

## Landscape History of the Stanford University Campus - The Early Years

Marlea Graham

In 1999, it came to my attention that a new landscape preservation group had been created - The Cultural Landscape Foundation. TCLF's primary mission seems to be educating the general public - and drawing attention to the plight of endangered landscapes. In 2002, they created a program called "Landslide." Its stated goal "is to save important American landscapes and preserve their artistic and cultural integrity." Landslide duly presented a list of the top ten most endangered modern designed landscapes. Number seven on that list was "America's College Campuses." TCLF feels that the 3,000 campus landscapes ranging from coast to coast, represent a continuum of landscape design spanning more than two centuries of US history that should not be lost to the bulldozer.

Because of the constant pressures to grow and expand their building programs, and the ever-present need for more parking lots, many college campuses have already lost much of this precious landscape history. In California, the work of Ralph Cornell at UCLA and Pomona College was mentioned, as was that of Thomas Church at UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz. But before all of these, comes the work of Frederick Law Olmsted - including his designs for the Stanford University campus.

In our last issue, Julie Cain related the story of how Leland and Jane Stanford took their only child for one more trip abroad before he was to start his first term at Harvard University. He died of typhoid fever in Italy. Within one month of

his death, the first newspaper reports appeared announcing the Stanfords' decision to start a university for young men in California as a memorial to their son. How it all came about is not absolutely certain. By the time anyone thought to look for historical data, some vital pieces had gone missing, no doubt in part lost during the earthquake and fire of 1906.

As best scholars can determine from what records remain today, the Stanfords returned to the East Coast of the United States in the fall of 1884 and began visiting such famous campuses as Harvard, Yale and MIT. They looked at buildings, talked to university presidents, and got estimates of costs. They were most impressed with the work of General Walker at MIT. Though he declined to give up his position there, he did accept a commission to serve as advisor on the Stanford university design and organization. It was reportedly General Walker who recommended Olmsted to the Stanfords.

Olmsted and Stanford shared some common ground. Both were largely self-made men, neither had any formal higher education, and both believed strongly in the value of practical education. Stanford had been known to

scorn college graduates who couldn't operate a cash register, and Olmsted believed that everyone should know how to care for a horse and sail a boat. Olmsted readily agreed to Stanford's expressed wish for a distinctive style of California architecture, drawing from the heritage of the Spanish missions.



Watercolor sketch of one early Stanford University plan.  
Note position of the church in right corner. [ J. Cain ]

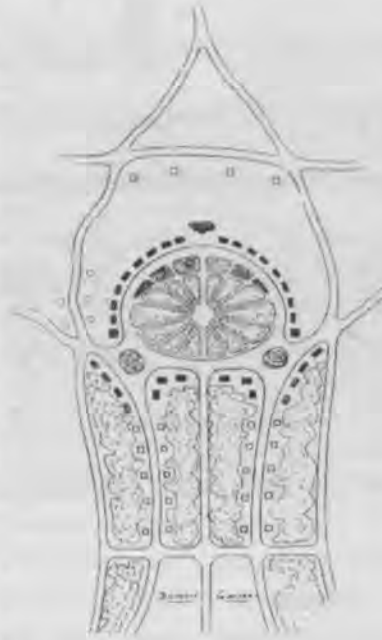
Fatefully, both were stubborn men, well used to fighting opposition to implement their ideas and plans, and each was firm in the conviction that he knew what was best. Consequently, they clashed on nearly every other point when it came to the designing of the university. Stanford's aesthetic preferences were for the formal and the Victorian, though he also had an appreciation of the natural countryside at Menlo. Rudolph Ulrich could easily have given Stanford the landscape he wanted, but Ulrich had no national standing, having worked primarily in California for the previous ten years. He also lacked any history of previous design work on college campuses, though he later showed himself quite capable of creating such a design for Denver University.

Starting his landscape career with New York's Central Park in the 1850s, Olmsted by now had spent some 30 years espousing and demonstrating his beliefs in the importance - indeed the vital necessity as a matter of good mental health - of designing landscapes according to the principles of the natural or picturesque style. This style should be expressed by the employment of important vistas, large greenswards and accompanying trees and shrubs arranged in a tasteful manner. The individual's immediate and visceral response to such landscapes as that of the Long Meadow at Prospect Park was Olmsted's goal in every work he designed. This response might be so subtle as to be termed subliminal, but it must be there. Where nature on a large scale was available for use, as for example with oceanfront properties, Olmsted would incorporate aspects of the sublime into his landscapes as well.

Since Stanford, along with a majority of the population of the United States at that time, probably knew little of Olmsted's philosophy, he also had no problem with hiring the man, no doubt assuming that Olmsted would provide, as a matter of course, whatever the client wanted. General Walker would have assured him that Olmsted had a goodly amount of experience with designing and remodeling college campuses, the most recent being the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey, done earlier in that decade. He was competent and famous enough to be suitable to the task, and that was acceptable to Stanford.

Olmsted was at least wise enough to have *some* reservations about the commission. On March 24, 1886, he wrote to his friend Dr. Eliot, then President of Harvard

University, "I was asked the other day if I would go professionally to California. 'Not if it is English landscape gardening that is wanted,' I replied, 'and I don't think I know enough for anything else.'" He had previous experience of the San Francisco Peninsula's climate and landscape in the 1860s, when commissioned by Mr. Howard to create a design for a portion of the El Cerrito estate, not far from Stanford's Palo Alto Stock Farm. While Olmsted's first response suggested the intention to decline the commission, he then expressed a desire to visit the gardens of Italy and Spain before attempting to create landscapes for the dryer sections of the country, suggesting that the challenge had some appeal after all. But there was to be no time for such a trip for Olmsted.



Plan 1. Note that all architectural drawings for Stanford University are done with true north at the bottom of the drawing.

