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"The Laurel Tree of Carolina"
from Mark Catesby, 1731
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION of the GARDEN at BACON'S CASTLE,
SURRY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

by Nicholas M. Lucchetti, Director,
James River Institute for Archaeology, Inc.

Bacon's Castle, located in Surry County, across the James River from Jamestown, is considered by Chesapeake architectural historians to be the only surviving seventeenth-century dwelling in Virginia. Unlike the typical seventeenth-century Virginia house of clapboards framed around wood posts set into the ground, the Castle is a two-and-one-half story brick structure with porch and stair towers. The house was built by Arthur Allen I; use of dendrochronology has suggested a date of 1665 for its construction. (The nineteenth-century name "Bacon's Castle" is derived from the 1676 rebellion in Virginia led by Nathaniel Bacon, whose troops occupied the Allen plantation for three months.) The house and grounds were acquired in 1973 by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, which initiated a program of stabilization, research, and interpretation.

As part of a continuing preservation plan at Bacon's Castle, the APVA commissioned an archaeological survey in 1983 of an area which was indicated by documents to be a 1.5-acre garden dating from the mid-nineteenth century. The survey revealed the presence of buried elements of an earlier garden, such as planting beds and walks. Based on these results, the Garden Club of Virginia funded a two and one-half year excavation of the entire garden. The work was conducted initially by the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology and later assumed by the James River Institute for Archaeology, Incorporated. The garden project was guided by a select committee headed by archaeologists William M. Kelso and Ivor Noel Hume.

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The survey in 1983 and initial testing in 1984 showed that the garden was covered by a homogeneous layer of fill which likely accumulated from the wind-blown soil of the surrounding cultivated fields. Since this layer contained no artifacts or stratigraphy, it was carefully removed by a machine, exposing a virtually intact garden plan that was nearly 340 feet long and 195 feet wide.

The garden was oriented to a central walk of white sand, twelve feet wide, which ran due north-south. The walk was flanked on each side by two columns of planting beds. The six lower beds, which appeared as large dark rectangles of brown loam, measured approximately 98 feet long by 74 feet wide and were separated from each other by white sand crosswalks eight feet in width. The two northernmost planting beds were twenty and eighty feet wide. The landscape consultant to the project, Rudy Favretti, has suggested that these may be starting beds, a thesis that is supported by the presence of brick and mortar scatter along the north edge of the beds, probably the debris of a dismantled forcing wall. Surrounding the eight planting beds was a perimeter walk ten feet wide of white sand, which in turn was surrounded by a parallel border bed six feet wide.

Test holes excavated in the planting beds showed that the garden had been raised on the colonial surface. The planting beds were created by mounding about two feet of sandy loam, and the walks were then fashioned by cutting trenches through the mounded loam and filling them with packed white sand. The test holes also uncovered concentrations of artifacts beneath the walks and planting beds. Wine bottle glass and ceramics from these concentrations indicate that the garden was constructed circa 1680-1690.

In addition, the remains of at least four structures were discovered immediately outside the border bed, each at the end of a crosswalk. The largest was a brick-lined foundation, twenty by thirty-two feet, which had been partitioned into two rooms. Stratigraphic evidence implies that it was built at the same time as the garden; its role as a garden building was strengthened by the scores of bell jar fragments that were found in the garden just outside the foundation. Most of the other three structures had been severely robbed of brick, leaving only patterns of back-filled trench to decipher. However, at least two of the structures appear to be three-sided and open to the garden, with a bench against the back wall opposite the garden. The footprint of the most intact of these structures closely resembles exhedras depicted in illustrations of medieval English gardens.

The six large planting beds seemingly were used for vegetables and herbs, while the border bed was planted with ornamentals or hedge. There was no indication of holes for orchards, vineyards, mazes, or anything other than utilitarian plantings in the large beds. Although these beds continued to be used until the 1880's, the starting beds and border bed were abandoned about 1800. The project will continue to try to determine the plants that were used in the various areas of the garden, especially by use of phytolith analysis (examination of the soil for the remains of specific species).

