

Preservation PROGRESS



FOR THE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF CHARLESTON

Summer 2006 • Volume 50 • No. 2

THE GARDENS OF LOUTREL BRIGGS: *Edens Lost and Found*

*Loutrel Briggs Garden at
64 South Battery*

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P r e s e r v i n g t h e P a s t f o r t h e F u t u r e



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Steven Craig

Once again, we embark upon that time of year where the streets of Charleston are bustling with children released from their daily school schedules, residents are emerging into their springtime gardens now in full bloom and, most noticeably, record numbers of seasonal visitors have descended upon the Holy City. As with everyone else in Charleston, the Society has also enjoyed an extremely busy and productive spring.

We hope this issue of *Preservation Progress* chronicles those activities in satisfying detail. Along with our enlightening quarterly membership meetings where we enjoy fascinating speakers, our successful study tours to great destinations like Winterthur, and events like our sold-out Hard Hat Luncheon, your Board and I are especially excited about the formation of the Society's new Medallion Circle. This group brought into our fold an unprecedented 320 new members and a major influx of energy and interest in our mission.

Aside from social and membership activities, on March 8, 2006, the Preservation Society of Charleston along with Historic Charleston Foundation filed a significant joint appeal in the Court of Common Pleas for the Ninth Judicial Circuit. This appeal was to the Board of Zoning Appeals – Zoning (BZA-Z) in reaction to their refusal to hear new public comments for a request at their February 7, 2006, meeting to extend a Special Exception. This Special Exception to existing zoning regulations was originally granted February 17, 2004, to allow a 185-room hotel at 404 King Street – the old Charleston County Library site.

The BZA-Z, on the advice of the city's attorneys, ruled at the February 7, 2006 meeting that the Vested Rights Act, enacted by the South Carolina General Assembly on June 2, 2004 and adopted by the Charleston City Council in 2005, automatically required that the BZA-Z grant a one-year extension of the Special Exception. They prohibited the Board from evaluating the extension request and from hearing public comment on this extension request because no changes had been made to the city ordinance since the Special Exception was originally granted.

Prior to the passage of the Vested Rights Act, the BZA-Z would have evaluated a request for an extension of a Special Exception the same as the initial application, fully weighing the pros and cons after hearing comments from the staff and others, including the Society.

We were prepared to make the Board aware of significant increases in traffic and new construction projects that have been planned or are being constructed since the Special Exception had been originally granted in February, 2004.

The Society has not been specifically opposed to a hotel at 404 King Street, but we have been concerned about the inappropriateness of an eight-story, 185-room hotel. It has always been our position that a building of this size is seriously out of scale for the historic architectural context surrounding it; i.e. the Old Citadel, St. Matthew's Church, and the Aimar Building. We feel the project as proposed would also greatly exacerbate the serious traffic and congestion problems that already exist in the area around Marion Square.

As we continue to pursue the goals of the Society, we acknowledge that we live in an internationally recognized historic community that is extraordinarily vibrant and one that many people enjoy visiting. At the same time, we are mindful that protecting our historic and architectural heritage is pivotal to ensuring this vitality for the future.

Steven Craig
President



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The Preservation Society of Charleston was founded in 1920 with its purpose being to cultivate and encourage interest in the preservation of buildings, sites and structures of historical or aesthetic significance and to take whatever steps may be necessary and feasible to prevent the destruction or defacement of any such building, site or structure, such purposes being solely eleemosynary and not for profit.

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SOCIETY'S NEW MEDALLION CIRCLE FOSTERS YOUNGER PRESERVATIONISTS, ADDS 320 NEW MEMBERS TO ROSTER

Recognizing that the work of preserving Charleston's unique architectural and cultural heritage will soon be the responsibility of a new generation, the Preservation Society has formed a group of young professionals who share these values. This new corps group of 20-, 30-, and 40-year-olds has been described as "the preservationists of tomorrow motivated for action today." Alix Tew, the Society's Director of Membership and Development, said, "A group of proactive young people has always been attracted to the Society's work, but they've not been formally organized until now. The name of this group is The Medallion Circle – so named for the intricate ceiling medallion located in the front parlor of 4 Logan Street (c. 1852), once the home of Society founder Susan Pringle Frost."

Early in April, hundreds of invitations went out to prospective members who (it was hoped) would respond favorably to an opportunity to join together with others interested in preservation issues. The response was impressive. Their first organizational/afternoon party on May 7th was called "Get Jazzed on the Piazza." When ticket sales were finally tallied, 320 new Society members had agreed to attend.

"The establishment of The Medallion Circle is a major step forward for The Preservation Society," said Executive Director Cynthia Jenkins. "With this one event, we welcomed into our organization a vital resource of energy and enthusiasm that promises to ensure the Society's future."

Despite threatening weather, the group gathered on this special Sunday afternoon in May at the William Aiken House (c. 1811), a national historic

landmark on upper King Street. Members and guests mingled with friends, listened to music, and enjoyed drinks and an array of delicious tapas. Music for the party was provided by Cabaret Kiki, a cabaret-style band whose music blended performance art, theatre, even a little dance with a 1930s-style sound. Their distinctive look and sassy jazz were a hit with the crowd.

Debbie Bordeau, Will Cook, Derrick DeMay, and Eleanor Smythe served as co-chairmen for the event. Honorary Chairmen included: Jill and Brad Braddock, Melissa and Todd Brown, Eliza and Bill Buxton, Elizabeth DuPre and Alton Brown, Becky and Edward Fenno, Sheldon and Cooper Fowler, Jane Maybank and Alexey Grigorieff, Laura Waring Gruber, Tara and Russell Guerard, Devon and Bill Hanahan, Greer Polansky, Eliza and David Ingle, Ben LeClercq, Mason Pope, Caroline and Chalmers Poston, Rachel and Robert Prioleau, plus Teri and Chris Thornton.

Steering Committee members included: Brett Bluestein, Edie DuBose, Adrienne and Todd Eischeid, Elaina and Erin England, Samia Hanafi, Missy Lansing, Rives and Luke Lucas, Mary Perrin and Hamlin O'Kelley, John Payne, Marti and Chris Phillips, Elizabeth and Chip Shealy, Ginny and Billy Shuman, Tiffany and Josh Silverman, Marion Simons, Irene and Christopher Todd, Abigail Walsh, along with Gail and Stephen Webb.

Special thanks for their support go to Cabaret Kiki, Diane and Mark McCall, Rhode Construction Co., Inc. S.M.G Management, Snyder Event Rentals & Staffing, Special Properties, Tiger Lily, Gail and Stephen Webb, and The William Aiken House. ■



Georgia Gruber, Allyson May, Elaina and Erin England



James Maybank, Samia Hanafi, Ashley Zatarain, Jennifer Breaux, and Harry Ragsdale



Christi Sanford, Jenny Miller, Cheryl Hay, Lois Lane and Kerri Weber



Robert Gruber, Laura Waring-Gruber, Greer Polansky and Tiffany Silverman

Aunt Rebe

~REBECCA M. FROST~

By Irene duPont, Jr.

Editor's Note: *The connection between Charleston and the duPonts of Delaware's Brandywine Valley could hardly be closer. The Preservation Society's study tour to Winterthur in March reawakened those associations in warm and vivid detail. One result is the charming memoir which follows - from the desk of Mr. Irene duPont, Jr. penned on March 30th, 2006 at Granogue, Mr. duPont's beautiful estate in Montchenin, Delaware. Granogue was one of the homes visited on the study tour. The following is his fond recollection of Rebecca Motte Frost of Charleston (whom he refers to as "Aunt Rebe"), she is the sister of Susan Pringle Frost, founder of the Preservation Society of Charleston.*



Rebecca M. and Susan P. Frost
Photo from the *News & Courier*

No story of Granogue would be complete without an account of Aunt Rebe, (pronounced: Reebee).

