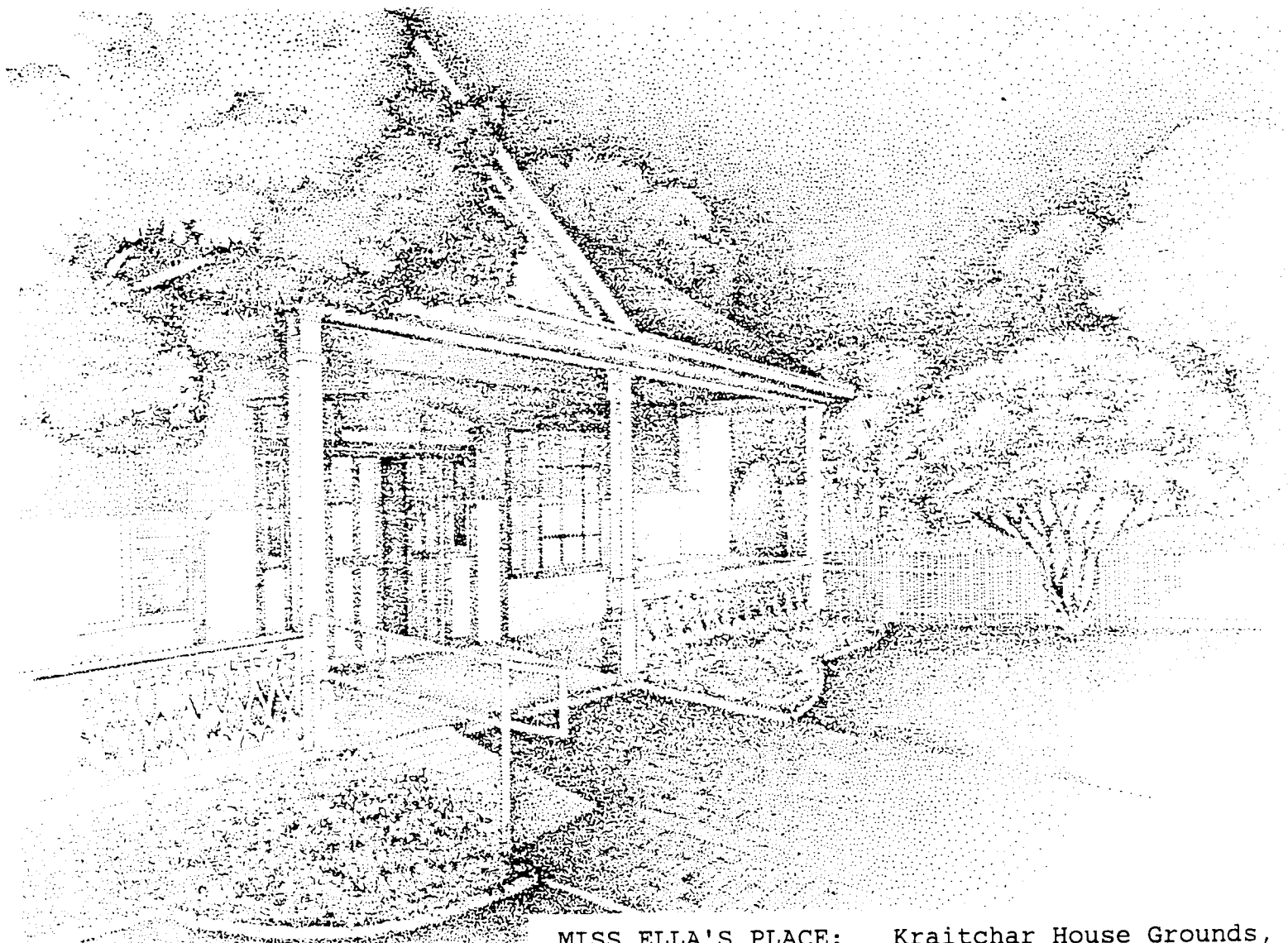
Dr. William C. Welch of College Station, Texas;
M. Edward Shull of Catonsville, Maryland; and
Shingo Woodward (Mrs. Truman Woodward, Jr.) of New Orleans, LA

In addition, Mr. John Flowers of Charlotte, North Carolina, past President of SGHS, was nominated and elected to serve an additional term on the Board.

