Book Review


I must disclose, at the beginning of this review rather than in a note at its end, that I have long admired the work of Warren H. Manning (1860-1938), a landscape architect who worked in the Brookline office of Frederick Law Olmsted from 1888 to 1896 and enjoyed an important, prolific practice as a landscape architect and civic planner through the opening decades of the twentieth century. As a reviewer, one should be dispassionate; however the pleasure experienced in the surviving gardens and grounds of Manning’s best works, as in those of Frederick Law Olmsted, influences one’s views.

The onset of this admiration dates to the 1970s, when I came to know the work of Charles Freeman Gillette (1886-1969), who entered Manning’s office in 1909 and in 1911 was dispatched to Richmond to oversee the implementation of Warren Manning’s design of a new suburban campus for Richmond College (now the University of Richmond). In 1912 Mr. Gillette left his mentor’s employ and launched his own separate practice in Richmond. For a near half-century, he enjoyed a prominence and renown in Virginia, where the greatest (continued on page 10)

"Map of The Village of Pinehurst, N.C." 1925-26, by Rassie E. Wicker. Manning echoed the Olmsted firm’s original 1895 plan, with curvilinear streets enframing the Holly Inn and Village Green (lower center) in his first expansion for The Carolina Hotel (left center) and later development to the West. Both provided lots on which members of the winter colony built cottages for which Manning also designed plans for gardens and grounds on commission.
number of his clients resided and their commissions were executed. In time his practice expanded into the South and other states, most notably North Carolina, where the second largest number of clients engaged him for public and private work. He would also see the opportunity represented by the garden recreations in Colonial Williamsburg and a competitive challenge in the emerging roles of their designers Arthur A. Shurtleff (1870-1957) and Alden Hopkins (1905-1960).

In the practices of Charles F. Gillette, Bryant Fleming, Fletcher Steele, Albert Davis Taylor, and Dan Kiley, among others, all of whom were employed in Manning’s office, we see the influence of Warren Henry Manning, himself a protégé of Frederick Law Olmsted and an admirer of Charles Eliot, extended through time and place. But, in fact, as we know from Lance Neckar’s overview of Manning’s career published in Landscape Journal 8 in 1989 and in Robin Karson’s The Muses of Gwinn . . . (1995), her biographical sketch of Manning in Pioneers of American Landscape Design (2000), and now her joint editorship of Warren H. Manning, Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner with Jane Roy Brown and Sarah Allaback, Warren H. Manning long enjoyed commissions beyond the Northeast, in much of the South, and the eastern United States. His is a critical practice in the history of American landscape architecture.

This is something I also know from experience. In 1895, while in the employ of Olmsted, Olmsted & Eliot, Warren H. Manning began an association with the Tufts family and their resort at Pinehurst, North Carolina, that continued up to his death in 1938. That professional engagement, arguably the longest with a client at one site in his career, was addressed in the National Historic Landmark Designation Report for Pinehurst that I co-authored with Laura A. W. Phillips in 1993-1996. In Manning’s obituary published in the Pinehurst Outlook on 19 February 1938, the editor of the resort weekly noted “...many of those features which make Pinehurst distinctive will long stand as a monument to one whose association with the village has been so close, so constant and of such long establishment.” Martha Lyon wrote the account of Pinehurst in this new book. (I later came into contact with Manning again, also in his role as an employee of the Olmsted firm, when I prepared a new National Historic Landmark Designation Report for the Biltmore Estate.)

Many members of the Southern Garden History Society know Manning’s work. Those who attended the Southern Garden History Society annual meeting in Tallahassee in 1997 will easily recall our visit to Mill Pond

Mill Pond’s largest garden, The Palm Garden, was bordered by "perfumed walks" edged with fragrant shrubs, camellias, and palms. Plantation, the winter estate of Jeptha H. Wade II (1857-1926), a wealthy Cleveland businessman, at Thomasville, Georgia. Having remained in the ownership of Mr. Wade’s descendants since its creation in 1903-1905, Mill Pond is one of the finest surviving examples of Manning’s country house/estate work, an honor it shares with Stan Hywet, the Seiberling estate at Akron, which is also featured in these pages. Staci L. Catron prepared the account of Mill Pond for this book and has included its gardens and grounds in the forthcoming Seeking Eden: A Collection of Georgia’s Historic Gardens.