Miss Rebecca Motte Frost (1877-1971) from Charleston, South Carolina, was Mumma's roommate at St. Mary's School, New York from 1894-96. Her family consisted of two brothers and three sisters, none of whom married. Pringle, always referred to as a marvelous chemist, died at age twenty three. Dr. Frank Frost was rector of the Episcopal Church on Staten Island. His parishioners sent him on a vacation in 1935 aboard the cruise ship *Mohawk*. The ship sunk in a collision off the New Jersey Coast. He was the only fatality. Susan took business training and was secretary to various administrators in the Charleston City government. Mary and Rebe taught at their own school in Charleston. The family inherited the historic Miles Brewton House at 27 King Street near the Battery. During summers Rebe would come to visit her former schoolmate and help out with the children while Mumma traveled with Daddy on business trips.

In 1918, the Frost School closed and Aunt Rebe came to live with my parents and their eight daughters domiciled in Wilmington on Rising Sun Lane.

Although she received a salary, she became a member of the family with a place at the table and a cocktail glass on the tray beside the shaker.

All of Mumma's babies were born at home. When I arrived, Aunt Rebe said she took me from Mumma's room and carried me to the third floor, because "a baby should go up before it goes down." When the family moved to Granogue, Cap Walsh, the head chauffer and captain of the (yacht) *Icaco*, taught her to drive and Daddy supplied her with a personal car. At Granogue Aunt Rebe and I had the two smallest bedrooms with a shared bathroom. We said prayers together, she read Bible stories to me and we took long cross country walks, which gave opportunity to discuss all the questions of life here on earth and beyond. She taught "lessons" which enabled me to enter the second grade at Tower Hill School in 1927. We were good friends.

Aunt Rebe handled secretarial work from a separate desk in Mumma's study. She ordered food and supplies, and arranged household workers' schedules. She woke the children in time for school, saw that our clothes were in proper order, and was there to bandage a barked shin or listen to the latest outrage in the realm of young people.

After my parents died Aunt Rebe kept the house running so that, in 1964, Barbie (Mrs. Irene duPont Jr.) and I with our family, were able to move into a fully functioning Granogue. Barbie and our children accepted Aunt Rebe as part of our family, too. Under our roof, Barbie's widowed father enjoyed Aunt Rebe's companionship during his final year with us. While this story is a testimony to Barbie's character and endurance, Aunt Rebe deserves credit for being kind, thoughtful and adaptable, even in her old age. She lived in the same room for forty-eight years and died there at age ninety-four. ■

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STUDY TOUR TO *Winterthur* HAILS THE COMING OF SPRING



Arrival at the Winterthur Museum.

the city's streets and sidewalks seemed crowded to near capacity as the allure of Charleston's peak tourist season was clear and evident to one and all. But springtime in Charleston is also when the Society's annual study tour departs all this seasonal congestion and seeks a soupcon of escape and edification elsewhere.

A very special, insightful day at Winterthur, the former home of Henry Francis duPont (1880-1969) was the centerpiece and one of the highlights of the Society's 2006 Spring Tour, which left March 30th and returned on April 2nd. Eighteen members of the Preservation Society traveled to the fabled duPont estate and museum nestled in the heart of Delaware's beautiful Brandywine Valley, half-way between New York City and Washington, D.C. where an enjoyable weekend of historic architecture, art, and antiques awaited.

Tom Savage, well-known former resident of Charleston and newly appointed Director of Museum Affairs for Winterthur, hosted the group for a gala weekend of touring area private homes, enjoying sumptuous dinners, and visiting several area gardens at the height of their springtime bloom. Of particular focus was the Charleston connection to many of the people, places, and wonderful objects d'art seen in the vast Winterthur collection and on the tour. (See article on previous page, "Aunt Rebe")



Granogue - the duPont family home and the residence of Rebecca Frost for 48 years.

The last week in March found Charleston bedecked in its finest springtime garb. Visitors to the Holy City were here in record numbers, according to a report in the *Post and Courier*. Carriages were fully loaded, attendance at area attractions was up, and

H. F. duPont was an avid antiques collector and horticulturist. In his one lifetime, he created an extraordinary American country estate on par with English examples that took centuries to evolve. Winterthur has in its 175 rooms and adjacent galleries an unsurpassed collection of 85,000 objects made or used in America between 1640 and 1860. Mr. Savage took the Society travelers on a highlighted tour of the museum's period rooms and hosted an informal luncheon in the "Charleston dining room," which was removed from the (1774) William Burroughs House that originally stood at 71 Broad Street. In 1928, when the house was being razed, the room was dismantled and sold to a private collector and is now part of Winterthur's architectural collection.



Preparing the authentic hearth cooked lunch at the Collins-Sharp House (c. 1700) in Historic Odessa.

Also on the weekend's agenda were visits to several of the Brandywine River Valley's most exclusive private homes and collections. Some of the houses on the tour were well-known to Miss Rebecca Frost, sister of Preservation Society founder Susan Pringle Frost, who was a long-time friend and close associate of the duPont family.

A major highlight of the group's visit to the village of Odessa (formerly known as Cantwell's Bridge) was a complete hearth-cooked lunch prepared in the open fireplace of the Collins-Sharp House (c. 1700) now owned and operated by Winterthur. The hearty three-course meal was prepared according to authentic 18th and 19th century recipe books once widely used in that area.

Azaleas in riot, redbud gone rampant, wisteria bursting beautifully in varied shades of blue. Yes, this is Charleston in spring. But our intrepid wanderers from the Preservation Society spring study tour made do with crocus, daffodils and the breathtaking Sargent cherry blossoms cascading down the March Bank of Winterthur Gardens. Not a bad trade, really. Not bad at all. ■

IN MEMORIAM

The Preservation Society of Charleston lost a dear and devoted friend with the passing of Elizabeth Agnew Luke on March 30th at her residence in the Presbyterian Home of South Carolina in Summerville. She was 89. Mrs. Luke, was born in Henderson, North Carolina. She grew up, however, on Charleston's own Church Street where she was fascinated by the city's history, architecture, traditions, and lore. Long-time members of the Society will recall that Elizabeth was one of the organization's first paid employees. She was instrumental in helping the Society bridge the gap from being an all-volunteer group of preservation advocates to a staffed organization with multiple, defined responsibilities.

"She did it all," remembers Wilson Fullbright, Advisor to the Board and a long-time Society volunteer. "In the early 1960s at the Society's Lining



Elizabeth Agnew Luke

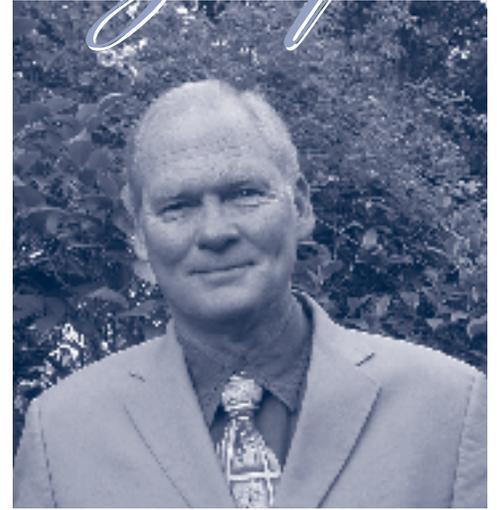
House office at 106 Broad Street, she interacted with the public, kept the membership rolls, performed bookkeeping and secretarial duties. She even sold cook books and post cards which eventually morphed into our retail book store and gift shop. Because Elizabeth was one of Charleston's earliest licensed tour guides, she helped innumerable visitors experience the city's special hospitality. On several levels, she witnessed Charleston's coming of age as a tourist destination and she played an important role in the Society's maturation, as well. She was a complete delight to work with and she did her many jobs extremely well."

