

James Wilkinson Elliott:

Could His Eastern Garden Flourish in California?

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The author retired as executive director of the Center for the Arts at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. He became interested in Elliott through his research on landscape architect Harold A. Caparn, his grand-uncle, who worked for Elliott from about 1890 until 1897. His article, "An Artful Garden," on an estate designed by Caparn (c. 1910) at the elite Oteora Park in the northern Catskill Mountains of New York, was published (Summer 2010) by The Mountain Top Historical Society. He contributed a biographical article on Caparn to Shaping the American Landscape (University of Virginia Press, 2009) and online to The Cultural Landscape Foundation. Mr. Chamberlain is the fifth generation of the Caparn-Chamberlain family with interests in horticulture and garden design.

In 1921, at age 63, J. Wilkinson Elliott considered it was time to retire. He was the prosperous owner of the Elliott Nursery Company of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and could now turn over the business to Rhea, his eldest son. He had planned to retire in his home state, but on a summer 1923 visit to his brother's home in California, Elliott saw the perfect site for his last residence on the Point Loma peninsula overlooking San Diego Bay and the Pacific Ocean.

Elliott had made significant capital, buying and selling land, owning several homes including, as his winter home in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, the former home of composer Stephen C. Foster. He had imported and sold millions of tulips and other bulbs from Holland. He had become known for promoting the use of hardy plants for informal natural plantings (over the usual formal beds of annuals), in his lecture to the Massachusetts Horticulture Society (1895) and then in his book that came from it, *A Plea for Hardy Plants* (1902). The book was reissued twice (1907 and 1910), with an additional chapter on "Naturalizing Hardy Plants and Bulbs." In the early 20th century it influenced many homeowners to change their gardening ways.

He had also achieved some fame as a designer of landscapes for, among others, former First Lady Lucretia Garfield, widow of President James A. Garfield, at Mentor, Ohio (c. 1885); Pierre Lorillard IV, founder of exclusive Tuxedo Park in the Ramapo Mountains of New York (c. 1890); and James R. Mellon, oldest son of the famed Mellon banking family of Pittsburgh (c. 1895). And he had been called in as an expert to redesign a garden for Darwin D. Martin of Buffalo, New York (c. 1905), whose home and estate were being designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

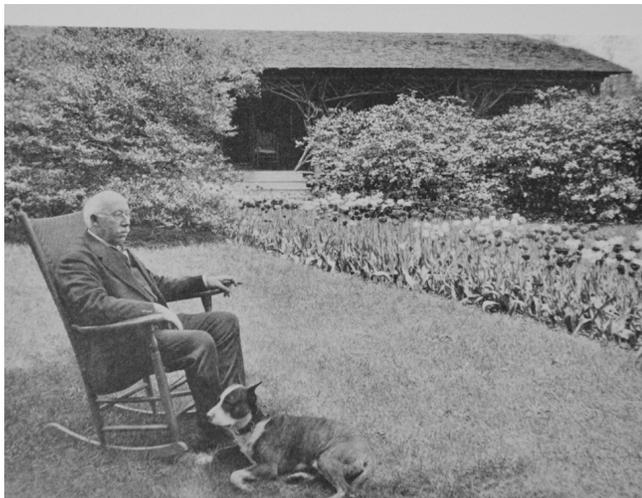
Though Elliott had no technical training in landscape design, he had something better: a thorough knowledge of trees, shrubs, and plants learned in his father's extensive nursery. In his autobiographical *Adventures of a Horticulturist* (1935), Elliott said, "Draughtsmen can always be hired." He had believed he could learn the principles of good landscape design through careful observation. He and his wife, Ida, had traveled the world, giving him the opportunity to study gardens and learn their designs in Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, and England.

He made it a point in his travels abroad and at home to meet and talk with gardeners. He visited in



*Estate of J. Wilkinson Elliott, Point Loma, Calif., c. 1930:
home, terrace, portion of lawn.*

(Continued on next page.)



J. Wilkinson Elliott at his summer home near Pittsburgh, 1917, with his dog, Bob, and a bed of tulips.

San Francisco, in February 1935, with John McLaren, who as an American had been awarded an honorary membership in the Royal Horticultural Society of England, and whom he considered “the greatest of all landscape gardeners.” McLaren was the designer and superintendent of Golden Gate Park, which Elliott called “incomparably the finest city park in the world.”

Of McLaren, he said, “Does he like formal gardening? He does not, but hates it as intensely as that great English writer and gardener, William Robinson.” In *Adventures*, he called Robinson “the greatest of all gardeners.” Robinson, when Elliott visited his home and garden, Gravetye Manor in England, told him, “An artistic garden [is] the rarest thing in the world.” Elliott then reflected that “any garden that contains beautiful flowers has the beauty of the flowers, but this beauty is greatly enhanced when the arrangement is artistic.”

Elliott continued in his *Adventures*, “There is a garden in my neighborhood [across town in San Diego’s Mission Hills district] owned by Mrs. Herbert Evans: it has only one hundred feet frontage on the street, but it is one of the most artistic and lovely gardens that I have ever seen. It flows for several hundred feet down a canyon. [It is] well worth a visit, especially at rose-time in the spring.”

Among other rose-gardeners, he knew The Very Reverend S. Reynolds Hole, Dean of Rochester Cathedral in Kent, that southeast county known as the “Garden of England.” He said, “The Dean’s book on rose-culture, *A Book About Roses* (1869), had a greater sale than any novel ever published in England. The Dean had already presented me with a copy of the book when he was in Pittsburgh in 1894.” Through his observation of gardens, reading about

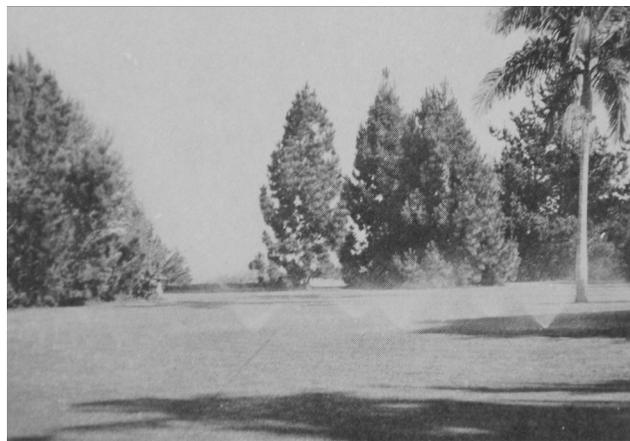
them and discussion with knowledgeable gardeners, Elliott became a thoughtful and discerning landscape designer.

His Move to Point Loma

Elliott bought land and home on Point Loma after seeing it briefly during the summer of 1923 with a banker of his acquaintance. He left instructions with a real estate agent that if it could be gotten at a reasonable price, he would buy it. After arrival home in Pittsburgh, two weeks later he received a telegram asking for a down payment. He bought the property forthwith, and he and his family had moved by mid-November. He immediately cut down 300 trees, cleared land, and seeded a bent-grass lawn. Elliott agreed with John McLaren and William Robinson that a lawn was necessary to present an enhancing view of the home. It should be framed by shrubs and trees and was to provide a private and reposeful setting for one’s outdoor recreation.

Like McLaren and Robinson, Elliott also espoused the informal, nature-based approach to landscape design. He said that he hated the formal, more geometric manner. His approach to making his estate grounds and gardens, derived from the English and eastern American tradition of making gardens, he now boldly brought to California on Point Loma.

Upon his arrival in California, Elliott joined the San Diego Floral Association, and it was noted in their publication *California Garden* (February 1924) that he had given a lecture at the Floral Home in Balboa Park. But an editorial by A.D. Robinson, a neighbor across the street on Point Loma, presented a comment that betrayed future questions. In it he said, “The great State has been settled in the last few years by people from everywhere else, who have come to bathe in her sunshine, and in return have grafted upon her a bit of every kind of garden except her own.” In the next month’s journal, there was the statement



Lawn with sprinklers at Elliott estate in Point Loma. Note the opening in a portion of the collection of pines, to frame a view of the San Diego Bay.

“Mr. Elliot expects to have to learn much over again and forget a good deal in the new conditions.”

Elliott understood something of the setting for his new estate, noting in his book that “Southern California is semi-arid, and the remark is often heard that if there were plenty of rain what a paradise it would be. Last winter (1934-35) we had plenty of rain, but no paradise.” He continued, “We are getting our reward this spring. Rains have brought us the greatest show of wild flowers that California has enjoyed in twenty-five years.” Although he could see the landscape as semi-arid, and even with an interest in wild flowers and the native plants of the region, still, he adhered to his long-held belief that the well-proportioned and well-maintained lawn was central to landscape design.



Part of Elliott's collection of trees and shrubs on his Point Loma estate. The walk, rather than gravel, is of grass, with a mesembryanthemum hedge.

Not all his neighbors agreed. As seen in the photograph of his lawn from his book, he needed to put in a large number of sprinklers in order to keep it green. Others thought that was a display of wealth and wasteful—not, they said, a California garden. As A.D. Robinson complained in a *California Garden* editorial (August 1924), quoting William Robinson, “The lawn is the heart of the true English garden.” The American Robinson continued, “Now we dare to say that the contrary is true of the California Garden. The California landscape is yellow or brown or tawny dotted sparsely with green, and if as the great gardener, William Robinson insists, we are to go to nature for our gardening inspiration, then the lawn far from being the heart of a California garden will be instead a mere pimple on its face or better left out altogether.”

But Elliott knew what he wanted for his last estate, even to the detail of using turf rather than gravel for his pathways. In *Adventures* he said, “We can grow scores of

things that cannot be grown in a colder climate, such as the glorious acacias, magnificent red-flowering eucalyptus, and the jacarandas, and we can garden every day in the year and have an abundant supply of flowers all the year round.”

He continued, “Roses can be had in bloom at all seasons, but varieties must be selected with discrimination, as there are many kinds that do not thrive in this climate. I started with over a hundred varieties, but reduced their number to about thirty.* The so-called Rambler roses, with the exception of American Pillar, are useless here on account of their mildewing so badly.” (It should be noted that in California, mildew on roses is a result of drought conditions, not excessive moisture.) He said further, “The large-flowered climbers are magnificent. The single Cherokee roses, so plentiful in the southern states but originally from China, do splendidly here. One plant of the Cherokee rose on my grounds is like a snowdrift, fifteen feet high and thirty feet across when it is in bloom in the winter time.”

His Promotion of Tulips

At his home garden in Pittsburgh, Elliott was well known for growing tulips. During World War I he had presented a tulip show as a benefit for the Red Cross. He described it thus: “My Dutch bulb-grower donated the tulips—100,000 of them in 300 varieties. I paid the freight and duty and planted the tulips in my private grounds. I had a large lawn completely inclosed [*sic*] with shrubbery, which made a beautiful setting for the tulips. The tulips bloomed in May when the leaves on the trees and shrubs were about half developed, and, of course, of the freshest green. When the tulips were in full bloom they made a beautiful sight.”

It took a while for Elliott to accommodate to the California reality for his tulip garden. He said, “the late-flowering tulips are good for only one season, and must be protected from the sun during the winter time or they will make no roots, and stems will be only two to three inches long.” Still, with care, he was able to grow some of his lovely tulips.

California Garden (April 1927) noted that the Floral Association had been invited to visit the Elliott garden earlier in the month and that more than 500 enthusiasts had turned out. “The day was most fitting for the display of tulips, Nemesias, Schizanthus and Cinerarias in colorful bands.”

* Of the 30 rose varieties, he mentioned ‘General MacArthur,’ ‘Radiance,’ ‘Dame Edith Helen,’ ‘Los Angeles,’ ‘Talisman,’ ‘Hoosier Beauty,’ and ‘Souvenir de Claudius Pernet’; and of large-flowered climbers, he mentioned ‘Belle of Portugal,’ ‘Paul’s Scarlet Climber,’ and ‘Climbing Hoosier Beauty.’

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The note continued, “The background of heavy shrubbery and dark Cypress and the extra fine Pines all served to make the garden well worth a serious study. Mr. Elliott has grown more tulips than anyone else in San Diego and has proven that the Darwin and the Breeder tulips are a great success in this mild climate.”



A portion of the tulips in bloom for the show at Elliott's summer home in Pittsburgh in 1917. Mrs. Elliott is at the near guest table.

His Speculation in Begonias

Again, *California Garden* (July 1929) brought notice that the Floral Association had been invited to visit “the Rosecroft Begonia Garden of A.D. Robinson, the estate of J.W. Elliott, the renowned tulip man, and the lovely home gardens of Maurice Braun, our noted artist.” Despite his neighbor’s critical comments about his estate, Elliott said that he considered Robinson’s lath-house garden of begonias an extension of his own garden and visited it often.

In *Adventures* Elliott related a story that, at age 35, led to his approach to selling plant stock and then to being able to buy his first nursery. During the spring or summer of 1893, he visited the estate on Long Island of banker Adolf Ladenburg. The gardener, Thomas Griffen, showed Elliott two greenhouses of tuberous begonias, but he was not overly impressed, knowing from working in his father’s nursery that anyone could successfully grow begonias under glass. He inquired further and was then shown a field that contained over 100,000 plants, “all in perfect condition, which was very remarkable when the hot, dry, sandy soil of Long Island is considered.” The knowledge that begonias could thrive in such adverse conditions would be a decided advantage in promoting their sale. Being satisfied with what he had seen, Elliott asked Griffen to sell the plants to him, subject to Ladenburg’s approval. The deal was concluded, and during the following fall and winter Elliott met with estate owners from

Boston to St. Louis, showing them the beautiful blooms and obtaining orders for delivery in the following spring. He sold them at a fine profit, stating that “by June I had a bank balance that put me on Easy Street, and I have been there ever since, in spite of the depression.” Elliott’s speculation in various plant stocks brought him prosperity and eventually the ability to retire on Point Loma.

