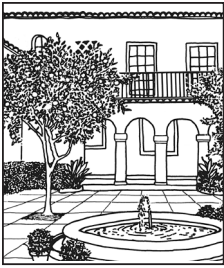


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On the Cover: Sydney Stein working on a display of calceolaria at the Conservatory of Flowers in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, April 18, 1945.

Above: Students at the California School of Gardening for Women. Published in the school's prospectus, ca. 1928-1930 (see p.12, endnote #2).

Opposite: Lyle Ghirardelli presents seeds from Costa Rica to Mrs. Sydney Stein Rich, chief gardener at the Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park, December 14, 1948. Photo courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.



Sydney Stein Rich Pioneering Professional Gardener

Judith M. Taylor, M.D.

“Can you handle a spade?” asked John McLaren, fearsome and tyrannical superintendent of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Strong men quailed before him. It was 1929.

The candidate was a small Jewish woman born in Brooklyn, New York—Sydney Stein. She was not easily intimidated. “Yes, I can,” she replied. “Good,” growled McLaren. “You are hired.”

The story of Sydney Stein Rich begins with a marble park bench dedicated to her memory in 1983. In 2001 when the Conservatory of Flowers in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park was being dismantled in preparation for seismic retrofitting, the park staff came across the bench and wondered, who was Sydney Stein Rich?

I became involved when a friend at the San Francisco Garden Club, Lola Heer, returned from a meeting with the

then director of the Conservatory, Scot Medbury. Lola said, rather casually, “Scot wants to find out more about someone called Sydney Stein Rich. She worked at the Conservatory in the 1940s.” I volunteered to do some research, but finding information about Stein’s personal and professional life was a challenge. In the beginning, all I knew was her position and the fact that she had died in either 1954 or 1959.

(continued)

As it turned out, both dates were wrong. She died on September 8, 1956, and the reason for commemorating her was that Mrs. Rich was the first Head Nurserywoman of the Conservatory—a remarkable achievement on two counts. Few Jewish people have been active in the field of horticulture, and few women, while often deeply involved in botany, horticulture and gardening, have reached senior levels in those fields.

Much of the information I uncovered about Sydney came from an invitation card that someone had saved and deposited in the San Francisco Public Library's Koshland History Room. The card had been placed in the Golden Gate Park Conservatory folder by itself without any annotation. The invitation was to a ceremony in honor of Sydney Stein Rich at the Conservatory on September 12, 1983. The host was not identified, but the card did include a brief list of Rich's impressive accomplishments, which gave me a point of departure. Untangling each strand led to successively richer sources of information and ultimately to the answer to the other question the park staff posed in 2001: who put the memorial bench in the conservatory—and why?

Early Life

From her death certificate I learned that Sydney Stein (Sadie Friedman) was born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 19, 1906, to Jacob Friedman, a Russian immigrant, and Eva Towaroski. From the births of their children we can surmise that the Friedman family reached New York between 1898 and 1906. They then moved to California between 1907 and 1915. Some time after the move, Stein's parents were divorced, and the breakup was the reason Stein applied to live in the Emanu-El Residence Club on 300 Page Street in San Francisco.

The inconsistencies with respect to her maiden name were cleared up when I reviewed her four applications between 1922 and 1929 to live at the club. Her mother, Eva (Towaroski) Friedman, married again, to a man named Wasserstein. On one of the first application cards at the Emanu-El Residence Club, Sadie (Sydney)

Friedman began to use the name "Stein," but this was cross-referenced with "Wasserstein." So it seems she shortened her stepfather's name to use as her own and became known as Sydney Stein.

According to Sydney, she graduated from San Francisco's Lowell High School, but the alumni association has no record of her under the names of Stein or Friedman. It is possible she attended the girls' division, which later merged with the main school, or that she did not actually graduate. The alumni do not have records on the former girls' division. In any event, by 1925 Sydney was living at 300 Page Street at the Emanu-El Residence Club, which charged \$3 a week for full board. Poor and taking any work she could find to survive, Sydney noted on her application to the club that she had worked as a stock girl and saleswoman for \$15 a week at several business establishments in the city.

While living at the club, Sydney caught the eye of Mrs. Matilda Esberg, a dedicated volunteer in the Temple Emanu-el Sisterhood. Sydney told Mrs. Esberg that she wanted to work in the open air. She had filled in as a gardener on a large estate for several months during the absence of a friend who was the regular gardener. The experience convinced her that this was how she wanted to spend her life.

In a 1986 article "The Emanu-El Sisterhood: Agent of Assimilation," Lynn Fonfa wrote, "Through the Matilda Esberg Horticulture Fund, a few residents were sent to the California School of Gardening (including Sydney Stein, now honored by a special bench in Golden Gate Park)."¹ Mrs. Esberg, who was always ready to help a young Jewish woman improve her life, sponsored Sydney at the newly established California School of Gardening for Women at Hayward, one of the earliest horticultural training colleges for women in the United States. Sydney probably entered the school in 1926, the year it began, and graduated in July 1927.

Emanu-El Residence Clubs

The Page Street club was part of a neighborhood center and settlement house started by the Temple Emanu-El Sisterhood for Personal Service in 1894. In addition to establishing a boys' club, sewing circle, kindergarten, classes of many sorts, a mothers' club, a medical clinic (the nucleus of Mount Zion Hospital) and an employment bureau, the women

recognized the need to provide inexpensive and safe housing in San Francisco for poor or immigrant Jewish women.

Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger of Temple Emanu-El was the force behind the center. From about 1880 to 1920, poor Jews from Eastern Europe poured into the United States, and he was deeply concerned that San Francisco might develop a version of New York City's Lower East Side—an overcrowded, squalid and somewhat distasteful neighborhood in the view of the respectable brethren in San Francisco. Rabbi Voorsanger turned to the Sisterhood, which had been founded by Mrs. P. N. Lilienthal to provide direct service to needy and deserving immigrants rather than cash, and tapped their energy and charitable impulses.

The demand for residential assistance grew very quickly. Within three years the Sisterhood had assisted 211 families and 119 single men. Thirty young single women were housed in dormitories in 1910. Over the next few years, three houses were rented and used for this purpose. The housemothers tried very hard to make them homelike, and at one point deserving young non-Jewish women were also allowed to live at the clubs.

After the First World War, the Sisterhood commissioned Julia Morgan to design and build their own premises. Morgan, with her associate Dorothy Wormser, completed the building on December 18, 1922. The Emanu-El Residence Clubs ran for many years, but the club at 300 Page Street eventually closed because most of its residents had prospered and moved away. The still-attractive building was sold to the Zen Center in 1969.

Sydney lived at the clubs on four separate occasions between 1922 and 1929—each time for several months. They clearly helped her through difficult periods. No doubt in gratitude, she joined the board of the Emanu-El Residence Clubs in October 1940 and then served in one capacity or another until 1955, the year before she died.

Sources of Inspiration

When Sydney Stein was growing up, few women worked as professional gardeners, although there were women nursery owners such as Kate O. Sessions in San Diego. However, two major new political and social movements were reaching their peak during Stein's childhood. U.S. women had been trying to achieve equality

Opposite: *Sydney Stein inspecting a banana tree at the Conservatory of Flowers in Golden Gate Park on December 1, 1941. Photo courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.*

with men for over 50 years. Voting rights were the key question. In October 1911, California women were enfranchised by a state constitutional amendment²—some 11 years before the vote was extended to all women in the United States by the 19th Amendment. For many reasons, women in the western states were more advanced politically. Wyoming (1879), Colorado (1893), Utah (1896) and Idaho (1896) were the first states where women could vote. In San Francisco, one tireless agitator for the right to vote was a Sephardic Jewish woman, Selina Solomons, whose 1912 book *How We Won the Vote* covered the triumph.³

Even though she was busy simply trying to survive and inhabited something of a Jewish microcosm, Stein would not have been completely immune to the ferment in the air over the emancipation of women. Comfortably married women like the members of the Sisterhood were often opposed to the types of political reforms symbolized by the emancipation of women. No matter how hard they tried to make conventional Americans out of the new citizens, some ideas must have percolated down to Stein. The topics were on everyone's mind and furiously discussed.

Western women were also taking the obvious next step very early, entering the professions and working at jobs previously held only by men. World War I hastened this process. Thousands of men were drafted and if women had not stepped in, production would have been seriously compromised. In England many women went to work on the land. D. H. Lawrence immortalized these "land girls" in his novella *The Fox*. Two former "land girls"—Maud Gibson and Dr. Anne Martin—were to influence Stein quite directly when she attended the California School of Gardening for Women.

Influence of Zionism

Sydney's choice of profession could also have been subtly or indirectly influenced by the powerful concept of Zionism. While many Eastern European Jews were escaping from Tsarist tyranny, new ideas about the capacity of the Jews to direct their own destiny were emerging. A thousand years of discrimination in Europe had left the Jews confined to a very few occupations. They were prohibited from owning land in most places and could not become farmers or practice agriculture.

(continued)







Sydney Stein Rich (continued)

Theodore Herzl came along and blew all that away. Jews should live in their own country, he wrote. Herzl believed that reclaiming the land of Israel had to be done by the Jews themselves, with their own hands. For the Jews, agriculture was essential to becoming a nation and throwing off the ghetto mentality. The problem was that most Jews had no experience of farming. In the United States, collectives sprang up to train young men and women for this crucial task. California Jews established themselves in the egg and poultry business, buying many farms in Petaluma, north of San Francisco. One such poultry farmer was the uncle of famed violinist Yehudi Menuhi.

Despite its reputation as an engine for assimilation and integration into American society, the Emanu-El Residence Club probably provided a home to a few young Zionists. Even if Sydney was not a Zionist, in this atmosphere the notion that she could choose an outdoor career would no longer seem implausible.

One wonders why Mrs. Esberg decided to send some of the Emanu-El girls to the California School of Gardening for Women. It is highly unlikely she was a feminist or a Zionist, though not totally impossible. What is more likely is that she wanted to get young women out of the stifling pre-ghetto atmosphere and break the cycle of low-wage employment in factories, shops, and offices. She was not concerned about turning them into “ladies.”

Life as a Professional Gardener

It is hardly surprising that a pretty young woman working in a “man’s” field would attract some attention. Three articles on Sydney Stein Rich appeared in the San Francisco newspapers. The first, in July 1927, was fairly brief, simply noting her graduation from the California School of Gardening for Women.⁴ Seven years later, a reporter once again found her story interesting. Virginia Coontz’s article⁵ covered how Stein handled working with the men gardeners at Golden Gate Park, how she could not keep her hands pretty and soft because of the constant heavy work, and how she liked to go dancing. Saying of her male colleagues that “they treat me like a sister,” Stein was careful to avoid stirring

up male prejudices. Although she would have liked to wear shorts on hot days she did not do so, knowing that the men would have been annoyed.

