



# Magnolia

*Magnolia grandiflora*  
The Laurel Tree of Carolina  
Catesby's *Natural History*, 1743

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## The Travels of Frederick Law Olmsted in the Antebellum South

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[This paper was originally presented at the 14th Annual Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The conference, "A Genius and His Legacy: Frederick Law Olmsted in the South," took place September 25-27, 2003, and celebrated the centennial of Olmsted's death in 1903.]

### Part 1: Early Years

The landscape design work of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted Firm had a profound and lasting impact upon the South during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This paper focuses on Frederick Law Olmsted's early life and work, primarily covering portions of the 1840s and the 1850s and examining Olmsted's travels through the South between 1852 and 1854. Several threads run through this period in Olmsted's life. First, he loved travel, and he became a keenly talented commentator on the conditions he witnessed. Along with his fondness for travel grew a corresponding interest in landscapes, both natural and manmade, and he frequently demonstrated his abilities in the many verbal landscape pictures he penned. He also demonstrated an enduring concern for the plight of ordinary people, as seen in his observations on sailors, English rural laborers, and especially enslaved African Americans. He argued powerfully for the amelioration of their living and working conditions. Apropos of the conference theme, his support for public parks was one important outgrowth of this strong interest in social reform—an interest that melded perfectly with his fascination with landscapes. Olmsted, moreover, was a proud New Englander, and his background surfaces in his writings regularly.

On April 26, 1822 Frederick Law Olmsted was born in Hartford, Connecticut, a city where his family had lived since the 1630s. His father John Olmsted (1781-1873) had married his mother Charlotte Law (1800-1826) in 1821. John's second wife (m. 1827) was Mary Ann Bull (1801-1894). Olmsted biographer Laura Wood Roper refers to John Olmsted as "moderately prosperous, and more than moderately generous."<sup>1</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted's early education was in the hands of

"six ministers," as he recorded later in life.<sup>2</sup> Stressing that they were not all schoolmasters, he recalled attending "day schools" while boarding with three of the six. Some of these relationships—which were less than happy—appear to have left him with a life-long discomfort regarding religion.

Olmsted became a traveler quite early. In the late 1870s he recalled that "The happiest recollections of my early life are the walks and rides I had with my father and the drives with



Frederick Law Olmsted 1857

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# CALENDAR

**November 11, 2006—January 7, 2007.** “*Natura Morta: Still-Life Painting and the Medici Collections*,” an exhibition at the Muscarelle Museum of Art at The College of William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. The exhibition includes more than forty European Old Master works from famous Italian, Dutch, Flemish, and French painters of the Renaissance and Baroque periods of the 16th to the early 18th centuries. See the college Web site for further information: [www.wm.edu/muscarelle/medici\\_general.php](http://www.wm.edu/muscarelle/medici_general.php)

**February 15-16, 2007.** The Southern Garden Heritage Conference in Athens, Georgia. This annual event is sponsored by The State Botanical Garden of Georgia, UGA School of Environmental Design, and The Garden Club of Georgia in cooperation with the SGHS and the Friends of The State Botanical Garden of Georgia. Brad Sanders, author of *Guide to William Bartram's Travels—Following the Trail of America's First Great Naturalist*, will open the conference with a presentation about Bartram's travels throughout Georgia and the Southeastern United States. The Bartram legacy will continue the next day with a presentation about the Franklin tree, *Franklinia alatamaha*, now extinct in the wild. Other topics will include: the Colonial Revival gardens of Virginia and the gardens of Charleston and Savannah; differing views of the Southern landscape—from sharecroppers to contemporary landscape architecture; the role women have played in the design of Atlanta's early landscapes and gardens; and cemeteries as treasure troves of history and heirloom plants. For additional information, write, call or e-mail SGH Conference, State Botanical Garden, 2450 South Milledge Avenue, Athens, Ga. 30605, 706-542-1244, [garden@uga.edu](mailto:garden@uga.edu).

**February 24, 2007.** “Elements of Timeless Gardens,” 6th Annual Winter Garden Symposium at Goodwood Museum & Gardens, Tallahassee, Florida. The symposium will focus on old garden roses and the art of garden design. Renowned author and rose authority Stephen Scanniello and Mary Palmer Dargan, ASLA, of Dargan Landscape Architects are the featured speakers. The fee is \$40, which includes a gourmet lunch. For more information, contact Mike Herrin, Director of Horticulture at Goodwood, (850) 877-7592 or visit their Web site at: [www.goodwoodmuseum.org](http://www.goodwoodmuseum.org)

**March 5-7, 2007.** 23rd Annual Davidson Horticultural Symposium: “Green Challenges: Gardening in Unexpected Places” will explore the challenges of gardening in unexpected places, from table tops to roof tops. The Davidson Horticultural Symposium, sponsored by the Davidson Garden Club, has been held at Davidson College since 1984. The speakers include: gardening provocateur Felder Rushing of Jackson, Mississippi, author of *Passalong Plants*; and Roger Turner of Cheltenham, England, author of *Design in the Plant Collector's Garden*

(2005). For further information, visit the Web site at [www.DavidsonSymposium.org](http://www.DavidsonSymposium.org), or contact Susan Abbott, Davidson Horticultural Symposium, P.O. Box 898, Davidson, N. C. 28036; phone (704)892-6281, email [sugarden@aol.com](mailto:sugarden@aol.com)

**April 3, 2007.** “Mina Edison and Women in the Garden,” at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates in Fort Meyers, Florida. Speakers include Dr. Anne Yentch; author Judith Tankard; landscape architect Ellin Goetz; and Chris Pendleton, President and CEO of the Edison & Ford Winter Estates, Inc. Topics will include historic garden restoration, contemporary plantings for the historic landscape, and the 1920s garden movement, including the work of British garden writer and designer Gertrude Jekyll and American landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman. For more information, contact the Estates at (239) 334-7419 or visit their Web site at: [www.efwefla.org](http://www.efwefla.org) [See article in this issue on the Edison & Ford Winter Estates]

**April 11-14, 2007.** “Exploring the Boundaries of Historic Landscape Preservation,” The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation 29th Annual Meeting in Athens, Georgia. [See more details in “Call for Papers” article, page 19]

**May 4-5, 2007. The 25th Annual SGHS Meeting: “Landscape Preservation: Beyond the Garden Wall,”** in Annapolis, Maryland. [See details in article, page 15]

**September 27-29, 2007. “Lost Landscapes—Preserved Prospects: Confronting Natural & Human Threats to the Historic Landscape”** the biennial **Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference** at Old Salem, Inc. in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This year's conference considers the efforts of local governments, various land trusts and conservancies, and private individuals to preserve lost features and aspects of the historic landscape. The conference will look not only to the past but also to the future, to the threats and to the solutions, addressing significant, successful mean of preserving the grounds of southern history—the setting of our gardens and our lives. Plans are being made to visit the Cooleemee Plantation House, an “Anglo-Grecian Villa” inspired by a plate published in Godey's *Lady's Book* in 1850. The house, which is in the shape of a Greek cross, was built in 1853-1855 by Peter and Columbia Stuart Hairston, a sister of Civil War General J. E. B. Stuart. The site is one of the 33 National Historic Landmark sites in North Carolina. More information about this conference will be posted on the SGHS Web site and included in future issues of *Magnolia*. For program registration information, contact Sally Gant, (336) 721-7361; [sgant@oldsalem.org](mailto:sgant@oldsalem.org)





## Frederick Law Olmsted.....(continued from page 1)

my father and [step-] mother in the woods and fields. Sometimes these were quite extended, and really tours in search of the picturesque. Thus before I was twelve years old I had been driven over the most charming roads of the Connecticut Valley and its confluents, through the White Hills and along most of the New England coast....”<sup>3</sup> He also noted that “I had also before I was twelve traveled much with my father and mother by stage coach, canal and steamboat, visiting West Point, Trenton Falls, Niagara, Quebec, Lake George.” He recalled in particular “the enjoyment my father and mother consistently found in scenery.”<sup>4</sup>

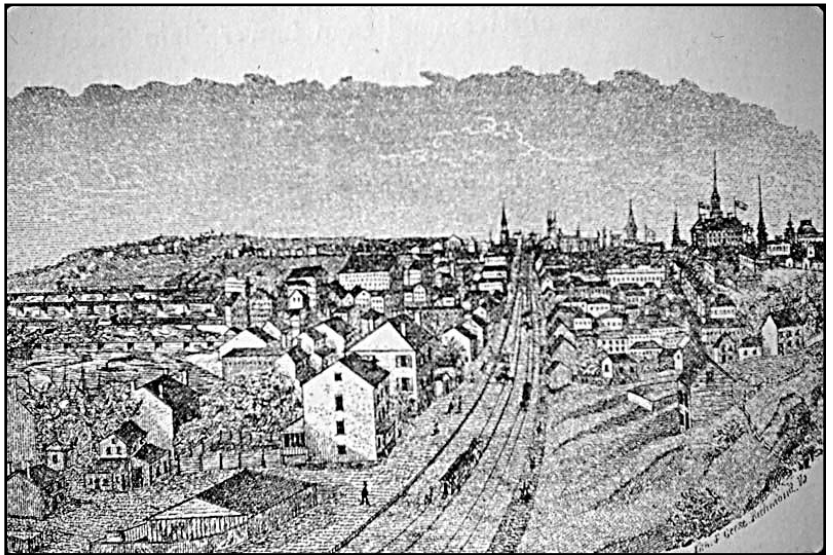
Sumac poisoning in 1836 led to vision problems that held the young man back from college. Instead, from late 1837 until May 1840 he studied engineering, though only “nominally” he recalled, with F. A. Barton, a clergyman and civil engineer. In truth, Olmsted followed what he termed “a decently restrained vagabond life.”<sup>5</sup> This allowed him time for a favorite diversion of drawing conjectural towns and landscapes.

At the behest of a father worried about the direction of his “vagabond” son, Frederick Law Olmsted tried being a merchant from August 1840 until March 1842, working in New York for Benkard and Hutton, a French dry-goods importing firm. Though it introduced him to the mysteries of the city, the job was not to his taste. It was here, however, that an idea most likely formed that led Olmsted, with his father’s blessings, to take a berth on the China-bound barque *Ronaldson*, setting sail for Canton on April 24, 1843 and returning April 15, 1844.

It was hoped this voyage might benefit his eyes and strengthen his constitution in general. The China trip, however, exposed Olmsted to a life that must have previously been unimaginable. Intense seasickness joined his disgust with a greatly overloaded ship and an abusive



*Andrew Jackson Downing*



*A mid-19th-century view of Richmond, Virginia looking toward the Capitol.*

captain. Other sicknesses, including scurvy, dogged him during the journey, and conditions grew so bad on the return to New York that the crew almost mutinied. John Olmsted could barely recognize his son when he landed, yet by any measure this was a maturing experience. It also provides insight into Olmsted’s developing consciousness of social injustice. From this point forward he retained a strong sympathy for the plight of seamen and the need for measures that would ease their lot.

