

EDEN

Journal of the California Garden & Landscape History Society

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The second meeting of the CG&LHS was held at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden on February 17-19, 1996. Thirty-seven people from all parts of California and out-of-state attended. Laurie Hannah and Virginia Gardner were in charge.

STATE MEETING SET FOR SAN DIEGO NOV. 9-11, 1996

The third statewide meeting of the newly formed organization will take place on the holiday weekend in November. Lucy Warren will chair the gathering, which will feature pre- and post-conference garden visits in addition to the business sessions and talks by garden historians.

Registration forms and information will be mailed to members and to others interested in attending during the late summer. As was the case in Santa Barbara, registration fees will be low, just enough to pay for the rental of space for the meeting, box lunches, refreshments. All those who attended the SB meeting were high in their praise of the organizers.

Carol Greentree has arranged a tentative agenda. Members in Southern California are asked to help with the plans. You may reach Lucy Warren at 3380 Granada Avenue, San Diego 92104-4526 - (619) 295-0342.

FOUNDING MEMBERS HELP ESTABLISH CG&LHS

Ron Arruda, Marie Barnidge, Barbara Barton, Beatrice Beck, Martha Benedict, Laura Bridley, Thomas A. Brown, Roberta Burke, Susan Chamberlain, Cecilia Christensen, Betsy Clebsch, Carol Coate, Kathleen Craig, Sharon Crawford, Tim Curry, Phoebe Cutler, Joan DeFato, Deborah Denne, Duane Dietz, Eva Fosselius, Betsy Fryberger, Virginia Gardner, Don Gholston, Hilary Goldstine, Bill Grant, Carol Greentree, Laurie Hannah, Joan Hockaday, Joan Hodgson, Jane Horning, Marie Ingram (England), Joan Jackson, Anne Jones, Suzanne Kish, Deborah Landis, Margaret Mori, Trevor Nottle (Australia), Jane Payne, Ella A. Prince, Hope Rehlaender, Andrew Rice and Kathy Jeffcott, Ginny Rice and Bill Glass, Thomas A. Rogers, Ramon Saldivar, Roger Scharmer, Joyce A. Smith, Barbara Stevens, Joyce Stewart, David C. Streatfield, Michelle Sullivan, Roy L. Taylor, Lucy Tolmach, Dick Turner, Mitzi Van Sant, Noel D. Vernon, Donald W. Walker, Lucy Warren, George & Olive Rice Waters, and Richard E. Whitehall. (As of May 9, 1996).

BRIEF HISTORY OF CG&LHS

Although California is one of the floral kingdoms of the world, there has never been a concerted attempt to record our garden and landscape history. Individuals have written histories of certain gardens or plants; magazines have carried articles about famous hybridizers or nursery owners; and libraries have collections of important works.

Those who have done research in garden history well know the difficulty in finding where materials are stored. I spent a year looking for photographs, letters, and diaries of a famous hybridizer who died in 1943. Botanical libraries had little information. Only through a hunch did I find a goldmine in a university library that had no other botanical holdings. It was at that point that I knew we must found a group that would record the past, preserve the present, and educate others to carry on the work.

The first job was to see if there were others who shared this idea. Indeed there were. The botanical librarians throughout the state were the first to give their support. Then the landscape architects and designers, garden writers, nursery owners, directors of botanical gardens, and, most of all, gardeners themselves, amateurs and professionals.

A meeting was called for September 23, 1995, at the University of California at Santa Cruz Arboretum. Twenty-seven California residents and one person from Washington state attended. The day was spent getting acquainted with one another, discussing goals, preliminary ideas for raising funds, membership, and, to use the words of Barbara Barton, "to have fun." No officers were elected, but conveners Don Gholston, librarian at the UCSC Arboretum, and Bill Grant were hosts for the gathering. Roberta Burke was recording secretary and Barbara Barton membership secretary. Margaret Mori volunteered to handle the treasury. Officers will probably be nominated/elected at the San Diego meeting in November.

