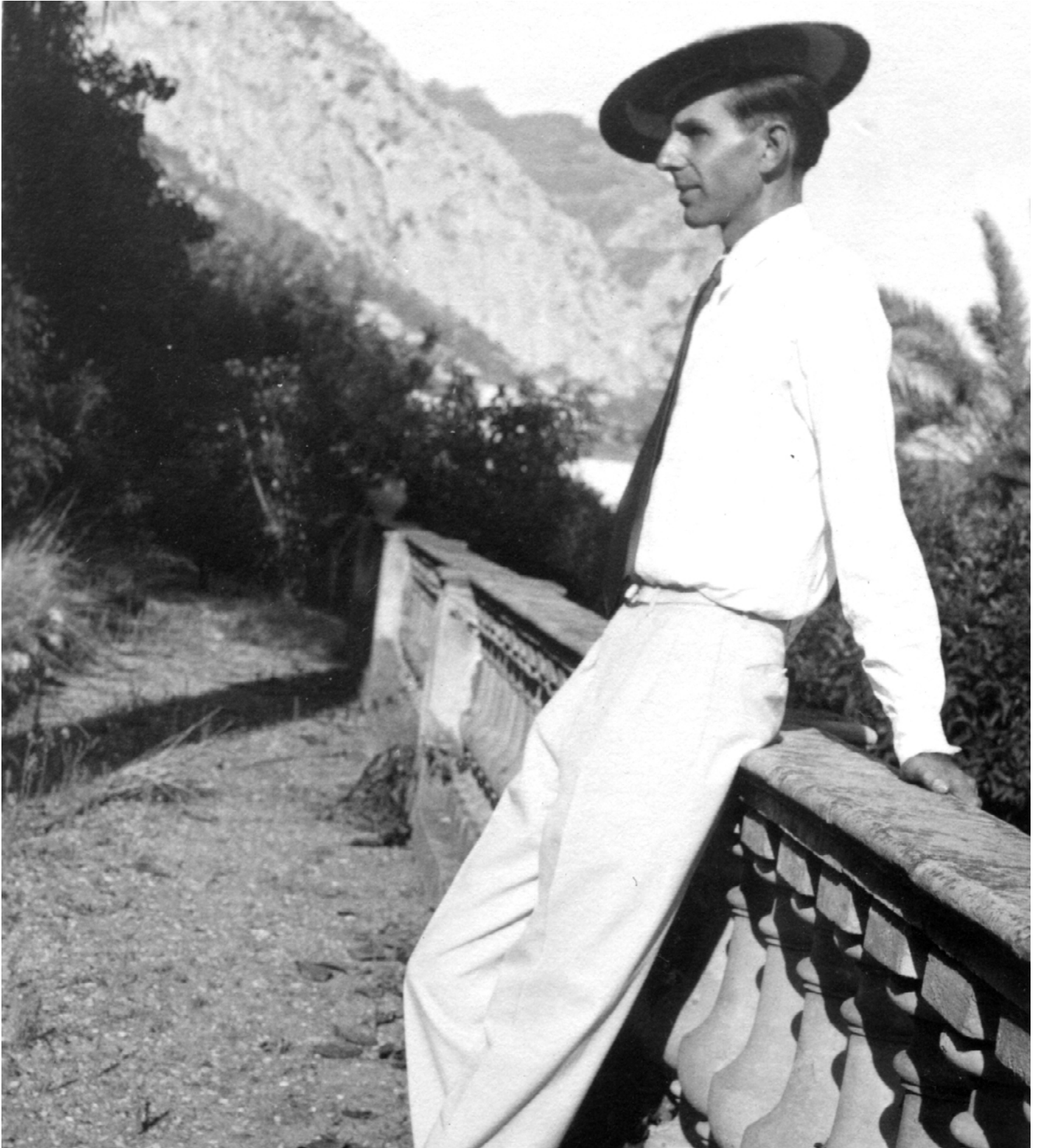
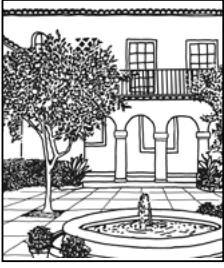


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On the Cover: *Naturalist and author Donald Culross Peattie. This and all photos in the article by Tim Longville, except as otherwise noted, are courtesy of Peattie's grandson David Peattie.*

Above: *Donald Culross Peattie.*

Opposite: *Dragon tree (Dracaena draco) at the Quien Sabe? estate in Montecito, California. Photo by Randy Baldwin, courtesy of Susan Chamberlin.*

Donald Culross Peattie

A Naturalist in California

Tim Longville



Today Donald Culross Peattie is seldom remembered or read, but in a career that stretched from the early 1930s to the late 1950s he published many remarkable books about plants. The books were vividly written and many were atmospherically illustrated by some of the finest artistic talents of his time. The climax of Peattie's career was his two monumental studies of American trees: *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America* and *A Natural History of Western Trees*. They, like several of his later titles, were written when he was living in California. From 1937 onwards, he had a series of houses in and around Santa Barbara, each of which came with a considerable existing garden. And since he wrote unstoppably and

interestingly about everything, all the time, Peattie also wrote about those gardens.

Born in 1894 on the outskirts of Chicago, then a still relatively new and violently expanding city, Peattie's upbringing was largely rural. The family's home in what became known later as "The Chicago Wilderness," though only eight miles from the city center, was distinctly hard to reach. "You had to drive out from Grand Crossing on the mere trace of a road, two ruts across the prairie through flowering soughs and over deep dune sand," Peattie wrote. Yet it was a place from which his father commuted daily to work on the city's main paper (his mother was a regular book reviewer for the same paper). His even more rural life took place on vacations

in the backwoods of Carolina where a constant was the sound of his mother at work, the sound of a typewriter. Writing as an integral part of life—and handsome book production as an integral part of writing—were lessons he learned early. Indeed, he wrote that the journalist or popularizer "has to remember that old city-room story about the famous newspaper editor who gave but one piece of advice: 'Be interesting, and be damned quick about it.'"

Peattie also learned early to love nature in all its forms, not just plants but animals, insects, and the merest scraps of pond-life. To love it and to fear it, for even when he was still a child, "A spring day came when I began to know that this was not the first spring of the world ... And I wondered, for



the first time ... Why is there sorrow in this return, so longed for, and so unfailing? ... On this day I first felt regret that spring must always go, and that when I am gone it will forever return."

It was a regret—a terror—that haunted Peattie for the rest of his life. He returns to it time and again, in book after book, trying to convince his readers and himself that, "If it hurts to think that April will be here and we not see it, it is also the deepest of consolations ... Spring is the only season that we are really sure is immortal; it is indeed the future life."

Whether in the large garden and the surrounding "wilderness" at home on the Chicago fringes or in the untouched hills of Carolina, that almost painfully sharp

interest in the natural world was intensified still further when in early adolescence he became friends with another nature-loving boy, Robert Redfield, who later became a famous anthropologist, author of *The Primitive World and its Transformations*. Before long, Peattie had fallen in love with Redfield's sister Louise.

The Redfields lived in Redfield House, one of several houses on the sizeable estate called The Grove, which had originally been created in the 1830s by Louise's great-grandfather, Dr. John Kennicott, who was also a farmer and one of the area's first nurserymen (as early as the 1840s, he was advertising rose bushes for sale in the *Chicago Tribune*). As Peattie described the place much later, it was filled with "Osage

and walnut, Scotch pine and red pine, Norway spruce and arbor vitae, apple tree and pear...." The Grove still exists and is now owned by the Glenview Park District, which preserves it as "a rare convergence of this region's nature and culture." As a result, both the woodland and the Kennicott and Redfield houses are open to the public.

After school and college at the University of Chicago, Peattie first tried and failed to follow his father by becoming a hard-boiled journalist. He then worked in an office in New York, but bored and

Above: Louise and Donald Peattie in Provence, France, ca. 1930.

hating it, longing for plants and “wildness,” he bought “a botany manual, and kept it secretly in my desk drawer, in that high New York office where my work, my first job, was something very different and much duller.”

The botany manual inspired him eventually to run away to botanize in the Appalachians of his childhood holidays. On his way back from the Appalachians to New York, he in effect ran away again. Getting off at Boston to change trains for New York, he decided instead to go to Harvard to inspect the glass flowers in the Agassiz museum. The experience was so overwhelming that he went straightaway to the professor who had written that manual once hidden in the desk, asking to be allowed to become one of his students. He succeeded and spent the next three years at Harvard.

After graduation Peattie went to work for the great David Fairchild in the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, which was then “the most colorful in the Department [of Agriculture].” Explorers were sending back material and accompanying letters “from Cathay and Samarkand, the Andes and Sokotra.”

Even so, Peattie wasn't happy. He hated being in an office and he wanted to write. So despite a growing young family (eventually he and Louise had three sons and a daughter, whose death in childhood devastated them both), the couple soon agreed that he should throw up his safe job, its pension, its regular hours, and his sober scientific studies. Instead, he would become what his genes demanded: a freelance writer and journalist, a popularizer, what he called a “water-carrier,” and she would write as well. In those years of the mid-1920s, while Louise was writing her first novels, her husband simultaneously wrote nature columns for a local Washington paper, his first book, *Cargoes and Harvests* (based on his work for Fairchild on important plant introductions), and a detailed study of the flora of the Indiana Dunes. It was also in those years that he went off to explore much of America's wild countryside:

[W]ith my country for my book, I read, as naturalist, the pages from the prairies and the north woods; I knew the Appalachian South, and the Tidewater South, and Florida down to the 'glades. The Potomac from Harper's Ferry to Chesapeake Bay became familiar ground, and in my college years I took much of New England on foot, from Blue Hills to White Mountains, from the Berkshires to the coast of Maine.

Despite that whirlwind of physical and mental activity, the young couple, like

many of their contemporaries in the 1920s, were dissatisfied with life in America. So, in 1928 when the dollar was strong and European currencies weak, they set off for France. Not for Paris, like most expatriates, but for Provence, where they stayed for five years, during which both wrote novels and Peattie explored the region's wild flowers. (He makes a fleeting appearance in Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, the classic account of the expatriate fashion of those years.) By the early 1930s, however, the dollar was no longer strong, the Depression was in full swing, their books weren't selling, and American innocence and “naturalness” came to seem preferable to European sophistication. That was true, Peattie came to feel, in the world of plants as well as in that of humans. In Europe, “a New World naturalist feels that he walks classic ground. But he can add nothing to it; it belongs to Europeans; so he goes back to his own, which is legendless, and vaster.”