“Rather curiously,” he continued, “Alfred Robinson, the greatest of all begonia specialists, has his establishment across the road from my California home, and his lath-house (lath-houses take the place in Southern California of glass conservatories used in colder climates) is the finest thing of its kind.”

Such was the milieu in which Elliott chose to spend his last years, with membership in the Floral Association as an outlet for his lantern slide lectures, with neighbors that enjoyed gardening like Maurice Braun, Mrs. Evans, and Alfred (A.D.) Robinson, in whom he had an appreciative audience for his collection of plants, shrubs, and trees, along with the artistic design of his estate.



Alfred D. Robinson's lath-house garden of begonias, at Point Loma.

His Last Estate

It is unfortunate that no ground plan exists for Elliott’s last estate, but Elliott had admitted that he was no draughtsman. Very likely he felt no need of a plan, knowing what he wanted to achieve and directly supervising the planting. To illustrate his approach, the plan is given for his landscape design of the city estate of James R. Mellon of Pittsburgh, of which Elliott said, “It shows a very elaborate and comprehensive garden, and one that proved very successful. The garden is entirely inclosed with stone walls and shrubbery. The garden-house is a reproduction of an Irish thatched cottage, and the garden in the rear of it is a miniature vegetable garden.” The plan is included in *A Plea for Hardy Plants*.

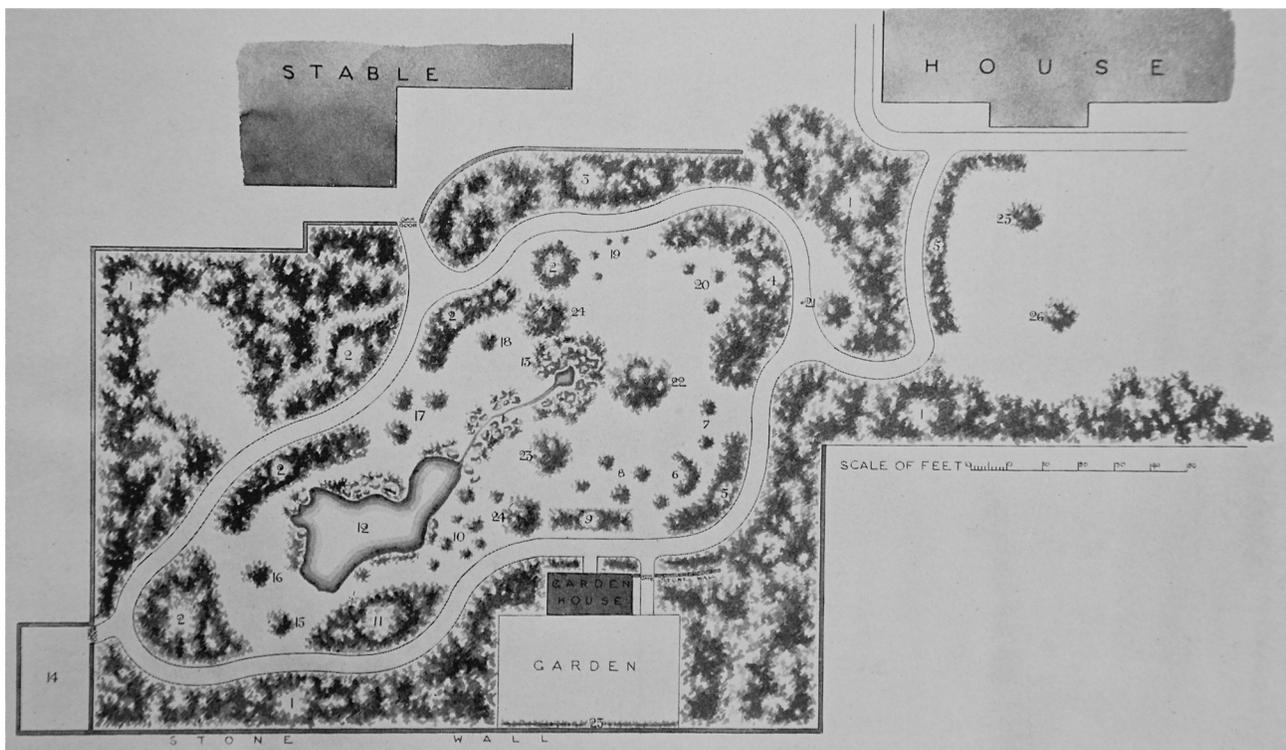
In *California Garden* (September 1929) there appeared a defense by Elliott of a prior criticism of his grounds, especially the profusion of pines. The lady writing wanted to take an axe to them, one and all, to allow a full view of the Bay. Elliott protested: "I hasten to the defense of my pine trees which are perfect specimens of their kind and represent a growth of over a quarter of a century. These trees instead of spoiling the view, divide it into three lovely vistas which are greatly enhanced by the trees. These trees also help to frame our lawn and garden and make several pictures of landscape beauty."

Following Elliott's defense, A.D. Robinson at Rosecroft, in a display of final accommodation, agreed with Elliott: "I sat on the bare ground where the Elliott porch now is and looked upon the view without lawn or trees, and frankly I much prefer it as it now is. Without shame I confess that I helped to plant those trees where they are, and I consider Mr. Elliott's lawn the finishing touch."

Elliott's estate at Point Loma was designed in the informal manner as was his plan for J.R. Mellon and had,

as he described, a wide collection of plants, shrubs, and trees. It was a showcase for his talents as a landscape architect. From photographs, it appears according to his views to have been well laid out and impressive at all times of the year. It was a fitting summation of his interests and abilities as the last estate of his design. His eastern-style estate garden flourished for a dozen years, albeit at some cost of criticism and expense. But it did not survive the subdivision of the estate after Elliott and his wife sold the property in 1936 and moved into the still-extant Elliott Arms Apartments, which they had built on Seventh Street in San Diego. He died there on February 3, 1939, three days short of his 81st birthday.

James Wilkinson Elliott and his wife, Ida, who lived to be 100 years of age, are buried at Greenwood Memorial Park in San Diego. Of Alfred Robinson's estate, the short stone wall and gate facing the street, which J.W. Elliott had viewed daily, are still evident. Of Elliott's estate, only a few magnificent pines remain.



Elliott plan for the J.R. Mellon estate in Pittsburgh.

Notes: Illustrations for this article are from Elliott's Adventures of a Horticulturist, privately published by the author in 1935 and printed at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in a limited edition by Elliott's friend, the noted horticulturist, author, and publisher J. Horace McFarland. The latter supplied a Preface, in which he said, "This spirit of inquiry, this love for everything that grows, led him to dream landscapes, always upon the imperishable model of Nature. Hating formality, loving beauty in every form, with an inherited plant-perception, he built gardens that were real, and, traveling abroad, saw as well what to avoid as what to absorb. Mr. Elliott is truly an artist." Elliott gave away the book in his 78th year to friends and professional acquaintances as a memento. The copy he inscribed to San Diego horticulturist Kate O. Sessions can now be found in the public library there.

The writer is indebted to Marlea Graham for her interest in J. Wilkinson Elliott, her research on the subject and on California gardens, and for graciously calling to the writer's attention notices of Elliott in The California Garden. For their research in that journal, thanks also to Thea Gurns and John Blocker, of the CGLHS.

A Coronado Garden

Mrs. Francis King

By way of contrast with J. Wilkinson Elliott's Point Loma garden, we include here this excerpt written by Mrs. Francis (Louisa Yeomans) King, from Chapter 11, "Spanish Gardens and a California Planting," in Pages from a Garden Note-Book (1921): 187-210. The garden was designed by the famous local nurserywoman, Kate O. Sessions, and was perfectly in keeping with the climate of San Diego—what Alfred D. Robinson would surely have deemed as a fitting California garden.

Photos are from Pages from a Garden Note-Book (1921). The endnotes were added by Marlea Graham.

At Coronado, as one stands on a little eminence trying not to see the hotel—that hotel which creates perfect comfort within its walls and unequalled discomfort by its outward aspect—and looks away toward the fine range of mountains in Lower California, really Mexico, the picture is all in long horizontal lines below the peaks. Lines of blue for the waters of San Diego Bay and Glorietta Bay, lines of white for the little white cities along the shores. Running from Coronado into Glorietta Bay, really a blue lake, is a line of green, a point of land ending in a small bit called Prospect Park. Blue, green, violet; the mountains are oftenest veiled in lavender or purple, and in the midst of this color, stands a little house of one story, a house built, as an aviator son first informed me, around a little court, not called a patio, but a plazita. The fact is that this house is in style pure Santa Fe Mission—all is absolutely true to type—there is no architectural compromise except perhaps in such matters as openings for light, air, and entrance.

The house, the property of Mrs. Robert, of San Francisco, and designed by Mr. William Templeton Johnson, of San Diego, is of a rather rich ochre in color.¹ Its window-frames and the grille of the door are painted a dark cobalt-blue. Framing this house, when I saw it, on two sides lay a lovely tropical or subtropical garden, a young garden not four years old, and because of spring's beginning in Coronado in December, a winter garden as yet. Here were not many flowers, but what there were showed orange and yellow bloom. *Calendula* and *trollius*² were conspicuous and the effect with the house walls was delicious. The beauty of line of the little house is clearly shown in the illustration. The beauty of the garden at the time of which I write lay in its foliage-color, foliage-forms, and the arrangement of these. An artist hath done this thing,



Front yard of Mrs. Robert's Mission-style home on the Coronado peninsula in San Diego.

exclaimed I to myself, as I walked into the little garden. Standing at the blue entrance-door, and looking down a slightly curved walk to the street, it is the planting on either side of the walk that first arrests one. On the right, back of the low border, is a wonderfully fine arrangement of the cylindrical cacti known as the Mexican "Organ Pipe," and *Cerius spaccianus*, one of the choicest of bloomers; also, here are a few low-growing varieties. Tall and dwarf these are, but so well set with regard to each other as to be of quite startling interest as a group. To the left again, beyond the border, were long, irregular colonies of lovely gray-leaved things. When first I saw this house I thought I had never seen a sweeter picture, and this was partly because of its setting of garden, but also because of the rare beauty of that garden itself. Gray and green foliage and flowers of yellow, orange, and lemon hues were delightfully used in the small stretches of ground lying about the house. The place covers less than one-fourth of an acre.

On first seeing the garden I thought the color the captivating thing. Then said I, no, it is the arrangement of form, the subtle knowledge of how to place things. Finally, I realized that it was both. Miss Kate O. Sessions, of San Diego, whose work in gardening is well known, and whose

A Coronado Garden (continued)

name is synonymous with great knowledge of the trees, shrubs, and flowers of this region, and with the beautiful use of such things, planned and executed this Coronado garden, to please the owner, who wished the planting to fit the architecture, to be a bit of New Mexico transplanted.

To return, however, after too long a digression. Here, to the right of the entrance-porch and beyond a blue-framed window, is a Hopi ladder leaning casually against the ochre of the wall. This serves as support for a climbing aloe, the burnt-orange flowers pointing upward above its leaves. Around the corner of the northeast wall is a beautiful climber, *chorizema*, with spraylike buds which as flowers will show rainbow colors. Nearby is a fine plant of *Romneya Coulteri*, or Matilija poppy, and beyond that a bearing lemon tree in front of the kitchen window. Farther on are fig-trees and guavas. Hanging above the entrance-porch, or loggia, of the house is an entrancing growth of the orange-colored trumpet-vine, *Bignonia venusta*, in full bloom all winter. The vine literally drips flowers. The small, vivid orange trumpets against a background of bright green leaves make the most perfect possible framing for the entrance-porch below. This small porch has a floor of tile, and, as I have said, a Spanish grille door of blue, of such a blue. On either side of the porch stand specimen bushes of *streptosolen*,³ with its clusters of velvet flowers in all the hues of *Gladiolus primulinus* hybrids. These carry the eye easily and delightfully up to the colored hanging above. At the outer edge of the tiled porch floor there is a border of the gray-blue grass, *Festuca*, like a delicate reflection of the sky. On the ochre wall beyond is the *streptosolen*, covered with its vivid flowers and delicate yellow buds. The blue-framed casement windows are just above the orange-shaded *streptosolen*, and on the ground a border of winter-blooming orange iceplant, *Mesembryanthemum auranticum*, gives intensity to the color scheme.

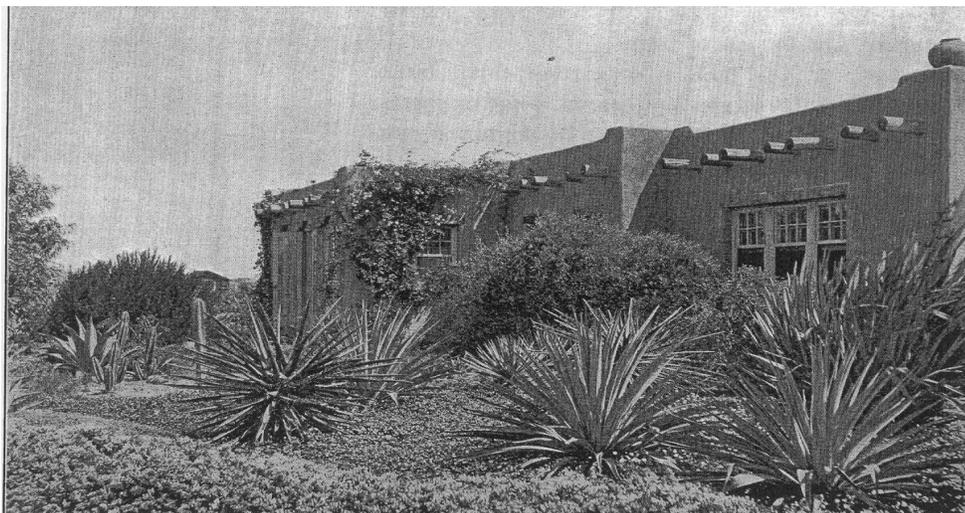
Standing at the street end of the cement walk leading from the street to the entrance-porch, this picture in flowers must be the envy of many a Californian whose eyes set toward subtropical beauty. The cement walk is bordered by a three-foot strip of the small creeping *Convolvulus auritanicus*, now entirely green but later a sheet of gray-blue bloom from April until October. At the extreme right stands a long, loosely arranged group of magnificent aloes, in several varieties, holding great spears of scarlet and yellow flowers far above their twisting leaves. Below these are other and smaller aloes, with leaf colors which one might think reminiscent of a dusky sunset—a remarkable glow, even a suggestion of rose in these leaves of blue-

green. Before this aloe group are great heaps and mounds, lower and higher—but never higher than two feet—of great white things, such as *Centaurea maritima*, and beyond all these, nearer to the house, sheets of sweet alyssum in full bloom, with a broad line of gray-foliaged border plants, *santolina*, behind which thrive a variety of sedums and *crassula* two feet high, and the rare *Portulacaria afra*.

