



# MAGNOLIA

Bulletin of the  
Southern Garden  
History Society

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

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According to Dean Norton, Horticulturist, the schedule for the annual meeting of Southern Garden History Society, to be held May 18-20, 1990, at Mount Vernon, Virginia, is almost complete.

The Friday afternoon lecture program will be held at the conference hotel, Old Town Holiday Inn, in the heart of Old Town Alexandria, and will be followed by a trip to Gunston Hall, home of George Mason, father of the Bill of Rights, where we will be treated to an after-hours tour of the house and grounds followed by cocktails, dinner, and an evening program.

On Saturday morning we will depart Alexandria for Washington, D.C., where we will board a boat for Mount Vernon. More speakers will inform us about Washington and his time during our day there. In early evening Dean will conduct a tour of the gardens and grounds, which will conclude at the piazza, where we will enjoy cocktails. For the next two hours we will tour the mansion house and be entertained by harpsichord and flute music. Horse-drawn carriages will be available for short trips around the serpentine avenues surrounding the bowling green, and afterwards a special program of opera and parlor music known and beloved by Washington will be presented by Opera Americana. Dinner will be served in Mount Vernon's restaurant.

Sunday's optional tours will begin with a tour of the White House grounds, followed by visits to three other beautiful Georgetown homes and gardens, including Dumbarton Oaks and Tudor Place. Our luncheon will be served at the Anderson House, headquarters of the Society of the Cincinnati.

more on page two (see CALENDAR)--

## CALENDAR

May 18-20, 1990 (Friday afternoon through Sunday evening) SGHS  
annual meeting at Mount Vernon. Registration will be limited  
to 125 participants; members should prepare now to respond  
promptly to the information packet that will be sent in Jan.,  
1990.

### SEVENTH OLD SALEM CONFERENCE: A GARDEN HISTORY "PLEASURE" FOR ALL

by Kenneth McFarland, Site Manager,  
The Stagville Center, P.O. Box 15628  
Durham, North Carolina 27704

Beautiful early October days saw the Old Salem "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" conference celebrate its tenth birthday. Those who attended the event enjoyed three days of presentations which examined the theme of "Gardening for Pleasure in the South." In addition, however, they also got a solid refresher course in the resource material available to garden history researchers, both writers and restorers.

One such important source - the rich iconography of gardening - was especially evident throughout the conference. It became obvious too that visual documentation for historic gardens and landscapes can sometimes be iconoclastic, thus shattering our modern-day notions about gardening habits of our ancestors. The conference's keynote speaker, Suzanne Turner of Louisiana State University, underscored that point. Using impressive drawings found in New Orleans archives, she showed that romanticized twentieth-century ideas of New Orleans courtyard gardening usually do not jibe with nineteenth-century fact. Though town residents surely took a certain utilitarian pleasure from what vegetable and ornamental planting they could manage, they devoted most of their energy to confronting a harsh environment where water and sewerage were an omnipresent problem. Privies, and not gushing fountains, were the central fixtures in the courtyards of these Louisianians.

Ms. Turner also used manuscript sources as she raised a further point about "pleasure" gardening. Turning to the correspondence of antebellum Louisiana planter Rachel Weeks O'Connor, she revealed how the widowed Mrs. O'Connor relied on her garden as a major "point of equilibrium" in a world where she was confronted with multiple adversities. We surely might surmise that for many other Southerners too the pleasure of gardening meant far more than superficial enjoyment. Instead, it served as a critical psychological antidote to a daily existence often marred by tragic disease and economic disaster.

Through her presentation, Ms. Turner showed that we must give careful thought to our definition of pleasure gardening, and thus to the very meaning of "pleasure" as linked to historic gardening practices. In addition, she provided an excellent lesson in how to make thorough and thoughtful use of garden history primary source materials. For those

who would follow, Suzanne Turner pointed the way to fruitful fields for further research.