Membership fees for 1996 were established, but these will be changed for 1997. A newsletter was planned (this was formalized in Santa Barbara; the name appears on the masthead of the first page: *EDEN*).

A mission statement prepared from the group discussions begins with the desire to identify and conserve, educate and celebrate California's garden and landscape history. Membership in the Society from all regions of the state, the US, and overseas will be encouraged.

As part of the twice-yearly statewide conferences of the group, visits to historical gardens, landscapes, botanical libraries, nurseries, and other sites of interest will be planned. (Pre- and post-conference visits were a big success at Santa Barbara.)

In the long-range goals of the Society, different types of research can be sponsored, oral histories can be recorded, book collections can be purchased. Regional groups of the Society will be able to organize their own meetings and visits. A home page on the Internet may be achieved sooner than we had planned.

The Society would like to serve as a sensitive, authoritative coordinator of information and expertise for the purpose of fostering education and research into our garden history. It welcomes those interested in the study, interpretation, and comprehension of historical topics ranging from cut flowers to potted plants, from windowsill to patios, from streetscapes to parks, from orchard to forest; from period to contemporary, from person to economic, from tamed to wild. And we wish to recognize and award outstanding garden restorations and garden writing on California garden history.

Help us make our Society an effective and permanent part of our history. **(Bill Grant)**

CALIFORNIA GARDEN ARCHIVES

California has an abundance of excellent archives. In the SF Bay Area dozens of special libraries hold extensive collections on garden and landscape history. This is a first in a series of articles that will result in a brochure for the use of those interested in doing research.

HELEN CROCKER RUSSELL HORTICULTURAL LIBRARY at the Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park. At last count about 14,000 volumes, with new books added each week. Coffeetable books, fine references, astonishing assortment of garden group newsletters, but best of all for California historians, a superb collection of old and new nursery catalogues. Upstairs and locked away from daily use are the very oldest catalogues--turn of the century offerings of Luther Burbank, Theodore Payne, and Carl Purdy, to name a few. Even the 1930s catalogues evoke nostalgia and enlighten readers on trends in California garden making. **Open 6 days a week (closed Tuesdays) 10 am-4 pm. Barbara Pitschel, head librarian. (415) 661-1514.**

STERLING LIBRARY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AT FILOLI Quietly and with little fanfare, the Filoli archives continue to mature into a first-rate research room. Upstairs in the mansion, and locked unless opened by appointment, the research library houses historic collections from the estates of Lockwood and Elizabeth deForest, Mildred Mathias (her botany books stayed in Southern California, her horticultural books went to Filoli), Albert Wilson (the newest collection to arrive), and other notable Californians. A complete set (in mint condi-

tion) of the deForest's *Santa Barbara Gardener* is on the shelf there. **Open Mon.Tues.Thurs. by appt.only. Tom Rogers, Librarian (415)366-4640.**

Fall 1919

Spring 1920

Hardy Perennial Plants

FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Edited by

CARL PURDY, Ukiah, California



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY:

School of Environmental Design Library. Landscape architecture books on open shelves, 100s of journals packed into this 2nd floor. Upstairs are scattered older books, many in foreign languages.

Garden Slide Collections are housed on the 3rd floor, available only through a professor of landscape architecture. Emphasis is on California with some European items.

Beatrix Farrand papers, the crown jewel of the UC collection, are housed on the third floor as well. Also here in **Special Collections** are Willis Polk drawings and papers.

During the school year: M-F 9 am - 9 pm; Sat.Sun. 10 am - 5 pm. Call for summer hours. Elizabeth Burns, librarian. (510) 642-4818. Special Collections by appointment only. (JOAN HOCKADAY)

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

It's a delight to find applications for membership in my mail every few days, and doubly wonderful because there has not yet been much publicity about our Society. Many people have become Founding Members, helping us to build a useful reserve for our start-up efforts. As of May — we have — members.

