

The Founders Memorial Garden and Women Who Loved It by Maureen C. O'Brien 8/9/15

Articles about the Founders Memorial Garden usually feature men influential in its history, such as Ross Crane, who in 1857 designed and built the three existing structures (Lumpkin House, kitchen building and smokehouse), and Dr. Wm. Leroy Broun whose family were the first residents. Prof. Charles Morris and family were the second residents for almost 30 years, and son Sylvanus grew up in the house, also became a professor, and later spent 27 years as dean of the UGA School of Law. (1) Hubert Bond Owens established the first professional study of landscape architecture in the SE and used the site as a facility to develop his fledgling program into today's vibrant UGA College of Environment + Design. Besides Dean Owens, there were many men who had a hand in designing the grounds, such as 1930s' professors Frederick W. G. Peck and Brooks Wiggington. Their influence is still found throughout the site, as is that of Prof. Robert J. Hill, the Garden's first director, whose 30 year commitment to the program is memorialized in the naming of the Robert J. Hill Courtyard in the center of the garden.

This article addresses some of the many women who also had a say in the management and development of the site and enjoyed the views out the windows and the scents, sounds and pleasures of this wonderful place. One of these was Miss Mary Dorothy Lyndon who, with the advent of women being allowed to attend regular sessions on campus, became the first UGA dean of women. (2) The Lumpkin House (named this as it was the first address on Lumpkin Street) had been remodeled and was ready to become her home and a place of comfort for the sixty-four new female students. In 1920, Dean Lyndon opened the wide door of this rose brick, plantation plain, Greek Revival style house and welcomed visitors into her parlor, as Mrs. Sallie Fleming Broun and Mrs. Mary Minor Morris, the faculty wives who previously lived here had done.

But Dean Lyndon's house was not the four and five room structure that these earlier residents had cared for, Mrs. Broun from 1854-1856, and Mrs. Morris in 1860-1890. In those early years, the house supported the work of the faculty husbands, provided a place of solace to homesick student visitors, was home for the wives and children, and was the centerpiece of a social and utilitarian, food providing landscape. The original two-story house contains two rooms on each floor and a central hall and staircase. The 20 x 40' rear addition, which was added by 1894, provided more space for the Morrises and their six children. (3) After the Morris family left, the house, kitchen building, smokehouse and outhouse supported the uses of student mess hall (1898-1906), a male student residence hall, and for a short time, an athletic dorm. (4)

For Dean Mary Lyndon, a clapboard wing was constructed on the south side of the house to provide an indoor kitchen and bathroom. This modernized building was very suitable for the visitors that came through the doors – fellow university faculty, her Athens friends and family, and the many young women who came for comfort, advice, and inspiration as Mary Lyndon was also the first woman graduate of UGA and had much to tell. This property had always been a social place, but now it became even more important to the women (and single men)

attending the university after World War I. A photograph implies that an ornate garden created at the turn of the century by Mrs. Morris was still providing a pleasant place to gather in front of the house. (5) The barns and food gardens in the rear and western side of the site, which supported the previous families and student food service, became an ornamental landscape for the enjoyment of the visitors.

The direct influence of Dean Lyndon on these young lives ended abruptly when she died of pneumonia in 1924. (6) Many young women had become attached to this landscape, so when Dean Lyndon's national sorority requested access to the university property, Phi Mu became the first sorority to have a house on campus and the site was again filled with female laughter. Starting with ten women, the chapter outgrew its home in four years and moved, (7) but the site continued to be a center of female activity as a women's dormitory until the mid-1930s. We may wonder how many trysts were made in this landscape when Joe Brown Hall, the male dormitory, was constructed in 1932 on the southern edge of the property.

While this house on Lumpkin Street became filled with people and anecdotes, an associated story had been created at the Lumpkin House on Prince Avenue. In 1891, Mrs. E.K. (Mary Brian) Lumpkin and eleven women friends officially began a club, soon named the Ladies' Garden Club. Later proven to be the first garden club in the United States, it began a strong movement across the country that knitted landscapes and people together. (8) By 1928, the Garden Club of GA, Inc. (GCG) was founded with 29 garden clubs across the state, and by the mid-1930s this burgeoning organization was looking for a special way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the garden club movement. Athens became the focus of that search.