Why did Olmsted agree to take on the Stanford commission? Perhaps it was the temptation to finally see executed a version of his 1860s design for the College of California in the Berkeley hills, where the natural vista out over San Francisco Bay would be utilized to best effect. Possibly the opportunity to actually create an entire university campus from scratch on a scale never before seen in this country proved an irresistible lure. On a more prosaic level, Olmsted had a family to support, so the very large fee to which Stanford agreed (reported to be \$10,000, possibly the highest amount ever paid for such work at that time) was almost certainly a factor. No written contract has been found. It was said that Stanford didn't want one, maintaining the gentlemanly beliefs of the day that a handshake was enough for honorable men. Though hard experience had taught Olmsted that he most often had to fight to implement his designs as they were intended and to keep them that way, he was also a perennial optimist, ever hopeful that "this time things will be different." Teaching his ideas to the uninitiated had become a way of life for him - albeit an often frustrating one - and he sincerely believed that it was his mission in life to educate less knowledgeable citizens as to the superior value and good taste of those ideas.

The first moment of disillusionment came swiftly. In July of 1886 Olmsted wrote to Dr. Eliot's son, Charles, then traveling in Europe. "I find Governor Stanford bent on giving his university New England scenery, New England trees and turf, to be obtained only by lavish use of water." However he did not draw back. "What can be done I don't know, but it will be an interesting subject of study."

Olmsted and Walker were invited to meet with Stanford (who was serving his first term as a US Senator in Washington DC), at Palo Alto in August. Olmsted apparently produced his first attempt at a plan of compromise between the dictates of Stanford and his own principles at Palo Alto in September. The plan shows 52 separate buildings arranged in a perfectly symmetrical and axial design, in a word, formal, but with softening, curvilinear lines. The shaded markings represent "college buildings," but most interesting is the first appearance of a botanic garden at the bottom of the plan. It isn't known if Stanford asked for this or whether it was Olmsted's suggestion; it would have fit the interests of both men at that time.

The next blow followed soon thereafter. At the end of September, Olmsted wrote to his nephew, adopted son and business partner, John C. Olmsted, "The site is settled at last - not as I had hoped." Stanford wanted his university on the plains of Menlo, not hidden away up in the foothills. The practical reason behind this was said to be the ease with which new buildings could be added on a flat terrain. A more prideful reason was that the Stanfords wanted their son's monument to be truly monumental and immediate in impact. Buildings nestled among the trees in a picturesque manner up in the foothills would impress no one, make no statement of importance. Stanford is also said to have played the untrumpable sentiment card. The plain was Leland Junior's favorite place to play and ride his pony, and therefore most fitting for his monument.

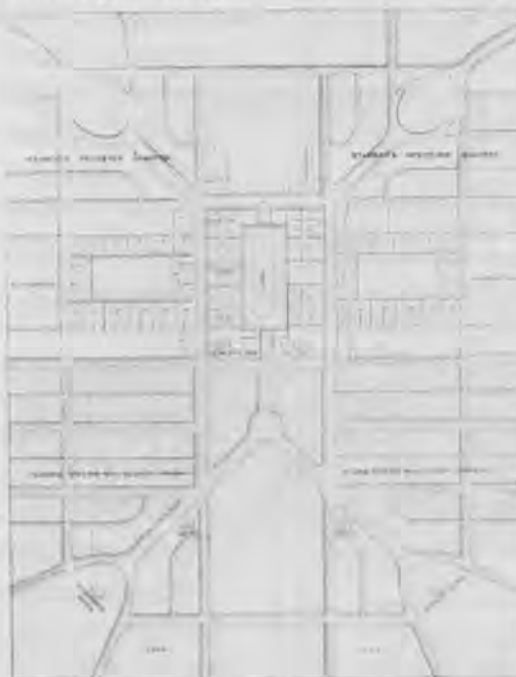
Olmsted and Walker returned to Boston to draw up their separate reports for Stanford, and at some point along the way, the architects were hired and began to sketch out their ideas for the buildings, with direction from Olmsted on siting, etc. The Stanfords reportedly first had wanted to hire H. H. Richardson, perhaps the most eminent architect of the day, but he had died in April of 1886. His partners, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, continued the business, and they were hired to design the first university buildings at Stanford in the Richardsonian manner. Coolidge described this as "Mission Style with Romanesque details." General Walker's report to Stanford recommended that the buildings be "uniform in structure," that they be constructed of stone, and that they all be one story high as there was plenty of land for future expansion.

Appearing for the first time in this report was the suggestion for employment of a system of arcades to link buildings while providing protection from the elements for faculty and students, and also the mention of buildings being arranged around "the quadrangle proposed to be laid out by Mr. Olmsted... I understand that Mr. Olmsted's plan provided for a second quadrangle, around which could be built up a second system of buildings, should the growth of the university be such as to demand it." University historians credit Senator Stanford with first settling on the quadrangular form, though he mistakenly referred to it in early newspaper reports as a parallelogram.

Did Olmsted give up on his hillside plan? Certainly not - it made another appearance in his November report, no doubt written after he has seen a copy of Walker's. Olmsted's criticisms were harsh, pushing all the emotional buttons he could find, while still remaining within the bounds of the "poisoned civility" common to period. First came a dig about the rejection of his obviously superior plan. "If the principal buildings of the University could have been placed near the edge of an elevated tableland, commanding a fine characteristic California distance..." He next suggested that *something* must be done to prevent the university from "bearing an expression of materialism and 'grad-grind' practicality... This, under General Walker's advice, cannot come from any stately beauty of the buildings, any picturesqueness in the manner of their disposition or any gardening or landscape appendages. It must be a matter of art. It must have scholarly dignity. It must not be ostentatiously costly, and it must be unobtrusively incidental to a means of a manifestly useful purpose."

While Olmsted may have thought himself a master at manipulating clients, Stanford was hardened through long exposure to much harsher language than this. As one of the Big Four railroad barons, he had been maligned in the press for many years, and he remained unmoved by Olmsted's criticisms and snide comments on his and General Walker's aesthetic tastes.

Olmsted went back to the drawing table and produced an even more symmetrical and formal design. Gone were most of the graceful curves of the first plan. In their place, we see a regimented assemblage of squares and rectangles. The botanical gardens are gone. In their place, and angled



Plan 2.

off to the sides to preserve the north-south axial view, are provisions for elementary and middle schools. Olmsted's central quadrangle focus is still the inspirational sight of the southern foothills immediately behind the college.