We are enclosing the membership form we send to people who inquire. It would be the greatest help if you would have copies made locally and pass them out at horticultural club meetings, landscaping groups, specialty nurseries, and to your like-minded friends. Print your name in small letters on the bottom of the application form, and the person who brings in the most new members will get a free membership for 1997!

Regular membership for 1996 is \$20. Founding membership through 1996 is \$50 and checks should be made out to the California Garden & Landscape History Society and sent to P.O. Box 1338, Sebastopol, CA 95473. **BARBARA BARTON**

California Garden & Landscape History Society
P. O. Box 1338
Sebastopol, CA 95473

FIRST CLASS MAIL

**AN ADDRESS ON THE HISTORY OF GARDENS AND
LANDSCAPES IN CALIFORNIA**

By David C. Streatfield

**Given on the occasion of the statewide meeting of the California Garden and
Landscape History Society**

SANTA BARBARA BOTANIC GARDEN

February 18, 1996

**(Reprints of this address are available from the Society. Send SASE to PO Box 1038,
Sebastopol, California 95473-2409)**

CALIFORNIA GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE HISTORY SOCIETY

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Department of Landscape Architecture
Professor of Urban Design & Planning and
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University of Washington

INTRODUCTION

Gardens are metaphysical symbols of the relationship between human society and Nature. Gardens can be great works of High art, works of vernacular art, they can also be places associated with ceremony, embody power, and order. They can heal, inspire, and be places of production and serve a considerable array of practical purposes. In short, they are among human society's greatest creative achievements.

In the last decade and a half interest in gardens and gardening has assumed unprecedented proportions and this interest can be said to constitute a major growth industry. The garden and gardening sections of bookstores have expanded considerably in the last ten years, and several new magazines have appeared, e.g., Garden Design, Fine Gardening; a popular television program was aired on public television, hosted by the late Audrey Hepburn; the Garden Book Club was established in the early 1980s; exemplary and enlightening scholarship on many aspects of garden history has been published since 1973 in the British journal Garden History, and since 1981 in the international Journal of Garden History. The American Landscape Journal has published numerous articles on garden history. In addition numerous seminars and colloquia have been devoted to various aspects of garden history and preservation. Thus, the foundation of a Garden History Society in the most populous state with a most distinct and significant history, as well as an important heritage of private and public designed gardens, is very much to be welcomed, indeed it might be said to be long overdue.

I propose to share some ideas with you about what this organization should accomplish. I will provide a definition and brief overview of garden history as a scholarly field, as well as some of the accomplishments on Californian garden history. This can serve as an introduction to suggestions in three areas, Knowledge, Advocacy and Education, and Conservation and Protection.

GARDEN HISTORY

Garden History as a serious area of scholarship began in Great Britain. Prior to the publication in 1927 of Christopher Hussey's remarkable book The Picturesque garden history was the domain of amateurs. Hussey's example was followed in 1941 by a long and detailed scholarly paper by Frank Clark in the Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes. These pioneering pieces inspired some full-scale monographs on individual garden designers, including Henry Wise, Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, Capability Brown, Humphry Repton, and Gertrude Jekyll, as well as more recent studies of critical periods, such as the gardens of William and Mary, the eighteenth century, and the Victorian decades.

In America major studies have appeared on Beatrix Farrand, Charles Adams Platt, Marion Coffin, and Fletcher Steele. To supplement these the Cultural Resources Heritage Preservation Services Program of the National Park Service has done much to draw

attention to less well known landscape designers in its publication of two volumes of an annotated bibliography of Pioneers of American Landscape Design.

The early British works were essentially historical biographies or descriptive history, but in the last decade and a half the field has evolved considerably. Some major contributions have been made using feminist and structuralist theory. Garden history as a scholarly area now unites techniques drawn from art history, horticulture, landscape architecture, intellectual and social history, and geography. Wilhelmina Jashemski's critical and pioneering application of archeology to the study of Roman and Pompeian gardens has been followed by the work of William Kelso at Carter's Grove and Monticello in Virginia.