Or, to put it another way, in the 1920s, “we are discovering ... that as a people with a common language and government, a single army, navy, flag, and oath of allegiance, we are rich also in peaceful differences ... we are piling the luggage and the children in the family car and setting forth to explore our many climates, many natural provinces, Appalachian and prairie, Great Basin and North Woods.”

The rest of Peattie's life would be devoted to acting as a self-appointed guide to America. That was what lay behind the Peatties' decision to return then to Louise's childhood home, Redfield House on The Grove estate. However, though Peattie was passionate in his love for the native flora of America, he was too well trained scientifically and had spent too long working for that great introducer of exotics, David Fairchild, for that love to have anything simplistic about it. He knew that the importation of aliens was an endless and unstoppable process:

As long as man keeps the upper hand with Nature, he is going to strive to bring about a flora once more cosmopolitan. His commerce and exchange of crops and weeds, of garden materials and attendant pests, will break down insularity and provincialism just as technical civilization drives out local customs and costumes, and smooths away dialects in favour of a uniform speech. Like the rest of our future, this promises mixed blessings. On the Mojave it is grateful to rest under the shade of tamarisk trees brought in from the Sahara, giving respite where even the native mesquite will not cast its thin umbrage. Upon the prairie, where once the virgin sod was proud with tall native grasses and blazing composites, it is lamentable to feel the foreign weeds

crowd harsh about the ankles. To the coming of such changes there is no simple answer.

It was during their years at Redfield House that Peattie finally began to find his true voice and method. Until then, he had felt dissatisfied both by his novels, which felt foreign and anyway didn't sell, and by his journalistic hackwork as a nature-writer, which sold but paid poorly and didn't allow him to say what he really wanted to say. He began to keep a journal of his daily observations of ‘an American grove of burr oaks under whose high, elderly, indulgent boughs the little wild plum and crab and the flat-topped hawthorns fume with blossoms that become hard, bright, tangy and astringent fruits.’ Gradually, in doing so, he “grew aware of greater implications behind the surface of this candid Nature. My newly wakening interest was ecology—loosely defined as the sociology of plants.”

That journal eventually provided the material for his first two “real” books. One was *An Almanac for Moderns*, which takes the form of a series of musings, one for each day of the year. Some are pure natural history, others pure philosophy. Yet others are miniature biographies of the pioneer naturalists whose lives and work inspired him. The second book was *A Prairie Grove*, about the interdependence of natural and human history at his in-laws' home, The Grove.

However, The Grove was far from the final destination for such natural pilgrims as the Peatties. Like the nation at large, Donald Peattie felt a compulsion to head west, to the one major section of the country not yet known to him. In the early summer of 1937, he and Louise packed a few suitcases into a car and headed off to the coast of Southern California. They found and rented a spectacular place in Montecito just outside Santa Barbara—spectacular and exotic not so much because of the house but because of the garden, which during its brief heyday was one of the most famous in California. There Peattie wrote *Flowering Earth* and *The Road of a Naturalist*.

All too appropriately, the 27-acre estate was called Quien Sabe? (Who knows?). Both house and garden had been created during the early 1920s for John D. Wright and his wife Ysabel. Wright, who was originally from New York, was an expert on the education of the deaf and deaf mutes. It was probably through that expertise that he met his Cuban wife, Ysabel Galban, since one of her brothers was a deaf mute who became a pupil in Wright's school. The marriage brought him real wealth, since Ysabel was related to a family that once owned not only an array of Cuban sugar estates but the Cuban national bank. The Wrights



commissioned the area's most fashionable and expensive architect, George Washington Smith, father of California's Spanish Colonial Revival style, to build them an imposing new house, which was to be modelled on a castle or manor house John Wright had fallen in love with in Spain. Meanwhile, the design of the garden of stone-walled terraces and the planting of its various separate areas, each devoted to the plants of one specific region, was commissioned from landscape architect Peter Riedel, the almost equally famous nurseryman, plantsman, and author.

Though there seems to be no documentary evidence to prove it, the landscape architect Ralph Tallant Stevens may also have been involved in the creation of the garden. Certainly, he, Reidel, and Smith often worked together on such projects. Stevens' best-known creation was and still is Ganna Walska's famous cactus garden, Lotusland, which he designed in the early 1940s on land that had belonged to his father, Kinton Stevens, who had moved to Montecito from England in 1882, and who became the first California nurseryman to specialize in tropical and subtropical

plants. Gregarious and multitalented, he is recorded as having in his spare time created clay figurines, practised taxidermy, and entertained his friends by singing and playing the banjo.

Ysabel Wright was much involved in the garden. She devoted a major section of it to her remarkable cactus collection, which soon acquired an international reputation. In fact, that part of the Quien Sabe? garden became so well known that photographs of it figured in *The Country Life Book of Gardens*, which was published in 1936 just before the Peatties arrived. By then, though, the Wrights seem to have lost interest in the estate. John Wright was in his seventies and may have found Quien Sabe?'s terraced terrain difficult to cope with or perhaps he wanted to be closer to his educational interests back east. In any case, George Washington Smith's redesign of the main house was never carried out. Indeed, Donald and Louise's son, Mark Peattie, Professor Emeritus of Japanese studies at the University of Massachusetts, remembered playing as a child on the stonework intended for it, which lay about under the pine trees in the garden. The only

part of Smith's plan that was actually realized was its most minor part—a new and grandiose separate service block in Spanish Colonial Revival Style, incorporating laundry facilities and extensive accommodation for gardeners and chauffeurs. By the late 1930s, the Wrights had effectively abandoned Quien Sabe? and returned to New York. In 1941 and 1942, Ysabel Wright donated her rarest cacti to Ganna Walska and The Huntington Botanical Gardens.

In *The Road of a Naturalist*, Peattie vividly describes the way in which, by the time of his family's arrival in the summer of 1937, "the rambling, wide-windowed house" had already been "half swallowed in semi-tropical shrubbery." Their first day in residence was spent exploring the house itself. However, on the second day, Peattie began to explore the grounds the agent had mentioned but which they hadn't even seen before signing the agreement:

I went out at the other side of the house, across the patio and through a green

Above: *Quien Sabe?* in an undated photo, courtesy of Marlea Graham.

door. I stepped into the silvery dusk of an olive grove; the path led through it, and past a small citrus orchard; here was fortune! And there was a hedge.... But the itch of exploration took me further; I wriggled through a hole in the hedge, reckless of trespass. I stood in a circular garden where every flower was blue; it was dry and sun-smitten; fallen corollas, faded petals lay on the walks or dropped upon the stem before the weary bees. The place seemed to belong to a big ground bird with a lizard in his bill, who ran before me through an opening in a farther, higher hedge.

So I went his way, down a walk of abandoned topiary, into a little garden where every flower was red. Three steps down, and I stood in a third garden, long and stately and crowded with unfamiliar aliens. Bold of flower, economical of foliage, muscular of stem, they spoke to me of their homeland—Australia. The road-runner tempted me on; he fled across my path again and took me, past a great stone urn buried in unchecked greenery, into still another close. And this was planted to vegetation sultry of blossom, succulent of habit, bulbous—a South African garden. It was all weedy and dreamy and strange with an accent of far places....

I had lost the road-runner now, but some other of the birds I did not yet know was calling with a tired insistence, in a light turning a little blue. I broke through a perfect Sleeping Beauty stand of harsh bright weeds, and was in a region of boulders and immense columnar cacti of the Mexican highlands, jointed cacti of the Arizona desert, writhing cacti of the Mexican lowlands, African crassulas, American yuccas, Hottentot figs and crown-of-thorns bush. It was a fierce lunar sort of garden, bold with rocks, angry with spines and abloom with gigantic pearly or flaming blossoms wherein the hummingbirds sipped with an irritable fairy roar of wings. Not all the breadth of the continent had prepared me for anything like this, and I stood lost in it, staring at the rigid architectural beauty of the cacti and at the mountains that reared behind them turning blue with the dusk.

The Wrights' gardener was Yoneda Tokijiro who had come from Japan to California as a young man in 1906. Yoneda had trained as a horticulturist under Peter Riedel and eventually became his foreman. He worked in that capacity on the construction of the garden at Quien Sabe?, at which time he seems to have been poached by the Wrights.

Peattie's son Noel recalled in an introduction he wrote for a reissue of *Flowering Earth* that Yoneda's daughter, Ritsuko, also helped in the garden. She helped

particularly in the naming of plants, since she, too, was a trained horticulturist. Noel remembered that when Donald got his sons to help him assemble, dry, and press a collection of seaweed from a nearby beach, "she entered the common names and Latin binomials of each specimen, in a handwriting as delicate as the seaweeds themselves." Sadly, Yoneda's own story does not end well. Despite Donald Peattie's best efforts, he was interned after Pearl Harbour, contracted tuberculosis, and died in the internment camp. Ritsuko died a few years ago.

Even before the arrival of the Peatties, and far more rapidly after their departure, the original 27 acres of Quien Sabe? was divided and subdivided, as the various buildings on the land were sold off and converted into separate houses. However, Mrs. Hideko Malis, the present owner of the main house and the main part of the garden, says that certainly her section at least is much as it was when the Wrights and the Peatties had it, though she confesses it is even more "overgrown and jungly ... but to me it is okay."

The parents of Mrs. Malis's late husband acquired their part of Quien Sabe? from the Wrights in the 1940s. That was also when George Washington Smith's Spanish Colonial Revival service block along with an acre or so of garden were sold off and subsequently converted into a spectacular house. And from the mid-1950s for almost half a century, that house was owned by yet another pair of writers, the novelist and autobiographer John Sanford and his screenwriter wife, Marguerite Roberts. Sanford's five-volume autobiography is an epic account of life in twentieth century America as experienced by this Communist son of Jewish immigrant parents. In the McCarthy era he and his wife were hauled before the House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee, where they refused to name names and as a result were blacklisted in Hollywood for more than a decade. That was when they bought their section of Quien Sabe?, as a sort of "refuge from the storm."

Before and after their blacklisting, however, Marguerite Roberts was responsible for the scripts of dozens of successful films, including the 1969 version of *True Grit*, starring John Wayne and directed by Henry Hathaway. Her success allowed her husband to go on writing what he wanted without worrying about how well the results sold. She died in the late 1980s, and he in 2003 at the age of 99.

