

Castle Chronicle



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Irmgard Graham's Garden

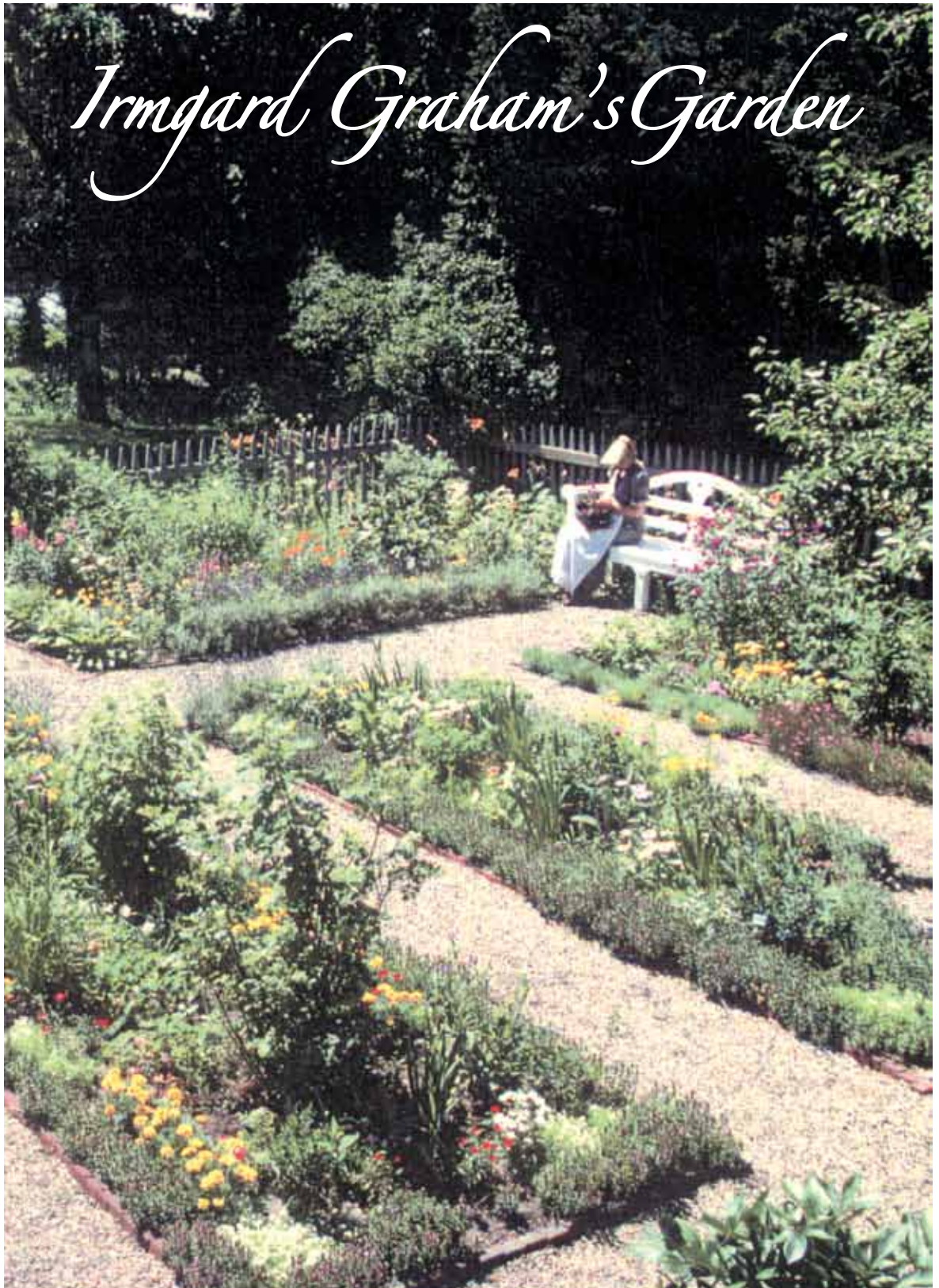
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The Graham Garden ca. 1990.

Lorrie McGowan, former resident caretaker, enjoys a quiet moment in the garden.

Photo: Maggie McGowan



Note from the President

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The views expressed by contributors to *Castle Chronicle* are not necessarily those of the Cocumscussoc Association.

Smith's Castle has many remarkable assets from its rich and fascinating history to its architectural elegance and its scenic coastal charm that continually delights visitors. Yet, for me, the draw of being a volunteer at the Castle is the people who keep this place going. We are like one big family. We work individually and together toward a common purpose, acting as each other's cheerleaders and mentors. We sometimes have our disagreements, but like most families, we all come together in the end.

This family spirit was no better evident than at our summer member party in August (page 3). A luau and pig roast, the event was planned to recognize a singularly effective Castle volunteer: Trustee Don Kern has been in the forefront of preserving the building fabric of both the Castle and the Annex for the past several years. He was instrumental in developing a new heating and ventilation system to address the moisture problems in the Castle basement. He helped secure funding from a State Preservation Grant for the \$45,000 project, and persevered through the project's many dips and turns to see it to its successful completion. The Castle basement is now "as dry as the Sahara," according to Don. Don's ingenuity and Yankee thrift saved the Castle and the State some money along the way, too!

Frank and Donna Boffi organized the event, with Frank paying a delightful tribute to Don and "awarding" him a gift of a garden bench as a token of the Castle's gratitude for his dedicated service. The docents gave him a wonderful one-of-a-kind Smith's Castle tee shirt. The comradery and spirit of goodwill evident at this celebration are emblematic of the great people we have here.

This positive view about the energy of Castle volunteers certainly is not just my opinion. This observation was echoed in the business plan for Smith's Castle recently developed by Preserve Rhode Island interns (page 4). While Smith's Castle faces many challenges in a tough operating environment for small historic house museums, Castle volunteers were praised for their energy and dedication. "Smith's Castle relies on and provides successful programming because of the support and dedication of its volunteers," the interns noted. "Their enthusiasm and commitment to the



property are contagious, and relying on this labor pool is vital for the future prosperity of the property."

If you haven't come down to the Castle lately, your next opportunity to see our team work its magic will be at the Colonial Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 17, 12–4 p.m. Melissa Powers, who is chairing the event, has developed an incredible day of fun for the whole family. The festival will celebrate fiber arts. Artisans will be demonstrating their crafts and selling their one-of-a-kind handmade items. The festival will also feature our docents and other invited reenactors engaging in colonial activities and cooking. Live entertainment will include the musicians of Updyke's Rose and the Yankee Volunteers' Fife and Drum Corps.

One challenge noted in the business plan is the need for Smith's Castle to tap into new resources, especially within the local North Kingstown community. It seems natural that the people and businesses of North Kingstown would support the historic property from which the town sprang. After all, Smith's Castle is the first English settlement (c.1637) not only in North Kingstown but in all of South County, and the Updyke family of Smith's Castle set out the village of Wickford in 1709. Moreover, Richard Smith's family crest forms the North Kingstown town seal. With such strong connections, would it surprise you to learn that less than one percent of North Kingstown households are members of Smith's Castle? Or that local business donations provide less than one percent of our annual budget? In 2010, Smith's Castle plans to make a major outreach effort to our local community, both for educational and fundraising purposes. We need your help. Do you have ideas about how to engage our local community more directly? Please send me your thoughts or consider volunteering on our membership or development committees.

Carol Palmer

—Carol Palmer, President



Trustee Don Kern Honored at Summer Social

Appropriately hot and muggy weather provided authentic atmosphere for Smith's Castle's first-ever Hawaiian luau on Sunday afternoon, August 16. Castle members and guests enjoyed a feast of roast pork and chicken along with a huge assortment of accompanying side dishes. The ROMPS (retired old men playing swing) and the Hummingbirds kept the mood lively with their upbeat renditions of many musical favorites.

Trustee Don Kern was honored for his determined and highly effective stewardship of the house as the chair (and sole member) of the Building Committee. His oversight of the recently completed installation of a boiler, sump pumps, dehumidification and humidification equipment, and associated duct work and drainage has effectively resolved the house's long-standing moisture problem.

Congratulations to Frank and Donna Boffi for putting together this wonderful event. It was a great way to spend a summer Sunday afternoon—friends, good food, good drinks, great music, and an unequalled setting! ■



Docents Gene Pouliot and Cathe Rezendes present Don Kern, center, with the first-off-the-press Smith's Castle tee shirt. Photo: Neil Dunay



Attendees enjoy their Hawaiian repast under the welcome shade of the giant mulberry tree. Photo: Neil Dunay

Don Responds

Thank you Sue [Moore] for the wonderful picture of great gramp and his great granddaughter Hadley. I hope some day, perhaps when she is a teen, her Mom and Dad will show her that picture and then she also will see and feel the love and the joy that she brought into my life.

