



## The San Francisco Peninsula's Great Estates: Part I

### Mansions, Landscapes, and Gardens in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

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Landscapes and gardens created on expansive estates in Northern, Central, and Southern California in the last four decades of the 19th century and the first three of the 20th were notable for their floristic abundance and exoticism. Nowhere during this seven-decade period was a more lavish array of great estates created than on the long and wide peninsula area stretching southeastwards from South San Francisco for some 40 linear miles (“as the crow flies”) to the southern end of San Francisco Bay, where Santa Clara Valley (now “Silicon Valley”) is centered. Close to the city of San Francisco, at the peninsula’s “neck,” the width is about seven linear miles, and at the south end of the bay it widens to about 20. The distances traveled over the land itself are considerably greater, particularly when crossing the mountains.

Why did the San Francisco Peninsula attract so many elaborate and extravagant estates? The main factor was the close proximity to a city that kept prospering long after riches from the Gold Rush had transformed it into the new state’s financial hub. In addition, this extensive area also featured a reliably benevolent climate, fertile soils, and ample available land.

Starting in 1850—the year that California joined the United States of America—great luxurious dwellings began to be built within the city of San Francisco (formerly called Yerba Buena) by its wealthiest residents. But they disliked the notorious fog, particularly in summertime, when families sought outdoor social entertainment and recreation.

Those who could afford to buy extensive properties farther south on “the Peninsula”—as the fast-developing area was increasingly called—began doing so, and then erected mansions even grander than their city homes. Most of these estates were created within San Mateo County, with a few in northeastern Santa Clara County.<sup>2</sup> The majority of noteworthy estates were located between Millbrae and Hillsborough in the north and Menlo Park in the south. Meanwhile, the Peninsula’s maritime flanks remained sparsely populated. A number of these estates have contributed their



*James C. Flood's Linden Towers in Hillsborough and its surrounding estate gardens and landscaping, as depicted in this 1881 artwork. From Dorothy Regnery's An Enduring Heritage.*

names or their owners' names to cities, townships, streets, residential communities, parks, and geographic features. Some of the mansions still remain, though often altered and surrounded by much smaller grounds. These and other remnants of the original estates, whether preserved or restored, are visual testaments to a distant era's grandiose lifestyle.

This two-part article considers a score of these Peninsula estates known for their often unique landscaping and special garden designs. By no means, though, does this overview name and discuss, briefly or at length, all the estates created during this period. There were at least 50 altogether, and especially in the earlier decades most were located on enormous acreages. All had sizable mansions and beautifully maintained pleasure garden settings. These estates were private domains, and following the precedents of their predecessors many current owners of the surviving estates tend to keep their properties totally private, disliking intrusive publicity.

### *A Special Climate*

In much of California the Coast Range separates the ocean side of the state from its interior regions. South of San Francisco Bay's Golden Gate Straits, this long ridge provides a backbone that divides the San Francisco Peninsula into two sides. Here is the northernmost reach of the Santa Cruz Mountains, which travel for 85 miles from the Pajaro River, east of Monterey Bay, to terminate south of the city of San Francisco. The average height of peaks is about 1,500 feet, with some rising to over 2,000 feet, and this high, unbroken ridge effectively has created two totally different environments.

A narrow coastal belt runs along the western base of the mountains, where the climate is marine in character. A thick fog bank often rolls in from the Pacific Ocean and lasts from early evening until the middle of the next day, even in summertime. The mountains tend to prevent fog from spilling over into the Peninsula's eastern side, allowing most days there to be sunny and warm throughout much of the year.<sup>3</sup>

Reports by early travelers on the landscapes they passed through indicate how the vegetation on the two sides of the ridge responded to these weather differences. Above the ocean the land was covered by dense chaparral, while thick stands of redwoods and Douglas firs grew in the deep canyons and near the ridge because they received abundant moisture and rain.

On the other side of the mountains the landscape developed a very different character. On the upper flanks close to the ridge were redwoods and other evergreen trees, while on the lower hillsides scrubby chaparral was interspersed with dry grasslands, and trees grew where the creeks flowed. At the base of the mountains, on the plateau sloping down towards San Francisco Bay were parklands where oak trees might attain impressive sizes. Captain George Vancouver described such an area on his memorable visit to the east side of the San Francisco Peninsula.

The plain on which we rode stretched from the base of these mountains to the shores of the port, and gradually improved as we proceeded. The holly-leaved oak, maple horsechestnut, and willow were increased from dwarf shrubs to trees of tolerable size, having some of the common English dwarf oaks scattered amongst them...[W]e entered a country I little expected to find in these regions. For about 20 miles, it could only be compared to a park which had originally been planted with the true old English oak; the underwood, that had probably attended its early growth, had the appearance of having been cleared away, and had left the stately lawns of the forest in complete possession of the soil, which was covered with luxuriant herbage, and beautifully diversified with pleasing eminences and valleys; which, with the range of softly rugged mountains that bounded the prospect, required only to be adorned with neat habitations of an industrious people, to produce a scene not inferior to the



*Satellite view of the SF Peninsula, showing its dramatically different east and west sides, with the tree-covered Santa Cruz Mountains in green. [www.mychinaconnection.com](http://www.mychinaconnection.com)*

most studied effect of taste in the disposal of grounds, especially when seen from the port or its confines."<sup>4</sup>

Beyond these park-like groves and closer to the bay, the landscape was quite open and sometimes bleak-looking.

### *Settlement Styles*

Spanish-speaking people began colonizing the top, bottom, and both sides of the Peninsula in the late 1770s as Spain further expanded its occupation of Alta California. Prior to 1769, the land had been long settled by Native Americans. Now, as a crucial component in the colonizing plan, the Franciscan fathers introduced them to both Christianity and wholly different ways of speaking, obtaining food, making shelters, using

tools, and clothing themselves. In 1776 a presidio guarded by a garrison of soldiers and a mission ruled by padres were established in what would become San Francisco. In the following year, both Mission Santa Clara de Asís and the civilian pueblo of San José were established at the southern end of San Francisco Bay.

The two missions claimed most of the land within the Peninsula, but Hispanic settlers regarded as communal property any unused by the missions for agriculture or pasturage. When the Mexican government secularized the mission system in the mid-1830s, these huge land holdings were divided up and given out as grants to both Mexican and foreign settlers (including Americans). Much of the Peninsula's land and Santa Clara Valley's became cattle-raising *ranchos* that widely varied in size, from about 300 acres to 30,000.

In the early second half of the 19th century, portions of these former ranch properties began to be acquired as large country estates. In the decade after California, gained in the



*This early photo taken from the Howard estate, El Cerrito in Hillsborough, provides a view of the semi-arid nature of the natural landscape on the east side of the Peninsula. Courtesy San Mateo County History Museum.*

Mexican War, joined the Union, men who had greatly profited from mining and other enterprises during the Gold Rush period sought new areas for investments, and also for displaying their wealth while living in comfort. They bought considerable acreages from bankrupted *rancheros* or bought them at bargain prices after US courts had rejected some of the Mexican titles. Also on former rancho lands small communities were established—usually close to the main north/south transportation artery, El Camino Real—to accommodate new industries and other economic activities. Many of these settlements were initially populated by enterprising squatters, joined later by people who helped build the estates and then support their operations.

The first wave of non-native settlers arriving on the Peninsula had followed the water-conserving tradition of Spain and parts of Mexico, well adapted to the exigencies of the California coastal landscape with its Mediterranean, dry-season climate. Though this practice might have served as a model for the next group of newcomers, they were not impressed with the forms of this culturally ingrained tradition. The *casas* in towns and rancho haciendas were disdained as simple cottages with sun-dried adobe block walls and bare ground surrounding them, with little or no garden and no trees. (Trees rarely grew close to houses to provide shade, fruit, or beauty, as good visibility was needed to spot the approach of foes or friends.)



*The Juana Briones adobe in the Palo Alto hills in the early 1900s. This once-desolate landscape is now densely covered with homes and verdant vegetation. The original part of the house, dating back to 1844, made it the city's oldest house. In recent years efforts were mounted to preserve it. However, a 2011 court order permitted its owners to demolish it and build a new house on the site. [www.pastheritage.org/JuanaBriones.html#oldpix](http://www.pastheritage.org/JuanaBriones.html#oldpix).*

Only the missions with their large walled gardens and central fountain basins recalled, albeit very distantly, the elegance of Spanish precedents. But early European visitors had praised the mission properties' fecundity, not their aesthetic qualities or a regional appropriateness in which water was treated as a scarce resource. By the middle of the 19th century the derelict missions offered nothing to admire and instruct, such as the *padres'* careful garnering and use of water supplies in their food producing and landscape achievements.<sup>5</sup>

Inevitably, then, the new Peninsula residents, like new California settlers elsewhere, rejected the Hispanic-period structures and gardens as prototypes for their own homes—a reaction often furthered by disapproval of the *rancheros'* reputedly indolent habits and distrust of the Catholic religion. The new inhabitants found little charm in the region's past decades—contrary to romantic portrayals coming later in both literature (most notably Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel *Ramona*) and paintings that depicted an idealized Rancho lifestyle. Mission Revival architecture with its tile roofs and thick white walls would then arrive, along with Spain-influenced landscaping.

The character of the mansions that the first estate owners on the Peninsula chose to build was determined by their backgrounds. During the earlier settlement of different parts of what became the United States, people imposed upon strange landscapes their own familiar house styles. This form of cultural colonialism provided a sense of rootedness in a new place.<sup>6</sup> Thus when wealthy landowners began occupying the Peninsula, they repeated this imposition and initially made no attempt to adapt to the new landscape. The new owners and their gardeners had grown up in the lush and greener landscapes of the Eastern states or in Europe. When confronting a new landscape of sublime dimensions but with native vegetation suitable for a semi-arid climate, an instinctive or nostalgic tendency was aroused: to impose the known and familiar upon this alien scenery. These new Californians did not differ from the early colonists on the East Coast and later westward-moving settlers; all had repeated familiar house and garden types or adapted them as closely as the local resources would permit.

As wealthy settlers began arriving on the Peninsula, determined to build summer residences, they imposed their own taste, experience, ambitions, and aesthetic ideals upon their newly acquired properties. Furthermore, the visual harshness of much of the natural landscape increased their innate desire to recreate the familiar. The architecture and landscape that these estate builders wished to emulate almost invariably came from their backgrounds in some very different place, or else originated with their architects or head gardeners. Having grown up in regions where rain fell dependably throughout the year, they were unacquainted with a climate in which wet and dry seasons alternated and water sources became scarce when there was no rainfall.

Eventually the new Peninsula settlers would need to conduct both gardening and farming practices in new ways, such as contriving personal or communal systems for obtaining, storing, and allocating sufficient water for all household and plant-growing needs. Wealthy landowners at least could afford to have their wells drilled deeply to secure diminishing groundwater supplies. They could also collect runoff from local mountain creeks in their own private reservoirs so as to maintain, in all seasons, the luxuriant landscapes surrounding their mansions. In time, too, the private water companies they originated often became profitable to them as public-serving utilities.

### *The Earliest Estates*

**EL CERRITO.** William Davis Merry Howard, a prosperous merchant from New England, created the first Peninsula country estate within what is now Hillsborough. Like many members of rich families, he had been attracted to the area by its fertility and benign summer climate. After buying a large portion (1,500 acres) of the former Rancho San Mateo in the late 1840s, he named his new place El Cerrito (“the little hill,” in Spanish) and put up a prefabricated wooden house. Other aspiring Peninsula residents could have emulated Howard’s example of importing from afar the materials for a complete house, but they did not. After all, his new home had come from New England via the costly ocean route around the tip of South America. (The Panama Canal was still a dream, not realized until 1914.)

For a decade, El Cerrito was the only property qualifying as an estate. House building more ambitious than erecting rustic cabins was still difficult on the Peninsula, as sawmills and skilled carpentry were in short supply. Other fabricated materials such as bricks, concrete, and stone slabs used for walls had to be transported by land (involving wagons and draft animals) or water (with few piers and docks conveniently available yet).

By 1860, though, wood for construction uses was more readily obtained from the redwood forests in the mountains now being extensively logged in this major new local industry, and sawmills had started up. Also, there were more men with good building skills. And by the decade’s end, the new transcontinental railroad service would greatly reduce the time and cost of the shipping special goods from East to West, including imports from Europe, such as furnishings and adornments for the insides and outsides of elegant new mansions.

When El Cerrito’s first Howard owner died prematurely, his brother took his place and married his widow.<sup>7</sup> In the following generation his son, William Henry Howard, gave great attention to improving the grounds. Most notably, in 1872 he brought over John McLaren from Scotland to serve as the estate’s head gardener. During the time McLaren worked for the Howards and their relatives on the Peninsula he was often loaned out to work on neighboring estates, and he thereby built up a substantial residential design practice. (McLaren’s extensive tree planting on various estates and along El Camino Real is credited with having transformed wide areas of the Peninsula by the late 19th century.) After McLaren became the superintendent of Golden Gate Park in 1888, William F. Turnbull, another Scot, took his position at El Cerrito.<sup>8</sup>



*An unpaved El Camino Real was the main route through the Peninsula for a century a half. In some areas it became tree-lined, often thanks to John McLaren. Photo: Gabriel Moulin. The Bookmill Collection.*

Over the years more family homes were developed, dividing up the original property. The original small house, which had been erected in 1850 and then expanded at various times, was finally replaced by a mansion built by electricity pioneer Eugene de Sabla—which is why early 1900s dates are often associated with El Cerrito. (That mansion was razed in 1930, and the property was later subdivided. But *Higurashi-en*, the Japanese garden created for de Sabla by Hagiwara, remains and is under private ownership.)