Olmsted’s time ashore in China was limited, as hours allowed for “exploration” were restricted by shipboard responsibilities and illness. His visits also shared certain features in common with those of his shipmates. In Thanksgiving 1843 letter he described his sailor appearance, as “swinging in tarry trousers, check shirt, with the lanyard of a jackknife in place of a cravat, monkey jacket, etc.”<sup>6</sup> Yet he seems to have understood and appreciated the Chinese far more than most jack tars. Among other places, he visited a school, which he compared to schools he had known at home, as well as a temple. His letters reflect a desire to capture a true feeling for the direct contacts he enjoyed, as exemplified in a conversation he had with one Mr. Boston, a “noted Chinaman” who had early in life visited Boston, and who was a well-to-do provider of naval goods to Americans.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Boston’s partner also had known his great uncle Aaron Olmsted, a shipmaster who had profited handsomely from the China trade.

Olmsted remembered China and his friendly treatment by the Chinese in an unpublished 1856 essay, where he observed: “I suppose that civilization is to be tested as much by civility as anything else. And I have recalled these incidents as illustrations of a personal experience which made a strong impression upon me, tending to a higher estimate of the social condition of the masses of the Chinese people than I think generally prevails.”<sup>8</sup>

Following his return from China, Olmsted seems to have developed a new seriousness about the future, surely to his father’s delight. He attended several lectures at Yale, but he

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## Frederick Law Olmsted.....(continued from page 3)

did not pursue college studies further. Instead, given a desire to live an outdoor life and also to truly benefit society, he became a farmer. Family connections helped, providing several farms for him to visit for extended periods. Subsequently, his

agriculture at length, being especially dismayed by conditions endured by English rural laborers, abetted by what he perceived to be an uncaring attitude on the part of landowners—a preview of his investigations of American slavery.<sup>12</sup> By contrast,

he greatly admired England's ancient buildings and was enamored even more by the overall landscape.<sup>13</sup> Here an often-quoted statement looks forward to Olmsted's later career: "In the afternoon we walked to Eaton Park. Probably there is no object of art that Americans of cultivated taste more generally long to see in Europe, than an English park. What artist, so noble, has often been my thought, as he who, with far-reaching conception of beauty and designing power, sketches the outline, writes the colors, and directs the shadows of a picture so great that Nature shall be employed upon it for generations, before the work he has arranged for her shall realize his intentions."<sup>14</sup>



photo by Philip Gould

Avenue of live oaks at Oak Alley Plantation, on the banks of the Mississippi River north of New Orleans.

father bought him two farms, one in Connecticut that proved inadequate, and the second, in 1848, on Staten Island. There he began making a name for himself, winning various prizes for his produce, assuming responsible roles in agricultural societies, and, of especial interest with regard to his ultimate career, redesigning his farm following Andrew Jackson Downing-type concepts of rural beauty. It is not hard to find the source of this influence. Olmsted had first met Downing in 1846, and they corresponded until latter's death in 1852.<sup>9</sup> He was an avid reader of Downing's books, along with his periodical, the *Horticulturist*, to which Olmsted contributed articles.

By 1850 he was giving every sign of becoming a successful and progressive farmer. Yet a restlessness remained, and it resurfaced when brother John Hull Olmsted and friend Charles Loring Brace began to plan a trip to England and the Continent. Frederick approached his father for money, making every possible argument for joining the duo. The pleading worked. The three left New York on April 30, 1850 sailing to Liverpool aboard the *Henry Clay*. Very early in a walking tour they visited the recently created Birkenhead Park, near Liverpool. Detailed in his book, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*, this was a seminal moment for Olmsted, who was already familiar with calls that had appeared in the *Horticulturist* and elsewhere for a park in New York City.<sup>10</sup> (In turn, he was to write an article for the May 1851 edition of the *Horticulturist* touting Birkenhead Park as a model for America.)<sup>11</sup>

In addition to remarks on Birkenhead Park, Olmsted provided many observations on the countryside. He discussed

The Olmsted brothers returned to the United States in October 1850, after visiting France, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, and Scotland and leaving Charles Brace to undertake further European travel. It was New York publisher George Palmer Putnam who soon after their return encouraged Frederick Law Olmsted to write a book based on notes made during the trip.<sup>15</sup> The result was the publication of the just-mentioned *Walks and Talks*, Volume 1 appearing in February 1852 and volume 2 in October 1852.

### Part 2: The South

A major impulse behind the Southern trips was Olmsted's strong differences with friends over the burning topic of slavery, especially with the "red-hot Abolitionist" Charles Loring Brace, his earlier traveling companion.<sup>16</sup> Brace stridently supported immediate abolition, while Olmsted took a far more moderate and gradualist stance.<sup>17</sup> He believed American slaves should, and could, be freed, but only after Southern planters had been shown that their true economic and social self-interest lay in the elimination of slavery. Free labor, he believed, was demonstrably more viable, even in the South.<sup>18</sup>

It was the well-connected Brace who recommended Olmsted to Henry Raymond, the editor of the *New-York Daily Times* who had conceived the idea of the Southern journeys.<sup>19</sup> After a conversation midway in 1852, reported to have lasted only five minutes, Raymond gave Olmsted the assignment. Raymond's only major requirement was that Olmsted must write from personal observation. As noted, the young correspondent had set himself to a serious task, but

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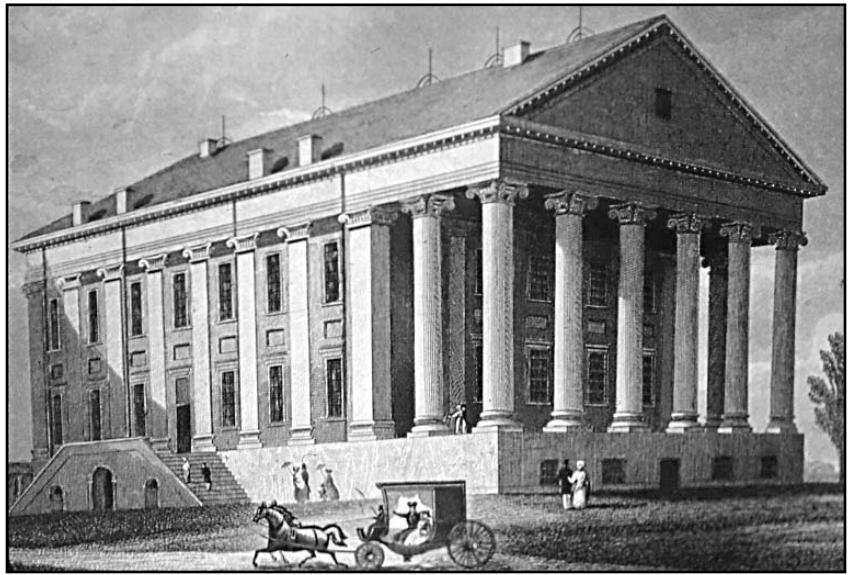
## Frederick Law Olmsted... (continued from page 4)

his peripatetic nature doubtlessly influenced the decision too. As Laura Wood Roper has observed, Olmsted was simply “never one to resist the lure of travel....”<sup>20</sup>

Olmsted’s Southern visits covered the period December 10, 1852 until early August 1854, excluding a break during the spring and summer of 1853. His observations were recorded in a variety of sources, including: the “Yeoman” articles in *The New York Daily Times*, some of which have been published along with other correspondence in Volume II of *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted; A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, published by Dix & Edwards, which first appeared in January 1856; *A Journey through Texas*, published by Dix & Edwards in January 1857; *A Journey in the Back Country*, published in the summer of 1860 by Mason Brothers; and *The Cotton Kingdom*, published by Mason Brothers in 1861. In the latter book, Olmsted in cooperation with Daniel Goodloe produced a summation of his three volumes.

The first trek began in Washington, D.C., Olmsted arriving December 10, 1852. Four days later he visited Charles Benedict Calvert’s two thousand-acre Riversdale in Prince George’s County, Maryland, a farm with a “national reputation.”<sup>21</sup> He briefly described the landscape near the house, remarking on the use of wire fence, a nearly invisible method of livestock control that allowed the grounds around the house to meld seamlessly into pastureland. Ever the farmer, Olmsted was also impressed with Calvert’s cattle operation, his use of guano, the production of turnips for cattle feed, and the lowland drainage system. True to mission, he addressed slavery at Riversdale, comparing the productivity of his Staten Island laborers with the work of Riversdale slaves, judging that the latter were “very difficult to direct efficiently.”<sup>22</sup>

On December 16, he took a Potomac steamboat from Washington to Aquia Landing in northern Virginia, where he departed by train for Richmond. On route Olmsted noted plantation dwellings, slave quarters, and the more common “habitations” of white people—terming “everything very slovenly and dirty about them.”<sup>23</sup> He also observed pine forests and worn-out fields, while corn and wheat were the chief crops in cultivation. Then, from Richmond came comments on the hilly nature of the city, with special emphasis on the Capitol and its “naturally admirable” grounds. There had been recent landscape improvements, but he believed the grounds could be *further* improved by the inclusion of some of the “fine native trees and shrubs of Virginia, particularly the holly and evergreen magnolias.”<sup>24</sup> He also greatly admired the “common red cedar” he saw nearby.<sup>25</sup> The future capital of the Confederacy greatly impressed Olmsted as a manufacturing center. He made note of its canals and railroads, ready accessibility of coal, its flour mills, cotton mills, tobacco factories, distilleries, paper mills, etc.<sup>26</sup> The nearby town of



Early view of Virginia State Capitol

Petersburg also attracted his attention for its “milling power,” Olmsted noting its importance as an entrepot to a “large and productive back country.”<sup>27</sup>

He moved further south on December 28, taking a train from Petersburg to Sussex County, Virginia, where he visited Thomas W. Gee (whom he termed “Mr. W.”), a tobacco planter. Gee had updated his older house in the Grecian taste and had added a “large wooden portico.” Olmsted observed that old oaks had once fronted the house, but in keeping with modern fashion these had been replaced with “ailanthus trees in parallel rows.”<sup>28</sup> As at Riversdale, Olmsted explored the topic of slave labor, discovering a situation to be encountered again: Gee was draining land using *Irish* labor. When asked why, Gee said the work was dangerous and that “a negro’s life it too valuable to be risked at it.” He told Olmsted, “If a negro dies, it’s a considerable loss, you know.”<sup>29</sup>

Early in January the young journalist left for Norfolk, travelling via rail and steamboat. He was impressed with its potential, but Norfolk in reality struck him as “miserable, sorry little seaport town.”<sup>30</sup> He wrote more extensively about the nearby Dismal Swamp, its economy, the Dismal Swamp canal, and the involvement of slave labor in Dismal Swamp industries. He focused on the business of making shingles, under which slaves lived as “quasi freemen,” able to earn small wages if they produced a sufficiently large number of shingles. Supporting his case for free labor, Olmsted noted that no “driving” from overseers was needed here, unlike slave gangs on plantations.<sup>31</sup>

Departing coastal Virginia on January 7, Olmsted traveled southwest by ferry, then by rail to Weldon, North Carolina. There followed a cumbersome transfer by ferry and stage to Gaston to take the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad night train to Raleigh, where he arrived January 8 and remained until mid month.<sup>32</sup> Raleigh was “a pleasing town—the streets wide and lined with trees, and many white wooden mansions all having little courtyards of flowers and shrubbery around them.” He