Later in the conference, Georgian interiors replaced New Orleans courtyards when John Austin offered another example of using historic garden-related iconography to dispell modern misconceptions. Perhaps no activity is more commonly associated with pleasure gardening than arranging flowers for display in the home. Mr. Austin, who is Colonial Williamsburg's Curator of Ceramics and Glass, observed, however, that ideas now commonly held about eighteenth-century arrangement practices are usually more rooted in the twentieth century than in the Augustan age. To support that argument he used an array of period graphic evidence showing how our forebears actually did decorate their homes with the produce of their pleasures. (There were apparently no tables laden with flower-filled punch bowls, for example.) Joined to photographs of eighteenth-century ceramic pieces, the early engravings and paintings that we saw demonstrated more than Mr. Austin's theme about floral arrangement: in making that case, he also displayed the type of iconographic materials which, though oftentimes demanding careful analysis, can be crucially important tools to the work of the garden historian.

The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts certainly enhanced that message through an exhibit mounted in the MESDA auditorium, the scene of most conference presentations. The audience was surrounded there with a collection of graphic material illuminating three centuries of Southern pleasure gardening. Thus no better setting could have been desired as MESDA's Director of Research, Bradford Rauschenberg, discussed American garden furniture of the period prior to 1840. Mr. Rauschenberg noted that his work was in its early stages, but he nonetheless offered an excellent overview on the vast subject. Period illustrations, enriched with slides of surviving early garden furniture, gave witness to a panoply of items ranging from "umbrellaed seats" and "root tables" to the more prosaic Windsor chairs which commonly were used in garden settings. Early business cards provided especially fascinating evidence for garden furniture, illustrating such pieces as "machine" chairs designed to enable the handicapped to enjoy fully their pleasure grounds.

While Mr. Rauschenberg thus illustrated furniture in the garden, Ed Shull of Catonsville, Maryland, discussed what might be termed "the garden in furniture." In the Friday night sharing session, he revealed how the painted furniture made by Baltimore's Findlay brothers has great potential for garden researchers. Thanks to the talents of Maryland craftsmen and to the tastes of their clients, these early nineteenth-century pieces displayed scenes that show a wealth of detail about both urban and rural landscapes. They are all the more valuable today because many of those settings have since been greatly altered or have disappeared completely.

Mostly gone too are the many mature trees which once graced the home of the conference, Old Salem. Their destruction by a recent tornado has compelled the horticultural staff there to make extensive replanting plans. Also speaking during the sharing session, Julianne Berckman of the Old Salem staff gave conferees details on those plans, which will

make the best of a natural calamity. She focused on the famous Salem Square as she revealed the enviable array of documents and illustrations, including photographs that the landscape committee has used to create the best possible union between historical accuracy and modern functionality.

As was also seen, photographic research material played a central role in the MLA thesis work of Delce Dyer of Smithfield, Tennessee. The Farmstead Yards of Cades Cove was the focus of her sharing session talk, during which she showed numerous photos taken in Tennessee prior to the 1926 creation of The Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These shots, available in the Park's Gatlinburg visitor center, provided dramatic views of the "domestic landscape" of the Appalachian mountaineer, while once more illustrating the wealth of materials available to researchers. Ms. Dyer has used them as guideposts for her plan for restoring and managing those "domestic landscapes" which are today Park-run sites.

Other sharing session speakers addressed additional examples revealing the pleasures and vicissitudes of historic site landscape restoration. Judith Hanes, who chairs the gardens and grounds committee at Virginia's famed Stratford Hall, examined the numerous problematic aspects of the landscape at such a long-established site. [An article on recent work in the gardens of Stratford Hall Plantation follows.] Speaking to a different type of situation, parks project planner James S. Kambourian of Georgia's Fulton County, examined the decision-making process at the newly-created Sandy Springs historic site. Both Ms. Hanes and Mr. Kambourian revealed that they are using a variety of research tools to facilitate their work, as is James C. Jordan III, who shared details about the ongoing restoration at Hope Plantation in North Carolina (see Magnolia, Vol. 5, No. 2). Particularly important to that project was an archaeological dig which proved invaluable in recreating Hope's kitchen garden.