**BELMONT.** In the mid-1850s Italian immigrant Leonetto Cipriani bought property located in the mid-Peninsula that featured a hilltop overlooking San Francisco Bay. (The city that eventually formed in the area took the name of his estate.) Formerly a colonel in the US Army, Cipriani had arrived in California after coming overland in 1853 from St. Louis with a herd of cattle, and quickly became rich by selling the livestock as meat supplies for hungry Argonauts.<sup>9</sup>

Cipriani built a small Italianate villa reminiscent of his homeland. A series of formal masonry terraces below the house, decorated with urns, provided views downward, over rolling parkland to the waters of San Francisco Bay. For some time this was the only Peninsula garden lacking an introverted character; Belmont’s owner clearly



*The setting of Cipriani’s and Ralston’s Belmont estate on the San Francisco Peninsula, portrayed in this painting by George Forest (1874). This painting (cropped here on both sides) is in the collection of the California Historical Society.*

possessed the Italian penchant for expansive distant vistas. However, the extensive use of grass on the terraces shows that the prevailing predilection for spacious green lawns caused the Count to depart from adhering totally to a formal Italian approach to landscaping.

Cipriani took trips back to his homeland, since he was greatly interested in the Risorgimento's unification movement. In 1862 he was appointed to the new senate in Italy and given the title of Count. Having settled down in Rome, in 1864 he sold his Peninsula estate to SF financier William Chapman Ralston—who three years later would build his lavish mansion, Ralston Hall, around the Count's original villa and its gardens, thus preserving portions of them. (See page 9.) The city of Belmont today features a school and a park named after its founder, Leonetto Cipriani.<sup>10</sup>



*Atherton's Valparaiso Park. Menlo Park Historical Association.*

**VALPARAISO PARK.** In 1860 land speculator Faxon Dean Atherton became one of the earliest new "suburban" settlers on the Peninsula after purchasing a 640-acre tract (for \$10/acre) in an area that eventually would take his name. His estate exemplified colonists' characteristic desire to recapture and almost literally recreate the familiar. Atherton's T-shaped, two-story wooden house united the severe simplicity and symmetry of the New England houses of his boyhood with the wooden-shuttered houses familiar to him from almost 30 years of living in Chile as a trader. Even the garden echoed these two earlier life experiences, with his Massachusetts upbringing reflected in elaborately clipped boxwood hedges and plantings within the oak groves of hound's-tongue, shooting stars, baby blue-eyes, pennyroyal, and other familiar flowering plants, while such exotics as Coquitos palms, the Caracalla vine, and the Chilean monkey-puzzle tree recalled South American landscapes.

The property was eventually subdivided, with its name given to a residential development occupying part of the former estate. A private country club, Circus Club, is located on the site of the home. Much of the city of Atherton overlays the original estate owned by Atherton.<sup>11</sup> (The Atherton name is preserved in literary history because Gertrude, the wife of F.D. Atherton's son George, ran away from this estate and marriage to gain fame as a writer.)

**BOREL ESTATE.** Also in the early 1860s Antoine Borel, a Swiss banker who had settled in San Francisco and quickly became a financial leader, fashioned his own estate on about 500 acres in San Mateo, calling his mansion Gougier Castle. He made his own landscape designs and deliberately recreated a sophisticated physical and cultural Swiss landscape. The expansive single-story house was surrounded by numerous formal flower beds that often featured mosaiculture—the new gardening vogue in Europe for the colorful geometric patterns in planting beds.

The extensive lawns were punctuated both by century plants standing alone and by mounded circular flower beds centered with yucca, and pampas grass. Beyond the drive and facing the front door was the estate's most memorable feature: an elaborate, oblong-shaped pond with steep rock walls suggestive of a rocky mountainous pass—intended to mimic alpine Switzerland in this California landscape. It remained fully in the tradition of earlier 19th-century rock gardens despite its miniscule scale.

To further evoke Swiss landscapes Borel transformed the remainder of his treeless property with thick plantations of redwood, larch, birch, pepper, and cypress trees. They simulated Swiss forests and excluded views of the nearby treeless mountains. While the Borels entertained their guests in the pleasure grounds surrounding the house, cattle grazed in a park-like area beyond. The brightly colored beds, the gentle sprays of the fountains, and the chiaroscuro and delicate textures of the forests were reminiscent of Europe, as were the rugged image of nature in the miniature alpine pass and a series of ponds stocked with trout. Catching fish in the ponds before dinner and moving through the miniature alpine landscape created idyllic references that heightened the contrast with the locale's untamed views stretching out beyond the manicured estate.<sup>12</sup>

After Borel's death in 1915, his estate continued to be occupied by family members, but by the 1950s the property had been totally subdivided. The main part, which had occupied an area around the present intersection of High-



*Though tropical-looking, this pool area in the Borel estate's garden was actually designed to resemble a narrow alpine pass in Switzerland to please the nostalgic Antoine Borel. Photo: Carleton Watkins. Courtesy San Mateo County History Museum.*

way 92 and El Camino Real, is now a thriving commercial area, and several financial and real estate enterprises bearing the Borel name have offices there, whether or not any of his descendants are connected with them.<sup>13</sup>

By the 1860s the views of the Santa Cruz Mountains from these new estates were rather bleak, since by then the slopes below the ridge top had been mostly denuded of trees due to the ruthlessly vigorous logging industry that profitably supplied redwood for buildings in the Bay Area and beyond. Moreover, the more immediate landscape's dried summer grasses were not considered attractive.

At most estates created in this early period, groves of trees that grew both fast, tall and thick would conceal outward views from the garden areas. An exception to this prevailing practice was Count Cipriani's garden, where its terraces looked out over the expansive parkland falling away to the Bay, and in the other direction toward the balding mountains—thus extending the Italianate character of the house into the landscape. (Today, the nearby mountains seen from the Peninsula's east side offer continuous, dark green and thickly tree-populated vistas, the result of ongoing dedicated restoration and conservation efforts, particularly by the Peninsula Open Space Trust.)

These Victorian-period gardens on early Peninsula estates are significant for the various ways in which they established different forms of accommodation with the California terrain. All recalled landscapes their owners had known earlier in their lives, and thus held deep personal meaning for them. Subsequent estates with their mansions and gardens would soon expand this manorial approach, as their owners were more inclined to undertake eclectic garden and landscape designs with English and Continental origins.

### *The New Wave of Land Division and Use*

In 1861 work commenced on building a railroad through the Peninsula by the San Francisco and San Jose Rail Road Company. (It would be the first railroad line constructed in the state.) Passengers would soon travel back and forth quickly and easily between "the City" and the Peninsula's new railway's depots. Cargos could also be shipped by railroad, covering distances at speeds and with sizes, quantities, and weights impossible for horse-drawn wagons.

As soon as the railroad's existence became a certainty, more large properties were bought, and both longtime and new landowners saw an opportunity to realize

handsome profits on their mostly vacant land. Subdivisions were planned and platted. In 1863, when the railroad was nearing completion between SF and Mayfield (now the southern part of Palo Alto), the Menlo Park Villa Association advertised five-acre lots on a tract of more than 800 acres.

When the railroad was completed in early 1864 with its 49.5 miles of track, its presence attracted middle-class families to the new settlements of San Mateo and Menlo Park. It also encouraged a number of wealthy men to launch plans to build impressive country residences on large tracts they already owned or else would acquire, sometimes after buying acreage from friends who owned portions of former rancho properties. Most such estates started out with at least 500 acres. Though having all the features associated with European manorial properties, despite their large size they functioned as suburban country homes, in the *villeggiatura* tradition that had transformed areas outside of Rome in the Roman and Renaissance periods, and in the 18th century around major European cities such as Paris, London, and Edinburgh.<sup>14</sup> The proximity to San Francisco enabled owners to commute daily to their offices during the summer months. The pattern of winter residence in the city and summer residence in the country became *de rigueur* for the rich, and to some extent it still exists. However, as the years went by, more well-to-do businessmen treated their Peninsula homes as year-round residences and maintained offices and elegant hotel suites in the City.

The initial construction of a mansion and its grounds involved hiring several hundred people, some of whom were highly experienced and perhaps foreign-born craftsmen. Then when their residence began, the owners would engage domestic and landscape-maintenance services, with employees who didn't reside on the estate itself living in modest homes in nearby communities, where land parcels

had been carved from estate properties and sold as tracts in newly created townships.

Much of the east side of the San Francisco Peninsula and the Santa Clara Valley beyond it proved to have deep, fertile soil and a benign temperate climate ideal for a range of agricultural crops. The cattle-raising ranchos had left the land fallow after mission farming ended; now farms of variable sizes were developed into homesteads where orchard fruits, wine grapes, market produce, grains, and forage crops were grown. To provide meat,



*The various Peninsula railway stations are shown in this poster map., "The Great Pleasure Route of the Pacific Coast, Southern Pacific," c. 1884. The Southern Pacific had extended the original 1860s railway southward to the coast. Private collection. Derek Hayes, Historical Atlas of the North American Railroad [2010]: 91.*

livestock were raised, and small dairies also operated. Prior to the arrival of the automobile age, most households kept horses for transportation use, and all the estates had large stables with horses and mules useful for riding, landscaping, and field work. Particularly in the early estate period, most estates, like their European models, became largely self-sufficient since there were few local grocery stores, and the extensive properties could accommodate numerous food-producing facilities, including kitchen gardens and livestock.



Greenhouse at the Lathams' Thurlow Lodge in Menlo Park. Photo: Carleton Watkins. David C. Streatfield Collection.

The Peninsula region began providing sustenance throughout the year for the ever-growing Bay Area population, and eventually supplied products elsewhere in the nation. Since its climate and soils were proving perfect for agriculture, horticulture also flourished. Estate owners took considerable pride in cultivating and displaying exotic plants that could not survive the harsh winters elsewhere unless protected indoors or in heated greenhouses. Nurseries began to proliferate, owned or serviced by highly knowledgeable horticulturists. Their offerings included imported plants—especially ones that had originated in far-distant parts of the world with subtropical or Mediterranean climates, and therefore could be expected to thrive within the estates, where they would rarely risk freezing. Many estates also had conservatories and greenhouses for the more cold-sensitive plants.

Existing towns expanded and new ones started up, clustered close to the railroad stations that served well-heeled commuters and visitors, who could now travel swiftly and conveniently to and from San Francisco, no longer riding in carriages drawn by horses along country roads that were dusty in the dry months and muddy during the rainy season. In 1870 Southern Pacific took over the ownership and operation of the original railroad and expanded the railway southward to Monterey Bay.

#### **Estate Building and Landscape Design Proceed**

Entrepreneurs who had bought land partly for speculation purposes usually retained at least several hundred acres for their own use. Mostly, estate owners wanted to outdo rivals not just in the business and social spheres, but also in the splendor of their country estates, and garden areas were expected to complement the mansions beautifully.

The garden was one of the great creative achievements of the Victorian age in both Europe and America, with England thought to be at the apogee of beauty. (Subsequent changes in taste have been so extreme that landscape design historians have made little serious assessment of the Victorian garden as an art form.) In California, though, virtually no attempt was made to fashion a theoretical ap-

proach that recognized the *genius loci*, or inherent visual character of place, which had long been a chief aim of landscapers elsewhere.

Garden design was considered by Andrew Jackson Downing (1815–1852), the leading American garden theorist, to have great potential as a unifying national force—a major manifestation of civilization and artistic creativity. The reality, however, turned out to be not exactly what he had envisaged. And although Downing's work was influential in many regions of the US, Euro-

pean garden design ideas proved far more popular with Californian nurserymen and gardeners, especially those from Britain and Western Europe. Significant new forms of gardening that appeared in California also utilized the greatly expanded range of plants introduced through global plant exploration—many of which could thrive in the Peninsula's benign climate.

Plant collecting already had a long history—pursued as assiduously by rich men as the collecting of rare and beautiful works of art. In the 18th century, plant explorers traveled worldwide, seeking unusual plants and bringing them back to collectors and botanical societies—whether as rooted plants, bulbs, cuttings, or seeds. Plant-collecting expeditions were sponsored by the Horticultural Society in London and by wealthy private collectors. Some affluent men on the East Coast emulated this practice. By the 19th century the cultivation of rare and unusual plants had been placed on a new scientific basis with the new major plant collections at such places as Kew Gardens in England and the Jardin des Plantes in France.

Besides the British garden design influence, Continental ones infiltrated the Peninsula. The Parisian passion for subtropical gardening displayed in the city's new parks featured a greatly extended use of foliage plants coupled with brightly colored flowers at their edge. These "floral collars" were also used as separate ribbons borders. German gardeners who created elaborate flower-filled cross- or crescent-shaped beds in lawns set into lawns may well have originated *mosaiculture*, which became popular all over Europe in the 1860s and migrated to the US. It consisted of creating beds of great complexity, in elaborate geometrical configurations or natural forms, such as butterflies. The mosaic-like designs were often carried out with succulents that did not require frequent trimming. Complex designs could be made more clearly visible by mounding up the soil. The French also raised the creation of rock gardens to a high level of artistic achievement, with the designers of Parisian parks highly celebrated for the naturalistic character of their great rockworks.

In California, the initial pioneering work of nurseries in rapidly introducing new plants into this remote frontier region had been extraordinary. The nurserymen's ingenuity was undeterred by their location on the edge of a vast continent—until the end of the 1860s, when the transcontinental railroad went into service, connected to major cities only by wagon trails. Nurseries quickly developed a remarkably wide range of plants, comparable to those in major European botanic gardens and aristocratic estates. The nurseries founded in San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose were among the most important in the West.

The work of garden designers and landscapers depended upon the availability of a wide selection of plants at nurseries. In the San Francisco Bay Area, plants were being imported from major nurseries in England, Germany, and France, as well as from Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. A wide variety of acacias and eucalyptus were imported directly from Australia, and by the 1870s plants were being exported from Japan, to become particularly desirable later for the popular tea gardens that would be created on many estates. Nurserymen then could work at greatly expanding their number through the various plant reproduction methods. The best nurseries in the Peninsula area were in San Jose. Here Louis Prévost and Louis Pellier established nurseries, and the latter imported and then supplied the stock for the uniquely sweet French plum, to initiate Santa Clara Valley's famous prune-producing industry.