Sydney also told Coontz that she did not want to become a landscape architect or work on a large private estate. Simply being a journeyman gardener was enough for her. Getting the job in the park had not been easy. John McLaren turned her down more than once and only relented in 1929. His question about handling a spade was not academic. For her first year in the park, Stein was kept busy spading. It was only much later that she was allowed to coach the entry-level gardeners to pass their examinations for certificates in horticulture.

In 1946, when she was 40 years old, Sydney married Neville J. Rich Sr. The couple, who lived at 3027 Webster Street, had no children of their own. In January 1949, the Women’s Section editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*, Marion McEniry, interviewed Mrs. Rich. McEniry’s patronizing tone is rather grating to modern sensibilities. She described Sydney as “a small, neatly put-together little trick with an aura of competence about her.”⁶ The rest of the interview was glowing, so the initial tone was not meant to be demeaning. It was merely how things were said in 1949.

The article covered, in considerable detail, the enormous difficulties of getting thousands of cyclamen plants, cineraria, Easter lilies, and other plants to flower perfectly at the correct time. Large public displays in the park and the conservatory were needed seven times a year, and the tension could be nerve-wracking if the weather was uncooperative. McEniry reported that careful control of temperature was the key to Mrs. Rich’s success in meeting these challenges. She also describes Sydney’s discovery of rare and unusual tropical plants for the Pond House. McEniry even followed Sydney home and described her house on Webster Street as small and very charming, with delicate French grey furnishings—“everything in small-scale perfection.”

In addition to her extremely difficult and demanding job in the park, Sydney remained active in the Jewish community of San Francisco. She worked as a special counselor at Camp Twonga, a camp for Jewish families and children near Yosemite,

Opposite: John McLaren, March 18, 1927. Photo courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

(continued)



Sydney Stein Rich (continued)

and served on the board of the Emanu-El Residence Clubs. After she left her Golden Gate Park position, she became a special consultant to the old San Francisco firm of florists, Podesta Baldocchi, sharing her expertise in flower arranging.

First Woman in the Union

All the Golden Gate Park gardeners were city employees but also belonged to the Laborer's Union, which they later named the William Hammond Hall Society after the engineer who actually created the park but was then completely forgotten and ignored. The name of the union was meant to be a hint to the authorities.

Sydney Stein became the first woman member of the union, a fact that also came to be forgotten.

In December 1980, the union's newsletter announced that five women had been accepted as permanent park gardeners for the first time.⁷ It also noted that some women had been allowed to work as temporary employees during World War II, but that none had ever been permanent. The five new women gardeners owed

their positions to a settlement reached in a 1978 lawsuit claiming discrimination. The requirement of the ability to lift 140 pounds from ground to shoulder was lowered to one of 80 pounds.

It is clear that none of the newly hired gardeners knew about their predecessor, who had been a permanent employee and member of the union long before the war. Rich's promotion to Head Nurserywoman in 1940 may have owed something to the wartime shortage of men, but otherwise she had been accepted entirely on her own merits.

In Memoriam

In 1956 Sydney Stein Rich died of malignant hypertension, an illness that today could be treated effectively. She was only 50 years old. Neville Rich died in 1979.

In the 1970s her younger sister, Esther Oppenheimer, began trying to create a memorial to Sydney with the staff at the Conservatory. She and a friend would take Chinese food to the staff and everyone would sit and share ideas for a permanent memorial. Tom Bass, who was then in charge of the department, suggested a bench. The Conservatory Auxiliary raised the money and had the bench built. The dedication ceremony was on September 12, 1983, almost 27 years to the day after Rich's death. ■

Notes

A previous version of this article was published in *Western States Jewish History*, Vol. 34, Summer 2002. The author is grateful to many people for their generous help: Frederick S. Sherman, director of research at the California Genealogical Society; Paula Freedman, archivist at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco; Aaron Kornblum at the Western Jewish History Center; the librarian at the California Academy of Science; George Waters, editor emeritus of *Pacific Horticulture*; Tom Bass, retired gardener, Golden Gate Park Conservatory; and Jim De Mersman at the Hayward Historical Society. The editor thanks Phoebe Cutler for steering her to the collection of Stein and McLaren photos in the San Francisco History Center at the San Francisco Public Library.

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3. Solomons, Selina. *How We Won The Vote*. New Woman Publishing Company, San Francisco 1911.
4. *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 25, 1927.
5. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 15 1934.
6. *San Francisco Examiner*, January 16, 1949.
7. *William Hammond Hall Society Newsletter* III (9) 2 1980.

Horticultural historian Judith Taylor, M.D., is the author of The Olive in California: History of an Immigrant Tree, Tangible Memories: Californians and Their Gardens 1800 to 1950, and The Global Migrations of Ornamental Plants: How the World Got into Your Garden. She has published articles on horticultural history in Eden, Pacific Horticulture, and Chronica Horticulturae, and also writes on California Jewish history. Her fourth book, Visions of Loveliness: Great Flower Breeders of the Past, is in press at the Ohio University Press. Born in London and educated at Oxford, Dr. Taylor lives in San Francisco with her husband.

Above: Portion of Golden Gate Park Conservatory honoring John McLaren, 1932. Photo courtesy of the San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

Book Review

The Fine, Fierce Particularity of Words

Paula Panich

National Public Radio does it; so does the *New York Times*, and now your very own *Eden* is following suit: celebrating the paperback publication of a noteworthy book.

Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape, edited by Barry Lopez and Debra Gwartney, published by Trinity University Press, appeared in 2006 and was received with quiet yet rapturous reviews. Republished this year in a handsome, close to field-guide-sized edition, the pleasure of this book awaits you.

Barry Lopez writes about the relationship between the physical landscape and human culture; he is well known for his lyrical yet precise scientific writing about the natural world. (His luminous book, *Arctic Dreams*, won a National Book Award.) In *Home Ground*, Lopez and writer Debra Gwartney invited 45 American poets and writers known for their interest in and sensitivity to the landscape in their work to define, redefine, interpret, and reinterpret about 850 terms relating to the physical landscape.

And what writers they are: Terry Tempest Williams; Los Angeles-based D.J. Waldie, Barbara Kingsolver, Gretel Ehrlich (who now lives part time on California's Central Coast), and enough writers to tempt you into their books for months.

Given the range of landscape in our huge state, a fair number of these terms refer to landforms and other topographical and geological features of California. These words are rooted in the great wash of languages (other than English) that have formed and informed this state and this country—Spanish, Russian, French, and Native American.

“Go in fear of abstractions,” Ezra Pound wrote sometime during what we may assume was a particularly lucid moment.

What did he mean? To use a precise, local word for a landscape event means that the speaker (or writer) acknowledges the great unseen sea of history—written, human, imaginative, and geologic. Our minds aren't generic but specific. And so, when properly expressed, should be the richness of our speech.

Here is D.J. Waldie, on the definition of a “rising dune”:

The force of the wind can blow enough sand to the base of a cliff to push a dune partway up the cliff face, forming a rising dune. Similarly, wind can blow a dune at the edge of a cliff over the side to pile up a falling dune at the base. The best examples of rising dunes are on the Navajo Indian Reservation of northwestern New Mexico, northeastern Arizona, and southwestern Utah.

And here is the poet Luis Alberto Urrea, taking on the commonplace noun *rock*:

In literature, a stone is a rock with gravitas. A rock is workmanlike, quotidian.... A stone is fraught with anthropomorphized depth, a rock seen with metaphoric eyes. (“He rolled away the stone....”) In nature, however, a rock is a naturally formed aggregate or compact mass of mineral materials; these may or may not be “coherent”—in other words, a rock can be a small anthology of geological matter. A stone, in contrast, is a concentrated piece of earthy or mineral material, often defined as a section of a rock. If you get a piece of the rock, you have a stone in your pocket....

Stones achieve true gravitas when they are gems—it is not just slang that makes diamonds “precious stones.” We elevate the stone in our culture: corner stone, gravestone, etched in stone.... A rock is solid and stolid, forever dependable as an essential part of the Earth's crust; a stone is a mineral metaphor, forever turning in the human mind, bearing “meaning” on its facets. Perhaps this is what moved Mexican poet Octavio Paz to write, “What is not stone/is light.”

And that definition, dear readers, is the inflorescence of a dancing mind. Will your own ideas about the word *rock* remain etched in stone? ■



EDITED BY
Barry Lopez & Debra Gwartney



Home Ground: A Guide to the American Landscape
Debra Gwartney (editor), Barry Lopez (editor)
Trinity University Press, 2013, 608 pages
www.tupress.org

Paula Panich, author of *Cultivating Words: The Guide to Writing about the Plants and Gardens You Love* and other books, is a Los Angeles-based food, garden, and landscape writer who has contributed to the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Gastronomica*. Her website is www.theliterarygardener.com.

Expanding “Women’s Work” The California School of Gardening for Women

Marlea Graham

In December 1917, two well-educated women with vested interests in women’s suffrage met and became fast friends—one would become a wealthy heiress and the other, a medical doctor who worked her way through college and earned her own living. Australian-born Maud Gibson and Dr. Ann Martin, a California native who graduated from UC Berkeley before earning her medical degree from Cornell, met in France where Dr. Martin was in charge of a hospital for refugee children. After the end of the First World War, the two traveled and lived in England and then moved on to California.

In 1920, while Dr. Martin was establishing her career at Children’s Hospital in Oakland, Gibson began buying property in Hayward. Between 1920 and 1924, she acquired several contiguous pieces of land in an area totaling some 13.5 acres at a cost of about \$4,000. Gibson spent another \$65,000 on building a 24-room Spanish-style house, enclosing an inner courtyard centered by a circular, raised pool with a fountain. To ensure a plentiful supply of water for gardens, Gibson had two wells dug to a depth of 165 feet each, and added tennis courts, a swimming pool and horse stables to the grounds. Gibson named her estate “La Granja,” presumably after the summer palace of the King of Spain, which was renowned for its beautiful gardens.

Both Dr. Martin and Gibson were interested in expanding the horizons of “women’s work” to include the profession of practical gardening. In July 1921 Gibson advertised in the *London Times* for a woman gardener with a National Diploma in Horticulture willing to accept a 2-year contract to landscape the grounds of La Granja and to “examine the prospects of starting a school of horticulture in the English tradition.” Judith Walrond-Skinner, a graduate of the Studley Horticultural College in Warwickshire, England, applied for the post and arrived in Hayward in July 1922. At Gibson’s request, she designed an English-style

garden around the Spanish-style house, noting that this garden style was perfectly feasible in California as long as “adequate water” was available. However, she also employed native plants in the landscape, and their proper use became a part of the course at the school that Gibson and Dr. Martin would found.

