



HISTORY
of
THE MAGNOLIA TRIBUTE GARDEN
at
Independence Hall National Historical Park
Locust Street between 4th & 5th Streets

*Compiled in 2021-22 by Susan Ayres, PCGCA Chairman,
from many sources which are noted at the end and in italics within the text.*

“Independence Hall” was originally the Pennsylvania State House and then, at the time of the American Revolution, the site of the Confederation Congress, First Continental Congress, the presentation of The Declaration of Independence and the writing of the Constitution.

After the Revolution, Philadelphia was the nation’s Federal City/Capitol from 1790-1800, when it was then moved to its current location in Washington, DC.

The Pennsylvania State government was also seated in Philadelphia until about 1812 when it moved to Harrisburg.

In 1816, The Independence Hall site was purchased by the City of Philadelphia to save it for “posterity”. It belonged to the State of Pennsylvania and the City of Philadelphia until the early 1940’s.

- 1910’s City Beautiful movement began
- 1926 Sesquicentennial
- 1930’s reorganization of National Park System
- 1935 Historic Sites Act passed

1940’s. As the city grew and spread out, it became prudent and necessary to protect the site and many nearby architecturally and historically significant buildings from encroaching slums, and the ever-present fire hazards.

World War II and the bombing of Pearl Harbor also inspired a heightened sense of patriotism, interest in our national history and concern for protecting historic sites from bombs. 1942 Independence Hall Association formed with Judge Edwin O. Lewis (Court of Common Pleas) as its President.

In 1943 it was declared a National Historic Site.

On **June 28, 1948**, Congress passed Public Law 795, authorizing the **creation of Independence National Historical Park**. It consisted of two parts:

- Pennsylvania State Mall, running north and south, accomplished by razing many blocks of buildings. It was a joint project of the State of Pennsylvania and the City of Philadelphia.
- Federal part, running east from Independence Hall and including many historical buildings, but because of a lack of funds it was never completed as planned.

In 1949 The Garden Club of America (GCA – founded here in 1913) got involved in beautification of the site when sisters; Mrs. Frederic Rosengarten (Emeline “Toby” Marion Sims Rosengarten), a member of **The Weeders**, enlisted the help of her sister Mrs. Charles Platt (Dorothy “Doc” Falcon Sims Platt), a member of **The Garden Club of Philadelphia** approached The Garden Club of America (GCA)’s Executive Committee, May 10, 1949 with a suggestion that they donate an allée of 48 *Magnolia soulangeana* trees along the Mall – “one for each state of the Union - a tribute of gratitude to those whose courage made this country possible”. Magnolias were selected as they were George Washington’s favorite tree. GCA agreed to donate 48 magnolias. Proposals were asked of several nurserymen, with appropriate trees being selected by Fairman Rogers Furness *, and were grown at Upper Bank Farm in Media, Pennsylvania (later Wirt and Sais Thompson’s family nursery), to await preparation of a site. The work was expected to be completed by 1951.

* (*Furness was a grand-nephew of architect Frank Furness*)

According to some random notes, no payment was ever made to him until April 1953 when GCA sent him \$200 as a down payment, from their Magnolia Fund which had been established to raise money for this project. Rose prints were sold to help finance the project.

Letter to GCA from Mrs. Rosengarten

(original in The Weeders file under “minutes.”, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

May 10, 1949

*Executive Committee
Garden Club of America
Mrs. Hermann Place – Chairman*

INDEPENDENCE HALL is the Shrine of American Liberty, The Liberty Bell, the very voice and symbol of our freedom. The presence of these relics in Philadelphia is, as the voice of radio would surely express it, “purely coincidental,” for they belong to every citizen from coast to coast.

In the course of years, buildings have been permitted too near the Hall creating a serious fire hazard and destroying the original beauty of its setting. The Federal Government and the State of Pennsylvania are now beginning the Herculean task of razing these buildings and replanting the reclaimed tracts of land.

It would be an inspiring and wonderful tribute should the Garden Club of America and the Federated Garden Clubs combine in offering to plant a Magnolia Mall in one of these tracts. One tree for each of the forty-eight States would mean an avenue twenty-four trees long and it would become a very beautiful feature of the new setting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Mrs. Frederic Rosengarten
Chestnut Hill
Philadelphia 18, Pennsylvania*

Presented to GCA Executive Meeting 8/10-49. Mrs. Place (GCA President) & committee approved that it be presented to Directors 8/11-49. It was. A motion was made and seconded to make offer.