Reputable architects who had flocked to fast-growing and prosperous California from the East Coast and Europe were now available to design elaborate mansions, sparing little or no expense, in a plurality of architectural styles (often a medley that combined favored ones of past and present). Since the gardens surrounding their summer homes were an integral part of their owners' patrician ambitions, impressive landscape designs were carried out by master gardeners and nurserymen who appreciated and benefited from the considerable horticultural potential of the area.



*Residence of D.O. Mills at Millbrae, c. 1874. Photo by Carleton Watkins. California History Room, California State Library; Picture Collection, J917.94 P5.)*

The invention and development of photography as an artistic craft enabled estate owners to hire professional photographers to produce visual records of the glories of their finished estates. Some of these surviving family photograph albums detail the interiors and exteriors of mansions, along with providing the proud owners' family portraits and views of the outdoor premises. The latter photographs serve as invaluable resources for garden and landscape historians and designers studying the plantings done on California estates in particular time periods or at certain estates. In the 20th century, newspapers and magazines like *Sunset* and *House & Garden* would send photographers to some estates and publish selections of their photos for subscribers to envy and possibly try to emulate.

Although the new profession of landscape architecture was introduced to America in the 1850s, there was only a handful of landscape architects by the century's end. Thus during the later years of the 19th century the design of the ambitious gardens on Californian estates was either undertaken by their owners, their architects, or, more usually, by either hired gardeners or nurserymen. While some professional gardeners, such as John McLaren (1846–1943) and Rudolph Ulrich (1840–1906), gained local recognition for their accomplishments, none achieved the heroic international stature of great English gardeners such as Sir Joseph Paxton and William Barron.<sup>15</sup>

Many San Francisco Peninsula gardeners—most notably John McLaren—had been trained on estates in Britain or elsewhere in Europe. William F. Turnbull, who replaced McLaren at El Cerrito, was a Scotsman who had been trained at Tulliallan Castle. When Jessie Penton left England in 1872, he came directly to take charge of Millbrae, the D.O. Mills estate. Subsequently, he took over most of John McLaren's extensive freelance garden practice on the Peninsula. Stephan Nolan, an Irishman who ran a successful nursery in Oakland, was also involved designing some Peninsula gardens.

Some of the more extensive and impressive gardens created in Northern California in the second half of the 19th century were associated with Rudolph Ulrich. Born in Weimar, after starting work as a gardener at the age of 16 he was trained in Germany, Italy, and England. In 1867 he migrated to the US to work on a 35-acre estate near Cincinnati. Taking an active role in improving it, he did considerable grading to alter the topography. When that job ended in 1874, Frederick Law Olmsted helped Ulrich obtain a landscape-gardening position at Darius Ogden Mills' Millbrae estate, thus launching his productive career in California.<sup>16</sup>

#### ***Four Notable Mid-Victorian Estates***

The most elaborate estates developed in the later 1860s into 1870s within the Peninsula were D.O. Mills' Millbrae, William Ralston's Ralston Hall, James Flood's Linden Towers, and Milton Latham's Thurlow Lodge.

**MILLBRAE.** In 1863 Darius Ogden Mills, a prosperous banker who had profited from the Gold Rush, purchased 3,000 acres of land that had once been part of the Sanchez family's Rancho Buri-Buri—a huge property with its west

and east borders at what is now Skyline Boulevard (Highway 35) and the Bayshore Highway (US Route 101). In 1866 he built a mansion that he called Millbrae—combining most of his surname with the Scottish word *brae* (rolling hills). According to the *California Horticulturist and Floral Magazine*, the house “answers more than any buildings we have seen, East or West, Mr. Downing’s ideal of the perfect American Home—‘a country house where the establishment may be moderate, the living rooms compact, and well-arranged, the labor-saving appliances multiplied.’”<sup>17</sup>

The Millbrae estate resembled ones along the Hudson River whose styles were familiar to Mills. It comprised the mansion and surrounding pleasure grounds, as well as an extensive farm with a series of dairy buildings. A large conservatory, by Burnham and Lord, lay south of the house, while a barn and a kitchen garden occupied the area west of the house. East of the pleasure grounds a large and improved area of grazing land descended toward the bay. Early photographs show the house sited on a prominent knoll facing out towards the Bay among open groves of oak trees.

Frederick Law Olmsted had advised Mills on choosing the site for his house, and presumably provided landscape advice. A photograph taken from the entrance lodge depicts extensive plantings of new evergreen trees, mostly Monterey pines, which would, when larger, serve to enclose and define the space of the drive. The conservatory, mansion, and a detached teahouse to the north were serial focal points in the very open landscape, with each structure serving to emphasize the open grasslands of the mountains behind. The park-like character of the middle distance resembled the open meadows of much of Olmsted’s work in Central Park and may well have been part of his conceptual recommendations.<sup>18</sup>

Many features in the garden, however, were not at all consistent with Olmsted’s use of the Picturesque principles promoted by English landscape designer Humphry Repton (1752–1818), who had sought idealized natural appearances. They included elaborate circular flower beds and a great diversity of plants along the drive and around the house. The entrance space was surrounded by ample miscellaneous tree species—including orange, magnolia, maple, Norfolk Island pine, monkey puzzle, Irish yew, redwood, ginkgo, Japanese plum, Chinese privet, bay, palm, pepper, boxwood, oak, Australian flame, cherry, and rubber (with one said to be the largest in California). This flo-

ristic diversity is typical of the work of landscape gardener-designer Rudolph Ulrich. In the spring of 1875, Mills had received Olmsted’s recommendation of Ulrich to continue the work already underway.

In later years, several lakes within the estate serving as reservoirs were popular as swimming places; then the Mills family began selling most of the land for development. D.O. Mills’ large mansion burned down during a staged fire drill in 1954; its site with its garden and the remainder of the estate were subdivided and are now occupied by unremarkable apartment buildings.<sup>19</sup>

**RALSTON HALL.** William C. Ralston, who had bought Count Cipriani’s Belmont estate in 1864, three years later extended the original house and its gardens into what would become, and would remain, one the Peninsula’s most palatial residences. Ralston was a financier who had profited from the Comstock Lode and founded the Bank of California. His grand country home, a four-story, 55,000-square-

foot palatial residence with 80 rooms, retained much of the earlier Italianate-villa spirit, but added touches of Victorian and “Steamboat Gothic” styles. Great attention was given to the landscaping. After Ralston’s death in 1875, Nevada Senator William Sharon, his former partner, acquired the estate, and it often accommodated high-society events.

Ralston Hall is one of San Mateo County’s best-known and well-used surviving grand mansions. After Senator Sharon’s death in 1885, it became a girls’ finishing school; from 1900 to 1922 it was the Gardner Sanitarium. In 1922 Ralston Hall was incorporated into the campus of Notre Dame de Namur University (formerly the College of Notre Dame), where it houses the admissions office. The mansion is frequently rented out for society weddings and other occasions. The grounds of the mansion feature numerous gardens, a stony grotto, and a collection of 150-year-old bamboos that dates back to the estate’s early proprietors.<sup>20</sup>

**LINDEN TOWERS.** During the mid-1870s James Clair Flood, who had amassed an immense fortune using financial tips he overheard while bartending in a saloon, carried out the construction of an ornate, castle-like mansion on 600 acres within Menlo Park (but now in Atherton). Because of its many architectural adornments it was dubbed “Flood’s Wedding Cake,” and for some years it not only could claim to be the largest dwelling in San Mateo County, but also the most ostentatious in the entire nation.

Flood hired Rudolph Ulrich to undertake the challenge of creating a set of different landscape moods to surround



*Ralston Hall as it appears today, on the campus of Notre Dame de Namur University. Photo: David C. Streatfield.*



*Linden Towers—“Flood’s Wedding Cake”—in Menlo Park. Marlea Graham Collection.*

the elaborate Eastlake- and Queen Anne-style structure rising in stages from the hands of multiple architects. Ulrich is credited with a number of the estate’s most prominent features. The main living room overlooked a large formal garden, defined by vine-embowered walls punctuated with elaborate cast-iron gaslights and graced by square and circular beds filled with annuals and a huge multi-tiered cast-iron fountain. Beyond this and forming the principal background for the entire garden were oak groves with a lavish understory of cream- and gold-flowered shrubs. Large, flowing lawns were planted with exotic trees such as the Norfolk Island pine. Mosaiculture beds bordered the paths through the trees, enlivening the passages between the lawns. Linden Towers was demolished following the death of James Flood’s son in 1926, and all its lavish furnishings were auctioned off. When the estate was subdivided into residential lots, many of its larger trees were retained, giving these smaller properties their most distinguished features.<sup>21</sup>

Ulrich’s elaborate garden designs at Linden Towers had anticipated his better-known flamboyant landscapes created later at three California resort hotels: the Hotel Rafael in San Rafeael, the Hotel Raymond in South Pasadena, and



*A Linden Towers garden area. David C. Streatfield Collection.*

the Hotel del Monte in Monterey, where each commission featured ample displays of the exotic new flora introduced into California. In the early 1880s Ulrich also designed the still extant cactus-filled Arizona Garden and arboretum on Governor Stanford’s Palo Alto ranch.<sup>21</sup> His work there preceded the death of Leland Stanford Jr., which led the Stanfords to change their plans for a mansion to founding a university.

**THURLOW LODGE.** Former US Senator Milton Latham acquired this Menlo Park estate from William Barron in 1871. When the mansion subsequently burned down and a new house was being built, many existing garden areas were redesigned, although trees planted by the estate’s two former owners were retained.

Thurlow Lodge’s garden may be the best known of all the great Peninsula estates that no longer exist because numerous photographs taken in the mid-1870s by well-known nature photographer Carleton Watkins survive in several handsome leather-bound albums, along with a real estate map. These documents establish a fairly accurate plan of the garden during the time when the property was owned by Milton and Mollie Latham.

It is unclear, however, who was actually responsible for the garden design. In past years research based mostly on hearsay recorded in newspaper articles indicated that Rudolph Ulrich had undertaken the initial work in redoing Thurlow Lodge’s landscaping. Yet neither the photographic images nor the time when the garden was executed can verify that Ulrich took a major role in the overall design work.

The entrance drive was flanked on both sides by thick plantations of Monterey cypresses and pines, broken only by the massive bulk of the “Charter Oak,” one of the largest oak trees on the property. Since the golden-brown grasses of Californian summers were considered unattractive, evergreens such as these species were used to provide a quick-growing screen.<sup>22</sup>

Two massive masonry pedestals topped by reclining lions marked the entrance to the “polished” pleasure grounds. Beyond them, two square pedestals bearing large “rocaille” rock pieces in metal emphasized the presence of the mansion in a setting of large spreading California live oaks interspersed with new evergreen trees, mainly the Monterey cypresses and pines that prevailed throughout the rest of the garden. The “Barron Cluster” close to the mansion was a particularly fine clump of oak trees that had probably been pruned up to reveal the trees’ sculptural nature.

The overall character of the garden with large groves of trees recorded in the Watkins photographs had been largely established either during the time of the property’s first owner, John Doyle, or more probably during Barron’s ownership. It was the addition during the Latham ownership of the specimen trees and a wide diversity of cast-iron pieces that changed the garden’s character considerably; among the latter were vases, lamps, statues of small animals, large figures, and fountains from the celebrated Parisian foundry of J-J. Ducel et Fils of Paris.

The presence of these cast-iron sculptures added to the simple vocabulary of lawns and existing oak trees, embellished with only a few exotic trees and small flower beds, make Thurlow Lodge's garden areas strikingly different from those in other great Peninsula estate gardens. There were few rare plants and almost no shrubs, with an apparent muted color use (the black-and-white Watkins photos can't indicate bright hues), while the extensive use of statuary was unique.

The meaning of the lavish number of cast-iron pieces is unclear. The Ducler foundry, one of the most notable in France, was renowned for its stations-of-the-cross sculptures, but it also produced a range of pieces for use on buildings, including ornamental balustrades, vases, and statuary. Unfortunately, the firm's records have been destroyed, and the Port of San Francisco's records too were destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. Thus it is impossible to determine when these ornamental pieces were purchased and by whom. It may be assumed that the Lathams selected the pieces for their California garden on a visit to Paris.

This diversity does not suggest an emblematic or programmatic set of symbolic meanings. It is most likely that many of the pieces, especially the smaller statues of animals and the urns, were used simply as visual punctuations at important positions, such as path junctions. The larger pieces such as the fountains, and the statues of Meditation and Neptune possibly had either a deep personal meaning for the Lathams or were used to establish a mood of chaste serenity.

In other ways the landscape of Thurlow Lodge typified many Victorian gardens with a series of varied incidents placed along the main visual axes and paths, and a collection of outbuildings at the edge of the pleasure grounds. Its introverted character, excluding all views of the outer landscape, was similar to most Peninsula gardens of the preceding decade. The lack of recreational facilities, such as a croquet lawn and a tennis court, was also typical of this period. Its restrained character was what made it unlike the other gardens created in the 1860s and '70s.

Ulrich was the only professional designer whose name was associated with Thurlow Lodge, but almost certainly he designed only parts of the garden, with either or both Milton and Mollie Latham being responsible for the basic character of the garden. The relationship between the client and the designer has been little discussed in the literature of garden design; scholars have usually assumed that the designer had complete control. Though this was undoubtedly the case in many gardens, some gardens are almost entirely the creation of their owners—with gardeners and professional designers merely supplying technical expertise.

After the collapse of Milton Latham's career, the estate passed through several different owners. New owner Mary Hopkins, the widow of Mark Hopkins, renamed it Sherwood Hall. In 1888 it became her belated wedding gift to her adopted son, Timothy Hopkins, and his wife, May (her niece), who had married in 1882 and moved into the house in 1883. Timothy developed part of the deer park into the Sunset Seed and Plant Company nursery. (See the follow-



*Garden rockery at Thurlow Lodge, with the mansion in the background. Carleton Watkins photo. David C. Streatfield Collection.*

ing article by Julie Cain.) When the 1906 earthquake broke the gas main that supplied heat and lighting to the mansion, it was never lived in again. The Hopkins moved into the gatehouse, which they enlarged.