More than simply hearing about garden archaeology, however, conferees actually were able to visit the site of a recent dig. Guided by John W. Clauser, Jr., who is the senior archaeologist of the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, they got a first-hand look at the site of Bethabara, North Carolina's first Moravian settlement. Mr. Clauser provided the group with extensive details on his excavation findings, and he described how he then joined this knowledge to documentary research to determine the configuration of the Bethabara community garden. His discussion on fence lines and bed layouts surely heightened the awareness of many in his audience about the merits of archaeology as a vehicle for garden research.

Mr. Clauser's enthusiasm for Bethabara, which is now a historic park of the City of Winston-Salem, was equalled by that of Ms. Sherold Hollingsworth for the Reynolda Estate. Ms. Hollingsworth, who wrote her MLA thesis on Reynolda, now serves as grounds superintendent for the Estate. During her conference presentation, she used a rich collection of early photographs to illustrate the landscaping accomplishments of Katharine Smith Reynolds. Ms. Hollingsworth's knowledge of her subject, together with those photographs, greatly enhanced the enjoyment of conference participants in their later visit to the house and to Reynolda Gardens.

While the importance of such garden history research tools as documentary photographs and archaeology was stressed repeatedly during the conference, other important resources were evident as well. The well-known preservation landscape architect Rudy Favretti addressed such material in his examination of gardening authors who have influenced the "pleasure grounds" of the American South. To understand early Southern gardening, Mr. Favretti demonstrated, we should study closely printed resources that were available in America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was under the influence of such writers as Stephen Switzer, Batty Langley, and Thomas Whatley that famous Southern gardeners like Henry Middleton and Thomas Jefferson reshaped their personal landscapes. Mr. Favretti went on to trace a lineage of authors and garden theories up to the works of Joseph C. Loudon, who in turn had a major impact on the ideas of Andrew Jackson Downing.

While Mr. Favretti thus reminded us of those persons who were so important to the creation of Southern "pleasure grounds," Arthur O. Tucker of Delaware State College spoke on the ornamental plants which brought life to those early gardens -- and which in the final analysis are among the most important of "resources" available to those who restore gardens and landscapes. In his several presentations, Dr. Tucker drew on a vast reservoir of personal study and experience to share strategies for obtaining authentic antique ornamentals. His level of commitment to the subject is evident in his Antique Plant Newsletter, distributed without cost to those who request it, and invaluable to every garden historian.

Surely everyone who attended the conference departed from Old Salem possessed of a new or renewed enthusiasm for the study of Southern garden history. A fine group of speakers had given them various assessments on the meaning of "pleasure gardening," and on the "pleasures" of the garden in our region of America. Moreover, attendees had the benefit of being surrounded for three days by people who are very well informed about garden history. At the same time, they were exposed repeatedly to the wonderful sorts of primary sources available for their own work on the subject. For both the neophyte and the veteran of research, therefore, there was much to be learned in this "edition" of "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes."

#### THE GARDENS OF STRATFORD HALL PLANTATION

by Ronald Wade and Catharine J. Farley,  
Stratford Hall Plantation, Stratford, VA 22558

Stratford Hall Plantation, in Westmoreland County, Virginia, built in the late 1730's by planter Thomas Lee, features a replicated late eighteenth century garden to compliment the current circa 1770 interpretive focus of the Great House. Stratford is the boyhood home of the only two brothers to sign the Declaration of Independence, Richard Henry Lee and Francis Lightfoot Lee; it is also the birthplace of Robert E. Lee.

The gardens of Stratford Hall are not exact duplications of the gardens in existence in the late eighteenth century. Archaeological research into garden design generally yields little information on the plant life that constituted the garden. Although the archaeologist sometimes discovers seeds, it is not possible to find a 250-year-old cabbage, carrot, or marigold. Much horticultural research is therefore based on surviving written descriptions or sketches of plants and gardens. In the case of the Lee family of Virginia, unfortunately, only scant written records of the gardens have been discovered to date. We can perhaps assume that the influential Lee brothers were so occupied with the task of running a 4,200-acre plantation, or so engrossed in political activities during the revolutionary period, that they had little time to record their impressions of the garden.