GCA Committee for Independence National Historical Park, appointed by GCA President, Mrs. Place in 1949:

The Committee included: Mrs. Charles Platt (GC of Phila); Mrs. Francis B. Crowninshield (of Boston, MA); Mrs. Joseph M. Cudahy (of Chicago, IL).

In 1950 or 1951, Mrs. Frederic Rosengarten (The Weeders) and Mrs. S. Laurence Bodine (The Weeders) were additions to the committee, as named by Mrs. Melvin Sawin (Pres. of GCA).

Notes from Minutes of The Weeders, stored at the Horticultural Society of Pennsylvania

- November 15, 1949 Regular Weeders meeting minutes

“The Mall at Independence Hall was spoken of next. It is hoped an architect of national reputation will be chosen. No one has yet heard who it will be. We were told that Mrs. Frederic Rosengarten’s idea of planting Magnolia trees has been well received. As these trees, in certain varieties, have been known to live in the city of Philadelphia, for well over one hundred years, it would seem a happy choice indeed. Mr. Fairman Furness is already collection” (sic).

January 1, 1951, The National Park Service took over administration and maintenance of the Independence Hall structures and the land.

Article in the GCA Bulletin

From Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia (undated)

On January 2nd the Federal Government of the United States took over Independence Hall and its surroundings as a National Historical Park.

It was the culmination of a vision – a dream come true – that this number one shrine in the hearts of Americans should for all time be administered and maintained by the Federal Government which was here conceived.

The meeting was held in dignified and beautiful Congress Hall - a wing of Independence Hall where George Washington was inaugurated for his second term as President and John Adams for his first. The shades of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and other notables that God was good enough to give this struggling country hovered around while the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Oscar Chapman, accepted the national shrine park in the name of the Government and later received the key of Independence Hall standing in the shadow of the Liberty Bell.

Then followed lunch at the Philosophical Society on Independence Square – the oldest learned society in the United States. Built in 1789 it harmonizes in architectural design with the other buildings. Judge

Edwin O. Lewis, whose untiring efforts have made the dream come true, in presiding called attention to the (sic) many of the significant historic sites and buildings, Mt. Vernon, Kenmore and many others, as well as preserving valuable archives in the form of diaries and family letters. At this all the ladies present preened themselves a little but only the grateful ghosts were aware of it.

As in so many other towns the population has grown away from this old site now surrounded with sprawling slums and undesirable buildings. These will soon be demolished to make way for two malls – the larger one to be the Pennsylvania State Mall, with which we are not concerned, and the smaller Federal Mall which will run east from Independence Hall eventually to the Delaware River.

It is this Mall that the GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA is to grace with an allee of Magnolia soulangeana trees – one for each State in the Union. These are already selected and growing in the Upper Bank Nurseries at Media, Pennsylvania, awaiting the call.

Much but not all of the ground has been secured, demolition has begun and with the powers of condemnation vested in the Commission it will not be long before all is acquired. The razing of many blocks of city buildings is a serious undertaking. The critical situation of the world today may, and probably will, slow up the immediate consummation of the project but Mr. Chapman was most emphatic in his speech that as this was the cradle of liberty it should be given a priority in these days when liberty and freedom for all men mean so much.

THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA planting will be, we hope, a lasting tribute of gratitude to those whose courage made this country possible.

Years went by without the site being prepared to receive the trees, meanwhile they grew both too large (10 -12') and too expensive (cost had jumped from \$2,400 to over \$7,000) to move from Upper Bank Farm.

[as of July 2021, nine (9) of the original trees still stand at Upper Bank Farm. A photo is in the notebook].

GCA Bulletin: (undated) *Magnolia Garden – Independence National Historical Park*

by Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia

Our United States was created in Philadelphia on July 4th, 1776 when the Continental Congress voted the final form of the Declaration of Independence. These great decisions were made in Independence Hall which is now a shrine honored wherever the rights of man are honored.

With the close of the century the Capital was moved to Washington and Independence Hall entered a new phase of its existence. In 1816 it was purchased by the City of Philadelphia which saved it for posterity. As the city spread out the urgent need of protecting it from the encroaching slums, with their constant fire hazards, stimulated official action. Many fine old buildings and private homes of the period, still extant in the area, were threatened with demolition.