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SOUTHERN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY held its fall meeting October 14-15 in Charleston, South Carolina. Attending were Dr. Edgar G. Givhan of Montgomery, Alabama, president; Flora Ann Bynum of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, secretary-treasurer; Catherine Howett of Athens, Georgia, immediate past president; and board members Anne Carr of Atlanta, Georgia; Hugh G. Dargan of Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina; Florence Griffin of Atlanta; Peter J. Hatch of Monticello, Charlottesville, Virginia; M. Edward Shull of Catonsville, Maryland; Shingo Woodward of New Orleans, Louisiana; and Dr. William C. Welch of College Station, Texas.

Mary Helen Ray of Savannah, Georgia, reviewed for the board the proposed plans for the seventh annual meeting of the Society, to be held in Savannah the weekend of May 12-14, 1989. Prospective locations for the 1990 annual meeting were reviewed. Other items of business discussed at length by the board were a potential archives site and permanent headquarters for the Society. Various ideas for publishing projects were also reviewed.

Hugh and Mary Palmer Dargan served as hosts to the board for the meeting. They entertained the group for cocktails in the courtyard garden of their home, and took board members on a walking tour of a number of gardens in the Charleston historic district. Several of these gardens had been designed and installed by the Dargans, who are landscape architects.

IN PRINT

SGHS has received a copy of Antique Flowers, a Guide to Using Old Fashioned Species in Contemporary Gardens, by Katherine Whiteside, published recently by Villard Books, New York. The foreword was written by John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Center for Historic Plants at Monticello, and a member of SGHS. Our Society is listed in the book among "Societies and Educational Organizations."

Those who seek information about visiting Hope Plantation, subject of an article in this issue of Magnolia, will find it in "Back in Time at Historic Hope" in The State magazine, June, 1988. Or write to Hope Plantation, P.O. Box 610, Windsor, N.C. 27983; or call (919)794-3140.

Plants and Gardens News, the membership bulletin of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, informed its readers in the summer issue this year that the Southern Garden History Society is not just for Southerners, and lists our basic dues and address; and the "Perquimans Weekly" of Hertford, a small town in northeastern North Carolina, carried a brief article on the Society in September, mentioned this bulletin, and provided membership information.

CALENDAR

May 12-14, 1989: Annual meeting of SGHS, in Savannah, Georgia.

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

RECREATING A FEDERAL PERIOD GARDEN IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

by James C. Jordan, Hope Plantation Administrator

Perhaps the most daunting task for a historic site is recreating a garden with little extant information about the plants that were grown in it, when even its exact location is unknown. When a landscape has been destroyed and a structure of substantial value is restored, some decision must be made about its setting. At Hope Plantation, recreation of a landscape setting was greatly needed, but more than 150 years of neglect and abuse -- including plowing right around the house -- had left restorers nothing to work with. The efforts of Historic Hope Foundation to interpret the grounds of Hope Plantation, the home of North Carolina Governor David Stone (1770-1818) have involved archaeological research, examination of available written sources, and analysis of other plantations in its area.

The Hope Mansion, an elegant Palladian style structure, was completed in 1803; it was the center of the large plantation of a prosperous gentleman planter. Located in Bertie County, North Carolina, the Stone home was built facing the old colonial road that ran from the port city of Edenton to the prosperous town of Halifax. The colonial road, a much-traveled route, provided David Stone's father, Zedichia Stone, a good location to establish a tavern.

David Stone himself was a successful planter; he raised sheep and hogs and grew wheat and corn for the markets in Norfolk and Petersburg. But little was known about the design of the grounds of Hope Plantation during his life and afterward. After Stone's death in 1818, the plantation had several owners; the property had long been neglected when a committee of Bertie County citizens concerned about its survival bought it in 1966 and began the task of restoring it. Farming activity right around the old house had allowed only two trees to survive, a black walnut and an American elm, and provided no sense of the appearance of the setting of the house at the time of David Stone's residence there. One outbuilding which had been used to store meat did remain, but otherwise no information about the farm activities on the land.