Dean Hubert B. Owens responded to the quest as he had been working closely with the GCG president Mrs. Mattie Hatcher Flournoy since 1928 to help his fledgling landscape architecture program grow. (9) By 1938, the landscape architecture program had moved into the Lumpkin House and a one story, one room, brick wing was added to the north side for Dean Owens' office. The next year a commitment was made with the GCG, the University and the GA Board of Regents to use the Lumpkin House, its outbuildings and 2.5 acres of surrounding land to create a special teaching garden, called the Founders Memorial Garden, as a living memorial to America's first garden club. (10) As was described in *The Garden Gateway*, the periodic publication of the Garden Club of GA, Inc.:

“Besides being a suitable memorial to this first club all Georgians are so proud to claim, the Memorial Garden will be an excellent example of landscape design which can be visited and observed by the garden clubs of Georgia, and its location served the additional purpose of giving future landscape architects a model garden, complete with many varieties of plants which they can study first hand.” (11)

The students and faculty of the landscape architecture program used the house and the kitchen building for classrooms and offices while they designed and oversaw construction of the garden. The construction was

financed by the Garden Club of GA, Inc. and the University adopted the maintenance. (12) Miss Nina Scudder, one of UGA's first female landscape architecture graduates, was a member of the Ladies' Garden Club and the secretary of the GCG during the early years of the garden development. She dutifully recorded the construction progress with script and photographs, and was co-chair of the effort with Mrs. Rosena White Bradshaw, who coordinated the fund drive. Women from over 127 garden clubs in the state (13) and over 20,000 members and friends contributed funds to this project. (14) Brick and sandstone pavers were donated to embellish the existing courtyard, and 2,000 boxwood plants came for the boxwood parterre and the perennial garden. A pond and fountain, an herb terrace, an allée of camellias, an elegant lawn, and a gravel terrace overlooking a formal staircase and walled perennial garden were installed. (15)

The formal garden areas, the first of three landscape styles that are featured in the garden, were designed by Dean Owens and his faculty and students in the Colonial Revival style, complete with balanced geometric beds, strong focal points, mixed herbaceous borders, and brick, wood and cast iron site furnishings. The earlier women who had loved this landscape would have once again been able to find an intimate formal garden to enjoy; now away from the front of the house and the bustle of a developing campus edge and placed into quiet spaces embedded into this secured green oasis. The earlier formal garden was replaced by an entry court of granite pavers, repurposed from Athens' cobble streets and is now a clausum with a time capsule to be opened in 2091. This entry court beautifully complements the Greek Revival double spiral staircase added to the front of the Lumpkin House. (16)

Dean Owens was satisfied that the bones of the Garden were completed and the ladies were delighted with the partnership and the results. The garden was officially dedicated in 1939, although not finished for a number of years. Individuals and garden clubs continued to provide plants, urns, benches, staircases, and statuary in memory of loved ones, and plaques and a sundial were added to show gratitude to those who contributed to this lovely place. (9)

After World War II, the north and southwestern areas of the Founder Memorial Garden became a living memorial dedicated to WWII veterans. The dedication plaque reads to "Those who gave much and those who gave all." These informal arboretum areas represent a second style, a picturesque landscape with high tree canopies, flowering understory trees, and sweeping shrub borders with a multitude of groundcovers and bulbs. Accented with benches, stone retaining walls, and a small pool with a statuary fountain, the northern arboretum was designed to provide a respite where one can sit in revelry and enjoy the beauty of this rich, educational landscape. Along the western side of the site, bordering the signature north campus iron fence, is a trail that expresses a third landscape style, a woodland walk. Using plants in mixed layers, one species spills onto another, texture upon texture. This woodland walk was called the "Sneak Path" by students and is still enjoyed today.

A few of the women in school during the design of the garden were Mary Ferguson, BLA '36, Nell Paulk, BLA '40, and Jeanne Guggenheim, BLA '42. These women may have influenced the design as throughout the garden's history students and faculty have had a voice in what plant materials should be used. As an example, Mrs. Weir "joined the faculty and tried to do the (perennial) garden in all white." (17) presumably to teach a new trend in garden design touted by garden writers of the era.

The Founders Memorial Garden soon became well established and served as an excellent teaching garden, but after seventeen years the Department of Landscape Architecture overflowed out of the antebellum structures and into three other locations on north campus. In 1956, the program was consolidated into Denmark Hall, a building uphill from the garden. With the garden buildings empty, the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. came forward. Now 738 clubs strong, the GCG needed a state office. From 1958-1964, the kitchen building of the Founders Memorial Garden served this role until the house could be reconditioned from classrooms and faculty offices into their new State Headquarters. The renovation work was done under the excellent oversight of Mrs. Jeanie Tate Anderson, and again the Founders Memorial Garden became a special place for women.