It was the combination of the introduction of gasoline rationing and the distance from Montecito, then still rural, to the shops and stores of Santa Barbara that persuaded Donald and Louise Peattie to leave

Quien Sabe? in 1942. Another rented house, Weldwold, offered the greater convenience of actually being in Santa Barbara, but it was also almost as spectacular a setting as Quien Sabe?. Situated on a steep hillside overlooking Mission Canyon, it had a dramatic view of the Santa Ynez mountains rising behind while the blue Pacific spread out before and below. Unsurprisingly, that is where the Peatties stayed for the rest of the war. It was only in 1946 that they finally bought a house of their own.

Stone Acres is in the same general area of Santa Barbara as Weldwold but on lower and flatter land. It was a large old house appropriately flanked by a pair of ancient live oaks. The garden there, created by Dr. Bissell and his wife Ervanna, was also well known, though not filled with dramatic exotics like Quien Sabe?. In the 1920s Ervanna Bisell wrote a splendidly illustrated book about the best Montecito gardens. Eschewing false modesty, she sensibly included her own, and it still looked much the same during the Peatties' ownership as it did when she wrote and photographed it in the 1920s. That is, it was largely "a slightly controlled oak wilderness," according to Maria Herold.

Maria Herold's friend Kellam de Forest, son of the famous landscape architect Lockwood de Forest (who was also involved in the creation of Lotusland), knew the Peatties when they lived at both Quien Sabe? and Stone Acres. He is convinced that Donald Peattie was purely a naturalist, never a gardener, and that he almost certainly made no alterations or additions either to the Wrights' garden at Quien Sabe? or to the Bissells' at Stone Acres.

He may not have made alterations to the gardens he inherited but Peattie was certainly fascinated by that inheritance, both at Quien Sabe? and at Stone Acres.

As if what he himself wrote about Quien Sabe? weren't enough evidence of how impressed he was by that garden's strange beauty, Noel Peattie remembered his father happily acting as paternal plant storyteller there, if not as hands-on gardener. "Strange plants loomed everywhere....," Noel wrote. "Here was a silver tree, its long silvery leaves aiming at me from South Africa, and there Father pointed out a tall background tree with a crown of sharp leaves":

That's a dragon's blood tree.

You mean that tree is a dragon?

No, it's called that because its sap is dark red, the way a dragon's blood is supposed to look. Trees like that come from the Canary Islands and the island of Socotra.

Peattie treated Stone Acres in much the way he had treated Quien Sabe?—as a place whose history and plants were fascinating

and could therefore make equally fascinating subjects for his writing. He used the garden at Stone Acres as a test case in a late unpublished article on the beauties of and interesting mysteries attached to old roses:

Yet in your rose garden you may have belles of all eras, as I have in mine. Indeed, I chose this house, with its long-neglected garden, for the old roses that I found growing here. When first I walked these paths, long suckering shoots ruddy with thorns detained me; the arbors and the weathered fences, burdened with a scented freight of unpruned roses, look to me, aslant under the weight, as if for help. Rose brambles hung upon the old stone walls; their green arcs roofed the lichened benches; ramblers had climbed even high in the boughs of the great live-oaks, to let their blossoms fall like fountain spray.

Those roses included a climbing ‘Cecile Brunner’, a ‘Belle Portugaise’ growing on a trellis, ‘Maman Cochet’ along the fence, and an unidentified mystery rose smothering an arbor.

At Stone Acres Peattie at long last settled down, and there he wrote his two great books on American trees. Donald and Louise died within months of each other, he at the end of 1964, she at the beginning of 1965. Throughout his career, he had tried repeatedly to make sense of human life and death in terms of a universal pattern of natural growth and decay, urging his readers to make good use of their brief allotted span “to walk upon this flowering earth”:

For the fates of living things are bound together, and a wise man can grow wiser, learning it. The perilous balance, the dangerous adventure, the thirst, the needs, the crashing end—they are impartially allotted to us all, tall man or taller tree. What we the living require is most of all each other. Progeny we must have, company, provender, friends, and even enemies. The whole long vital experiment on earth is symbiotic by chains of cause and relation past glib explaining.

It is not explained why there is for us all but one life, but it is plain enough that all life is one . . . We die together too, in each other’s arms, and of each other, for life is its own best enemy, and to die is functional in living. We mate together and, welding a life to a life, get our seed, and so give, as we were given, a time to walk upon this flowering earth.

Acknowledgments

Among his descendants, I thank particularly Peattie’s son, the late Mark Peattie,



and his granddaughter, Dana VanderMey, one of Malcolm Peattie’s daughters. Sadly, I was too late to make contact with Noel Peattie, who died early in 2005. Librarian, poet, author of an erotic novel and two volumes of quirky reflections on life, books and everything, small press editor and publisher, sailor, raconteur, lover of wine and food, cat companion, and pillar of his local Quaker meeting, he sounds like a man it would have been a pleasure to have known. The Peattie connection with literature still continues, however, in the shape of Mark Peattie’s son, David, who frequently collaborated with his uncle Noel and runs his own San-Francisco-based small press, Whereabouts, and the book-design company, BookMatters.

For their help with my long-distance researches into Peattie’s life and the houses and gardens that marked its various stages, I have to thank many kind Internet friends in California. First, Mrs. Hideko Malis, the present owner of *Quien Sabe?*. Second, Maria Herold, curator for the Montecito History Committee, who generously sent me copious extracts from their file on *Quien Sabe?* and reported the memories and opinions of her friend Kellam de Forest. Third, Marlea Graham of the California Garden and Landscape History Society, who has been tireless in exploring archives on my behalf. I also thank Susan Chamberlin and Bill Grant of that Society; Billy Goodnick, city architect of Santa Barbara; David Tambo, Head of Special Collections at the University of California

at Santa Barbara, where the Peattie papers are held; Dr. Dieter Wilken, Vice President in charge of Conservation, Education and Research at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden; Dr. Michael Redmon of the Santa Barbara Historical Society; Santa Monica nurseryman Randy Baldwin; and Karrie Reid, Joe Seals, and Nan Sterman of the Internet group, *Medit-Plants*.

There is no biography of Donald Peattie or of his wife Louise, though an article by Peter Friederici in *Chicago Wilderness* magazine for Fall 2000 provides a useful and sympathetic sketch of them both (see chicagowildernessmag.org/issues/fall2000/peattie.html).

The same magazine, in its issue for Spring 2002, carried an article on *The Grove* (see chicagowildernessmag.org/issues/spring2002/weekendexplorer.html). The Grove’s own website provides information about public access: www.glenviewpark-dist.org/fa-grove-info.htm.

David F. Myrick’s two volumes on *Montecito and Santa Barbara and the Days of the Great Estates* (published by the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation) are exhaustive. An article called “The Men Who Made Montecito Bloom” by Elaine Griscom in *Montecito Magazine* provides a useful anecdotal account of gardening in the area in the first half of the twentieth century (see richardmann.com/montecito/real/estate/tips/menwhomademontecito.php).

Patricia Gebhard’s *George Washington Smith: Architect of the Spanish Colonial Revival* (Gibbs Smith, 2005), updates her own research and that of her late husband, David.

Marlea Graham thinks that the mystery rose described by Peattie at Stone Acres was probably one of the Hybrid Wichurana ramblers bred by Barbier.

There is a website devoted to John Sanford and his work: psych.fullerton.edu/jmearns/sanford.htm. Run by his literary executor, Jack Mearns, it provides full details of his life and writing, including details of what is currently available.

Editor’s Note

Tim Longville’s two articles on Peattie were originally published as one article in the Autumn 2006 issue of that wonderful British journal *Hortus* (www.hortus.co.uk).

Tim Longville has been at various times poet, editor, translator, publisher, teacher, and lecturer, but nowadays mostly confines himself to gardening—in a small walled garden by the Solway Firth, on the border between England and Scotland—and garden journalism (predominantly for the weekly, Country Life, and the quarterly, Hortus). His Gardens of the Lake District, published by Frances Lincoln, won The Hunter Davies Prize in 2008.

Above: *Botanist Peattie at work, n.d.*

A Gentle Man

David Peattie

I never met my grandfather. Or if I did, I was too young to remember. He died when I was growing up in Japan, so all the stories I heard, in addition to a few old photographs, formed my memories of him. That, and of course his books.

He was a gentleman and a gentle man. You could tell that in his writing, but also from the tales my father, Mark Peattie, who passed away earlier this year, told me. Those remembrances were not focused on his chivalrous nature, but the side notes made that clear. For instance, when he would take his children for a hike and share his knowledge of all things flora and fauna, he often wore a coat and tie.

While he was soft-spoken both in praise and criticism, he did not shy away from speaking up about what was right. In the period following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, for instance, he spoke out eloquently against the internment of Japanese Americans, and wrote letters to the editor in their defense.

My grandfather was nothing if not a civilized man. And that included his love of cocktails, especially making them. When his three sons were in their teens, he even taught them how to mix cocktails, and drink in moderation, in order to learn socially responsible drinking before they went out into the world of alcoholic temptations. He often wrote for *Reader's Digest* and once penned an article on this very subject. Unbeknownst to him, it was titled "I Taught My Children to Drink." He received hundreds of angry letters from outraged readers. Although he was famous for his writing and knowledge as a naturalist, he secretly wanted praise for his skills as a mixologist, a term he loved. He became good friends with Don the Beachcomber, the famous restaurateur and barman. When Don came to visit his home in Santa Barbara, he pronounced that my grandfather "had all the right rums." It was one of his proudest moments. When my father went to Cambodia as a new Foreign Service diplomat, my grandfather sent him the best gift he could think of to survive this hardship post: his own annotated collection of cocktail recipes, *Witches' Brew: Lady Macbeth's Bad Book of Good Cocktails*.

So for those of you who might think the best way to celebrate the memory of my grandfather is to dip back into one of his literary treasures (*A Book of Hours* is my personal favorite), I offer to you another treasure: a recipe from his cocktail book, for Buttered Rum Punch.

Cheers! And I hope you have all the right rums.

David Peattie is the owner of BookMatters, a company in Berkeley, California, that provides editorial and production services for book publishers (www.bookmatters.com).

Left: Donald Culross Peattie and his wife, Louise Redfield Peattie, with their son, Malcolm, the author's uncle.