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## Frederick Law Olmsted..... (continued from page 5)

described the Capitol as “a noble building...in the Grecian style.” But, while a great amount had been spent on the structure, he bemoaned that the Capitol square, though some mature oaks survived, “remains in a rude state of undressed nature, and is used as a hog-pasture.” He added that a “trifle of the expense, employed...to give a smooth exterior face to the blocks of stone, if laid out in grading, smoothing, and dressing its ground base, would have added indescribably to the beauty of the edifice.” Anticipating his future career, Olmsted observed that an “*architect should always begin his work upon the ground.*”<sup>33</sup>

Olmsted next traveled by stage from Raleigh to Fayetteville, his first night, January 14, being spent at a one-story cabin twenty-six miles south of the capital.<sup>34</sup> The following day he toured turpentine country, gathering material for discussion of turpentine and naval stores production, and the use of slave labor in this business. He observed that slaves in the piney woods were, by and large, superior in “every moral and intellectual respect to the great mass of the white people inhabiting the turpentine forest.”<sup>35</sup> From Fayetteville a steamboat carried the journalist and a load of turpentine down the Cape Fear River to Wilmington, North Carolina.<sup>36</sup> He left Wilmington quickly, however, taking boat, train, and stage to Charleston, making a variety of observations along the way regarding the dwellings of ordinary white citizen, as well as commenting on the various activities of slaves he encountered. Olmsted stayed several days in Charleston, yet wrote surprisingly little about this “old town.” He criticized the slovenly nature of certain areas and spoke about Charleston’s “ruffianly character.” He also stressed the military ambiance of the port city, a fascinating forecast of developments eight years later. Indeed, he wrote that there was so much military-related activity there that it “might lead one to imagine that the town was in a state of siege or revolution.”<sup>37</sup>

Savannah, located “but a half a day’s sail from Charleston,” followed on his itinerary.<sup>38</sup> Arriving on or about January 27, Olmsted described a still-familiar town plan, noting that Savannah had a “curiously rural and modest aspect, for a place of its population and commerce.” He went on to observe that a “very large proportion of the buildings stand detached from each other, and are surrounded by gardens, or courts, shaded by trees, or occupied by shrubbery. There are a great number of small public squares, and some of the streets are double,

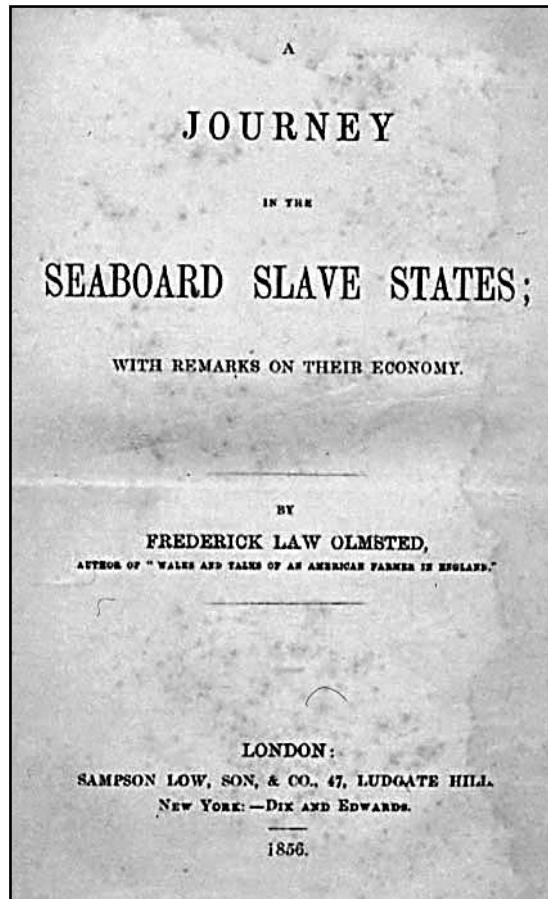
with rows of trees in the centre.”<sup>39</sup> He added little more, saying Savannah had been so extensively visited and written about there was no reason to go further.

Nearby was the “rice coast,” where Olmsted made extensive observations on two plantations owned by Rhode Islander Richard Arnold (1796-1873), whom he termed “Mr. X” in *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* and whose family spent much of the year in Providence.<sup>40</sup> On his way to Arnold’s land he rode by Richmond plantation, spotting one of his favorite Southern landscape features, a live oak allee. He reported excitedly that he had “hardly in all my life seen anything so impressively grand and beautiful.”<sup>41</sup> Richard Arnold devoted

most of his attention to five hundred acres of rice land, though there was “some hundred acres...cultivated for maize and Sea Island cotton.”<sup>42</sup> Accompanying his fellow New Englander on an inspection tour, Olmsted visited the largest of Arnold’s slave quarters, drawing an excellent verbal landscape picture that is typical of his writing. The 42 x 21 foot buildings housed two families, each averaging five people. Between each house was “a small piece of ground, inclosed with palings, in which are coops of fowl with chickens, hovels for nests, and for sows with pigs.”<sup>43</sup> Vegetable gardens were to be found in the rear. Following his typical pattern, the correspondent then explained and analyzed operations at Arnold’s holdings in depth, along with remarking on many aspects of slave life on a rice plantation.

After returning to Savannah, Olmsted went west in early February, via the “Savannah and Macon Line” and occasional “rapid stage-coaching.” He was impressed by his ability to cross Georgia in twenty-four hours, a feat attributed to the involvement

of “Northern men” in the construction and operation of the line.<sup>44</sup> Passing through Columbus, he noted its manufacturing output but warned against a visit, complaining of dirty accommodations, and of the intoxication and gambling he witnessed.<sup>45</sup> Montgomery, Alabama was more appealing. It was “prosperous town, with very pleasant suburbs, and a remarkably enterprising population, encompassing a considerable proportion of Northern and foreign-born business-men and mechanics,” the implicit cause for all of these charming attributes.<sup>46</sup> Leaving Montgomery about a week later, Olmsted took the steamboat *Fashion* down the Alabama River to Mobile. A slow trip, with much cotton being brought aboard on the way, it allowed time for excellent views of life on a Southern river. Watching



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## Frederick Law Olmsted.....(continued from page 6)

the loading of bales, Olmsted again observed the use of Irish workers in highly dangerous situations, once more hearing that slaves were too valuable to risk being seriously hurt or killed.<sup>47</sup> In Mobile, Olmsted noted his dislike of the commercial section but approved of the remainder of the town, noting that most houses had enclosed plots planted with “trees and shrubs.” The finest trees, he said, were the magnolias and live oaks, while “the most valuable shrub is the Cherokee rose, which is much used for hedges and screens.” He noted “an abundance, also, of the Cape jessamine.”<sup>48</sup>

No understanding of the region could be complete without a visit to New Orleans, so in mid-February 1853 the Connecticut Yankee took a steamboat to Louisiana and then a brief train journey from the coast to the Crescent City. He stayed at the Greek Revival St. Charles Hotel, a source of pride to many in New Orleans but a building he termed “stupendous, tasteless, ill-contrived and inconvenient.” Ever the fancier of good landscapes, he expressed contrasting delight with “the old

to the vegetables. He particularly approved of the slave quarters, which he reported to be as “neat and well-made” as cottages provided for New England factory workers.<sup>52</sup> The slaves at Fashion, he observed, “seemed to be better disciplined than any others I had seen...” apparently because Taylor was “a man of more than usual precision of mind, energetic, and humane,” a characteristic that affected the entire plantation operation.<sup>53</sup>

After encountering a variety of delays and misadventures, chiefly ascribed to slovenly Southern habits, the traveler left New Orleans on March 2, going by steamboat up the Mississippi and then the Red River. Here he observed some of the most extensive plantation landscapes of the first Southern trip. On March 4 or 5 at Grand Ecore, near Natchitoches he came on quarters that he believed were intended for approximately one hundred slaves.<sup>54</sup> He also visited what is thought to have been Meredith Calhoun’s Red River 15,000-acre cotton plantation prior to returning to New Orleans on March 12, 1854.<sup>55</sup> Leaving several days later, but hampered

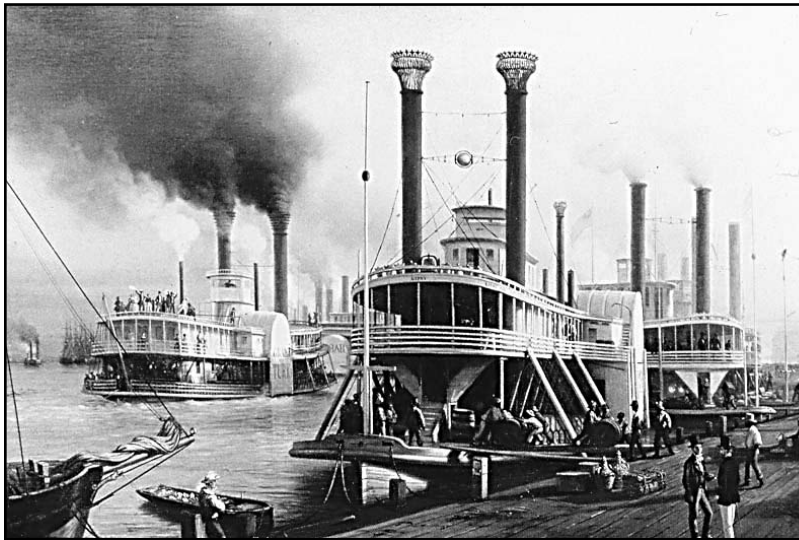
by flooding, he traveled by steamboat via the bustling cotton port of Vicksburg, Mississippi, arriving in Memphis, Tennessee on March 20.<sup>56</sup> Departing the next day by train, he moved on randomly by rail, stage, and foot through a small section of Tennessee, and then visited upcountry Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, western North Carolina, and Virginia.<sup>57</sup> He was back at his Staten Island farm on April 6.<sup>58</sup>

### Second Journey 1853-1854

Now accompanied by his brother John Hull Olmsted, Frederick left for a second trip south on November 10, 1853. Passing through Maryland and Virginia, the brothers took the Ohio River steamboat *David L. White* to Cincinnati.<sup>59</sup> They found the bustling river town “bricks, hurry, and a muddy roar.”<sup>60</sup> Olmsted described a booming urban landscape, which included Cincinnati’s major hog processing industry. Soon, however, the travelers were off by stage into

Kentucky, rolling along “one of the few well-kept macadamized roads in America.” Obviously impressed, Olmsted termed this country “an immense natural park,” which was “landscape gardening on the largest scale.”<sup>61</sup>

They were soon in Lexington, which Olmsted praised, saying of all “Southern towns there are scarce two that will compare with it for an agreeable residence.” He liked the buildings, shops, and shaded streets. Yet, so typical of many of his Southern observations, he could not resist a jab, noting that “the impression is one of irresistible dullness.” He added that Lexington was “the focus of intelligence and society for Kentucky.” This was, however, “not concentrated in town, but spread in its environs,” these environs having a “rare charm.” He observed that “the rolling woodland pastures come close upon the city, and on almost every knoll is a dwelling of cost and taste.” One of those dwellings was Henry Clay’s home, Ashland,



Steamboats docked at New Orleans port.