Rutan and Coolidge arrived in California in April, and the sketch at right appeared in the *San Francisco Examiner* shortly thereafter.

A large and imposing memorial church has been added to the configuration of the central quadrangle. The southern hills vista is preserved, and the church is placed to one side, in an attempt to slightly reduce the overall formality of the design and keep the view. The proposed expansionary quadrangles are not shown here.

By May of 1887, Coolidge reported back to Olmsted in Boston that "Both the Governor and Mrs. Stanford on looking at the model were very much disappointed, as you expected, at seeing the rear of the buildings as they called it towards the approach... They said it faced the wrong way... and wished the main drive and tomb vista to be on the long side. We showed them how by this change they lost the vista from the tomb to the back hills through the trees because the church would cut it off, but they thought the vista was long enough, and would end more appropriately at the church. They also desired a vista up and down the valley through the quadrangle; finally we told them that this would change the grade and would upset your work, to which the Governor replied, "A landscape architect and an architect might be disappointed but he was going to have the buildings the way he wanted them." After this we did the best we could to preserve your plans as intact as possible. I have simply turned the quad one-quarter way round on its axis."

The letter continues, "Both Mr. and Mrs. Stanford think the main entrance should be a large memorial arch with an enormously large approach and in fact, the very quietness and reserve which we like so much in it is what they want to get rid of." Why did



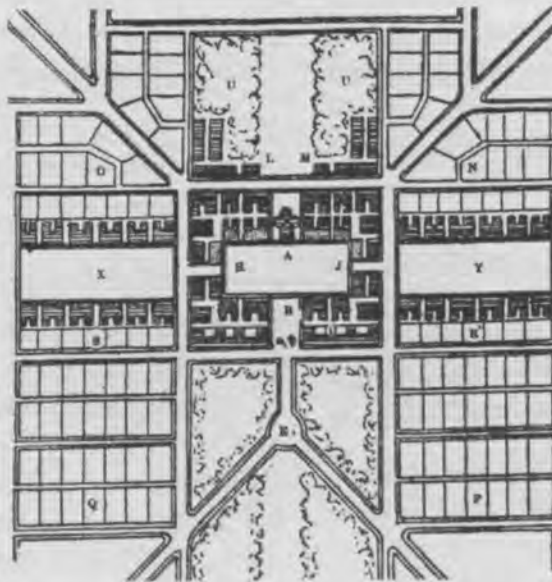
Sketch, *San Francisco Examiner*, April 28, 1887.

friend Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "There is a story to be told about Stanford University... The matter is not going well, but not ruinously." Van Rensselaer wrote for the Eastern magazines, so Olmsted was careful not to write anything too indiscreet to about a client. The cornerstone was laid on May 14th for Leland Junior's birthday, at the Stanfords' insistence, never mind that the architects would not have the new plans ready to implement for months to come. The new east-west campus orientation (see below) made its first appearance in the June *Sacramento Bee*.

In the fall of 1887, Olmsted wrote to Rudolph Ulrich, asking for information on what resources would be available to him for landscaping purposes. There seems to have been an exchange of four letters, though only one has been found to date - Ulrich's reply to Olmsted's second. He offered to procure additional plants on his next collecting trip to the desert, should they be wanted for the new university. Olmsted also wrote to John McLaren, newly appointed superintendent at Golden Gate Park, and asked for sugges-

tions of plants would do best on the Peninsula, McLaren having more than 10 years previous experience as head gardener at the El Cerrito estate. Only McLaren's reply was found, delineating which plants were best grown from cuttings and which from seed.

A letter from Olmsted to Stanford, dated 12 April 1888, indicates that the Senator had once again changed his mind about the plan, and that yet another major revision was required. Olmsted was distinctly peeved at this point, and he took another opportunity for a dig about the rejection of his hill plan. "Since you decided against our sev-



Plan 4, *Sacramento Bee*, June 18, 1887.

eral suggestions for locating the University on higher ground we have made three plans with each of which you have for the time being been satisfied. It appeared last fall that since the last was submitted a further development of your views had occurred."

Stanford now wanted a broad and straight central avenue approach to the university, and a railroad station at the foot of it. At this time, there appears a more ambitious plan, apparently instituted by Olmsted, for not only does the botanic garden reappear, but, but he writes that "These [drawings] will include one showing a considerable variation from the original general plan and an extension of it to include on one side an arboretum and several hundred acres of forest plantations on the foothills..."

... meant to support the studies of a School of Arboriculture. The Olmsted firm always denigrated Stanford's existing Arboretum on the Menlo plain as unworthy of the name, being by that time already badly overgrown with the eucalyptus, seedling oaks and pine trees that were originally intended only as temporary protection for the more tender and rare species. FLO & Company plans always referred to this area as merely "existing woods" or "the Park."

Being at that time involved with the building of a great estate, including extensive forests, for George Vanderbilt in North Carolina - with unlimited resources at his disposal and full cooperation from his client - Olmsted may have tried to rouse Stanford's competitive spirit as a means of obtaining agreement to a similar plan on the opposite coast. Olmsted would certainly have liked the idea of having a great western arboretum to match his creation of the Arnold Arboretum in the East, and a great forest to match that he was designing at Biltmore.

Forestry was a large horticultural issue of the day, with Olmsted's friend Charles Sprague Sargent, editor of *Garden & Forest* and head of the Arnold Arboretum, printing frequent articles on the importance of creating a policy to protect our fast-disappearing forests. There was, at that time, no School of Forestry in the US. The creation of such a collection was obviously the right thing to do and therefore the client must accordingly be pushed to do the right thing. Sargent's text accompanying the newly published plans, stated that "It is needless, of course, at this



Plan 5. Garden & Forest, December 19, 1888.

time to call attention to the importance of this particular part of Mr. Olmsted's comprehensive scheme, or to urge the necessity for establishing an Arboretum and Botanic Garden in California." The opportunity to grow a wider variety of plants in a milder climate was rationale enough, and anyone of sense should understand this. Stanford apparently agreed to the plan, at least initially.