Mrs. Luke was a member of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America, the Junior League of Charleston, and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Summerville. Our deepest respects and sincere sympathies are extended to her son and daughter and their families. ■

BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT:

Jim Wigley

Part of our 50th anniversary celebration of *Preservation Progress* this year is the profiling of new members serving on our 2006 Board of Directors. This time the honors go to Jim Wigley, well-known preservation consultant and head of the general contracting firm of Wigley Construction Services, LLC. Jim's company specializes in planning and construction administration for commercial historic properties – which (in Charleston) means he's a very busy man. His commitment to preservation has given him the opportunity to work on many interesting projects through his professional life. Among the notable landmarks on his resume are; the Charleston County Courthouse, the Charleston County Judicial Center Archaeological Project, Old St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church on Edisto Island, Christ Episcopal Church in Mt. Pleasant, St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Mt. Pleasant, plus numerous historic private homes scattered throughout the greater Charleston area.



Jim originally became interested in preservation issues while restoring antique sailing yachts in the early 1970s. He first came to Charleston working as a tugboat captain in 1980. As a member of the Preservation Society, he served on the Planning and Zoning Committee for two years (1994-95). He met his wife, Susan, when she was Associate Professor at Johnson & Wales University in 1979. They have lived in the Wagner Terrace neighborhood since 1987. ■



103 Bull Street c. 1853, Bee's Row Townhouse

FOR HOMES THAT MADE HISTORY...Thank you.

From the Battery to the Beaches, to the Old Village of Mount Pleasant, the perseverance and passion of the Preservation Society of Charleston are what keep our city alive and vibrant while insuring the history of our city and its buildings are kept intact. We, at Daniel Ravenel Real Estate, support the Preservation Society and highly commend them on their hard work and success in honoring the Lowcountry's material and cultural heritage. We thank you for helping Charleston, our great city, continue to be one of the most historic and preserved cities in the United States.



From The Battery to The Beaches

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Hard Hat Luncheon Gets Up Close and Personal With Major Restorations In Progress

The technical and artistic aspects of restoring Charleston's treasure trove of historic architecture (and gardens) gets more sophisticated and fascinating every day. State-of-the-art materials and methods used by professionals doing this kind of work are of interest to many more than just the homeowners actually restoring properties (and paying the bills). That's why the Preservation Society's "Hard Hat Luncheon" on April 7th was a big hit with members of all ages and areas of interest.

The mid-day educational program featured two homes, the Henry Gerdt's House (c. 1859-1860) at 13 Pitt Street and the Gaillard-Bennett House and garden (c. 1800) at 60 Montagu Street. Guests heard the "back story" of each property's restoration from some of the professionals responsible for doing the work and guests also had the opportunity to see that work in-progress – up close and personal.

"There was something for everyone," said Special Events Coordinator Amelia Lafferty. "Historians and teachers, architects and engineers, decorators and carpenters, plus almost everyone in between found this Hard Hat Lunch program educational – but fun, as well," she added. "Everyone seemed to find the lunchtime escape from work a refreshing break from routine."

Featured speakers included Society former-president Glenn Keyes along with Rubin Solar, of Glenn Keyes Architects, LLC; Richard Marks, of Richard Marks Restorations, Inc.; Glenn Gardner, of Wertimer & Associates Landscape Architects; and describing his specialty of restoring period ornamental plaster work was David Hueske.

"Fostering the educational component of preservation is instrumental to sustaining the goals of our organization," said Society Executive Director Cynthia C. Jenkins. "Programs like our Hard Hat Luncheon series help keep all of us in-touch with the hard work that is, today, a highly-specialized science."



A group fills the portico of the Gaillard-Bennett House (c. 1800) to begin the tour.

Special thanks to Mr. Richard (Moby) Marks and Mr. Steve Stewart, owners of 13 Pitt Street and Dr. Mary Caroline and Mr. Steve Stewart, owners of 60 Montagu Street, for generously sharing their properties with the Society. Also, The New York Butcher Shoppe for providing lunch for this very successful, educational event. ■



What will you see at your first
 dinner party? Will the kids
 ride in the farmer's market in
 a wagon? Are you going
 to take enjoying the north view
 a hot? How much joy will
 your new garden bring? Allow
 us to help you choose the
 perfect one, for life & lifestyle.

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Edens Lost and Found

THE GARDENS OF LOUTREL BRIGGS (1893-1977)

Loutrel Briggs photo: courtesy of *Post and Courier*

Editor's Note: The following is an interview with Sheila Wertimer, ASLA. In addition to her being a member of the Society and formerly serving on our Board of Directors, she is a highly respected landscape architect with a flourishing practice – specializing in rehabilitating old and/or historic gardens plus designing new ones imbued with that elusive quality of tradition, heritage and time-proven charm. She is among a group of local professionals who have undertaken the daunting but important task of documenting the remaining Charleston gardens designed in the first half of the last century by the remarkable Loutrel Briggs – possibly the one landscape architect singularly responsible for defining what, today, is considered the “classic Charleston garden.”



Loutrel W. Briggs
Landscape Architect

Q. For the uninitiated – who was Loutrel Briggs? And how did he become so closely associated with the historic gardens of Charleston, South Carolina?

A. Actually, Loutrel Winslow Briggs was not a Charlestonian – or even a Southerner. He was born in New York City in 1893. He graduated from Cornell University (as did I). His degree (earned in 1917) was in “rural art” (today known as landscape architecture) and he became head of the department of architecture at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. His early life is wonderfully outlined in his 1951 book, *Charleston Gardens*, (University of South Carolina Press) which is out of print, unfortunately, but it’s a fascinating resource for understanding his point of view. He had traveled extensively in Europe and much of what he absorbed there of the European/English traditions in gardening found an appreciative audience here.

He first came to Charleston in the late 1920s. It was a time when a number of wealthy Northerners were “rediscovering” the city’s architectural charms. They were purchasing town homes and plantation properties as wintertime retreats. Briggs had a large following in New York and he was asked by some of those clients to design gardens for their Charleston properties. His first local commission was in 1929 for Mrs. Washington Roebling, widow of the famous engineer who supervised the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. She was restoring the (1772) Gibbes House at 64 South Battery which includes one of the city’s largest formal gardens. Not long after that, he opened a Charleston office and spent his winters living and working here until he retired to Charleston in 1959.

Q. Then, would he be considered among those people associated with “the Charleston Renaissance” (of the 1920s and 30s)?

A. I would say so, yes. He certainly became extremely popular among Charleston property owners during that period and remained so well past that time even into the 1960s. He was widely sought out, his work was often published in national magazines, and his book quickly became something of a local classic. Even today, when clients say to me, “I want to have a formal Charleston garden,” what they’re really saying is – I want a garden like Loutrel Briggs designed for Charleston’s beautiful 18th and 19th century homes.

Q. Was he working from a historical context – replacing what had been here in the 18th and 19th centuries?

A. I don’t think so. There’s some historical record of early formal gardens being in the City of Charleston, but they weren’t extensive and even they were echoes of much earlier European gardens. In actuality, the side yards and rear gardens of most early Charleston homes were small urban farms. You would have found more milk cows and chickens, vegetables and herbs growing there than exotic ornamentals. Loutrel Briggs’ bias toward formal European landscape design was ideally suited to Charleston’s architecture as it was “idealized” later on – in his own time. He liked to create a series of garden “rooms” divided into a hierarchy that related logically to the architecture. For instance, his more formal spaces are adjacent to the house – intended to be looked down upon from a piazza. The farther removed from the house, the more informal the garden spaces become. This intimate relationship between the garden and its architectural host was a European concept that was seen in Charleston’s earliest gardens, but Briggs revived the tradition and refined it.