Place d’Armes, now a public garden, bright with the orange and lemon trees, and roses and myrtles, and laurels, and jessamines of the south of France.”<sup>49</sup>

While such public places could be visited easily, Olmsted was finding that gaining access to plantations was more difficult than he had assumed.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, on February 23-24 he was able to visit Fashion, Richard Taylor’s sugar plantation in St. Charles Parish, twenty miles north of New Orleans.<sup>51</sup> Despite Taylor’s use of slave labor, Olmsted was impressed by his host’s achievements. He described Taylor’s “old Creole house,” and its surrounding grounds, which included a front “yard, planted formally with orange-trees and other evergreens.” The rear yard contained the dwellings of the house slaves, along with “a kitchen, stable, carriage-house, smoke-house, etc.” Behind this area was a one-acre vegetable garden tended by a slave gardener. There was a row of fig trees along the fence, and Olmsted was impressed that the gardener, on his own, had planted “violets and other flowering plants” in accompaniment

(continued on page 8)

## Frederick Law Olmsted..... (continued from page 7)

which his admirer Frederick Law Olmsted took particular pleasure in visiting.<sup>62</sup>

After a November 24 Thanksgiving dinner on the Ohio River at Smithland, Kentucky, the brothers took a steamboat to Nashville, arriving November 28. Unlike Lexington, Olmsted found little to compliment except the Capitol, “one rare national ornament...” he noted, which was “all it pretends to be or needs to be.” He observed that Nashville was “on high ground.” The Capitol, he added, “stands at its head and has a noble prominence,” believing that “Better laws must surely come from so firm and fit a senate house.”<sup>63</sup>

This visit was a turning point for Olmsted. While in Nashville he spoke at length with John’s Yale friend, the wealthy and urbane planter Samuel Perkins Allison. Allison’s comments, which obviously represented the thoughts of many across the South, tellingly demonstrated that most slave owners had no interest in embracing free labor. Moreover, they were fully committed to the extension of slavery into the territories and new states.<sup>64</sup> The process of gradual emancipation favored by Olmsted was not part of their vision of the future

Reflective of his now-numerous encounters with Southerners, Olmsted was also beginning to believe that their connection with slavery had forever impaired their ability to distinguish right from wrong, and his writings began to reflect this new perspective. While Allison could never have made Olmsted a supporter of slavery, however, he did compel the Connecticut native to acknowledge that Northern society had its own systemic weaknesses and that there was undoubtedly a general “lack of elevation” among northern farmers and laborers. This led to him to address a topic that recalled his Birkenhead Park experience and looked forward to his upcoming work designing Central Park in New York City. In the Yeoman Letter of January 12, 1854 he began to argue that government had a role to fulfill in exerting “an elevating influence upon all the people...” through support of “public parks and gardens, galleries of art and instruction in art, music, athletic sports and healthful recreations, and other means of cultivating taste and lessening the excessive materialism of purpose in which we are, as a people so cursedly absorbed....”<sup>65</sup>

The Olmsted brothers returned to Smithfield and in early December left on the steamboat *Sultana* for New Orleans, arriving, after long stops at cotton plantations, on December 8.<sup>66</sup> Following a brief stay, the two were in Natchitoches, Louisiana by mid-month. After the purchase of animals and supplies, they crossed the Sabine River into Texas, and by January 2, 1854 they were camping west of the Trinity River. Soon Frederick was excitedly recording his first encounters with “the Prairies.” At one point the travelers crested a steep forested hill where they suddenly confronted “a broad prairie.” Olmsted described the terrain as a “waving surface...” like “the swell of the ocean after the subsidence of a gale which has blown long from the same direction. Very grand in vastness and simplicity were these waves.” Their contours, he added, followed “Hogarth’s line of beauty and of grace with mathematical exactness.”<sup>67</sup>

Several days after crossing the Brazos, the brothers arrived

in Austin.<sup>68</sup> Olmsted called it “the pleasantest place we had seen in Texas,” Austin reminding him of America’s capital. It was, he said, a “Washington, *en petit*,” adding that from the new Capitol a “broad avenue stretches to the river...” He also admired the countryside, which was “rolling and picturesque, with many agreeable views of distant hills and a pleasant sprinkling of wood over prairie slopes.” Always one for the caveat, he added that in Austin there were “a very remarkable number of drinking and gambling shops, but not one book-store.”<sup>69</sup> Departing with John on January 14, Olmsted now began to describe the *western* prairies. The impression “was very charming.” The “live-oaks,” he noted, “standing alone or in picturesque groups near and far upon the clean sward, which rolled in long waves that took, on their various slopes, bright light or half shadows from the afternoon sun, contributed mainly to an effect which was very new and striking, though still natural, like a happy new melody.”<sup>70</sup>

His enchantment with the prairie experience, however, could not match his feelings as he and John began to meet the German settlers in the New Braunfels and San Antonio area.<sup>71</sup> Olmsted saw the anti-slavery German communities as the perfect foil to the slavery system. He praised the settlers’ various social improvement associations, including a horticultural club that had “expended \$1,200 in one year in introducing trees and plants.” Showing both his frustration with the South, and appreciation for his



Cherokee Rose, *Rosa laevigata*

own region, he noted that those “associations are the evidence of an active intellectual life, and a desire for knowledge and improvement among the masses of the people, like that which distinguishes the New Englanders, and which is unknown wherever slavery degrades labor.” He then asked plaintively: “Will this spirit resist the progress of slavery westward, or must it be gradually lost as the community in which it now exists becomes familiar with slavery?”<sup>72</sup>

The remainder of the brothers’ time in Texas involved additional contact with German settlers such as Adolf Douai, anti-slavery editor of the *San Antonio Zeitung*. With him they visited Sisterdale, one of the “Latin Settlements,” which have been so-called because of the high education levels of the area’s German immigrants.<sup>73</sup> The late winter and early spring months entailed further Texas excursions, as well as a trip to Mexico. By



## Frederick Law Olmsted.....(continued from page 8)

May 6 or 7, however, they were in Houston, and by mid-month back in Louisiana.

Near the end of May 1854 they parted, John going to New Orleans and then New York, and Frederick instead taking “a trip across the mountains,” commencing with a ride from Bayou Sara, Louisiana to Woodville, Mississippi.<sup>74</sup> Some of Olmsted’s richest descriptions of the Southern landscape are found in this section of his *A Journey in the Back Country*.<sup>75</sup> The landscape around St. Francisville, he noted, had “an open, suburban character, with residences indicative of rapidly accumulating wealth, and advancement in luxury among the proprietors.” He commented, moreover, on the thick and tall rose hedges along the road he traveled, which in the balance he found “very agreeable.” This, along with the road being sometimes “narrow, deep and lane like...” meant “delightful memories of England were often brought to mind.”<sup>76</sup> He apparently visited Rosedown Plantation as well, a place he recalled as “a nice house, with a large garden, and a lawn with some statues or vases in it.”<sup>77</sup>

In Natchez on or about May 28, Olmsted wrote, “Within three miles of the town the country is entirely occupied by houses and grounds of a villa character.” Their grounds he found to be in “paltry taste.” But there was, he said, “an abundance of good trees, much beautiful shrubbery, and the best hedges and screens of evergreen shrubs that I have seen in America.”<sup>78</sup> He was particularly impressed with the bluff and the view it offered, calling it “the grand feature of Natchez.”<sup>79</sup> From Natchez he rode northeast spending June 1854 passing through Jackson, Mississippi, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Chattanooga, Tennessee before crossing into western North Carolina. On July 11 he visited Asheville, where over three decades later he would shape one of his most enduring masterpieces, the Biltmore Estate. “This is a pretty place among the hills,” he observed, “with a number of pretty country-seats about it, which, I suppose are summer residences of South Carolina planters.”<sup>80</sup> He spoke of springs and resorts, as well as the coming of the railroad, which would bring irrevocable change to the region.

As Olmsted neared the end of his second expedition he rode through Piedmont Virginia, where he penned one of the most powerful evocations of his voyages—a landscape of Southern “inhospitality.” Here a “severely ill” traveler was repeatedly refused lodging at homes along his route, ultimately gaining refuge only late at night in a rural store. At several points in his works Olmsted sought to deflate what seemed to him a myth of Southern hospitality. Here, near the close of *A Journey in the Back Country*, however, he spoke on the topic at length. Anger flowed onto his pages as he stated that far greater generosity to travelers actually could be found in Connecticut than in the South. He argued that “the only ground of the claim that slavery

breeds a race of more generous and hospitable citizens than freedom” was based on “the common misapplication of...word to...custom.”<sup>81</sup>



Overview perspective drawing of Birkenhead Park, near Liverpool, England

Arriving in Richmond at the end of July, Olmsted returned to New York by steamboat, reaching Staten Island on or about August 2, 1854.<sup>82</sup> His lengthy Southern travels were at an end, though his authorship of books on the subject was just beginning. Those books, along with other period documents, reveal a man who had experienced and learned much over the previous year and a half. His initial optimism about replacing the Southern slavery system with free labor had been tempered dramatically by repeated contacts with slave owners, as well as by national political developments. Nonetheless, his writings touched many readers, both in America and abroad. He certainly produced one of the most comprehensive series of views of the South on the eve of the Civil War, and it has been maintained “his critique of slavery contributed significantly to the ideology of the Republican Party, which was taking form in those years.”<sup>83</sup> Concurrently he provided a legacy for scholars that will remain invaluable for future generations. Moreover, though his lofty hopes about the gradual abolition of slavery were certainly diminished, Olmsted’s dedication to improving the human condition remained strong, and in coming years that dedication would increasingly be channeled into his work in landscape design. Surely the vast array of natural and designed landscapes he experienced across the grand sweep of the South—and which he described so poignantly—became as crucial to his palette as his New England upbringing and his exploration of a beloved English countryside. Thus, it is truly impossible to understand his “Genius and His Legacy” without also studying the travels of Frederick Law Olmsted.