Looking now toward the left of the walk, the character of the planting is different. On a slight mound is the effective group of cacti previously mentioned, which give a semi-humorous impression. They seem to people the ground. One remembers the phrase, “Men as trees walking.” Those who know this cactus will understand; yet the beauty of it here is very great. The ground beneath and around is covered with the purple-flowering *Verbena venosa* and the beach strawberry native about San Francisco. This has a wonderful dark foliage and plenty of large white flowers, but no fruit. Beyond the cacti, just overlapping them, is a very widely spaced group of grasslike plants, *dasyliirions*, in three varieties, which give this part of the garden the look of having been gone over by an etcher’s needle. The threadlike effect is only partly given in the illustration. More of the low purple *verbena*, next a large American agave, silvery green and gray on the shining green carpet of the strawberry leaves; then *Phormium tenax*, or New Zealand flax, a valuable fibre-plant; *Yucca baccata* and *Dracaena draco* rise above the masses of *escholtzias*, with their orange flames; more blue-gray agaves, yellow sedums rising from groups of lemon-yellow *gazanias*, all backed by a handsome shrub of *Grevillea thelemanniana*,⁴ and a group of the fernlike tree, *Lyonothamnus floribunda*, a native of the Santa Barbara Islands.

We have now come around the house to the southwest side, following a narrow curving walk, and find here more massed planting, partly to screen out the service region, partly as a background for the house itself. Here stand the fern-leaved trees just mentioned, here are well-grown groups of *Acacia latifolia*, and here, toward the street again, are spreading the *Cactus opuntia*, thornless and thorny, with the bright orange-blooming *Dimorphotheca aurantiaca* all over the ground against and beneath the cactus-green. Wherever such masses of flowers occur, the foreground is apt to be cut by a yucca or an agave of different varieties, or by some other plant, bold and distinct in character, such as *Echium simplex*, a honey plant of the Azores. This virile use of such plants is one of the many characteristics of the small place under discussion. There is

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*Landscaping designed
by Kate O. Sessions
in the back yard
of the Robert home
in Coronado.*

no lawn or hedge nor fence in the front of this garden, but along the front a border three to six feet wide is composed of four sorts of mesembryanthemum, variable as to texture and color and well placed for effect, which is very brilliant from May to October. The broad parking space outside of the cement sidewalk is filled with the orange-colored gazania, which likewise is in bloom from April to October. These masses of color are like a miniature copy of the wild-flower fields of Coronado when it was only a rabbit-and-quail park and there was plenty of rain.

Also, one of the charms of this place lies in the restrained use of creepers against the house. Fancy what this restraint means in such a climate. The temptation there is, I observe, to allow the vines of quick growth to suffocate the house. Its outlines gasp for breath. All sense of form is lost, and the unrestrained ficus and bignonia come in for a share of the blame. In the same manner precisely, and for the same reason, the scarlet geranium is condemned by the visitor to southern California.⁵ It should not be; it is only

badly, very badly used there by the mass of the people. Now and again one sees it superb, well-grown, well-groomed, perfectly placed. Time will surely bring to all of southern California, as it has to much of it already, an understanding of the need for structural green perhaps more easily and more quickly supplied there than in any other part of the country. The perfect example in this, as in many other things, is there in the San Diego Exposition grounds and buildings—an ideal, a gleam to follow, which has been and will be followed in the architecture and gardening of that part of the United States. What fine opportunities there to realize the truth of that sentence from “Studies in Gardening”: “A single flowering shrub rightly placed in front of a dark barrier of greenery has your eye to itself, and satisfies it like an alter-piece in a quiet church.” When such things are brought to pass commonly, not only in such places as Montecito and others one might mention, there will have sprung into being in that part of the State a true paradise for lovers of the best gardening.

Endnotes

1. The Elizabeth Woodson Robert residence at 1000 Glorietta Boulevard is listed as built by Johnson in 1917 (David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* [1982]: 468). It is the corner lot at the intersection of Vista Place and today faces the Coronado Municipal Golf Course and Glorietta Bay. Though the landscape has changed somewhat over the intervening years, subsequent owners appear to have continued to eschew broad expanses of water-hungry turf.
2. Trollius is a totally inappropriate plant for the San Diego region and it seems unlikely that Kate Sessions would have chosen to include it in her plant palette; *Sunset's Western Garden Book* notes that it cannot take drought or heat and recommends it only for California zones 1 -6, whereas San Diego County is zone 24. One wonders if perhaps Mrs. King was mistaken in her identification of trollius.
3. Marmalade Bush is the vernacular name for *Streptosolen jamesonii*, a native of South America which is recommended for zone 24. It will bloom nearly all year long in frost-free areas.
4. This Australian native is also known as the Hummingbird Bush or Spider-net Grevillea; it carries clusters of bright red flowers tipped with yellow, and prefers the dry, warm winters of southern California to the wetter and cooler ones of our northern regions.
5. J. Wilkinson Elliott certainly condemned the red geranium, closing his lecture about the English gardener, William Robinson, with the comment that, if Mr. Robinson were to come to California, “he would probably start a crusade against the red geranium because it has but little beauty, is neglected and shabby on account of its ease of culture and takes up a great deal of garden space that should be occupied by far more beautiful things.” (“A Great Gardener,” in *California Garden* 16, no. 1 [July 1924]: 2.)

The Other McLaren: Part III

Marlea Graham

This is the third and final installment of the author's article based on investigative research into the life and work of landscape engineer Donald McLaren (1878–1925). He was the son and only child of John McLaren (1846–1943). The latter was renowned in the San Francisco Bay Area for his lengthy and versatile landscaping work, particularly in Golden Gate Park. Donald's own professional accomplishments were largely overlooked and often mistakenly attributed to his father. Part I was published in the Spring 2010 Edén and covered McLaren's schooling, first employment as a clerk for the Pacific Mail Steamship Line, and the beginnings of his career as a self-described landscape engineer and principal in the San Francisco firm of MacRorie-McLaren Company, formed in 1909. Part II (Summer 2010) primarily addressed what was probably the largest endeavor the firm ever undertook in its relatively short existence, San Francisco's 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, and the relatively quiet years thereafter up to the end of World War I.

(Author Marlea Graham was the editor of Edén from 1997 to the end of 2009.)

Donald McLaren failed, despite 17 years of operating his own company, to create a separate identity. He was constantly confused with his father. The misapplication of credit could only have proved a source of irritation to both father and son. To add insult to injury, people often bungled the name of the firm. A photo caption in the June 1919 *Architect & Engineer* noted that MacRorie-McLaren were the landscape gardeners for the newly built house of F.W. Bradley in San Francisco, but elsewhere in the same issue, the journal noted that “John McLeran [*sic*] was in charge of the landscape work.” A 1921 issue of the *San Jose Mercury* credited John McLaren with landscaping the new home of William J. Leet in that city, but it was not until two years later that Donald took steps to correct this misunderstanding. Properly attributed photographs appeared in one article for *Architect & Engineer* that featured the work of the MacRorie-McLaren Company, and another article written by Donald for the *Building Review* was illustrated with nothing but plans and photographs of the Leet estate, with the former clearly showing the legend “MacRorie-McLaren



This image is from Irving F. Morrow's March 1923 article for Architect & Engineer: the formal sunken rose garden/lily pond with pergola in the background, designed by MacRorie-McLaren for the Andrew Welch estate. Some portions of the original property are still intact, and the pergola was recently restored.

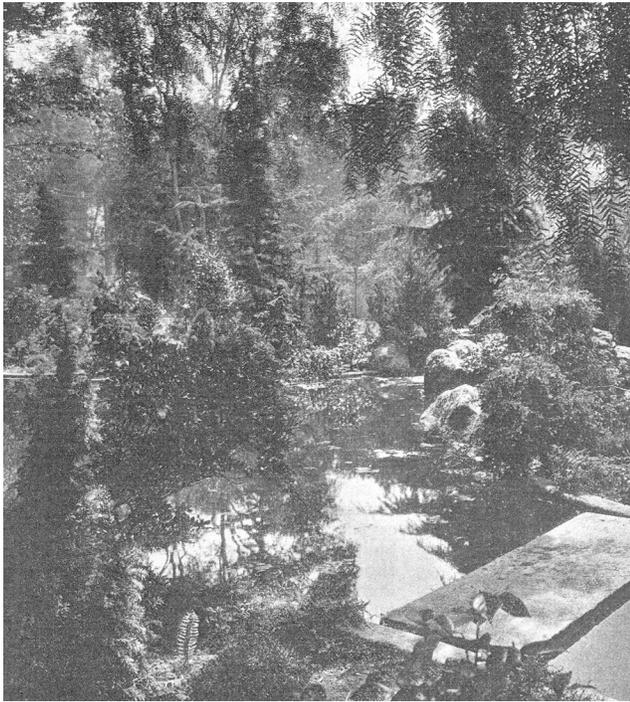
Co., Landscape Engineers.” It's enough to make one question whether John McLaren should receive credit for designing anything between 1910 and 1925, when his son was in business.¹

The ever-present descriptive appellation “son of John McLaren, superintendent of Golden Gate Park” added after Donald's own name when it appeared in print may have been another irritant. No doubt the intention was benign—meant merely to distinguish this particular Donald McLaren from all the others of that ilk; it is not, after all, a particularly uncommon name. Nevertheless, it must have rankled after 10 years of repetition, and the irritation may

have worked both ways. For a change, when the MacRorie-McLaren Co. won the contract to beautify Wingfield Park in Reno, Nevada, in 1920, the *Reno Evening Gazette* of 10 March 1920 gave sole credit for designing “the landscape wonders of the Panama Pacific International Exposition” to Donald McLaren. Could it have been Donald who gave reporters that impression?²

Because Donald was largely forgotten after his death at a comparatively young

(Continued on page 10.)



Another image from Morrow's article, showing a "natural effect" around a pond on the Leet estate at San Jose. Note the feeling evoked that this could be a Japanese-style garden, enhanced by the use of a rock slab bridge, weeping willow, placement of boulders. Nothing remains of this estate, this section of The Alameda now being all subdivided into commercial properties. (Architect & Engineer, March 1923).

age, and because his father was such a fixture in the Bay Area for so long (54 years at Golden Gate Park alone), the problem only gets worse in the present day. Whenever the firm name of MacRorie-McLaren is seen today, too many authors automatically assume the involvement of John McLaren. Donald used photographs of his work for the Andrew Welch estate on the San Francisco Peninsula in his firm's 1918 advertisements, in a 1921 article he wrote for the *Building Review*, and in Irving F. Morrow's 1923 article for *Architect & Engineer*. Yet, in *No Sidewalks Here: A Pictorial History of Hillsborough, California* (1999), local historians Michael Svanevik and Shirley Burgett gave all the credit to John McLaren.

Some Puzzles Remain Unsolved

Donald published another article in the April 1920 issue of *Architect & Engineer*, and this is also cause for some confusion, aside from someone getting the client's name wrong in the photo caption. The first illustration was for "Entrance Driveway, Country Place of Mr. George M. Newhall [*sic*], Hillsborough. A good example of the proper use of Lombardy poplars." It may after all be too broad an assumption to believe that McLaren would feature only photographs of his own work in these articles, because

Porter Garnett (*Stately Homes of California*, 1915) stated very specifically that George Almar Newhall's "house and gardens were designed by Mr. Lewis P. Hobart." On the other hand, it is possible that Hobart hired MacRorie-McLaren to do the actual installation of this formal Italianate garden, if not the design. The Redwood City estate of George Lent is another pictured in this article, as is that of Mr. Frank Ames of Hillsborough, both confirmed as McLaren clients.⁴