In 1936 Timothy Hopkins bequeathed the property to Stanford University with the proviso that his wife would continue to live there until her death, which occurred in 1941. In 1942 the mansion and contents were sold at auction and dismantled, as were all other structures except the gatehouse. Dibble Army Hospital was then built on the grounds. It was later replaced by Stanford Village (student housing), and now the Stanford Research Institute. Some of the larger trees still exist on portions of the former estate. In the early 1950s 80 acres became the Linfield Oaks subdivision, while the headquarters of *Sunset Magazine* and Sunset Books was developed at the same time on another seven-acre parcel. This perhaps makes a fitting replacement for the site's original garden, since Thomas D. Church, the distinguished modernist landscape architect, designed its grounds as a demonstration of the preferred features of the California garden of the 1950s. Its emphasis



*A surviving statuary fountain dating back to the Thurlow Lodge/Sherwood Hall eras. Restored, it is close to the gatehouse—the only remaining structure from the original estate. Photo: Julie Cain.*



*Landscaping at the Stanford University campus in the early 1900s. From Dorothy Regnery's An Enduring Heritage, 1976.*

upon recreation and outdoor living make it very different indeed from Milton and Mollie Latham's garden of the 1870s. But it is surely appropriate that one of California's greatest Victorian gardens was replaced by a notable semi-public garden typifying the California lifestyle of the mid-20th century.

#### ***A Transition Period***

By the close of the 1870s the San Francisco Peninsula was said to contain the largest constellation of country estates west of the Mississippi. In the last two decades of the century the estate-building pace somewhat slowed down. After the Southern Pacific Railroad opened up two lines from the north to Southern California in 1878 and 1888, the Southland became a highly desirable place for the wealthy set to acquire new estates, build mansions, and develop even more exotic landscape settings.

The decline in estate building was partly due to the Panic of 1873, precipitated after Germany went off the silver standard at the end of the Franco-Prussian War. When the US dropped its own silver standard and the price of silver plummeted, runs on banks caused the collapse of financial markets and institutions across the nation, with the dire downturn in San Francisco inevitably affecting all local banks, investors, and businesses—and families connected with them. (First known as the Great Depression, its name was changed to the Long Depression by historians who wanted "Great" for the long-enduring nationwide financial crisis in the 1930s.)

By 1880 the depression had lifted. However, adverse experience with erratic or troublesome investments tended to curb super-rich entrepreneurs' inclinations to launch ambitious projects that might become unsupportable and lead to bankruptcy—such as the costly purchase, building, and maintenance of great estates on the Peninsula. They had been forewarned, and when another severe economic downturn hit again in 1893, it lasted for five years. During periods of economic distress doubt-

less some occupants of grand new mansions refrained from widely publicizing the wonders of their residences in order to avoid unwelcome attention, including disapproval of ostentatious displays of wealth. (Thus some still-existing mansions of this and later periods are little known.)

Leland and Jane Stanford's decision in 1885 to convert their 8,800-acre Palo Alto stock farm into a university instead of a grand estate brought a new form of prosperity to the Peninsula as a big influx of construction workers and craftsmen, including landscapers, settled in, along with tradespeople and their families.<sup>23</sup> While a variety of farming activities continued to occupy large plots of land, middle-class business people increasingly established family residences in the ever-growing Peninsula towns and commuted by railway to the City.

Yet a desire within the wealthy class to have splendid dwellings and gardens had not ended. In the new century a new set of post-Victorian estates with mansions and gardens were created. In this largely prosperous era, an array of both new aesthetic tendencies and technological innovations would influence the landscapes of the great estates, both old and new.

***[To be concluded in the Spring 2012 issue of Eden.]***

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## Endnotes

1. Much of the material in this article combines information, insights, and opinions given in passages of articles written by the author that previously appeared in his book *California Gardens: Creating a New Eden* and in two published articles, "'Paradise' on the Frontier" and "Where Pine and Palm Meet." (Refer to Selected Bibliography, below.) It also uses numerous portions of his unpublished essay, "Thurlow Lodge Garden," written in 1978 as a monograph intended to accompany an exhibit of Thurlow Lodge furnishings and photographs planned for New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Unfortunately, the exhibit was never mounted. A number of miscellaneous small facts were also incorporated into the text by the editor to provide an overview of different stages of settlement within the San Francisco Peninsula, and of its notable historic estates in particular. Some but not all of these numerous sources have been cited.
2. Frank Stanger, *Peninsula Community Book* (San Mateo, CA: A.H. Cawston, 1946).
3. This account of the geography of the Santa Cruz Mountains is largely based on Tito Patri, David C. Streatfield, and Thomas J. Ingmire, "Early Warning System: The Santa Cruz Mountains Regional Pilot Study" (Berkeley, CA: Dept. of Landscape Architecture, University of California, 1970), 9-48.
4. George Vancouver, "A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Around the World; in which the Coast of Northwest America has been carefully examined and accurately surveyed." (London, 1801), 34.
5. The new Anglo residents' disdainful dismissal of the Hispanic settlement models in California is detailed in David C. Streatfield, "Where Pine and Palm Meet" (1985).
6. David C. Streatfield, "Cultural Colonialism and the Settlement of the Frontier of the Pacific States," in Patrick J. Miller and Larry Diamond (eds.), *The Frontier Landscape: Selected Proceedings*, I.F.L.A. Congress, 1981 (Vancouver, BC: The Landscape Architecture Program, University of British Columbia).
7. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Davis\\_Merry\\_Howard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Davis_Merry_Howard) (accessed December 13, 2011).
8. Philip Alexander and Charles P. Hamm, *History of San Mateo County from the Earliest Times, with a Description of Its Resources and Advantages, and the Biographies of Its Representative Men* (Burlingame, CA, Press of Burlingame Publishing Co., 1916).
9. Leonetto Cipriani, Ernest Falbo, and John B. Goodman. *California and Overland Diaries of Count Leonetto Cipriani from 1853 through 1871*. (Portland, OR: Champoe Press, 1962).
10. <http://www.belmont.gov/subContent.asp?CatId=240001210> (accessed December 15, 2011).
11. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faxon\\_Atherton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faxon_Atherton) (accessed December 20, 2011).
12. Much of the information about the Borel estate landscaping was given to the author by the late Mr. Aylett Lindley (Lin) Cotton, a great-grandson of Antoine Borel.
13. <http://www.borel.com/about-borel/history> (accessed December 14, 2011).
14. For villas around Rome, see David Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); for the villas around London, see Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope, 1731-1743* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1969); for villas around Edinburgh, see A. E. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh: 1715-1840* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966).
15. The work of British gardener William Barron (1805-1891), not to be confused with the California property owner of the same name, became widely known in Great Britain when the gardens at Elvaston Castle, Derbyshire, were opened to the public in the 1850s. He was also the author of *The British Winter Garden* (1852).
16. Several articles about Rudolph Ulrich by Marlea Graham were published in *Eden*: "Searching for Rudolph Ulrich," Vol. 3 No. 3 (Fall 2000); "Rudolph Ulrich & the Hotel del Monte," Vol. 3 No. 4 (Winter 2000); "The Continuing Saga of Rudolph Ulrich," Vol. 4 No. 2 (Summer 2001); "Rudolph Ulrich on the San Francisco Peninsula," with Julie Cain, Vol. 6 No. 3 (Fall 2003).
17. Mrs. E. S. Carr, "The Rural Homes of California." *California Horticulturist and Floral Magazine*, 3, no. 3 (March 1873): 70.
18. Joe Dees, "The Mills Estate as I Saw It," *La Peninsula* 8. (February, 1955): 3-7.
19. <http://www.ci.millbrae.ca.us/index.aspx?page=36> (accessed December 19, 2011).
20. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralston\\_Hall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralston_Hall) (accessed December 19, 2011).
21. "Linden Towers," [http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sanmateo/history/smcady\\_e.htm](http://www.sfgenealogy.com/sanmateo/history/smcady_e.htm).
22. Frederick Law Olmsted summoned Ulrich to Chicago in 1890, where he was engaged in landscaping the grounds of the World's Columbian Exposition. He then became Superintendent of Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Despite Ulrich's considerable accomplishments, his work was not admired by members of the landscape architectural profession. Some indication of the professional snobbery that had developed by the end of the century can be gauged by the reaction made to a proposal by Charles Leavitt for the American Society of Landscape Architects to write a letter of sympathy on his death, a copy to be sent to his widow, citing the precedent of the death of Samuel Parsons. The proposal was vigorously opposed on the grounds that "it would be officious to pass such a resolution on a man who was not a member of the A.S.L.A., nor a conspicuously able member of the profession." Harold A. Caparn, James Sturgis Pray, Downing Vaux, (eds.), *Transactions of the American Society of Landscape Architects from Its Inception in 1899 to the End of 1906*. (Harrisburg, PA: Horace J. McFarland Company, Mt. Pleasant Press, 1906), 23.
23. Most of the information and text in this section was taken from the unpublished monograph "Thurlow Lodge Garden," per endnote 1.
24. Marlea Graham, "Landscape History of the Stanford University Campus," *Eden*, Vol. 6 No. 4 (Winter 2003).

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Streatfield, David C. "Where Pine and Palm Meet: The California Garden as a Regional Expression," *Landscape Journal*, 4:2 (Fall 1985): 60-74.

# From Floral Paradise to Commercial Nursery and Back: The Saga of the Barron/Latham/Hopkins Estate, 1864–1942

Julie Cain

During the 1850s, many Californians who created great wealth through banking, mining, railroading, agriculture and real estate development built summer homes on the San Francisco Peninsula. These palatial estates were characterized by their opulent luxury and park-like landscapes. William E. Barron and Milton S. Latham, two successive owners of a 280-acre estate in Menlo Park, each contributed to making their property their personal version of a California Eden. Timothy Hopkins, the third owner, was not content to merely live in a floral paradise. From 1891 to 1899, he attempted to make the estate self-sustaining by transforming the outlying acreage into growing grounds for one of San Mateo County's largest commercial nurseries. Renowned for growing blooms for the cut-flower market, Hopkins's nursery also produced trees, plants, seeds, and bulbs of all types.

Known during Hopkins's long tenure (1883–1936) as Sherwood Hall, the property had already earned a reputation as one of the most beautiful and elaborately landscaped estates on the Peninsula long before he owned it. Once an open oak savannah, the boundaries were San Francisco Creek, Alma Street, Ravenswood Avenue, and Middlefield Road. The land was probably subject to seasonal burning by Native Americans who lived along the waterway for 10,000 years before the Spanish arrived in 1769. While under Spanish and Mexican possession, the unfenced land was used to graze cattle. When William E. Barron, one of the wealthy directors of San Jose's New Almaden quicksilver (mercury) mine, purchased the land in 1864, it was in a natural semi-arid state, as Menlo Park experienced less than 20 inches of rainfall annually.

Barron, unwilling to rely only on water available from local artesian wells, formed the Corte Madera Water Company in partnership with other

nearby landowners in 1865. He then ran seven-inch pipes from the reservoir (a result of damming Bear Gulch Creek in the nearby foothills) to his estate, enabling him to irrigate an enormous expanse of lawn through the dry summer and fall months of California's Mediterranean climate. Amelia Ransome Neville, a society woman from San Francisco, claimed Barron told her "that a green velvet carpet over the land, frequently renewed, would be less costly, but he had a preference for grass" (Neville, *The Fantastic City*, [1932]: 207).

In addition to the grass, Barron also installed an artificial trout pond, a large grapery, an enclosed deer park, and an ornamental fountain in front of his newly built mansion. His applied use of water and the subsequent transformation of the semi-arid landscape into a lush English-style parkland profoundly changed both the look and perception of the land. The sparse native grass that turned golden brown during the dry months was gone, replaced by vast stretches

of neatly clipped lawn that Barron kept green during the dry months with a daily inch-deep inundation of water. He inter-planted the numerous native coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and valley oaks (*Q. lobata*) that already dominated the estate grounds with exotic trees and artfully placed patches of flowering shrubs. Barron, like other local wealthy landowners, held the native oaks in high esteem; the group of oaks closest to the house was later referred to as the Barron Cluster. Noted by explorers and travelers alike, these stately oaks (along with the climate) were one of the chief reasons the Menlo Park area was so highly desirable.

It is not surprising that Barron, despite being a native of Spain and raised in Mexico, chose to landscape his grounds in an English



Above: *The violet beds. Sherwood Hall photo. Image originally published in Pacific Rural Press on Sept. 5, 1891.*

Below: *Site of the violet beds today. Author's photo.*

style rather than that of his homelands. Although Spanish-Mexican use of land in California had reflected their understanding that water was scarce, the European and American settlers arriving in the region from the 1850s onward had no interest in continuing a landscape tradition tied to a people they considered indolent and wasteful of the land's potential. Instead, landscape design in California during the latter half of the 19th century was based on eastern United States and European practices. Settlers wanted the comfort of their familiar landscapes from home and planted accordingly. Coming from areas of year-round rainfall, they needed irrigation to provide the perpetually green lawns they craved. The English-style parklands that prevailed on the Peninsula estates were status symbols of great wealth, as only the very rich could afford to irrigate such large tracts of land. What had once been open grazing land now became enclosed estates belonging to the *nouveau* landed gentry.

Barron died in 1871 and the man who bought his "beautiful country estate" had come into very great wealth indeed (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 16 Dec 1871).<sup>1</sup> Milton Latham, the former United States Senator from California (1859–1863), had made, lost and remade several fortunes in various financial ventures since his 1850 arrival in San Francisco. The mansion he had built on fashionable Rincon Hill was widely considered to be one of the most opulent abodes in California, if not all of America. Now Latham intended to remodel Barron's country house into a residence comparable to his City home. However, the edifice burned down when workmen lit a huge fire in an attempt to dry out fresh plaster recently applied to the walls; the only items recovered were three tool chests stored near the front door and a piano (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 17 Feb 1872). Latham promptly hired noted architect David Farquarhson to design a three-story, French Empire-style mansion complete with a 98-foot-high tower. Latham also turned his attention and immense fortune to his landscape, expanding Barron's trout pond and deer enclosure.

