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FILOLI – One of the finest remaining US country estates of the early 20th Century

by Susan North



Filoli house from a walled orchard garden in late winter/early spring

On my way home from a recent holiday in Russia I spent two days with a friend's family in Woodside, California. My friend had arranged for us to visit FILOLI, an historic property nearby. I had no idea what I was about to see....

FILOLI is one of 27 sites owned by the US National Trust for Historic Preservation and is operated by the Filoli Centre. It is located 51 kms outside central San Francisco and is recognised as one of the finest remaining country estates of the early 20th century. FILOLI was built by Mr & Mrs William Bowers Bourn II, a wealthy San Francisco family who relocated to the peninsula after the 1906 earthquake. The Bourns owned the Empire Gold Mine, the largest hard-rock mining operation in California, as well as the Spring Valley Water Company and the Crystal Springs Reservoir.

Cambridge-educated Mr Bourn selected the site and called it FILOLI by combing the first two letters from the key words of his credo: “**F**ight for a just cause; **L**ove your fellow man; **L**ive a good life.” The Bourns engaged Willis Polk, a San Francisco architect to design their country estate. The house is predominantly modified-Georgian in style, containing over 5000 square metres of interior

floor space with 56 rooms, including 10 family bedrooms, 16 bathrooms, 17 fireplaces, a ballroom and a servants' wing.

The formal Renaissance-style garden was designed by San Francisco artist and designer Bruce Porter, and built between 1917 and 1929. Following the death of the Bourns in 1936, Mr & Mrs William P. Roth, owners of the Matson Navigation Company, bought the property and maintained the original design as much as possible. Mrs. Roth, a noted horticultural enthusiast, recognised by the Garden Club of America, brought worldwide recognition to the garden. Mrs Roth lived at FILOLI until 1975 when she donated the house, formal garden and surrounding acreage to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The reflecting pools, formal gardens, arbours and shady walks were all designed to blend harmoniously with the nearby San Andreas hills. The house and the garden were designed as complementary units. The garden is a succession of garden rooms, containing parterres, terraces, lawns and pools arranged between the two parallel north-south walk ways. There are hundreds of camellia, rhododendrons, roses, magnolias and many rare plants.



Commemorative Wall Plaque: a fitting tribute to Lurline B Roth

Today the garden is maintained by 14 full-time horticulturists, along with many student interns and more than 100 garden volunteers.

Between the formal garden and the agricultural fields is the olive orchard, with gnarled old Mission and Manzanillo olive trees. Nearby is a 10 acre Gentlemen's Orchard of mixed fruit trees, with 1,000 trees planted in 1918 to provide the family with year-round fruits. Today, the 150 surviving trees are being preserved, along with a newly-planted collection of rare period fruit cultivars.

I was particularly interested in the Gentlemen's Orchard and how the concept of a "Gentlemen's Orchard," was introduced to the United States by Thomas Jefferson, who developed a fruit collection at Monticello, his plantation estate in Virginia. The Filoli orchard had been neglected for many years until a former director of horticulture at Filoli, Lucy Tolmach, who spent 35 years working there, resurrected it with other key people such as Alex Fernandez (Manager of Horticultural Operations) and Todd Kennedy (an agricultural attorney and member of the California Rare Fruit Growers).

Although the primary focus is still on apples, the gentlemen's orchard has approximately 656 fruit trees, including 270 varieties of apples and more than 100 varieties of pears. In addition to familiar apple cultivars like Gravenstein and Jonathan, there are also many unusual ones such as Esopus Spitzenburg, Marie Louise Delcourt and Okusankichi, many of which visitors can taste at the annual Autumn Festival in September. Growing these non-commercial, heirloom varieties of apples is important for maintaining the genetic heritage of America's apples. FILOLI has North America's largest private collection of fruits—including numerous rare, historically significant varieties. Apart from the apples, the gardens include about 450 other fruit trees such as stone fruits - peaches, plums, and apricots as well as fig trees, and grapes. Ms Tolmach and the project team added other deciduous fruits appropriate to the era and area, including English walnuts (grafted onto California walnut rootstock), persimmons, and less commonly grown fruits such as quinces, Asian pears, mayhaws, crab apples, chestnuts, hawthorns, hazelnuts, and medlars.