I also hope that they will tell her that 16 August 2009 was a banner day in great gramp's life and although the picture featured only great gramp and her, there were many wonderful friends of his present. Friends who worked very hard to create a memorable Hawaiian luau festival on a beautiful New England afternoon. Friends who great gramp enjoyed working with because they were dedicated to keeping a significant period of Rhode Island history alive and to have "The

Castle," a beautiful historic building with period artifacts and grounds on the shore of the Bay, as a hands-on backdrop for that history. Finally, I hope when Hadley develops an interest in her birth state's history, she will return to the Castle and find it in pristine condition and will listen as she tours to the wonderful stories of its history accompanied by the creaking of the floor boards.

It has been an honor and a privilege to have been invited to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable team of volunteers in support of the Association mission. My sincere thanks for that wonderful day, the beautiful garden bench, and the unique and handsome Castle tee shirt.



'Gramps' Kern and great granddaughter, Hadley. Photo: Sue Moore

Business Plan Released

Neil G. Dunay

Earlier this year, Smith's Castle was one of five Rhode Island historic sites to be selected to participate in a business planning project under the auspices of the Preserve Rhode Island (PRI) and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC). [Chronicle: Summer 2009, 3] The final plan arrived in mid August, and the recommendations are summarized below.

"Smith's Castle, its volunteers, and its offerings are highly valuable. The Association's mission and efforts in terms of education are successful, as is its preservation of history and open space. The volunteers are professional and knowledgeable, the programming varied and interesting, and the site well maintained and accessible. Frequently though, the Association seems to undervalue its own offerings, and special events is an excellent example of that undervaluation."

The next step in the process is a review session on Friday, September 25. In a morning session, representatives from the five sites will participate in a workshop facilitated by the John Nicholas Brown Center. A public session will be held in the afternoon to discuss the business plan template and models for collaboration among historic sites in Rhode Island.

Many thanks to Carol Palmer, Maggie Skenyon, Barbara Vollmar, Melissa Powers, and Paul Christiansen for overseeing the project and providing information for the interns. Smith's Castle also wishes to thank the interns, particularly the project lead, Meghan Stasz, and

assistant, Melissa Higgins, for developing the report. We are also indebted to PRI and RIHPHC for funding and overseeing the project. Smith's Castle was delighted to be a part of this program and looks forward to using the plan to improve our operations.

Please review the recommendations below. If you see a project you would like to help the Castle tackle, please call the office (294-3521) or email smithscastle@earthlink.net.

Summary of Recommendations

Audience/Target Market

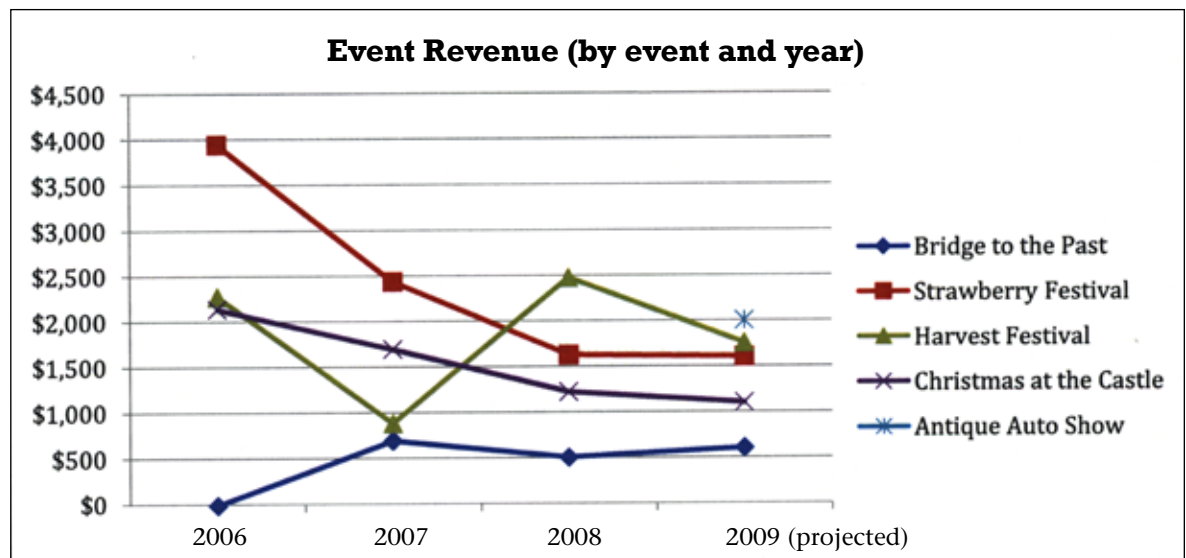
- Smith's Castle should focus its efforts on the community as its primary target audience, rather than tourists.
- The Castle should work with the Wickford Village Association and the Wickford Arts Association to collaborate and expand presence.

Governance

- The current committee structure should be streamlined.
- New committee responsibilities should be developed for Events, Community Relations, and Technology.

Organizational Management

- The Castle should find the resources to hire a full-time executive director and two part-time staff, one for media outreach, event planning, and website maintenance, and the other for managing membership and other development activities. (The estimated cost is approximately \$90,000 per year for the three positions.)



Marketing

- The marketing committee should take on a larger role, especially in communicating and coordinating with the local community.
- Printed materials should be streamlined (text reduced); all materials should consistently reflect the imagery and style of the brochure and rack card.
- The quarterly *Castle Chronicle* should be replaced with a semi-annual, shorter, glossy PR piece with large color photos that is focused on promoting Castle events and volunteer activities. The model should be the Preservation Society of Newport County's *Newport Gazette*.
- The website should be updated; models to follow are the Newport Historical Society, the Preservation Society of Newport County, and the Mystic Seaport websites. This item was noted as a top priority.

Sales

- Tour admission prices should be raised from \$5 for adults and \$1 for children ages 6–12 to \$6 and \$2, respectively.
- Gift Shop procurement should be reviewed to identify which items are the most costly and find lower cost alternatives or partner with other nonprofits on bulk purchasing.
- All events need to produce more revenue by increasing admission prices, vendor fees (from \$25 to \$45), the number of vendors, and corporate sponsorships.
- Rentals should be promoted more. The website should contain a rental section (modeled after Blithewold), and the Castle should reach out to local wedding planners and photographers.

Interpretation

- A possible addition to existing programming is a dairy component, and milk bottles and associated items could be sold in the Gift Shop.
- The Castle should provide a tour survey or evaluation system to gauge the interest of museum visitors, including the preference for docent-led or self-guided tours.
- The audio tour should be available on MP3 players for self-guided tours of the grounds, and markers should be placed strategically around the grounds to inform visitors. Cell-phone guides should be explored.

Education

- Teachers and chaperones who have used the Castle's educational programming should be sent surveys to solicit feedback.
- The Castle should create a promotional item (button, sticker, brochure) for students to take home as a promotion for their parents.

Buildings

- A maintenance plan should be created.
- The Annex should be renovated to include public restrooms and meeting space for use by the Association and other organizations' meetings for a rental fee.

- A small landing for kayaks and canoes should be built.

Financials

- Revenue from membership, annual appeal, and corporate sponsorship should be increased.
- More prominent donation boxes should be stationed around the Castle.

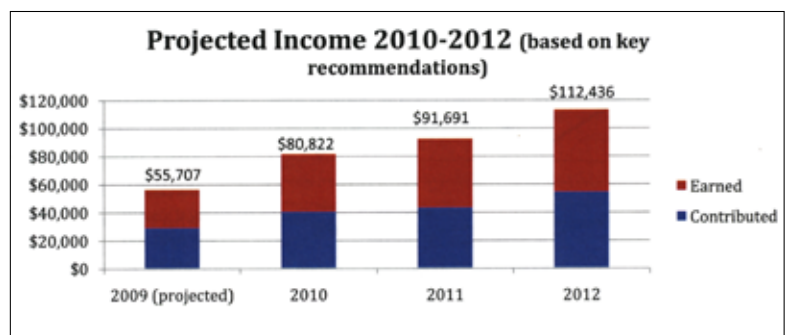
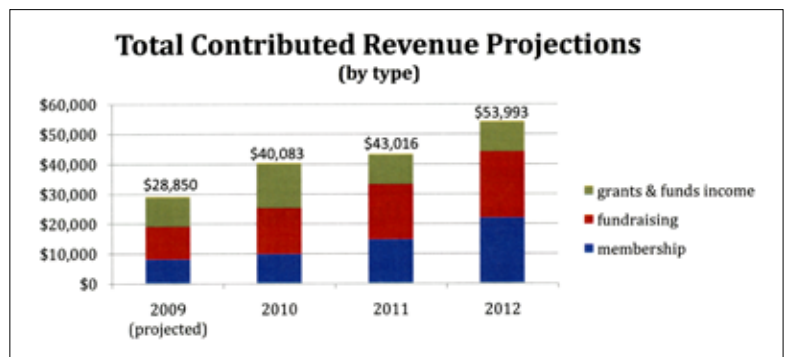
Development

- The annual appeal should include direct phone calls.
- Development Committee should create a development plan including a major donor program, planned giving

"The Cocumscusoc Association is a highly functional organization and Smith's Castle is a well-run, historically relevant site with a dedicated group of volunteers, talented docents, and significant competitive advantages in terms of site, history, structural condition, and aesthetic. There is a great deal of potential for new revenue streams, to increase existing ones, and to build on the member and volunteer program to aid those revenue streams."

program, and corporate sponsorship opportunities.