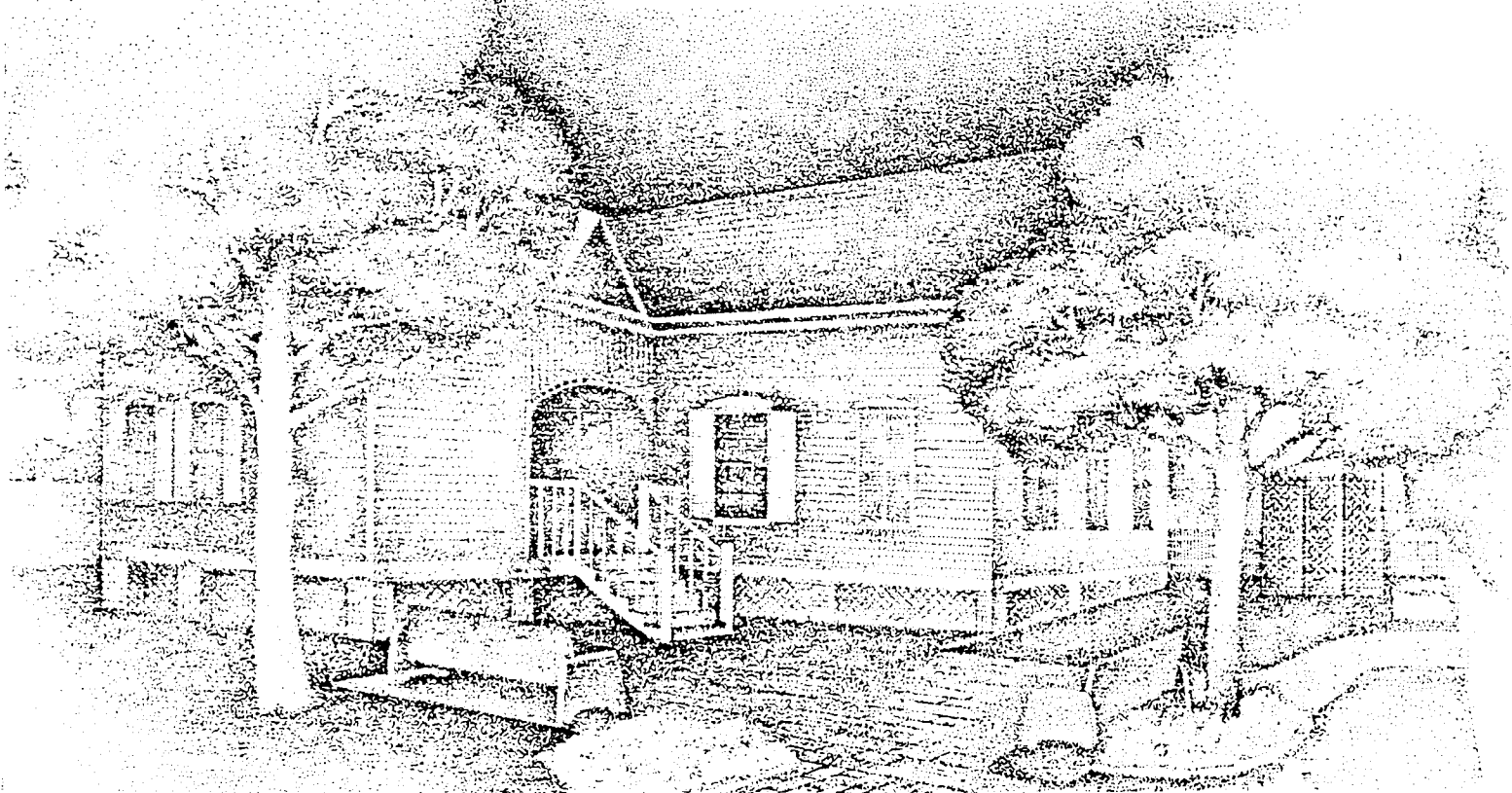
New officers are listed on the first page of this issue, and other board members continue to serve.

IN PRINT

Edited by Mary Helen Ray (a member of the Society) and Robert P. Nicholls, The Traveler's Guide to American Gardens, revised edition, has been published this year by the University of North Carolina Press. It is available in cloth cover for \$22.50 and in paper cover for \$9.95 through local bookstores, or from the Univ. of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514.