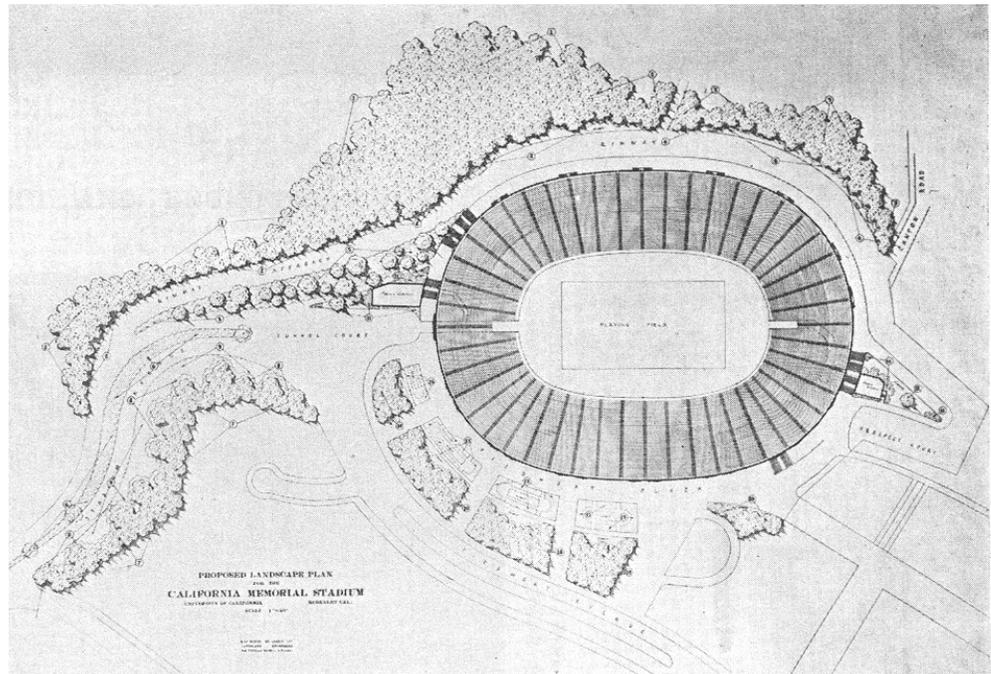
In 1921 the firm sold its SF flower shop, relocating their landscape office to Suite 301 in the Phelan Building, and they also won a contract to construct Central Park in Bakersfield. As one begins to expect by now, a 2009 document published by that city named MacRorie-McLaren Company [*sic*] as the contracting firm, but credited the work to "partner" John McLaren of Golden Gate Park fame, having no notion of Donald's existence. In 1922, MacRorie-McLaren did the landscaping around 10 model homes built for the "California Complete Home Exposition" held at Oakland's Lakeshore Highlands. Morrow's 1923 article had copies of plans or photographs indicating commissions for W.H. Talbot in Hillsborough (the San Mateo City & County Historical Society now holds those plans); a grammar school in Antioch (no longer extant); Gordon Ainsley's residence at Campbell (a bit of a puzzle as Emerson Knight is also reputed to have designed a garden for Ainsley—neither extant, as the cottage was later moved to a new location to preserve it and no effort was made to replicate either design around this still existing building); the Stanford University stadium (landscape still extant but there are plans—presently in abeyance due to the economic crisis—to tear it down and built a new facility); the UC Berkeley Memorial Stadium (following the eventual failure of the tree-sitting campaign [12/06 through 9/08], the landscaping was largely destroyed to make room for earthquake retrofitting); the Robert Oxnard residence in Redwood City; and the Balboa Terrace subdivision which borders St. Francis Wood in San Francisco.⁵

Business and Family Stresses Increase

The 1920 US Census showed Donald still living with his parents and daughter at the Lodge, Golden Gate Park, but voter registration records (*Ancestry.com*, 11 Aug. 2010) for that year had him at a new SF address, 920 Leavenworth Street. It is known that Donald remarried at some point that year, but other facts are still sparse; the 1910 US Census revealed that Donald's new wife Helen (aka Helena and Helene) was the elder sister of his new business partner, Walter A. Hofinghoff (later shortened to Hoff), born in California of Russian parents. She had formerly been

employed as a teacher in the San Francisco school system. According to Tom Girvan Aikman, John McLaren's biographer (*Boss Gardener*), Mattie McLaren didn't like her new stepmother and elected to remain with her grandparents at the Lodge—not unusual behavior for a 13-year-old who until now had had her father's exclusive attention. Nevertheless, her attitude and choice must have hurt Donald and perhaps made his new home life less than idyllic. The 1922 voter records showed Mrs. Helena McLaren residing alone at 1140 Bellevue Ave., Burlingame, indicating that the Donald McLarens maintained two residences, at least for a time: an apartment in San Francisco and a country place on the Peninsula. One report of McLaren's death noted that Helena McLaren was then residing at the Leavenworth address.

In 1922-23 MacRorie-McLaren expanded its nursery operation with the opening of a branch outlet in San Francisco, located on approximately four acres of land leased from the Spring Valley Water Co. at Lake Merced. It was during this period that business troubles began to increase exponentially for Donald McLaren. First came the defection of Donald's brother-in-law, Walter A. Hoff. Not only did he leave McLaren in the lurch at a critical moment, but he then proceeded to set up his own business (early enough to be listed in the 1922 *Redwood City Directory*), in partnership with a former MacRorie-McLaren employee, Gardner A. Dailey, and landscape gardener Herman J. Scherer. Called the West Coast Nursery Company, it had an office at 1154 Hobart Building, San Francisco, and a nursery located at the intersection of El Camino Real and San Francisquito Creek in Palo Alto, with the land for the latter being leased from Stanford University. Their advertisement in the August 1924 *Pacific Coast Architect* read, "It is the aim of the West Coast Nursery Company to produce garden effects as visualized by the architect and client." Their motto was "Plant to a plan," and they were clearly competing for McLaren's customer base.



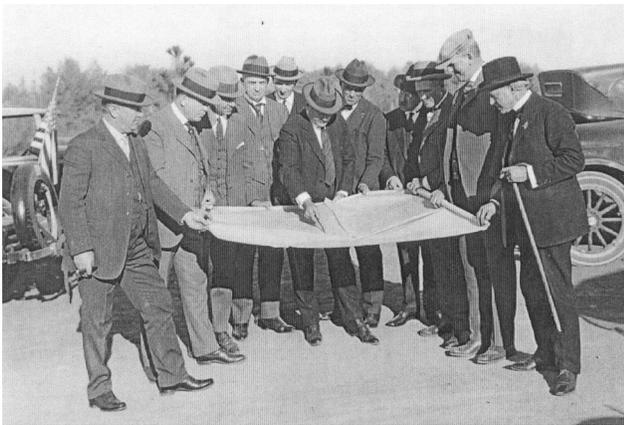
The MacRorie-McLaren landscape plan for the California Memorial Stadium at UC Berkeley also appeared in Morrow's 1923 article. The stadium and the grove of trees McLaren planted were called "Memorial" in honor of the soldiers who gave their lives in WWI. McLaren is credited with creating another war memorial in Watsonville, which is still extant—a circle of redwoods and several oak trees crammed into one small, pie-shaped lot. Newspapers of the day variously credited either or both John and Donald McLaren for the Watsonville memorial. (Architect & Engineer, March 1923.)

Then on 6 June of the following year, Daniel MacRorie died unexpectedly at the age of 53. Donald was left without his seasoned and reliable partner of 14 years, without a manager of his nursery, and presumably minus the money necessary to buy back Hoff's shares of the company stock.⁶

Sometime in 1923, probably after MacRorie's death, Donald McLaren hired Conrad L. Wirth, newly graduated from the University of Massachusetts. In his 1980 autobiography *Parks, Politics, and the People*, Wirth (who later became Director of National Parks) wrote rather disparagingly of his two years with MacRorie-McLaren: "I was the first and only professional landscape architect in the firm. The other members were interested primarily in selling nursery stock. They planned and developed some very fine estates, however, and it was a great experience for me.... In the early spring of 1924, I had gotten jobs in the firm for two classmates of mine, Effy Buckley, a landscape architect of Natick, Massachusetts, and Willie Marshman, a pomologist of Springfield, Massachusetts."⁷

In the McLaren obituary notice that Minneapolis park superintendent Theodore Wirth wrote for *Parks & Recreation* he mentioned that though he had only met the younger McLaren on the occasion of his visit to the PPIE in 1915, "I have heard of him and his work through my sons and

(Continued on page 12.)



Executive board members of the Transcontinental Highways Exposition view plans for the California Building at Idlewild Park, Reno, Nev., 1925. Donald McLaren is the man standing at the center of the group with his head down, pointing at some detail of the plan. (UNRS -P1992-01-2173. Courtesy of the Special Collections Department, University of Nevada, Reno Library.)

others who have known or worked with him.” This suggests that the youngest Wirth, Walter L., may also have worked briefly for McLaren, though his brother never mentioned it. These brash new young men might have taken up some of the slack with the landscape work, and they had the assistance of two older and more experienced men in landscape engineers Louis Smaus (age 40) and Emery A. La Vallee (43), also both employed by the firm during this period. But who was running the nursery? One envisions McLaren as a juggler having trouble keeping too many balls in the air. He was vastly overworked. Aikman reported that McLaren began to rely on the bottle to alleviate his business worries, and soon became an alcoholic.⁸

Despite whatever demons he was struggling with, Donald’s success at garnering commissions for the firm continued. In 1924, he obtained the contract to landscape the 1927 Transcontinental Highway Exposition at Reno, Nevada. Undoubtedly an earlier commission to beautify Reno’s Wingfield Park in 1920 led to McLaren being chosen again to lay out this exposition. The City of Fowler’s Union High School was also done in 1924. The Wirth obituary noted that Donald was responsible for the landscaping of Ellis Lake and its surrounding park at Marysville in that year, though other accounts credit his father; possibly John McLaren carried on the work following his son’s death. It was supposedly not concluded until 1939, probably due to financial difficulties resulting from the Great Depression.⁹

Donald signed a contract to landscape the new junior college campus for the city of Taft in January 1925. And in the same year MacRorie-McLaren was also chosen to

landscape the new Monterey Heights subdivision in San Luis Obispo, according to the “naturalistic” principles popularized by Olmsted—with pocket parks and curvilinear streets that followed the contours of the land. As one has come to expect, historian Margaret Lovell, who wrote the Cultural Heritage Report (2009), credited John McLaren for this accomplishment, having no knowledge of his son Donald as the sole surviving principal of the MacRorie-McLaren Company. Theodore Wirth credits Donald McLaren with other commissions: at the San Francisco Presidio, a park in Richmond, and some college grounds at Stockton—possibly the University of Pacific campus. However, no confirmation of these commissions has yet been discovered by the author.¹⁰

An Unexpected and Untimely Death

On the morning of 5 June 1925, Donald McLaren was found dead in his hotel room. Reporting on McLaren’s death, the *SF Examiner* stated that he had returned from Reno “last Friday,” where he was still working on the Exposition. “He was last seen by friends when he visited the offices of his firm in the Phelan building Monday morning. Robert Milligan [the bookkeeper] and Emery A. La Vallee, his business associates, said he seemed nervous and depressed—a condition that had been growing on him, they said, since the death of his business associate M. McRorie [*sic*].” A later article (“M’Laren Heirs Seek Life Risk,” *Chronicle*, 14 August 1925:8) stated that he did not communicate with his wife on his return to San Francisco—not too surprising under the circumstances.

McLaren had apparently checked into the somewhat seedy Alp Rose Hotel on Mission Street that Monday and continued there through Friday. According to another report in the *Oakland Tribune* the hotel landlord told of a rather strange conversation he’d had with McLaren shortly after midnight on 5 June, in which McLaren asked him in a jocular manner, “What would you do if I could not pay my rent?” He then told the proprietor that he was going back to Reno. Sometime later that morning, the proprietor smelled the odor of natural gas and found McLaren’s body in his room, with the gas burner turned on but not lit. This newspaper also stated that “McLaren was a member of the firm of McDorie & McLaren [*sic*] founded by his father, a widely known authority on horticulture.” As no note was left, a coroner’s inquest was held, and after hearing testimony from many witnesses, including company lawyer and director Oliver Dibble, “who declared that the financial condition of his business was never better..., the jury declared McLaren’s death was accidental.”

The newspapers reported that Helena McLaren was “near prostration from the shock.” Aikman wrote that it “probably hastened his mother’s passing” and that Donald’s daughter was also terribly shocked by the unexpected death of her father. After Jane McLaren died at the Lodge in Golden Gate Park only 15 months later, John was left to soldier on alone, raising his 17-year-old granddaughter Mattie with the help of the faithful housekeeper, and never referring to his own grief over these events.¹¹

In May 1927, the MacRorie-McLaren Nursery Tract on the Peninsula was subdivided and sold by the Bell Brothers of San Francisco. Advertisements for the sale appeared in the *San Mateo Times and Daily News Leader* (“Bell Tract,” 25 May 1927). On 14 May 1929, the Decree of Dissolution of MacRorie-McLaren Company was filed with the State of California. This document stated that 117.5 shares of company stock were held by Donald’s daughter, Martha Jane McLaren; an equal number of shares belonged to Donald’s second wife, and now widow, Helene McLaren. Daniel MacRorie’s widow, Florence, and his daughter, Janet, each owned 107.5 shares. John McLaren had 17 shares; Alex J. Garden (at one time assistant superintendent of Golden Gate Park under John McLaren) and his wife, Babette, held five shares, as did landscape gardener [William] McMillan Brown; and three members of the Board of Directors, lawyers Oliver, Dibble and J.E. McCurdy, and bookkeeper Robert Milligan each had one share—the total number being 480. The amount of subscribed stock was \$48,500; thus each share was priced at approximately \$100. The estate consisted of \$45,602.66 in capital assets. Assets after distribution were \$2,897.23 and total indebtedness was \$60,672.34. The author, who is neither a lawyer nor an accountant, may be missing something, but this does not sound quite like “business was never better.”¹²

The Unknown Man—New Discoveries

As mentioned earlier, Donald continues to go largely unrecognized today, even by relatives. The family photograph shown in Part I of this article (*Eden* 13, No. 2, Summer 2010) was provided to McLaren biographer Tom Aikman by Donald’s granddaughter. Apparently neither the granddaughter nor Aikman (whose grandmother was John McLaren’s younger sister) recognized the “unknown man” as Donald. Raymond H. Clary (*Making of Golden Gate Park*) stated that “Donald and his father owned and operated a nursery on El Camino Real in San Mateo County”; he apparently knew nothing of MacRorie or of Donald’s extensive work as a landscape engineer. William A. Mann

(author of *Landscape Architecture: An Illustrated History in Timelines, Site Plans and Biography* [1993]) gleaned his information from Conrad Wirth’s autobiography (they are the only two who referred to the firm as “MacRory & McLaren”), but then got confused about which McLaren Wirth had said was the owner of the business. Ethan Carr (*Mission 66*) got the McLarens straight but also credited Donald with being only a nurseryman.¹³

As often seems to be the case with the author’s research projects, there remain several avenues to pursue and assorted details to pin down. In the last few months alone, two additional articles written by Donald McLaren have been discovered: the first a 1910 piece on orchids done for a small San Francisco literary journal called *Philopolis*, and the other a July 1914 exposition article (see Endnote 1, Part I).