After completing the landscaping of La Granja, Skinner examined the curriculum offered by the University of California’s Landscape Division and that of the other two American schools of gardening for women, Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture, Gardening and Horticulture for Women, established in 1901 at Groton, Massachusetts, and the School of Horticulture, established in 1911 at Ambler, Pennsylvania. Deciding that there was scope for another such school on the West Coast, Skinner persuaded her friend and former Studley classmate Margaret O. Slaney to move from England to assist with the project.¹

With a professional staff in place, Gibson and Dr. Martin began the California School of Gardening for Women at La Granja in 1924. The School ran advertisements in the September 1924 issue of *Garden Magazine and Home Builder* and the October 1924 issue of *House & Garden*, but while both magazines mentioned a class starting in January 1925, the first documented graduation date was in May 1927. The school’s prospectus (undated) described the grounds and job prospects for graduates and provided an outline of the curriculum.

It is a thirteen-acre estate with many charming features that bring to mind the Old World Gardens of England. Along the banks of San Lorenzo Creek, which flows through the grounds, are fine old sycamores and bay (or laurel) trees and native shrubs....The main features are a flagged rose garden; a spring bulb garden with its carpet of purple and gold crocus, its snowdrops, scillas and grape hyacinths and, later, narcissi of all kinds; a little, old-fashioned, sweet-smelling pergola garden; an iris garden; herbaceous borders; pink and gray borders; a blue garden; a yellow garden and a rock garden. The gardens are surrounded by an apricot and pear orchard. The flower gardens, vegetable

garden, glasshouse and frames serve as a laboratory where students are taught practical gardening. There is also a workroom, lecture room and library.²

According to the prospectus, job opportunities were good for “the girl with organizing abilities” who could take charge of large estates. “A very good opening for



Right: Unidentified student at the Hayward school ca. 1928-30. From Clara Schaeffer’s “The Call of the Garden” in the *Women’s City Club Magazine* 6, no. 9, October 1932.

women occurs in jobbing gardening, i.e., taking charge of two or three [smaller] gardens in a district. Opportunities occur also in lecturing, horticultural journalism, teaching and community gardening. The work demands as high a type of student as any other profession, and to the girl of ability and character who is physically

strong, wider and more interesting posts are open.”²³

Despite financial difficulties, the California School of Gardening for Women continued in Hayward until the spring of 1936, when Walrond-Skinner and Slaney decided to return to England and the school changed hands. Former student

Elsa Uppman, who took over as owner and principal of the school, reached an agreement with Stanford University to lease approximately 1.5 acres of land in a far corner of the campus. With the help of students, a small school building, greenhouse and lath house were constructed
(continued)



during the summer of 1936 and classes began that fall. The school became coeducational, and its grounds also served as the first test garden for *Sunset Magazine*. After 10 years on the Stanford campus, the California School of Gardening finally closed its doors in 1947. ■

Editor's Note

This article is based on excerpts from a much longer manuscript that will be published in a future issue.

Endnotes

1. Laura Mercado Smith, "The California School of Gardening for Women: A History"; Elsa Uppman Knoll, "The California School of Gardening for Women: A Personal Report." In *California Horticulture Journal* 31, no. 4 (Oct 1970).

2. "California School of Gardening for Women, Hayward, California, Prospectus." Aurelia Reinhardt Papers, Record Group II, Partial Listing of Correspondents, Organizations & Subjects, Office of the President Files: F (1928-1930), Folder 20, Garden School Correspondence. Special Collections, Heller Rare Book Room, Olin Library, Mills College. It is presumed that the prospectus was written by Judith Walrond-Skinner.

3. Ibid.

Marlea Graham holds a BA in psychology and a California teaching credential (elementary level) from California State University at Hayward. She is a retired Oakland firefighter, a lifelong gardener, a collector of heritage roses and an avid garden history detective. She edited the quarterly journal of the Heritage Roses Group for 10 years, and then spent another 12 years (1997-2009) as editor of Eden. She has contributed a number of articles to Eden over the years and convened CGLHS conferences at Stanford (2003), Riverside (2004), and Santa Cruz (2010).

Right, clockwise from top left: *Front entry to the California School of Gardening classroom at Stanford University, ca. 1947. Photo courtesy James A. Lawrence. "Cabin, Studio, Cottage?" In Sunset Homes for Western Living: From Five Years of Sunset, 1947.*

Judith Walrond-Skinner, principal of the school. Photo courtesy of Elsa Uppman Knoll. In California Horticulture Journal 31, no. 4, October 1970.

Elsa Uppman standing in the California School of Gardening's herbaceous border at Stanford University, c. 1939. Linda Thorne. "A Garden on the Farm," in Stanford Illustrated Review 41, no. 1, September 1939. Reprinted with permission from Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University.

Courtyard with pool at La Granja. Bari Brenner. "Two Women Whose Home Reflected Many Firsts," in Hayward Daily Review, 21 February 1971. Photo courtesy of Hugh Martin or Al Chasmar.

Student spading in the Hayward school garden. Found in the school prospectus, n.d., Aurelia Reinhardt Papers, Mills College.





California School of Gardening Course Outline*

Practical Work

Use of tools – preparation of soils, digging, trenching, manuring, hoeing and raking

Making and care of lawns

Weeding

Care of flower beds – preparing, planting and maintaining. Color schemes. Use of native plants, of herbaceous and annual plants.

Special gardens [i.e., rock gardens, rose gardens]

Seed sowing, thinning, and transplanting.