Q. What are the other typical characteristics of a Briggs garden?

A. That’s really quite interesting. From his accounts, we’re learning that his palette of plants and colors actually evolved as he became more adept working with this southern climate and his Charleston commissions grew in number. Still, he worked with a fairly narrow scope through most of his career. You will almost always find azaleas, camellias, a dogwood tree and usually a focal point (or points) frequently in the form of a water feature. He was incredibly prolific and meticulous in his record-keeping. That’s been a boon to our study. We’ve identified at least a hundred Briggs gardens in the Lowcountry so far. And the number could easily grow as more documentation is found.

Q. What is the Loutrel Briggs Survey?

A. In the spring of 2003, a group of professionals and preservationists set out to survey the contribution of Briggs in a definitive way – as much of his work was seriously being eroded by changes in property ownership, poor maintenance, natural disasters and the passing of time. Even the documentation of his known work was spread over several resources. The survey evolved from dialogue between the Preservation Society and Historic Charleston Foundation over the deteriorating status of some Charleston gardens. The effort was joined by the South Carolina Historical Society, the Charleston Garden Club, The Charleston Horticultural Society, Briggs biographer and garden writer James Cothran, Clemson Architecture Center director Robert Miller, and a number of local landscape architects who directed staff time to the project.

Q. What does the Briggs survey hope to accomplish?

A. We set out to identify, document, photograph, and preserve as many Briggs gardens as are still with us. To do this, we had to devise a survey form, coordinate volunteers, contact property owners identified as owning a Briggs garden, and archive the information for the public’s future use in a working data base that can be maintained and updated as changes occur. It’s still a work in progress.

In my practice, I’m frequently asked to restore a garden originally designed by Briggs or we’re asked how to retain the best Briggs elements while updating a garden for more contemporary use. The survey will help me (and others) know where and what Briggs designs are still out there and how best to preserve them and/or restore them, appreciate them, and live with them for today’s purposes as well as tomorrow’s enjoyment.

The Preservation Society’s Executive Director Cynthia C. Jenkins stressed the importance of the Loutrel Briggs Survey to the city this way. “According to the guidelines set forth by the Department of Interior, a property qualifies for the National Register through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Of these seven key “integrity” – the surrounding gardens or the landscape of a property engage three; design, setting and feeling. The remarkable garden designs of Loutrel Briggs are clearly integral to the historic fabric of this city.” ■

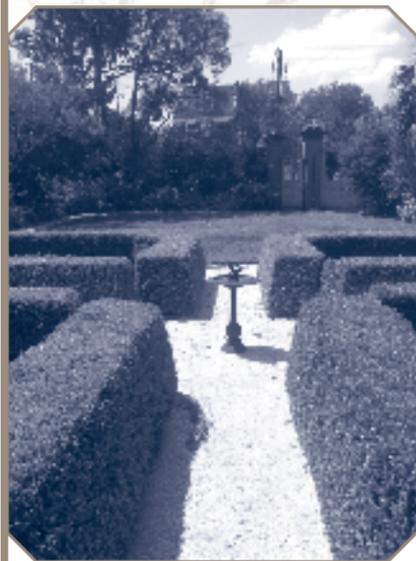
HOW WIDESPREAD WAS BRIGGS’ DESIGN PATH?

A. Although the complete inventory of Loutrel Briggs’ garden designs is still incomplete, the impressive volume of his known work is evident in this partial listing provided by the study. His popularity with Charleston residents speaks eloquently of his sensitivity to the relationship between historic homes and the garden environments surrounding them.

Loutrel Briggs completed designs and/or actual gardens for properties on the following streets in Charleston: Anson, Atlantic, Bedons Alley, Catfish Row, Chalmers, 16 properties on Church, East Battery, 4 properties on East Bay, Elliott, Greenhill, 11 properties on King, Ladson, 4 properties on Lamboll, 9 properties on Legare, Lowndes, 9 properties on Meeting, 2 properties on Murray Boulevard, 3 properties on Orange, 2 properties on Rutledge Avenue, 3 properties on Society, South Adgers Wharf, 8 properties on South Battery, 2 properties on State, 9 properties on Tradd, and Water. He also created gardens for Mepkin Plantation, McLeod Plantation, Mulberry Plantation, Rice Hope Plantation, the Francis Marion Tomb, and Strawberry Chapel. ■



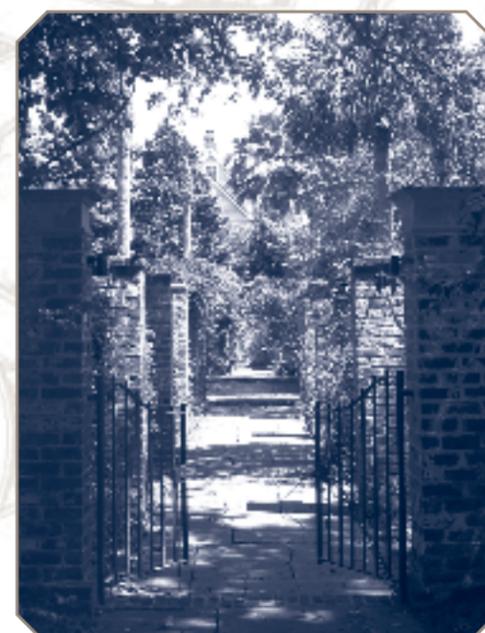
Focal point of a garden ruin



A formal rose garden



A secluded path leads to romantic ruins ▶



◀ This corridor of brick piers frames several garden rooms

Edens Lost and Found

THE GARDENS OF LOUTREL BRIGGS (1893-1977)

Loutrel Briggs photo: courtesy of *Post and Courier*

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Q. For the uninitiated – who was Loutrel Briggs? And how did he become so closely associated with the historic gardens of Charleston, South Carolina?

A. Actually, Loutrel Winslow Briggs was not a Charlestonian – or even a Southerner. He was born in New York City in 1893. He graduated from Cornell University (as did I). His degree (earned in 1917) was in “rural art” (today known as landscape architecture) and he became head of the department of architecture at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art. His early life is wonderfully outlined in his 1951 book, *Charleston Gardens*, (University of South Carolina Press) which is out of print, unfortunately, but it’s a fascinating resource for understanding his point of view. He had traveled extensively in Europe and much of what he absorbed there of the European/English traditions in gardening found an appreciative audience here.

He first came to Charleston in the late 1920s. It was a time when a number of wealthy Northerners were “rediscovering” the city’s architectural charms. They were purchasing town homes and plantation properties as wintertime retreats. Briggs had a large following in New York and he was asked by some of those clients to design gardens for their Charleston properties. His first local commission was in 1929 for Mrs. Washington Roebling, widow of the famous engineer who supervised the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. She was restoring the (1772) Gibbes House at 64 South Battery which includes one of the city’s largest formal gardens. Not long after that, he opened a Charleston office and spent his winters living and working here until he retired to Charleston in 1959.

Q. Then, would he be considered among those people associated with “the Charleston Renaissance” (of the 1920s and 30s)?

A. I would say so, yes. He certainly became extremely popular among Charleston property owners during that period and remained so well past that time even into the 1960s. He was widely sought out, his work was often published in national magazines, and his book quickly became something of a local classic. Even today, when clients say to me, “I want to have a formal Charleston garden,” what they’re really saying is – I want a garden like Loutrel Briggs designed for Charleston’s beautiful 18th and 19th century homes.

Q. Was he working from a historical context – replacing what had been here in the 18th and 19th centuries?

A. I don’t think so. There’s some historical record of early formal gardens being in the City of Charleston, but they weren’t extensive and even they were echoes of much earlier European gardens. In actuality, the side yards and rear gardens of most early Charleston homes were small urban farms. You would have found more milk cows and chickens, vegetables and herbs growing there than exotic ornamentals. Loutrel Briggs’ bias toward formal European landscape design was ideally suited to Charleston’s architecture as it was “idealized” later on – in his own time. He liked to create a series of garden “rooms” divided into a hierarchy that related logically to the architecture. For instance, his more formal spaces are adjacent to the house – intended to be looked down upon from a piazza. The farther removed from the house, the more informal the garden spaces become. This intimate relationship between the garden and its architectural host was a European concept that was seen in Charleston’s earliest gardens, but Briggs revived the tradition and refined it.