A perusal of various digitized gardening journals has revealed a number of other helpful items. It has finally been confirmed that William (Bill) McMillan Brown was once employed at Sandringham Palace. More importantly for our purposes, he was also employed by MacRorie-McLaren as late as 1915; by 1921 he was working in the Burlingame greenhouses of Peterson & Haywood, who had recently bought out Henry Maier. But if Brown ever worked for John McLaren or was in partnership with MacRorie, it can only have been during the brief period between Brown’s arrival at San Francisco in April 1909 and the formation of MacRorie-McLaren Co. in June. The 1910 census shows that Brown only immigrated to the US in 1907, and letters and articles published in gardening journals prove that from December 1907 to April 1909 he was employed at ‘Langwater Gardens,’ the estate of F.L. Ames in North Easton, Massachusetts.

In addition, supporting evidence has now been found that the Stockdale Nurseries at Burlingame *had* belonged to W.S. Tevis and that Maier had been in charge of that facility before it was purchased by MacRorie-McLaren. After Miss Jennie Crocker acquired the Tevis estate, she kept Maier in her employ and apparently entered the florist business herself with the creation of the Hillsborough Nurseries.¹⁴

While there is undoubtedly still more information to be found, if nothing else, it is hoped that “The Other McLaren” will, once and for all, set the record straight as to which McLaren was the principal of MacRorie-McLaren Co. and what his firm managed to accomplish in its 17 years of existence.

[The endnotes for this article follow, on page 14.]

Endnotes for “The Other McLaren: Part III”

1. Frederick W. Jones, ed., “The Charm of the Small House,” and “Notes on the F.W. Bradley Residence,” *Architect & Engineer* 57, no. 3 (June 1919): 54-57; “Famous Artist Will Landscape Home Here,” *San Jose Evening News*, 28 July 1921: 1. *Genealogy.com*. Web. 15 May 2010; Irving F. Morrow, “Work of the Landscape Engineer,” *Architect & Engineer* 72, no. 3 (March 1923): [94]-104, A-H; Donald McLaren, “Gardening of Our Country Homes,” *Building Review* 24, no. 4 (October 1923): 37-40, xx.
2. “Landscape Expert Enthuses Over City Park,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, 10 March 1920: 8. *Ancestry.com*. Web. 29 May 2010.
3. “MacRorie-McLaren Company,” *Architect & Engineer* 52, no. 5 (May 1918): 28; Donald McLaren, “Spring Flowering Bulbs in California,” *Building Review* 20, no. 3 (September 1921): 47-49, 57; Morrow, *Architect & Engineer* (March 1923).
4. Donald McLaren, “California Gardening,” *Architect & Engineer* 61, no. 1 (April 1920): 77-81. It has only recently been learned that the Lent/Redwood City and Oxnard/Redwood City commissions were connected and date back to 1911-12. Oxnard bought the property in 1911 and immediately sold half of it to Lent. Both men hired MacRorie-McLaren to landscape their grounds. The Schellens Papers (v. 26.1, p. 123, 1912, Redwood City Public Library History Room) contain a note about existing MacRorie-McLaren landscape plans found at the Peninsula Covenant Church, which now owns a portion of the Oxnard estate.
5. *Crocker-Langley SF Directory* (1921 and 1922). *Archive.org*. Web. 9 Aug. 2010; “Rehabilitate Bakersfield Right, A Guide to Construction within Older Historic Neighborhoods,” City of Bakersfield Economic and Community Development Department, 2009. PDF file sent to the author on 6.16.10; “Home Building Exposition Is Taking Shape,” *Oakland Tribune*, 27 August 1922: 2-T. *Ancestry.com*. Web. 29 May 2010; Morrow, *Architect & Engineer*; “California Memorial Stadium.” *Wikipedia.org*. Web. 11 Aug. 2010.
6. Spring Valley Water Company records, 1856-1952, BANC MSS C-G 189, Carton 52, Folders 33, 40; *1922 Directory for San Carlos, Redwood City, Menlo Park, Atherton, Woodside and Portola* (Redwood City, CA: Willis L. Hall, 1922); “West Coast Nursery Company,” *Pacific Coast Architect* 26, no. 2 (August 1924): 34. Sometime after the formation of his new company, Hoff bought out partners Dailey and Scherer and carried on the business alone; Scherer continued to work for various nurseries in northern and southern California, and ended up as Superintendent of State Parks at Long Beach, while Dailey left the country for a time, then returned to open a San Francisco office as a building architect; “Daniel A. MacRorie to Be Buried Today,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 June 1923.
7. Conrad Louis Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980): n. pag. *NPS.gov*. Web. 10 Aug. 2009. Wirth’s recollection of the firm name was “MacGrory & McLaren” and this error was repeated by William A. Mann, *Landscape Architecture, an Illustrated History in Timelines, Site Plans, and Biography* (1993).
8. Theodore Wirth, “Death of Donald McLaren,” *Parks & Recreation* 8, no. 6 (July-August 1925): 576-77. A biography of Conrad’s brother, Walter Wirth, stated that he “engaged in contracted landscape design work with park systems in San Francisco and Los Angeles” around 1923, another indicator that he may have been hired either by Donald or John McLaren for a time. “Walter L. Wirth.” *AAPRA.org*. Web. 14 June 2010; Aikman, *Boss Gardener*, 83.
9. “Support Pledged to Exposition,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, 3 October 1924; “Council Hires Landscape Man,” *Gazette*, 11 March 1920. *Ancestry.com*. Web. 15 June 2010; “MacRorie-McLaren Co.,” *Pacific Coast Architecture* 26, no. 5 (November 1924): 36; Wirth, *Parks & Recreation*; Tammy L. Hopkins and Henry Delamere, *Marysville* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007): 92. Two newspaper citations confirming the Ellis Lake commission have since been discovered in the *Oakland Tribune*, 20 July 1924: D4 and 1 January 1924:11. *Ancestry.com*. Web. 27 Nov. 2010.
10. Kern County Hall of Records. *Recordonline.co.kern.ca.us*. Web. 16 June 2010; Margaret Lovell, Cultural Heritage Committee Report: Monterey Heights Subdivision. *ci.san-luis-obispo.ca.us*. Web. 8 Aug. 2009; Wirth, *Parks & Recreation*.
11. “Death of SF Park Designer Still Puzzle,” *SF Examiner*, 6 June 1925; “Donald M’Laren Is Found Dead,” *Oakland Tribune* 5 June 1925; “Death of McLaren Is Held Accident,” *Tribune*, 20 June 1925. *Ancestry.com*. Web. 15 Jan. 2009; Aiken, *Boss Gardener*, 84-87.
12. The “Decree of Dissolution” is filed with the “Articles of Incorporation-MacRorie-McLaren Company” at the California State Archives in Sacramento. On 14 August 1925, the *SF Chronicle* reported that MacRorie-McLaren Co. had filed suit for payment of a \$50,000 insurance policy. “Attached to the complaint is a photostat copy of the \$50,000 policy, which shows that McLaren also had taken out a \$25,000 policy with the same insurance company. Checkup late yesterday failed to reveal whether or not the \$25,000 policy was paid.” No report of the outcome of this suit has yet been located. It would also be interesting to know on what dates the two policies were issued.
13. Marlea Graham, “The Other McLaren, Part I,” *Eden* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 1; Aikman, *Boss Gardener*: viii, 94; Clary, *Making of Golden Gate Park, the Early Years*: 76; William A. Mann, *Landscape Architecture, an Illustrated History in Timelines, Site Plans and Biography* (NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1993): 385; Ethan Carr, *Mission 66* (Amherst, MA: UMass Press, 2007): 40.
14. Robin C. Baily, “SF Supplies Orchids to Britain’s Queen,” *SF Call*, 12 May 1912: 3. *cdnc.ucr.edu*. Web. 23 Aug. 2010. “Pacific Coast Horticultural Society,” *American Florist* 43, no. 1385 (19 December 1914): 1150; “The Retail Trade: San Francisco – Notes.” *American Florist* 44, no. 1406 (15 May 1915): 869; “Retail Trade: San Francisco – Notes,” *American Florist* 56, no. 1726 (2 July 1921): 1133. *Archive.org*. Web. 23 Aug. 2010. The 1910 US Census had William M. Brown, single, 30 years old, a native of Scotland who immigrated to the US in 1907 and was still of alien status, boarding at 20 DeWolf Street, San Francisco, and working as a florist on an orchid [illegible – farm?]. *Ancestry.com*. Web. 23 Aug. 2010; Wm. McM. Brown, Langwater Gardens, Mass. USA, “American Notes on Carnations,” *Journal of Horticulture and Home Farmer* 55 (12 December 1907): 562-63; Wm. J. Stewart, ed., “Personal,” *Horticulture* 9, no. 15 (10 April 1909): 531. “Wm. McM. Brown...has resigned his position with W.N. Craig on the Ames estate, North Easton, Mass., and started on April 9 for the Pacific coast, with a view to possibly locating there.”; “San Francisco, Cal.,” *American Florist* 35, no. 1168 (22 October 1910): 620; “Hillsboro, Calif.,” *American Florist* 37, no. 1214 (9 September 1911): 361. *Archive.org*. Web. 23 Aug. 2010.



Book Reviews & News

Living Landscape: The Extraordinary Rise of the East Bay Regional Park District and How It Preserved 100,000 Acres. Laura McCreery (Berkeley: Wilderness Press, 2010), 194 pp. \$24.95

Living Landscape celebrates the 75th anniversary of the East Bay Regional Park District, the first regional park district in the United States and now the largest. The district was established in 1934 in Alameda County. Its first parks covered 4,000 acres and included portions of Tilden Park in Berkeley and Redwood and Temescal Parks in Oakland. Its first goals were the preservation of the ridgeline between Alameda and Contra Costa counties and the creation of recreational areas.

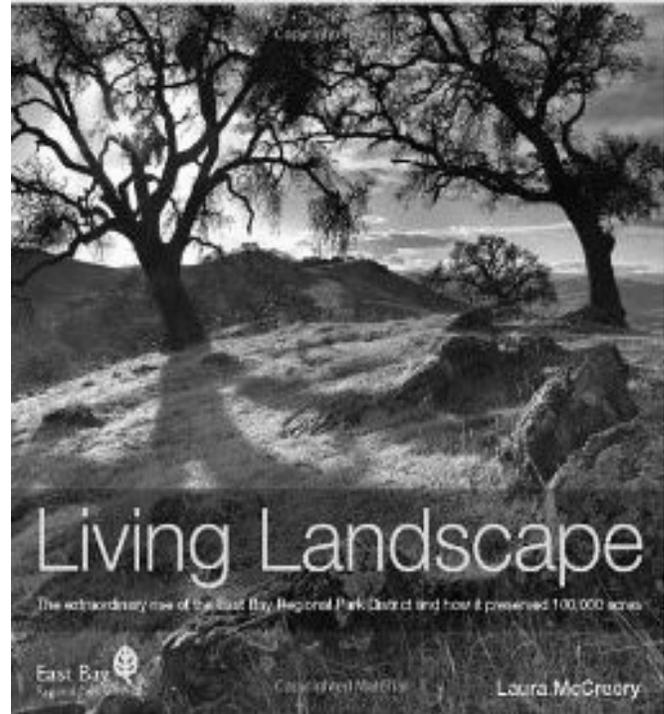
In 1930, the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts with Anson Hall of the National Park Service did a master plan for 10,000 acres of surplus watershed land at the request of the East Bay Regional Park Association, a group of local park and recreation organizations and individual citizens. Four years later, local voters created a special district. It took over 30 years to acquire the land envisioned in the Olmsted-Hall report.

In 1964, the Contra Costa County Park District merged with the East Bay Regional Parks, adding additional acreage and spurring the major expansion and acquisition program which eventually led to today's vast holdings. The expanded parks were the vision of William Penn Mott, Jr., general manager from 1962 until 1967, when he was asked to head the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the National Park Service. The 1974 master plan expanded the goals of the park district and identified seven classifications of property which should be acquired: regional parks, recreation areas, wilderness, shoreline parks, trails, preserves, and land banks. These categories still guide the expansion strategies. By 1984, the District's 50th year, it owned almost 60,000 acres.

The author, Laura McCreery, is an oral historian at the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California at Berkeley, specializing in California politics. This history focuses on politics, coalitions, partnerships, finance, and the incorporation of the environmental movement into the park district's mission. The author tells a dramatic story of strong personalities, board room battles, and bond issues. She also points out that one of the East Bay Regional Park District's original policies was "to insist upon the most rigid economy," a practice it still adheres to.

Living Landscape is organized thematically into chapters, such as Beginnings, Expansion, Land, Voters, and Stewardship, which generally coincide with the chronology. It is well written, well designed, and beautifully illustrated with historical and contemporary photographs. It is written for a general audience and, despite its narrow geographical area, will inspire park advocates everywhere. It is a fitting celebration of 75 years of innovative park administration. The design of the parks and their structures is another topic for another book.

—Margaretta J. Darnall



Wish to suggest that a recently published or reprinted/revised book be reviewed in a future issue of Eden? Or might you like to contribute a review yourself? Contact book editor Margaretta J. Darnall at 1154 Sunnyside Road, Oakland, CA 94610, or phone 510-836-1805. Please provide title, subtitle; author or editor name(s); publisher; and publication date.

Reporting on Our Annual Conference: “Santa Cruz—Land of 1001 Wonders”

—Barbara Marinacci

If you couldn't attend our annual conference that commemorated CGLHS's founding in 1995, you might like to read about its wonderfully diverse offerings during those three very busy days—from Friday, October 15th, to Sunday, the 17th—at various locations on the north side of Monterey Bay. Altogether, we made a dozen different “official” stops. We warmly thank Marlea Graham, the conference's extraordinary convener. She was ably supported by a number of people whose contributions are acknowledged in the textbox on page 19.