Like Barron, Latham used the indigenous oak forest as the foundation for his own landscaping plans. Coast live oaks lined both sides of the curvilinear driveway that led through two successive sets of gates; the second set, topped by bronze lions, heralded the entrance to the manicured greensward and the mansion. A swath of mixed coast live and valley oaks cut through the center of the property and surrounded the mansion, while the outlying acreage was left relatively open, with only a few oaks cropping up here and there. An 1872 newspaper item noted Latham's purchase of two mature California fan palms from San Jose. Thirty feet high with a base girth of two feet, the trees cost him \$600, plus another \$400 to transport them to Menlo Park (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 15 Dec 1872).

Landscape architect and historian David Streatfield once credited German-born landscape gardener Rudolph Ulrich with laying out Latham's grounds.<sup>2</sup> However, he now believes that Ulrich, the only gardener of record to have



*The trout pond at Thurlow Lodge/Sherwood Hall. Image by Carlton Watkins. Courtesy Stanford University Archives.*

worked for Latham, was not the principal landscape designer. By 1877, when Ulrich worked for Latham, he merely added touches to the grounds that included a rockery, flower beds, and tree specimens. He was likely restrained by the Lathams' taste, as the relatively simple geometric flower beds at Thurlow Lodge did not reach the level of lush complexity associated with Ulrich's later work at Monterey's Hotel del Monte and other Peninsula estates.

Latham's beautiful and vivacious second wife, Mollie McMullin Latham, had her own private walled garden and a hothouse filled with ferns. Latham obtained water from the same source as Barron, taking over the then-defunct Corte Madera Water Company and turning it into the Menlo Park Water Company.

The Lathams, who named the property Thurlow Lodge, moved into their new Peninsula mansion in 1873. Albert Bierstadt, noted for his beautiful portrayals of Yosemite, painted Mollie Latham sewing with friends beneath the oaks while a man and young child (presumably Latham and the couples' young son, Milton Thurlow Latham) idled nearby. An 1874 newspaper editorial described the estate in typical rhapsodic terms:

Within an area of four miles are the splendid mansions of Messrs. Hort, Atherton and Donahue [*sic*], but surpassing these is Thurlow Lodge, the residence of Mr. Milton S. Latham, surrounded by a natural park of oaks. The gardens are pictures of floral art, graced at every curve by chaste statuary, fountains melodious with the music of falling water, arbors bewitching in expressive stillness (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 13 Jun 1874).

Watkins photographed three different fountains; a fourth Latham fountain not pictured here still graces the grounds today near the surviving gatehouse. Known for his fine art collections of paintings, drawings, and sculpture, Latham extended his passion for beautiful objects to include French cast-iron, bronze, and marble statuary, urns, and fountains. The statuary took the form of classical figures such as Cupid, Neptune, Meditation, and Baccanta, as well as a host

of ordinary mortals and animals. The local newspaper noted: “Mr. Latham is decidedly a wag. In big letters he has stuck up here and there on his outer fences ‘Look out for the Bull Dogs.’ They are on the grounds, great metal ones” (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 3 Aug 1872).

Latham also indulged in building an Aviary that held rare birds, a separate canary house that was home to one hundred songsters, a classical “Ruin” composed of marble columns shipped from Pompeii at a cost of \$20,000, a stable and carriage house made of inlaid wood and boasting a chandelier and bell tower, and, most quixotic of all, a Moorish Temple variously described as a smoking kiosk, a summer house, a teahouse, and a pagoda (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 25 Jan 1873). Alonzo Phelps, author of *Contemporary Biography of California’s Representative Men* (1881), claimed that Latham’s efforts were “the first stimulus given in the erection of those magnificent private residences which have since followed.”



*The Moorish Temple at Thurlow Lodge/Sherwood Hall. Courtesy Menlo Park Historical Association.*

The popular couple entertained extensively at Menlo Park, but their idyllic lifestyle came to an end in 1877-78. Latham had invested heavily in the North Pacific Coast Railroad Company and became overextended when it went bankrupt. Citing health reasons, Latham resigned his position as president of the London and San Francisco Bank. Henrietta Dwight, Latham’s sister-in-law, loaned the couple \$300,000 with Thurlow Lodge as collateral. The Lathams traveled to Europe and came back to the United States in 1880, settling in New York City. Latham became president of the New York Mining Exchange, but his health had been broken; he died bankrupt in March 1882 at the age of 54 (*SF Daily Evening Bulletin*, 6 Mar 1882).

After her husband’s death, Mollie Latham moved back to San Francisco with her son. Latham must have hoped to recoup his losses and redeem Thurlow Lodge, for the estate had been kept in good working order, and all of the stock (racehorses, pleasure horses, ponies and cattle) was still on the premises. In September 1882, the animals and their equipage (buggies, wagons, etc.) went to public auction; neighbors such as William Sharon, Leland Stanford, and

John T. Doyle made many fine purchases (*Daily Examiner*, 25 Sep 1882). At the same time, it became public knowledge that Henrietta Dwight was now the legal owner of the estate. In April 1883 she sold the property to Ariel Lathrop, Leland Stanford’s brother-in-law and manager of his Palo Alto Stock Farm, for \$205,000. In turn, Lathrop deeded the property to Mary Frances Hopkins, widow of millionaire Mark Hopkins, in September 1883.<sup>3</sup>

Mrs. Hopkins, who split her time between Massachusetts, New York, and her Nob Hill mansion in San Francisco, renamed the estate Sherwood Hall (Sherwood being her maiden name) and only visited it on occasion. Her adopted son, Timothy Hopkins, and his wife, Mary (“May”) Kellogg Hopkins (niece of Mrs. Mark Hopkins), moved into the house in 1883 and initially made it their year-round home.<sup>4</sup>

Isabella Cass, a childhood friend of May Hopkins, visited Sherwood Hall from December 1884 to April 1885. During that time she kept a daily diary detailing her experiences. Coming from snowy Massachusetts, Cass was enthralled with the relatively balmy California weather and the profusion of flowers growing outdoors during the winter months. She was particularly taken with the oak trees, spending hours sitting on the limbs and looking at the clouds, the sun- and shade-dappled grounds and the nearby Coast Range. From her bedroom window she could also see El Palo Alto, the enormous redwood tree that Portola supposedly camped near when exploring California.<sup>5</sup>

Cass also recounted how Timothy and May Hopkins continued to use the estate features Latham had created. They hand-fed the deer and trout, kept birds in the aviary and canary house, had a pack of seven dogs, owned 60 work and pleasure horses, played tennis, lounged in the Moorish temple and near the Ruin, and spent many hours eating meals and dawdling about on the 16-foot-wide veranda that flanked two sides of the mansion. May Hopkins also spent much of her time riding and driving about the



*Thurlow Lodge/Sherwood Hall with the Aviary in the background. Courtesy Stanford University Archives.*

various estates on the Peninsula, viewing their grounds and gardens.

Cass made it clear that floriculture and horticulture were an integral part of Timothy and May Hopkins' lifestyle at Sherwood Hall.<sup>6</sup> Hopkins caught the 7:00 a.m. train into the City every weekday, and when he returned home in the afternoon, tours of the estate greenhouses were a regular event.<sup>7</sup> The butler presented fresh bunches of violets every morning at the breakfast table, and May Hopkins brought posies of violets as hostess gifts when visiting neighbors. Fresh flowers were placed throughout the great mansion, but as yet there was no mention of sending them to market in San Francisco. Grain was being grown in the outlying fields; it took a team of six horses to plow through the heavy clay soil.

The head gardener for the estate was a Mr. Nicholas. Hopkins replaced Nicholas with Irish-born gardener Michael Lynch.<sup>8</sup> Much later, one of Lynch's obituary notices gave him a great deal of credit for having turned Timothy Hopkin's hobbies of floriculture and horticulture into a booming business:

In 1886 Lynch took charge of the Sherwood Hall Nursery, owned by Timothy Hopkins. There, with his usual energy, he raised the concern from small beginnings to one of large proportions, so that when he retired (in 1892) the nursery was furnishing San Francisco with a very large and important part of its flower supply (*Gardening*, 1 Jul 1905, 314).

Another source also gave Lynch recognition for bringing the first greenhouse-grown flowers to market, including chrysanthemums, sweet peas, China asters, and the violets for which the Sherwood Hall Nursery Company was famous (*Gardening*, 1 Jul 1905, 314).

In 1886 Hopkins clearly had plans to expand. In addition to hiring Lynch, he put in two 70-foot water towers and two large stock barns. However, he was also considering quitting the business before he had scarcely gotten started. Hopkins, like Stanford and many other local landowners, hired Chinese laborers as both domestics and gardeners; this soon became a source of local disputations.

The use of Chinese labor was a hotly contested issue in California during the last half of the 19th century and into the early 20th. Free white laborers vigorously protested the hiring of Chinese ones, who would work longer hours at undesirable jobs for less pay. Anti-Chinese Leagues, also known as Anti-Coolie Leagues, sprang up all over the state; Menlo Park, despite its village-like size during the 1880s, was no exception. Hopkins met with a three-man delegation



The violet beds depicted in a *Sherwood Hall Nursery Catalog*.  
Courtesy Thomas A. Brown.

from the Menlo Park Anti-Chinese League on March 28, 1886.

Hopkins, claiming to have spent \$43,418 over the past three years on white labor and only \$14,000 on Chinese labor during the same period, refused their demand that he fire his "Celestial" workers. He made the point that a great deal of money was flowing through Menlo Park as a result of the jobs created by his great estate, saying, "I want to continue improvements but if there's going to be difficulty [a

strike] I do not care to spend any more money, if I am not to get the same amount of pleasure which I am enjoying now" (Gunnison, *Journal*, unpaginated). The blustering committee members backed down, but the Chinese issue continued to be a bone of contention for some years to come.<sup>9</sup>

Newspaper accounts of the Sherwood Hall Nursery not only identified the Chinese labor presence, they also provided detailed descriptions of the operation. Often waxing heavily on the romantic side when describing the great old oaks and the sheer beauty of 200 acres of flowers in bloom—unable to decide whether the colors or the fragrances were the more compelling—they also provided salient facts. By 1890, six months out of the year Hopkins had five acres of violets producing four varieties of blooms for market. Sweet peas took up 15 acres (later expanded to 100 acres to produce both cut flowers and seed), with over 10,000 chrysanthemum plants growing alongside them. Of the 150 varieties of roses, some were grown outside, while others resided in the greenhouses to continue the supply of blooms through the winter months.

Hopkins also had over 10,000 carnations growing under glass, in addition to poinsettias, ferns, China asters, and various bulbs—such as hyacinths, tulips, and tuberoses (*Daily Evening Bulletin*, 21 Jun 1890). The 25 greenhouses required "four big furnaces for the hot-water heating apparatus, and entail the purchase of from 200 to 300 tons of coal annually," and a 15-horsepower gas engine pumped water from artesian wells into the two water towers (*Palo Alto Times*, 29 Apr 1894). Watering the flowers took up to 200,000 gallons of water per day (*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 7 Aug 1892).<sup>10</sup>

The flower fields received so much attention in the press that Hopkins in late 1893 decided to change the business name from the Sherwood Hall Nursery Company to the Sunset Seed and Plant Company, in order to better reflect the broad range of plants and seed available, in addition to the cut-flower trade.<sup>11</sup> Several notices appeared in various

publications, all stating: “This is merely a change of name, the personnel, affairs and location of the business remaining as formerly” (*Overland Monthly*, 15 Nov 1893).

On May 28, 1893, the meteoric success of the venture was noted in the *San Francisco Call*, as it had been in several other publications within a year of the official opening date of April 1, 1890. Not only was Hopkins dominating the cut-flower market and other nursery concerns in San Francisco; he was also managing to ship both cut flowers and seed to the Eastern United States and Europe. He received the only award given out for sweet peas at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and his nursery entries consistently won prizes at the local flower and horticultural shows. But while 1893 was a banner year in terms of selling products, clients were feeling the pinch of the Cleveland Depression and were slow in paying their bills.<sup>12</sup> Hopkins stopped paying his workers, most of whom continued to receive room and board on the estate.

By January 1894, the white workers went on strike.<sup>13</sup> James Sproule, manager of the Sunset Seed and Plant Company, promptly traveled down from San Francisco to Menlo Park on the train, paid off the strikers, and then just as promptly fired them all (*Palo Alto Times*, 2 Feb 1894). Sproule replaced the men with other local laborers; the Chinese who worked for Hopkins do not appear to have been part of the strike or the subsequent discharge.

Hopkins, whose wife was expecting another child (their daughter Lydia had been born in 1887), was distraught when the baby died within a day or two of being born in early March 1894. Reputed to be a devoted family man, he had more pressing concerns to deal with than labor issues on the estate. However, keeping his reaction to the Menlo Park Anti-Chinese League in mind, it would appear that the strike created a discordant note that Hopkins could not ignore. By April, he had Sproule “taking a look at our thrift and talking garden with Professor Emory E. Smith” (*Palo Alto Times*, 20 Apr 1894).<sup>14</sup>

In June a large number of men were let go due to “a decrease in business” (*Palo Alto Times*, 1 Jun 1894). What Hopkins appears to have been considering was a separation between the cut-flower business and that of the plants and seeds produced by the Sunset Seed and Plant Company. Sproule continued to manage the nursery concern, while Hopkins in 1895 leased out the cut-flower grounds to gardener Sidney Clack—who in 1890 had replaced Rudolph Ulrich at the Hotel del Monte after that gentleman resigned his position (*Palo Alto Times*, 12 Jun 1895).