HOT BUTTERED RUM

This is supposed to be an invention of the Hudson's Bay Company but it has been enlarged to include tastes not known in the original drink.

The drink should be made in the mug in which you expect to serve it, which means that each drink is made separately. If you are making several, then, to time things right, you must perform each operation in one glass after another.

First, preheat with boiling water all the cups and mugs. In the meantime, have water boiling on the stove. Now pour the water out of the mugs and put in:

- 2 heaping teaspoons of brown sugar
- 4 whole cloves
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon (not more) of strained (no seeds please) lemon or lime juice

Stir all this up with a long spoon

Next:

- 1/2 jigger dark sweet rum (Jamaica type)
- 1/2 jigger of light pale rum

Now quickly add actively boiling water to each mug to fill the mug to the top. Slip on a tiny pat of butter, postage stamp thin, floating on the surface.

Don't stir the butter into the drink. And serve pronto, before anything gets cool.

A Storyteller's Eye

Tim Longville

Donald Culross Peattie was one of the most influential American nature writers of the twentieth century. In 2014 Trinity University Press reissued a series of his books that had been out of print for decades.

Trained as a botanist, Donald Culross Peattie wrote with scientific authority, yet gripped the reader's attention because he inherited from his journalist father and novelist mother a storyteller's eye for the compelling anecdote. Peattie roused readers' emotions through lyrical descriptions of individual plants or of wide stretches of the American landscape and its history, and stimulated their minds through his advocacy of science as a sort of secular religion. Science he argued was, if not the answer to the questions of life (and death), then at least the best answer we have. Finally, he had the novelist's knack for interweaving several disparate strands, whether of anecdote, autobiography or argument, into a single, coherent narrative—a skill particularly rare in writers of books about nature.

Beyond all that, Peattie's worth reading because most of his books were illustrated by some of the finest artistic talents of his time. Many were enriched by the striking wood engravings of Paul Landacre, who had as unusual and interesting a career as Peattie's. Born in 1893 in Columbus, Ohio, Landacre studied entomology at Ohio State University and was a talented middle-distance runner with hopes of competing in the Olympic Games. However, in 1915 a devastating illness left him crippled for life, and he had to abandon both his scientific and athletic ambitions and move to Southern California to recuperate. There, out of necessity, he took work as an artist for an advertising agency. It was only because his wife was able and willing to support him financially that after a while he was able to leave the agency and painstakingly teach himself the art of wood engraving. Over the next few years his engravings, mostly of California's plants and landscapes, became both increasingly stylized and increasingly dramatic. By the 1930s he was a leading member of a fascinating if little-remembered Modernist circle of artists living in and around Los Angeles, and remained so until his death in 1963. Another of that circle was the famous photographer Edward Weston, while its spiritual center was Jake Zeitlin's remarkable book and print shop on Hope Street.

All this begs the question: Why are Peattie's books largely forgotten and unread? I suspect the answer lies in the very nature of his accomplishments. Precise scientific description is hardly to the taste of that mysterious creature "the common reader."

Lyrical prose, however securely anchored in detailed observation, is just as little our style. And when science and lyricism are combined in a single passage, as in Peattie they often are, modern readers tend to be put off. Still less our style, perhaps, are his anguished explanations of what he sees as the necessity of clinging to science as the only possible saving spar in a post-religious whirlpool of despair. Yet the rich Christmas pudding of a style that resulted from those richly varied abilities and preoccupations was a real achievement.

The books that formed the climax of his career were certainly the two volumes on the trees of America, *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America* and *A Natural History of Western Trees*. They were the first two of an intended series, which, owing to increasing ill-health, he never completed. These volumes were not designed as field guides. Each runs to over 500 large and profusely illustrated pages on heavyweight paper. Hardly books for pocket or backpack, but books rather for the chair in the study. Books for reading by the winter fire, to inspire next season's hikes or plantings. Books, above all, to make their readers share Peattie's own feeling for the sheer romance of the American flora and fauna, the interconnectedness of all of its multitudinous parts, including the human. Though they do contain compressed but accurate species-by-species scientific descriptions, Peattie concentrates far more on a tree's beauty and character, on its utility to men, and above all on its place in the overall structure of Nature.

Though his descriptions of the evergreens of the west can be as impressively weighty as the trees themselves, his writing comes most to life with the deciduous hardwoods and the longer human history of the north and east. Few books about plants can ever have contained sentences of the intensity and grace of these from his account of *Acer saccharum*:

There is no properly planted New England village without its Sugar Maples. They march up the hill to the old white meetinghouse and down from the high school, where the youngsters troop home laughing in the golden dusk. The falling glory lights upon the shoulders of the postman, swirls after the children on roller skates, drifts through the windows of a passing bus to drop like largesse in the laps of the passengers.

On a street where great Maples arch, letting down their shining benediction, people seem to walk as if they had already gone to glory.

Often his descriptions are enlivened by some bizarre but gripping anecdote, such as this from his account of the black locust (*Robinia pseudo-acacia*):

William Cobbett, famous English publicist, anti-Jacobin, politician, rural economist, having fled to America, took to growing Black Locust, between 1817 and 1819, on his farm on Long Island, where there was then a vogue for the culture of this tree, the hope being to supply the British Navy with treenails. For the Locust nails of many an old-time vessel were stronger than the strongest hulls, and far longer-lived... But Cobbett made America too hot to hold him... so he returned to England with a quantity of Black Locust seed—and the corpse of Thomas Paine. This he had dug up from its neglected grave in New Rochelle, intending to inter it in a splendid monument to atone for his former attacks on the author of *The Rights of Man*. The monument was never erected; on Cobbett's death, the coffin was auctioned off to a furniture dealer, and the renowned corpse inside was lost to history.

After reading that, how could you not read on? Those sufficiently intrigued by the fate of Paine's corpse can now read about it in detail in Paul Collins' *The Trouble With Tom: The Strange Afterlife and Times of Thomas Paine*.

Most characteristic of all, however, in its idiosyncratically effective combination of the utilitarian, the scientific, the novelistic, and the lyrical, is this account of one of his favourite trees, the sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*):

Sourwood honey is medium-light in color, of heavy body, and slow to granulate. An average flow of 75 pounds per colony from Sourwood has been recorded. Usually the local demand takes the entire crop at prices above the open market, so that Sourwood is a honey like some of the choicest wines of the vineyards of Europe—that is, it practically does not appear upon the market at all and can be had only by those epicures who will journey far to partake of it. One buys Sourwood honey as one buys any such rare product from its producers—not in a

commercial spirit, paying for it and carrying away the wares—but with all the due ceremony observed between a collector and a creative artist. You ride up to the cabin door; a woman appears at the barking of the hounds, with children peeping out from behind her skirts, and mountain courtesy requires that you begin, not by stating your business but by telling where you come from. Then you assure her that she has a “right pretty place”; you praise her portulacas, her turkeys, and so, across the landscape, you arrive at her bee gums. Then you ask if she likes Sourwood honey as much as you do. You tell her that you would go far to obtain a little if only you could find somebody who would give up a few pounds of it. When the honey is produced, as it certainly will be, you accept it before asking the price. This will be shyly stated. You may safely pay it for your haggling was all done, by indirection, in your previous parley.

If you want to know more about Peattie himself, however, you have to read some of his earlier books. Though those don't have the massive authoritative simplicity of his two great volumes on trees, several of them have even more charm and individuality. It is difficult to name any other books about plants that are organised in so subtle, so literary a way, interweaving vivid accounts of episodes from his own life with vivid descriptions of plants. Perhaps the two most striking of these more personal and novelistic books are *Flowering Earth* and *The Road of a Naturalist*.

While *Flowering Earth* interweaves fragments of Peattie's own development over decades with accounts of the successive stages of the development of America's flora over millennia, *The Road of a Naturalist* is a response to the imminent threat of the Second World War and the destruction it will inevitably bring. In it, he describes how studying the way an individual, whether plant or human, forms part of Nature's larger pattern, has been for him a source of comfort and strength, even when facing the death of his infant daughter. His attempts to discern such patterns could on the one hand, when they failed, cause emotional turmoil and even despair. On the other, they could, when successful, lead to a deep recognition of the interconnectedness of all things, including human life and death. As he wrote of his favourite glen in

the Appalachians, “I got it by heart, the dripping rocks, the ferny grottoes, the eternal freshness, the sense of loam, of deep sweet decay, of a chain of life continuous and rich with the ages.”

It was that “chain of life” (a metaphor with a lot of currency at the time, in various fields: think of the literary scholar A.O. Lovejoy's *Great Chain of Being*) that Peattie devoted the second half of his life to explaining and expounding. Above all he felt himself to be an advocate for what could not speak for itself: the other-than-human. And what gardener could resist so eloquent an advocate?

One half, the green half, of all this living, gives no tongue save to the walking wind. It is that earthly paradise, that clean temple, where no wrong is ever done. The Green Kingdom embraces our restless one, is nurse to it and grave to it ... [I]n the end our friends come and make us a last home out of a log, and plant a flowering tree by which to remember us as fairer than we were. Then it will be too late to walk alone and smiling through the flicker of beechen shade, or to lie side by side on the wild sod. When brambles throw their arms around our knees in the road, we had best be partaking of the brusque offer of fruit. And if in this life we never tended brave seedlings, in what other world do we expect to see them jump up responding, their split seed shells cocked aside their heads?