The Board of Directors' fall meeting was held Friday morning at Codiga Center and Agricultural Museum in Watsonville. Afterwards, in the early afternoon, other conference attendees arrived, and from there we carpoled eastward to make our first site visit at Suncrest Nurseries, which sells only to wholesale customers. The 65-acre spread specializes in Mediterranean-climate plants, particularly California natives. There, horticultural director “Mike” Nevin Smith talked about his lengthy involvement in nursery operations and his love for bringing back new and unusual plants from the Sierra terrain.

While some people stayed on to view a small portion of Suncrest's vast plant collection, others returned to the Agricultural Museum, where Director Pat Johns told of admirable efforts made over the years by an all-volunteer group that constructed the building, provided artifacts illustrating the area's agricultural history, created museum displays, and now hosts educational programs and social events. Despite growth all around it, the Watsonville area still remains primarily a farming community, as our drives through the rural landscape revealed. It's especially known for producing different kinds of berries.

Our next stop was in the town itself, at the Bockius-Orr house and garden. Now the home of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association, it contains extensive records and mementos pertaining to the region's history—much of it connected with the business of agriculture and families who conducted it. Led through the house (now a small historical museum) and around the well-kept garden, we heard about past glories, were graciously served refreshments, and visited an archive-holding outbuilding with displays of agricultural items created for our tour.

From there we drove northward on Highway 1, then took the narrow and challenging old *carreta* road to the Rancho San Andres Castro Adobe. The two-story *casa*, initially built in the early 1850s (using Castro's Gold Rush earnings), was badly damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Now the property of California State

Parks, which acquired it from its last owner, historian Edna Kimbro, it has already undergone extensive external and internal repairs. We were privileged to visit the site, as it probably won't be open to the public for some years, dependent—as such major restoration projects usually are—on financial and volunteer support.



*The Bockius-Orr house and garden in Watsonville are well tended by the Pajaro Valley Historical Association, and a local garden club.
(All photos in this article were taken by B. Marinacci.)*

We assembled in the back garden area, where State Parks Ranger Julie Sidel and Castro family descendent Charlie Kieffer provided background history. Their accounts included the 1960s, when landscape architect Thomas Church, a friend of the owners, designed the gardens there, whose only survivors may be a few shrubs and big, contorted cork oak trees that line the outside wall. The house itself, with a Monterey-style balcony, has been stabilized but needs more fix-ups before the interior finishing and decorating can be done. The mostly barren yards, pockmarked with gopher holes, must be totally re-landscaped. So this perplexing issue got debated: When restoring authentic “historic” landscaping, to which time period should it be returned? Here, the time span ranges from the late Californio period (the transition to total Anglo settlement) to Church's probable garden designs and plantings more than a century later. Not surprisingly, no consensus was reached.

Our Friday ended splendidly at the reception given at the historic Sesnon House on the Cabrillo College campus in Aptos, located between Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

There we mingled sociably while enjoying a sumptuous repast. Marlea Graham's first article about Donald McLaren in the Spring 2010 *Eden* had already provided some of this site's background history, particularly of its landscaping. Now she recapitulated it in a brief talk, while inviting us to view several poster-size enlargements of old photos taken of the once luxuriantly landscaped grounds.

The conference resumed on Saturday morning in the Arboretum building on the UC Santa Cruz campus. Marlea reminded us that this was exactly where, 15 years earlier, the California Garden & Landscape History Society got launched, under William Grant's leadership. Present, Bill then arose to tell us how he'd taken charge only because everyone he tried to buttonhole declined doing so.

First off, Director Brett Hall gave a winsome talk covering the origin of the Arboretum—called thus because the UC regents had said there were already enough botanic gardens on the various existing campuses, but found the tree-focused name acceptable ... and it was San Jose nurseryman Max Watson's donation of rare eucalyptus trees from Australia that started the project. Brett also told of his 35 years of employment there, mostly spent as garden manager, but recently as director of horticulture, after the Arboretum's fiscal straits forced numerous staff cutbacks. He then traced the origins of the notable collections of introduced plants, particularly from Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, that enable the Arboretum to supply nurseries and gardeners with remarkable Mediterranean-climate plants. The Arboretum is also known as a good source for acquiring unusual species of California natives, and periodic public sales days are highly popular.

Next on the program agenda came Judith Taylor, MD—the retired neurologist who has created an laudable second career as a horticultural historian, already resulting in three books. (The latest one is *The Global Migrations of Ornamental Plants: How the World Got into Your Garden*.) Her topic was “Begonia Breeders of Santa Cruz County.” Dr. Taylor summarized the origins in Eurasia of the begonia family, then told how over time two local nurseries made Capitola the world's center for breeding a succession of novel hybrids—and also launched the still

popular Begonia Festival. (This account will soon appear in her forthcoming book, *Visions of Loveliness: The Work of Forgotten Flower Breeders*.)

The final speaker was Pam-Anela Messenger—on the great span of work created by Thomas Dolliver Church in Northern California. Using a slide program for visual backups, she detailed Church's early involvement, in the late 1920s and early '30s, with real estate developer (and golf champion) Marion Hollins and architect William Wurster, as he carried out the Olmsted Brothers' plans for the Pasatiempo residential and golf course complex in Santa Cruz. She then covered the work that Church did three decades later in preparing the master plan for landscape development at the new UC campus to be located in Santa Cruz. Significantly, it called for placing buildings among existing trees, particularly the oaks and redwoods. “Instead of remaking the land, the land must remake our standard conceptions of building and plaza and parking lot,” was one of the principles Church contributed to the historic Master Plan document. Although the number and size of buildings, academic and utilitarian, have expanded greatly in the past four decades, UCSC manages to pre-

serve much of the ambience of a large property that's both forested and rural.

The morning session concluded with our Annual Membership meeting, including the election of officers and board members. During the buffet lunch, Marlea gave a brief “This Is Your Life” presentation on our founder, Bill Grant, and his many accomplishments, ending with gifting him with a case of Scotch and an honorary Life Membership in CGLHS.

After lunch, we headed outdoors, to follow Brett Hall through the Native Plant Garden area while he identified plants and discussed maintenance issues. He then asked us to choose which plant region to

visit next, with a specialist guide: New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, or Native Plants. After years of being tended by staff and volunteers in these gardens, many of the specimens we saw—such as unusual species of Australian banksias and eucalyptus and of South African proteas—may be much larger and healthier than their counterparts growing wild in less hospitable homeland terrains.



UCSC Arboretum manager and horticulturist Brett Hall strokes one of the many species of sizable and mature eucalyptus trees in the Australia section..

(Continued on page 18.)

Our Santa Cruz Conference (continued)

The day's last scheduled stop came at the Alan Chadwick Garden. There its manager, Orin Martin, greeted us in the redwood cabin headquarters, then summarized the 43-year history of this two-acre hillside growing space created in the late 1960s on the fledgling campus by the peripatetic Brit whose well-publicized work here began inspiring a new nationwide interest in organic gardening and biodynamic principles. (For background information, see Martha Brown's lead article in the Fall 2010 *Eden*.)

Calling our attention to two table displays of autumnal produce, Orin discussed their attributes: varieties of apples (both heirlooms and hybrids) and peppers (sweet or hot). Finally, he took us along pathways through areas of the terraced garden, where apple trees were still shedding their fruits and long beds of winter crop seedlings stretched up the slope above us. Rain droplets were starting to descend, presaging a wet Sunday ahead. Some intrepid souls went off to other campus locations, using a map that identified the locations of noteworthy historic landscaping.



Manager Orin Martin took the CGLHS group on a tour of a portion of UCSC's Alan Chadwick Garden..

Sunday proved the accuracy of the rain forecasts. Our first convergence was at 9:30 a.m. at the afore-mentioned Pasatiempo Golf Course and Country Club Estates (whose origin was delineated in the Spring and Fall *Edens*). We assembled at the home of Craig and Mimi French—the couple who have beautifully preserved and restored (wherever possible) what had been Thomas Church's home (with studio) and landscaped garden areas. Our generous and articulate hosts led us, in small groups, slowly through the William Wurster-designed house and around the grounds, detailing at each stop their considerable knowledge and appreciation of Wurster's and Church's originals, and pointing out modifications made over time that at times they've admirably managed to reverse.



An old brick stairway leads up to the road from Thomas Church's former home in Santa Cruz's Pasatiempo enclave.

From the Church house we walked back up the road to the Club House, where local historian Bob Becker stood on the balcony overlooking part of the golf course and showed us photos of the original golf course designed and laid out by the Scottish golf course expert, Dr. Alister MacKenzie. He told stories of its creation and evolution, and answered our questions, often with sage humor. Soon due to arrive at the next site, we had little time to drive around and explore other portions of Pasatiempo, using the provided map. Besides, the intermittent but sometimes heavy rainfall had become a deterrent.

The next venue was the capacious CC Moore/Rittenhouse property, on aptly named High Street. Built on a portion of the original Rancho Tres Ojos de Agua, it ranks among Santa Cruz's most historically important



A waterfall carries the creek water from one pond to another in the attractive landscaping on the Tres Ojos / Moore-Rittenhouse estate.

gardens. The Spanish name, “three eyes of water,” derives from the trio of still-extant pools dotting the neighborhood, fed by underground aquifers on the UCSC campus. A year-round stream from one of these three pools crosses the Rittenhouse land, then terminates downtown at the Neary lagoon. Our group gathered on the office porch to hear Marlea summarize the site’s historical background, while resident-owner Louis Rittenhouse stood nearby, ready to answer questions. In the early 1900s wealthy industrial engineer CC Moore acquired some of the rancho acreage which he developed into an elegantly landscaped estate, with a nine-hole golf course, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, and a tennis court, as well as a working farm. Since the 1940s the Rittenhouse family has retained a smaller portion of Moore’s holding. They have re-landscaped the grounds within the remaining framework of historic trees, and are currently renovating the original Craftsman house.

Venturing out across the wide, rain-drenched lawn, we viewed trees, shrubs, and bedding plants that surround the historic rock-lined pools, crisscrossed the creek on small metal bridges that replaced Moore’s earlier rustic-style wooden ones, and admired the 3-decker tree house built in a towering old cypress by a Rittenhouse son some 30 years ago.

After taking time out for lunch, we headed for the final tour site—and surely the most amazing one. Arriving at Laguna Ranch, located in the midst of coastal hills, we walked down from the parking area toward a family compound of weathered redwood houses, where Stephanie and

David Mills have lived for about a decade. And there Stephanie has created, in the words of CGLHS’s new president, Judy Horton, “one of the most outstanding Mediterranean gardens in all of California.”

Leading groups around her vast garden, Stephanie told us she doesn’t leave the premises often, and admits (quite understandably) to not always knowing or remembering common or botanical names. Stretching over several acres are remarkable arrangements of plants of every possible color, in an astounding variety of sizes, shapes, and textures—some grouped in containers or nestled among rocks. Often placed among them or swirling above are sculptures made of wood, concrete, metal, natural fiber, colorful plastic; ancient, classical, or modern; fantastic, whimsical, or reverential. Stretching westward toward the ocean, the garden’s distinctive sections are often accessed by going through gates or up stone or brick stairways. Here and there a stream meanders, filling small verdant ponds.

It’s greatly challenging to maintain such a remarkable and glorious garden, full of thousands of diverse plants and many decorative accouterments—particularly under the nearly constant barrage of coastal winds. Somehow this gets done by the hand-on resident gardener, the highly hospitable Stephanie Mills, who kindly invited us indoors to warm up and dry out a bit before wending our various ways back home.

We hope you’re already planning to join us during next year’s annual conference in San Luis Obispo—on September 9th to 11th. Stay tuned!



A quirky red giraffe sculpture surveys its exotically landscaped surroundings at the Laguna Ranch.

A THANK-YOU TO A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE

For much-appreciated help in setting up facets of our Santa Cruz conference, and then for as-needed support during those three busy days, I am much beholden to CGLHS members Phoebe Cutler, Peggy Darnall, Nancy Mead, Judith M. Taylor, MD, Ann Scheid, Susan Chamberlin, and Judy Horton—also to my ever-diligent and amiable partner, Jerry Flom, CGLHS’s retiring treasurer. Valuable assistance was provided in advance and during our site visits by a number of others: Jane Borg of the Pajaro Valley Historical Association; Pat Johns, director of the Agricultural History Museum; Carolyn Swift of the Capitola Historical Museum; local historian Charlene Duval, who provided much valuable information about the Castro Adobe and paved the way for our visit to Tres Ojos. Thanks are also owed to our very interesting speakers—Brett Hall, Judith Taylor, and Pam-Anela Messenger; to our tour guides—“Mike” Nevin Smith (Suncrest Nurseries), Pat Johns (Ag. Museum), Jane Borg and all her helpers (Bockius-Orr House), park ranger Julie Sidel and Castro descendent Charlie Kieffer (Castro Adobe); Brett Hall and volunteers (UCSC Arboretum); Orin Martin (UCSC’s Chadwick Garden); and Bob Becker (Pasatiempo Golf Course); and to those who generously opened their homes and gardens to us—Craig & Mimi French (Church residence), Louis Rittenhouse (Tres Ojos/C.C. Moore residence), and David & Stephanie Mills (Laguna Ranch).

Last but not least, we give thanks to all those who attended the conference, because without your participation the efforts made on your behalf would have been for naught!

—Marlea Graham

Two Southland “Tours & Talks”

This is the second article about the historic California ranches featured in CGLHS’s “Tours and Talks” that were offered in the Los Angeles area this year to our members, friends, and interested others. The Summer Eden reported on the May visit to King Gillette Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains.

In the late 18th and early to mid 19th centuries, vast sections of land, often over 40,000 acres, were deeded to colonists by Spain, then Mexico, primarily to be used for raising cattle. Over time, more than 600 of these family-occupied ranchos were created. When California became part of the United States after the Mexican War and then the Gold Rush quickly transformed the territory, many ranchos were acquired by non-Hispanic owners through intermarriage, purchase, foreclosure, dubious legal means, or seizure by squatters. Most then underwent subdivision, until few of the formerly huge Hispanic land spreads remained. Remnants, whether publicly or privately owned, often use Rancho in their names. Other sizable pastoral properties, especially ones with cattle or horses, may take up the name Ranch—which originated from the Spanish word.