In 1948 the Independence National Historical Park was established for its protection. Two projects were then undertaken. The Pennsylvania State Mall running north and south is now an accomplished fact, many blocks of buildings having been razed, walls built, trees planted and the illusion of the past recreated. Due to lack of sufficient funds the Federal part running east from Independence Hall and including many historical buildings, has been much slower of accomplishment.

In 1949 it was voted that the GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA should participate in this Federal project by a planting of 48 magnolia trees – one for each State of the Union. Not realizing the endless delay of any Federal project the trees were selected and planted at the Upper Bank Nurseries at Media, Pa., awaiting their disposition. Year after year has gone by – the trees increasing in size and a ratio equal to labor costs, and a survey last spring disclosed that they would now cost more than twice as much as was originally estimated. It was then decided to donate 13 magnolias, one for each of the thirteen original States.

Due to endless delays in acquiring the properties – relocation of the tenants, cost of demolition, historical research factors –the finishing of the Federal area is still some years off and our trees continue to grow.

During this delay, or because of it, the scope of the project evolved so that **by 1955 the final plan** was to plant 13 magnolias, one for each of the thirteen original states. A piece of the federal area of the park, running between Walnut and Locust Streets, was designated as the site, and the Garden Club of America was offered a substantial space for the trees, 100' X 128', backing up to the old brick retaining wall of St. Mary's Churchyard. This adjacent open space provided light and air. (*St. Mary's Church, established in 1763, was the principal Catholic church in Philadelphia during the Colonial and Revolutionary periods*). A plan was established, and the group decided to go ahead without the completion of the of the east-west (federal) area. This would be a Tribute Garden, for which donations were sought and money was raised from all the GCA clubs.

GCA Bulletin (undated)

A spur of the Federal area running between Walnut and Locust Streets is to be completed next autumn. Here the GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA has been offered a substantial space, 100' X 128', backing up to the old brick retaining wall of St. Mary's Churchyard. This adjacent open space will provide a maximum of light and air. St. Mary's Church, established 1763, was the principal Catholic church in Philadelphia during the Colonial and Revolutionary periods.

A most attractive plan has been made for our garden with its 13 magnolia trees. It is hoped that every club will contribute to the extent of its capacity and that the response will be 100 percent in tribute to this most beloved and revered shrine. We hope to be able to furnish some iron benches of a suitable design and a bronze plaque in recognition of our continued thankfulness for living in the land of the free. Had we awaited the completion of the east-west area – our trees would have been scattered throughout with no definite plan – whereas the part now offered us will be entirely a GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA garden – our own Tribute Garden

Please make cheques payable to: Magnolia Planting – Garden Club of America, and send to Garden Club of America, 15 East 58th Street, New York 22, N. Y. being sure to enclose the name of your club.

The Park was formally established in 1956 and managed by the National Park Service. It contains fifty-five acres, including the Mall and several other garden sites, such as the Liberty Bell Garden, the Rush Garden, the Rose Garden, Franklin Court, and several others.

- January 2, 1959 The Weeders' regular meeting minutes

Mrs. Place asked that our club propose Mrs. Charles Platt as recipient for the GCA Achievement Medal (sic) for her initiative and efforts on behalf of the project.

- October 11, 1956 The Weeders Executive Committee Minutes

Due to the growing interest and activity in National Parks projects, the executive committee will recommend that a National Parks Chairman be appointed by the Conservation Chairman from a member of her committee.

GCA Bulletin, July, 1956 *Magnolia Planting, Independence National Historical Park*

Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia, Chairman (read by Mrs. Erastus Corning)

Since 1949 we have awaited eagerly the disposition of the Magnolia soulangeana trees offered to the Independence National Historical Park. Unaware of the delays of Federal project forty-eight trees were selected at the Upper Bank Nursery awaiting their allocation. Year after year has gone by – the trees and the costs rising in size. Last spring it was disclosed that it would now cost twice as much as the original estimate.

It was then decided to donate thirteen magnolias for the thirteen original States.

The completion of the main mall is still some years off. A spur of it is to be finished next autumn and here we have been given an area 120'X 80" backed up to St. Mary's churchyard which makes an open space providing light and air. St. Mary's established 1763, was the principal Roman Catholic church in Philadelphia during the Colonial and Revolutionary periods.

A more attractive plan has been made and it is hoped that every club will contribute to the extent of its capacity – that the response may be 100%. Had we awaited the completion of the main mall our trees would have been scattered throughout with no definite plan, whereas what is now offered will be entirely our own – a Tribute Garden in gratitude for living in the land of the free.