## Endnotes

- 1 Laura Wood Roper, FLO, *A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 4
- 2 Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and Theodora Kimball, eds., *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture: Frederick Law Olmsted, Senior*, 2 vols. (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1922, 1928), I: 48.
- 3 Olmsted and Kimball, *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, I: 46
- 4 Olmsted and Kimball, *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, I: 47
- 5 Olmsted and Kimball, *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, I: 61
- 6 *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*, ed. Charles Capen McLaughlin, assoc. ed. Charles E. Beveridge, Vol. I, *The Formative Years, 1822-1852* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 174
- 7 Olmsted, *Formative Years*, 174, 177.
- 8 Olmsted, *Formative Years*, 190.
- 9 For a biographical sketch of Downing, see Olmsted, *Formative Years*, 74-77.
- 10 Frederick Law Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 51-56.
- 11 Olmsted, *Formative Years*, 337.
- 12 Olmsted, *Walks and Talks*, 238-239.
- 13 During this trip he visited his ancestral home Olmsted Hall. He found it to be a relatively humble dwelling, but the young New Englander appreciated it all the more for this yeoman-like quality. Olmsted, *The Formative Years*, 350-354
- 14 Olmsted, *Walks and Talks*, 95
- 15 Olmsted, *Formative Years*, 373, 375, n. 13.
- 16 The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, ed. Charles Capen McLaughlin and Charles E. Beveridge, asso. ed. David Schuyler, Vol. II, *Slavery and the South, 1852-1857* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 83.
- 17 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 83. By contrast to the "red-hot" Brace, Olmsted described himself as a "moderate Free Soiler." For discussion of Olmsted's views on gradual emancipation, see Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom, A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), xliii-xliv.
- 18 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 83
- 19 Roper, FLO, 84.
- 20 Roper, FLO, 91.
- 21 Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, with Remarks on Their Economy* (New York: Dix & Edwards, 1856; New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 5; Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 467. Appendix II of this volume, "Annotated Itineraries of Olmsted's Southern Journeys," 463-482, is of incalculable value in understanding the complexities of these trips.
- 22 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 11.
- 23 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 17.
- 24 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 95. Italics added.
- 25 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 95.
- 26 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 96-98.
- 27 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 144-145.
- 28 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 89-90.
- 29 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 91.
- 30 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 137-138.
- 31 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 153-154.
- 32 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 318.
- 33 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 318-319. Italics added.
- 34 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 326-327; Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 468. Irritated by poor stage connections, Olmsted claimed that he walked twenty-one of those miles.
- 35 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 348
- 36 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 356-357, 368-369. In Fayetteville he visited a cotton mill employing "a number of girls of Highland blood," an situation that anticipated the great growth of the Southern textile industry following the Civil War and the creation of a new type of Southern urban landscape.
- 37 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 404.
- 38 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 405.
- 39 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 405.
- 40 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 163, n.6
- 41 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 160, Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 417.
- 42 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 420.
- 43 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 422.
- 44 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 546-547. The "coaches, horses, and drivers" were also from the North, Olmsted reported; Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 198-199
- 45 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 548.
- 46 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 549. Italics added.
- 47 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 551.
- 48 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 565-566.
- 49 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 581.
- 50 On February 23, 1853 he wrote Charles Loring Brace from New Orleans bemoaning the problem. Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 209-211.
- 51 Taylor, a Yale graduate, was the son of President Zachary Taylor. Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 212, n.13, 470; Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 656-663.
- 52 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 659-660.
- 53 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 657.
- 54 Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 629. Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 470.
- 55 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 222, n.2, 470.
- 56 Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country*, (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860; New York: Burt Franklin. 1970), 125
- 57 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 128-157.
- 58 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 471.
- 59 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 472.
- 60 Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas, or, A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857; Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1980), 8. Substantial credit for this book goes to John Hull Olmsted, who wrote it using Frederick's notes while the latter was on a publishing business trip to England.
- 61 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 10-11.
- 62 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 17-18.
- 63 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 36.
- 64 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 16-17, 232-236.
- 65 Roper, FLO, 93; Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 244.
- 66 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 38-42; Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 472.
- 67 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 89, 98.
- 68 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 474.
- 69 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 110-111.
- 70 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 129-130.
- 71 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 138-150.
- 72 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 179.
- 73 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 187-200.
- 74 Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas*, 406-407; Olmsted, *Back Country*, 11, 16.
- 75 For a detailed examination of this segment of the voyage, along with discussion of other portions of the Southern trips, see William Lake Douglas, "The Landscape Observed: Olmsted's View of the Antebellum South," in Dana F. White and Victor A. Kramer, eds., *Olmsted South: Old South Critic/New South Planner* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 81-89.
- 76 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 13-14.
- 77 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 32-33, 34-35; Douglas, "Landscape Observed," 84, 89, n. 15.
- 78 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 35.
- 79 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 37. Italics added.
- 80 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 251.
- 81 Olmsted, *Back Country*, 411.
- 82 Olmsted, *Slavery and the South*, 482. The editors cite his as a tentative date.
- 83 Charles E. Beveridge and Paul Rocheleau, *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1998), 19.



# The Elizabeth Lawrence House and Garden Achieves National Register of Historic Places Status

In September 2006 the Charlotte, North Carolina home and garden of Elizabeth Lawrence at 348 Ridgewood Avenue was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The site holds historical significance not only for the South but also nationwide as the home of the celebrated plantswoman and garden writer from 1949 to 1984. The property reflects and holds association with two critical aspects of her life and career: her work as a garden designer, and her life's work as a writer. With the loss of her Raleigh house and garden, where she resided from 1916 to 1948 and wrote *A Southern Garden* (published 1942), the Charlotte house and garden is the single surviving property associated with her lifetime career as a horticulturist and writer.

Elizabeth Lawrence acquired this property in May 1948, oversaw the house's construction in 1948-49, and occupied it with her mother in the later years. Her Ridgewood Avenue garden dates to 1949-1950, when she laid out its paths, beds, and borders on the grounds around the newly-completed residence and set about the process of planting. Today the garden survives as the most intact and best preserved example of the work of the first woman graduate in landscape architecture from (present-day) North Carolina State University in Raleigh. That significance is underscored by her use of the garden as a laboratory for plants, a place where she continually cultivated a wide range of both heirloom plants and modern cultivars, studied their habits, and used the experience as the grist for her columns in the *Charlotte Observer* from 1957 to 1971 and for the two books published during her years here, *The Little Bulbs: A Tale of Two Gardens* in 1957 and *Gardens in Winter* in 1961. Her experience as a gardener on Ridgewood Avenue also figured in the revision of *A Southern Garden* for its reprinting in 1967.

As Allen Lacy has written, "Her three major books—*A Southern Garden* (1942), *The Little Bulbs: A Tale of Two Gardens* (1957) and *Gardens in Winter* (1971)—are horticultural classics, fully a match for anything written by such British gardening writers as Gertrude Jekyll and Vita Sackville-West." And there, of course, lies her distinction and significance. While a Southern-born writer, who wrote largely about Southern gardens, Elizabeth Lawrence was in no way provincial. She continually evaluated

her own experience as a plantswoman and gardener in two North Carolina gardens with that shared by her many correspondents. She then combined this valuable perspective with a detailed knowledge of garden history and a remarkable gift for language to produce writings far above those of most of her American contemporaries.

Today, *A Southern Garden* and *The Little Bulbs* as well as two posthumous works, *Gardening for Love:*

*The Market Bulletins* (1987) and *A Rock Garden in the South* (1990) remain in print as do two collections of her shorter works for newspapers, magazines, and horticultural journals, *Through the Garden Gate* (1990) and *A Garden of One's Own* (1997). *Two Gardeners: A Friendship in Letters* (2002), her correspondence with Katharine S. White, has been issued also in a paperback edition. This body of work, unequaled by her contemporaries in its quality, appeal, and timelessness, has earned her the first book-length biography accorded an American garden writer. Emily Herring Wilson's *No One Gardens Alone: A Life of Elizabeth Lawrence* was published in 2004, and it was issued in a paperback edition in 2005. Elizabeth Lawrence's Charlotte house and garden, modest in proportion to their importance, retain their association with her extraordinary achievement. —Davyd Foard Hood

[Mr. Hood, architectural and landscape historian, and member of the Southern Garden History Society Board, prepared the nomination for the property to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination was approved by the North Carolina Review Committee in June 2006 and then submitted to the National Park Service for review and approval.]



## Flora Ann Bynum Fund to Endow Lectures

The Board of Directors of the Southern Garden History Society (SGHS) voted at its fall board meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina to use the Flora Ann Bynum Fund to endow the keynote speaker at the Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference (RSGL) held biennially in Old Salem. The keynote speaker will be designated as the Flora Ann Bynum Lecture, a special distinction and honor. SGHS is a cosponsor of the conference along with Old Salem Museums and Gardens, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, and the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office. Sally Gant and Davyd Foard Hood, co-chairs of the RSGL conference, expressed delight on behalf of the conference planning team for the SGHS gift honoring Mrs. Bynum.

The FAB Fund was established by the board at the spring 2006 meeting in Fort Worth, Texas in memory of Mrs. Bynum, who died March 17, 2006. She was a founder of both the Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference and the Southern Garden History Society, which was organized as an outgrowth of the RSGL Conference. Mrs. Bynum served as secretary-treasurer of the society from its beginning in 1982 through its annual meeting in 2005.

Additionally, the board voted to incorporate future honorariums, memorials, and gifts to the Southern Garden History Society into the FAB Fund. On alternate years, earning will be used to fund a speaker at the SGHS annual meeting. As the corpus grows, it is hoped that the FAB Fund can support other special projects relevant to the SGHS mission.

“...Made abegining to take up the Tulip roots...”  
*A Look into the Annapolis Garden of William Faris*

Mollie Ridout, Director of Horticulture, William Paca Garden, Annapolis, Maryland

William Faris was a man of many parts. A resident of Annapolis from 1757 until his death in 1804, he earned a living as a clockmaker, silversmith and innkeeper. He was a family man and an active citizen, but most significantly, he was a diarist, for this is how we have come to know him so well. The diary that he kept on a daily basis for the last thirteen years of his life reveals that he was also a devoted gardener and plantsman.

When he married in 1761, Faris bought the lease of a two acre lot, half a block from the center of Annapolis. In 1769 he advertised that he was selling the “remaining time of a servant MAN...He is by Trade a Gardiner.” Most likely this indentured servant had done the heavy work of laying out the garden beds and turning them over for the first time. Unfortunately the garden’s last remains, a holly tree, were removed from the site in 1985 and the approximate location on West Street is now covered by a parking lot.

In his day, Faris cultivated a myriad of vegetable crops on this plot, tended his fruit trees and pampered his exotic pot plants. His well-stocked flower beds were edged with meticulously trimmed boxwood and he constructed a series of water “tables” or channels to irrigate the beds. But of all the garden activities recorded in the diary, it is Faris’s involvement with tulips that stands out.

In mid-spring his garden was blanketed with thousands of tulips in bloom. We know how many he grew because each year as he deadheaded the faded flowers, he recorded the number. In 1792 he broke off 1,490 tulip stalks. In 1803, his year of peak production, he broke off 3,566 stalks. This is a breathtaking number of tulips to pack into his two acre garden along with so many other ornamentals and enough vegetables to serve the table of his extended family.

While Faris gardened mainly for his own pleasure and

household use, he did do some business in bulbs. In April and May customers visited his garden to pick out the tulips they liked. Each customer’s choices were marked with a stick, either notched or painted for identification. Once he had deadheaded the flowers, he allowed the plant to grow on until the foliage withered in early summer. Then Faris and his garden helpers dug the bulbs and stored them in a cool place. Customers returned to pick up their purchases in time for fall planting.

Faris himself replanted thousands of bulbs, increasing his stock by dividing the offsets that develop alongside the main bulb. He also collected seed from the tulip plants and grew it on. Growing bulbs from cross-pollinated seed was not likely to produce an attractive hybrid, and in May of 1799 he designated plants marked with “sticks with a Hole in are not to be planted again.” Nevertheless, year in and year out, Faris filled his nursery beds with the offspring of his tulip collection. His annual lists of tulips in the diary included a rainbow of colors – red, red and white, yellow, yellow and white, purple, purple and red, even a dwarf black tulip. And he listed an array of tulip types including simple, double, dwarf, Dutch and parrot tail.