We do know, however, that extensive gardens existed at the Plantation. Certainly large vegetable gardens and an orchard were kept to supply fresh produce; no eighteenth-century garden was complete without a quantity of herbs and flowers. There must also have been an orangery.

After Stratford Hall Plantation was purchased by the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation in 1929, the Garden Club of Virginia generously assumed the responsibility of developing the gardens to the east of the Great House. The Club installed a formal parterred boxwood garden, which provides a lovely vista from the second floor of the house. In 1942, architects Innocenti and Webel of Long Island were commissioned to design a colonial interpretive garden for the area to the west of the Great House; their plans for elaborately-shaped ornamental beds and espaliered fruit trees were not implemented until the early 1960's. Innocenti and Webel also proposed the addition of vegetable beds in the West Garden; they were gradually added in the 1970's.

During the last twenty years, a gradual succession of changes has taken place in the West Garden as more historical knowledge of eighteenth-century horticulture is gained. Paul Calloway, of Calloway Associates, has recently provided plans for a more accurate historical interpretive focus in this garden, resulting in ornamental beds of plants with long blooming seasons. One welcome result of this change is the labor it has saved without any decrease in the beauty of the gardens.

Today the visitor to Stratford Hall Plantation sees the formal boxwood garden to the east of the house, intensely cultivated rectangular vegetable beds and five-sided ornamental beds surrounded by large expanses of lawn to its west, and an orchard of authentic eighteenth-century fruit trees northeast of it. A breathtaking vista of the Potomac River, three quarters of a mile away, adds serenity to the experience. Visitors may also visit the Dependencies, which include a working grist mill. We cordially invite all members of Southern Garden History Society to include Stratford Hall in their travel plans before or after the annual meeting next year, and to linger in our beautiful and fascinating gardens. If you cannot visit at that time, keep Stratford Hall Plantation on your list for a later trip.

THE LANDSCAPE AT TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ABBEVILLE, S.C.:

A MID 19TH CENTURY GARDEN IN THE UPCOUNTRY

by Christy Snipes, Historic Landscape & Garden Design,  
501 Pelham Drive, E-205, Columbia, S.C. 29209

The year 1858 marked a time of prosperity and plenty for Abbeville in upcountry South Carolina. The affluent congregation of Trinity Episcopal Church, under the leadership of the Rev. Benjamin Johnson, began to build an impressive new Gothic style church. This edifice was consecrated in November of 1860, but the celebration was overshadowed by the rumblings of political discontent. On November 20, a group gathered in Abbeville for the first time in the South to talk of secession from the Union.

It was during this prosperous yet unsettling period that the landscape at Trinity Episcopal Church was born. The Rev. Johnson created its design. An Abbeville historian says that Rev. Johnson came from Baltimore, Maryland, to South Carolina "in search of health." He arrived in 1847, ministered at several low-country churches, then became rector at Trinity in 1855. A rectory was constructed shortly afterward, and a plan for landscaping the grounds was established. The Reverend Johnson must have been a landscape gardener of considerable talent, for several notable and distinguished families of Abbeville secured his services; he is credited with the layout and care of gardens at the homes of Major Armistead Burt, General Sam McGowan, Col. J. Foster Marshall, and Dr. J. W. Marshall.

Both Abbeville historians and nursery records of the time confirm Johnson's landscape work: According to the account books of Pomaria Nursery, Benjamin Johnson ordered plants on four occasions between 1860 and 1863. (He may also have placed orders before 1859, the earliest year of available account records.) By examining Johnson's orders, we can follow his gardening activities with some degree of certainty. For example, his first requisition, of March 9, 1860, is labelled "Cokesbury." Johnson served as president of the nearby Cokesbury Female College from 1859 to September, 1860, and may have helped to landscape the grounds there.

His next order, for December 29, 1860, came one month after the consecration of the new building at Trinity Episcopal Church. Perhaps this improvement of the grounds was instigated in preparation for the Annual Convention of the Diocese of South Carolina, which was to be held at Trinity in June, 1861. Johnson purchased ornamental evergreens, hedging plants, and fruit trees; so the church grounds were used both to ornament the town and to feed its people. The order of J. Foster Marshall appeared in the account records directly after the Johnson order, perhaps because Johnson was then at work on the Marshall grounds.