MISS ELLA'S PLACE: Kraitchar House Grounds,
Caldwell, Burleson County, Texas (sketches)
above: front entrance below: backyard patio



MISS ELLA'S PLACE: RESTORING THE COMMON LANDSCAPE OF TEXAS

by Nancy J. Volkman, Associate Professor of Landscape
Architecture, Texas A & M University

To many people landscape preservation and restoration involves only masterpieces of design, great and famous works by noted designers. These projects, though, make up a fraction of the designed landscapes which have existed. Most were works by common people who attempted to follow fashionable design styles, but did so in very homey and idiosyncratic ways. These designs are often very important in illustrating local, particularly ethnic, patterns and in suggesting to the contemporary viewer the overall character which a town may have had in the past.

One such common landscape currently being restored in Texas is the Kraitchar House grounds in Caldwell, the County Seat of Burleson County. Caldwell is located on former savannah lands in central Texas about seventy miles east of Austin. The town is in many ways typical of county seats in the state: its focal point is the courthouse in the middle of town, surrounded by a square with shops on its outer perimeter. As a center of government Caldwell drew people from a wide area and was for this reason also an important market center into the 1960's. Some of the most impressive homes in the town were those built by merchants with shops near the courthouse.

Thomas Kraitchar, Sr., was one such prosperous merchant. He owned a store on the square and in 1891 built a house on Buck Street as a wedding gift to his son and partner, Thomas Kraitchar, Jr. The home which he had constructed is a white painted frame Victorian cottage style residence of two stories. Its dark green trim is in a simple carpenter gothic scroll pattern. In plan the house has a central hallway with two rooms to each side. Stairs lead from the hall to the second floor where there is a two-room attic. A large porch stretches across the front elevation. At the rear is the kitchen, which was probably an addition, but an early one.

Thomas Kraitchar, Sr., was one of the earliest Bohemian settlers in Burleson County, having moved there from elsewhere in Texas in the 1880's. His store in Caldwell, Thomas Kraitchar & Son, was also opened at that time. In 1891 the son, Thomas, Jr., married Mary Kocourek. Thomas and Mary had six children, of whom four lived to maturity. The eldest of these, Ella, inherited the house after the death of her parents, and continued to live in it alone until 1972. Following Ella's move to a nursing home, the house was unoccupied but was maintained by family members.

In 1982 the Burleson County Historical Society purchased the house from the Kraitchar heirs for use as a headquarters. From 1982 to 1984 the restoration of the house was completed under the direction of David Woodcock, restoration architect and Head of the Architecture Department at Texas A & M University. In 1987, Catherine Alford, President of the Historical Society, contacted me to discuss the restoration of the grounds. Because funds were limited, the restoration plan was completed by the class in preservation of the historic landscape at Texas A & M, an interdisciplinary class made up of students from the

fields of landscape architecture, horticulture, and urban and regional planning.

The design intent of the Burleson County Historical Society was to restore the grounds as it looked during most of Ella Kraitchar's ownership of the house. Miss Ella, as she is still fondly called, had simple landscape taste which emphasized the functional character of her home grounds. In many ways her taste was more a reflection of common design styles of the late nineteenth century rather than those of the twentieth century.

No photographs or plans of the grounds were found, but from interviews with family friends, the class learned that the front area of the house was a simple lawn with a few shade trees. The only shrub was a single specimen at the southeast corner. The most heavily planted area of the site was along the western property line, formerly seventy-five feet west of the present line. There Miss Ella had a rectangular bed running the full depth of the site and planted with vegetables, herbs and flowers. Between the street and these beds were a line of simple unpainted wooden trellises for sweet peas and grape vines. The rear yard, used as an outdoor service court, had a wooden wash house, a carriage house, and dog pens. The primary vegetation there was the invasive Hackberry (Celtis laevigata), with one specimen growing against the house and others near the rear property line, and several specimen Crape Myrtles (Lagerstroemia indica).

Later in life Miss Ella did follow one modern garden design trend by installing a paved patio near her rear porch. Its material and form are unknown, but Agricultural Extension Service landscape photographs of the 1920's and 1930's show most patios in this region as simple rectilinear concrete slabs, and this is probably the type used at the Kraitchar house.