- By 2010 launch campaign for endowment or capital reserve fund, using the endowment campaign funds to cover expenses.
- The Castle should launch an upscale, annual fundraising event on the Castle grounds in the summer, collaborating with local businesses. ■



Recommended Reading

The Brother Gardeners Botany, Empire, and the Birth of an Obsession

by Andrea Wulf

Albert A. Knopf New York, 2009

Hardcover, 356 pages

ISBN-13: 978-0-307-27023-8

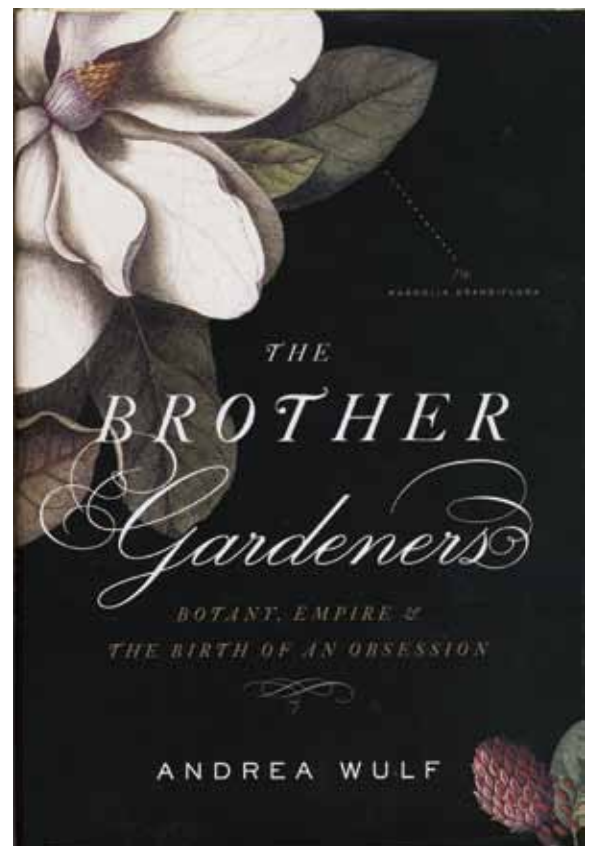
The cover of *The Brother Gardeners* features a detail of *Magnolia altissima*, the Laurel-Tree of Carolina, by Mark Catesby, published in 1754.

When we think of England, the famed British landscape gardens often come to mind. In *The Brother Gardeners: Botany, Empire, and the Birth of an Obsession*, Andrea Wulf, a German living in London, traces the 100-year process by which England became a nation of gardeners and center of horticultural expertise. In doing so, Wulf discovered that a small group of naturalists beginning in the early 1700s, transformed gardening from a hobby for the rich, who expressed their power and wealth through their gardens, into a national obsession shared by all classes by 1798.

Peter Collinson, an amateur botanist and cloth merchant in London, used his transatlantic connections to tie up with John Bartram, a Philadelphia farmer and fellow Quaker. For almost forty years, Bartram trekked through the wilds of the North American British colonies as far south as Florida, collecting seeds and plants to ship to Collinson and other clients in England. New species of evergreens and flowering shrubs were introduced that transformed the English garden.

The earliest British gardens simply imitated the formal geometrical patterns of France and Italy with clipped shaped shrubs, well-trimmed turf, and formal paths. By the end of the century, English gardens, influenced by the Enlightenment idea of "let nature reign," were characterized by a blend of shrubs, trees, and flowers set out according to the patterns of nature. Plants from throughout the entire British Empire were transposed into the gardens of the high born as well as those of the middle class.

Brother Gardeners is a story of six men throughout the world, some friends, some enemies and often rivals, who through a worldwide network changed the face of botany and gardening forever. Philip Miller's *Gardeners Dictionary* (1731) was the most popular practical gardening manual of his day. Wulf notes that Miller's *Dictionary* laid the foundation for much of our current horticultural knowledge and provided a template upon which all plant encyclopedias are



based. In his manual, non-professionals discovered the secrets of cultivation in easily understood essays.

Several years after the publication of Miller's *Dictionary*, the Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, traveled to England to convince the British to adopt his method of classifying plants according to a sexual system. Although shocking at the time, his classification method and his standardized naming of plants have become the accepted norm today, in spite of Miller's prediction that both "would be of short duration." Linnaeus also applied his nomenclature to animals, classifying humans as primates, and first



Callicarpa americana.
This was one of Mark Catesby's drawings that made English collectors and gardeners excited about colorful American plants.



Monarda didyma.
Bartram found this flower during his expedition to the League of the Iroquois near Oswego in 1743 (hence its common name Oswego tea). It flowered first in England in Collinson's garden three years later.

using the designation *Homo sapiens*. Thanks to the Linnaean system, botanists throughout the world could communicate with each other. In contrast to some of the other "brother gardeners," Linnaeus is portrayed as an egotistical genius who sometimes named noxious plants after botanical rivals who dared criticize him.

A much more likeable character was the botanist and wealthy adventurer, Joseph Banks. Along with his colleague, Daniel Solander, who had been Linnaeus' star pupil, Banks explored the plant life of Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, and Tahiti aboard HMS *Endeavor*, during Captain Cook's landmark expedition that Banks financed. As evidence of his obsession with botany, Banks was disappointed when he gave his wife a clump of moss to wear as a brooch and she found it unsightly. He thought her a "fool" for preferring diamonds. Banks also bankrolled the ill-fated journey of the HMS *Bounty* to gather breadfruit trees to feed West Indian slaves as well as Captain Bligh's second successful mission for the same purpose.

The trade in plants reinforced the connection between England and the colonies. It inspired the self-taught Bartram to suggest to Benjamin Franklin a colonial equivalent of England's Royal Society. His suggestion led to the establishment of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia in 1745. Even the tensions of the American War for Independence could not sever the connection between Joseph Banks, who maintained his neutrality in the interest of science, and Franklin who, at Bank's request, granted immunity to Captain Cook's scientific voyages.

Readers not normally interested in horticulture will enjoy this well-illustrated book. The author has included copious notes as well as an excellent glossary that gives the Latin name, common name, date of introduction, and, for many plants, several sentences of additional information. Wulf tells a wonderful tale and this, combined with her meticulous research, makes the work a most readable recounting of the history of Britain's national gardening obsession.

England's obsession was contagious. Catherine the Great demanded an elaborate English garden in Tsarskoe, outside St. Petersburg, and when Thomas Jefferson visited England he noted many of the trees and shrubs were of American origin, and realized it would be possible to bring the English garden to Monticello, his Virginia estate. A reading of this book should enable Smith's Castle members to better understand and appreciate their own eighteenth-century garden. The time period Wulf examines is contemporary with the date the Graham garden was intended to reflect. It is a wonderful source for background information on the gardens and landscape at Smith's Castle. ■

—Norma LaSalle, PhD

Irmgard Graham's Garden

An 18th-Century Garden for Smith's Castle

Darrell McIntire

One of the most enduring and admired features of Smith's Castle is the lovely garden that lies on the southwest side of the house. It is known variously as "the eighteenth-century garden," "the colonial revival garden," or simply, after its creator, "the Graham garden." Perhaps my most vivid experience associated with the garden occurred five or six years ago while I was fielding potential questions from visitors during Strawberry Festival. It was a beautiful spring day and the garden had been immaculately manicured for the event. A group of half a dozen or so women entered the garden. As they walked around they frequently stopped, pointed to certain plants, and quietly murmured among themselves. Uh oh, I thought, it looks like they're going to have a lot of questions. Finally, one of them approached me and asked, "Is this an eighteenth-century garden?" No, I responded. "It was created with that intent, but over the years it has drifted somewhat, and the current garden can't honestly be called eighteenth century." With an harrumph, the woman turned on her heels and along with her companions, hastily exited the garden. This, apparently, was a group of knowledgeable women who had come to Smith's Castle expecting to see an eighteenth-century garden, and for good reason. We represent our garden as such. I wonder how many other disappointed visitors we have had over the years. From that spring day I stopped referring to the garden as the eighteenth-century garden, preferring colonial revival garden or, more accurately (and succinctly), the Graham garden.