Q. What are the other typical characteristics of a Briggs garden?

A. That’s really quite interesting. From his accounts, we’re learning that his palette of plants and colors actually evolved as he became more adept working with this southern climate and his Charleston commissions grew in number. Still, he worked with a fairly narrow scope through most of his career. You will almost always find azaleas, camellias, a dogwood tree and usually a focal point (or points) frequently in the form of a water feature. He was incredibly prolific and meticulous in his record-keeping. That’s been a boon to our study. We’ve identified at least a hundred Briggs gardens in the Lowcountry so far. And the number could easily grow as more documentation is found.

Q. What is the Loutrel Briggs Survey?

A. In the spring of 2003, a group of professionals and preservationists set out to survey the contribution of Briggs in a definitive way – as much of his work was seriously being eroded by changes in property ownership, poor maintenance, natural disasters and the passing of time. Even the documentation of his known work was spread over several resources. The survey evolved from dialogue between the Preservation Society and Historic Charleston Foundation over the deteriorating status of some Charleston gardens. The effort was joined by the South Carolina Historical Society, the Charleston Garden Club, The Charleston Horticultural Society, Briggs biographer and garden writer James Cothran, Clemson Architecture Center director Robert Miller, and a number of local landscape architects who directed staff time to the project.

Q. What does the Briggs survey hope to accomplish?

A. We set out to identify, document, photograph, and preserve as many Briggs gardens as are still with us. To do this, we had to devise a survey form, coordinate volunteers, contact property owners identified as owning a Briggs garden, and archive the information for the public’s future use in a working data base that can be maintained and updated as changes occur. It’s still a work in progress.

In my practice, I’m frequently asked to restore a garden originally designed by Briggs or we’re asked how to retain the best Briggs elements while updating a garden for more contemporary use. The survey will help me (and others) know where and what Briggs designs are still out there and how best to preserve them and/or restore them, appreciate them, and live with them for today’s purposes as well as tomorrow’s enjoyment.

The Preservation Society’s Executive Director Cynthia C. Jenkins stressed the importance of the Loutrel Briggs Survey to the city this way. “According to the guidelines set forth by the Department of Interior, a property qualifies for the National Register through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Of these seven key “integrity” – the surrounding gardens or the landscape of a property engage three; design, setting and feeling. The remarkable garden designs of Loutrel Briggs are clearly integral to the historic fabric of this city.” ■

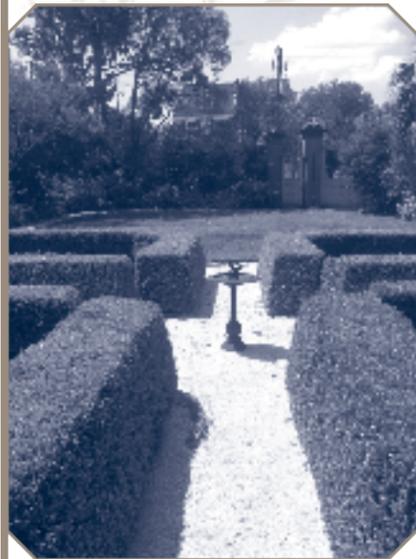
HOW WIDESPREAD WAS BRIGGS’ DESIGN PATH?

A. Although the complete inventory of Loutrel Briggs’ garden designs is still incomplete, the impressive volume of his known work is evident in this partial listing provided by the study. His popularity with Charleston residents speaks eloquently of his sensitivity to the relationship between historic homes and the garden environments surrounding them.

Loutrel Briggs completed designs and/or actual gardens for properties on the following streets in Charleston: Anson, Atlantic, Bedons Alley, Catfish Row, Chalmers, 16 properties on Church, East Battery, 4 properties on East Bay, Elliott, Greenhill, 11 properties on King, Ladson, 4 properties on Lamboll, 9 properties on Legare, Lowndes, 9 properties on Meeting, 2 properties on Murray Boulevard, 3 properties on Orange, 2 properties on Rutledge Avenue, 3 properties on Society, South Adgers Wharf, 8 properties on South Battery, 2 properties on State, 9 properties on Tradd, and Water. He also created gardens for Mepkin Plantation, McLeod Plantation, Mulberry Plantation, Rice Hope Plantation, the Francis Marion Tomb, and Strawberry Chapel. ■



Focal point of a garden ruin



A formal rose garden



A secluded path leads to romantic ruins ▶



◀ This corridor of brick piers frames several garden rooms

Test Your Charleston Lore: Why Are We Called “The Holy City?”

by J. Michael McLaughlin



No visitor to the Lowcountry is here very long before encountering the popular euphuism “The Holy City.” Carriage drivers clip-clopping along our streets tend to favor the term as an alternative to repeating the name “Charleston” over and over as they tell their tales to tourists. The term frequently pops up in local newspaper headlines and (often with emotion) on the editorial pages, as well. Even Charlestonians favor it as an affectionate nickname for their hometown when discussing the daily events affecting the city.

Some out-of-towners are confused by the term – wondering if it’s a reference to some pious attitude on behalf of overly proud Charlestonians. Others take outright offense – saying it’s a blatant insult to the Biblical city of Jerusalem. But the origins of the term have little to do with civic pride – even less the geography of early Christendom.

Exactly when “The Holy City” entered Charleston’s collective vocabulary is difficult to say. A number of theories have been offered. One story goes that early ship captains sailing into Charles Town started using the term as slang

– having crossed the vast Atlantic with nothing to look at on the horizon but endless ocean. When they finally spied the steeple of St. Philip’s Episcopal Church (first Anglican church built on the peninsula in 1680) they knew they’d safely arrived. Actually, it was probably the congregation’s second building they saw (built in 1723 and destroyed by fire in 1835). It featured an 80-foot tall tower that would have been clearly visible far out at sea. Later, in 1761, construction was completed on St. Michael’s Church (still standing and now Charleston’s oldest church edifice) whose magnificent spire further enhanced the city’s welcoming skyline for approaching ships.

Today, a number of church steeples are evident to those who travel to Charleston by sea – and now by car – thanks to the spectacular new bridges making dramatic approaches into the city. While there’s no doubt tall church spires were useful navigational aids for sailors coming into port, the true origins of “The Holy City” as a moniker for Charles Town might be much older. It may have more to do with the spiritual open-mindedness of the early colony itself.

The Royal Charters of King Charles II of England made no bones about his intention to dictate and regulate the colony’s religious character. This was to be a colony for followers of the Church of England. The Anglicans were firmly established here as early as 1706. However, the King’s plans were soon frustrated. John Locke and one of the Lord Proprietors, the Earl of Shaftsbury, included in their Fundamental Constitution for colonists a provision allowing unprecedented religious and civil freedoms.

Word got back to Europe that other religious groups were welcome here, as well. Before long, early Charles Town was by no means exclusively Anglican. There were many “dissenters” among the colonists. Dissenters were defined as those persons unwilling to accept the Anglican Church as the official religion of the colony. Prominent among these were the French Huguenots – immigrants escaping the persecution, which followed the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Joining them were many others – among them Anabaptists, Quakers, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Shortly thereafter came Lutherans and Jews.

A liberal attitude toward religious expression was more evident here than in New England where the Puritan culture had a stronger (and far stricter) code of conduct. No one religious movement in Charles Town could effectively dictate the rules of society – or commerce, for that matter. The success of exporting indigo and rice (and importing vast numbers of slaves to plant, harvest and process those crops) meant Charles Town was well on its way to becoming a very wealthy colony. Wealth fostered the growth of religious diversification, and that toleration, in turn, encouraged the further expansion of business.