To commemorate the first twelve founders of the garden club movement, the smokehouse was turned into a memorial room. This Memorial Room was later redecorated in 2009 into the award-winning space that it is today under the presidency of Mrs. Charlotte Waters of the Ladies' Garden Club. One of its interesting adornments is the brass door knocker, donated by Miss Moina Michaels, the Poppy Lady, who initiated the worldwide use of the red corn poppy flower as a symbol of remembrance for war veterans. Miss Michaels was a UGA professor who lived in the downtown Georgian Hotel, and a member of the Ladies' Garden Club. She enjoyed introducing young WWII Navy officers who were temporarily housed in Old College and the Georgian Hotel to the Founders Memorial Garden. (18)

For 27 years the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. used the buildings and the gardens almost daily, enjoying the amazing facility that they had helped create. Many events were held in the gardens, many walks were taken along the paths, and many visitors were entertained with stories of past residents or the beauty of the diverse botanical collections. Eventually the GCG also outgrew the buildings and relocated their headquarters to the State Botanical Gardens of GA. (19) The garden buildings did not stay vacant for long, as some of the College of Environment + Design faculty and staff moved back into these now elegantly appointed spaces.

Presently, Dr. Dorinda Dallmeyer, Director of the Environmental Ethics Certificate Program shares the upstairs rooms of the Lumpkin House with Ms. Sara Ross, Director of the Wormsloe Institute. Dr. John Waters, founder of the UGA Historic Preservation Program, is now in the previous office of his mentor, Dean Hubert Owens. Ms. Maureen O'Brien, the garden's horticulturalist and curator, has her office in the kitchen building.

As a teaching garden, the Founders Memorial Garden provides a diversity of garden design, construction materials and plantings, and over 1500 student visits were made during the past school year by the College of

Environment + Design alone. It is also a place of wonder for students, faculty, veterans, gardeners, photographers, parents and children. The long history of women who followed their interests and their passion to nourish and create this environment is still felt today by those who visit it and enjoy its charm. We welcome you to be one of those people.

End Notes

1. **Morris, Sylvanus.** *Strolls About Athens in the Early Seventies.* Athens : Unknown, 1912.
2. **Shearer, Lee.** Phi Mu honored as UGA's oldest sorority. *Online Athens.* [Online] March 5 Monday, 2012. <http://onlineathens.com/uga/2012-03-05/phi-mu-honored-ugas-oldest-sorority>.
3. **Waters, John.** *Nomination for Garden Club of GA Museum- Headquarters House- Founders Memorial Garden.* Athens : National Register of Historic Places, 1971.
4. **Reed, Thomas Water.** *"Uncle Tom" Reeds Memoir of The University of Georgia.* [ed.] Ray Mathis. Athens : University of Georgia Libraries, Miscellaneous Publications, 1974, Vol. 11.
5. **Adams, Dexter.** *Founders Memorial Garden, Athens, GA: A Site History.* Athens, Georgia : UGA Thesis for MLA, 2000a.
6. **Georgia Alumni Record.** *Lyndon, Mary Dorothy.* 1938, p. 73.
7. **Shearer, Lee.** Phi Mu honored as UGA's oldest sorority. *Online Athens.* [Online] March Monday, 2012. <http://onlineathens.com/uga/2012-03-05/phi-mu-honored-ugas-oldest-sorority>.
8. **Cothran, James R.** *Garden Club of Georgia.* September 09, 2014. New Georgia Encyclopedia.
9. **Scudder, Nina Wilkins.** *Report of Founders Memorial Committee 1938-1940.* Special Collections Library , UGA. Athens : s.n., 1940. Garden Club of GA, Nina Scudder Manuscript Collection.
10. **Owens, Hubert B.** *Personal History of Landscape Architecture in the Last Sixty Years 1922-1982.* Athens : UGA Printing Co., 1983a. pp. 45-6.
11. **Black, Jannette B.** Founders Memorial Garden. *Garden Gateway.* Fall, 1940a, October, p. 3.
12. **Owens, Hubert B.** *Personal History of Landscape Architecture in the Last Sixty Years 1922-1982.* Athens : UGA Printing Co, 1983b. p. 45.
13. **Kempton, Grace Arrington.** *Founders' Memorial Garden Growing.* Athens : Garden Club of GA, 1940.
14. **Owens, Hubert B.** *Personal History of Landscape Architecture in the Last Sixty Years 1922-1982.* Athens : UGA Printing Co., 1983c. p. 47.

15. Black, Jannette B. Founders Memorial Garden. *Garden Gateway*. Fall, Oct 1940b, October, p. 3.
16. Adams, Dexter. *Founders Memorial Garden, Athens, GA: A Site History*. Athens : UGA, 2000b. p. 17, MLA Thesis.
17. —. 2000c. p. 76, MLA Thesis.
18. Michael, Mona. *Georgia BIOS: The Poppy Lady*. [interv.] Sadie Hornsby. s.l. : U.S. Work Projects Administration, Federal Writers' Project (Folklore Project, Life Histories, 1936- 39); Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, February 8-9, 1939.
19. Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. *Founders Garden*. [Online] 2015. <http://gardenclub.uga.edu/foundersgarden.html>.