Soon after the Cocumscussoc Association was formed in 1949 and restoration had begun on Smith's Castle, the job of upgrading the landscape surrounding the house also got underway. In this task the Association was fortunate to have the support of the South County Garden Club of Rhode Island. The Club's efforts led to the creation of an *Eighteenth-Century Garden for Smith's Castle at Cocumscussoc*, as the project was formally labelled. This hard working and dedicated group not only conceived and designed the garden, but also secured the Garden Club of America's coveted "Founders Fund Award" for their design in 1953. This highly competitive award pro-

vided the funding necessary to install the garden. A talk by Irmgard Graham, the garden's designer, details these women's efforts (page 14).

Mrs. Graham notes that while the garden is labelled an eighteenth-century garden, it is not a recreation or restoration of a garden that existed at Cocumscussoc at that time. It is a mid twentieth-century creation of a landscape feature that never existed, at least not in the location the Club selected as its garden's site. However, Graham believed such a garden very likely had existed at Cocumscussoc, and by applying the principles of eighteenth-century garden design and layout, and by employing a palette of appropriate period plant materials, she intended to create an authentic eighteenth-century experience for mid twentieth-century visitors to the site.

This brings us to why the garden is often referred to as a "colonial revival" garden. The colonial revival movement got going around the time the nation celebrated its centennial in 1876 when a renewed interest in all things colonial and a desire to save the rapidly disappearing architecture of America's colonial past took hold in the country. Interest soon spread beyond architecture to interiors, to artifacts and antiques, to costume and clothing, and ultimately, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, to the gardens and landscapes of the American colonial era.

1. The site selected for the eighteenth-century garden was a bare area lying just southwest of the house. The stone wall in the center of the photo supports the picket fence adjacent to the side of the house.





2

The ultimate colonial revival landscape of course is Colonial Williamsburg. The creator of Williamsburg's landscape and gardens, Arthur Shurcliff (1865–1957), a New Englander and Harvard graduate in landscape architecture, undoubtedly held rock-star status among the women of the South County Garden Club. Shurcliff's hand is evident in the assumptions, the basic design principles, the configuration, and the list of plants employed in the garden for Smith's Castle.

What makes Irmgard Graham's garden an eighteenth-century garden? To begin with, it sits next to an eighteenth-century house. Smith's Castle is often referred to as a Georgian structure. To be more precise, its current appearance reflects a 1738 renovation carried out by Daniel Updike in the Georgian style. Georgian simply refers to the collective stylistic features of the period from 1714 to 1830 when a sequence of King Georges (the I through the IV) ruled England and, until 1776, her American colonies.

Architecturally, Georgian design is characterized by the bilateral symmetry of its major visual and functional elements. The entry door is the main ornamental feature of the Georgian facade. It is centered on the front and is flanked on either side by windows aligned horizontally and vertically in symmetrical rows. If the interior space does not require a door or window, a false one is introduced to maintain the building's symmetry. Design detailing is classically inspired, with the work of Andrea Palladio especially apparent. Overall, Georgian design is very elegant, very refined, and very precisely executed. Although based on human proportions and human in scale, Georgian buildings do not blend



3

with their natural surroundings. In America at least, Colonial-era Georgians did not embrace nature, they elevated themselves above it, a very appealing idea as, at the time, they were busy carving out a place for European civilization in the "wilderness" of a new world.* Nature was to be dominated, controlled, and kept in her place, not embraced and certainly not idealized. Georgian architecture exists apart from nature. Its paint colors contrast rather than blend with the landscape. Auxiliary elements, such as gardens, are laid out and shaped to relate to the main structure. Pathways travel in straight lines, turn at right angles, and have uniformly parallel edges. Levels are well defined and flat. When levels change, terraces with steps are favored over gradual, sloping grade changes. Areas have well-defined edges and are precisely differentiated from adjacent areas.

Graham's design layout consciously reflects the relationship between her garden and the house; and she integrated eighteenth-century concepts of garden placement into her scheme. The garden is an extension of the adjacent house, not only in its placement, but also in its structure and configuration. For example, existing pathways at the side and front of the house serve as axes that, when extended, define the edges of the garden and determine how it is oriented. Component planting beds in Graham's design are precisely defined. However, as few plants grow according to Georgian design

2. September 1953. Ladies of the South County Garden Club plant the garden, in dresses!

3. May 1954. The Graham garden soon after its initial installation. Boxwood lines the main path and tiny germander plants are just visible along the edges perpendicular to the boxwood in the center beds. None of these plants survived Hurricane Carol. The germander was replanted, but the boxwood was replaced with lavender.

*On the other hand, in England, gardeners were busy making their gardens more naturalistic. In 1753, Horace Walpole noted in *The World* "There is not a citizen who does take more pains to torture his acre and a half into irregularities, than he formerly would have employed to make it as formal as his cravat."

—continued on page 10

Irmgard Graham's Garden (from page 9)



4. Daniel Updike's Georgian house is barely discernible beneath the Victorian-era embellishments of the nineteenth century.

principles, a well-groomed and well-defined border is necessary to keep free-form exuberance in check. Planting beds are delineated with bricks. In addition to the brick edging, a border of edging plants is introduced. In Graham's initial scheme, boxwood and germander hedges, precisely trimmed to create a well-defined, crisp edge, were used to corral the more unruly plantings. Photos taken following the initial installation and planting of the garden clearly show bricks neatly sailed in perfectly straight lines, meeting at precise ninety-degree angles. Fledgling box and germander plants line the edge (photo 3).

While Georgian principles may have been the guiding force defining the garden's design concept, mid twentieth-century garden and landscape ideas did creep into Graham's design, whether knowingly or not. In the 1950s, just as today, naturalism was an underlying characteristic of landscape and garden design. In America it was an increasingly influential trend in the nineteenth century and the Victorians were much enamored with the natural world. In the realm of design and architecture, structures were more likely to be integrated into, rather than placed apart from their surroundings. They were painted warm colors that blended with the landscape, and were further softened by trees and shrubs planted near to the house. Think of Smith's Castle at the time it was purchased by the Association in 1949 (above). Daniel Updike's Georgian mansion was barely discernible beneath the Victorian embellishments added over the years. The sharp gable ends of the house had been clipped, a Victorian practice intended to make them appear softer, more "organic." Porches that blurred the line between indoor space

and outdoor space had been added to three sides of the house. The front porch had been further softened by planting a trumpet vine that was trained to grow along the porch's roof line. On all sides of the house foundation plantings edged the base of the house, nestling the house into its surroundings and blurring the distinction between the man made and the natural. Over time, the formerly straight-edged pathways became less well defined, and as new paths and drives were introduced they were inevitably curved rather than straight.

Graham and her contemporaries were not immune to these trends any more than we are today. She had edged her garden with a fence to be sure, but it is an informal one with softly curved pickets painted a natural gray color. It defines the garden but certainly not as emphatically as a hard-edged Georgian designer might have done. Graham's design also includes a decidedly un-Georgian planting bed along the side and front foundation walls of the house, softening the edge between house and pathway, a distinctly Victorian practice still very much with us. Today, a house without foundation plantings looks stark and almost unfinished. Also, Graham's design incorporated the ancient trumpet vine with its gnarly trunks and rustic arbor, another vestige of the Victorian era. Finally, the restored house was painted red, then *de rigueur* for colonial houses, but a very un-Georgian color choice nevertheless. The juxtaposition of Victorian features against Georgian features resulted in a confusing blend of two time periods, as well as opposing design principles. This blurring of conceptual intent created a difficult interpretive issue, although it is doubtful the founders were aware of it.

Sadly, no sooner had the South County Garden Club completed the hard work of installing the garden than Hurricane Carol swept through the area in August 1954 (page 16). Photos taken shortly afterwards recorded the damage to the area adjacent to the house. The debris was quickly cleared and the work of reinstalling and replanting the garden got underway. By the following spring, the garden was again ready for the public. It seems the planting scheme of this second version of the garden varied somewhat from the first. For example, none of the boxwood plants survived the hurricane, and were replaced with lavender, an edging plant with a substantially different growth habit than boxwood. In the Smith's Castle archive, two distinct planting schemes can be found, and these may define the pre- and post-Carol gardens. After it was installed, the South County Garden Club continued to care



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for the garden until 1961. Photos through the early 1970s show the garden to be well maintained. Upon her death in 1991, Irmgard Graham left a generous bequest to the Association. It became the basis of the Graham Garden Fund that has supported the continued maintenance of her garden to this day.

By the 1990s, the fence and paths of the garden were showing their age, and a substantial renovation of the garden was carried out. Photos show the perimeter fence was refurbished and repainted, and the paths on all four sides of the garden were spruced up and again looked as crisp and clean as they did when new (photos 7 and 8). There is no record of any attempt to restore the original planting scheme of the garden at that time, however. In fact, one photo clearly shows the presence of bleeding heart, a very old plant to be sure, but one Irmgard Graham specifically excluded from her original scheme because it was introduced to American gardens only in the nineteenth century.