In these plans of 1888, we see, for the first time, the Stanford Oval in front of the proposed "large memorial arch," and the straight access road. The memorial church is now centered directly in line with the arch, blocking the vista in that direction once and for all.

Plans for siting the mausoleum changed at least three times, finally settling on the mound of the previously

"proposed new building site" for the Stanford residence. Engineer McMillan, FLO's liaison on the building site, was responsible for creating the vista from the Mausoleum. There

## SUSTAINING MEMBERS

*Our heartfelt thanks to those members who have helped to put us on solid financial ground by becoming Sustaining Members at \$50 and up.*

Bayard & Nancy Allmond, Jr.	Judy M. Horton
Helen Babb	Marge Howard-Jones
Marie Barnidge-McIntyre	Gail Jansen
John Blocker & Thea Gurns	Peggy Jenkinson
Roberta Burke	Glenda Jones
Susan Chamberlin	Maryanne Lucas
Betsy Clebsch	Carol McElwee
Carol Coate	Margaret Mori
Kathleen Craig	Denise Otis
Beverly Dobson	Michael James Rendeau
Anne M. Dwelley	Ann Scheid
Betsy G. Fryberger	Jill Singleton
Virginia Gardner	Roy L. & Janet R. Taylor
Cathy Garrett	Judth M. Taylor, MD
Marlea Graham	Lucy Tolmach
Bill Grant	Marc Treib
Frances Grate	Dick Turner
Katherine Greenberg	Christopher Van Dyke
Laurie Hannah	Lucy Warren
Jill Hoeksma	Jacqueline Williams
Mary Pat Hogan	

was an exchange of letters between McMillan and Olmsted as to whether a particular oak tree should be saved. The tree *was* saved and later named The Guardian Oak. Other trees were removed where they impeded intended vistas. Grading plans, sewage plans and drainage plans occupied the Olmsted office during this period.

Olmsted also began to implement his forestry plans, approaching renowned tree authority and nurseryman Robert Douglas of Waukegan, Illinois, for an estimate of the costs. Again, we have only one side of the conversation, Douglas' reply to FLO. He outlined the contract he would offer: 500 acres of trees propagated and planted for \$60 per acre for a total of \$30,000. Robert Douglas was a frequent contributor to *Garden & Forest*, primarily writing articles about growing trees from seed. A notice in *Garden & Forest* tells us that Douglas' son, Thomas, formerly employed as California's first State Forester, was hired in December of 1888 to be superintendent of the planting. "The trees are to be planted in open order, and arranged with vistas and views, so that the Arboretum will have the features of a pleasure-ground in addition to its scientific character." If Olmsted couldn't get the university buildings up into the hills, he intended still to lure people up there in other ways, that they might benefit from viewing the picturesque scenery at hand.

While Thomas H. Douglas' primary job was, at least initially, to be the propagation, nurturing and planting of seedling trees for the arboretum and forest, in fact, he ended up trying as best he could to fill a landscape gardener's shoes. His daily work journals, preserved as a part of the Stanford University Archives, document Douglas' activities. He was working in the Stanfords' residential garden, the vegetable plot, the park, including the Arizona Garden, as well as collecting and propagating seed and cuttings for the university grounds. Occasionally his crew was turned out to help with larger farm tasks like weeding or harvesting the acres of carrots Stanford grew for his racehorses. It was his responsibility to see that the area around the Mausoleum was properly landscaped - in other words he had to implement Olmsted's designs for this and other areas such as the Oval and the Inner Quadrangle, regardless of the fact that he has no training or experience whatsoever in doing this type of work.

Olmsted was soon thwarted yet again in his attempts to push through the plan for the arboretum and forest in the



Stanford University Inner Quad c.1900.

hills. He requested another more comprehensive list of suitable plants, this time from Sargent, and urged Stanford to come in person from Washington DC to visit Sargent and the Arnold Arboretum, and "to discuss Stanford's scheme" of a great collection of trees at Palo Alto. In March of '89 FLO was still urging this visit, but by May, he wrote to Douglas that "two projects for the arboretum and the planting of the hills have been vetoed and I am at a loss

what to prepare next." On June 10, Douglas wrote to FLO, "I was informed by Gov. Stanford that the plans for the arboretum did not suit him and he also said he was not going to have the hills covered with trees." Was this a matter of aesthetics or economics? Several things suggest Stanford was beginning to feel pressed for money. Like many of his class, he was land-rich and cash-poor. None of his huge estates actually made a profit. Huntington, angered at his "theft" of the Senate seat from a friend, had begun plotting to force Stanford out of his lucrative position as President of the railroad. There were many signs of skimping where formerly lavish spending had been the norm.

Thomas Douglas had quickly encountered some problems of his own at Palo Alto. Olmsted complained to Stanford that, "Douglas writes that he has been badly set back in all his plans and has accomplished less than I had laid out for him because of the necessity of constant, close, personal, detailed direction of Chinamen who could not understand or read English and who not being able to read labels would make sad mistakes if he did not follow each man closely. This has kept him so closely to the nursery itself that he could not go about to search for the seeds and plants of California that you most wanted nor make good arrangements for identifying and collecting them. He found it impossible to deputize this work... [and] Mr. Lathrop said that you had forbidden [the hiring of an assistant.] At last his father came to his assistance, but too late to allow him to accomplish what had been intended... However, he has seeds sown of over 200 species."

The next battle was over the paving of the Inner Quadrangle. Olmsted wrote in June of '89 that "the paving of the central quadrangle has been a matter of much concern to us." He favored paving block manufactured in Boston, and denigrated the use of the lawn that Stanford wanted for such a situation. In the end, Stanford brought in a crew to pave with asphalt, another substance Olmsted did not

approve. Ostensibly this was done simply to get the job finished in time for the opening of the school.

On the other hand, the memorial court that fronts the Quad was an area Stanford insisted must be lawn, and so it was, even in times of extreme drought. When Olmsted again tried to reason with Stanford, his reply was "We shall have plenty of water to keep the place green."