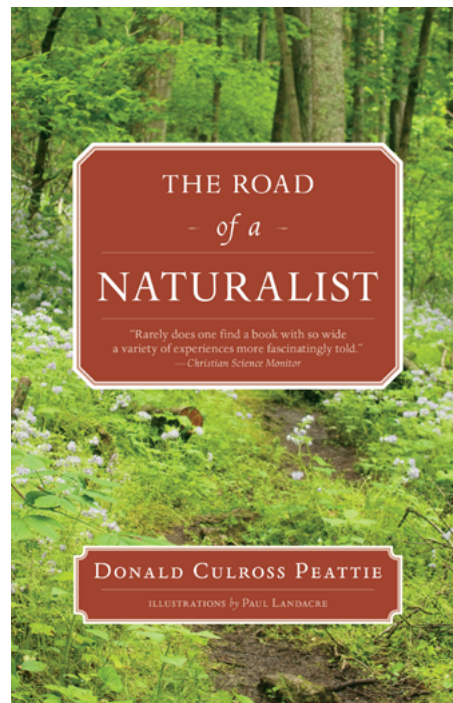
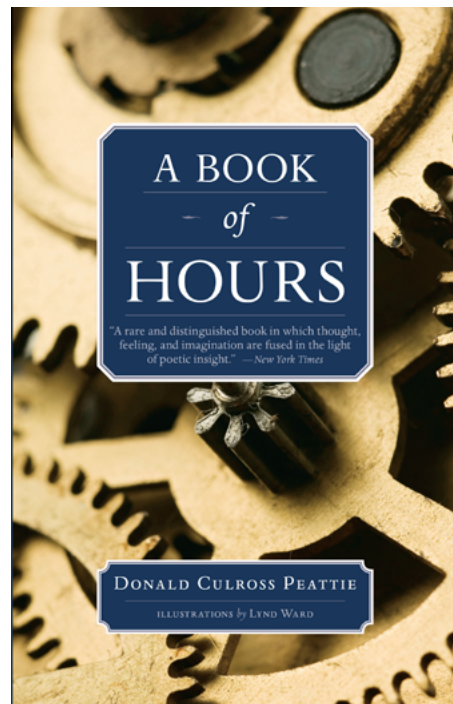
Author's Notes

The books quoted from are *Flowering Earth* (1939) and *The Road of a Naturalist* (1941), *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America* (1950) and *A Natural History of Western Trees* (1953). The first two have been reprinted in recent years, but first editions of all four can fairly easily and cheaply be acquired.

If you find and then enjoy any or all of those, it is also well worth seeking out *The Great Smokies and the Blue Ridge: The Story of the Southern Appalachians* (1943), which was edited by Peattie's brother, the geographer Roderick Peattie. Donald Peattie contributed a chapter to his brother's book. It contained some of his finest writing, both in descriptions of those southern forests and in accounts of the early explorers and naturalists who traveled through them.

There are two books devoted to the life and work of Paul Landacre: Anthony Lehman's *Paul Landacre, A Life and a Legacy* (Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles, 1983) and Ward Richie's *Paul Landacre* (Book Club of California, 1982). Alternatively, *LA's Early Moderns: Art/Architectural/Photography*, by Victoria Dailey, Natalie Shivers and Michael Dawson (Balcony Press, 2004), provides a good account of the artistic world of which Landacre was a part.

Book covers courtesy of Trinity University Press tupress.org



Graduates of the California School of Gardening

Marlea Graham



In researching my article “Expanding ‘Women’s Work’: The California School of Gardening for Women,” published in the fall 2013 issue of *Eden*, I could find no official school records of any kind, no letter books, no lists of students or teachers, no financial records. I did find research by Judith Taylor and some journal articles as well as small caches of letters and other documents at the Environmental Design Archives and the Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley; Special Collections, Shields Library, U.C. Davis; Special Collections, Olin Library, Mills College, Oakland; Crocker-Russell Library and Academy of Sciences Library, Golden Gate Park; Alameda County Recorder’s Office, Oakland; and Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Palo Alto. Articles written by the school’s principal and two

others were found in various obscure journals, thanks to the Hathi Trust Digital Library. The websites NewspaperArchive.com, GenealogyBank.com and Ancestry.com provided much more personal background on the founders, instructors and students, but not nearly enough to cover the 23 years this school existed. In this continuation of my earlier article, I identify and offer biographical details on some of the school’s graduates and instructors.

According to its founder and first principal, Judith Walrond-Skinner, the California School of Gardening for Women was meant to bridge what was perceived as a gap between the services provided by the landscape architect and the average, unskilled common garden laborer.

All over the United States people are taking an ever-increasing interest in

gardens and gardening—and because of this there is an increased demand for gardeners and for gardeners who understand and love their work, who know plants and how to care for them and use them, rather than the untrained laborer. Therefore, the future seems of great promise to the trained women gardener.¹

On 15 Feb 1925, the *Oakland Tribune* noted in an article about the school, “There is a serious lack of skilled gardeners and as most of the experts are foreign-born, with the immigration restrictions, it seems unlikely their numbers will increase. The object...is to train women that they may fill this need and to stimulate an interest in gardening.” Walrond-Skinner pointed out that job prospects were good for “the girl with organizing abilities” who could take charge of large estates. There were

additional opportunities in the areas of what was then known as “jobbing” gardening, working one or more days at several different gardens in the same district, nursery work, lecturing, horticultural writing and teaching.²

School graduate, Laura Mercado Smith recalled that an important part of their schooling included field trips to the Filoli estate at Woodside; to Mrs. Norman Banks Livermore’s estate at Ross, Marin County; to the Harold Spens Black garden on Alvarado Road, Berkeley; and others. “There were trips to well-known home districts, where we learned to evaluate what had been done with the landscaping in front of the houses.” There were also field trips to Sunset Nursery (Oakland), Roeding’s California Nursery at Niles, to Sidney Mitchell and Carl Salbach in Berkeley (both famous iris breeders), to Walter B. Clarke’s Nursery in San Jose, and to Toichi Domoto in Hayward.³ These trips provided not only a chance to see how things were done, but to meet some of the important movers and shakers in the San Francisco Bay Area’s tightly knit horticultural community. By the 1920s, the Golden Age of the great estates was largely a thing of the past in California. Many of them had already been subdivided, and by the end of that decade, the Great Depression had put an end to the creation of the new, smaller estates such as Donald McLaren had specialized in designing. In spite of these travails, graduates of the California School of Gardening for Women did manage to find work.

The Hayward Years

The school’s first graduate, **Sydney Stein** (1906-1956), received a mention in the *Hayward Review* of 31 May 1927: “Girl Graduates in Gardening at Hayw’rd School. Miss Stein is first to complete two-year course.”⁴ Stein had attended the school on a scholarship from the Matilda Esberg Horticultural Fund. In attendance at the graduation ceremony was Mrs. Garfield (Delight) Merner, owner of the newly finished landscaped estate, Villa Delizia, in Hillsborough. The estate grounds were designed by a woman, Willa Cloys Carmack, who is known to have later taught landscape design at the school from 1936 to 1939.

Mrs. Merner was already employing a young woman as head gardener, one Gertrude Aronstein, who had emigrated from Germany in 1924. Like Stein, Aronstein was also a resident of San Francisco’s

Emanu-El Residence Club in 1925, and listed herself in the city directory as a landscape gardener. *The Review* noted that Stein had “already secured a very nice position in Burlingame and will leave Hayward soon to begin her new work.” In 1934, Virginia Coontz reported that Miss Stein has already graduated from the Hayward school when she “took up the spade” and for nine months “practiced the ‘new-fangled’ ideas she had been studying” [author’s emphasis] on behalf of a girlfriend who wanted a vacation. The author believes that Aronstein suggested Stein to Mrs. Merner as a substitute gardener during the period when she returned to Europe to visit her brother. Aronstein returned to California in February 1928, and Stein’s services were no longer needed at Villa Delizia; thus, she returned to the city and began to haunt John McLaren’s doorstep.⁵ Once McLaren relented and hired Stein, she never looked back. Two years as a common park laborer led to seven years in the nursery. Stein was placed in charge of the conservatory in 1940 and held that position until retirement. She then continued her horticultural career, acting as a special consultant for a famous San Francisco firm of florists, Podesta Baldocchi.

Clara Maud Schaeffer (1888-1981), who was a member of the San Francisco Women’s City Club, was referred to the School of Gardening in 1928 by the club’s career counselor. Schaeffer wrote an article about it for the club journal. Formerly employed as a stenographer, she was later described as having “considerable experience in practical garden work, around the bay” and had made a specialty of planning and supervising the installation of city patio gardens. Following her graduation, she created a niche for herself at the club as a writer and leader of a gardening round table discussion group, took charge of landscaping a roof garden at the club, published newspaper articles on gardening subjects and gave talks to garden clubs. In 1930, she was working at least part time at the Hayward school, teaching “plant material.” In the 1940s, she served on the executive committee of the California Horticultural Society and also chaired their library committee, but after that, her connection to the world of horticulture seems to have ended. By 1948, she was principal of Gough Elementary School in San Francisco. Surprisingly, her death certificate stated only that she had been self-employed as a gardener for twenty years, but said nothing of her later work.⁶

Margaret (Peggy) Stebbins (1905-1970) and **Margaret Ward Truax** (1905-1975) both attended the University of California, Berkeley. While Stebbins dropped out in her junior year, Truax graduated in 1927. Both subsequently enrolled at the California School of Gardening. Stebbins appears to have done nothing in the professional line with her new training initially, although one newspaper account said she had “gained a wide reputation for her cultivation of native perennials and wildflowers.” Truax went on to take further training and employment as a gardener in England and Scotland. She took over management of the grounds at the La Granja estate in Hayward after the school was relocated to the Stanford campus in 1936. By 1940, Truax and Stebbins had formed a final joint venture, the Page Mill Nursery in Palo Alto/Los Altos Hills, which continued until 1961. This was one of the first California nurseries to focus on perennial plants and had a high reputation among Bay Area gardeners. At least some of their stock must have come from the Hayward estate. When the nursery closed, Truax went on to work for another graduate of the Hayward school, **Edith Hollis Brattin**, at her native plant nursery in Carmel Valley. More work is needed on Brattin’s biographical details, but she appears to have lived from 1911 to 1978 and been married to another gardener, Melvin Brattin.⁷

Ruth Sarah Hartwell (1896-1995), **Signe Louise Luomala** (1906-1948), and **Florence Chamberlain** (1888-1965) all graduated from the Hayward school in the spring of 1929. Ruth worked as a gardener before landing a position as a botanist at the Museum of Natural History in Santa Barbara. Signe was a native of Minnesota and though this training was intended to facilitate a career change, instead she returned to her home state, married and never used her gardening skills except in a private capacity and by taking an active part in her local garden club. Florence began her career working as an office clerk, eventually finding a post with the U.S. Department of Forestry in Sonora, California. After nine years in this position she left to study at the Hayward school, and afterwards moved to

Opposite: *Helene Wolf* (1899-1975) trained in Vienna and taught at the Stanford school from 1939-1942. Here she is standing in her backyard, where she operated her own nursery for a brief time. (Hayward Daily Review, 26 Feb 1949, Lester Kent Studio, courtesy Hayward Area Historical Society.)

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OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, MONDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 14, 1921.