In the **spring of 1957**, The National Park Service planted the magnolias and agreed to care for the park. In addition to the trees, a foundation was laid for the brick walls, flagged paths were laid and ground covers were planted.

The cost of the trees was \$105 each or \$1,365 – this included planting, topsoil and peat. \$2,685 had been donated, to date, so brick edging and a wide border of ivy and periwinkle could also be added.

GCA Bulletin, July 1957

Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia, Chairman

At last – good news. The magnolias are planted and are lovely. The architects of Independence National Historical Park made an attractive plan with flagged walks, a high brick wall 80' long on one side and a brick wall on the front 120' long, with iron grilles at frequent intervals and posts with (??) at the entrance.

It is a stupendous improvement on the plans submitted to you last year and we cannot be grateful enough for the interest and cooperation of the Superintendent, Mr. Anderson, and his co-workers. They are as pleased and excited about the garden as we are.

Besides the Magnolia soulangeana we are providing endless ground covers for the wide borders- vinca and Baltic ivy, plus other plant material – some suitable (??) and a bronze plaque expressing our gratitude for living in the land of the free.

GCA member clubs and 19 individuals have contributed to date and to them gratitude and warmest thanks

A member from Savannah has donated a lovely lead figure which will be in the center of the garden pool.

In a few years – when it is established – we believe that the Magnolia Garden will be a thing of beauty and interest and another feather in the cap of The Garden Club of America

- *June 3, 1958 The Weeders regular meeting Minutes*

Questions concerning the Magnolia Garden in Independence Square brought forth these facts: GCofA is doing initial planting. The Federal government will make the paths and take care of the perpetual upkeep. GCofA needs to fund the ground cover. Mrs. Thacher proposed, and Mrs. Stokes seconded a motion to give \$100 for this purpose. Private donations are also welcome.

GCA Bulletin July 1958 Magnolia Garden – Independence National Historical Park

Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia, Chairman

The Magnolia soulangeana trees which were planted last spring came through our bitter winter with flying colors. They were faithfully watered during the summer's awful drought.

Things are humming now – the pool is finished, the foundation laid for the brick walls, and when the flagged paths are done, we can start planting the ground covers.

Originally, there was no idea we would be given such a large and lovely site. Over 5,000 square feet of ground cover, plus rising cost, comes high, so contributions will still be gratefully received from individuals and the few clubs that have not yet had a part of this wonderful project.

A collection of interesting slides by Mrs. Charles Fife and a fascinating paper by Mrs. Nathan Hayward on the Historical Park have been given to The Garden Club of America. They may be had from the office in New York and would make a stimulating club program.

- *September 3, 1958 The Weeders regular meeting minutes:*

Mrs. W. (Williams) read an enthusiastic letter of thanks from Mrs. Platt for the Weeders' gift to the Magnolia Garden.

May 14, 1959, the installation was completed and dedicated to Independence National Historical Park by the Garden Club of America.

Mrs. Platt and Mrs. Rosengarten invited guests to tea at the Powel House which was nearby. Eight (8) memorial benches (wrought iron copies of those in Christ Church burial ground) had been donated, and a figure in the fountain was donated by Mrs. Samuel Rotan (of Savannah ?). National Park Service photos show that the statue was damaged in shipping from Mrs. Rotan.

- *January 16, 1959 The Weeders Executive Committee Minutes*

Mrs. Place hopes Mrs. Charles Platt will be proposed for the Achievement Medal of the GC of A. Approved

GCA Bulletin, July 1959 *Magnolia Garden – Independence National Historical Park*

Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia, Chairman

The Magnolia Garden is to be dedicated on May 14 (1959), followed by a tea at the old Powel House nearby.

At last it is a fait accompli and we hope it will be a credit to the Garden Club of America. The thirteen Magnolia soulangeana – growing apace – bloomed beautifully this spring, fulfilling their tribute to the thirteen original colonies.

The response of the clubs has been wonderful – almost 100%. They, twenty-nine generous individuals and a contribution from the National Parks Commission have made the garden a reality. Warm and grateful thanks to those who have made this dream come true, and to the donors of the eight memorial benches and Mrs. Frederic Rosengarten, for all she has done. I have tried to acknowledge all contributions personally, should I have missed any, may I be forgiven.

If I only knew how a swan’s song goes – I would sing it now!