The lower orchard has also been planted with 670 new heritage fruit trees, which includes 47 varieties of heritage stone fruits and 141 varieties of hybrid American table grapes.

There is so much to see and explore – the upper west terraces, a sunken garden (with a shallow reflecting pool that mirrors the Clock Tower and olive trees that are pruned in the shape of a goblet).

The walled garden has a wonderful sundial, which marks the centre of one of the two axes of the garden. The inscription on the sundial reads "Time began in a garden". Within a walled garden are many large tree specimens of the rare Mountain Camellias, and a Ginkgo tree, an ancient species from SE China. The Dutch garden has a rare specimen of NZ Black Beech and formal planting beds. Then you come across an outstanding display of blue and white hydrangeas, surrounded by beautiful latticework.

The Wedding Place contains a 15th Century Venetian fountain of red Verona marble, while white clematis climb up a brick wall and in the Yew trees, producing fragrant, white blooms throughout March and April. The next surprise is Yew Allée, a tree-lined walkway of more than 200 Irish Yews grown from cuttings from the Bourn's house in Ireland.

Continuing west, you can see Daffodil Meadow and the Fruit Garden. To the East is the Rose Garden with approx. 500 roses. Pear Allée, leads into the Woodland Garden which has a collection of camellias and other shade-loving plants, including a collection of rare Japanese Maples.

After a tour of the house and walking in the garden for many hours we had a pleasant lunch in the Filoli Café. Apart from the Autumn apple festival, there are many interesting events held during the year at FILOLI. See the website for up-to-date information: <https://filoli.org/>.

(Thanks to Jim Salyards – Head of Horticulture & Internship Program Coordinator at Filoli for assistance with photos.)



During the summer of 2016 the Sunken Garden, Filoli's focal garden room, was embellished by a display of blown glass by local artists

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Sydney & Northern NSW Branch News - January 2018

I hope all our members have enjoyed a relaxing break and look forward to a stimulating 2018. The Christmas gathering was a delight – it was a lovely evening in an enthralling and charming garden in Warrawee – hosted by Angela and David Low.

2017 was a significant year for gardening. This year's New Years Honours list included four people from the field of gardening: Judy Horton OAM, Paul Bangay OAM, Kelvin Trimper AM and Jeanne Villani OAM (Honorary). Judy Horton is a horticulturist who works as a garden adviser for Yates. She is responsible for the regular updating of Yates Garden Guide, the best-selling Australian gardening book – the first gardening book I ever owned and she is heard on the ABC as one of their gardening experts, Paul Bangay is a garden designer with a distinctive approach, Kelvin Trimper is the President of the International Federation of Rose Societies and, of course, Jeanne Villani we all know for her long association with the Australian Garden History Society as a committee member, Sydney and Northern NSW Branch, since 2002, as well as a past secretary, booking officer and editor of the newsletter 'Branch Cuttings' from 2003- 2017. What a splendid time for all engaged in gardening, its history, its design, its practice and its protection. Gardening is one of the major recreational activities in Australia and more people engage in gardening than they do sports. Congratulations to all those honoured this year.

Our first event this year is a talk by Lynne Walker about the development of the rose garden at Saumarez Homestead, Armidale and a community inspired by the passion of one woman, Catherine MacLean who collected hundreds of roses on a suburban block. The work at Saumarez is now in the second stage and from the air the geometric design look extraordinary and the execution is so exacting. I can't wait to hear more about the progress they are making. The remainder of the year will be brimming with interesting talks, walks and more. I am particularly looking forward to hearing Dr Greg Johnson, who will commence his series of lectures on Australian garden writers in May.