Berkeley Girl Is Landscape Gardner, and Success, Too



MISS WILLA CLAIR CLOY, who adds a new profession to feminine list

Tradition Smashed by Miss Willa Clair Cloys Who Urges Young Women to Adopt a Profession

Carmel and worked there as a gardener.⁸ On September 25, 1929, Maud Gibson, the gardening school's founder, wrote Dr. Aurelia Reinhardt, president of Mills College (a private women's school in Oakland) that she could no longer keep up the school, which had never paid its own way. Gibson proposed that Mills College take over the property and the school as an adjunct to the Mills curriculum. Mills' landscape architect, Howard Gilkey, was

Above: Willa Cloys Carmack (1889-1968), was the first woman to graduate from UC Berkeley's Division of Floriculture and Landscape Gardening in 1916. She later taught landscape gardening classes at the Stanford school from 1936-1939. "Berkeley Girl Is Landscape Gardner [sic]". Oakland Tribune, 14 November 1921: B-112-3.

SEWER, PARK BONDS VOTE IN PIEDMONT

Mayor and Board of Trustees Point Out Needs of Both to City on the Eve of Ballot to Be Held There Tomorrow

PIEDMONT, Nov. 14.—Piedmont's \$114,400 bond election, embracing two highly important propositions, sewer construction at a cost of \$65,000 and the voting of park bonds in the sum of \$50,000, will be held tomorrow. On the eve of the election, Mayor Oliver Edsworth and the members of the board of trustees are calling attention, in a formal statement, to the details of the election. In this statement the board explains the necessity of submitting two bond propositions to a vote of the people of Piedmont and states that neither of the propositions would have been offered if there had been any other logical course open. It is pointed out that the trustees availed themselves of expert advice as to the most economic interest rate and period of maturity.

OAKLAND WILL AID.

The sewer bonds, totaling \$65,000, are 5 1/2 per cent, 20-year bonds. The amount represents 42.642 per cent of the cost of constructing a main outlet sewer from the western line of Piedmont on Grand avenue through Oakland to the estuary. It is pointed out that Oakland has already adopted a resolution agreeing to pay 57.315 per cent of this cost.

It is further pointed out that, were Piedmont required to construct its own sewer, it would cost the city approximately \$108,398. The present plan, based upon drainage area, effects a saving of about \$43,000 to Piedmont.

The second proposition is that of park bonds, \$50,000, 5 1/2 per cent, 20-year bonds. It is stated that \$40,000 of this amount will go to discharging the obligation to W. M. Alexander and the remainder \$10,000

Editor Scores Profanity at U. C. Rally

BERKELEY, Nov. 14.—"Cuss words" as used at last week's Palmspring Rally at university students, today brought down the wrath of Frank Bartlett, editor of the Daily Californian, student publication.

Bartlett criticized the using of the profanity as an insult both to university girls and to the other members of the audience.

"Hell" and "damn" may be permissible words for a rally speaker to use during his talk. Before a college audience they always bring a laugh. But at the Palmspring rally last Thursday night the main speaker of the evening outdid himself. He "hulled" and "dunned" in full manly fashion throughout his "talk."

Bartlett further classified the speaker as "going beyond the pale of polite and gentlemanly conduct."

"We might remind him," he adds, "that his audience was not a rowdy vaudeville crowd. Neither was he up there to hurt profanity into the ears of 4000 university girls. We feel that the campus demands that nothing like this miserable exhibition happens again."

TEARS OF WIFE FREE HUSBAND SHE PUT IN JAIL

BERKELEY, Nov. 14.—The sight of her husband, George Harr, sitting forlornly in a cell at Berkeley police station today, proved too much for Mrs. Charlotte Harr, 1824 Derby street.

Harr was arrested last night on his wife's complaint, being charged with returning to his home in an intoxicated condition and with proceeding to wreck the family furniture. A disturbing of the peace warrant was issued. Harr came on before Judge Robert Edgar this morning. His case was set for trial for Wednesday. Harr was fined \$25.

Harr insisted it was for the necessary cash. He was taken to a cell downstairs.

There his wife saw him, she

DOCTOR NEAR DEATH FROM ODD ILLNESS

Physician At Burke's Sanitarium, Santa Rosa, Stricken by Disease Which Colleagues Cannot Diagnose

SANTA ROSA, Nov. 14.—Physicians here are mystified by the condition of Dr. Fred M. Woolley, of Burke's sanitarium, who is dying slowly in a local hospital from a malady they can not diagnose. The sufferer was placed in the hospital last Friday and since then every medium known to medical science has been invoked without success. Attending physicians say his death may occur at any moment.

Dr. Woolley recently traveled by automobile to Ukiah to visit relatives. By what method of transportation he returned here is not known but it is known almost definitely that he did not return in his automobile. No trace of the vehicle has been found. From the time of his return here Dr. Woolley appeared to be dazed and unable to think or speak coherently beyond indicating he had "been in an auto accident." His condition rapidly became so alarming he was moved to an hospital here. Shortly after being placed in this institution he became unconscious and has remained so.

Physicians have not been able so far to discover any marks about Dr. Woolley's body serious enough to cause death or serious injury. Other physicians declared today that certain symptoms observed in the patient are similar to those manifested by persons suffering from cerebral poisoning. This theory, however, has not been established definitely and the doctors say they are becoming increasingly mystified by the cause of Dr. Woolley's condition.

Four Are Jailed in Alameda Dry Raids

ALAMEDA, Nov. 14.—Four of

quick to offer his services as head of the proposed new department, but while at first viewing the idea with cautious interest, the school's trustees declined the offer once it was clear the national economy was in deep trouble and not likely to recover anytime soon. Curiously enough, school attendance appears to have increased slightly during the early Depression years, to the point that additional instructors were hired, albeit briefly, in 1930.⁹

Students during the Depression years included **Laura Mercado Smith** (1902-1994). Her father was a municipal engineer for the City of San Francisco, and Laura had initially trained and worked as a nurse. By 1927 she was superintendant of nurses at Lane Hospital in the city, and in 1931 she was working as a medical technician at

Mt. Zion Hospital. She apparently found this work unsatisfying and enrolled in the California School of Gardening. By 1934 she was listing herself as a gardener in city directories and in 1942 had her own crew of women gardeners working in San Francisco. At some point, she moved to Marin County and was still practicing there as a landscape architect as late as 1970.¹⁰

Another Depression-era student, **Elsa Uppman Knoll** (1906-2000), was probably the most renowned graduate. She was the daughter of Swedish immigrants who came—the U.S. in 1902 and settled in Santa Clara County. Her father had worked as a draftsman in a planing mill and as a cabinet-maker, and was probably later instrumental in the construction of the school's buildings in a remote part of

the Stanford campus. Elsa graduated from Stanford University in 1928 with a BA in English, and worked briefly as a secretary to one of the university deans. Graduating from the Hayward school in 1933, Elsa taught gardening classes in Palo Alto's adult education program in 1934-35. An obituary notice said she was also teaching at the Hayward school, and this was confirmed in a February 25, 1936, article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that described her as Miss Walrond-Skinner's assistant, helping to teach a course of gardening to members of the San Francisco Garden Club.

The Stanford Years

In the summer of 1936, Elsa Knoll took over as owner and principal of the gardening school and ran it at Stanford until 1947. She married in 1940 and in 1941 she wrote *Sunset's Visual Garden Manual*, the precursor of today's *Western Garden Book*. She then became a garden editor at Lane Publishing Company, remaining with them until she retired in 1971, although she continued to assist the Gardening Department as an editorial consultant. Knoll served two terms as president of the Strybing Arboretum Society and a year as vice chairman of the Editorial Committee for the American Horticultural Society. She was also a member of the National Board of Advisors for Filoli. She eventually moved to Carmel and in the 1980s helped to create the Lester Rowntree Native Plant Garden.¹¹

As for graduates of the Stanford school, only four have been identified, all of them women. Nothing has been found of the post-war veterans Elsa said enrolled under the G.I. Bill of Rights. After graduation, **Miriam Leigh King** (1922-2004) and **Eda Jean Bolton** (1916-2003) both worked for a time as gardeners at Trabuco College in Southern California before it shut down. Bolton had begun her landscape training at Oregon State, and then transferred to the Stanford school. She taught gardening classes at night school for a time, then around 1940 moved down to Southern California where she taught gardening classes in a Los Angeles Mexican boys' school for three days a weeks and also lectured at garden clubs in Pasadena and Palos Verdes in addition to doing a little jobbing gardening. When Trabuco College closed down, she entered the American Friends work camp program and later changed to a career in social work.

King was a Stanford University graduate. What she did after Trabuco College shut down is still undetermined.¹² **Dawn Daniel Woltz** (1921-?), a resident of San Diego, graduated from the gardening school around 1942 and married Charles

K. Woltz, a naval captain. She is said to have subsequently run her own landscape service and made flower arrangements for clients, while her husband was serving in World War II. After the war they moved back to his hometown of Charlottesville, Virginia, where Dawn became active in the local garden club and worked as a volunteer at Monticello, daily making fresh flower arrangements for display in the public rooms. She wrote a book on the subject, *The Flowers Grown and Shown at Monticello*, in 1977.¹³ A wedding announcement in the *San Mateo Times* of December 3, 1940, noted that **Cheyila Daswell** had studied at San Mateo Junior College, the San Francisco College for Women, and the California Gardening School at Stanford. Possibly the name was misspelled because nothing more has been found about her.

The most serendipitous discovery was of **Helene Pollak Wolf** (1899-1975), based on an inquiry placed on The Cultural Landscape Foundation's website by Ulrike Krippner of the Institute for Landscape Architecture, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria. She was seeking information on Wolf, a native of Vienna who had fled the Nazis in 1939 and ended up in Hayward. Wolf trained as a gardener at the *Höhere Gartenbauschule für Frauen* in Vienna. She graduated in the 1920s and established her own practice, called Helenium, in a suburb of Vienna. The company consisted of a perennial nursery, a landscape construction business, and a garden architecture studio. Marrying around 1925, she continued the business in partnership with her husband until the worsening political climate forced her to leave the country in 1939. Krippner's query asked about a trained gardener who came to Hayward, was believed to have taught at a California university, and supposedly lived for a time on her American sponsor's Hayward estate, taking care of her garden. A ship's manifest proved that Wolf's ultimate destination in 1939 was the residence of Maud Gibson, apparently on referral by a British associate. Wolf taught at the Stanford school for three years, presumably from the fall of 1939 until spring of 1942. Thereafter she taught gardening classes at the Art and Garden Center in Walnut Creek and through the adult education programs at Hayward and Centerville (now Fremont). She was also said to have been "connected with Bay Area nurseries" but no details of this association have been found, though at one point she was certainly selling plants out of her home. She also had a day job as an inspector and later as an assembler for Frieden's Calculating Machine Company in San Leandro during the late 1940s and early '50s. She lived in Hayward until her death in 1975.¹⁴

When the Stanford school closed in 1947, the terms of Knoll's property lease required that she remove any "improvements" and return the land to its original state. Thus, by 1948, nothing whatsoever remained to mark the spot other than an original tree or two. Later on, Sand Hill Road was built right over that section of the campus, completely obliterating the school site.¹⁵

The perceived need to fill the gap between the landscape architect and the unskilled garden laborer still exists today. Both of the other American schools of gardening for women eventually suffered from declining enrollment and were absorbed by larger institutions. Lowthorpe became a part of the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, and the School of Horticulture in Ambler, Pennsylvania, merged with Temple University's School of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture. Affordable training programs for men and women became more readily available at both the state and community college levels.