GCA Bulletin, July 1960 *Magnolia Garden Independence National Historical Park*

Mrs. Charles Platt, Garden Club of Philadelphia, Chairman

The Fourteenth of last May was a gala day for the Magnolia Garden when it was dedicated at long last.

Though they had just returned from the Annual Meeting, many members of the Executive Committee were present. They and the Presidents of the nearby Clubs lunched at the Acorn Club before joining other interested friends at the Garden.

Mrs. Harrison, Judge Lewis and Mr. Anderson, Superintendent of the Independence National Historical Park, spoke and everyone had teas at the Old Powel House afterwards.

The day was beautiful. The Garden lovely, though the ground-covers were not “covering” as yet. They made a wonderful growth during the summer and are now refulgent.

All thanks and gratitude to the 160 Clubs for this unanimous tribute and to Mrs. Frederic Rosengarten for her inspiration and help over the years.

Tablet quoted:

“This Magnolia Garden was planned and planted by The Garden Club of America in honor of The Founders of our Nation. 1959”

1961 plaque installed which reads:

MAGNOLIA TRIBUTE GARDEN
contributed by
The GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA
In honor of the
FOUNDERS OF OUR NATION
1959

In May of 1963, celebrating GCA’s 50th Anniversary there was an event of some kind in the Magnolia Tribute Garden as we have photocopies of 6 photos taken by a W.A. McCullough

In **1973**, the Pennsylvania legislature voted to transfer the three Mall blocks to the Federal Government, fitting for this site where our US government was first conceived.

Judge Edwin O. Lewis, President of the Independence Hall Association, was a major force in seeking the recognition of Independence Mall. He advocated for a three-block area, but the federal government was only interested in purchasing the one block in front of Independence Hall. Lewis persuaded the state legislature to get involved, with the idea that the land would be turned over to the National Park Service. The joint project of the City of Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania, was funded by 40-year state bonds, and managed by Edmund Bacon. They demolished most everything, including the remaining walls of the (homes/White Houses) of George Washington and John Adams. The Free Quaker Meeting House was moved to accommodate the widening of Fifth Street. Judge Lewis was a Virginian who came to Philadelphia as a young man, and the Judge Lewis Quadrangle is named for him in one of the blocks north of Independence Hall. His wife was a member of **The Weeders**.

In 1976, concern for the number of Americans who would visit during the Bi-Centennial and not have access to the bell, prompted the removal of the Liberty Bell from Independence Hall to a separate location on the mall, the location being suggested by Mayor Rizzo.

There seemed to be no further involvement of GCA or its area clubs between 1959 and the early 1980’s.

By the 1980’s The **Philadelphia Committee of the Garden Club of America (PCGCA)**, founded in 1964, realized that the Magnolia Tribute Garden needed help with maintenance as it seemed that the Park Service “lacked interest and pride” in it’s care. It was weedy, overgrown and suffered wear and tear from the overuse by the children of the neighboring St. Mary’s School. PCGCA took responsibility for sending volunteers to the park several times a year, in order to maintain what had been a gift of The Garden Club of America to the National Park Service.

In 1994, a team of Jean Bodine and Keith Straw (**The Gardeners**) - for over twenty years - led the PCGCA efforts to maintain the park, working with the Park Service. Over the years there have been several events and anniversaries which have inspired renovations to the site.

1997 GCA Annual Meeting held in Philadelphia with conservation and preservation as its theme. In 1995 PCGCA begins restoration of the fountain in preparation for this meeting- *per letter from Jean Bodine 10/15/1995*

2013 GCA Centennial / Annual Meeting was held in Philadelphia beginning on April 29th. In preparation for this event and in partnership with the Park Service, repairs were made in early April to the brick wall surrounding the 1959 commemorative plaque, and a new lead basin for the cistern at the bottom was fabricated by Garden Accents of West Conshohocken. Correspondence with PCGCA and Susan Edens (Cultural Landscape Architect at Independence National Historical Park) refers to a lead fish/dolphin decoration which was removed and shipped to the fabricator for attachment to the new basin. PCGCA committed to funding \$3,950 for the work.

A June 2013 report indicates that a *Quercus robur* "Fastigiata" was planted in the SE corner of the garden as well as one *Picea* on each side of the wall fountain. The lawn was re-sodded and some azaleas and ivy were also planted.

Apparently repairs were made to the circulating fountain as a November 2013 report makes note of this.