Growing of vegetables for home use – cultivation, succession [planting] and gathering

Fruit for home use – pruning, spraying and gathering

Greenhouse and frame work

Flowers and early vegetables

Propagating, pricking out and potting

Watering

Ventilation and care of heating systems

Trees and shrubs – propagating, planting, pruning and general care

Diseases and pests – their prevention and remedies

Theoretical Work

Gardening – minimum two lectures a week, including all branches of horticultural theory, history of gardening, and principles of design

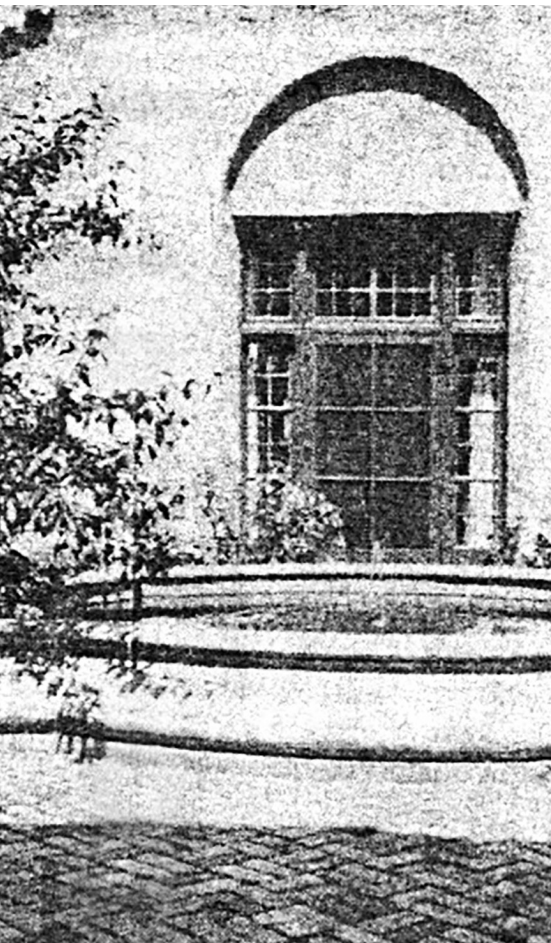
Botany – two lectures a week

Soils and fertilizers – alternate years, one lecture a week

Business methods – alternate years, one lecture a week

Occasional observational trips to adjacent nurseries and estates are arranged

**From "California School of Gardening for Women, Hayward, California, Prospectus."*





The Indomitable Isabella Worn

Thomas Ross Perry

At the turn of the 20th century, Isabella Worn was one of San Francisco's pre-eminent floral decorators, along with her sisters Annie and Grace. Foremost among the Misses Worn, though, was "Bella" who during her life (1869-1950) crossed paths with an astonishing number of notable figures in California history. She worked with Julia Morgan, John McLaren, Bruce Porter, Willis K. Polk, William Randolph Hearst, the Roth family, and William and Agnes Bourn. Her career took her from San Francisco's Palace Hotel to Heart's San Simeon, and from the Crocker family estate to Filoli, the Bourns' estate on the San Francisco Peninsula.

Isabella Austin Worn was born in 1869, one of five children whose maternal grandfather, James Ross, had immigrated to San Francisco from Scotland and Australia in 1849. Ross made a fortune selling liquor and lumber to the Gold Rush miners and had parlayed his success into the purchase of Rancho Punta de San Quentin, an old Spanish land grant of 8,877 acres in central Marin County, extending from Point San Quentin to what is now known as the Ross Valley. The Worn children, with their parents George and Annie, grew up in privileged circumstances until the financial collapse surrounding the Comstock Silver Mine fiasco in 1870, which largely wiped out the family's fortune.

In Marin County's Ross Valley, a tiny Episcopal church built on a piece of land donated by the Worn girls' grandmother, Annie Ross, glowed on Sunday mornings with flowers from the Worn garden. And while their father, George Worn, was a gifted horticulturist in his own right, an artistic strain ran through the women of his family. The Worn sisters delighted in decorating the chapel in Ross with the flowers they had grown and were encouraged to start a floral shop in San Francisco. Around 1888 the sisters opened a soon-flourishing floral enterprise in a storefront on Sutter Street. Later, they moved to the old Lick Building at 18 Post Street. Operating as "The Misses Worn" the sisters

were then about the ages of 22, 21, and 20.

The three, despite shy and retiring natures, were to demonstrate ideas on floral decoration that departed from the stiff formality that was the standard of elegant turn-of-the-century decor. Moreover, they insisted that their clients allow them to select and arrange the flowers. They succeeded in popularizing an entirely new, much freer style of flower arrangement, and it soon became the vogue to have decorations done by the Worn sisters. So despite their reduced financial and social circumstances, the Worn sisters were buoyed by a loyal cadre of well-heeled friends who transitioned eagerly to patrons.

After the death of sister Grace in 1915, the floral business was down to Bella and Annie. In 1915, prominent San Franciscan William Bourn commissioned his friend Willis K. Polk, the renowned architect, to design his family's new home on the San Francisco Peninsula in Woodside. Bruce Porter was engaged to assist in the furnishing of the house and to develop the layout of the gardens at Filoli, and Bella Worn was brought in to supervise the installation of the garden.