With the assistance of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, the archaeologist Gary Stone was hired to discover any artifacts or evidence that might provide information about the original kitchen garden. The dig proved successful in locating a detached kitchen with two bake ovens, and in identifying Zedichia Stone's house. Adjacent to the kitchen, the archaeologist found remains of post holes indicating a fenced area behind the kitchen. A kitchen garden was established in the area that had been fenced. Lack of funds then prevented a more extensive archaeological investigation of the property, which would in any case have left many questions, since only twenty-five acres remained of the original three thousand.

Dr. Turner Bond Sutton, a professor of botany at North Carolina State University and a native of Bertie County, provided research into garden books of the period and into other lands and gardens in the area around Hope Plantation. Because so few ornamental plantings remained at Hope, Dr. Sutton advised planting at Hope the trees and shrubs found at other

plantations in the Roanoke-Chowan area, using a naturalistic arrangement following the English style of landscaping popular in the early 19th century. Over the following decade, and continuing today, shrubs and trees have been planted following the natural contours of the land and relating to the house as the focal point.

After this decision had been made, Governor Stone's library of nearly fifteen hundred volumes was examined; it contained twelve volumes on gardening and farming, confirming the Governor's strong interest in them and also providing insight into the sorts of plantings and practices that he might have favored.

Among them were A Treatise on the Culture and Management of Fruit Trees by William Forsyth, published in Philadelphia in 1802, the first book devoted wholly to fruit culture published in the United States. This book was edited by William Cobbett, who supplied an introductory chapter and notes adapting the original English edition to American readers. It included plain directions for planting, pruning, and harvesting fruits.

Another title owned by Stone was Elements of Agricultural Chemistry by Humphry Davy, published in 1813, the first serious attempt to apply chemistry to agriculture. It remained a standard work until it was displaced by Justus von Liebig's publication on the subject a generation later.

Stone's library also included popular gardening books such as On Planting and Rural Ornament (1803), Bernard McMahon's The American Gardener's Calendar (1806), and John Gardiner and David Hepburn's The American Gardener (1804), in which David Stone was listed as a subscriber. Governor Stone also owned other books on scientific farming, including Essays and Notes on Husbandry and Rural Affairs by John Beale Bordely (1799). The list of farming and gardening books in Stone's possession attests to the exchange of ideas between American and English farmers and gardeners before and after the American Revolution. Such exchange seems to have been constant especially in these fields of study in two countries where gentleman farmers valued information about their enterprises. Like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, David Stone seemed to value the latest information on developments in agriculture. By studying his books, we can make more informed decisions about the practices that Stone might have used on his plantation. (A collection of the titles owned by Stone is now a part of the library at Hope.)

In addition to the archaeological evidence and the literary clues, Hope Plantation examined plans from other plantations in the area in order to create a kitchen garden as it might have existed at Hope. John Flowers of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History [a past president of Southern Garden History Society] recommended examination of the 1769 garden at Hays Plantation in Edenton, North Carolina, for the garden layout and plantings as they were shown on the map of Edenton made by Claude Joseph Sauthier, Governor Tryon's gardener and map maker. The Hay Plantation gardens were drawn in geometric squares popular in French gardens and frequently seen in eastern North Carolina gardens in the eighteenth century. John Flowers recommended that the

plots at Hope be laid out in the manner preferred in many early nineteenth-century gardens, with the flowers in the center plots and kitchen vegetables planted in the outside plots.

Once the pieces of historical research had provided a coherent plan for the kitchen garden, implementing it was a pleasant task. Vegetables and flowering plants were chosen from recommendations in American Gardener and planted by the caretaker for the property with the help of Bertie County community service workers. The orchard, planted before the garden was begun, needed some realignment in order to balance with the rest of the garden and to demonstrate the tight symmetry of the garden plots. Once planted, the garden not only looked beautiful but also reflected nineteenth-century domestic needs and purposes. (It would have been a garden in which even flowering plants had medicinal uses.)

Many questions about the gardens of Hope Plantation remain, but on-going research and a future archaeological dig should provide still more information about the appearance of this garden and the practices that this wealthy planter in eastern North Carolina used to maintain his property.