Side Notes

Still furnished with antiques, draperies and lighting donated by the previous users the lower rooms in the Lumpkin House provide a unique and beautiful space for meetings and classes and are offered as a venue for weddings and other special events. The buildings and garden can be rented by contacting the Garden Director, Prof. David Nichols (dnichols@uga.edu).

The Founders Memorial Garden Endowment Fund was established to provide funds to restore the historic features, and tell the historic stories of the house and gardens. For more information on ways to help with a gift, please contact the CED Development Director Jennifer Messer at jlmesser@uga.edu or 706 542-4727.

Photo Credits

- Figure 1. UA0045, Box 1, Mary Dorothy Lyndon Papers, 1915-1964, UGA 92-105:152, Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries.
- Figure 2. Adamson, W.C and Canupp, J. T. *The Founders Memorial Garden, Athens, GA*. Athens: UGA BLA Thesis, 1960. Photographer unidentified.
- Figures 3 UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Historic Photo Collection: *Sue O'Kelly, age 16, 1960s*, photographer unidentified. FMG.60.O'Kelley.unknown
- Figure 4. UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Photo Collection: *Gooseboy Fountain*. Photograph by Maureen O'Brien, Spring 2013.
- Figure 5. UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Photo Collection: *Bldgs/Gardens From Above*, Spring 2013, Img.2956. Photograph by Maureen O'Brien.
- Figure 6. UA93-042:4-5 RG2-14 Env. Design. Records of Hubert Bond Owens 1959-1987 Box 4 Folders 4A, *Dedication of Lady with the Rose, 1954*. Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries.
- Figure 7. UGA College of Environment and Design FMG Photo Collection: *Ribbon Cutting of Memorial Room Remodeled, 2009*. Photograph by John Waters, March 30, 2009.

Photos for Article



Figure 1. Miss Mary Dorothy Lyndon, the first female UGA graduate student, and a professor of English, was the first Dean of Women and lived in the Lumpkin House before the Founders Memorial Garden was built.

Photo courtesy of UGA Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

Photo of students with augar.

Figure 2. Dean Owens and faculty made sure that students were educated in the construction of the gardens.

Photo courtesy of Adamson and Canupp UGA BLA Thesis.



Figures 3 and 4. The garden fountains have provided places of relaxation for decades.

Photos courtesy of UGA College of Environment and Design

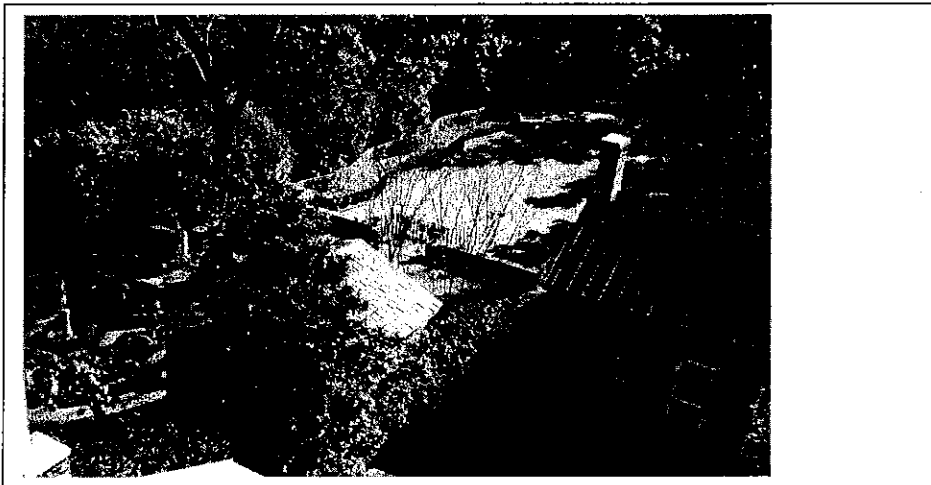


Figure 5. The formal areas evoke Colonial Revival design.

Photo courtesy of UGA College of Environment and Design



Figure 6. The Lady with a Rose statue was dedicated in 1954 by the National Council of State Garden Clubs and is located in the Perennial Garden. Left to right: Mrs. Rosena Bradshaw, National Garden club representative, Dean Owens, Miss Nina Scudder

Photo courtesy of Garden Club of GA, Inc.



Figure 6. The old smokehouse was made into a Memorial Room to honor the first garden club in the US, established in Athens, GA in 1891. It is open by appointment. Left to right at the ribbon cutting of the recent award-winning remodel in 2009: Mrs. Ginnie Denson, Mrs. Charlotte Waters, Mrs. Kathryn Gruetter of The Ladies' Garden Club.

Photo courtesy of John Waters