So, early on, churches were plentiful here. Soon, it followed that the church buildings themselves became an important part of Charleston’s architectural vocabulary. Churches with congregations of considerable means could build edifices of great beauty and artistic refinement. Handsome spires, one after another, soon reached upward into the sky. The town homes and small businesses surrounding them were smaller in scale – closer to the ground – while the real engine of commerce (the vast plantations) were scattered elsewhere around the rural Lowcountry.

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Via Rebecca C. Curren, Dorothy A. Moring, Sylvia Ann F. Frazier, Jane Krumboltz, and Melissa

Why Are We Called “The Holy City?” continues on next page.

QUARTERLY SOCIETY MEETINGS EDUCATE AND ILLUMINATE THE CHARLESTON EXPERIENCE

The Preservation Society of Charleston's quarterly meetings have always been one of the major benefits of supporting the Society's work. Every meeting features a different speaker who illuminates and advances some aspect of the Society's mission. Programming in 2006 features a variety of topics. On March 9th, at the Charleston Museum, a fascinating lecture was given by Mr. Pratt Cassity.

Mr. Cassity is Public Service and Outreach Director for the College of Environment and Design at The University of Georgia. He coordinates their Center for Community Design, Planning & Preservation and travels extensively in that capacity providing services to local governments and state agencies as well as international preservation organizations.

His message to our members was entitled "The Evolution of Contemporary Preservation Practice: Charleston's Role in defining the Future." It offered members an international overview of how Charleston's approach to protecting its architectural heritage "changed the temperament, the efficacy and the

'localness' of the American preservation movement." He added that when the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings (now the Preservation Society) advocated in favor of a Board of Architectural Review in the 1930s it quickly became a model for the world. He pointed out how that idea was soon echoed in Europe with The Athens Charter (1931) which framed in its concise



Dr. Biemann Othersen with guest speaker, Pratt Cassity.

sixteen paragraphs "a roadmap for European preservationists through the tumultuous mid-20th century."

In crediting Charleston's preservationist (then and now), he observed, "one only needs to look out the door (at the streetscapes of Charleston) to realize this place 'gets it.' "The Holy City changed America's planning history forever ... creating a model that has survived for over 75 years." Today, no fewer than 2,599 communities across America have followed Charleston's lead. In fact, The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions was founded in Charleston.

Mr. Cassity recalled that it was no accident that Hurricane Hugo's unwelcome visit here in 1989 was immediately followed by The National Trust's Annual Preservation Conference the following year. The world was watching what happened here. That conference resulted in the nationally-recognized and respected Charleston Principles. "They were so well-written and ... concise," he said, "they perfectly outlined the need for better community preser-

vation as America moves on into the next century." The Charleston Principles serve to shape local policies, plans, and development.

As an ambassador for preservation ethics here and elsewhere across the globe, Pratt Cassity's message brought welcome tidings of respect and encouragement to the Preservation Society of Charleston as we continue into the new millennia with many challenges ahead and tests of our will in store.



Dr. Eric Emerson signs copies of his book for PSC members.

The Society's May 11th membership meeting presented at The Charleston Museum Auditorium was an evening with Dr. Eric Emerson, executive director of the South Carolina Historical Society. A native of Charlotte, North Carolina, Dr. Emerson holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Alabama. Prior to accepting his position with the Historical Society, he served as editor of the *South Carolina Historical*

Magazine and was editor in chief of their publication program. For our meeting, he discussed his recent book, *Sons of Privilege: The Charleston Light Dragoons in the Civil War*.

Dr. Emerson related the very human and dramatic story of this unique Confederate cavalry company composed of men drawn from South Carolina's elite planter aristocracy, wealthy merchant class, and politically connected families. He used the appropriate phrase, "a company of gentlemen."

Describing their pre-war lifestyle as being much like a gentleman's social club, the unit was, in fact, quite an anomaly in the Confederate army – which was largely composed of working class Southern farmers and non-slave-holding laborers. This unit, numbering about 150 men at the start of the war, spent the early years of the conflict in relative safety and comfort – if not luxury. However, as the tide turned, the unit received two major assignments, the latter of which included several weeks of brutal combat. Although the unit fought valiantly, 1864's Battle of Haw's Shop in Virginia saw them cut down in terrible numbers. At war's end, only a handful of survivors remained.

The Dragoon's fascinating story – sometimes amusing in retrospective detail – was ultimately a tragedy for their class-conscious society. Dr. Emerson concluded his remarks with praise and encouragement for the Preservation Society's important contribution to Charleston's rich architectural and cultural heritage. He signed copies of his book at a reception immediately following the meeting. *Sons of Privilege: The Charleston Dragoons in the Civil War* (University of South Carolina Press, 2005) is available at the Preservation Society Bookstore, 147 King Street. ■

Why Are We Called "The Holy City?" continued from previous page.

The towering church steeples dominating Charleston's skyline sometimes did so at their own risk. During both the American Revolution and the Civil War, the spire of St. Michael's was painted black to make it less of a target for enemy artillery taking aim by night.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the same economic influences that closed in on Charleston – effectively stalling modernization, creating an architectural time-capsule of the peninsular city – dealt Charleston's churches a similar hand. War, poverty, and financial stagnation effectively preserved Charleston's 18th and 19th century churches as the dominant architectural icons of the lower peninsula.

At some point, the dominance of church steeples on the Charleston skyline became a tradition in its own right. As the waterfronts of other coastal cities in America became more industrialized and evermore unattractive, the skyline of the Holy City became more treasured as an exception. As Charleston became a popular destination for domestic and international travelers, the skyline of The Holy City was a symbol of our reverence for tradition and history – coming full circle back to the welcome it extended to the tall sailing ships and mariners of yore.

The Preservation Society's advocacy mission includes encouraging new construction in Charleston to respect this tradition. Through the use of quantitative tools like height, scale, and mass, we seek responsible zoning and decisions from the Board of Architectural Review that will protect what we, as a city, hold dear. "We must be careful to protect against the gradual loss of our steeple-dominated skyline," said Executive Director Cynthia C. Jenkins, "as this is as much the character and cultural heritage of Charleston as the city's historic buildings themselves."

From the land and from the sea, the church spires of Charleston still hail to passers-by that this is a destination of high note, lofty praise to a higher power, a welcoming "Holy City" at the edge of a vast, blue-green sea.* ■

• Parts of this story originally appeared in Wild Dunes' *Island Memories* magazine as "The Holy City" (by the same author). Their permission and cooperation are gratefully acknowledged.

SNAPSHOTS IN TIME: The Earthquake of 1886

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Preservation Progress*, we pause to remember another anniversary – a less happy event – that befell Charleston 120 years ago. On the hot and humid summer night of August 21, 1886, a major earthquake shook the Holy City to its knees. The quake was felt from the Atlantic seaboard to the Mississippi Valley and from the heart of Georgia and Alabama as far north as Lake Michigan. The aftershocks continued for thirty-six hours.

James Whitcomb Riley, the famous Hoosier poet (author of *Little Orphan Annie* and *The Ol' Swimmin' Hole*) was passing through Charleston when the calamity occurred. Immediately upon his return to Indiana, he penned three poems with an earthquake theme. The following sonnet was subtitled “Charleston – September 1, 1886” and originally published in *The Indianapolis Journal* four days later as Northerners eagerly read harrowing accounts of the terrible Charleston earthquake in their daily newspapers. ■

A FALL-CRIK VIEW OF THE EARTHQUAKE

By James Whitcomb Riley

I kin hump my back and take the rain,
And I don't keer how she pours;
I kin keep kind o' ca'm in a thunder-storm,
No matter how loud she roars;
I hain't much skeered o' the lightnin',
Ner I hain't sich awful shakes
Afeared o' cyclones – but I don't want none
O' yer dad-burned old earthquakes!