In 1798 his friend Alexander Contee Hanson spent time with him, naming seventy of the tulips Faris was raising. The names reflect the heroes of the time, including General Washington, Lafayette, and the Revolutionary War hero General Montgomery; also the names of learned men like Sir Isaac Newton, and patriotic subjects like the Rights of Man. These named tulips were marked and inventoried for several years afterward. Pressed specimens of some were preserved in Faris’s daybook and are currently in the collections of the Maryland Historical Society. The diary itself is available as *The Diary of William Faris*, edited by Jean Russo and Mark B. Letzer, published by The Press at The Maryland Historical Society.



photo by Ray Brown [courtesy of Historic Annapolis Foundation]

*A pressed specimen of Faris’s tulip ‘General Montgomery’ from the collections of the Maryland Historical Society.*



# Mina Edison's Moonlight Garden: Edison & Ford Winter Estates

Chris Tenne Pendleton, Fort Myers, Florida

In 1929, Mina Miller Edison engaged New York Landscape Architect, Ellen Biddle Shipman, to install an outdoor garden space on the grounds of “Seminole Lodge,” the winter estate that she and her inventor husband, Thomas Alva, enjoyed in Fort Myers, Florida. Today, the garden has been carefully restored to its 1929 appearance through the discovery of archival photographs, original drawings, plant lists and the dedication of a group of staff, volunteers, and organizations.

Mina and Thomas Edison came to Fort Myers in 1886. During the next four decades, they created a lovely winter estate complex that included riverside homes, one of the earliest private pools, two laboratories and 15 acres of combined research, family and native plant gardens. The gardens included many varieties of bamboo and rubber plants that Edison used in his botanical research. By 1929, Thomas agreed to allow Henry Ford to move his original botanical laboratory and office to Greenfield Village, Michigan. The vacant space, formerly occupied by his laboratory, left a terrible void for the 80-year-old inventor.

The original office and laboratory had been virtually hidden by what Edison called “his vines,” and he required that these be saved when the building was moved. “Edison’s vines” were his beloved magenta-colored bougainvillea, *Bougainvillea cv. ‘Barbara Karst’*. He had ordered these from the Hendry family local nursery, Evergreen Nursery, the first in Florida.

A plan for the “void” emerged and included creating a new office for Edison and supporting the vines on lattice walls to create an outdoor garden room. Mrs. Edison engaged New York landscape architect, Ellen Biddle Shipman, to design the garden (after) a popular concept of the time: “The Moonlight Garden.” Shipman was a well-known landscape architect and had created gardens for Mina Miller’s family in Chautauqua, New York, as well as dozens of gardens for affluent families throughout the country.

The original garden included a reflecting pool (to reflect the moon and stars) and a billowy border of varying annuals and perennials many of which were scented and visible at night—white, blue and pink flowers were favorites. The green lattice garden walls provided support for the original bougainvillea. Stately cypress trees added plant columns throughout the space. The grassed area between the reflecting pool and the flower border provided space to entertain visiting dignitaries, family and friends. The placement of tall glazed strawberry pots around the pool provided the opportunity to easily “change out” the seasonal flowers.

After Thomas Edison’s

death in 1931, Mina changed the plantings in the Moonlight Garden finding varieties that were more suited to the tropical garden. Of note is the replacement of the original Italian Cypress with a more tropical-friendly variety of Podocarpus. In general, however, the garden continued to follow the original Shipman plan and provided the widowed Mrs. Edison with a delightful outdoor area to entertain members of many local garden clubs (of which she had been a founding member in most cases).

In 1947, Mina Edison deeded the Edison Estate to the City of Fort Myers to perpetuate and celebrate the life and work of her husband, Thomas Edison. Through the ensuing years, the Edison Estate became one of the great Florida attractions, welcoming thousands of visiting tourists each year to Fort Myers. The City purchased the adjacent estate of the Edisons’ friends, Henry and Clara Ford, to complement the property’s history.

Unfortunately, by 2003, the combined properties—The Edison & Ford Winter Estates—were deteriorating from heavy visitation and deferred maintenance of the buildings and gardens. Most of the original historical garden plan was lost although the Moonlight Garden retained some of its original appearance and the original pool. A new management structure was created and the property was leased to a new non-profit Board of Trustees, known as the Thomas Edison & Henry Ford Winter Estates, Inc. Professional staff was hired and the property has just completed a \$9 million restoration and rebirth through the support of the city, county state, private donors and a special grant from Restore America/HGTV, Save America’s Treasures of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

In addition to the building restoration, the Moonlight Garden was selected as the first of the old garden areas to be restored because of the surviving historic records, photographs, and anecdotes of patrons who knew Mina Edison. Led by Estates President, Chris Pendleton, a group of Trustees, volunteers, garden clubs, and the Lee County Extension Service, approximately \$80,000 was raised to restore the garden and work began to re-create the original plan.



*Egret standing next to the reflecting pool in the restored Moonlight Garden.*

Well-known Naples, Florida architect Ellin Goetz, managing architect Wiley Parker, and historian Anne Yentch were selected to design the project. In addition to the original drawings and plant lists, there were many photographs of the garden in Edison’s time and over the ensuing decades. Resources, such as an original 1926 Evergreen Nursery Catalogue, were found and used for plant orders. Trustee Helen Hendry, a landscape architect, whose family had owned the nursery and ordered plants for Edison, discovered the catalogue within her private collection.

The Moonlight Garden in

# Mina Edison's Moonlight Garden:

(continued from page 14)

Mina Edison's time was designed to include a reflecting pool (to reflect the moon and stars), white, blue, and other flowers that would shimmer in the moonlight, plants with special fragrance (especially at night), a border lawn and an enclosed space with the lattice walls that framed the garden. Another design requirement was to include the historic bougainvillea vines that had climbed on the walls when Thomas Edison's first Fort Myers laboratory stood here.

In Thomas and Mina's time, the Moonlight Garden provided a lovely outdoor room to entertain friends and family and the many garden clubs that regularly visited Mina. Over the years, the original plants that Mina installed proved unsuitable for Florida's tropical climate and the plantings changed.



Mina and Thomas Edison

The restoration of the Moonlight Garden took a very special local and historical connection when Estates President, Chris Pendleton, contacted Bernese Davis who, as a young woman, knew Mina Edison and who has been an important leader in the garden councils in the

area. Through Mrs. Davis' original gift, the Estates was able to also gain support from the National Council of Garden Clubs, the Principal Financial Group, the Periwinkle Garden Club, the Carissa Garden Club, the Jasmine Garden Club, and the Fort Myers/Lee County Council of Garden Clubs.

After completion of the restoration, the Lee County Extension Service Master Gardeners designated the Moonlight Garden as one of their projects. Today a team of volunteer Master Gardeners are working to continue to maintain the gardens, propagating and nourishing its historic plants, including Thomas Edison's beloved bougainvillea.

This year, the newly restored Moonlight Garden hosted a seminar on historic garden restoration by the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation and recently won the 2006 Award of Merit in Preservation by the Florida Chapter of American Landscape Architects. The award was well deserved for a significant and historic garden whose restoration has involved many individuals and groups. Volunteers may sign up to join the group who work in the Moonlight Garden, Propagating Nursery and Garden Shoppe, by contacting Kathy Allen, Horticulturist, at Edison & Ford Winter Estates.

With the help of Cornell University, the Estates Curator, Pamela Miner, has created an exhibit that will open in November 2006, "Mina Edison's Moonlight Garden and a Selection of Other

Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman." The exhibit includes historic photographs as well as pictures documenting the restoration of Mina's Moonlight Garden as well as selected other Shipman gardens. In spring 2007, the garden will host a series of events including a lecture by SGHS member Judith Tankard, author of *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman*, and Dr. Anne Yentch. [See the *Calendar*, page 2]

The Edison & Ford Winter Estates and the historic Mina Edison Moonlight Garden are open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tours of the site are available daily and the garden frequently hosts special tours and programs. Call (239) 334-7419 for information or visit the Web site at [www.efwefla.org](http://www.efwefla.org).

## Edenton's Cupola House Database Available

Longtime SGHS member Frances Inglis and Mary Kay Coyle have worked with the Cupola House Association in Edenton, North Carolina to compile an informative reference booklet for its garden restoration volunteer group that could be a valuable resource for other historic sites. The publication includes entries on over 260 plants with over 550 photographs and much of the material was drawn from the Southern Garden History Society's Historic Plant List compilation. The format for this report might prove a useful model not only for public gardens but also for private gardeners who want to keep track of their activities.

The Cupola House was built by Francis Corbin in 1758, and he and the Dickinson and Bond families who lived there for 140 years all had gardens. But the site had been covered by buildings long before 1918 when the people of Edenton learned that the downstairs woodwork of the home had been sold and that the house was in danger of being demolished. Citizens rallied to rescue the home and became the first preservation organization in the state created to save a single house. The Cupola House Garden restoration is based on the 1769 maps of Edenton drawn by C. J. Sauthier. The association utilized a variety of experts and consultants including Carlton Wood and Perry Mathewes (previously from Tryon Palace in New Bern) and John Flowers (then of Stagville). The Southern Garden History Society held its annual meeting in New Bern and spent a day touring Edenton in 2001.

The Plant Database and Photo Gallery booklet and CD can be ordered from the Cupola House Association. For more information, visit their Web site at [www.cupolahouse.org](http://www.cupolahouse.org) or write to the CHA at Post Office Box 311, Edenton, North Carolina 27932.





# Landscape Preservation Beyond the Garden Wall

## Preview of the 2007 Annual Meeting in Annapolis, Maryland

Mollie Ridout, William Paca Garden, Annapolis

The 25th Annual SGHS Meeting will be held in Annapolis, Maryland on May 4-5, 2007. Well-known for its Georgian architecture and baroque street plan, Annapolis provides a charming and friendly backdrop to a meeting that explores the historic landscape. Friday lecturers will examine the context of the Chesapeake landscape, “where land and water intertwine,” and the reconstruction of the William Paca Garden from archaeological and archival records. This will set the scene for fine dining in the garden itself on Friday night, and on a river cruise aboard the Harbor Queen on Saturday night. Saturday activities focus on historical gardens and streetscapes of Annapolis and provide ample time for exploring the brick paved streets of this city which so gracefully connects its colonial heritage with its thriving present. Optional Sunday activities will take participants out of the town and into rural landscapes of past centuries. A visit to Historic London Town provides an opportunity to witness the reconstruction of a townscape first laid out in 1680 and a chance to learn about collaborative efforts to save the remnant fabric of past landscapes. A rare opportunity to visit privately owned properties on Cumberstone Road highlights the importance of personal stewardship and allows us to talk with a state legislator who has worked hard to preserve landscapes. Meeting rooms and accommodations at the Historic Inns of Annapolis put us in the heart of the Historic District and promise to make this a memorable weekend. In January registration information will be mailed to members and posted on the SGHS Web site, [www.southerngardenhistory.org](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org).



photo by William Shaw

William Paca House and Garden

## SGHS Fall Board Meeting Highlights

The Southern Garden History Society board met on September 23, 2006, in Charlotte, North Carolina. The meeting, arranged by former board member Patti McGee, was held at the conference room at Wing Haven Bird Sanctuary and Gardens. Attending the meeting for the first time were new directors Wayne Amos of Alexandria, Virginia; Marion Drummond of Mobile, Alabama; and Dr. Belinda Gergel of Columbia, South Carolina.