The success and influence of the Sunset Seed and Plant Company appeared to continue to expand, and there was no stint in advertising or catalog production. A snippet in the local Palo Alto newspaper apparently went unnoticed in San Francisco:

A considerable change will be made at the Hopkins’ ranch on April 1st. For some time, Mr. Hopkins has been preparing to abandon a part of the nursery business to which the place has been devoted. This has necessitated a reduction of the working force and on the date named a number of men will be discharged. The fruit interest, however, will still require quite a force of workmen (*Palo Alto Live Oak*, 24 Mar 1897).

At this point Hopkins removed himself from Sunset Seed and Plant Company, whose worth Bradstreet had rated at \$1,000,000, and sold his interest to Sproule (*San Francisco Call*, 7 Sep 1898). While the public might have been swept up in the romance of the Sherwood Hall estate as a floral paradise, Hopkins was businessman enough to get out once it became clear the nursery was losing money; the 1894 strike was identified as “the first serious trouble” for the nursery (*San Francisco Call*, 7 Sep 1894).<sup>15</sup>irate creditors, unaware until September 1898 that Hopkins had

left the business a year earlier, wanted him to cover the \$15,000 debt owed them by Sunset Seed and Plant Company. Sproule promised Hopkins would not have to do so; the company would make good on the money they owed (*San Francisco Call*, 7 Sep 1898).

While Hopkins was not able to make the nursery effort support the estate, he still accomplished his other goals. He had indulged his love of floriculture and horticulture at a level those less wealthy could only dream about, and his initial commercial success did much to raise California floriculture and horticulture in the eyes of the nation. Both the Sherwood Hall Nursery Company and the Sunset Seed and Plant Company introduced numerous new varieties of various plants over the years, realizing Hopkins’ desire for “excellence of stock and

all flowers true to name” being “the cardinal principles of the venture” (*SF Daily Evening Bulletin*, 21 Jun 1890). Hopkins continued to enter flower shows (and sponsor prizes) long after his nursery experiment ended, and Sherwood Hall successfully produced tons of dried fruit (apricots, peaches, prunes, and olives) annually until at least 1918.<sup>16</sup>

Hopkins left his estate to Stanford University at his death in 1936 with the caveat that his widow be allowed to live there until her demise. With her passing on 14 October



An advertisement in a Sherwood Hall Nursery catalog. Courtesy Thomas A. Brown.

1941, the house and outbuildings (with the exception of the gatehouse) were razed at the end of 1942.

The gatehouse is still flanked by magnificent coast live and valley oaks today, some in a state of genteel decline due to their greatly advanced age. They are the most prevalent feature of the landscape today, clear evidence of the beauty that drew Barron, Latham and Hopkins to the property in the first place. Latham's gatehouse, later modified by Hopkins in 1906 (and by others during WWII), now belongs to the Menlo Park City Council and is used to house a local non-profit organization. All of the Menlo Park City Council offices, including the police station, currently stand on the former estate grounds.

The Menlo Park Community Library takes up one small corner where the violets once grew, and two neighborhood parks boast several heritage tree specimens. They, and the lawns growing between them, are reminiscent of the estate's park-like setting that existed between 1865 and 1942. Barron's trout pond is long gone but another artificial pond is now home to several contented ducks. The United States Geological Survey and the Stanford Re-

search Institute take up one large quarter of the original property and the Sunset Publishing Company (no relation to Sunset Seed and Plant Company) with its demonstration gardens went up at the corner of Middlefield Road and San Francisquito Creek. A large and quiet residential neighborhood—with streets named Hopkins, Sherwood and Thurlow winding through it—takes up what remains of the estate grounds. El Palo Alto still stands near San Francisquito Creek, and when a train pulls into the tiny Menlo Park Depot, it is not hard to imagine all those railroad cars from over one hundred years ago loaded down with flowers and heading towards San Francisco.

**(Bibliography and endnotes are on pages 20-21.)**

*Julie Cain is a member of CGLHS. She has a master's degree in history and works at Stanford University as the Historic Preservation Planner for Heritage Services. She is particularly interested in Gilded Age estate gardens on the San Francisco Peninsula and is working on a book about 19th-century landscape gardener Rudolph Ulrich with research partner Marlea Graham.*

**TIMOTHY HOPKINS** provided 51 years of devoted service to Stanford University as a major donor and the longest-lasting of its first trustees. His main contributions were the Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove and the Lane Medical Library. Additionally, he developed Palo Alto—initially founded as University Park, a town to supply Stanford's practical needs. He and his wife, May, along with Dr. Charles Gardner, originated the Stanford Convalescent Hospital at Jane and Leland Stanford's Palo Alto estate home. They also gifted the university with one of Sherwood Hall's bronze statues: a horse that now stands outside the Stanford Red Barn.

Born in Maine to Patrick and Caroline Nolan on March 2, 1859, Hopkins lost his father at a very young age. Accounts of his life thereafter vary, with erroneous facts often accepted and repeated as gospel. For instance, one version says that his mother found work in Sacramento as housekeeper to Mark and Mary Sherwood Hopkins, long before Hopkins made a fortune as one of the Central Pacific Railroad's four principals. Another has it that she was a neighbor of the Hopkins, and that Mrs. Hopkins, who was childless, doted on Timothy and wanted to adopt him. Whatever the circumstances, when Caroline Nolan remarried and left the area, she agreed to leave Timothy with the Hopkins. He grew up virtually as Mark Hopkins' son, though he was never formally adopted by him.

A year after Mark Hopkins' death in 1878, his widow adopted Timothy, when he was about 21. After assuming responsibility for his adoptive mother's extensive business affairs, he was mentored by Leland Stanford, and thereafter the two men remained close associates. Hopkins served as treasurer for the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific railroads until 1892, when he resigned to pursue his own business and personal interests. One of them was creating the Sherwood Hall Nursery on the grounds of the former Thurlow Lodge estate which he and his wife had occupied since 1883.

While some regard Hopkins's life as a fable touched only by great good fortune, he had his share of sorrows. A devout family man, he and May lost four sons, who were either stillborn or died shortly after birth. In later life he became estranged from his daughter, Lydia, his only surviving child. Also, after Mary Sherwood Hopkins married a much younger man, she chose (or was persuaded—again, accounts vary) to leave her immense fortune to her husband. Cut entirely out of her will, Timothy sued, and an out-of-court settlement reportedly awarded him three million dollars in various stocks, bonds, and property.

Although Hopkins never attended college, he was extremely well read and maintained a lifelong pursuit of numerous topics. He acquired the contents of the famous Thurlow Lodge library along with the house and made his own substantial additions to it over the years. Both libraries were later donated to Stanford University. In 1936 May Hopkins established the Timothy Hopkins Room in the university library. That room still exists today, filled with furniture, books, and art from Sherwood Hall. It is a fitting tribute to a man who for many years had given the school so much of his extraordinary energy and heart.



—Julie Cain



## Endnotes

1. Barron bought a 320-acre parcel in 1864, built his house on the central portion of the land, and offered for sale multiple lots ranging in size from 7 to 15 acres that ringed three outer boundaries of the property (Ravenswood Ave., Middlefield Rd., and San Francisquito Creek). He kept two lots along Ravenswood Ave., where the estate gatehouse and entrance roadway were located, in reserve for his own use, and retained the viewshed along Alma St. so that he could see the Coast Range mountains. Latham initially purchased Barron's central plat, then bought the surrounding lots over the next five years until he had acquired all of Barron's original property. The deeds subsequent to Latham's death list the acreage at 280 acres (Regnery Collection).
2. Rudolph Ulrich was identified in the local newspaper as laying out Latham's grounds at some point before September 1877; he had initially come to California to work on the D.O. Mills Millbrae estate in May 1875. Trained at the Royal Gardener's Institute at Potsdam and at Van Houtte's School of Horticulture in Belgium, Ulrich also worked in Saxony, England, and Italy before coming to America in 1868. Known for utilizing formal design and highly complex plantings, he worked at several San Francisco Peninsula estates in addition to designing the grounds of Hotel del Monte, Hotel Raymond, and Hotel Rafael (three California resorts located respectively in Monterey, South Pasadena, and San Rafael). His work at Hotel del Monte (1881-1890) set a very high standard that other California resorts tried to emulate. Ulrich later went on to work as the landscape superintendent of the Chicago (Columbian), Omaha, and Buffalo Expositions.
3. Mark Hopkins, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, and Collis P. Huntington, known as the Big Four, had together invested in and built the first successful transcontinental railroad. All owned palatial homes on San Francisco's Nob Hill and their intertwined business interests extended far beyond the railroad and into the next generation for those who had surviving children. The Hotel del Monte in Monterey was built and owned by the Big Four. It is probable that Lathrop originally bought Thurlow Lodge as Stanford's agent and that Stanford, in turn, gave or sold the property to Mrs. Mark Hopkins as part of their mutual business interests (Regnery Collection).
4. Local historian Frank Stanger claimed Mary (May) Kellogg Hopkins told him personally that her aunt "took over the place on mortgage," which explains why Ariel Lathrop was able to purchase Thurlow Lodge for well below the market price (Regnery Collection).
5. Leland Stanford named his estate for that tree, and Hopkins, who founded Palo Alto as a university town for Stanford, followed suit.
6. Timothy and May Hopkins married in November 1882; he was 23 to her 19. Responsible for managing his adoptive mother's extensive and convoluted finances since Mark Hopkins's death in 1878, Hopkins was made treasurer of the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads in January 1883 at a salary of \$10,000 per year. He never attended college but was mentored in business affairs by Leland Stanford after Mark Hopkins's death. Hopkins read voraciously on many subjects and built up an extensive personal library, which he later donated to Stanford University. The Stanfords appointed Hopkins as one of the original Board of Trustee members in 1885 and he served the university devotedly until his death in 1936.
7. Mollie Latham used at least one hothouse and the local newspaper reported that Latham planned to build a conservatory "this season or next" in 1873 (*San Mateo County Gazette*, 24 May 1873). Hopkins had already begun adding large greenhouses when Cass visited in 1884-1885; by 1890, he had a total of 25 greenhouses in use.
8. Lynch has been credited with introducing violets as Sherwood Hall's signature flower, but Cass's diary entries reveal that Hopkins was already growing violets long before Lynch came to work for him.
9. Chinese were still living and working on the Hopkins estate in large numbers in 1895, and "a Chinaman" took charge of one of the estate workers' boarding houses in 1898. Hopkins was still being asked to fire his Chinese workers as late as 1895, but he does not appear to have ever done so as a result of any outside pressure (*San Francisco Call*, 30 Jan 1895; *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 Feb 1895; *Redwood City Democrat*, 24 Mar 1898).
10. Starting in 1898 Hopkins would also pump water out of San Francisquito Creek, but this source would dry up during the summer and fall months (*Palo Alto Times*, 8 Jul 1898).
11. Michael Lynch resigned from Sherwood Hall in 1892 in order to set up his own nursery business, the highly successful Menlo Park Nursery Company. He built his greenhouses on Oak Grove Avenue, just one block over from the Sherwood Hall growing grounds. James Sproule and a partner, a Mr. Campbell, took Lynch's place as managers of the nursery aspect of Sunset Seed and Plant Co. (*Chicago Inter-Ocean*, 7 Aug 1892).
12. A Wall Street panic took place in early 1893, followed by a catastrophic four-year depression. In California alone 75 banks closed and 50,000 people were out of work. Grover Cleveland was president at the time.
13. A later account of the incident claimed the workers were striking for higher wages rather than unpaid back wages (*San Francisco Call*, 7 Aug 1898).
14. Smith, a highly respected botanist at Stanford University, was a close colleague of Hopkins; they served on horticultural-related committees together and entered the same flower shows.
15. Sproule kept Sunset Seed and Plant running for another year, moving the growing grounds to Belmont, while Clack successfully pursued the cut-flower end of the business. In 1908, he bought property in Mayfield (now south Palo Alto) to begin his own nursery business (*Sunset Magazine*, Nov 1898; *Palo Alto Times*, 5 May 1908).
16. It is impossible to know how badly the Sunset Seed and Plant Company was hit by the depression that gripped the United States economy from 1893 to 1898. None of the nursery records appear to have survived; they were likely lost in the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire. None of the Sherwood Hall estate records appear to have been retained either. The only evidence found relating to estate costs were Hopkins's approximate labor costs for 1883-1886, noted in the Gunnison journals, and one snippet in the *Sacramento Daily Union* that estimated he had made \$104,000 "in improvements" between 1883 and 1894 (*Sacramento Daily Union*, 24 Aug 1894). One of those improvements included setting up a large poultry operation that supplied eggs and chickens to the Hotel del Monte (700 guest capacity) and San Francisco's Pacific Union Club in 1889—clearly another venture to achieve estate sustainability (*Daily Evening Bulletin*, 25 Apr 1889 and *Pacific Rural Press*, 15 Jun 1889).



## Fall Photography Field Trip to the Getty Villa with Tim Street-Porter

Spending an afternoon at the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades is always a delight—a holiday away from the noise of our sprawling city. Recently members of the California Garden & Landscape History Society made a field trip to the Villa ... with the added luxury of following master photographer Tim Street-Porter as we meandered through the gardens. Street-Porter, a highly regarded landscape photographer in the US and England, has authored a number of fine art books, including *Los Angeles*, in which stunning color photographs depict the architecture of the city from unusual vantage points.

An *al fresco* lunch gave us a chance to get acquainted and share a bit of our interests before we strolled the grounds to see the Villa in a new way.

What a privilege to have someone of Street-Porter's caliber critique our



*Kelly Comras & Tim Street-Porter.  
Photo: Judy Horton*

work, and then immediately put those recommendations into practice! Even in the less than desirable time before the “golden hour,” small adjustments turn an ordinary photo to an excellent one; by using light and shadow in a slightly different manner, one can change an average shot into a memorable one; changing the shutter speed or F-stop can capture a fountain's flow midstream or produce the illusion of motion.