Marjorie Longenecker White, also a SGHS member, contributed essays on Manning’s 1916 Birmingham District Plan and the elegant, nature-honoring plan for Mountain Brook Estates in suburban Birmingham that he completed in 1929. These accounts and those for the Athens City Plan (1925), Fairyland Estates on Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga (1925), campus planning at the University of Virginia (1913) and at the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial College at Greensboro (today’s UNC-G), where consultations occurred from 1901 to 1921 with interruptions, and his design of the grounds for Jamestown Exposition of 1907 at Hampton Roads, Norfolk, are Southern examples of the range of his expertise and practice. They constitute nine of the sixty-two projects represented in this monograph.

Warren H. Manning: Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner, a volume in the Critical Perspectives in the History of Environmental Design series, is a joint publication of the University of Georgia Press and the Library of American Landscape History. The monograph also represents Robin Karson’s long commitment to documenting Manning’s work,
comprising over 1,600 known projects, and gaining deserved recognition for its quality, extent, and influence. In this, his role as one of the founders in 1899 of the American Society of Landscape Architects, his published writings, and the number of men and women who worked in his office and went on to establish important practices of their own, enhance our understanding of his significance. "Employees Listed in Manning's Financial Records" and "Published Writings of Warren H. Manning" are two of the book's three appendices. Robin Karson's role in the long genesis of this book was both personal and professional, exercised through her position as executive director of the Library of American Landscape History and as the guiding spirit of an effort that gained status as the Warren H. Manning Research Project. She was thus the ideal, best-placed scholar to provide an overview of Warren H. Manning's career, and she did so in these pages with intelligence and a sure feeling for the man, his time, and his place in history. Her essay precedes the contributions of individual accounts of sixty-two projects contributed by twenty-five writers, including herself and Jane Roy Brown, who enjoy professional associations with their subjects or related fields of interest.

This book, its value, and its appeal to readers also benefit from the contributions of two others, both photographers, one living and one dead. In 1927 and 1928 Warren H. Manning commissioned photographs of several projects from Arthur Grenville Eldredge (1880-1972). His black and white images of estate gardens and public parks capture both in their prime with a sensitivity Pamela Hartford described as that of a "Poet behind the Lens" in a 2010 article. Carol Bertsch's work is well known. In 2007 her photographs were an especially valuable part of A Genius For Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era, also a collaboration with Robin Karson, its author. Here in the pages of Warren H. Manning, Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner, her photographs convey a rare insight into Manning's intent and his achievements, images that confirm their significance and capture a remarkable beauty, particularly those of Stan Hywet, where the birch allée is one of the great moments in American landscape architecture.

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Vale, North Carolina

**SGHS Board Announces the William Lanier Hunt Award**

Open to professionals and accomplished amateurs, this award recognizes any individual or organization that has made an exceptional contribution to fields closely aligned with the goals of the Society. Recipients of this award will have an unquestionable legacy of accomplishment in the field equivalent to a lifetime achievement award.

Preference shall be given to candidates whose body of work includes significant volunteerism or demonstrates extraordinary achievements. Areas of interest include: land conservation, garden preservation, landscape and garden scholarship/education, landscape archeology, horticultural heritage, and other areas closely tied to the SGHS mission.

Potential award recipients may be nominated by any SGHS member through a letter of recommendation sent to the president by August 15. Please see the website for more information: www.southerngardenhistory.org

**Members in the News**

*Justin Stelter*, SGHS board member from Nashville, Tennessee, is now President of the Board of the Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association, Inc., which was established in 1905.

SGHS board member *Jeff Abt* has retired after twenty-three years as contributing weekly garden columnist for the *Daily Sentinel* newspaper in Nacogdoches, Texas. He encouraged gardeners in East Texas as he networked with horticulturists and visited gardens around the world.

*Gail Griffin*, long-time SGHS board member and treasurer (since 2007), has retired as Dumbarton Oak's Director of Gardens and Grounds, a position she has held since 1997. Gail received the Harvard Heroes Award from the Trustees of Harvard University in 2013 and the Flora Ann Bynum Medal in 2014.

Another long-time board member and secretary (since 2008) of SGHS, *Mollie Ridout*, recently retired as Director of Horticulture for Historic Annapolis Foundation, Inc., a position she has held since 2003. Mollie coordinated the SGHS annual meeting in Annapolis in 2007.