WILL ROGERS STATE HISTORIC PARK

On a Saturday in mid-July a CGLHS group gathered for a three-hour tour of Will Rogers’ former ranch, led by Randy Young—noted local author, historian, and environmental activist who has taken a key role in its restoration. Joining him were curator Rochelle Nicolas-Booth and Trudi Sandmeier, president of Will Rogers Ranch Foundation, whose Swiss-born grandfather was Rogers’ longtime assistant.

Seventy-five years ago America’s much beloved movie star, humorist, and cowboy-author-philosopher departed forever from this 186-acre property. For 10 years he had developed the chaparral-covered land just north of Sunset Blvd., in the foothills of the transverse-range Santa Monica Mountains, within Pacific Palisades. He kept expanding a summer cabin with a view of the Pacific Ocean—until 31 rooms accommodated himself, his wife, Betty, and their three children in a sprawling, two-story house. All the important people in Hollywood were entertained there, and they marveled at the many ranch-themed objects arrayed in the living room: Indian rugs and baskets, a sun-bleached steer skull, Western paintings, a stuffed pet calf. Friends brought their horses for polo-playing on the field below the house, or borrowed them from the handsome stable up the hill to ride on trails Will had laid out. Sometimes he’d rope cattle that galloped by, to show off the talent that in his youthful years had



Will Rogers’ ranch house in Pacific Palisades. (Photos by B. Marinacci.)

earned him a living in vaudeville, leading ultimately to worldwide fame and fortune.

After moving to Southern California in the early 1920s, Rogers became one of the movie industry’s highest paid actors. He also gave public talks, had a radio program, wrote a newspaper column—always dispensing humorous, homespun wisdom. During the Depression this phenomenal transplant from Oklahoma’s Cherokee territory spent lavishly when creating his ranch. Will directed all the landscaping. He loved bright-blooming flowers. At the time there was little interest in using only California natives, so like many people he planted the fast-growing, shade-providing, drought-tolerant eucalyptus—particularly the blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), which has reproduced prolifically, to tower now above the paths and roadways.

Will Rogers’ exuberant life came to abrupt end in August of 1935, when aviator Wiley Post’s plane crashed in Alaska. A decade later, after Betty Rogers’ death, the ranch became a state historic park. But as the polo field, stables, and corrals began evolving into a playground and horse-boarding facility for prominent, wealthy Angelenos, not a venue to welcome visitors from around the world, the situation was successfully challenged, to end misuse by the privileged few. Meanwhile, as the ranch’s condition deteriorated, the Rogers family threatened to reclaim it—a

move that pushed the State of California into launching an ambitious restoration plan, aided by the fundraising done by the new Will Rogers Ranch Foundation.

Earthquake-retrofitting the house while restoring it to resemble its 1930s original, begun in 2006, is now completed. The handsome, historic stable has regained

its former splendor, though it no longer houses horses. The former garage building has a visitor center and provides upstairs offices for the State Park’s Topanga Sector.

Additional restoration efforts will continue as public and private funds permit. Attention will be given to returning the ranch’s landscaping, particularly around the house, to its appearance during Rogers’ years there. Thanks to his Hollywood connections, the many photographs taken there should make it possible for landscape designers to replicate the long-ago plantings. But allowances must be made for the tree growth in the past three-quarters of a century—for some now block Will’s once splendid ocean views.

RANCHO LOS ALAMITOS

In early October came CGLHS's third visit in this series of tours, when again we met at a notable historic California ranch property—this one at a prime location in Long Beach. All three ranches have had unique pasts, quite evident in their buildings and the landscaping created around them. We spent much of the day with Pamela Seager, the energetic and history-knowledgeable executive director of Rancho Los Alamitos.

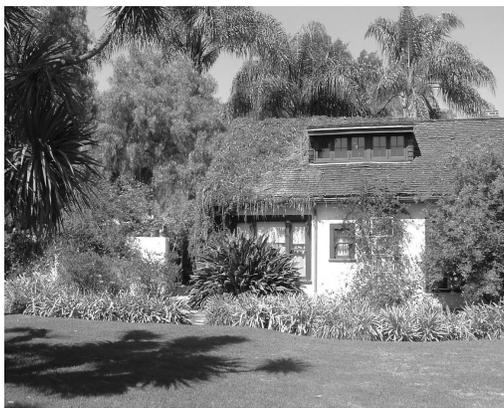
After creating in 1986 a master plan for restoring the buildings and landscaping, she took on the challenge of raising both public and private funds to gradually convert this city-



Director Pamela Seager shows displays of restoration and expansion plans.

owned property into an accessible and attractive venue that would offer a fine array of educational programs representing the thousand-year occupancy of this site and its coastal surroundings—above all vividly displaying a turn-of-the-20th century rural ambience. Rancho Los Alamitos (“Ranch of the Little Cottonwoods”) got its start in 1834, when Rancho Los Nietos was subdivided into five sections. (That immense ranch had been given a half-century earlier to a Spanish soldier who in 1769 had come with Portolá to occupy Alta California.) In 1842 Yankee businessman Abel Stearns acquired the 26,000-acre rancho and enlarged the adobe *casa* as a summer home for his young bride, Arcadia Bandini. While cattle raising continued there, the couple stayed mostly in El Pueblo de los Angeles, where their spacious home was the town's social center, both before and after the American takeover of California in 1848.

In 1866, after several drought years, Stearns lost the property to foreclosure. The premises deteriorated until purchased in 1881 by a partnership involving John W.



The original rancho casa has been much enlarged over the past century and a half. The old adobe blocks have been revealed behind some of the newer walls.

Bixby. In 1906 his son Fred, who had long participated in the ranch work there, inherited the central part of the property, which included the original but enlarged *casa* and the outbuildings. While Fred gave major attention to cattle raising and farming, his wife, Florence, devoted her time to remodeling the house and, above all, beautifully landscaping the grounds around her home, often doing the work herself.

The Bixby family struck it rich in 1921 when oil was discovered on some of the ranch's property, closer to the coast. “Alamitos No. 1” and its companion wells made Signal Hill the most productive oil field ever in the US. Over the years the extended Bixby family, owners of other properties as well, contributed generously to various Southern California communities. After Fred Bixby's death in 1968, the rancho's remaining 7½ acres were gifted to Long Beach for future use as a public attraction.

In the last two decades and more, Pamela Seager and the Rancho Los Alamitos Foundation have combined admirably with the City of Long Beach to create a museum in the old Bixby-era house, replicate the property's former identity as a ranch (even relocating buildings), and returning the gardens to past horticultural splendors. Ongoing work aims to show the authentic appearance of workplace areas, including barnyard, hayloft, blacksmith's shop, and stables. Children may especially enjoy and benefit from visits to this restored ranch.



Restoration efforts focus on replicating the Bixbys' working ranch, as well as Florence Bixby's attractive landscaping.

In the Spring 2011 issue we will report on our final Tour & Talk. Taking place in the Pasadena area over two days in mid-November, it covered much of landscape architect Beatrix Farrand's work in Southern California, from the late 1920s to the early '40s, and included a talk given by Judith Tankard, the author of Beatrix Farrand: Private Gardens, Public Landscapes.

A Valedictory Message from Our Outgoing President

As my term of office dwindles to a few days and the High Calorie season looms, the lull between these events and our last conference offers the opportunity of reviewing the Society's past year. My term has been a rewarding experience, made so by the dedication and hard work of the Board members, who have my thanks for their efforts and assistance.

A heap of thanks is due Marlea Graham, convener of our Annual Meeting and Conference at the Arboretum of the University of California at Santa Cruz, in the same room where we met to organize 15 years ago. We were pleased to be able to honor our founder, Bill Grant, who appeared little the worse for wear after celebrating with friends, the night before, the anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake they all endured.

Anyone who has ever put on this sort of event knows Murphy's Law rules, and comes with a whole list of small -print corollaries as well. One needs the mental agility of a chess master, the executive ability of a four-star general, and the patience of Job. *Brava*, Marlea!

Election of officers to the Board of Directors was held at the Santa Cruz Conference in mid-October with the proposed slate elected. Our President-elect is Judy Horton, who has been a powerhouse of ideas since joining the Board, which include organizing the popular Tours & Talks—this year's seminars given at specific gardens and sites in the Los Angeles area. These have also resulted in a significant increase in our membership. I have every confidence the Society will be in good hands under her leadership.

Aaron Landworth continues as Vice-President. His role, other than devoutly hoping he will not have to chair a meeting, has been to serve on several subcommittees, thus improving inter-subcommittee communication; to contribute practical ideas; and to apply words of cheer and an occasional cheering libation.

New board member Kathryn Rudnyk is from a generation brought up on computers and other socially connective gadgetry, and has fearlessly agreed to oversee the Society's Website. This frees our long-serving Susan Chamberlin from these duties. She (along with her husband and, later, Tom Buhl) has our thanks for creating and maintaining our Web presence for lo these many years. A major task of the next year will be to make our Website more useful and conversant with the newer technologies.

Another new member, Christy Edstrom O'Hara of San Luis Obispo, spreads the Board's geographic representation further within the Central Coast. She has agreed to take on the duties of Treasurer. Retiring treasurer Jerry Flom has labored mightily to bring our accounting and budgeting practices into compliance with federal requirements and to simplify them so we can better understand them. He is already well into the process of transfer and conversion of computer programs and materials to his replacement for a smooth transition.

Ann Scheid has agreed to stay on as Recording Secretary *pro-tempore* until someone else can be persuaded to take up this essential role in the Executive Committee. She has devised a very clever (actually brilliant) tabular form on her computer for keeping track of Board business, motions, votes, and the critical parts of discussions.

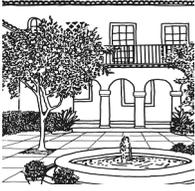
Phoebe Cutler returns to the Board as a Member-at-Large. Readers of *Eden* will recall the several excellent articles she has written for it, and she will also now serve on the Editorial Board. Two other new Members-at-Large we welcome aboard are Nancy Carol Carter, a San Diego-based lawyer and librarian with in-depth knowledge of many aspects of garden history; and Sandra Price, a landscape designer and garden restorer who lives in Napa Valley and is writing a master's thesis on the family farm's place in California history. Although Margaretta (Peggy) Darnall is leaving the Board, she will continue as *Eden's* Book Review editor.

The Board is planning a strategic planning retreat in February to assess the results of our previous such meeting two years ago and to determine areas to focus on for the future. And we now have an Editorial Board whose members will assist editor Barbara Marinacci in assembling and vetting the ingredients for *Eden*.

It has been a year of changing of the guard as some tasks are laid down, to be shouldered by others; such is the necessary process of renewal.

My thanks to all who made my term so enjoyable, and best wishes for continuing growth and success of the Society.

—Thomas Brown, President 2009–2010
California Garden & Landscape History Society
December 2010



Preservation Matters

The Cultural Landscape Foundation reported that the colorfully fanciful **La Laguna Playground** (aka “Dinosaur Park”) in San Gabriel’s **Vincent Lugo Park**, threatened with demolition in 2006, is being rescued. Created in the mid-1960s by master concrete artist Benjamin Dominguez, it was placed on the California Register of Historic Places in 2009. This year, the Friends of La Laguna received a Phase I rehabilitation grant of \$250,000 from the Cultural and Historic Endowment and the Western Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to restore “Lookout Mountain.” Other grants have been awarded or are pending for restoration of additional playground features, such as the large animal sculptures that children climb on. Assembly Bill AB 2701, introduced in 2010, was intended to amend the Health and Safety Code by acknowledging that certain playgrounds can be deemed historic landscapes, subject to the Historic Building Code—not to codes governing modern play structures. Unfortunately, it was vetoed. Visit www.friendsoflalaguna.org.

The 159-acre **Roeding Park in Fresno**, donated in 1903 by Frederick and Marianne Roeding, is threatened by the city’s plan to lease out a large section to a private company that operates the zoo within the park. Virtually an arboretum, it contains over 3700 tree specimens from around the world. The takeover would eliminate or transplant over 800 trees, destroy a series of ponds designed by landscape architect Johannes Reimers, remove original picnic areas, relocate a historic building, and in other ways negatively impact the park. (For a quick review of the park’s landscaping history, see Marlea Graham’s article in the Winter 2008 *Eden*, pp. 18-19.) Roeding family members are challenging this action, and Chris Pattillo of NorCal HALS wrote a report for consideration by the Historic Preservation Commission. Visit <http://www.saveroedingpark.org/>, or contact pattillo@PGAdesign.com.

The century-old **Aoyama Tree** in downtown Los Angeles urgently needs an irrigation system, as its trunk is surrounded by asphalt and concrete. This culturally significant landscape element represents the beginnings of the Japanese-American community, for it stood at the entrance to the Koyasan Buddhist temple, which long served as a spiritual, cultural, and social center for immigrants and their children. When the old temple was razed years ago to make way for a parking lot, the tree was allowed to remain. Its position now is fittingly near the Japanese American National Museum and the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy. In March of 2008 this 60-by-70 foot Moreton Bay fig tree was designated Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #920. It has acquired many admirers, but its continued survival is threatened by years of neglect, urban blight, abundant graffiti, and lack of water.



This large Ficus macrophylla in L.A.’s “Little Tokyo” needs TLC—especially in the form of H₂O.