The future of Hadley Park is uncertain and the Sydney Branch of the AGHS Executive committee has included it on the AGHS *Landscapes at Risk* register. The estate includes two very early buildings: a two storey farmhouse ca.1811 and a timber cottage ca.1806. It is not listed on the State Heritage Register and Hadley Park's status as one of the earliest surviving houses in the country with an intact setting on its original land grant makes its future management worthy of the most careful consideration and it should be listed as a state heritage item and afforded the respect and care it deserves. We will be writing to the Minister for Heritage, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton imploring her to protect this vulnerable vestige of our heritage from the threat of development and I commend all members to consider the same.

The committee and I encourage you to get in touch: we are stronger and better with your feedback and ideas! Ways of involving potential new members or suggestions for possible speakers, are welcome. Happy New Year!

James Quoye. Tel: (02) 95195250 or email: james@qanda.com.au

NEW MEMBERS

The Branch would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new local members who have joined in since June:

Edmund Beebe, Judith Boydell, Kathlene Hennessy, Verena Mauldon, Shane Moran, Toni Warburton, Sandra Welsman, Michelle Cotton, Sibella Court, Stephanie Licciardo, Chris Ward

BERRY'S BAY WALK AND TALK

A delightful and interesting afternoon was spent walking around Berry's Bay and adjoining Balls Head in November. Dr Ian Hoskins led us around the foreshore and headland detailing the fascinating history of the area.



CHRISTMAS PARTY

Great company and fabulous food was enjoyed at the Branch Christmas Party where Angela and David Low treated us to their warm hospitality in their



lovely house and garden.



AGHS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

Date: Sunday 25th March 2018, 2-4:30pm

Event: **Walk and Talk:** *'Control and command: the World Heritage significance of the Parramatta Park landscape'* with Verena Mauldon

Cost: AGHS Members \$20, Non-members \$30, Students \$5 includes light refreshments. Bookings essential

Online Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/UEXO>

Enquiries for all events David Low 0407 464 876 or 02 9943 1456

Email aghssydney@gmail.com

Payments by internet bank transfer to:

Australian Garden History Society Sydney & Northern NSW Branch

ANZ Bank, Centrepoint Branch BSB 012040 Account 101762565,

Please include your **name** and the **function**

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

Southern Highlands AGHS Branch

- **Summer Jazz at Summerleys in Sutton Forest** Sunday 25 Feb 4.00 – 7pm
- **The Beauty of Tasmania Tour** 11- 21 March
- **Southern Highlands Branch Winter Seminar** Sunday 24 June

Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney

Check the RBG website for costs and details: <https://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/whatson>

- **Free guided walks with a volunteer guide:** Weekdays 10:30 and 1pm
- **Aboriginal Tour** Every Wed, Fri, Sat 10am -11 am
- **Plants for sale at the Growing friends Nursery** Growing Friends Nursery Mon-Fri 11am-2pm & Sat 10am-2pm
- **Edible Window Box Workshop: Create an Edible Kitchen Garden for Your Window or Balcony** Friday 23 February
- **Gone Troppo: A Passion for Palms** Tuesday 27 February Maiden Theatre 5.30 for 6-7.30pm
- **Pollination at the Calyx - Explore the World of Pollination:** 10am-4pm daily. Free

National Trust

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/explore>

- **In the Minds Eye** Ten talented photographers from the Blue Mountains Photography Group, are showcasing their beautiful new works, at the Everglades Historic House and Garden Gallery. selected dates from 3 February 2018 until 25 February 2018.
- **Jazz in the Garden at Norman Lindsay Gallery** iconic jazz band, Galapagos Duck
24 Feb 5:00pm -9:00pm Bookings are essential: 0247511067 or info@normanlindsay.com.au

NEWS OF INTEREST

Jeanne Villani has been awarded an Honorary OAM at the Australia Day Honours for service to the preservation of heritage gardens.