The pioneering work of J.B. Jackson in the late 1950s in his remarkable magazine Landscape and his numerous subsequent books directed attention to the role of vernacular American landscape as a reflection of unique American values. Jackson's work, together with that of cultural geographers, and scholars of material culture was important in elevating the study of vernacular landscapes as being as worthy of study as the work of famous professional garden designers.

This impressive body of pioneering and innovative work has clearly established garden history as an activity that is interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary in nature. It integrates geography, landscape architecture, horticulture, botany, history, anthropology, archeology, and ecology.

The linkage between these two strands of history has occurred in the area of preservation. Some professionals involved in landscape preservation have argued that the definition of 'garden' should be expanded to include other designed parts of regional landscapes, such as public parks, minor public grounds, university campuses, botanical gardens, forts, battlefield sites, streetscapes, working farms, towns districts, and prehistoric sites. More specialized sites in California would include shopping centers, amusement parks, resorts, and hotel grounds.

From very modest beginnings the achievements of garden history societies have been most impressive. The English Garden History Society, founded in the mid 1960s, has grown from a small group of dedicated and enthusiastic amateurs into an organization that has played a major role in the conservation of critical historical gardens and whose counsel is now sought by national and local governmental agencies and by numerous county garden trusts that are promoting the restoration of major historic gardens and deciding priorities of garden preservation.

Similarly some Eastern American garden societies have achieved local prominence by developing programs of listing major gardens. In the 1970s the National Park Service, after decades of denying and even eliminating all traces of cultural history in the National Parks under its care, reversed this policy and has assisted other organizations to initiate programs of cultural landscape management and protection. Ebey's Landing on Whidbey Island in Washington state is a notable example, based on the English precedent of The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is the first, and regrettably sole, National Historic Landscape Reserve in the nation. 30,000 acres of working agricultural land of great historic and aesthetic value remain in private ownership and under the protection of very tight planning controls.

GARDEN HISTORY IN CALIFORNIA

The early writing of garden history on California was concerned with the history of the state's horticulture and starts with E. J. Wickson's work in 1910. Several garden clubs in the San Francisco Bay area published useful introductory surveys of gardens in the 1930s, frequently based on personal reminiscences. H. M. Butterfield's articles on the introduction of the Eucalyptus and Acacia in Madrõno in the 1930s, and his articles in the Journal of the Horticultural Society of California in the 1940s and 1950s initiated and developed an interest in the importance of plant introductions and the major role played by nurseries. The first major attempt to write a comprehensive history of Californian horticulture was Victoria Padilla's incomparable book Southern California Gardens (1961). This is still an invaluable resource marred only by its lack of footnotes. Scholarly work on California nurseries has been continued notably by Tom Brown's recent comprehensive study of nurseries developed prior to 1900.

Starting in the 1970s a number of scholars, including myself, began to examine the history of landscape architecture in California. Some of the major achievements of this work are the monographs on A. E. Hanson (1985), and Florence Yoch (1989). Joan Hockaday's book on San Francisco gardens published in 1988 is significant for its focused emphasis on the gardens of a city region. Carol Greentree has drawn attention to the important contributions of San Diego in a series of articles on garden designers and horticulturists. A unique series of publications began in 1993, when for a period of three years a book a year appeared on the history of the garden in California. Most of the gardens in these books were designed by professional landscape architects or by accomplished horticulturists.

In addition to these published scholarly works are a number of unpublished Master's theses on landscape architects including Lockwood deForest, Edward Huntsman-Trout, Robert Royston, Charles and Henry Greene, and Garrett Eckbo.