In 2014 leadership was turned over to new co-chairs, Sallie Greenough (**The Garden Workers**) and Anne Barnett (**The Gardeners**). In an effort to determine who was responsible for what in terms of hardscaping, general maintenance, repairs and plant material, information was requested from GCA by these new chairs. That archival material is summarized below in "Sources".

2015 restoration efforts began in preparation for the upcoming anniversary of the National Park Service. Chairman of the restoration project was Ellen Goodwin of **The Garden Club of Philadelphia**. Committee members included Ginnie Tietjens, Jorie Nailor, Jenny Rose Carey and Laurie Marshall. This was huge - a \$20,000 - \$30,000 project which involved a new irrigation system as well as new and replacement plant material – new azaleas, addition of hydrangea, ground cover and bulbs. GCA declined to contribute so PCGCA asked for contributions from the 14 GCA clubs in Zone V and raised \$22,800. A bit of this money is still in the PCGCA bank account for use as needed.

Per Ellen Goodwin's records here is what was planted:

In 2016: 12 Hydrangea macrophylla 'Endless Summer' and 5 Ilex crenata.

In 2017: 12 White Delaware Valley azaleas, 15 Ilex crenata 'Hoogendorn,' 1 Hydrangea 'Endless Summer' and 1 Pieris Japonica 'Mt. Fire'.

In May of 2017 there was a celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service in the Magnolia Tribute Garden, organized by Marilyn Sprague (**The Weeders**) and Wyn

Coghlan (**The Gardeners**). GCA President Dede Petri attended, acknowledging the historic link to GCA. It was an honor also to have Cynthia McCleod, the Superintendent of Independence Hall National Historical Park in attendance.

The Invitation read as follows

*A celebration of the Garden Restoration
By the Philadelphia Committee and member garden clubs
Honoring the 100th Anniversary of Historic National Parks*

As of 2021, sadly only one or two of the original trees planted still survive.

Per Derrick Black, Grounds Supervisor, Independence NHP (215-597-9170) the magnolia specimen replacing the originals are *M. virginiana* (Sweet Bay) and native to the southeastern US. The contractor could not acquire the *M. soulangeana* when needed.

Awards Associated with the garden:

- 1959 GCA Achievement Medal was awarded to Dorothy Falcon Platt for her work to establish the garden
- 2014 PCGCA Distinguished Service Award to Jean Bodine and Keith Straw for their 23 years as “Guardian Angels” of the garden
- PCGCA Peg Dilks Award: 2007 a certificate
 2020 a certificate plus a \$1,000 gift

Sources of Information

As of July 2021 copies of the materials cited below are in a notebook in the possession of Marilyn Sprague, Magnolia Tribute Garden chairman

Annual & Monthly Reports:

1991- 2021 some are missing

Histories – various

The following documents were provided around 2014 when information was requested by the incoming PCGCA co-chairs of the Magnolia Tribute Garden attempting to determine the relationship of GCA to the Magnolia Tribute Garden, and its incumbent responsibilities, if any

Articles about dedication in “GCA Bulletin” Sept. 1959

Article about the garden “The Evening Bulletin”, Sept. 3, 1959

Letter, undated, from Dora S. Heintz – with copies of photos of the park which her father’s firm was helping to build – showing it nearing completion in 1958

November 2011 Maria Thompson’s remarks to the Free Quaker Society Annual Meeting

- June 2017 Marilyn Sprague's remarks - given at Garden Party celebration
- September 2015 Marilyn Sprague
 June 2015 documents re: MTG in GCA Archives, sent to Ginnie Tietjens by Jennifer Barnette, CEO, GCA
 Chronological display of references to "Magnolia Tribute Garden" or "Independence Hall"
 Article from GCA Archives sent by Sally Cummins, * Vice-Chairman, GCA Archives
- December 2014 MTG Chronology by Coxe Toogood, Historian, Cultural Resources Management, Independence National Historical Park
 "Landscapes of Independence NHP - Magnolia Garden"
- 1956 - 1960 Copies of GCA Bulletin articles
 Copy of Page from GC of Philadelphia history **
 Copy of articles by Mrs. Charles Platt for Independence National Historical Park

National Park Service (Department of the Interior) – 1949- 1951 letters between Mrs. Herman Place, Mrs. Melvin E. Sawin and the Secretaries of the Interior and Directors of the National Park Service – includes some biog. Information – some correspondence relating to these documents