Porter had worked with the Bourns on a number of projects, including their home at 2550 Webster Street in San Francisco and, had collaborated with Bella Worn on other garden projects. In 1910, Porter designed and Bella worked on the gardens for the 700-acre Russell Crocker estate, New Place, which later became the Hillsborough Country Club. New Place was one of the earliest Italianate gardens in California, a formal landscape planted with specimen oak trees and pines purportedly grown from seed gathered at Hadrian's garden. Porter and Bella also collaborated on the Double-H Ranch in Carmel Valley, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Russell.

Lurline Matson Roth (whose family succeeded the Bourns in 1937 as owners of Filoli) described Bella's early role in the formation of Filoli's garden. In her 1981 oral history with the *Oakland Tribune*, Mrs. Roth recalled that Bella Worn had been brought in by Porter to supervise the planting of the Filoli gardens sometime after the Bourns had taken up residence in 1917, while it was still under construction. According to Mrs. Roth, at some

point later Porter and Bella had a falling out over the planting of the garden and Porter left the Filoli project. He would not return to see the garden until many years later, shortly before his death in 1953.

While Bella continued to work on the development of the Filoli gardens throughout the 1920s, she was invited to join another project. In 1919, newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst had undertaken the construction at San Simeon of his iconic Castle on 275,000 acres of the central California coast. Hearst chose Julia Morgan to develop his grand vision for a California mansion surrounded by beautiful gardens. Hearst was notoriously headstrong and hands-on in his construction projects. Hearst and Morgan exchanged more than a thousand letters during the building of San Simeon. And he was famously fickle about those in his employ.

As the role of the gardens became more prominent in the development of the estate, Morgan brought in Porter in the early 1920s to consult on the design. She later hired Bella to assist in its implementation. According to San Simeon historian Victoria Kastner, Bella was recognized for her "excellent sense of color and would go round the garden with [Hearst]." He apparently was known to bombard Morgan with ideas generated from the 14 magazines he then owned, such as *House Beautiful*, *Town and Country*, and *Connoisseur*.

It is not clear just how long Bella and Mr. Hearst were able to work together without fireworks, but the association dissolved sometime shortly thereafter. As with her falling out with Bruce Porter, it was not the first time Bella had gone head-to-head with others on a garden project. In any case, during her tenure at San Simeon, due to the remote location, Bella would stay on site and socialize with the many famous guests. Her family constantly begged "Aunty" for details of these encounters. Bella would regale them with stories of some of the intriguing personalities gathered in the elegant dining hall, complete with ketchup bottles on the table.

But Bella's attention to Filoli was never entirely diverted. By 1922, Agnes Bourn founded the Hillsborough Garden Club, which became the Garden Club of America in 1929. During this time, Filoli

(continued)

Opposite: Isabella Worn in Filoli's lavender field with head groundskeeper Louis Moriconi, sometime in the late 1940s. All photos in the article are courtesy of the author.



Isabella Worn (continued)

was the site for many teas, receptions, and theme parties, all decorated by the two [Worn] sisters and made vibrant by their floral decorations.

But the latter half of the 1920s were a time of decline for the Bourns, as both William and Agnes were in failing health. Bella's involvement in Filoli gradually diminished, and with the death of the Bourns in 1936, her emotional connection to Filoli seemed severed. Meanwhile, the floral business continued to flourish and Bella remained active in other landscape projects, including the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island where "the Misses Worn, under the supervision of John McLaren... created floral designs and arranged for the planting of evergreens indigenous to the Pacific coast."

Sometime thereafter, William and Lurline Roth, heirs to the Matson Navigation Company who had bought the Filoli estate in 1937, convinced Bella to resume supervising the Filoli gardens. By the 1940s, she had a regular Thursday appointment at Filoli and came down from Marin County, usually wearing a big floppy hat, and in a truck, chauffeured by her faithful right-hand man, Emilio Dentoni. Lurline Roth recalled those years in her 1981 oral history with the *Oakland Tribune*:

Everybody loved Miss Worn. But she in some ways was hard to get along with because she was very opinionated and wanted to do things her way. But as her way was always perfect, I didn't find anything to argue about and so we were great friends.... She always made you feel that the garden was absolutely yours. She made me feel as if I had made the garden. Well, I didn't make the garden, of course. But she always gave you that feeling.

Bella remained active in other landscape projects as well. One of her last was Stern Hall on the campus of UC Berkeley John W. Gregg and Isabella Worn are credited with the landscape design of the 1941-42 building on Hearst Avenue—the first women's dormitory in the University of California system.

During all these busy years, "Aunty" Bella was the quiet benefactress of her nieces and nephews—putting them through school, helping them get started in business and supporting the family through the Depression years.

Bella never married, but among her suitors was Herman Jaehne. The two became engaged, but Jaehne's medical condition prevented the marriage; they remained devoted "soul mates" for the rest of their lives.

Bella continued visiting Filoli until the week before her death on November 9, 1950. The outpouring of condolence notes sent to her sister and partner, Annie, read like a "Who's Who" of Northern California society during the first half of the 20th century. Over the years, Bella had made many friends and was much loved. Annie died less than 3 months later on January 20, 1951. And so *The Misses Worn* passed into legend. In 1953, in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Humboldt County, friends of Isabella Worn dedicated a redwood grove in her memory. ■

Editor's Note

This article is based on a wonderful talk the author gave at Filoli in 2012.

Thomas Ross Perry is the great-nephew of Isabella Worn. The de facto family historian, Perry says that he is "in possession of a lot of boxes of old family stuff... and as a nurseryman at Sunnyside Nursery for the past 36 years, I feel a kinship to those who made their mark in the horticultural field before me."