Rev. Johnson's request of December 16, 1862, made during the Civil War, was quite extensive, and consisted of a number of hedge plants (privet, pyracantha, euonymus, and cherry laurel), several of the new, exotic and picturesque evergreens (horizontal cypress, deodar cedar, Norway spruce, and Swedish juniper); the live oak, and the Southern magnolia. Also included were some old favorites, the rose and the boxwood. Portions of this order were most likely used in the design of the cemetery, located at the rear of the property.

1861

1861

DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE  
OF

Southern and Acclimated

FRUIT TREES,

Evergreens, Roses, Grape Vines,

RARE TREES, SHRUBS, &C.,

CULTIVATED AND FOR SALE AT THE

POMARIA NURSERIES.

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ADDRESS

WM. SUMMER, POMARIA, S. C.

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COLUMBIA AGENTS:

DR. C. H. MIOT AND ROBT. M. STOKES.

CHARLESTON AGENTS:

MESSRS. INGRAHAM & WEBB.

FLORINDINA, FLA., AGENTS:

MESSRS. ROUX & CO.

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COLUMBIA S. C.:

STEAM-PRESS OF ROBERT M. STOKES.

1860.

Johnson's final requisition recorded in the Pomaria account records, of January 10, 1863, reflected the necessity of food production on the landscape during the war years. Fruit trees and raspberry and strawberry plants were purchased, and again hedge materials (euonymus and mock orange) were included and perhaps were used to protect the orchard or vegetable garden. Even then, in that most difficult time, Johnson bought roses and also the Cedar of Lebanon, tree of faith.

The Pomaria catalogues and Rev. Johnson's orders confirm the existence of an ethic of landscape gardening in the South at that time, and show that a diverse group of plants were available to the gardener who wanted them. Pomaria made available the newest and rarest plants of its day. The Nursery was operated at Pomaria (near Abbeville) from 1840 to 1878 by William Summer; it had a nationwide reputation for excellence and received orders from around the nation and even from other countries.

Pomaria was a huge operation. By 1858 Summer had a specimen orchard of thousands of trees; the Agricultural Census of 1860 valued the orchards at \$10,000. A visitor to the nursery in 18699 wrote, "How many thousand Grape-vines Mr. S. has, ready for sale, we do not undertake to say, but no more than the population of our State ought to want. The ornamental Department, at Pomaria Nursery, is unrivalled and the largest and best in the South, and shows of Mr. S.'s good judgement and fine taste."

Summer published descriptive catalogues of his stock often, and wrote and edited other horticultural publications such as The Southern Agriculturist, promoting vegetable and fruit growing in the South. Although his nursery may not have been as well-known as P.J. Berckmans of Augusta, Georgia, Summer was certainly a great influence on horticultural practices in the up-country. By examining the orders from Abbeville alone, one can see that Summer served a horticulturally sophisticated clientele; many of his requests are extensive, and they include the popular picturesque evergreen trees, hedging plants of great variety, parterre and edging plants, the exotic ornamentals, and plants for food production.

The landscape at Trinity Church included all these elements at one time or another. The boxwood parterre garden that fronted the parsonage followed a design tradition of the period. It was laid out in a formal symmetrical style, with shrubs, flowers, and bulbs planted in the center. Photographs taken circa 1890 show the box pattern and an abundance of large picturesque evergreens near the church. A wooden fence surrounds the property on the Church Street side. Other details are not definitely known, but we can guess that the area behind and to the side of the parsonage would have been service yards, and that the vegetable garden, vineyard, and orchard may have been located beyond them, also in the back yard; these food crops were probably protected by living hedges.