NNSW Sub branch NEWS

- **Stage 2 of the AGHS Heritage Rose Garden at Saumarez**, the National Trust property is well underway. This garden has been designed once again by one of our local members, Dr Ian Telford and will feature rose breeders both national and international, heritage and modern. Another local member, Richard Bird, was appointed Project Manager by the local AGHS Heritage Rose Garden subcommittee and the construction was completed within two months. The list of roses needed has now gone out to nurseries around Australia and it is hoped that planting will be completed by the end of July. Funding for this stage was provided by the Armidale Regional Council with a grant of \$43,000.
- **The Rosey Roundabout.** A major roundabout is being built to the south of Armidale airport and local member, Lynne Walker, has persuaded the Roads and Maritime Authority to fill it with roses rather than concrete. Rugosa roses have been chosen as the most suitable species because of their hardiness, their almost year round foliage, wonderful hips and autumn colour. The authorities will provide the soil, irrigation, mulch and funding for the roses and the local AGHS members will plant and maintain the roses. Armidale has a long history of association with roses which have featured on both Armidale Council and University of New England crests.
- **Sally Croft Memorial.** Report featured in latest journal as follows; “On Boxing Day 2017 a group of family and AGHS members gathered at Saumarez Homestead Armidale to commemorate the life of Sally, Lady Croft, who died in 2015. Two weeping cherries had been planted in the garden and two plaques were unveiled, one from the Croft family and one from the AGHS, acknowledging her very significant contribution to gardens and garden history throughout Northern NSW. Sally’s husband, Sir Owen Croft, spoke of her love and promotion of gardening including her many years as Northern NSW Chair of Selectors for the Australian Open Garden Scheme and Bill Oates, Chair of the Northern NSW sub branch of AGHS, spoke about Sally’s history with the organization and how she and Owen were instrumental in establishing the local sub branch. The result of Sally’s gentle influence on gardens and gardeners will long be felt throughout the region.”
- **MoU Update.** In early December the annual combined meeting of the National Trust Saumarez and AGHS NNSW was held to determine how the MoU, the first of its kind in Australia, was working and what adjustments might be needed. It was acknowledged by both parties what a success the rose garden was and how it had increased visitor numbers to the property overall. One significant development was that AGHS members have been invited to “go over the fence” and advise on rose and other plant identification in the Saumarez garden itself.
- **Australia Day.** Several members took the opportunity to have an AGHS stall distributing membership forms, selling raffle tickets (proceeds to go to the purchase of roses for stage 2 of the Heritage Rose Garden) and talking to visitors about the garden.
- **First meeting for 2018** will be held on Sunday 25th February at the University of New England Heritage Centre when Marilyn Pidgeon will talk on the Gardens of Japan. A short meeting will follow before a group catch up over dinner.

CORRECTION –ORAL HISTORY

The author of the article about Ian Walker in the last issue is Roslyn Burge. This was inadvertently omitted.

‘Control and command: the World Heritage significance of the Parramatta Park landscape’

A walk and talk by Verena Mauldon

Sunday 25 March 2018, 2 - 4:30pm

Parramatta Park is identified as a landscape at risk by the AGHS



Image: Government House Parramatta, 1819, Joseph Lycett. From the collection of the Mitchell Library, SLNSW. (V1B/Parr/18)

This walk and talk aims to raise awareness of the world heritage significance of the landscape of Old Government House and the Domain, Parramatta Park. The Parramatta Government Domain was an important centre from which convict transportation was implemented. Here decisions were made about the control and administration of the convicts and colony. This is reflected in the landscape, where an estimated 80 to 100 convicts lived and worked, clearing land and producing food as well as constructing roads and public buildings. It was also where agricultural production in Australia and town planning commenced, and was the site of some of Australia's earliest botanical endeavours.

Parramatta Park is a natural and cultural landscape that is still recognisable as the site where the establishment of a British military outpost, the dispossession of the Indigenous inhabitants and the foundation of a successful colonial settlement took place.



Verena Mauldon is a curator and public historian with over 20 years' experience at some of Australia's leading cultural organisations. She has worked at the National Museum of Australia, the Australian National Maritime Museum and at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. For seventeen years she was Curator of Parramatta Park managing, researching and interpreting the cultural landscape, archaeological sites, buildings and monuments of this World Heritage listed site. Verena is currently working at the NSW Heritage Division.

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