In August of '89, Olmsted wrote to inform Stanford that "My duties here" made it impossible to come out West before October at the earliest. He proposed that "Mr. Codman shall go for us... He has made a journey in Spain and on the opposite African coast in order to get all the information possible as to gardening in climates like that of Palo Alto. Since his return we have taken him into partnership." As is usually the case with new and junior partners, Codman got the least desirable job. At this point, it seems that Olmsted had essentially washed his hands of the Stanford project. He had more interesting work elsewhere, such as the first attempt to employ a picturesque landscape at a World's Exposition. An acquaintance who knew Olmsted as a much younger man, had once pointed out that, "He is an enthusiast by nature. Many of his favorite schemes will go for naught, but he'll throw it aside and try another and spoil that and forget them both while you or I might have been blubbing over the ruins of the first."

Codman arrived on the scene, full of youthful optimism and certain that he could soon make everything right, but he was quite dismayed to find how little work had been accomplished, with a proposed opening date of fall 1890 looming before him. He wrote to complain that the work crews relied too much on hand labor instead of utilizing more horse-drawn teams to scrape and shape the earth to their specifications. Certainly one of the builders of an intercontinental railroad knew well what was needed to realize building plans in a timely manner. These teams, of course, would have been more expensive.

Inner Quad conflicts continued: arguments about the height of the walls of the planting beds, squabbles over the height of the trees and shrubs that would fill the circles, and disagreements over whether there should be any planters at all. Douglas wrote in December of '89, "The last day [Stanford] was here, he told me he didn't want any flower pots, as he expressed it, in the quadrangle." In April of



Stanford Oval and Lower Sections, c.1905. [J. Cain]

'90, Codman wrote that "someone has been talking with the Senator again about grass in the Quadrangle, but fortunately Coolidge and I lunched at the house with them and succeeded in stopping them from going too far." This gives us a view of Stanford at that time as one easily influenced by whomever he spoke to last, a disastrous propensity in a client. In November of 1890, Douglas wrote "Gov. Stanford ordered

the circles lowered one foot and I have done it to seven of them. Will finish as soon as the asphaltum men get through with their work." Of course this changing of the circle walls also necessitated lowering the soil level and repositioning all the plants. Their growth and general well-being were, accordingly, adversely affected to a noticeable degree. Many of the palms died.

There were more struggles over what should be planted in the Oval and in the sections surrounding it. Olmsted wanted drought-tolerant shrubs; Stanford, as usual, wanted lawn. The firm did finally send out planting plans for this area, and Douglas did his best to implement them, with some help from the visiting Codman; the areas closest to the buildings were kept as lawn, and those farther out were planted with a variety of shrubs and trees. By the time the school was ready to open in the fall of 1891, the Olmsteds had given up on getting their plan implemented in Stanford's lifetime. However, FLO never closed the door on any client. He maintained cordial relations with Stanford, sending congratulations on the opening of the school. He also went behind Stanford's back and wrote a letter to Stanford University President David Starr Jordan in May of 1891, letting him know that the firm would like to continue working with the school should their services be needed at a later date. In fact, the school did hire the Olmsted Brothers in the early 1900s and again in the 1930s.

*Part II of this article will appear in the Spring issue of Eden. Except where otherwise noted in the captions, all illustrations appear courtesy of the Stanford University Archives. The author wishes to thank Julie Cain, who shared her research notes on the landscaping of the Stanford grounds. Thanks also to Jack Douglas, new CGLHS member, San Jose historian and descendent of Robert Douglas, who has freely exchanged information with me about his most interesting ancestors, Robert and Thomas H. Douglas. The phrase "poisoned civility" was borrowed from Devil in the White City by Erik Larson (2003), a book on the Chicago Exposition, first brought to my attention by Jack.*

## WHAT NEEDS SAVING NOW?

### Santa Barbara: Franceschi House and Park

The *Santa Barbara New Press* of 17 December 2003 reported that, "In front of a standing-room-only crowd of more than 100, the Santa Barbara City Council voted 5-0 to restore the Riviera's Franceschi House and Park, a move that thrills preservationists and disappoints some Riviera homeowners." (One member was absent and another abstained from voting to avoid a conflict of interest, as he is also a member of the Pearl Chase Society, which advocates restoration.) Accepted at this meeting was the master plan for restoration of the historic house and grounds. Some neighbors fear the usual mix of increased traffic, parking congestion and noise that they believe will result from planned rental of the facility to groups of up to 30 people. The Pearl Chase Society is committed to raising the \$2.1 million and a \$200,000 endowment to restore the house and offer educational tours, horticultural classes and a venue for private events such as weddings and business conferences. The history of Franceschi Park is reviewed in articles by Susan Chamberlin in *Eden* (Spring 2002) and *Pacific Horticulture* (Jul/Aug/Sept and Oct/Nov/Dec 2002).

### Paso Robles: Mission San Miguel Arcangel

The 6.5 earthquake centered in the Paso Robles area in December 2003 did nothing to improve conditions at nearby Mission San Miguel Arcangel. In need of major repairs prior to the quake, the church is now closed indefinitely. Richard Ameil, executive director of the California Missions Foundation, the nonprofit group that raises money to restore the state's 21 Spanish missions, said he did not know if the structure would be repaired or condemned. The quake left a large crack in one wall, and major cracks in five pillars. An American Indian mural also crumbled. The sacristy and arcade will need immediate repairs. San Miguel, located about seven miles north of Paso Robles, was the only mission in California that had all original interior paint. The

church was built from 1816 to 1818. Even before the quake, the California Missions Foundation put San Miguel at the top of its critical list, estimating that repairs would cost between \$7 - \$10 million. For further information about the Foundation, see the website: <http://missionsofcalifornia.org/> or contact CMF, 1007 - 7th Street, Suite 319, Sacramento CA 95814-3407. Phone: 877.632.3623. Email: [info@missionsofcalifornia.org](mailto:info@missionsofcalifornia.org).