Since the SGHS was organized, the offices of secretary and treasurer have historically been held by one person, Flora Ann Bynum, one of the founders of the organization, who served until 2005. At that time, Sherry Hollingsworth was elected to the two offices. The executive board made the recommendation at the 2006 fall board meeting that the two offices be separated and held by two individuals. The motion was made and approved to that effect. Gail Griffin, the vice president resigned her office, and Sherry Hollingsworth resigned the office of treasurer. The executive board then made the recommendation that Jeff Lewis be nominated for vice president, Gail Griffin for treasurer, and Sherry Hollingsworth to retain the office of secretary. This slate of officers was approved by the board.

Other business conducted included approval of the budget for the new fiscal year, which will run from August 1, 2006 to July 31, 2007. Membership dues approved at the last board meeting will go into effect when renewals are mailed in spring of 2007.

The board approved Ken McFarland's recommendations to add material to the Web site. Issues of *The Magnolia* from 1985 to 1999 will be posted to the site and available for research. Additionally, historic plant lists that were collected by Gordon

Chappell as a joint project of Colonial Williamsburg and the Southern Garden History Society will be added to the Web site.

The board voted to designate the Flora Ann Bynum Memorial Fund to provide financial support for a keynote speaker at the Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference, held at Old Salem [see separate article, page 11].

The 2007 annual meeting will be held in Annapolis, Maryland, May 4-6. Mollie Ridout, Gail Griffin, Wayne Amos, and Ed Shull are the planning committee.

Other meetings are being planned for Athens, Georgia, 2008; Camden, South Carolina, 2009; and Mount Vernon, Virginia in 2010.

Lindie Wilson, who currently resides in the home of Elizabeth Lawrence, gave a slide presentation of the garden and Patti McGee and Davyd Hood gave an update on the status of the efforts to preserve the site [see article on the Lawrence House and Garden, page 11]. The board formally reiterated its support of these efforts.

Members of the society are encouraged to contact board members with their comments or questions.

[The SGHS board meets twice annually to conduct the business of the society. The spring meeting is always held in conjunction with the annual SGHS symposium. During odd numbered years, the fall board meeting is held at Old Salem, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, immediately following the Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference. On even numbered years, the fall meeting is held wherever the board decides.]

# Upcoming SGHS Annual Meetings

## 2008 Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars now for future annual meetings of the Southern Garden History Society. On April 11-13 we will meet in Athens, Georgia, when the dogwoods, azaleas, and other spring flowering trees and shrubs will be at their peak. Plans include an opening session at The State Botanical Garden of Georgia and the Garden Club of Georgia's state headquarters. The Saturday afternoon activity will be a visit to Madison, Georgia, "the most cultured and aristocratic town on the stagecoach route from Charlestown to New Orleans," according to an 1845 guide to Georgia. There we will tour a number of fine antebellum homes and gardens. The optional, post-conference tour on Sunday will be a trip to Milledgeville, Georgia, "bathed in an intoxicating mixture of magnolias and moonlight." The city, which was laid out in 1803, served as the state capital from 1804 to 1867 and is the only city in the U. S. designed for the purpose of being a state capital. The Old Governor's Mansion, the most perfect example of Greek Revival Architecture in the state, was home to Georgia's governors from 1838 to 1868. Jeff Lewis and Jim Cothran (of Atlanta) are co-chairing the event.

## 2009 Annual Meeting

Plans are well underway for the 2009 meeting, scheduled for April 2-5 in Camden, South Carolina. While Camden figures importantly in the 18th- and early 19th-century history of South Carolina and the South, its period of acclaim in garden history and estate-making begins in the antebellum period and continues into the mid-20th century. Having a temperate winter

climate, Camden became the site of an important winter colony for residents of the Northeast and others who built cottages here. Because of climate and its location, Camden also emerged as an important winter equestrian center in the first half of the 20th century and enjoys that distinction to the present. The runnings of the Colonial Cup in the fall and the Carolina Cup in the spring are celebrated social events in the state and on the national steeplechase circuit. A number of important sites with gardens survive in Camden, particularly in the Kirkwood Hill neighborhood. We will also visit The Terraces, an antebellum plantation house with an important terraced garden, which is being reclaimed after long years of neglect.

The meeting will also occur on the 70th anniversary of the publication of *Carolina Gardens* by the University of North Carolina Press in 1939. The book by E. T. H. Shaffer was originally published in 1937 in a limited edition of 300 copies, however, the 1939 printing is the one most gardeners know. The book contains descriptions of the gardens in Camden as well as others nearby, which will be included on the traditional, optional Sunday tour. The meeting's planning committee is chaired by Davyd Foard Hood and includes Lisa Taylor Towell, president of the Camden Garden Club, and Sallie Iselin, a member of SGHS who lives in Camden and is active in the local garden club.

Further details of these meetings will appear in future issues of *Magnolia* and on the Society's Web site:

[www.southerngardenhistory.org](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org)



## Members in the News

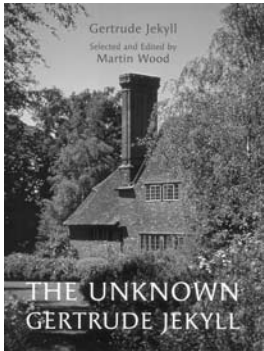
The September 2006 issue of *Traditional Home* magazine features the garden of **Patti and Peter McGee** in Ethne Clarke's article: "Garden Redux: a Charleston gardener honors the past and looks to the future." The story not only describes and illustrates Patti's exquisite garden in the heart of Historic Charleston, South Carolina, but also highlights Patti's work with the Garden Conservancy to preserve the Charlotte, North Carolina home and garden of 20th-century southern garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence.

On November 2, 2006 the Volunteer Task Force for the 2007 American Public Garden Association (APGA) Conference Host Committee held a symposium, "Gardens In Graveyards," at Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria, Virginia, which featured Jessica Ward's book *Food to Die For, A Book of Funeral Food, Tips, and Tales*, published in 2004 to support the **Old City Cemetery** in Lynchburg, Virginia. The proceeds for the symposium will be used to supply refreshments and thank you gifts to the cadre of volunteers who will assist with the APGA 2007 annual conference.



## Book Review

*The Unknown Gertrude Jekyll*, by Gertrude Jekyll, edited by Martin Wood, published by Frances Lincoln Limited. Hardcover, 201 pages plus index, 2006, ISBN: 0-7112-2611-3; ISBN-13: 9780711226111



In the mid 1890s, when Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) took up writing columns for the *Guardian* newspaper (not today's paper of that name), she had celebrated her fiftieth birthday and was already long-experienced as a designer of gardens. She was also well-advanced with plantings on the acreage that became her famed gardens at Munstead Wood. Since at

least 1885 she had been writing articles for *The Garden*, William Robinson's now legendary periodical. Canon Henry Ellacombe had also provided articles for *The Garden*, and there was no little coincidence in Gertrude Jekyll's being asked to succeed him as the house garden writer at the *Guardian*.

During the course of a near half-century, until her death in the late autumn of 1932, Gertrude Jekyll wrote fourteen books and she "contributed well over a thousand articles, notes and letters to numerous newspapers, magazines and periodicals" (Wood, 6). Her first book, *Wood and Garden*, was published in 1899 and it followed the example of Canon Ellacombe's *In a Gloucestershire Garden*. Published in 1895 it contained a selection of articles he had published in the *Guardian* between 1890 and 1893. *Wood and Garden* was largely a series of Miss Jekyll's writings from the *Guardian*, some of which were reworked for narrative flow. *Home and Garden* appeared in 1900. In 1901 the Country Life Press published both her *Lilies for English Gardens* and *Wall and Water Gardens*, and followed them in 1902 with *Roses for English Gardens*, which Miss Jekyll co-authored with Edward Mawley. *Old English Household Life*, Gertrude Jekyll's fourteenth book and the last published in her lifetime, appeared in 1925.

Two years after her death Francis Jekyll, the gardener's nephew, saw to publication *Gertrude Jekyll: A Memoir*, and he followed up that tribute with another. *A Gardener's Testament*, published in 1937, comprised a selection of some sixty-seven of his aunt's writings, choices made in cooperation with Geoffrey Taylor, the gardening editor of *Country Life*. These works were the first in a long series of books leading to the appearance this year of *The Unknown Gertrude Jekyll*. Some in this series have been reprints of her earlier books, others are compendiums of her writings, and yet others have addressed her life, her garden designs, and her collaboration with the equally-celebrated architect Edwin Lutyens with whom she produced a small number of highly important and remarkably

handsome Edwardian estates. Mr. Lutyens' design of Munstead Wood for Miss Jekyll was a key step in this partnership, and their profound respect for each other proved life-long. Many, if not most of the black-and-white illustrations in this new book are of the gardens and plantings at Munstead Wood.

*The Unknown Gertrude Jekyll* is a welcome book if also one that is pointlessly misnamed. For it Martin Wood, the co-author of *Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead Wood* and a biographer of the interior decorator Nancy Lancaster, selected another group of writings dating from 1885 to 1932. Although seventeen of the pieces were published in lesser-known journals, including the *Busbridge Parish Magazine*, or in books, 104 of the 121 writings selected by Mr. Wood were first published in three well-known English magazines: *The Garden*, *Country Life*, and *Gardening Illustrated*. While perhaps not easily accessible, this collection can hardly be considered as "unknown." But the matter of the name is a minor issue. The larger complaint with this book is not the matter of selection, for which Mr. Wood can only be complimented, but the fact that the original place and date of publication for each of the writings does not appear with the text, but in a separate listing at the back of the book. This irritation is not particular to *The Unknown Gertrude Jekyll*. But it could have been so easily eliminated by the inclusion of the source and date on the same line as the title of each piece, without any compromise to the design of the book. Although a great majority of the articles date from the 1910s and 1920s, and Miss Jekyll possessed genius from birth and displayed it quickly, the immediate notice of date and place provide a frame of reference and the context of each of the writings.

It could be argued that readers today are not turning to Miss Jekyll in these pages for advice but to savor her insights as a gardener, a designer, a plantswoman, and a writer. That is probably true. And perhaps it matters not that the reader finishes her sketch entitled "A River of Daffodils" published in *Gardening Illustrated* in June 1924 and continues with her account of "Carpeting Bulb Beds," the concluding piece in the section "Bulbous Plants and Their Uses," to find that it was published thirty-nine years earlier (in December 1885) in *The Garden*.

Finally, these occasional shifts in time might also be dismissed. For as Gertrude Jekyll wrote in *Children and Gardens* in 1908, concerning her agility in climbing over a garden gate or jumping a ditch, "I think it is because I have been more or less a gardener all my life, that I still feel like a child in many ways, although from the number of years I have lived I ought to know I am quite an old woman." Indeed, Gertrude Jekyll retained the innocent joy of a child through her many seasons as a gardener, and her learned experience, always leavened with delight, shines through these writings.