During the 1990s and early years of this decade, Audrey Moncrieff must be credited with maintaining the garden. Following Audrey's departure in 2002 a garden committee was formed, but the garden was neglected until 2004 when the Trustees voted to "restore" the garden. This led to a period of maintenance by master gardener volunteers from the University of Rhode Island. Their efforts ensured a well-maintained and well-groomed garden for the following two to three years. Several plants dating to the twentieth century (e.g. hybrid tea roses) were removed and replaced with more appropriate plantings. Mature red cedar trees, small shrubs when the garden was first installed, were limbed up restoring

significant sunlight to the garden. Also, a much-needed irrigation system was installed. However, inappropriate plants continued to find their way into the garden. A very large lace-cap hydrangea, a nineteenth-century introduction from Asia, now dominates the southwest bed of the garden. Not only is it period inappropriate, but the hydrangea is out of scale for the garden. Any original plants remaining around its base will not long survive, including one of the garden's original peonies.

Today, Irmgard Graham's vision of an elegant Georgian confection displaying the wealth and refined taste of its aristocratic mistress is a very distant memory. The crisp, Georgian features of the garden have diminished. The once precise, neatly aligned brick edges now wobble and weave, the inviolate line they formerly drew flaunted by flower and weed alike. Edging plants gave up long ago. Johnny-come-lately nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultivars mock and bully their venerable eighteenth-century counterparts. Now, the garden evokes an aging cottage garden whose mistress has grown too old to effectively care for her creation.

While the garden's fortunes have diminished, the house, thanks to its recent restoration, today more accurately reflects Daniel Updike's vision than at any time since he completed his 1738 renovation. It is now painted white as Updike had intended, and appears much more Georgian than its red, 1950s predecessor. The recent removal of the trumpet vine and its rustic arbor makes it possible to once again see the facade of the house. For the first time in more than one hundred years the intrusive vine's Victorian veil

5. Graham garden, 1975. Twenty years following its installation, germander edging plants still remain in the center bed. Annual marigolds have replaced the lavender edging along the main path, however. Interestingly, the Federal-era porch still exists at the rear of the house.

6. Graham garden 1991. Just prior to an extensive renovation project undertaken in the early 1990s, overgrown shrubs and trees are apparent both inside and outside the garden.

7 and 8. A 1990s spruce-up included a renovation of the garden's perimeter path. Shown here are the paths to the side and rear of the garden. Both are overgrown and impassible today.

—continued on page 12

Irmgard Graham's Garden (from page 11)

9. The newly restored garden and fence, ca. 1993.

The bench has been moved from its original location to make way for a bird bath dedicated to a former member. The bench is at the end of the main path with a view of the side of the house as opposed to the view of the cove, from its intended location.



9

has been lifted, and the effect of the house's Georgian features can be fully appreciated.

Today, the effects of several seasons of little maintenance are clearly apparent in the garden. A rapidly advancing brush line has literally reached the garden gate, and the perimeter path of the garden is now impassable on three sides. Inside the garden's severely deteriorated fence, weeds have the upper hand, in spite of the heroic efforts of Robin and Lily Bell Porter. [*Castle Chronicle*, Summer 2009, 2] A report to the long-range site committee, prepared by Jack Renshaw (page 16), details the many problems that currently plague the garden. The site committee, in working towards the creation of a *Site Preservation and Master Design Plan* for Cocumscussoc, has made the Graham garden a priority. Later this year, grant requests to support a much-needed, professional restoration of the garden will begin going out. The proposal to restore the Graham garden will seek funding to support three major efforts:

1. The restoration of the garden by a historic landscape professional. The proposal will include, not only the restoration of the infrastructure of the garden, the so-called "hardscape," but also the resto-

ration of the South County Garden Club's original planting scheme with plant materials from the original plant list.

2. The creation of a master maintenance plan to guide future care of the garden. A beautifully restored garden will quickly deteriorate unless adequate maintenance guidelines and care procedures are put into place.

3. The augmentation of the current Graham Garden Fund. Even the most comprehensive maintenance plan will not ensure survival of the garden unless there is adequate funding available to carry out its directives. The restoration proposal will also request funding to increase the Graham Garden Fund to a level sufficient to guarantee adequate professional maintenance of the garden in the future.

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, issued in 1996 by the U.S. Department of the Interior, will guide the restoration work. Under the terms of a covenant with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, the Cocumscussoc Association is obligated to adhere to these Standards. Federal funding granted to the Association through the Rhode



Island Department of Transportation's Transportation Enhancement Program compels compliance with the Standards as well.

According to the Standards there are several kinds of preservation treatments available for elements in a cultural landscape. We are fortunate the Graham garden retains a very high level of "integrity." That is, the original hardscape features and overall layout of the garden remain intact. Also, although little of the original plantings remain, thorough documentation of the planting scheme and the list of original plants still exist, and the garden can therefore be accurately recreated. This makes the Graham garden a perfect candidate for restoration. As a preservation treatment strategy, "restoration" has a precise meaning, i.e., "the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period." [DOI: 5]

According to the Standards the Graham garden is a *Historic Designed Landscape*, a "landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist

according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture; or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes." [DOI: 2]

The Cocumscussoc Association has been, since the mid 1990s, obligated to apply the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards* to its maintenance of the Graham garden (and to its care of the entire landscape for that matter). While the condition of the garden makes such compliance currently impossible, it is hoped the proposed project will, not only restore the garden, but also renew the Association's pride in this very important feature of the Smith's Castle landscape.

The Graham garden has many layers. It is an eighteenth-century-style garden created in the twentieth century and influenced by the nineteenth-century colonial and Georgian revival movements. It is not simply the Smith's Castle backyard garden, and we can not treat it as we do our gardens at home. Understanding the garden is necessary to properly maintaining and interpreting the garden for our visitors.

If, at some future Strawberry Festival, another group of ladies comes seeking the eighteenth-century garden at Smith's Castle let's make sure they find the garden they are looking for. Let's insure they experience the garden Irmgard Graham and the women of the South County Garden Club wished them to experience. And let's make certain their experience leads them to a greater appreciation of the site, the house, and the Updike family of Smith's Castle. ■

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Irmgard Graham's Garden

Irmgard Graham Discusses Her Garden

In this piece Irmgard Graham describes her garden and the process of creating it for Smith's Castle. From the phraseology, it seems likely this originally was a talk presented by Graham.

The eighteenth-century garden here at Smith's Castle is a creation rather than a restoration. Although the location of a "garden" to the southeast of the house is clearly marked in Lodowick Updike's will, no detailed information has come down to us.

The plans for the present garden were made in 1951 for the Cocumscussoc Association by an interested member and were approved by the Association. In 1953, the South County Garden Club of Rhode Island submitted the plans to the Garden Club of America and applied for, and won by popular vote of the member clubs, the Founder's Fund Award. The funds thus received made possible the entire construction and original planting of the garden. The work was supervised and in part done by members of the Founder's Fund Committee of the South County Garden Club. At present the maintenance is the responsibility of the South County Garden Club.

When the garden was first being planned we decided upon the mid to late eighteenth century as the period for it, as this was the height of the House's prosperity. At that time, it was the centre for the intellectual, political, and social leaders of the South County; balls and parties were given and its warm hospitality was extended freely to the many guests who came to its doors, not only from Rhode Island but from all parts of New England and Nieu Amsterdam.¹ Mr. Daniel Updike made many additions and improvements; among others he added the beautiful paneling in the dining room and the handsome staircase. Surely Mrs. Updike, and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Lodowick Updike would not have been content with a few herbs and simples by the back door! Particularly when every week ships were dropping anchor at the dock at the foot of the orchard, bringing news of the world and its fashions! And surely it is reasonable to suppose that in the cargo with the silks, brocades, spices, and other luxuries and necessities of the day there would have been plants and seeds from England and, particularly, bulbs from Holland. For the Dutch had been coming into the quiet waters of Wickford harbour as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century to trade with the Indians and the Smith/opDyck connections with Holland and Nieu Amsterdam were close. With such a house, beautiful, even luxurious, and such owners, there is no need

to question that there would have been a garden suitable to the house and the people who lived there.

Gardening played a tremendously important part in the life of the eighteenth century; interest was universal, not only in the art of gardens, and the design and layout, but in horticulture too. As trade increased, and ships sailed the seven seas, rare plants and seeds from all quarters of the globe were included in the cargoes and eagerly awaited and sought after.

Garden layout in the colonies followed the traditions of the period. "[Gardens] were simple, but orderly; the paths were of gravel or grass. For walls there was earth, planted with such shrubs as were found locally; and stone, where stone was plentiful; as bricks were being made in most of the colonies, bricks also were used; and, of course, wooden fences of many kinds."