## ARCHIVES

### Contra Costa County: The Moraga Rancho

An obituary for Brother Dennis Goodman, FSC appeared in the October newsletter of the Moraga Historical Society, written by Sandy Kimball. In it she mentions his lifelong interest in the history of the rancho. With his research assistance, Ms. Kimball wrote a "popular" history of the rancho in 1984, titled *Moraga's Pride*. A second edition came out in 1999. Kimball wrote that, "It was entirely a question of what had to be left out in order to create a book of practical size and affordability...there was a sadness on Brother Dennis' part as he envisioned all the readers who would never be given the opportunity to share every one of these wonderful tidbits of history." For those who want the original, unedited version, visit the archives of the Moraga Historical Society, 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga CA 94556. Brother Dennis' tidbits have all been saved on 3x5 cards in several card files "now safely ensconced" at the History Center. Call 925.377.8734. Hours: M-W-F 11-3 PM, Tuesday and Thursday by appointment.

### Sonoma County: Villa Pompeii at Asti

Two years ago, when our annual conference was to be held at Sonoma, we published a postcard illustration (circa 1910) on page 4 of our Summer 2001 issue. It featured an enclosed courtyard and reflecting pool. The caption indicated this was at the Casa del Vetti, residence of M. A. Sbarboro in Asti, Sonoma County. We knew nothing further about the property at that time, but wondered what else might have been there. Serendipity recently brought the Winter 1996/97 issue of *The Argonaut - Journal of the San Francisco Historical Society* (Vol. 7, No. 2) to our attention at a used bookstore. What should it contain but "Andrea Sbarboro, An Early American Success Story - The Memoir of an Italian-American Entrepreneur and Pioneer."

While doing research for a book on Italian-Americans in California, Deanna Paoli Gumina, PhD., discovered Mr. Sbarboro's memoirs, written in 1911, preserved at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley. While his business ca-

### HOW TO JOIN CGLHS

To become a member of the California Garden & Landscape History Society, send a check or money order to the Membership Secretary, Box 1075, Palo Alto, CA 94302-1075.

See our website: [www.cghls.org](http://www.cghls.org) for an application form.

California  
Garden  
& Landscape  
History Society

Membership rates:  
Individual \$20; Household \$30;  
Institution \$40; Sustaining \$50  
and up.

reer occupied center stage in this document, we learned that the Sonoma county property was actually called "Villa Pompeii." It had been built by Sbarboro as an identical copy of the Casa del Vetti, which he saw while visiting Pompeii, Italy. He also mentions that Pompeian statuary decorated the court, and that the reflecting pool had fish.

The estate consisted of 32 acres of land on the banks of the Russian River. "The climate is admirably adapted to an open court in the center of the house, and oranges, date palms, pomegranates, palms, and a variety of fruit and semi-tropical trees and shrubbery provide a beautiful setting for the villa. When we started to set out oranges, lemons, pomegranates, chestnuts, and olives at Asti, twenty years ago, we were laughed at by the colony of Missourians who had ranches immediately adjoining...The fruit and flower wizard, Luther Burbank, who lives near by in Santa Rosa, paid me a visit, and later sent me some of his hybrid fruit trees..."

Visitors "marveled at the remarkable transformation of the Valley, and extent of the winery, and the novel attractions of the Villia Pompeii, in the grounds of which they have been surprised and amused by an unexpected sprinkling received from cunningly hidden fountains, which work automatically. When the victim steps on a bellows-sort of covering, the water is instantly released and if he loses his wits and does not move promptly he gets quite a shower. These springs are modeled after the famous hidden springs of Pegli at the Villia Palavioni, near Genoa." Regrettably, Sbarboro does not mention who was responsible for designing the grounds.

## BOOK REVIEWS & NEWS

*Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930*, by Terence Young, Gregory Conniff (Editor) and Edward K. Muller (Editor), is one in a series of books classified under the heading, "Creating the North American Landscape," (Johns Hopkins University Press, January 2004), 272 pages, \$45. ISBN: 0801874327.

The press release on Amazon.com says, "In *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930*, Terence Young [asst. prof. of geography at Cal Poly, Pomona] traces the history of San Francisco's park system, from the earliest city plans, which made no provision for a public park, through the private garden movement of the 1850s and '60s, Frederick Law Olmsted's involvement in developing a comprehensive parks plan, the design and construction of Golden Gate Park, and finally to the expansion of green space in the first third of the 20th century. Young documents this history in terms of the four social ideals that guided America's

urban park advocates and planners in this period: public health, prosperity, social coherence, and democratic equality. He also differentiates between two periods in the history of American park building, each defined by a distinctive attitude towards "improving" nature: the romantic approach, which prevailed from the 1860s to the 1880s, emphasized the beauty of nature, while the rationalistic approach, dominant from the 1880s to the 1920s, saw nature as the best setting for uplifting activities such as athletics and education. *Building San Francisco's Parks* maps the political, cultural, and social dimensions of landscape design in urban America and offers new insights into the transformation of San Francisco's physical environment and quality of life through its world-famous park system."

### Other Books of Interest

*Restoring American Gardens: An Encyclopedia of Heirloom Ornamental Plants, 1640-1940*, by Denise Wiles Adams, (Timber Press, February 2004), 420 pages; illustrations include both color and b&w photos, also line drawings, 8.5" x 11", hardcover, \$40. ISBN: 0-88192-619-1. The press release:

Adams' book is an exhaustive work of primary research, culled from old books and journals, photo albums - even postcards. For each of the more than 1,000 plants described, from trees to heirloom roses, she includes their earliest known literature citation as well as quotes from period garden writers that reveal changing opinions and fashions. Stunning images from catalog art, early photographs, and period illustrations provide a visual record of these plants in gardens. Providing context for this wealth of information, the author includes invaluable chapters on how to read the historic landscape, as well as background information on design styles and American building types. Adams is a horticultural consultant and ornamental plant historian residing in Virginia. She owned and operated her own ornamental flower and herb nursery for a decade, and is a frequent contributor to publications such as *Fine Gardening*, *Country Gardens*, *The Herbalist*, and *Perennial Plants*.