The area to the southeast of the church appears to have been less formal than the boxwood parterre garden, which lies to its northwest. The southeast area may have been a fairly open space, as it is today. On the extreme southeast border, an osage orange hedge directed one down to the cemetery. A deodar cedar was the centerpiece of the cemetery design, with American box surrounding it. Paths were laid

Rev. P. Johnson  
Abbeville S.C

1862  
Dec 16

100	To amt of bill rendered	80	u
100	Pounds		
100	Persea caroliniana		
300	Eucalyptus small		
200	Ceras Caroliniana		
4	Magnolias		
1	Large Horizontal Cypress	3	u
2	Florida Cedar	5	u
2	Low Oak		
3	Norway Spruce		
2	Southern Juniper		
Paid			
2	Hump ash	4	containing 20
12	Roses	50	in Box.

Recd - payment of Eighty dollars in full  
Wm. Sumner

Johnson's order of December 16, 1862, in Pomaria Nursery account book.

among the grave plots, and evergreens and other ornamentals were planted there. The entire church landscape was much admired in these early years of its existence.

Trinity Episcopal suffered loss of lives and resources during the Civil War, and Rev. Johnson continued to serve the congregation. But after eleven years in Abbeville, he accepted a call from Governor Jenkins of Georgia to take the rectorship at St. Stephens Church in Milledgeville, Georgia. Johnson eventually left the Protestant Episcopal Church and became a moving force in the establishment of the Reformed Episcopal Church in America.

Reverend Johnson's impression on the landscape at Trinity survived over time and provided a source of pride to the whole community. In recent years concern grew for its condition; interested in possible rejuvenation and restoration of Rev. Johnson's landscape, the congregation asked me in 1988 to conduct research and provide them with a master plan. It has been completed, and the church is now raising funds for its implementation.

Trinity is only one example of historic preservation and revitalization in Abbeville, which has been lauded as a national prototype for small town restoration. From its beautiful town square of active businesses in buildings with restored 19th-century facades to the refurbished 1908 Opera House and its live performances to the Burt-Stark House, last meeting place of Jefferson Davis and his Confederate Cabinet, Abbeville is keenly alive. Restoration of the mid-19th century garden at Trinity Episcopal Church should provide yet another place of beauty to this charming upcountry town.

#### INFORMATION SOUGHT AND FOUND

The Association for Preservation Technology has announced a close-out sale on back issues of APT BULLETIN, The Journal of Preservation Technology. Two special issues on landscape history and preservation may be of interest to members of SGHS: Vol. XI, No. 4 (1979), and Vol. XV, No. 4 (1983). Each is \$6 from APT, Box 8178, Fredericksburg, VA 22404. A more recent issue, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (1989), also treats landscape issues, and is available for \$10 from the same address.

Gardens of North and South Carolina, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, are the subject of study and an exhibition. The exhibit will include pleasure, kitchen, and scientific gardens. Any information, correspondence, illustrative materials or artifacts related to pre-1820 Carolina gardens is sought by James C. Jordan, III, Hope Plantation, 202 Hofler Ave., Windsor, N.C. 27983; or telephone 919-794-3140.

Information is sought on the Elmwood Hall Estate at Ludlow, Kentucky, which was occupied by the English entrepreneur William Bullock between 1828 and 1836, and on the whereabouts of a model of Bullock's proposals for a "small town of retirement" to be known as "Hygeia," by John Edmondson, Liverpool Museum, William Brown St., Liverpool L3 8EN England.

SOFTBALL REMATCH

On September 28, 1989, the Mount Vernon Marauders traveled to Monticello to play softball against the Monticello Muffins. As members may remember, the Marauders beat the Muffins 23-15 in 1988. Monticello found new yeast this year and rose above the greatest efforts of the Marauders to win the rematch 18-4.

"It was embarassing and humiliating," wrote Dean Norton of Mount Vernon, who is also busy organizing the SGHS annual meeting to be held there in May, 1990. "But it was lots of fun."

WINTER ISSUE: Please send your articles on any aspect of Southern garden or landscape history, or your news of events, meetings, and publications, by Feb. 1, 1990 to Peggy Newcomb, Associate Editor, at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc., Box 316, Charlottesville, VA 22901, or to the state editor for your state, listed in the May issue.

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