Letter from Dora Heintz to Susan Eden (INHP) about her father's firm building the park in 1958

Maps – architectural plans

- Wall & Fence
- Original plans??? Site, layout plan, walk details, north wall, west wall, courtyard, garden niche, pool, water & Drain details, gates & doors, entrance gate details, courtyard gate details, fence details, north wall caps, coping details
- Plant list

Restoration projects 1990's - 2014

Wall problem with St. Mary's Church School/ correspondence/Drawings
 Irrigation system 2015-2016 - fundraising by selling miniature bulbs

Photos

Photocopies of photos from 1958
 a typed note from Dora S. Heintz of Short Hills, NJ – circa 2013 ?– refers to 8 enclosed photos which her dad (a Mr. White) took in 1958 as the park his firm was building neared completion. She did not provide his name of that of the firm.
 50th Anniversary party photos (photocopies) taken by W. A. McCullough 5/7/63
 Wall restoration 1996- 1998
 Garden Party Celebration - Invitations, photos
 Tea honoring Jean Bodine & Keith Straw

Names mentioned in GCA Minutes tied to this project: (undated)

Mrs. Frederick (sic) Rosengarten (The Weeders) This is Emeline Marion "Toby" Sims Rosengarten, daughter of John Clark Sims and Grace Ledlie Patterson, b. 1883, d. 1968.

Frederic Rosengarten was a brother of Adolph G. Rosengarten, Sr., who built Chanticleer in 1912/13 and Frederic was very active in the family chemical business, Rosengarten & Sons. When it merged with Merck & Company in the 1920's, Frederic became chairman of the board (1927). He died in 1955. The Rosengartens lived in Chestnut Hill in a house known as Indian Rock, designed by one of her brothers, Joseph Patterson Sims, a Philadelphia architect. (Willing, Sims & Talbutt). Their two children were Marion Sims Rosengarten (Mrs. Morris Stroud) and Frederic Rosengarten (both deceased).

Mrs. Charles Platt (Garden Club of Philadelphia) This is Dorothy Falcon Sims Platt, sister of Mrs. Rosengarten. There were seven Sims children.

Mrs. Samuel P. Rotan (donated fountain figure and later stolen) created by Allethaire Ludlow Cummer Elkins. Mrs. Rotan was step-mother-in-law of Weeder, Louis Elkins Sinkler. Mrs. Rotan lived in the Wharton-Sinkler house in Chestnut Hill/Wyndmoor, which she and her husband built. When it was for sale in the early 1940's, it was purchased by her step-daughter-in-law, Louise Elkins Sinkler and her husband, Wharton.

Mrs. Bodine (The Weeders – Mrs. S. Laurence Bodine) – took idea of Mrs. Frederick (sic) Rosengarten to the GCA; she reports to GCA after that as Co-Chairman of the Independence National Historical Park project (1952 GCA notes). She was Helen de Peyster Koues , second wife of Mr. Bodine of Berwyn (and a nephew of S. Laurence & Helen Bodine). (Historic Jones Plantation). She was staff editor for the Ladies Home Journal 1909-1914, fashion editor of Vogue (1914)1916), and associate editor of Good Housekeeping from 1916. She died in 1960 (buried St. Davids Church, Wayne PA).

Mrs. Thacher – (The Weeders have many Thachers, but a Mrs. Thatcher is a member residing in NYC, and is likely this one) speaks on behalf of idea to GCA board of directors

Mrs. Poe (Mrs. Edgar A. Poe, The Weeder, mother of Cynthia Wister Wetherill Wallace, grandmother of Isabel Wister) suggests to Mrs. Bodine that they obtain more than one estimate for magnolias.

In 2021 Maria Thompson (The Weeders) pointed out an error here. She says that Mrs. Poe was, "not related to Cynthia Wallace. She was the mother of the late Louise McIlhenny Roberts and her granddaughter is Louise "Weezie" Roberts Johnston." They are all members of The Weeders.

Mrs. Place suggests letter to Judge Lewis confirming wish to plant magnolias. 1949 Mrs. Place passes along brochure received in connection with this project. Mrs. Hermann G. Place (Angela Moore) was a president of GCA, 1947-1950.