The Villa's architectural aspects and varied gardens present myriad chances to find a dappled sunlit corner or filtered light tracing through lacy foliage or patterns that repeat themselves in stone and softscape. Statuary, columns, and archways provide more opportunities to see and experiment with the Street-Porter way by using those structures to advantage—with the end result a photograph worth keeping.

Thank you to Kelly Comras, who provided her charming Palisades garden, food, and wine to end our day, and there we spent the last light remembering our most excellent day.

And thank you again to Tim Street-Porter, whose expertise, experience, and eye were at our disposal for one delightful afternoon.

—Sonja Daniel



*The Getty Villa's pool and Mediterranean garden area. The premises are modeled after the Roman Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum. Photo: Gina Bush.*



### Participants in the photography field trip to the Getty Villa

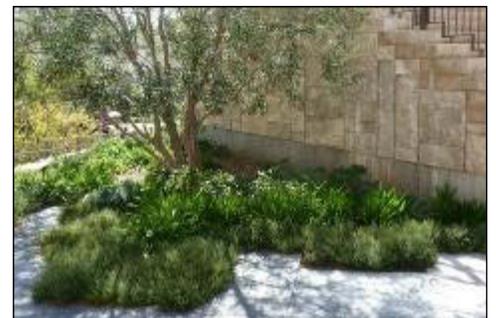
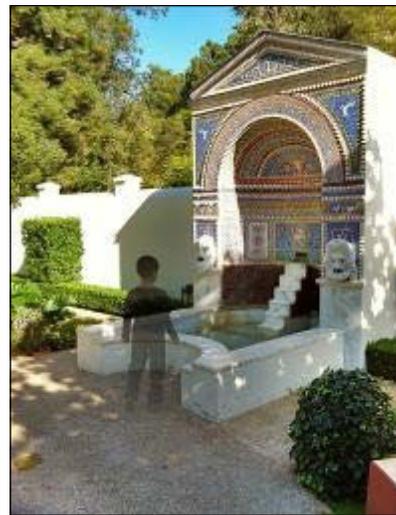
*In left front: Kelly Comras*

*Middle row (from the post):  
Sonja Daniel, Peggy Stewart,  
Carole McElwee, Kathleen Fernan,  
Judy Horton, Marlise Fratinardo*

*Back row: Bill Linsman  
Ralph Gidwitz, Grant Loucks,  
Tim Street-Porter, Gina Bush.*

*On opposite page, the photo montage images are by (clockwise from the top):  
Kelly Comras, Judy Horton,  
Kelly Comras, Judy Horton,  
Marlise Fratinardo, Bill Linsman,  
Gina Bush Grant Lincks, Judy Horton,  
Bill Linsman.*

*The two center photos are by Bill Linsman.*





## Postings

**Three CGLHS members are leading special tour programs in Europe during spring and early autumn:**

### ***Mallorca & Menorca: Gardens, Art, and Cuisine***

**April 14–24**

Sponsored by Pacific Horticulture Society

Join a spring tour of Mallorca, which features invitations to visit spectacular private gardens and art collections. Some of the gardens to be visited date from the 8th century and others are recently designed by Spain's leading landscape architects.

The tour will take attendees from the lovely patios of Palma to elegant country estates and charming medieval villages. Also to be explored is the island of Menorca, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve with fascinating archeological sites and distinctive architecture. Along the way, meals will be given in private homes, along with experiencing the generous hospitality and scenic beauty of the Balearic Islands.

The tour will be escorted by Katherine Greenberg, who is past president of Pacific Horticulture Society and the Mediterranean Garden Society: [klgcal@aol.com](mailto:klgcal@aol.com)

For a detailed itinerary, contact Sterling Tours, 619-299-3010 or visit [www.pacifichorticulture.org](http://www.pacifichorticulture.org).



### ***Floriade 2012***

**May 4–13**

Nan Sterman, a garden writer and designer, will lead a special tour in Holland and Belgium—inspired by the chance to attend the Floriade Horticultural Exposition. This international event, which takes place only once in a decade, celebrates culture, horticulture, and nature. The tour is specially planned for the enjoyment and enrichment of garden designers, horticulturists, florists, green industry professionals, and garden lovers.

Two days will be spent at the Floriade in the Netherlands' Venlo, where five “lands” will offer different themes, gardens, and hands-on experiences. Other tour activities will be visiting these places: private canal gardens in Amsterdam; the Aalsmeer Flower Auction where 20 million blooms are traded daily; a commercial bulb grower; the Keukenhof Botanical Garden, where 80 acres are filled with flowering bulb plants; Appeltern and its 200 landscape displays; the annual Beervelde Garden Day; and the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Brugge, Belgium.

The tour has been arranged with Celia Levy of Worldview Travel. For more information, visit [www.PlantSoup.com](http://www.PlantSoup.com).

Nan Sterman is the proprietor of Plant Soup, Inc. Contact her directly at [NSterman@PlantSoup.com](mailto:NSterman@PlantSoup.com).



### ***Great Gardens in Central Italy***

**September 19–October 3**

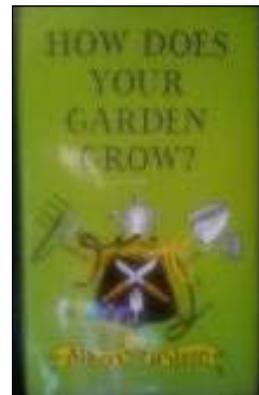
Tom Brown, CGLHS's immediate past president, invites you to join him and landscape architect and watercolorist Lisa Guthrie from September 19 to October 3—“as we explore, sketch, and photograph the greatest gardens of central Italy.

These gardens, full of fantasy, wit, and sensory delight, offer experiences out of the ordinary and have inspired artists and designers for over four centuries. These direct ancestors of today's theme parks have stories to tell, and landscape historian Tom Brown will relate their history, meaning, and features in illustrated orientation talks the evenings before we see the gardens.” The group will be based at La Romita School of Art, housed in a 16th-century monastery overlooking Terni in Umbria, about 60 miles north of Rome. For more information or to request a brochure, contact [lisaguth1@comcast.net](mailto:lisaguth1@comcast.net).





## Book & Film Reviews + News



***How Does Your Garden Grow?*** Albert Wilson. (Menlo Park, California: Happy Hours, 1949), 299 pp.

Albert Wilson (1902-1996) was a well-known radio and television personality in the San Francisco Bay Area. He was an accomplished horticulturalist, garden designer, prolific author, teacher, and popular speaker throughout California. Wilson was raised in a San Francisco orphanage, worked for a florist as a teenager, and then attended Stanford University, where he received a BA in botany and, later, an MA in biology. Wilson designed his house and garden, Happy Hours, on Creek Drive in Menlo Park. He died while working to save the San Francisquito Creek opposite his home.

Wilson's Sunday morning radio show on the local NBC affiliate, *Dig It with Albert*, began in 1945 and was the source for *How Does Your Garden Grow?*. By the mid-1950s a televised version on a PBS affiliate supplemented the radio program. The radio show continued on various stations for over 40 years. He was openly opinionated and kept his audiences entertained.

*How Does Your Garden Grow?*, like the broadcasts, is a week-by-week garden calendar, beginning in January, the time to prune the roses. Like all "gardener's year" books, it is best to begin with the week one receives the book. In general, Wilson's gardening advice is sound for San Francisco Bay Area gardeners, particularly his planting and pruning instructions. His extensive use of chemical pesticides, many of which can no longer be used legally, dates the first edition. Later editions are less enthusiastic about those chemicals. The chatty style makes the book a pleasure to read. The index allows a search for specific plants and topics. And, above all, the illustrations, line drawings, and woodcuts are both instructive and charming.

Wilson thought the suburban garden should be the focus of a family's life. This was in step with post-World War II America and the emerging world of *Sunset Magazine*, also based in Menlo Park. He considered the rose the queen of the garden. Other favorite flowers were peonies, fuchsias, pelargoniums, and iris. Fruit trees of all kinds were a staple of a home garden. He provides cultural information on all of these and more. *How Does Your Garden Grow?* ignores the natives, even ceonothus and fremontia, which he used extensively in his design work in the 1950s.

Wilson was responsible for planting at Allied Arts, designed by architect Gardiner Dailey, near his Menlo Park home, and for the Rodin Sculpture Garden at the Stanford University Museum, although both have been altered. Wilson also designed numerous gardens for friends and acquaintances throughout the Bay Area. His *Distinctive Trees, Shrubs, and Vines in Gardens of the San Francisco Peninsula* (1938) is still consulted.

Wilson left his papers, including his drawings and photographs, to the library at Filoli. Thanks to our members Lucy Tolmach and Julie Cain, the papers now reside in the Special Collections of the Stanford University Library, where they await scholarly use. *How Does Your Garden Grow?* was reprinted in the mid-1980s in both hardcover and paperback editions. It is available online from sites such as [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) often can be found in used book stores.

—Margaretta J. Darnall

### ***News of Possible Interest to Landscape Historians***—contributed by Marlea Graham

The May/June 2011 issue of *California Garden* 102, no. 3 has two articles of interest to landscape historians:

- "Kate in Coronado: Origins of the K.O. Sessions Nursery," (p 12) by Nancy Carol Carter; and "Roots—Profiles in Horticultural History: John G. Morley," (pp 16-17) also by Carter. Morley served 27 years as superintendent of San Diego parks.
- Before he recently died, Frank Cabot (1925–2011), founder of the Garden Conservancy, had produced a DVD (43 minutes) with an illustrated talk he gave about his estate garden 'Quatre Vents' in Quebec. First established in the 1930s, the garden has evolved under Cabot's stewardship over the last quarter of the 20th century. He wrote the book on the subject, titled *The Greater Perfection* (2001). \$21.95 including shipping, available from The Garden Conservancy, PO Box 219, Cold Springs, NY 10516. Tel: 845.265.2029 or visit their website: [www.gardenconservancy.org](http://www.gardenconservancy.org).

## Film Review: *Women in the Dirt*

Don't be put off by the title. *Women in the Dirt* is a lyrical, nuanced portrait of seven groundbreaking designers who are changing the face of the California landscape.

Filmmaker Carolann Stoney began her documentary as a student project at USC. It is a marvel that her master's thesis has become, with continued polishing, one of the best films on landscape architecture ever made. Ms. Stoney has succeeded in capturing the voices of seven marvelous designers: Cheryl Barton Andrea Cochran, Isabelle Greene, Mia Lehrer, Lauren Melendrez, Pamela Palmer, and Katherine Spitz. Her film explores the goals and motivations of these very different designers working on projects that range in scale from private gardens to civic planning.

At the same time, *Women in the Dirt* seeks commonalities. All the women interviewed are concerned with issues of sustainability, beauty, and the natural environment. As for the issue of "Women": Only Mia Lehrer addresses the problem of discrimination head on, noting that she has only informed her clients that she has had children in the last two years.

The film leaves some questions unanswered. Why these women, and not others? I would love to see Pamela Burton, Julie Bargmann, Kathryn Gustafson, and others interviewed. There is a California theme that is not stated in the title. Thaisa Way, PhD, who has studied the history of women in landscape architecture, notes that the problem of needing to highlight women's accomplishments is part of a "discourse of marginalization"—meaning that women landscape architects still have a long way to go to achieve the recognition that they deserve.

Brava, Ms. Stoney for this beautiful and inspiring film. Four stars!

A DVD is now available to schools and individuals on her website, Wind Media: <http://vimeo.com/user4330072>.

—Lisa Gimmy, ASLA, LEED AP



### ***SAVE THE DATE!***

#### **September 8 & 9, 2012 — The CGLHS Conference in Sonoma County *"Plants, Passion, and Propagation"***

From winegrower Agoston Haraszthy and plant creator Luther Burbank to the present day, Sonoma County has harbored a great number of people whose lives and livelihoods have been closely connected with the Plant Kingdom. Horticulture, agriculture, and human culture have thrived here for many years.

Come and see where, who, how, when, and why!

For more information, visit [www.cglhs.org](http://www.cglhs.org) or e-mail [conference@cglhs.org](mailto:conference@cglhs.org).

The Spring and Summer issues of *Eden* will also provide more details.



## Preservation Matters

### ***HALS Challenge***

Documenting American Latino Landscapes is the subject of the 2012 HALS Challenge. The Historic American Landscapes Survey Northern California chapter plans to meet the national challenge by documenting each of the 21 California Missions. For more information and to download the short form template see [www.HALSca.org](http://www.HALSca.org).

Chris Patillo writes: “This challenge is the perfect way to get started with HALS because it is great fun to visit the sites and there is a lot of information for the history section available at the Library of Congress site from HABS work that has been done in the past. Also, just through Google—tons of information, so doing the research is easy.”

This is a statewide undertaking. You can get on the website and choose a Mission; there are plenty still left. If HALS Northern California wins a cash prize, the funds will be used for future landscape documentation projects.

### ***UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden***

UCLA plans to sell this well-loved, historically significant garden. Some of you may remember this garden from our 2007 annual conference, “California Japanese-style Gardens: Tradition and Practice,” co-sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum, the Los Angeles Conservancy, and the Garden Conservancy in recognition of the importance of the topic to both the cultural history of Los Angeles and our national garden history. Through UCLA’s Extension Landscape Architecture program many of us visited the UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden as a pre-conference option.

I went back to see the garden with Antonia Adezio, president of The Garden Conservancy, in October. It is in excellent shape, and very well cared for. We were told by UCLA’s representative that the garden would be listed for sale in January. Prior to that, UCLA planned to remove some of the significant art objects – stone lanterns, tablets, and a stone pagoda for display at UCLA.