"Simple but orderly"—these are key words;—there was a definite pattern, axes were taken into consideration, and the relationship of the house to the garden. We were pleased to find this description—"the house itself never formed any boundary wall of the garden which lay out a little way to catch the sun. A clear space was left all around for "passing." At times, to get a level situation or a southern exposure, a garden would be laid out at the side of the house instead of the back."²

Here, on the side of the house, a path already existed which had to be kept "for passing," and the south side was precisely the place where we wanted to build the garden. With this to go on, although there are evidences of possible terraces to the east, we chose this location (photo 1, p. 8).

The pattern, as you can see, is very simple. The paths are of screened gravel on a suitable foundation and brick edged for permanence and easy maintenance. They were not paved with brick for although this was commonly done in the south, it was seldom done in New England at that time. The paths are wider than they probably would have been in the eighteenth century but this was done because of the semi-public nature of the garden and for better circulation.

A picket fence was decided upon for the enclosure. In spite of the pleasant view toward the creek and the bay, an enclosure was a must. The pickets were carefully shaped to resemble those found in a very old, now abandoned, dooryard garden on Quaker Lane. We took another liberty in adding two service gates. Ordinarily [there] would probably have



been only one entrance to a garden of this period, but for ease of maintenance and better circulation, two inconspicuous ones were added.

When it came to choosing the plants we found the list of plant materials available in the late eighteenth century a surprisingly long one. Sometimes people express surprise that some of the “old fashioned” flowers, such as bleeding heart or petunias or the double Harrison’s Yellow rose are not included. They ARE old, to be sure, but date back only to the nineteenth, rather than the eighteenth century.

Trees, shrubs, bush roses, flowers, and herbs all grew happily side by side in eighteenth century gardens and here are some that you will find in the garden at Smith’s Castle.

To help give us some much-needed shade we planted two Washington Thorns (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*), a

seckel pear, and a quince tree. For shrubs we have two white-flowering almonds, a sweet shrub, the shrubby St. John’s wort, and, outside the garden a smoke bush, winter berry, red cedars, and, to guard against evil, a clump of elderberry. Within the enclosure are the old roses; the white Rose of York, the Cabbage, the Rose of Damascus, the old pink mosses, the Rose des Peintres, the old French, and the Eglantine.

Originally, the entry path was lined with boxwood, a most generous gift from one of our Garden Club members³ but it, with so many other plants, did not survive the ravages of [Hurricane] Carol, so it has been replaced with lavender. The side paths are edged with teucrium (germander) and grass pinks.

The blooming season begins with the earliest bulbs; snow drops and cloth of gold crocus, soon followed by grape hyacinths, candy stripe tulips, and the old double yellow and double white daffodils. These overlap with forget-me-nots and the tiny hearts ease. Soon afterward, as the flowering almonds are fading, myrtle, lily of the valley, sweet violets, and Jacob’s ladder come along; quickly followed by florentina iris, the old red, white, and pink officinalis paeonies, short spurred blue columbine, the grass pinks, and the fragrant, lemon day lily.

Early summer brings the foxgloves, Canterbury bells, sweet William, and hollyhock; stokesia and veronica; lavender, sweet rocket, corn flowers, and love in a mist. Annuals, such as snapdragon, calendula, marigold, Chinese asters, nasturtium, globe amaranth, and celosia carry the bloom through the summer months and make a gay picture with the summer flowers, tiger lilies, London pride, liatris, sneeze weed, and New England asters. Note: This is only a partial list. ■

—Irmgard B. Graham, Chairman
Founders’ Fund Award Committee, 1953, ‘54, ‘55
South County Garden Club of Rhode Island

1. Mrs. Graham is off in her chronology. Nieuw Amsterdam had ceased to exist about one hundred years before the late eighteenth-century time period selected for the garden. It was surrendered to the English and became New York in 1674.

2. This quote is from *Gardens of Colony and State; Gardens and Gardeners of the American Colonies and the Republic Before 1840*, p.4, edited by Alice G.B. Lockwood and published in two volumes by the Garden Club of America in 1931–34. The fact that the reference was not given also suggests this was a verbal rather than written presentation.

3. Mr. and Mrs. William Davis Miller donated 35 boxwood plants in 1951.

The path that runs along the front of the house was continued into the garden and was the garden’s intended entry path. This gate was considered the main gate. It is the widest of the three gates and the only one with two panels. Today, choked by English ivy and trumpet vine, it can not be opened. Only one of the two service gates remains operational. Photo: Maggie McGowan.

Irmgard Graham's Garden

Irmgard B. Graham was born in November 1902 in Germany. She immigrated to the U.S. with her family as a child. She and her husband, James Douglas Graham, lived on Love Lane in North Kingstown and were actively involved with Smith's Castle in the early 1950s. Both were landscape architects and Mr. Graham served as head of the landscape architecture department at R.I. School of Design. In addition to the Smith's Castle eighteenth-century garden, Mrs. Graham executed designs for many area gardens, including one for the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society in 1974 on the occasion of the bicentennial of South Kingstown. It was also a project of the South County Garden Club of Rhode Island (SCGC). She was very active in the SCGC and served as the group's president in 1961 and '62.

Mrs. Graham's design for the Smith's Castle garden included not only the area enclosed within the picket fence that delineates the garden today, but also incorporated areas adjacent to the front and side of the house. In 1953, '54, and '55, Mrs. Graham served as chair of the Founders' Fund committee of the SCGC and oversaw the successful application to the Garden Club of America (GCA) for its Founders' Fund Award in 1953. The prize money thus awarded financed the initial installation of the garden and, following Hurricane Carol, its re-installation.

In addition to the garden itself, a model of the garden, recently re-discovered in the Annex basement, [Chronicle, Winter 2008: 24] was also recognized by the GCA, according to a Castle and garden club member at the time.

When her husband died, Mrs. Graham sold the Love Lane house and moved to an apartment in Wickford. She remained there just one year before purchasing a home in Brandon, Vermont, near their son, Douglas. She died in Vermont in December 1991 at 89 years of age.



Carol vs. Cocumscusoc

On August 31, 1954, the 18th century Founders' Fund Award garden at Smith's Castle, Cocumscusoc, entertained its most distinguished, or rather, we should say, notorious, visitor. Hurricanes seldom give much notice of their coming, nor do they observe visiting hours. The little garden, prim and tidy, as it had been all summer, was prepared to receive courteous and interested guests. Our vigilant maintenance committee had seen to that and had left nary a weed nor dead-head in place. This guest arrived, however, not as a lady, to a well-ordered house, but as a roaring, tempestuous wench, hurling herself in headlong, paying no heed to gates or fences, and bringing with her chaos and destruction.

She brought not only wind, but water; salt water, submerging the garden completely, stopping just short of the door sills. She swept out the fence and scattered the pickets, so carefully shaped to resemble those found in an old South County garden. But though she huffed and she puffed she couldn't blow the house down for she had not reckoned with the



seventeenth- and eighteenth-century builders who built their houses to endure many a hurricane. As house presents she left two boats in our garden beds and deposited five others on the property, as well as crates and lumber, dock timbers, demolished buildings, furniture, and wash tubs, even the corpse of the woodchuck who had annoyed us all summer by nibbling away at the annuals. The grave of the forty soldiers who gave their lives in the Great Swamp Fight of 1675 remained undisturbed; the path to it badly burned, but around the grave itself only a premature autumn had shed the leaves.

A few days later, with the aid of a clear-sighted and comforting husband I tried to see beyond the incredible debris and to take stock of the situation. In spite of the salt-water bath, might not the freshwater of the nearby creek and the torrential rains that accompanied our second "Sudden Guest," Edna, have prevented toxication of the soil? How much of the plant material were we going to lose? Was the fence, scattered hundreds of feet in two directions, irretrievable? Were sections of the flower beds so low because our neat mulch of buckwheat hulls had gone with the water or had a great deal of loam been washed away?



Were the paths and brick edges, so definitely tipsy in spots, going to mean an expensive repair job?

By the middle of October the report was encouraging. The University of Rhode Island, after analyzing the soil, declared it still fertile and safe for future planting. The trees, roses, and most of the shrubs showed signs of new growth and will probably survive. The boxwood and teucrum edgings are doubtful, but already a committee member is raising teucrum from cuttings in her greenhouse for possible replacements. Some of the herbs and perennials will undoubtedly have to be replaced but fortunately the fall planting of the iris and peonies had not been done. Most of the fence proved retrievable. Stringers, pickets, and posts were combed from the flotsam and jetsam and only a small number found damaged or missing. When the soil that had been displaced was levelled out we found very little was needed to bring the beds back to their original grade. A morning's work with skilled hired labor restored the gravel paths and brick edgings to their previous neatness. Our unbidden guest brought us one welcome house present, which we hereby acknowledge with thanks! Five railroad ties; these were promptly used to retain the bank below the fence. The garden is a garden again. On the whole, Carol was kind.