As long as my legs keeps stiddy,
And long as my head keeps plum',
And the buildin' stays in the front lot,
I still kin whistle, some!
But about the time the old clock
Flops off'n the mantel-shelf,
And the bureau scoots for the kitchen,
I'm a-goin' to skoot, myself!

Plague-take! Ef you keep me stabled
While any earthquakes is around!—
I'm jes' like the stock, —I'll beller
And break fer the open ground!
And I 'low you'd be as nervous
And in jes' about my fix,
When yer whole farm slides from inunder you,
And on'y the mor'gage sticks!

Now cars hain't a-goin' to kill you
Ef you don't drive 'crost the track;
Crediters never'll jerk you up
Ef you go and pay 'em back;
You kin stand all moral and mundane storms
Ef you'll on'y jes behave—
But a' EARTHQUAKE; —Well, ef it wanted you
It 'ud husk you out o' yer grave!



The residence of Bishop Keane of the Catholic Archdiocese lost its brick gable end, but otherwise appears to have fared fairly well in the quake.*



This is Hibernian Hall on Meeting Street. The collapsing massive portico spared the fragile pair of gas lamps out front.*



Washington Park became a campground for citizens displaced by the quake or fearful of sleeping indoors as aftershocks continued ominously for several weeks.*

*Earthquake photos from 1886 courtesy of The Winterthur Museum & Country Estate collection.



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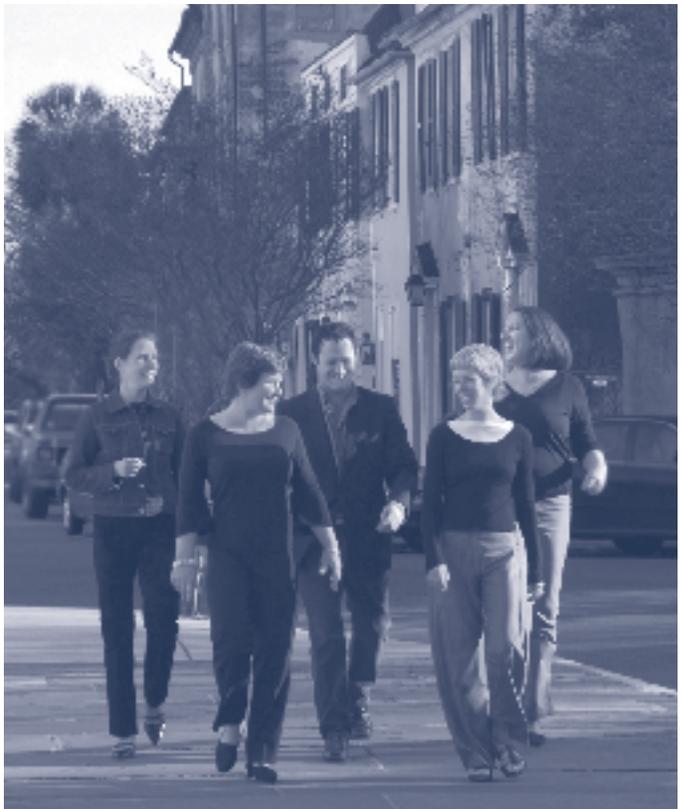
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Looking Forward/Looking Back

Preservation Progress: The First 50 Years... Part II: The 1970s and 1980s

The regular feature we call "Looking Forward/Looking Back" has been examining the archives of Preservation Progress from the prospective of its 50th year of publication. In our Spring 2006 issue, we revisited the origins of the newsletter starting in 1956. In those days, it was a single mimeographed sheet, hand-typed and sans photos or graphics. But within the decade it had morphed into a fully-staffed "megaphone" trumpeting the news from a preservation organization with proud traditions and a focused mission. This issue deals with the 1970s and '80s – a period when the growth of Charleston tourism was shining new light on our preservation values while introducing tremendous new stresses on the city's evermore fragile historic fabric.

The decade of the 1970s opened with the Preservation Society of Charleston's offices being located within the handsomely restored Lining House at 106 Broad Street. Office hours were listed as Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9a.m. to Noon. Inside, volunteer staffers maintained a small library of preservation publications from all across the country as a reference. These seemingly benign office hours were in stark contrast to the serious amount of work being done by the membership at the time.

By the 1970s, *Preservation Progress* was an 8-page, quarterly publication featuring a wide array of featured writers addressing an impressive list of topics. One of the Society's founding members, Col. Alston Deas, (author of the definitive book on Charleston wrought iron) made a survey of "Old Charleston brick," discussing its color, texture, and obvious popularity – noting its (grey-brown and deep-rose) hues were a favorite of the renowned architect Stanford White. Even our founder, Susan Pringle Frost, found her way into the pages of *Preservation Progress* in 1970 (albeit posthumously). In a 1941 letter she penned to the *News and Courier* she recounted her struggles to fund the Society's early preservation projects. A decade after her death, the letter lent valuable insight, encouragement, and needed perspective to a new generation of preservationists.

Even Loutrel Briggs (See "Edens Lost and Found"), the renowned landscape architect with offices both in Charleston and New York City, wrote "A Tale of Two Cities," comparing the two cities' approach to the impact of traffic on their historic districts.

Indeed, one of the hottest topics of the decade seems to have been the planning for a new bridge to James Island – and where it should connect to the peninsula. Already the call was being sounded for a comprehensive traffic and transportation analysis for The Holy City.

These years saw high praise come to *Preservation Progress*. Mrs.. C.L. Paul III, publication chairperson for the Society at the time received this letter from J.B. Fraser, assistant director of public relations for the American Institute of Architects saying: "I commend you, the staff and the writers of *Preservation Progress* for what must be the most interesting local preservation publication in the nation. ... I particularly like the skillful blending of fascinating stories of

the lives of past Carolinians and events with the call to arms to meet current threats to the priceless landmarks of your beautiful city. Your writers manage to do all this with great care and talent." Clearly, future editors would have big shoes to fill.

In small ways and in large ones, *Preservation Progress* during the 1970s broke new ground. It introduced to the membership (and its many other readers) a number of unusual projects that, today, are taken for granted as standard landmarks of the Lowcountry. At a time when only a handful of restaurants were open in Charleston for fine dining, *Preservation Progress* heralded the restoration of a run-down c. 1830 warehouse on then-seldom-traveled Prioleau Street. It would soon be called The Colony House. Another issue introduced the Mills (Hyatt) House, "Charleston's 'newest' hotel," and hailed its accurate replication of many architectural details from its 1853 predecessor.

The South Carolina Tri-centennial in 1970 resulted in the building of Charles Towne Landing at the once-privately-owned Old Town Plantation.

This became a unique state park built on the site of the 1670 colony's original settlement. Readers of *Preservation Progress* were told about the revolutionary "interactive" exhibits planned to showcase the city's fascinating origins.