As the economy goes through its periodic booms, fortunes rise, and new estates are created, new gardens need to be designed and, more importantly, maintained. The "mow and blow" crews have neither the time nor the knowledge to do anything beyond minimum maintenance. Following World War II, women in general, and married women in particular, were expected to give way to returning war veterans who needed jobs. It was not until the women's liberation movement of the 1960s that women again began to seek access to jobs deemed to fall outside the parameters of "women's work." Today, while jobbing garden work is mostly the province of immigrant workers, there is still room for nurserywomen who specialize—witness Annie's Annuals in Richmond and Flora Grub Gardens in San Francisco). We are finally feeling no shock of surprise to see women working in many fields once closed to them, including that of landscape gardening, and at last can safely say, "We've come a long way, Baby!" ■

Endnotes

The genealogical website, Ancestry.com, was used in researching the history of each person mentioned in this article. The author has elected not to repeat citations for each occasion it was consulted. Likewise, various city directories were also employed in tracking these individuals.

1. *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 14 Feb 1929:10. "Urges Gardening as Women's Profession." *Gazette*, 3 Aug 1929: 9. "Unlimited Educational Opportunities... Women Gardeners in Professional Field."

2. *The California School of Gardening for Women, Hayward, California* (undated school prospectus): 11. 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 the principal, Judith Walrond-Skinner.

3. Laura Mercado Smith. "The California School of



Gardening for Women: A History." *Journal of the California Horticultural Society* 31, no. 4 (October 1970).

4. For full details on Sydney Stein Rich's career in horticulture, see Judith M. Taylor, M.D., "Sydney Stein Rich, Pioneering Professional Gardener," in *Eden* 17, no. 1 (Winter 2014).

5. "Graduates in Gardening at Hayw'rd School." *Hayward Review*, 31 May 1927: 1; "San Francisco Girl Wins Garden School Certificate." *SF Chronicle*, 27 July 1927: 7; Virginia Coontz. "She Delves the Good Earth, for Happiness." *Chronicle*, 15 August 1934: 19.

6. Clara M. Schaeffer. "The Call of the Garden." *Woman's City Club Magazine* 6, no. 9 (October 1932): 16; "New Beauty in Our Roof Garden." *Woman's City Club Magazine* 7, no. 8 (September 1933): 14. Correspondence 1930, Alice Eastwood Collection, MSS 142, Series 3, Correspondence - Personal and Professional, 1906-1953, Box 42, Folder Sc. California Academy of Science, Golden Gate Park.

7. Robert Sibley, ed. *The Golden Book of California* (1937); *Blue & Gold*, University of California at Berkeley yearbooks, 1924-1927; "Wild Flower Exhibit to Feature Garden Show Here." *Oakland Tribune*, 25 March 1935; Golda Coillot. "Four Perennials Provide Selection for that Desired Place in Garden." *Hayward Daily Review*, 1 Aug 1953:4; *Inventory of the Nursery and Seed Catalog Collection no. 0-009*, UC Davis, Shields Library, Special Collections. Several Page Mill Nursery plant lists and catalogues and a Brattin nursery plant list were found at Davis. The earliest plant lists for Page Mill Nursery indicate Byron Farrington was initially a partner in the business with Stebbins and Truax; his name does not appear later on; Farrington worked at the 'La Granja' gardens for a time while it was under Truax's supervision. He later opened his own nursery on the Peninsula, Farrington's Flowerland. Other records indicate that Stebbins was the sole owner of Page Mill Nursery. She provided the financial wherewithal, presumably family money she'd inherited, since she never worked before this.

8. "Gardening School Graduates Soon." *Hayward Daily Review*, 20 Jun 1929.

9. Reinhardt Papers. For more about Gilkey's career at

Mills and elsewhere, see Phoebe Cutler, "Mills College: Horticultural Glory Years, 1915-1940," in *Eden* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2008).

10. "Situations Wanted." *SF Chronicle*, 3 October 1942: 19; Laura Mercado Smith. "The California School of Gardening for Women: A History." *Journal of the California Horticultural Society* 31, no. 4 (October 1970).

11. *Stanford Quad* (Stanford University yearbooks, 1924-1928); *Stanford University Bulletin - 45th Annual Register* (1935-36): 88, 192; *Bulletin - 46th Annual Register* (1936-37): 91, 214; Linda Thorne. "A Garden on the Farm." *Stanford Illustrated Review* 41, no. 1 (September 1939): 17, 25; "September in the Garden. Women Gardeners." *Sunset Magazine* 83, no. 3 (September 1939): 18; Joseph Henry Jackson. "The Bookman's Daily Notebook." *SF Chronicle*, 15 March 1941: 15; Elsa Uppman Knoll. "The California School of Gardening for Women: A Personal Report." *Journal of the California Horticultural Society* 31, no. 4 (October 1970); "Elsa Uppman Knoll." *San Jose Mercury News*, 7 Dec 2000; "Elsa Uppman Knoll." *Peninsula Perspective from San Francisco to San Jose* (February 2001).

12. Trabuco College was the institution established (1942-49) by Gerald Heard in the Santa Ana Mountains as a facility where comparative religion studies and practices could be pursued. He later donated the land to the Vedanta Society of Southern California, who still maintains the property as a Ramakrishna monastery and retreat. Miriam King. "Life at Trabuco." [www.geraldheard.com/recollections.htm, 8 Sep 2013]; "Jean Bolton May." *SF Chronicle*, 27 Jun 2003; *Lyre of Alpha Chi Omega* 43, no. 2 (1940); "Obituaries, Miriam Leigh King." *Stanford Alumni* (March/April 2005) [http://alumni.stanford.edu, 12 Oct 2013].

13. "Miss Dawn Daniels Honored at Party." *San Diego Union*, 4 Oct 1942; "The Rivanna Garden Club, 1922-2012." [http://therivannagardenclub.org, 12 Oct 2013]; Marsha Blakemore. "Jefferson's Love of Growing Things Inspires Arranger." *Richmond [VA] Times Dispatch*, 1 May 1977.

14. Ulrike Krippner. "Seeking Information about Helene/Helena Wolf (1899-1975)." [tclf.org/pioneer/research-query], 9 Oct 2013; "Over the Ocean: Women Immigrants in American Landscape Architecture in the

1940s and 1950s." Abstract, *Dumbarton Oaks Fellowship* (2010/2011); "Cultivating, Designing and Teaching: Jewish Women in Modern Viennese Garden Architecture." *Landscape Research* 36, no. 6 (December 2011); numerous email letters beginning 9 Oct 2013 to the present. The author thanks Judy Horton for bringing Krippner's query to her attention.

15. *Annual Report of the President of the University*, 1946/47, Stanford: 365.

Above Clockwise from top left: Dawn Daniel Woltz (1921-?) graduated from the Stanford school c. 1942. She later became the chief volunteer flower arranger at Monticello. San Diego Union, 4 Oct 1942, "Miss Dawn Daniel Honored at Party." Photographer Joan Ray.; Margaret Ward Truax (1905-1975), graduate of the Hayward school and proprietor of Page Mill Nursery. Courtesy of the University of California at Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Blue & Gold yearbook, 1927; Sydney Stein (1906-1956), first graduate of the California School of Gardening at Hayward. SF Chronicle, 27 July 1927; Miriam Leigh King (1922-2004). Reprinted with permission of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford Quad yearbook, 1941; Elsa Elizabeth Uppman (1905-2000), graduate of the Hayward school and later, principal of the Stanford school. Reprinted with permission of Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford University, Stanford Quad yearbook, 1927.

MEMBER NEWS

CGLHS at the 2015 San Francisco History Expo

CGLHS faced stiff competition from its neighbor, the National Japanese-American History Society, which handed out copies of reprints of the 1942 poster announcing the internment order. Along with that historical association, our group was one of 62 organizations flaunting their wares at the 140-year-old San Francisco Mint over the weekend that ended this March 1st.

Against a background of strolling costumed characters, including the likes of Adolph Sutro and Lillie Coit, Marlea Graham, Peggy Darnall, Margaret Mori, Virginia Kean, Jean Von Berg, Keith Park, Cecily Harris, and Brandy Kuhl informed a previously oblivious public of CGLHS' existence. When not handing out membership forms and selling the odd Eden, our sales corps surveyed what the competition was up to. The results were inspiring. In the basement was a show of lantern slides depicting San Francisco after the '06 Earthquake. Nearby a movie buff ran 1930s movies featuring San Francisco as the backdrop. Among the many neighborhood groups, the Bernal Heights History Project unreel a World War II film about civil defense. Next year why not a film or PowerPoint show of a panoply of great California gardens? Maybe even the upcoming Balboa Park in October?

On the static side, every stand had a raffle box. For our part we offered a tour-for-two of the 1949 Donnell Garden in Sonoma as both a first and a second prize, and membership in CGLHS as the runner-up reward. With tickets at \$1 each, we raised \$80 for the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society, the event organizer. That worthy society has been trying for umpteen years



to retrofit the venerable Mint as its domicile. Last year the city, harboring thoughts of a shopping center or such, lost patience and ordered the Society out. Let's hope the success of this year's San Francisco History Expo gives a deserving organization a permanent reprieve.

Phoebe Cutler

Above: New board member Brandy Kuhl (left) and Eden editor emerita Marlea Graham, working the CGLHS booth at the San Francisco History Expo in the Old Mint. Photo by Virginia Kean.