A word should be added about finances. The South County Garden Club Maintenance Fund is paying for the needed repairs to the garden itself and for the plant replacements not being donated. The Cocumscussoc Association, in grateful appreciation of the gift of the Garden Club of America, is raising the money needed to repair and re-set the fence. The sum remaining in the Founder's Fund Award account will be used only to complete planting and work previously planned, but not carried out.

Those of you who read Mrs. Greene's article, "Even Pick a Posy" in the January 1954, *Bulletin* may possibly remember that in listing some of the plants to be used, she wrote, "and, of course, to ward off evil, an elder bush." I can only suppose that the elder bush I transplanted from our own place last spring was not quite big enough. Perhaps a whole row? The latch string at Smith's Castle continues to be out, but we trust that our future visitors will arrive like ladies, in a decorous manner as becomes our well-ordered eighteenth-century background. ■

—Mrs. James Douglas [Irmgard] Graham
South County Garden Club of Rhode Island
in *Garden Club of America Bulletin*, January 1955.

August 2009 marked the 55th anniversary of Hurricane Carol. Although the devastation to the garden, which had been installed only a few months earlier, was substantial, the Association and the South County Garden Club were able to reinstall the garden by the following spring. This, while also coping with severe damage to the remainder of the site, including both houses.

Irmgard Graham's Garden

The Graham Garden Today

Jack Renshaw

The Graham Garden, August 2009.

The garden has become very overgrown and weeds are rapidly gaining an upper hand.



The Graham Garden, also known as the Colonial Revival Garden, was installed at Smith's Castle in 1953 and subsequently restored following the devastation of Hurricane Carol in 1954. It was sponsored by the South County Garden Club with plans drawn by Irmgard B. Graham. The garden is an approximate 35' x 45' rectangle with brick-edged gravel paths and planting beds, all enclosed by a low, wood, picket fence. The inspiration, design, and original appearance of the garden are more thoroughly described in the *Cultural Landscape Report for Cocumscussoc* prepared by Lucinda Brockway in 2009. The condition of the garden today has changed significantly from its early years. Conditions recently noted include the following:

- The gravel paths, which may have been resurfaced with new gravel over the years, are increasingly overgrown with weeds.
- The bricks edging the paths, which also may be a replacement material, are shifting out of position.
- The wood picket fence, which may be mostly original, is in increasingly deteriorated condition.
- Railroad ties, installed after Hurricane Carol outside of the fence at the southeast corner to stabilize the garden from erosion, are rotting.
- Just to the south of the garden, plantings that were noted as "5 cedars" in the original plans and show

up as small shrubs in early photos, are now a dense grove of tall cedars and other trees and shrubs that covers the garden with an increasing amount of shade during the growing season.

- A wooden bench has been added at the south end of the main path. It bears a small plaque commemorating the South County Garden Club.
- A surface-mounted irrigation system has been installed in recent years. The condition and operation of this system were not verified for this report.
- Existing planting materials that seem to conform to the original Graham plan include the following:

The Seckel pear tree that was designed as a focus at the southwest corner of the garden has survived and matured, although a quince tree specified for the west end of the garden is no longer extant, nor are the Washington Hawthorns specified for the northeast corner.

Some original shrubs appear to survive, including several boxwoods and a pair of *Prunus glandulosa* (Dwarf Almond) beside the "Old Gate" on the north side.

Also remaining throughout the garden are a number of herbaceous peonies.

- There is much shown in the original planting plan that appears to now be missing. This would include the following:

Quite a few old shrub roses that were located throughout the garden are no longer there (at least a half-dozen varieties were originally specified).

All of the original edging plants, which had lined all of the paths, are now gone. These include borders of lavender that once ran along the north-south path, as well as germander and other plants that lined other paths. Note: Originally, the continuation of the path along the front of the house into the garden was the "main" path. The gate that accessed this path was intended to be the main gate. Today, it is unusable.

The original plans called for a great variety of herbaceous plantings that would have provided for sequential blooming throughout the season. Virtually all of this originally specified material seems to be gone and has been replaced with other plants. Note: There is a system of plant identification labels throughout the garden, but these labels do not seem to be related to the original planting plan. Also, there exists another planting plan for the garden which is neither labeled nor dated. It appears that this plan may have been

drawn for a replanting of the garden at some point in time. Whether this plan was ever implemented is not known.

The original garden plan also makes note of a number of plants in the surrounding area outside of the picket fence. These plants included yucca, mock orange, and smoke bush, along with a variety of other plants, which, with the exception of the yucca, no longer exist. ■

The Garden Needs You!

On Saturday, September 12 at 9:00 a.m. a "weeding party" has been scheduled for the Graham Garden. As anyone who has visited the Castle this season can attest there are enough weeds to ensure plenty of work for anyone willing to volunteer.

Since fall 2007, nature has had free rein in and around the garden. Weeds have grown with abandon, matured and, with no fall or spring clean-ups, deposited countless seeds that, abetted by this year's unusually wet spring and summer, have sprouted and again matured into the dense bumper crop that now confronts us. The photo at the left only hints at the situation.

This special party will go a long way towards making the garden more presentable for the remainder of our visiting season. However, the garden needs tender loving care on a continuing basis. Can you possibly spare a few hours away from your home garden each month? If so, we want to hear from you! Please phone the office (294-3529, Thurs.-Sun.) or email (smithscastle@earthlink.net).

Your help will ensure that this generation of Smith's Castle members and volunteers carries on the work of generations past who lovingly nurtured this beautiful, important, and meaningful feature of the Cocumscussoc landscape.

Irmgard Graham's Garden

Whose Garden?



"Whose Garden?" by Mrs. Joseph Warren Greene Jr. first appeared in the January 1955 issue of the *Garden Club of America Bulletin*. Mrs. Greene was a founding member of the Cocumscussoc Association and served as president in 1951.

Above. The plaque on the garden gate reads "18th Century Garden, Winner of the Founders' Fund Award of the Garden Club of America."

Known ye, gentle dames, that your eighteenth century garden at Cocumscussoc is a conversation piece. Never a dull moment at Smith's Castle explaining to visitors why certain plants are in the garden and, what is more provocative, why certain plants are not.

"My grandmother always had..." Someone is sure to say before she is through the gate which she does not trouble to close, "my grandmother always had..." And although I am tempted to ask how old the grandmother was when she departed this life hoping to indicate the lady could not have lived in the eighteenth century, I invariably resort to plucking a bit of ambrosia or rubbing the green velvet of peppermint geranium between my fingers thus turning the talk to potpourri and "soothing our thoughts to gentleness" as is suggested in an old herbal.

If I began, sweet ladies, by saying your eighteenth century garden, I believe I should correct myself for I doubt if the garden is yours in spite of the sign on the easterly gate, the one that looks to the bay and to the spires of Updike's Newtown (Wickford to you)—*Winner of the Founder's Fund Award of the Garden Club of America*. I doubt if the garden is ours, either.

"Where..." cried the proprietary female marching into the garden last summer with a bevy of Valkyries, "where is the angelica? It should be in that corner!"

May Druids and Pan protect me, I thought, knowing full well the angelica had been moved.

"It was growing too tall," I ventured.

"Angelica" replied the dame in the voice of a Cook's Tour guide sweeping past me, "is what you put in the frosting of cakes."

Feeling myself on alien soil I turned to a little girl kneeling on a gravel path copying from the plant labels into a diminutive note book—*Teucrium... Lavendula vera*.

"Could you help me?" she asked looking up. "I'd like the Latin and English names of all the edging plants." Twelve years old and she wants the Latin names, I thought with joy. We sat down comfortably on a bench.

"The others did not want to come," she confided. "They wanted to go to other places but I had to come. Where else around here could I see an eighteenth century garden?"

Where else indeed and straightway I forgot the long drought, the losing battle with voracious weeds, and the tedious trials of all gardeners.

"You must come back," I said, "when the lavender is in bloom, see the tall blue spikes which have consoled us for the box edging Carol so ruthlessly stole and the lovely white almond blossoms and the old roses—Remember," I cried in exuberance (receiving perhaps some remote guidance from the wife of Richard Smith whom Roger Williams records as a woman of "notable hospitality toward strangers")—remember the garden is yours!" and not content I added, "It belongs to everyone."

Recollecting tardily my position of trust I did call after the little girl, "Please close the gate. Unfortunately, we do have to exclude some from the garden, the permanent inhabitants of Cocumscussoc—woodchucks and rabbits."