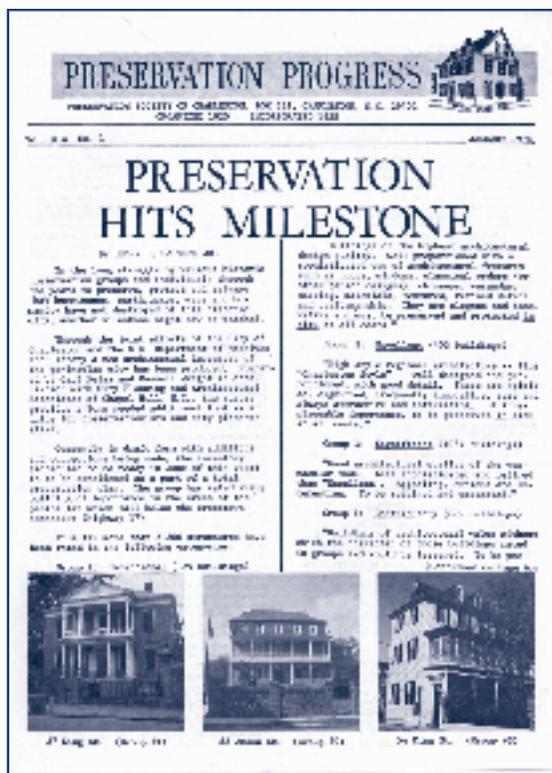
In 1973, Drayton Hall's transformation from a rarely-seen private property to an architectural museum interpreted for the public was also major news. This was the decade, too, when the gardens at Middleton Place announced the opening of the stable yard with live animals, skilled tradespeople, and a deeper insight into the harsh realities of plantation life. *Preservation Progress* also announced the opening of the (1825, 1838) Edmondston-Alston House at 21 South Battery – giving visitors to Charleston yet another house museum to enjoy, another tantalizing peek into Charleston's opulent past.

As tourism found its sea legs in Charleston, the local business sector eagerly embraced this growing influx of visitors (and dollars). The pages of *Preservation Progress* reflected cautious concern as this magic genie (with decidedly mixed blessings) began to swirl out of its bottle. Opinions on all sides of the issue were aired, but the challenge of managing this

inevitability seemed to be preservation's most realistic goal. More and tighter controls seemed called for as pressure from developers grew more intense.

In 1974, the Society's new executive Director, Henry F. Cauthen, summarized the situation this way: "The preservation movement in this country is stronger than ever," he wrote in *Preservation Progress*, "but the demolitionists is that much quicker. Ten years ago, the movement was to save an individual building and now we have to fight for whole neighborhoods."

This was dramatically illustrated when one whole block of Charleston's "warehouse district" (bordered by Cumberland, East Bay and State streets, and Lodge Alley) was slated to be razed with a \$6 million, eight-story condominium built on the site. A stalwart handful of concerned citizens formed a committee of independent preservationists called the "Save Charleston



Foundation” and successfully interceded by buying the property and selling it to a more sympathetic developer. The efforts of this group were frustrated by the city’s lack of accurate documentation on some of the buildings at risk – rendering legally powerless most of the preservation safeguards in place at the time. While the end result turned out to be the infinitely more acceptable low-rise Lodge Alley complex we know today, the difficult process fostered an invaluable byproduct. It inspired the first in-depth, professional inventory of Charleston’s existing architectural heritage since the Carolina Art Association published their survey called *This is Charleston* in 1944.

In 1972, the Society had received an offer from a private individual to buy the Lining House. After serious debate among the membership (ending with covenants accepted by the new owner to ensure its continuing preservation), the house was sold. This transaction left the Society (temporarily) in better financial situation than in its entire history to date.

In 1974, the Society undertook the moving of six houses which were on the site of a municipal parking garage being built on the corner of George and St. Philip Streets. *Preservation Progress* called this project the largest house-moving in the history of the city. Another fundraising effort launched in *Preservation Progress* was to save the Frederick Wolfe House at 21 State Street (c.1796), a rare example of a “middle class” Charleston dwelling that was about to become a bank’s parking lot. This house, too, was successfully moved, restored, and then sold.

The obligation to raise “rescue” funds for what seemed like an endless list of endangered structures was an ever-present strain on the Society. Realizing that these needs far outpaced the Society’s economic resources, the Society’s focus shifted from bricks and mortar projects to advocacy.

Some financial relief came with the publication of *Charleston Houses and Gardens*, (Legacy Publications, 1976). This handsome coffee-table book with photos by Jane Iseley and text by Evangeline Davis, took two years to produce and was a major source of income to the organization. It was followed in 1979 by *Charleston Interiors*, (this time the text was by Henry F. Cauthen).

In anticipation of additional tourism generated by America’s Bicentennial celebration, *Preservation Progress* reported to the membership in 1976 that fall (fundraising) house tours would resume. According to the Society’s archives, house tours were held prior to 1934, but they had been suspended as being “too costly” during the difficult Depression years. In the meanwhile, Historic Charleston Foundation’s spring tours had become quite popular and an autumn version was deemed a viable income source for the Society. The Fall Candlelight Tours of Homes and Gardens became a Society-sponsored event that endures to this day.

In March 1977, the first article in *Preservation Progress* appeared in which the city’s assistant planner discussed initial ideas for revitalizing the city’s King Street business corridor. This was the opening volley for what would become an epic conflict for the Society. The early plans included the building of a massive convention complex including a hotel and parking garage to go up in the block between King and Meeting Streets. From this point forward, the battle was on to keep the scale of these plans from overwhelming the historic cityscape. Eventually, the conflict became a legal struggle entangling preservation ethics, business interests, and even personalities. Although it was a very difficult, stressful time for everyone associated with the Society, the end result was a greatly scaled-down project (and a preserved facade on Meeting Street that time has redeemed as being very worthwhile) and the more-reasonably scaled facility now called Charleston Place.

During the 1980s, while the tools of preservation were becoming more political and technically sophisticated, another quiet revolution was taking place. The popularity of personal computers both at home and in the workplace spawned the widespread use of desktop publishing. Suddenly the standards were raised for all printed material and especially for newsletters like *Preservation Progress*. Some felt the “grass roots” look fostered by the Society for years held a certain charm and appropriateness, while others saw the need to join the parade of progress and accurately reflect our organization’s moder-

ity. In 1982, the first professionally typeset *Preservation Progress* rolled off the press. It was a small change technically, but it opened the doors to a new world of layout and graphic options – not the least of which was greater readability for Society members and friends.

In 1982, the Preservation Society accepted its first conservation easement – a legal guarantee that a property will never be unsympathetically developed or altered in appearance. Donating an easement to the Society gave the donor a one-time tax deduction that became a new and popular tool of preservation. By 1985, the Society had received more than thirty easements for homes, condominiums, hotels, inns, retail stores, warehouses, and restaurants.

Readers of *Preservation Progress* during the 1980s followed the design refinement of the courthouse annex just off the Four Corners of Law, the restoration of the Exchange Building, a renaissance of Hampton Park, the development of the city’s new Waterfront Park along the Cooper River, and the adaptive reuse of an old railroad shed as the city’s Visitor Reception and Transportation Center.

Also during the 1980s, *Preservation Progress* took the opportunity to revisit the last of the Society’s founding generation – introducing these remarkable individuals to new members and saluting their achievements. Alston Deas, Dorothy Porcher Legge, Jack Krawcheck, and John D. Muller, Jr. were among those pioneer Charleston preservationists profiled in our pages. Although they are no longer with us, their memories live on through their profiles, which continue to inspire.

As everyone knows, a hurricane named “Hugo” punctuated the end of the 1980s. No one here at the time will ever forget it. The Society’s new executive director John W. Meffert had only been on the job 15 months when Hugo struck. It may have seemed as if the Society’s total effort – the preservation work of more than half a century – was undone in one horrible night. *Preservation Progress* was clearly staggered by the storm, but not silenced. It flickered, faltered, and regressed back to a typewritten, 12- page format. But under his leadership it heroically went to press less than three weeks after the storm listing important recovery resources and encouraging patience as the clean-up and restoration process slowly began. It reassured the membership of the Preservation Society of Charleston that we will endure, come hell or high water. And we did. The following issue of *Preservation Progress* published in December 1989—slightly over a month later – featured an adaptation of the Carolopolis seal ravaged by flood waters and strewn with hurricane debris. “Once again,” it said, “the endurance of her timeless courage shall triumph over adversity to mend and preserve the treasures of her heritage for future generations. This is Charleston 1989.” ■



NEXT ISSUE:
Part III, From the 1990s into the Future.



Preservation PROGRESS

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*To inspire the involvement of all who dwell in the Lowcountry
to honor and respect our material and cultural heritage.*



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