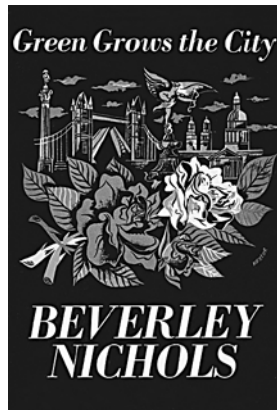
-Davyd Foard Hood, book review editor

## In Print – A Reprint

*Green Grows the City*, by Beverley Nichols, published by Timber Press, Inc. Hardcover, 285 pages plus index, 2006; ISBN10: 0-88192-779-1; ISBN13: 978-0-88192-779-5

In 1998, on the centennial of Beverley Nichols' birth, Timber Press launched its reprint program of his much-acclaimed gardening books. Readers far and wide were well-acquainted with his *Garden Open Today* and *Garden Open Tomorrow*, published in 1963 and 1968, respectively, but as his many devoted fans knew, those were among the last published of his garden books. They followed on a long roster of gardening titles, and other books by the prolific author, which began with *Down the Garden Path* in 1932 and continued to the year of his death, 1983, when a fiftieth anniversary edition of *Down the Garden Path* was issued with a new preface by Mr. Nichols. My own appreciation for Beverley Nichols dates to about 1990 when I, like others searching for his books in second-hand shops, purchased copies of his first novels, *Prelude* and *Patchwork*.

The reprint series was launched with his trio, *Merry Hall*, *Laughter on the Stairs*, and *Sunlight on the Lawn*, that chronicled his refurbishment of Merry Hall, a Georgian mansion, and its garden. While decorating and gardening efforts were the obvious subjects of these books, readers responded as well to the charmed life of the writer, whose manner bore an unmistakable resemblance to that of contemporary characters created by Noel Coward and P. G.

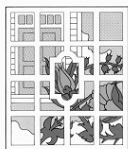


Wodehouse. Another constant in his books is the figure of Alfred R. Gaskin, his manservant, who joined the Nichols household in 1924.

Timber Press next reissued his classics, *Garden Open Today* and *Garden Open Tomorrow*, in 2002. As in the above trio, Nichols took as his subject the fitting up of a new house and its garden, Sudbrook Cottage, Surrey, which he bought in 1958 after selling Merry Hall. In 2005 the press reprinted his three novels about gardening published in the 1930s, *Down the Garden Path*, *A Thatched Roof*, and *A Village in a Valley*, written while he resided at Thatch Cottage, Glatton.

In *Green Grows the City* Beverley Nichols recounted his experiences in making a suburban garden on the eve of World War II. In 1936 he purchased the house at One Ellerdale Close, Hampstead, designed by Clough Williams-Ellis. As in his earlier writings Nichols wove fact and fiction into a seamless narrative, and he described his new house as standing at #5 in the close, which did not exist—they were but four houses here linked by brick archways, and installed his gardening nemesis, Mrs. Heckmondwyke, in his own #1. His description of making a garden on an awkward, bare triangular lot is appealing, and photographs in the book demonstrate his success. However, his encounters with Mrs. Heckmondwyke are another focus of his wit and keep the reader entertained through its pages. As Roy Dicks writes in his excellent foreword to the reprint, Beverley Nichols occupied One Ellerdale Close for only three years before war cast its shadows over London. He resided here through the war. In 1945 he sold the subject of *Green Grows the City*, and bought Merry Hall, and the process of decorating, gardening, and place-making began again with his usual irrepressible energy.

-dfh



### LOST LANDSCAPES - PRESERVED PROSPECTS

Confronting Natural & Human Threats to the Historic Landscape  
**16th Biennial Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens & Landscapes**  
September 27-29, 2007 - Winston-Salem, North Carolina

**EACH YEAR** important Southern landscapes – whether rural or urban, formal or natural, agricultural or industrial, coastal or mountain – are imperiled or succumb to threats that include natural disasters, human apathy, greed, haphazard development, and unmanaged growth. In Virginia, a crucible of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, important battlefields and other places of war and peace, are endangered. As hurricane Katrina has shown, the forces of nature can be catastrophic and virtually beyond control. Human activity that abuses the southern landscape cannot be fully halted either, but it can be mitigated.

**A WIDE RANGE OF EFFORTS**, including those of private individuals, local governments, and regional land conservancies, among other preservation initiatives, are being utilized to protect Southern landscapes. The 2007 Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes looks not only to the past but also to the future, to the threats and to the solutions, addressing significant, successful means of preserving the grounds of southern history – the setting of our gardens and our lives.

*Save the dates and join us at Old Salem!*

#### CONFERENCE SPONSORS

Old Salem Museums & Gardens • Reynolda House Museum of American Art • The Southern Garden History Society  
The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

For program and registration information: Sally Gant: 336-721-7361 / [sgant@oldsalem.org](mailto:sgant@oldsalem.org)



# CALL FOR PAPERS

*Exploring the Boundaries of Historic Landscape Preservation*  
*The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation - 29th Annual Meeting*  
*Athens, Georgia - April 11 - 14, 2007*

## Conference Theme

Those who work with historic landscapes confront boundaries everywhere, for the work of landscape preservation is not easily categorized or constrained. The cycles of nature and the steady flow of time show little respect for property lines or the limits that demark one municipality from another. Human memory and experience likewise cut across divisions in the land, just as they blur the social divides that pervade the communities inhabiting a place. Those who work with historic landscapes also confront conceptual boundaries—when deciding how to divide landscapes elements into categories such as “historic” or “non-historic,” for example, or when determining whether a particular management practice is “appropriate” or “inappropriate.” Such uncertainties compel our discipline to expand beyond the old limits of practice, making landscape preservation an increasingly diverse and interdisciplinary field. Like the landscapes we preserve and protect, the boundaries of our field are fluid and continuously reconfigured. Where is the “cutting edge” of landscape preservation today?

The AHLP 2007 conference will provide a forum for practitioners, educators, and students to speculate, debate, and share ideas about current trends and future directions in landscape preservation. We invite abstracts focusing on the theme of boundaries in landscape preservation work—from the challenges involved in managing physical boundaries or the implications of political jurisdictions, to the dilemmas encountered when trying to understand conceptual or symbolic boundaries. Abstracts that address the boundaries or the vanguard of preservation practice are especially encouraged. Paper topics might include, but certainly are not limited to cultural landscapes or landscape preservation projects that:

- Span multiple communities, municipalities, or political groups;
- Contend with the boundaries of natural systems (or lack thereof);
- Demarcate or give form to space, e.g. the garden wall, hedgerows, fences
- Define social spaces and institutions, e.g. the town/gown
- Challenge the boundaries of current concepts, ideas, and norms
- Bridge established knowledge domains, disciplines, or professions

Although priority will be given to proposals that engage the conference theme, other papers addressing issues of landscape preservation theory, practice, and education are also welcome.

## Conference Venue

The University of Georgia campus and the Athens region is an ideal venue for exploring new directions in landscape preservation. Since the early 1980s, faculty and students in the historic preservation and landscape architecture programs at the University of Georgia’s School of Environmental Design have been a major force in advancing landscape preservation theory and practice, and the school remains distinctly oriented toward the integration of environmental design with preservation principles. Athens is a cultural crossroads, centrally situated in the Georgia piedmont between the distinctive bioregions and cultures of Appalachia and the southern coastal plain. It is a landscape where boundaries and contrasts are plentiful: stately antebellum houses and gardens adjoin strong ethnic neighborhoods, soul food fuses with Old World cuisine, and bluegrass mixes with retro punk in fueling the city’s world famous music scene. The AHLP 2007 conference will provide an opportunity to dig deep into these and other cultural contrasts, as we pursue our own quest for the cutting edge of landscape preservation practice.

## How to Submit a Paper Abstract

Abstracts for papers are due not later than Friday, 19 January 2007, and will enter a double blind peer review process. Abstracts are to be limited to 400 words, or one page. Please respect this limit. All abstracts must be submitted electronically. Send the abstract as an attachment to the following e-mail address: [eamacdon@uga.edu](mailto:eamacdon@uga.edu). The attachments should be Microsoft Word documents. Participants may submit an unlimited number of abstracts, but no more than one accepted paper may be presented at the conference.

For further information on the conference and registration please visit [www.ahlp.org](http://www.ahlp.org).



## Publications Available Through SGHS

**The New Louisiana Gardener - *Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane***, 1838 publication by Jacques-Felix Lelièvre and translated into English by Sally Kittredge Reeves. Published by LSU press in cooperation with SGHS. Hardcover. 186 pages with color photographs and halftones. Specially priced for SGHS members at \$25 (plus \$3.95 postage). *NC orders add 7% sales tax.*

**Bound Sets of Magnolia Back Issues.** Includes Vol. I, No. 1 (Fall 1984) through Vol. XIV, No. 4 (Winter/Spring 1999), with index. \$50. Price includes postage and tax. (Individual back issues of *Magnolia* \$5.00 each)

**NEW *Cultivating History: Exploring Horticultural Practices of the Southern Gardener*** (2001 proceedings of the thirteenth biennial Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes Conference held at Old Salem). \$10 (plus \$3.95 postage). *NC orders add 7% sales tax.*

Also available: *Breaking Ground* (1997 proceedings) and *The Influence of Women on the Southern Landscape* (1995 proceedings). Contact publications secretary for special SGHS member's pricing.

Send orders to: Kay Bergey, publications secretary, SGHS, c/o Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108.

NOTE: Checks payable to SGHS for *Nouveau Jardinier* and *Magnolias*. Checks payable to **Old Salem, Inc.** for conference proceedings. For information call (336) 721-7378 or e-mail: [bergeymk@gmail.com](mailto:bergeymk@gmail.com)

## Annual Membership Dues

### Important Changes

Beginning with Fiscal Year 2007-2008, the society's membership year will change from May 1—April 30 to **August 1—July 31**. This change will allow the budgeting and accounting for annual meetings to be completed within the same fiscal year. To accommodate the change, the Fiscal Year 2006-2007 will extend from May 1, 2006, to July 31, 2007. Paula Chamblee, membership secretary, will send renewal notices to members in the summer of 2007 for the next year's membership, and membership categories and dues will change as follows:

| Category                | Current | beginning FY 2007-2008 |
|-------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| Life Member             | \$1000  | eliminated             |
| Benefactor              | \$ 250  | \$ 250                 |
| Patron                  | \$150   | \$150                  |
| Sustainer               | \$ 75   | \$ 75                  |
| Institution or Business | \$ 30   | \$ 50                  |
| Joint                   | \$ 30   | \$ 40                  |
| Individual              | \$ 20   | \$ 25                  |
| Student                 | \$ 5    | \$ 10                  |

For information about membership contact  
Paula Chamblee  
Southern Garden History Society  
Old Salem, Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27108  
phone (336) 721-7328  
[www.southerngardenhistory.org](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org)

*Deadline for the submission of articles for the winter issue of Magnolia is December 31, 2006.*

### Officers:

*President:* Mary Anne Pickens, Columbus, Texas  
*Vice-President:* Gail Griffin, Bethesda, Maryland  
*Secretary-Treasurer:* Sherold D. Hollingsworth,  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

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