I do not in any way wish to appear to disparage this work. Most of it is excellent and has considerably advanced our understanding of the unique qualities of designed California landscapes. However, this brief summary does emphasize some serious lacunae. Much work needs to be done in documenting vernacular landscapes, such as bungalow gardens, farm landscapes, the landscapes of large scale irrigation, highways, parks and other public open spaces, cemeteries, amusement parks, resorts and hotels, and university and college campuses. In addition, serious scholarly attention needs to be directed to a number of other designers, including John McLaren, Bruce Porter, Ralph Cornell, Katherine Bashford, Fred Barlow Jr., Ruth Shellhorn, Lawrence Halprin, Robert Royston, Douglas Baylis, and Courtland Paul.

This leads me to the role that this society could play in addressing these gaps in our knowledge, and leading the promotion of a new awareness of the necessity for conservation of historic gardens and landscapes.

KNOWLEDGE, ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION

Despite the increasing interest in the garden as a subject of scholarly inquiry and the development of sophisticated analytical techniques in academic circles, sheer ignorance of the cultural importance of all designed landscapes is still widespread. I wrote California Gardens: Creating a New Eden (1994) principally as an examination of the garden as an important expression of cultural attitudes to the California landscape. This is an important contribution to society that this organization should continue. Indeed, I would argue that it has to be at the forefront of your activities. Tireless advocacy of the garden and vernacular

landscape as an expression of culture as important as painting, sculpture, and architecture must remain a central mission. It must however be based upon detailed and accurate knowledge.

Knowledge

The development of more sophisticated searching mechanisms in the emerging communication age has greatly increased the capacity of scholarly research. It will help in the development of a comprehensive list of primary and secondary sources on California Garden History. This should be drawn from the collections of National libraries as well as the libraries in the state, counties, cities, and universities, colleges and private institutions, all of which are full of treasures.

This data bank should include all the drawings, related correspondence and bills of landscape architects, photographs, diaries, and other family records; and ephemera, such as postcards, and nursery catalogues. Many secondary sources such as maps, aerial photographs, the county histories of the late nineteenth century, magazine and newspaper articles are gold mines of information on gardens together with guide books, and real estate advertisements.

In addition, there are almost certainly collections of photographs and papers still in private hands that ought to be included with the ultimate objective of being made available for scholarly work. A related task is to identify libraries that can serve as repositories of such materials.

But in addition to summarizing existing sources, knowledge also needs to be created. Oral histories of landscape architects, garden owners, nursery men, landscape contractors, farmers, farm workers, and gardeners need to be undertaken immediately. Much of my own work is based on interviews that I conducted with a variety of individuals over a period of many years. I can affirm that this often is a history that would otherwise be irretrievably lost; it will be especially critical in cases of irrevocably threatened gardens and landscapes.

Advocacy and Education

Strong advocacy of the importance of gardens and vernacular landscapes must involve constant vigilance. The owners of properties of historic and cultural significance, as well as public officials need to be made aware of the extent and value of critical gardens and landscapes. Thus, advocacy will almost certainly be most successful if it is locally directed. However, I believe very strongly that to be effective a society such as this must base its advocacy on rigorous scholarship. This explains my emphasis upon the need to develop a comprehensive list of sources and to be involved in the gathering of new knowledge.

There are considerable opportunities for writing op-ed articles in newspapers and articles in magazines as well as involvement in other media. Further opportunities lie in public school education and in mounting exhibitions. In the first two decades of this century gardening played an important role in teaching in many California grade schools. This could be revived either as a form of practical environmental education, or it be coupled with new teaching programs based on the history of gardens and gardening. My own experience in teaching undergraduate survey courses suggests that the garden, both as a form of High Art and the vernacular, is an exceptionally good

vehicle for broad humanistic teaching. One cannot help but think that the Jesuitical belief that if a child is inculcated before the age of seven it will be yours for life might be an appropriate model to follow.