Because the original lot was so much wider than the existing site, with twice as much frontage along Buck Street, the designers of the restoration plan were challenged to recreate the character of the original with substantially less space. Another significant challenge, as in all restorations which must adapt to modern use, was to accommodate the contemporary needs of the Burleson County Historical Society members, who wished to use the rear yard for service events and receptions. Since it was known that Miss Ella had a patio, this element was reintroduced into the site without destroying the restoration concept. It was located in what most likely had been its original location, the "L" of the house. It was designed to be made of brick or of concrete with a brick edge, in harmony with paving installed during the house restoration. Because access to this area was important, paths were added to the rear yard. This was a major change, since there is no evidence of earlier paths there. To minimize their visual impact, they were kept to the sides of the yard and are of brick laid in sand.

Every effort was made to use plants that had grown in Miss Ella's garden or in some other garden in Caldwell more than fifty years ago. Crape Myrtle, the city tree of Caldwell, known to have been planted extensively at Kraitchar House, were reintroduced. The class proposed

that three Crape Myrtles be planted on the adjoining bank property to suggest visually that this land had once been part of the Kraitchar property. Salvia greggi was planted in beds at the base of the front porch where it had formerly been. The linear beds along the west fence were recreated at a smaller scale using herbaceous materials popular in the early part of the century. Miss Ella's trellises were reestablished in the west side yard, but were planted with old roses rather than sweet peas or grapes in an effort to reduce maintenance. The most controversial design decision was to retain a Hackberry in the back near the wash shed. In Texas, the Hackberry is considered to be a "weed tree," not suitable in a designed landscape. The class was able to persuade Historical Society members that a significant aspect of Miss Ella's yard was the haphazard arrangement of naturalized plants, and that this should be reflected in the restoration plan.

The Burleson County Historical Society is executing the restoration plan in phases, beginning with the front yard. When completed, the Kraitchar House grounds will be a reinterpretation of a nineteenth-century landscape aesthetic which Ella Kraitchar perpetuated into the twentieth century. It will also be a physical representation of the simple and cost-efficient tastes of the Bohemian settlers who contributed greatly to the development of central Texas.

U. S. CONSTITUTION COMMEMORATED WITH LIVING PLANTS IN LOUISIANA

The Plant a Living Legacy program of Louisiana, sponsored by the United States Constitution Bicentennial Commission, began in 1987 to encourage Louisiana communities to use plants to commemorate the signing of the Constitution in 1787. The state's chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects has offered assistance to communities needing professional expertise in planning and implementing their projects.

Among the types of projects suggested for community improvement were restoring blighted areas, preserving natural scenery, development of new parklands, adoption of a neglected neighborhood open space for planting and future care, refurbishing plantings around a public building, planting street trees, and creating a children's garden or a historic garden. Schoolyard planting and cemetery restoration were also encouraged.

Mindful that Louisiana's oldest trees were young saplings when the Constitution was signed two centuries ago, the Plant a Living Legacy program hopes that present-day residents of the state will commemorate the past by providing for the future of their state.

[This news provided by D. G. Abbey, ASLA, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, Louisiana State University, through our State Editor, Dana Martin Currier]

VIRGINIA REPORT (from Dean Norton, Mount Vernon Horticulturist)

The Virginia editors apologize for not contributing to this issue, but look forward to submitting a report next time by Nickolas Lucchetti, archaeologist with the James River Institute for Archaeology, on the Bacon's Castle Project.

We have this short report on an in-state challenge that will interest members of SGHS: Mount Vernon Estate, home of George Washington, has challenged Monticello, home of Thomas Jefferson, to a softball game. The challenge was accepted by Peter Hatch, Director of Monticello Grounds and Gardens, fierce competitor and all-round sports enthusiast. The game between the Muffins of Monticello (as we at Mount Vernon have dubbed them) and the Mount Vernon Marauders will occur at Mount Vernon on August 17. History tells us that Thomas Jefferson introduced wine to Virginia, but further research reveals that it was George Washington who said, "I will serve no wine until the muffins are cooked." The final score will be reported in the next issue, unless Monticello wins.

AUTUMN ISSUE

We will be glad to consider publishing your article on any aspect of Southern garden or landscape history. Send it by November 1, 1988 to Peggy Newcomb, Associate Editor, at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., Box 316, Charlottesville, VA 22901. Or contact your state editor (see fall 1987 issue for names and addresses). Send us also your news of events, meetings, and publications on topics of interest to our members.

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