CGLHS wishes to extend a warm welcome to these two new members who inadvertently were not listed in the January issue: **Robert Boro** and **Elizabeth Flack**. We also had an addition to our Donors & Sustaining Members: **J. C. Miller**.

Members in Print



Visions of Loveliness: Great Flower Breeders of the Past
Judith M. Taylor
Ohio University Press: A Swallow Press Book, 2014
424 pgs. | Color photos | Available in hardcover and paperback
www.ohioswallow.com

Judith M. Taylor admiring a specimen at the Shelldance Orchid Nursery in Pacifica, California, in 2014. Photo by Martha Bruce.



Check out the newly published book *Women, Modernity and Landscape Architecture* for a chapter by CGLHS president Kelly Comras on landscape architect Ruth Shellhorn. Publisher Routledge used Shellhorn's landscape design at Fashion Square Santa Ana on the cover.



The Arcadia, California garden of Donivee and Merrill Nash, designed by former CGHLS president, Judy Horton, is featured in the April 2015 issue of *Martha Stewart Living*.

The Begonias Reach California

Judith M. Taylor

In Visions of Loveliness: Great Flower Breeders of the Past, Taylor chronicles the lives of plant breeders and describes the heyday of the begonia in California. We are very grateful to Ohio University Press for granting permission to publish this section from the book, which was published last fall.



The begonia found a most congenial home in California, where its cultivation reached a peak. The state's fertile soils and equable climate were ideal for many species of this tropical and subtropical genus. How this came about is a curious and circuitous story, mirroring that of quite a few other plants. Begonias originally found in the New World made almost a complete circle and returned there. Begonias from Asia and Africa joined them as they traveled at least three thousand miles across the Atlantic Ocean and a further three thousand miles to the West Coast.

Harry Butterfield attributed the first begonias in California to William Walker of San Francisco (1858) followed by James Hutchison of Oakland (1874). He credited Walker with stocking *Begonia manicata* Brongn. ex Cels and Hutchison with *B. semperflorens* Link & Otto (now known as *Begonia cucullata* Willd. var. *cucullata*). In 1969, the American Begonia Society awarded Harry Butterfield its Eva Kenworthy Gray medal, given to a member who offered the most help to novices in growing the flowers.

Begonias were a rich man's indulgence. During its heyday, from the 1870s to the 1920s, this flower was treated rather like the orchid. It needed heat and specialized care. Once it could be reliably grown from seed and became less finicky in its needs, the general public was able to enjoy it too.

To gain some perspective on the value of this crop, it is helpful to look at the USDA floriculture summary published each year. For the United States as a whole, ornamental horticulture contributes about four billion dollars to the GDP. In 2000, California

begonias constituted about six million dollars of that aggregate. Curiously, Michigan, North Carolina, and the northeastern states are all larger suppliers of begonias now than California. Many California growers have transferred much of their activity to Central America or Mexico.

During the first phase of begonia collecting and breeding, the principal work was done in Europe, mainly Belgium, England, France, and Germany. The possibilities seemed limited, but the process began quite early. Helen Krauss listed I. von Warscewicz's hybrids of *Begonia manicata* Brongn. ex Cels and *B. dipetala* appearing in 1840 or 1841. The earliest species had small and single flowers and came in tones of pink and white.

Victor Lemoine, and the firm of Crousse in Nancy, as well as Louis Van Houtte in Ghent, began to expand the choices. A double flower had been seen in England in 1872 and in Lyons in 1873. Lemoine issued a double begonia in 1876. Classification began to stagger under the weight of new forms. Using the nomenclature suggested by Voss, Lemoine called his flowers *Begonia* × *tuberhybrida*.

This portmanteau term was adopted by experts such as Charles Chevalier, a professor at the Liège Professional School in Belgium who published an important monograph on begonias in 1938. Within that grouping, many horticultural subgroups were formed, with informal names such as "rose form," "camellia form," and "picotee."

Harry Butterfield credited Lemoine with four definite seminal

introductions in the bedding class and at least three other probable ones, between about 1880 and 1900. Flower series named “Gloire de Lorraine” or “Gloire de Nancy” were a Lemoine hallmark even if his name did not appear. Another handful are simply listed as being “from France” and are either Lemoine or Crousse varieties. Lemoine’s son, Emile, or his grandson, Henri, did the later work.

The First World War was a turning point in this, as in so many other things. Shipping was restricted to essentials, and there was a great shortage of food. No seeds or plants could go to the United States from Europe. That led to a shift in the American nursery scene and stimulated local initiative.

American nurseries looked to the neighboring countries. Begonias began to arrive directly in the United States. The Central and South American sources were closer and more contiguous, but in spite of that, very little is known about the advent of particular begonias in California.

A review of early nursery catalogues reveals that the commercial choice of begonias was still extremely limited until after the First World War. The large seed companies such as Burpee offered a few species, an occasional hybrid, and very little else. In the 1890s, rex begonias were listed as “conservatory and parlor decorative” plants. People were fearful of planting them outdoors because they were so tender.

There was some hybridizing in early twentieth-century America, but nurseries were still importing European varieties. One of the notable Californian begonia breeders in that epoch was Mrs. Theodosia Burr Shepherd, a housewife of extremely modest means in Ventura.

In 1912 the San Francisco firm of C. C. Morse listed a new shipment of begonias from a “distinguished English breeder.” Most probably that was Blackmore and Langdon. (C. C. Morse merged with the D. M. Ferry Seed Company in 1930 to create the Ferry Morse Seed Company long after both Charles Copeland Morse and Dexter M. Ferry had died.)

This combination of factors—namely, the absence of European imports and the recognition that California’s climate was favorable for begonias—led to a profound change. The Vetterle Brothers in Capitola played a very important role in this transformation.

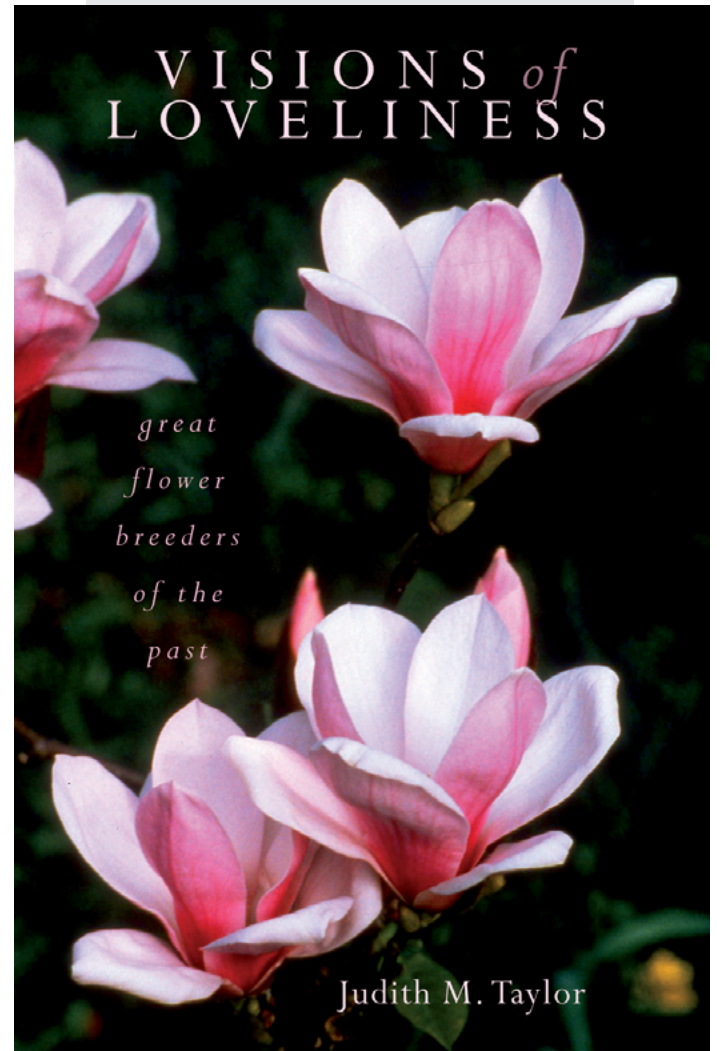
San Francisco-based Judith M. Taylor is a retired British neurologist and author of several books, including The Olive in California: History of an Immigrant Tree; and The Global Migrations of Ornamental Plants: How the World Got into Your Garden.

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www.ohioswallow.com

Opposite: *Alfred D. Robinson, one of the founders of the California begonia industry. Reproduced by permission of KOLZ Begonia Research Center.*



“*Visions of Loveliness* is a fascinating compilation of the history of breeding and selection of some of America’s most beloved garden plants, celebrating the work of key gardeners and plant breeders in many parts of the world. This work fills an important gap in our understanding of early ornamental plant breeding and selection.”

*~ Scot Medbury,
President, Brooklyn Botanic Garden*



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SAVE THE DATE!

2015 CGLHS CONFERENCE IN SAN DIEGO

October 2, 3, and 4, 2015

Join the centennial celebration of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition at our annual conference in San Diego's Balboa Park. Known as "the Garden Fair," the 1915 Exposition unleashed a century of influence over California architecture and landscapes.

Oct. 2, **FRIDAY EVENING:** Opening reception with wine and light food at Marston House and Gardens, an important Arts & Crafts property built in 1905. Tour the house and visit a special exhibit of "Balboa Park Architects and Designers" for San Diego's 1915 and 1935 world's fairs. Marston's specialty gift shop will be open.

Oct 3, **SATURDAY:** CGLHS partners with the venerable San Diego Floral Association for a day-long program featuring speakers Professor Robert Melnick and Elizabeth Barlow Rogers. Melnick is an internationally recognized expert on cultural landscape evaluation and historic landscape preservation planning. Betsy Rogers is President of the Foundation for Landscape Studies and the founding president of New York City's Central Park Conservancy. Other speakers will address the concept of "cultural landscapes," the history of Balboa Park's landscaping, and the 1915 Exposition's influence on design and regional identity. Join a 35-minute walking tour of Balboa Park after the program and enjoy an informal Mexican fiesta dinner in historic Old Town San Diego on Saturday night.

Oct 4, **SUNDAY:** Convene on Sunday morning for coffee and a tour of Balboa Park's iconic Botanical Building, followed by a very special private tour and lunch option (still in the planning stage.).

Stay tuned, but mark your calendars now!