California has an enviable history of participation in exhibitions on landscape and garden history. The Museum of Art in San Francisco held the first exhibition in the world on Modern Landscape Architecture in 1937. Subsequently other exhibitions were held on Mural Conceptualism, a form of mural sculpture for which Thomas Church designed a Garden, and two further exhibitions were held in 1948 and 1958. Most recently the exhibition on William Wurster, held in the new Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, included a section on the early gardens of Thomas Church. The Art Museum of the University of California at Berkeley is planning to hold an exhibition on the work of Garrett Eckbo in the near future. Clearly, there are considerable opportunities for holding further exhibitions on California gardens as a way of celebrating this part of the state's unique heritage of designed landscapes. In addition the numerous Garden Shows are appropriate places for exposing the gardening public to the importance of history, both through lectures and displays.

CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

A number of notable historic California gardens are preserved in some way, usually under federal, state, county, or city government ownership, or under the protection of private institutions such as the Huntington Botanic Garden, or non-profit organizations, such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which owns two gardens in the state, and the Garden Conservancy, which has been involved in the protection of two Californian gardens. With the exception of the latter, these properties were put into a form of protective care not so much for the historical value of the garden but for other reasons, such as the significance of the house, or association with an historic figure, or the importance of the plants horticulturally or botanically.

Yet one of the great challenges of the present and the future is to ensure that as many significant gardens as possible are protected. The range of problems to be faced are considerable and Santa Barbara and Montecito typify the broader situation. I have known this area since 1967, and I am much saddened by the complete and often undocumented disappearance of, or undocumented inappropriate changes that have been made to some of its finest gardens. This community, once the proud keeper of some of the state's finest gardens is not alone. In many parts of the state, and indeed in most states, gardens of historic importance are either bulldozed or irresponsibly altered without any regard to their designer's intentions or to their historic character. It will not be possible to save every garden of historic value, but we should at least understand what we are losing and record them appropriately.

It will therefore be necessary to develop a list of important gardens throughout the state from the Mission period to the present. This should be prioritized, and developed with the assistance of a consulting team of experts of landscape and garden history, geographers, horticulturists, botanists, ecologists, anthropologists, and in conjunction with research institutions, such as botanic gardens, arboreta, and state, county, and local agencies, as well as National organizations, such as The Garden Conservancy. Threatened properties should be identified and prioritized.

It almost certainly will not be possible to save every valuable site. But the initiation of such a program could improve the present situation. Such a list of critical gardens could be used by state and local agencies to develop priorities for acquisition and the exercise of protective

strategies other than outright purchase. In the case of properties that cannot be purchased or conserved in private hands the list could be used to develop priorities of photographic and other forms of documentation.

CONCLUSION

Gardens and vernacular landscapes are an important part of California's heritage. The definition of garden should be expanded to include a broad range of private and public designed landscapes in both the categories of High and the vernacular art. The California Garden and Landscape History Society has a great opportunity to act in a number of capacities to broaden the awareness of gardens and participate in programs to conserve critical gardens.

1. Knowledge

It should compile a comprehensive data bank of primary and secondary sources. It should assist owners of critical documents to donate them to appropriate institutions. It should be active in developing a program of oral histories of individuals who have, in various ways contributed to the making and managing of gardens.

2. Advocacy

The Society should play a major role in making members of the public and policy makers aware of the value of historic gardens. This should be done through the use of all media, working with schools, and developing exhibitions in association with museums throughout the state.

3. Conservation and Protection.

The Society should develop a program of listing critical gardens in need of protection through public ownership or careful design controls.

The tasks I have outlined are formidable in scope, but they can and should be accomplished in close association with national organizations such as the Catalogue of Records in Landscape Architecture housed at Wave Hill, The Garden Conservancy, the Heritage Preservation Services Historic Initiative of the Cultural Resources Division of the National Park Service, and the Alliance of Historic Landscapes, as well as the numerous organizations in California dedicated to establishing its history.

Gardens are among the most fragile works of art. Yet their individual and collective value is considerable as expressions of human creativity and markers of cultural development. Their documentation and categorization in California will be both a local and national celebration of this inventiveness and creativity.