So you see, gentle dames, the garden is hardly ours any more. ■

Kids' Corner

Collecting Plants: A Pressing Project

In the sixteenth century when European explorers struck out to discover parts unknown, they often returned with samples of plants they'd found along the way. As this collection of treasures soon exploded, botanic gardens were hard pressed to keep living samples of the whole lot. So botanists devised a solution: create a collection of pressed plants. After all, scientists wanted to compare their discoveries, identify new plants, and document the diversity and distribution of plants on Earth. The system they designed includes carefully pressing plants, mounting each specimen on a sheet of heavy paper, and creating an accompanying information card. These feature such details as when and where the plant was found (and by whom), its habitat, and the common and scientific names (if known). These plant libraries, which scientists



Left. Carl Linnaeus in the Lapland attire that he wore while courting his wife-to-be, Sara Elizabeth. He also wore this contume in the Netherlands in order to impress the Dutch botanists. Linnaeus was always painted holding the pink forest flower, *Linnaea borealis*. Right. An herbarium specimen of hybiscus from Harvard University's Gray Herbarium.

still use today, are called herbaria (below).

Following is information on how you can gather and press flowers and plants. You can then create scientific-style herbarium pages, bound into booklets, design a field guide to your yard, your neighborhood, or perhaps Smith's Castle. You can focus on

specific plant categories—those used for medicine, or native trees, or flowers introduced to American gardens in the 18th century, for instance. Flattened flowers and interesting leaves can also be used in art and gift projects, including notecards, place-mats, and decorative candles.

What is a Herbarium?

A herbarium is a library or museum of dried plant specimens. The first herbarium is attributed to Luca Ghini (1490?–1556) who held one of the first chairs of botany at the University of Bologna. By the mid 1500s the art of herbarium-making was disseminated all over Europe. The herbarium of Gherardo Cibo, a pupil of Ghini, was started in 1532 and still exists today.

Originally herbarium pages were bound into a book. It was Carolus Linnaeus (1707–78), the founder of the modern system of scientific plant names, who departed from the convention of the day. He introduced the idea of mounting specimens on single

sheets and storing them flat in cabinets. This became the general practice by the mid eighteenth century and is still the standard today (see Norma LaSalle's review of *The Brother Gardeners*, p. 6) Today, the Linnaean Society of London's Herbarium archive contains all 14,300 of Linnaeus' plant specimens.

Closer to home, the Harvard University Herbaria, with more than five million specimens, are one of the ten largest herbaria in the world in number of specimens, and along with the library, form the world's largest university-owned herbarium.

Kids' Corner

Get out and gather

It's best to collect plants for pressing when they are free of dew or rain. Use scissors to snip flowers, leaves, or entire plants. Flat flowers tend to press better than bulky ones. To keep collected plants fresh in the field, put them in sealed plastic bags out of the sun. You'll want to get plants into the press as soon as possible. If you need to keep them overnight, a wet paper towel in the bag will keep them from wilting too much. Or, you can press and protect plants in a phone book or catalog until you get home.



Assemble the plant press

A plant press sandwiches plant parts between layers of absorbent material so they will dry quickly. (This better preserves specimens and color.) Although you can press plants in old phone books or catalogs, a setup that enables air movement speeds up the drying process. The plant press consists of alternating layers of plants arranged on absorbent material (newspaper and/or blotter paper) and corrugated cardboard. The cardboard enables air circulation so the plants dry more quickly.



Press the flowers

Carefully lay each specimen in between a folded sheet or two of newspaper (or blotter paper, sandwiched in between newspaper). You can lay numerous flowers or plants of the same thickness on the same piece of paper, as long as they don't touch.

Try to arrange flowers and other plant parts in a natural way, so their parts will be visible when pressed. In between each plant/paper layer, insert a piece of corrugated cardboard. Finally, place wooden boards on either side of your layered pile. Bind or weight the stack to create pressure. You can tighten straps or belts around it or put something heavy on the stack. Leave your press in a warm, ventilated location.



Many plants will dry in ten days to two weeks, some may take longer. If you find they are still moist when you check them, and you have them between more than one newspaper layer, you can change just the outer layer. (Delicate plants, when moist, will likely stick to the piece they're touching.)



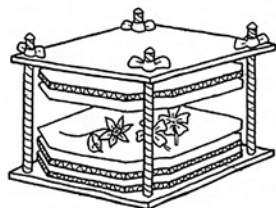
Mount the flowers

Use a thinned Elmer's white glue to attach plant parts to heavy paper. If a flower, petal, or leaf seems breakable, put the glue on the paper and let it sit until it dries a bit. Next, pick up the flower with a damp fingertip and press it gently onto the glue. You may want to cover your pages with clear contact paper or slip them into clear sleeves before putting them into a binder.

Flowers that press well

Here are a few types of flowers that are good for pressing: bleeding heart, buttercup, butterfly weed, columbine, daisy, dutchman's breeches, heather, larkspur, pansy, phlox, Queen Anne's lace, salvia, and wood violet. (Also think about using ferns, colorful leaves, and other plant parts to add interest to pressed flower displays.)

Information on how to press plants adapted from the National Gardening Association's website (kidsgardening.com).



Hearthside Cooking

'Tea' from Your Garden

Contributed by Barbara Crudale

Herbal teas are infusions made from anything other than the leaves of the tea bush (*Camellia sinensis*). Herbal teas therefore are not really "tea," but let's not get into that. Colonial-era Americans made teas from plants found in their gardens, but following the Boston Tea Party herbal teas became closely associated with the struggle for independence.

Here are some of the most popular recipes for brewing tea from plants in your back yard. You can use leaves fresh or dry them for use during the winter. Common herbs to use are members of the mint family (black or white peppermint, apple mint, spearmint), lemon balm or lemon verbena, or these blends:

- equal parts sage, thyme, marjoram, and chamomile flowers
- six parts peppermint with one part sage and one part rosemary leaves
- equal parts lemon verbena, or lemon balm, and peppermint with a pinch of grated lemon or orange peel
- equal parts of lavender, rosemary, and thyme

To make tea from fresh leaves

Pick fresh leaves from the top of the plant and wash (usually the bottom leaves hold too much oil for culinary use). Heat the teapot by rinsing it with hot water. Boil the water for tea. Place six to eight leaves in a tea strainer and place in a four-cup teapot. Pour boiling water over the strainer and let steep about ten minutes. Take the strainer with tea leaves out of the pot before pouring tea.

To dry leaves for tea

Hose the plants down with a fine spray about an hour before harvesting. In late morning or early afternoon, prune the top four to six inches from the top of the

plant for drying. A shoe box lined with paper towel and labeled with the name of the plant is helpful to store the leaves as they dry and also remind you which herb is in the box.

- The herbs can be dried in the box in a warm, dark, well-ventilated place. A bedroom with the shades drawn, but the window open, for example. Remember to turn the leaves occasionally to expose all sides to the air. Once they are crisp dry, the box can be covered until ready to be used for tea.

- Also a drying rack can be used to hang bunches of herbs to dry; a fan circulating near the rack will dry the leaves quicker.

- Leaves can be dried in a microwave oven. Place a layer or two of leaves between two paper towels and set the timer for two to three minutes. If the leaves need more time, set the timer for thirty-second intervals, checking the leaves between each thirty-second shot.

- The conventional oven, set no higher than 100°F, will also dry the leaves. Lay leaves on a baking sheet and keep warm until crisp.

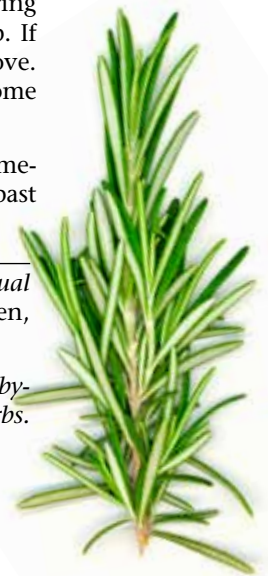
To store the leaves

Use glass jars with screw tops. Watch carefully during the first week to be sure the leaves remain crisp. If not, remove them and continue to dry as above. Otherwise, the entire contents of the jar will become moldy. Don't forget to label the jars.

As the snow flies this winter, let a cup of your home-grown tea warm you with memories of gardens past and dreams of gardens yet to be. ■

Pos, Tania M. Buckrell. *Tea and Taste, The Visual Language of Tea*. Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., Atglen, Pennsylvania, 2004.

Shaudys, Phyllis. *The Pleasure of Herbs: A Month-by-Month Guide to Growing, Using, and Enjoying Herbs*. Barnes and Noble, New York, 1997.



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Upcoming at Smith's Castle

September

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 12	9:00 a.m.	Graham Garden "weeding party"
Saturday, 19	9:00 a.m.	Docent meeting
Friday, 25	9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Business Report Workshop John Nicholas Brown Center, Providence
Saturday, 26	9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Landscape Master Plan session Hazard Conference Rooms A & B Coastal Institute, URI Narragansett Bay Campus

October

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 17	Noon – 4:00 p.m.	Colonial Harvest Festival Fiber arts theme
Saturday, 31	4:00 p.m.	Castle closes for the season

November

Day	Time	Event
No scheduled events		

December

Day	Time	Event
Saturday, 5	Noon – 4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle
Sunday, 6	Noon – 4:00 p.m.	Christmas at the Castle