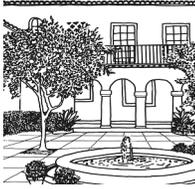
The Friends of Piedmont Way in Berkeley on November 6th, assisted by 24 UC students and some Berkeley Project volunteers, planted new street trees within the medians in that thoroughfare traversing the UC campus between Dwight Way and Stadium Rim Way. This deed culminates the long effort to replicate the original Olmsted designs for the historic boulevard, and it follows four years of hard work, including fundraising, that led to a successful application for a HALS listing (mentioned in the Spring 2006 *Eden*). The UC Chancellor’s Fund paid for the tree purchases, cutting tree wells, and hiring a service to provide weekly watering for several years while the trees get established. Support was provided by a number of groups listed on the Website: www.piedmontway.org.

HALS News

The Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) was created in 2000 as a federal program to document our nation’s significant cultural landscapes. In California, 10 years later, we continue to work to identify and document designed and vernacular landscapes for the HALS program. Northern California has an active HALS group; Southern California has done a number of training sessions, including one with the California Preservation Foundation for both SoCal and San Diego HALS. However, Southern California does not yet have an active “core group” of HALS supporters to do HALS “short format recordations” or to take on a major HALS project. (The desire may be there, but the economy is weak?) Hopefully, people who love Southern California’s cultural landscapes will want to join in the HALS effort. Also, it’s educational, fun, and you (literally) will be making history! If you’re interested, please contact Noel Vernon: ndvernon@csupomona.edu.

In 2010, its 10th year, HALS issued the Theme Park Challenge. (CGLHS member Janet Gracyk won 3rd place for her Sonoma Traintown Railroad submission.) A second challenge has now been posed: “Celebrating Cultural Landscapes of Diversity”—in other words, to document historic landscapes that reflect ethnic heritage. “The diversity of the landscapes of America reflects the diversity of our people. Campuses, cemeteries, gardens, neighborhoods, parks, plazas, ranches, villages, etc. all can represent a unique cultural landscape identity. Each state is challenged to complete at least one HALS *short format recordation* to increase awareness of the role of various cultural groups in shaping the American landscape.”

The HALS Short Format History guidelines, brochure, and template can all be downloaded from the Website: www.nps.gov/hdp/standards/halsguidelines.htm. These histories should be submitted to HALS at the National Park Service by July 31. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three submissions, with results announced at the ASLA Annual Meeting and Expo at the end of October. (See p. 25.)



Member News

For your information: All the candidates nominated for 2011-12 positions on the board of directors were elected at the annual meeting on October 16th. For their bios, refer to pp. 20-21 in the Fall 2010 issue.

In Memoriam: Barbara Pitschel (1939-2010)

Barbara Pitschel, head librarian at the San Francisco Botanical Garden's Helen Crocker Russell Library of Horticulture (HCRL), died on 3 August 2010. Her tenure at the library stretched back 30 years, and the library has been a member of CGLHS since 1997.

SF Bay Area members of CGLHS who engage in research and writing (Bill Grant, Judith M. Taylor, Phoebe Cutler, Marlea Graham, and others) all knew her and deeply appreciated the collection she was instrumental in building (the largest and most comprehensive horticultural library in Northern California), and the personal time and assistance she gave to our various projects. Barbara was equally well known to Southern California members such as Laurie Hannah because of her longstanding membership in the national Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries (CBHL). She received the Robert Long Award of Merit in 2006 for her outstanding dedication to that organization and her many contributions to the field of horticultural literature and information service and research. Barbara and her husband, Roland, were both active members of the California Native Plant Society. They had produced the Yerba Buena Chapter's newsletter since 1995, and Barbara was also program co-chair of their very popular meetings. Since 1972, the group has worked on the restoration and ongoing maintenance of Bernal Heights Park as a significant natural area within the city. Barbara's husband died on 1 August 2009, and Barbara followed him a year later. They are survived by a daughter, two grandchildren, and one great-grandson.



—Marlea Graham

Please note! **The Pitschel Prize** has been set up to commemorate the late Barbara Pitschel. High school students are invited to submit an essay of not more than 1000 words on the theme "Natural California." They are eligible to win cash prizes, but in addition the first prize winner's essay will be published in *Pacific Horticulture*, courtesy of Dick Turner.

What's Going On with You?

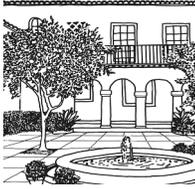
If you have news to share about your ongoing professional interests or recent accomplishments, or would like to let us know about other CGLHS members' achievements when they're either too busy or modest to tell us about them, please alert us so that we can relay the news to Eden readers. Or else you might need or wish to have certain questions answered about certain historic gardens and landscapes, and the persons who originally created or owned them. If we publish your questions in Eden, some other members just might know! ... Please send Member News items and inquiries to eden.editor@gmail.com.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Christy O'Hara received two preservation awards for the Hollywood Bungalow Courts in North Hollywood: Large Rehabilitation Category from the California Preservation Foundation and Residential Multi-family Project from the Los Angeles Conservancy. This project was a rehabilitation—restoring both the structures and landscape to the 1920s while updating the infrastructure of the design to meet Green Criteria qualifications.

Janet Gracyk won the 3rd place prize in the national HALS Theme Park Challenge for 2010. Her submission gave the background history of the Sonoma Traintown Railroad. She lives in Petaluma.

Thaisa Way, an assistant professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington, received the John Brinckerhoff Jackson 2010 Book Prize for her *Unbounded Practice: Women, Landscape Architecture, and Early Twentieth Century Design* (University of Virginia Press, 2009). She also received a highly competitive Graham Foundation Award in support of her research for her next book project—*Richard Haag: Urban Ecological Design as Pedagogy, Activism, and Design*. Though not an "official" CGLHS member, she's actively interested in our organization's mission and regularly sends us news for posting in *Eden*.



Coming Events in 2011

February 17-18: “Women and Modernism in Landscape Architecture: A Colloquium.” At the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University. (CGLHS member Kelly Comras will give a talk there.) For information: tway@uw.edu; or visit www.gsd.harvard.edu/events.

March 18-19: “Foreign Trends on American Soil Symposium,” hosted by the Dept. of Landscape Architecture, University of Pennsylvania. Forum on the tradition, from the 18th century on, of garden and landscape design based on interpreting and adapting trends imported into the US. Visit <http://www.design.upenn.edu/landscape-architecture/foreign-trends-american-soil-symposium>.

April 12: Allyson Hayward will give a lecture to the Decorative Arts Society at the Newport Beach Stadium Theater. She is a member of CGLHS and the author of *Norah Lindsay: The Life and Art of a Garden Designer* (2007), reviewed in *Eden* 10, no. 4: 21 (Winter 2007). Admission is \$60 for non-members of DAS. Checks to be made payable to Mary Anna Jeppe, 108 Via Koron, Newport Beach, CA 92663. For information, contact her at majeppe@roadrunner.com, or call 949-673-1714. Website: www.decorativeartsociety.net.

April 13: The Landscape Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians will have a one-day symposium preceding the SAH’s annual meeting in New Orleans: “Landscape Architecture and Economics.” The Call for Papers asked that submitters address the designed landscape and economics from different perspectives, from all periods in history and all cultures, with the main emphasis on designed landscapes, not cultural landscapes or planning projects. For information, e-mail sduempel@umd.edu or mtrieb@socrates.berkeley.edu.

April 16 & 30, May 14 & 21 (Saturdays): “Four Writers, Four Landscapes, Four Passions”—a seminar series to be given in UCLA Extension’s Landscape Architecture program, led by writer, teacher, gardener, and landscape observer Paula Panich (a CGLHS member). Its theme: “Creating a space of one’s own is a fundamental human need. This course explores intersection points along an arc of early-to-mid-20th century literature that reveal passionate connections among place, landscape, and gardens.” Examining the life and work of the featured writers—Anton Chekhov, Edith Wharton, Mary Austin, and M.F.K. Fisher—will offer “insight into our own attachment to where we live and places alive in memory.” For information, contact Andrea Swanson: 310-825-9414 or aswanson@uclaextension.edu.

May 15–18: The California Preservation Foundation’s annual conference will take place in Santa Monica. Its theme will be “Preservation on the Edge,” with sessions, workshops, and study tours that address important issues facing professionals and volunteers involved with preservation projects. For information, visit <http://www.californiapreservation.org/>, call 415-495-0349, write to CPF at 5 Third St., Suite 424, San Francisco, CA 94103; or e-mail cpf@californiapreservation.org.

June 27–29: “Scales of Nature—From Urban Landscapes to Urban Gardens.” Call for abstracts for the 48th IFLA World Congress, a global gathering in Zurich of professionals in landscape architecture and development, horticulture, spatial planning, construction, forestry, and agricultural engineering. Contact hayal.oezkan@zuerich.ch or visit www.ifla2011.com, or www.twitter.com/ifla2011.

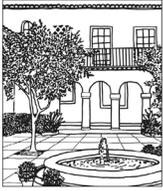
SAVE THE DATE! CGLHS will hold its 2011 conference in San Luis Obispo on September 9th to 11th.

October 11–14: The Association for Preservation Technology (APT) will hold its annual conference in Victoria, BC, and cultural landscapes will be one of its theme tracks. Abstracts are due in Spring 2011. A 2-day workshop about current cultural landscape issues and activities will be held following the conference. For more information, e-mail Hugh C. Miller: hcmfaia@comcast.net.

October 30–November 2: Annual meeting of ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects) and Expo, at the San Diego Convention Center. HALS will hold a subcommittee meeting there of the Historic Preservation Professional Practice Network. Visit www.asla.org.

We Invite More Involvement from YOU in Our Activities

Please let us know if you’d like to serve as a regional representative for CGLHS or as an *Eden* correspondent. As the organization’s local rep, you could provide outreach by talking to garden club members and preservation groups, and also by distributing brochures and displaying copies of *Eden*. Or as our journal’s correspondent, you would send *Eden*’s editor reports on important current garden and landscape preservation issues and efforts in your area, as well as provide alerts to coming programs and events, to announce in this section. Additionally, representatives and correspondents might offer ideas for articles suitable for future publication in *Eden* and perhaps also suggest potential authors for them (maybe yourself?).



California Garden & Landscape History Society

www.cglhs.org

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Eden: Call for Content

Eden solicits your submissions of scholarly papers, short articles, book reviews, information about coming events, news about members' activities and honors, and interesting archives or Websites you have discovered. In short, send us anything pertaining to California's landscape history that may be of interest to CGLHS members.

More regional correspondents would be welcome, to report on local garden and landscape preservation concerns, efforts, and accomplishments

For book reviews, notices of interesting magazine articles, museum exhibits, etc., please write to the Book Review Editor: Margaretta J. Darnall, 1154 Sunnyhills Road, Oakland, CA 94610.

All other submissions should be sent to *Eden* editor (see contact information above).

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As a matter of policy, CGLHS does not share its membership lists with other organizations, and that policy extends to e-mail addresses as well.

California Garden and Landscape History Society (CGLHS) is a private nonprofit 501(c)(3) membership organization devoted to: celebrating the beauty and diversity of California's historic gardens and landscapes; promoting wider knowledge, preservation, and restoration of California's historic gardens and landscapes; organizing study visits to historic gardens and landscapes as well as to relevant archives and libraries; and offering opportunities for a lively interchange among members at meetings, garden visits, and other events. The Society organizes annual conferences and publishes EDEN, a quarterly journal.

For more information, visit www.cglhs.org.

Locations & Years of CGLHS's Conferences:

1995 – Santa Cruz (founding)
1996 – Santa Barbara (Spring)
 San Diego (Fall)
1997 – UC Berkeley (Spring)
 Huntington Gardens, San Marino (Fall)
1998 – Sacramento
1999 – Long Beach (Rancho Los Alamitos)
2000 – Monterey
2001 – Sonoma
2002 – San Juan Capistrano
2003 – Stanford University (SF Peninsula)
2004 – Riverside
2005 – Napa Valley (10th anniversary)
2006 – Saratoga (Westside of Silicon Valley)
2007 – Los Angeles (for Japanese-style gardens)
2008 – Lone Pine and Owens Valley
2009 – UC Berkeley (SF Bay Area)
2010 – Santa Cruz (15th anniversary)
2011 – San Luis Obispo

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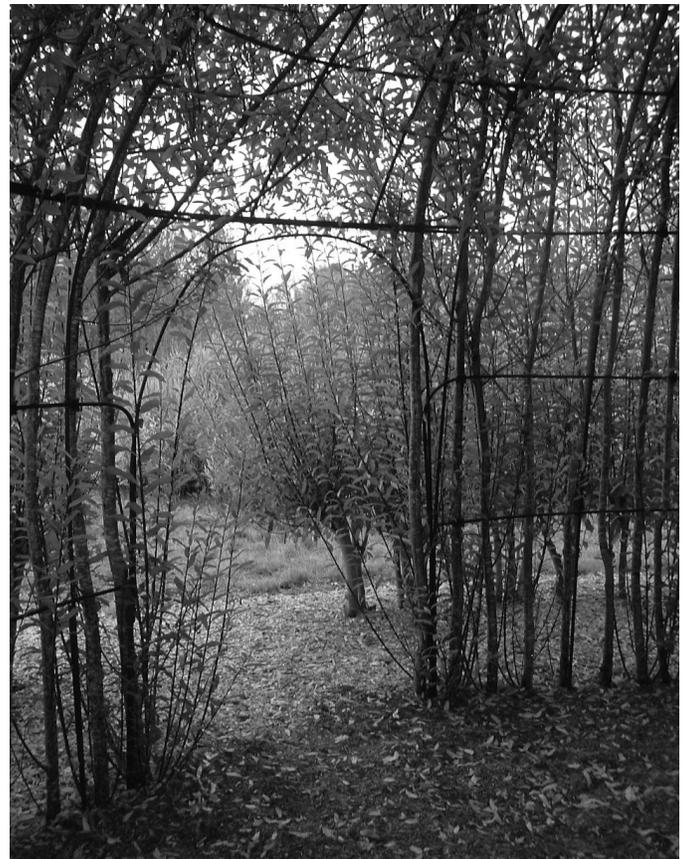
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A bower of bent branches at Laguna Ranch, near Santa Cruz