*Hollywood In Vintage Postcards*, by Rod Kennedy, Jr., in association with Hollywood Heritage, Inc., with text by Elizabeth Ellis (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2003), 96 pages, softcover \$15. Of interest to us are images of such historic landscapes as the Cahuenga Water Gardens, the G. W. Wattles estate, and the Japanese Gardens of Adolphe and Eugene Bernheimer.

According to Kendall H. Brown (*Japanese-Style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast*, 1999), the Bernheimers were dealers in Asian antiquities, as was

George Turner Marsh before them, and they followed his example in creating a garden at least in part as a display for the sale of their wares. A recently acquired descriptive pamphlet tells us that the landscaper of the first Bernheimer Japanese Gardens - built in Hollywood in 1913 and called "Yamashiro" - was one A. C. Orum, who evidently came to California from Oklahoma. This property was sold in 1925 and the Bernheimers built another garden on a Pacific Palisades hilltop, overlooking Santa Monica and Hollywood. Whether Orum also landscaped the later garden is not yet known. Parts of the second garden encompassed miniature vignettes within the larger landscape. Several photographs may be viewed on-line at the Los Angeles Public Library website: <http://catalog1.lapl.org>. We have not yet been successful in tracking down the book we believe was written on the topic of making this garden. Anyone?

## COMING EVENTS

**Through February 16:** "America's Cornucopia: A Collector's View of American Botany and Horticulture," an exhibit at the New York Botanical Garden. Features rare books and prints that trace the history of North American botany and horticulture including the mass-marketing of popular seed catalogs. On view in the William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery. Website: [www.nybg.org/](http://www.nybg.org/).

**Through February 22:** "Exploring Garden Transformations, 1900-2000," a traveling exhibit from the American Garden Legacy Series of the Smithsonian Institution, will be at the State Botanical Garden in Athens, Georgia. Subsequent venues for this year include Milwaukee WI, Manchester VT, and Wisconsin Rapids WI. Check the website for details: [www.sites.si.edu/exhibitions/](http://www.sites.si.edu/exhibitions/).

**January 10 - February 21:** "Feast Your Eyes: The Unexpected Beauty of Vegetable Gardens," another traveling exhibit sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute, will be at the Tulsa Garden Center in Oklahoma. "Traces visual appeal of vegetable gardens across centuries."

**January 27:** A benefit to raise funds for the restoration of Franceschi House and Gardens and/or the new Japanese Teahouse & Garden installation at Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens will be held at the home of Virginia Gardner, 2014 Garden Street, Santa Barbara. A \$50 ticket will provide you the opportunity to meet and talk with famous British authors Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix. Co-hosted by author and editor Bill Grant, who has contributed much to the Phillips & Rix rose website: [www.rogersroses.com](http://www.rogersroses.com). The

Japanese garden uses California native plants and is anchored by an authentic Japanese teahouse, built in Kyoto, Japan in 1949. It was given to Royce Greatwood as a gift of gratitude and resided on his Hope Ranch property for fifty years. It was donated to the Botanic Garden by its most recent owner, Alice Esbenshade-Burke, because the property was again to be sold and all buildings razed. Master plans for both ventures will be on display. There will also be wine, hors d'oeuvres, dessert and book signings. Tickets *must* be reserved in advance. Make checks payable to either PARC Foundation - Franceschi House Fund or the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden - Teahouse Fund, and mail them ASAP to Virginia Gardner, 2014 Garden Street, Santa Barbara CA 93105-3615. Phone 805.563.9435.

**February - April:** "A Genius For Place," the photographic exhibit of the Library of American Landscape History (LALH), will be at Winterthur Museum in Delaware. From May through October, it will be at Oldfields in Indianapolis. The LALH welcomes donations to assist in the continuance of their mission to produce quality books on the subject of landscape history. LALH, PO Box 1323, Amherst, MA 01004-1323. Website: [www.lalh.org](http://www.lalh.org).

**March 17 - 21:** San Francisco Flower & Garden Show at the Cow Palace, 2600 Geneva Avenue, Daly City, 94014. Bill Grant will be speaking at the show on **March 20** at 3:00 PM, "Why Not Try Old Roses: Easy to Grow in the Bay Area."

**April 4 - 6:** 58th Annual Williamsburg Garden Symposium held at Colonial Williamsburg, co-sponsored by the American Horticultural Society and *Fine Gardening* magazine. The theme will be "Heirloom Plants & Gardens." Speakers include Scott Kunst of Old House Gardens - Heirloom Bulbs, Southern heirloom garden expert and author Bill Welch, Dean Norton of Mt. Vernon, Kent Whealy of the Seed Saver's Exchange, food historian William Woys Weaver, and more. Registration fee: \$45. Website: <http://www.cwf.org/History/institute/garden04.cfm>. (We had trouble with this, couldn't get there directly, but it is the right address.) Use the on-line registration form, or write to Registrar, 58th Garden Symposium, CWF, PO Box 1776, Williamsburg VA 23187-1776. Phone toll-free: 800.603.0948. Email: [ContinuingEducation@cwf.org](mailto:ContinuingEducation@cwf.org).

**April 28 - May 1:** The 29th Annual California Preservation Conference will be held at the San Francisco Presidio. Details to be announced. Website: [www.californiapreservation.org/calendar.html](http://www.californiapreservation.org/calendar.html). To receive a registration packet, email [cpf@californiapreservation.org](mailto:cpf@californiapreservation.org) or call

415.495.0349. Tour sites include Alcatraz, the newly re-opened Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park, etc.

**May 7-8:** Southern Garden History Society's 22nd Annual Meeting, this year's theme being "Native Plants and Creole Gardens." To be held in New Orleans, Louisiana. See the website, [www.southerngardenhistory.org/meetings.htm](http://www.southerngardenhistory.org/meetings.htm). Or write to SGHS care of Old Salem Inc., Drawer F, Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108-0346. Email Sally Reese at [skrnona@cox.net](mailto:skrnona@cox.net).