Above, left to right: Annie Worn Perry, Donald E. Perry, Grace Worn (seated), Annie Ross Worn, and Isabella Worn (seated) in the family's Marin County garden.

Above right: Isabella Worn, ca. 1897.

W. B. BOURN

FILOLI
SAN MATEO, CALIFORNIA

15 April, 1920.

Dear Bella:

I have sent you cheque for my flower account, but I have not received your bill for my Christmas purchases with full description, etc., etc., as requested. Please send it not later than next Monday.

Agnes told me she had a bill from you long delayed. Now, Bella, it does not make any particular difference to Agnes or me, but to some of your clients it might make a big difference; you are not fair to yourself, or to some of your clients - particularly yourself. Our bills amount to over \$1400. Interest on that for one year is atleast \$80. You have lost \$80 and nobody gains. Collect your bills, and if your banker does not pay interest I will send you to a banker who does, or invest your money where you can make 6% or 7% and see what it amounts to on the bills you have let run. Take me into partnership and let me have a small percentage of the money I will save for you.

Be good, but not too good, and next year you have got to come to Muckross with us.

Affectionately yours,

W. B. Bourn

Miss Bella Worn,
Lick building,
San Francisco, Calif.

For the Worn sisters, bookkeeping took a back seat to artistic expression. Invoices were often tossed in a chest and clients billed when the mood would strike, as this letter from William Bourn attests.



CALIFORNIA GARDEN & LANDSCAPE HISTORY SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT 2013

This year will mark my tenth year on the Board of CGLHS and my fourth and final year as your president. As we approach our twentieth anniversary in 2015, CGLHS is undergoing an exuberant season of change, renovation, and growth. There were 25 people at the organizing meeting called by our founder, Bill Grant, on September 23, 1995. Our membership has grown to more than 200 passionate garden and landscape lovers.

The accomplishments of 2013 actually began in 2010—that’s when Barbara Marinacci took on the editorship of *Eden* after founder Marlea Graham retired as editor and back office manager. In these three years we’ve made subtle changes. Moving from an all-volunteer organization, we now include a few paid consultants to allow for a more professional organization ready for growth. We celebrate the team we’ve brought together: *Eden* editor Virginia Kean, *Eden* production manager and website designer Sheryl Scott, and business manager Kathleen Fernan of K&K Business Solutions.

Now we are moving in new directions. I personally hope we are able to increase our current membership by threefold—an idea that delights us all. Here are some changes achieved and those already under way.

In the past year, *Eden* moved to a crisp, new look with color on its covers! We welcomed a new editor, Virginia Kean, and her fresh vision for our print publication. Members also receive a digital edition of *Eden* as well as e-notices of CGLHS events, and can renew their membership or register for an event online at www.cglhs.org. And you can “like us” on Facebook!

Thanks to member donations, a dynamic new CGLHS website is under development. The website will have the complete archive of back issues of *Eden*, up-to-date information on CGLHS events, and tips on how to research the historic landscapes and gardens in our state.

Three CGLHS events were held in 2013. In late September, our 18th Annual Conference, “Becoming Public: Design, History, Plants, and Preservation,” was held in the San Francisco East

Bay Area, and included trips to three, once-private, legendary gardens that made the transition to public spaces—the Dry Creek Garden, the Shinn Historic Park and Arboretum, and the Ruth Bancroft Garden. In April, members attended “A Fresno Frolic.” Exploration of this little-known urban treasure included a rather mysterious underground garden. In March, we visited “When They Were Wild: Recapturing California’s Wildflower Heritage” at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, where 300 works of art and other objects traced the journey of California’s plants from the wild to flower-filled home gardens. The exhibition was the unsung brainchild of CGLHS board member Carolyn Bennett.

We would like to thank the many people who put in countless volunteer hours writing for *Eden*; speaking, hosting, and organizing events; and serving on our Board of Directors and the Editorial Board; and the many members who contribute above the basic membership level. Without all our members, this organization and its leap forward into the larger world would not be possible.

Judy M. Horton, President, CGLHS

president@cglhs.org

Above: Matt Moore of East Bay Regional Parks District gives a talk at Dry Creek Garden during the 18th Annual CGLHS Conference. (Left to right) Richard Tiede, Judy Ahmann, Bracey Tiede, John Blocker, Jack and Nancy Mead, Cecily Harris, Peggy Darnall, Phoebe Cutler, Virginia Kean, Ann Scheid, Matt Moore, Christy O’Hara, Judy Horton, Marlea Graham, Cathy Merrill, Norma Frey, Sandra Price, Sarah Raube, and Cathy Garrett. Photo by Carolyn Bennett.

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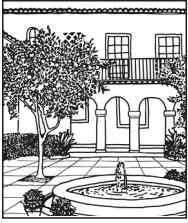
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California Garden & Landscape History Society

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George Schoener Day in Santa Barbara

Friday, March 21, 2014 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth in Germany of Father George Schoener, Santa Barbara's legendary "Padre of the Roses." The Santa Barbara Rose Society will mark the day with a ceremony at the A.C. Postel Memorial Rose Garden, across from the historic Santa Barbara Mission. In his heyday Father Schoener was one of the best-known rose hybridizers in the world. His "Avenida de las Rosas" in Santa Barbara was immortalized in a 1937 Paramount Pictures newsreel. Sadly, only two of his roses survive for current rose lovers to enjoy: 'Schoener's Nutkana' and 'Arrillaga'.

'Schoener's Nutkana'. Photo by William A. Grant.