Mrs. Crowninshield – served on committee (1950). This is Mrs. Francis B. Crowninshield of Boston, MA

Mrs. Cudahy – served on committee (1950), along with Mrs. Bodine and Mrs. Rosengarten, representing GCA. This is Mrs. Joseph M. Cudahy, Chicago, Illinois

Mrs. Platt – reporting to GCA on behalf of project

Mrs. Platt, Mrs. Rosengarten and Mrs. Bodine hold ceremony in Congress Hall, Judge Edwin Lewis presiding

Mrs. Sawin – appoints Mrs. Bodine and Mrs. Platt permanently on new committee for Independence Hall planting. Mrs. Melvin E. Sawin was a GCA president, following Mrs. Place.

In 1951, Committee members included Mrs. Platt, Mrs. Bodine, Mrs. Cudahy, and Mrs. Rosengarten with Mrs. Crowninshield

In the meantime, the magnolia trees (grown and prepared for planting by Mr. Fairman Furness, grew too large and unsuitable. No payment to him was ever made (by 1953, when GCA sent him \$200.00 from the Magnolia Fund, designed to raise money for this project. Rose prints were sold to help finance the project.)

Mrs. Reid – (probably Mary Reid, The Weeders) attended meeting with Mrs. Charles Platt

Mrs. Brodnax Cameron and Mrs. David I. Mackie (Somerset Hills Garden Club)

Mrs. Corning (reported at Annual Meeting in 1956)

*** From Sallie Cummins, Vice-Chairman, GCA Archives.**

The Magnolia Tribute Garden at Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia

When Mrs. S. Lawrence (sic) Bodine of The Weeders first reported in her role as Co-Chairman of the Independence National Historical Park project at GCA's Annual Meeting in 1952, she told of progress in GCA's plans to donate 48 magnolia trees to Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The National Park Service was in the process of acquiring land, restoring historical buildings and demolishing ramshackle ones. The plans for landscaping could not really be made until it was determined which buildings would remain. In fact, the committee, consisting of Mrs. Bodine and her Co-Chairman, Mrs. Charles Platt of the Philadelphia GC (sic). Mrs. Crowninshield, Mrs. Cudahy, and Mrs. Rosengarten ("whose idea it was") were not even sure that the trees would be magnolias or something else, but George Washington's expressed interest in magnolias had inspired that idea. They just wanted to make sure that their committee had a voice in the plans.

The plan, which had originated in 1949, remained on hold for some years. Forty-eight Magnolia Soulangeana trees had been selected at a nursery, and as the trees grew, so grew the budget – to double the original estimate. "It was then decided to donate thirteen magnolias for the thirteen original States," reports Mrs. Platt, now Chairman of what is called the "Magnolia Planting Independence National Historical Park" Committee at the 1956 Annual Meeting. The size of the garden was to be 120' X 80' and it was hoped that every GCA club would contribute. The Tribute Garden was to be in gratitude for "living in the land of the free."

And then at the Annual Meeting in 1957 Mrs. Platt reports: "good news. The magnolias are planted and are lovely." In 1958: "The trees . . . came through the winter in flying colors." Now there were 5,000 square feet of ground cover to be planted, and there was another plea for donations. In 1960, the garden was dedicated (sic: 1959). Almost 100% of the GCA clubs had contributed, plus there was a donation from the National Parks Service, and gifts from individuals. In 1961 a Tablet was installed which reads

*Magnolia Tribute Garden
Contributed by
The Garden Club Of America
In honor of the
Founders of our Nation*

1959

In her last report of the Committee in 1962, Mrs. Platt states with evident pleasure: "Our Magnolia Garden is now an established oasis in Independence Park, gratefully used by mothers and children, workers from nearby offices at lunchtime, men reading papers, visitors and people taking photographs. It is flourishing, well cared for and unlettered. . . Over one and a half million people visited this National Historical Park last year."

The Philadelphia Committee of the GCA, with members from ten garden clubs in the area, tend, prune, weed and water the Magnolia Tribute Gardens today. (Note: care began after 1965 founding of PCGCA)

**** From Garden Club of Philadelphia history – date unknown**

"These were years of great achievements and awards were heaped upon our members as they ventured into the national scene. The feeling ran high that without Mesdames Battles, Keith, Platt and Willing the Garden Club of America would fall apart at the seams. In 1958 the Garden Club of America Achievement Medal was presented to Mrs. Platt, our perpetual star performer. She and her sister, Mrs. Frederick (sic) Rosengarten, planned the creation of the Garden Club of America's Tribute Garden in Independence National Historic Park. Our club was proud to contribute one of the thirteen *Magnolia soulangeana* planted there."