## DIRECTORY ADDITIONS

Please welcome these new members:

- Amanda Blosser, 1490 Drew Avenue, Suite 110, Davis 95616.
- Susan Durrett, 1949 Green Street #6, San Francisco 94123.
- Ebsco Publishing, 10 Estes Street, Ipswich, MA 01938-2106.
- Maryanne Lucas, 1986 Channelford Rd, Westlake Village 91361
- Paul Sundstrom, 5642 Panama Avenue, Richmond, 94804.

## WEBSITES TO VISIT

**California Nursery History Park**  
[www.ironorchid.com/museum/trees/cnco.htm](http://www.ironorchid.com/museum/trees/cnco.htm)

This webpage recently caught Laurie Hannah's eye. It was put together by the son of City of Fremont Arborist Nelson Kirk as a highschool project, and is part of the larger "Roadside Arboretum" a program to document and preserve the historic trees of Fremont and surrounding areas. Though she did not receive full credit for it, the page on the California Nursery History Park is mostly composed of research work done by CGLHS member and East Bay historian Jill Singleton. Jill writes that she has a contract for a book on the history of Niles "that will address an overview of area nurseries - Shinn, California Nursery Company, Edenvale, etc., between 1876-1976." No publication date from the publisher's website yet. Jill also has contributed some work to the upcoming EBMUD book, *Plants and Landscapes for Summer-Dry Climates of the San Francisco Bay Region*, edited by Nora Harlow.

## MISCELLANY

### Douglas Dockery Thomas Fellowship in Garden History and Design

A member sent a clipping from the *Landscape Architect and Specifier News*, October 2003 issue. It advises that the DDTF is awarded annually and provides \$4,000 to an exceptional graduate student studying landscape architecture or horticulture. The 2003 award went to Rachel Leibowitz for her dissertation on the writings of William Allen

White, and his impact as a journalist on early 20th century US landscapes. Leibowitz is in her final year of coursework in the new doctoral program in landscape history and theory at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Deadline for the award is January 15, too late for this year, but make plans for 2005. Selection is by a panel of experts appointed by the Landscape Architecture Foundation. Approved by the GCA Scholarship Committee. To apply, contact: Ron Figura, Landscape Architecture Foundation, 818 - 18th Street NW, Suite 810, Washington DC 20006-3520. Phone: 202.331.7070, ext. 10. Email: [rfigura@lafoundation.org](mailto:rfigura@lafoundation.org).

## APOLOGIA

The Editor wishes to take this opportunity to remedy the sin of omission due to forgetfulness in the last issue. We hereby gratefully acknowledge the generous contribution of time and effort by Lucy Tolmach and her staff to our 2003 Stanford conference. Lucy offered us a series of outstanding guided tours of the gardens and archives at Filoli, kicking off the conference in style. The Filoli library is one we would most like to be locked into overnight, as long as we had a working reading lamp, of course!

### EDEN

EDEN (ISSN 1524-8062) is published four times yearly (Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter), by the California Garden & Landscape History Society, a non-profit organization as described under section 501(c) (3) of the IRS code. Gifts in excess of \$20/person are fully tax deductible. Editor: Marlea A. Graham, 100 Bear Oaks Drive, Martinez, CA 94553-9754. Phone: 925.335.9156. Email: [maggie94553@earthlink.net](mailto:maggie94553@earthlink.net). Material may be photocopied for academic purposes, with appropriate credit. Sample copies and back issues are available from the Membership Secretary, PO Box 1075, Palo Alto CA 94302-1075 at \$2.50/each.

#### Officers

Thea Gurns.....President  
 William A. Grant.....Vice President  
 Phoebe Cutler.....Recording Secretary  
 Glenda Jones.....Membership Secretary  
 John Blocker.....Treasurer  
 Marlea A. Graham.....Editor

#### Board of Directors

Thea Gurns.....President  
 William A. Grant.....Vice President  
 Phoebe Cutler.....Recording Secretary  
 Glenda Jones.....Membership Secretary  
 John Blocker.....Treasurer  
 Marlea A. Graham.....Editor  
 Jacqueline Williams.....Publicity Chair  
 Laurie Hannah.....Immediate Past President  
 Tom Brown.....Member-at-Large  
 Betsy Clebsch.....Member-at-Large  
 Lucy Warren.....Member-at-Large  
 William A. Grant.....Founder

#### Committees

Roberta Burke.....Documentation and Web-site Chair  
 Susan Chamberlin.....Logo Chair  
 Marlea A. Graham.....Newsletter & Journal Chair  
 William A. Grant.....Nomination and Regional Garden Groups Chair  
 Laurie Hannah.....Strategic Planning Chair  
 Lucy Warren.....Finance Chair  
 Margaret Mori.....Estates Group Chair  
 Karen Adams & Noel Vernon.....Preservation Co-Chairs

#### Regional Correspondents

Patsy Jeffery.....Sierra Foothills  
 Phoebe Cutler.....S. F. Bay Area  
 Kathryn Lyon.....Central Coast  
 Pam Waterman.....L. A. Basin  
 Lucy Warren.....San Diego

Deadline for copy for the next *Eden* is: December 01, 2003

# *California Garden and Landscape History Society*

## *Aims and Purposes*

- To celebrate the beauty, wealth, and diversity of California gardens and landscapes.  
\*
- To aid and promote interest in, study of, and education about California garden and landscape history.  
\*
- To collect and/or coordinate resources and expertise about the history of California's gardens and landscapes.  
\*
- To visit on occasion historical gardens, landscapes, archives and libraries in different parts of the state.  
\*
- To enjoy one another's company at meetings, garden visits, and other get-togethers.

California  
Garden  
& Landscape  
History Society  
P.O. Box 1075, Palo Alto, CA 94302-1075  
[www.cglhs.org](http://www.cglhs.org)



**FIRST CLASS MAIL**

**Address Correction and Forward  
Requested**

*Giochi d'Acqua (Water Jokes) at Villa d'Este, Tivoli. Etching by G. F. Venturini from Le Fontane del giardino Estense in Tivoli (Rome, 1691). Reproduced in Fountains, Splash and Spectacle (1998).*