Dr. Kendall H. Brown, professor of Asian Art, California State University, Long Beach and the leading scholar on Japanese-style gardens in America, in an e-mail to me has assessed the importance of the garden in relation to existing public Japanese-style gardens in Southern California. Ken wrote that the UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden

... is the biggest and best private, residential [Japanese-style] garden built in America in the immediate post-war period and thus demonstrates the rapid embrace of Japanese culture in the wake of World War II. It also shows, for the time, a new sophistication in American domestic culture, in which garden styles, including “California patio,” “Hawaiian tropical,” and “Japanese teahouse,” are combined into something that is distinctly American and wonderfully Californian.... The Carter garden is also important because it represents the garden design of two of the leading figures who created Japanese gardens in the mid-20th century. The garden was designed by Nagao Sakurai, who later created civic Japanese gardens in San Mateo and Spokane, as well as many leading private gardens. Sakurai was chosen by the Japanese government to build the Imperial Japanese Gardens for the 1939 international expositions in San Francisco and New York, and is a major figure in modern garden history. The Carter garden was one of the first gardens he made after immigrating to the US in the 1950s....

After a mudslide damaged the Carter Garden in 1968, redesign was directed by Koichi Kawana, a member of the UCLA facilities staff and life partner of UCLA Dean Carol Parish. The Carter Garden was one of Kawana’s first projects, and helped launch his career. In the 1970s and 1980s he became the leading Japanese garden designer in North America.... Locally, he created important Japanese gardens at the Tillman Water Reclamation facility in Van Nuys and at Lotusland in Montecito.

Both Antonia and I wrote letters to UCLA Chancellor Gene Beck urging that steps be taken to assure the preservation of the garden before offering it for sale. In my letter of November 1, I asked UCLA to reconsider plans to remove artifacts from the garden and to list the garden for sale without restrictions. I urged them to “meet with professionals in landscape and garden preservation. These professionals can help you realize your goal of selling the property while assuring its preservation and continued public access as well as honoring the intent of Mr. Carter’s gift.” In addition, I offered CGLHS’s assistance in the process by connecting UCLA with individuals and organizations that could provide help in assuring that the UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden is preserved.

UCLA replied on November 4 that they were going forward with plans to list the garden for sale without imposing restrictions for future use and that they were indeed going to remove objects from the garden. “Campus to sell Japanese garden and estate to meet intent of property’s donors” by Phil Hampton appeared November 10, 2011 in UCLA Newsroom <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/campus-to-sell-japanese-garden-218545.aspx>. UCLA’s reasons for selling the garden are explained in the article. The article goes on to state: “Officials are evaluating which artifacts have the greatest cultural, architectural and historical significance. In recognition of the Carters’ generosity, those items will be retained and displayed at an appropriate campus location. Organizations and individuals with a specific interest in Japanese gardens will be contacted as potential bidders. The property is not expected to go on the market until January 2012.”

CGLHS is in touch with individuals and organizations concerned about the future of this garden. If you would like to be added to the list please e-mail [president@cglhs.org](mailto:president@cglhs.org).

Thanks to our former board member Susan Chamberlin, I learned that the site was a 1923 A.E. Hanson garden before it became a Japanese garden in 1959–61. Hanson designed it as a country retreat (but without a house) for his Windsor Square client, Harry Calendar.

—Judy M. Horton

## *The Design & Historic Preservation of Pasadena's Gardens*

The California Office of Historic Preservation has awarded the City of Pasadena a grant to conduct a study of historic gardens in Pasadena. The grant includes the preparation of a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), which will support the nomination of historic gardens in Pasadena to the National Register of Historic Places.

The City of Pasadena has selected a multidisciplinary consultant team organized by Pasadena-based Sapphos Environmental, Inc. and comprised of four CGLHS members: Ann Scheid, Kelly Comras, Vonn Marie May, and Marlise Fratinardo. They will support City staff in the evaluation of historic properties and complete the required MPDF.

This innovative project will identify and document Pasadena's rich history in garden design and also designate the most important heritage gardens that remain in existence.



*Two historic gardens in Pasadena.  
Photos by Kent Sokolow and Kevin Johnson  
[www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/planninganddevelopment/](http://www.ci.pasadena.ca.us/planninganddevelopment/)*

### *Tours and Talks in the Southland—A Reprise in 2012*

A second round of our popular Tours & Talks series will be underway in the Los Angeles area soon, starting in the spring of this new year.

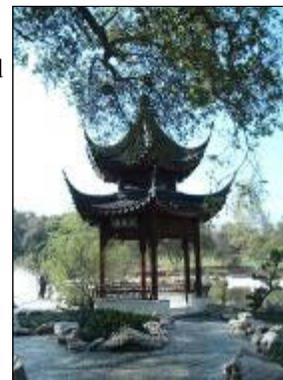
Perhaps you attended some or all of the five Tours & Talks program offerings in the Southland in 2010. If so, you'll surely want to sign up again. If you live in the area but didn't come on any of the site visits, and regretted it after hearing or reading about the wonders you missed, you may well want to join us this year. And even if you live elsewhere, perhaps you can plan on coming for at least one event.

This year will include not only garden venues, but also investigations into the subject of imaging and recording historic landscapes. Our explorations will include:

- A behind-the-scenes tour of the Huntington Botanical Gardens
- An excursion specially planned for CGLHS members within the Los Angeles County Arboretum
- A lecture highlighting a new book on one of the nation's earliest women photographers— Frances Benjamin Johnston, who photographed several remarkable Pasadena gardens in 1917
- A panel discussion focused on historic preservation planning strategies for historic landscapes

When our Tours & Talks plans are finalized and details are available, members will be sent an e-mail announcement along with a registration form. The information will also be posted on [www.cglhs.org](http://www.cglhs.org), and people can e-mail [toursandtalks@cglhs.org](mailto:toursandtalks@cglhs.org) with any questions.

Stay tuned!!



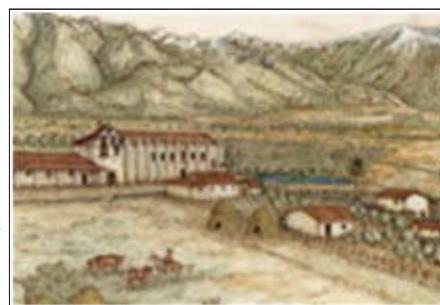
*Chinese Pagoda at the Huntington Botanic Gardens. Photo: B. Marinacci.*

### *Water Began It All: A New Look at the San Gabriel Mission*

An exhibit at the Huntington Library Botanical Center's Flora-Legium Gallery, on weekends until February 19

Water was crucial to the history and growth of the Southland's San Gabriel Valley. Before Hispanic colonists arrived, Native Americans living along the valley's 16-mile-long Raymond Fault benefited from the water emerging from this geological fissure whose seeps, springs, *ciénagas* (bogs), and lakes provided abundant flora, fauna, and fish. In 1774 Spanish priests at the San Gabriel Mission began capturing the water flowing south through the canyons; they enlarged natural lakes and built dams and a network of *zanjas* (ditches) to water their fields, run their grist mills, and supply the mission.

New research by Michael J. Hart, an expert on local water history, has used early maps, archival documents, drawings, and photographs from several archives to provide the first detailed and accurate look at the mission's water system.



*San Gabriel Mission in the early 19th century. [http://www.huntington.org/huntingtonlibrary\\_exhibitions.aspx?id=108](http://www.huntington.org/huntingtonlibrary_exhibitions.aspx?id=108)*



## President's Message

As 2011 draws to a close and I am caught up in holiday joy and rush, I try to find the time for some reflection and gratitude. I have been thinking about our aim “to promote wider knowledge, preservation, and restoration of California’s historic gardens and landscapes” in support of our mission “to celebrate the beauty and diversity of California’s historic gardens and landscapes.” Though I am not a professional in the field of history or preservation, I am passionately committed to both.

I am delighted David Streatfield is writing for us in this issue of *Eden*. My own personal journey began with David Streatfield’s 1994 book *California Gardens: Creating a New Eden*. I went back to it a few days ago, as I do frequently, to look up something about Lockwood de Forest and saw that he signed it to me—“To Judy, with best wishes, David C. Streatfield, 4th May, 1995.” I remember that day, sitting spellbound, outdoors, somewhere in the valley north of downtown Los Angeles, as David talked about history and culture through the lens of gardens. While I knew quite a lot about European garden history through reading and visiting, I had not thought much about California’s garden making traditions. I did not know the names of our landscape architects and garden designers other than Florence Yoch, Thomas Church, and Garrett Eckbo. I had never heard the phrase “cultural landscape.” I didn’t know anything about landscape and garden preservation.

David told us about the work that was going on at Rancho Los Alamitos ([www.rancholosalamitos.org](http://www.rancholosalamitos.org)) Soon after, I made the first of many visits, including the CGLHS 1999 Conference, to that always-fascinating site, where I met Pamela Seager, Rancho Los Alamitos’ hardworking, visionary executive director. The years since have been a continuing education as I have watched unfolding history as various elements of the nationally recognized comprehensive Master Plan are implemented. Last year, at a CGLHS event, a group of us spent a day with Pamela. As well as admiring long-restored gardens, we saw the Native Garden, latest in a long series of garden restorations, along with the Barns area restoration-in-progress. We admired “Footprints on the Land: Issues in Cultural Geography,” a kit for use in schools. I have just acquired a new book, *Rancho Los Alamitos: Ever Changing, Always the Same* by Claudia Jurmain, David Lavender, and Larry Meyer. The site underscores the importance and rewards of planning, careful research, and documentation.

The end of the year brought some sad news. Frank Cabot, founder of The Garden Conservancy, died on November 19. Frank was inspired to found The Garden Conservancy after a visit to Ruth Bancroft’s garden in Walnut Creek. That garden became their first preservation project. To learn more about this visionary horticulturalist, garden maker, and philanthropist visit <http://www.gardenconservancy.org>. The Garden Conservancy has been another important part in my garden history and preservation education. I have attended many of their symposiums, visited gardens through Open Days, and was privileged to work with Betsy Flack, its West Coast Program Director, in producing our 2007 conference on Japanese-style gardens. The broad spectrum of Garden Conservancy projects has helped me to view garden and cultural landscape history through a wide lens. In California, its second project is the Gardens of Alcatraz. In addition to those two California preservation projects, The Garden Conservancy holds a conservation easement on Green Gables in Woodside, a garden and house designed by Charles Greene in 1911. (*Eden* will have an article about the Conservation Easement process in a future issue.) At our 2003 Conference on the San Francisco Peninsula, we heard a talk by David Streatfield on the garden and then went to visit it.

The other piece of sad news came in October. UCLA has plans to sell the UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden. See *Preservation Matters* (p 27) for the details.

I wish you all a Happy New Year ... and ask you to **Save the Date!** for our 2012 Conference on “**Plants, Passion, and Propagation,**” **September 8–9 in Sonoma County.**

**Judy M. Horton**

# EDEN

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*Eden* solicits your submissions of scholarly papers, short articles, book reviews, information about coming events, current 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. Also, more regional correspondents reporting on local landscape preservation concerns, efforts, and accomplishments will be welcomed, along with other relevant issues.

For book reviews, notices of interesting magazine articles, museum exhibits, and the like, please write to:

Margaretta J. Darnall / 1154 Sunnyhills Road / Oakland, CA 94610.

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

Deadlines for submissions are the first days of January, April, July, and October.

Material may be photocopied for academic purposes, with appropriate credit.

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**The Society organizes annual conferences and publishes EDEN, a quarterly journal.**

**For more information, visit [www.cglhs.org](http://www.cglhs.org).**

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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  
 2012 – Sonoma

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### Contents in this issue of EDEN

*The San Francisco Peninsula's Great Estates: Part I*  
David C. Streatfield ..... 1-13

*From Floral Paradise to Commercial Nursery and Back:  
The Saga of the Barron/Latham/Hopkins Estate, 1864–1942*  
Julie Cain ..... 14-21

Fall Photography Field Trip to the Getty Villa  
with Photographer Tim Street–Porter ..... 22-23

Postings: Three CGLHS members announce special tours  
(Mallorca & Menorca, Floriade, Gardens in Central Italy) ..... 24

Book & Film Reviews + News  
*How Does Your Garden Grow?* ..... 25  
*Women in the Dirt* ..... 26

Save the Date! 2012 CGLHS Conference in Sonoma County ..... 26

Preservation Matters;  
HALS Challenge: The 21 California Missions . .....27  
The UCLA Hannah Carter Japanese Garden ..... 27

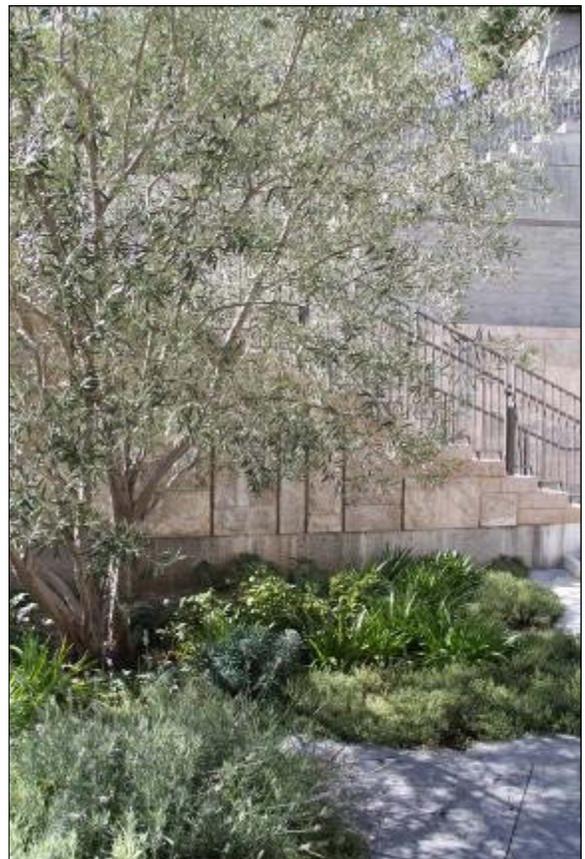
The Design and Preservation of Pasadena's Historic Gardens ..... 28

Tours & Talks in the Southland: A Reprise in 2012 ..... 28

Water Began It All (exhibit) ..... 28

President's Message ..... 29

About *Eden* and CGLHS ..... 30-31



*Stairway area at the Getty Villa in Pacific Palisades.  
Photo: Kelly Comras.*