NEW MEMBERSHIP BROCHURES AVAILABLE

The new brochure for members of Southern Garden History Society outlines the history, purposes, and goals of the Society; lists the categories of membership and their dues; provides names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the members of the board; and includes a membership form to be sent by anyone wishing to join.

If you wish to have a supply of these brochures to give to prospective members, drop a card to the Society secretary at the headquarters address: Southern Garden History Society, Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108.

Several members have given memberships in SGHS to their friends as gifts. One member who has given memberships says that it is a good way to honor someone for a particular accomplishment or for volunteer work, and also a good solution to the problem of choosing a gift for the hard-to-buy-a-gift-for friend. The Society secretary will write a letter to the recipient of a gift membership to indicate the donor.

In addition to some three hundred members in our region, we have a number of members who live outside the South, from New York to California, and even outside the United States. We are pleased to share our interests with any likeminded person, and hope that our present members will make good use of the new brochure to let others know about SGHS.

GAME REPORT In a hot battle on August 17 (temperature 104F at Mt. Vernon), the Mount Vernon Marauders defeated the Monticello Muffins in softball by a score of 23-15. Monticello warned after a cookout that the Muffins will rise again!

GLEANNING FROM MANY FIELDS -- a report from Cinder Stanton of the staff
at Monticello

At what conference can you make a straw hat, turn a furrow behind a pair of oxen, swing your partner in a nineteenth-century country dance, and play baseball according to the rules of 1858? I did all that and more at the 1988 Annual Conference of the Association for Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM). Last June over two hundred participants -- from sites as widespread in time and space as Plimoth Plantation, the Ontario Agricultural Museum, Old Cienega Village in Santa Fe, and Grove Farm on Kauai -- converged on Long Island for five days and almost fifty sessions.

The theme this year -- "Gleaning from Many Fields" -- encouraged "looking beyond our accustomed resources for the information, skills, and support needed to make agriculture, living history, and outdoor museums flourish." Sessions explored ways to benefit from the resources of the academic community, the world of computers, and helpful organizations like the American Association for State and Local History's Common Agenda for history museums and the Early American Industries Association. Lively discussion was generated by the always controversial topics of first person interpretation, how to portray historical change over time, and the impact on museums of special events and volunteer staff. And then there are those sessions beloved of longtime ALHFAM members that provide detailed information on the evolution of the ploughshare or the adoption of artificial fertilizer.

For me, the spirit of ALHFAM is best expressed in the meetings of its various committees: Seeds and Plants, Farm Machinery, Livestock, Historic Clothing, and, new this year, Foodways. As one participant said, "The free flow of information among its members is what ALHFAM is all about." Bob Becker of Cornell, chairman of the Seeds Committee, handed out a list of resource material on historic field crops, ornamentals, and fruits and vegetables. The committee's future plans include preparation of a source list of historic seeds and plants and of bibliographies of heirloom varieties and historic garden practice (Bob particularly needs volunteers to compile the bibliographies for fruit and field crops). In the longer term the committee hopes to develop a set of standards for authenticating historic varieties, in other words, virtually a history of those varieties -- certainly a task for the dauntless.

The computer age has inspired a new enthusiasm for data sharing, and every session generated resolutions to provide information to a central recordkeeper. Sitting in the Livestock Committee meeting, I found myself inspired to volunteer Monticello's computer to keep track of all historic breeds (from Pilgrim geese to Ossibaw hogs) now residing at North American museums.

Monticello will be hosting Southeastern Regional ALHFAM in February, and the next annual meeting is in June 1989 at Conner Prairie in Noblesville, Indiana. All those interested in becoming an ALHFAM member (at a reasonable \$8 per year) and receiving its newsletter can write to ALHFAM, Box 2727, Duxbury, MA 02331.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Notices for 1987-1988 dues were mailed to members in February; a second notice was sent in May, and a third in August. The secretary-treasurer reports 27 members who have still not responded. A fourth notice will be mailed to these in November; if no response is received in one month, these members will be dropped. If you do not receive a notice in November, you are paid up for this year.

WINTER ISSUE

We will be glad to consider publishing your article on any aspect of Southern garden or landscape history. Send it by February 1, 1989 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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