

Cohasset Garden Club History

2006

After World War I, with the United States securely established as a player on the world stage, American women found their horizons significantly expanded. They had gained the vote, and rising prosperity presented more women than ever before in history with the means and leisure to move beyond the domestic. By the end of the century they would be closer to equality with men. At this point, in the 1920s, ambitious women turned their talents to the manageable options open to them: helping alleviate the tribulations of poor women and children, preserving open land and the remnants of the great forests, establishing parks for the benefit of all, and expanding educational opportunity for children. Many women with time at their disposal turned to gardening, reflecting Kipling's thought that:

Some can pot begonias
And some can bud a rose
And some are hardly fit to trust with anything that grows.
But they can weed and trim the lawns
And sift the sand and loam
For the glory of the garden glorifieth everyone

Before the post-war period, gardening meant different things to different folk. For most, it meant cultivating back yard plots to put food on families' tables, while for centuries people in many societies had viewed gardening as both an art form and subject for scientific inquiry into horticulture. The late nineteenth century had seen the enthusiastic establishment of formal associations for those sharing common interests. Antiquarians and epicureans, hunters and golfers set up clubs with stated goals, bylaws, and selected membership. Gardeners were following a popular trend when they organized their own societies.

In 1924, a small group of Cohasset women started an informal garden club with Mrs. B. Preston Clark as their leader. Members of the original group included Mrs. J. Franklin McElwain, Mrs. Eugene F. Ladd, Miss Mary C. Sears, Mrs. Charles C. Wheelwright, and Mrs. J. Willard Tuckerman. Not until 1925 was an organized club established with Mrs. Eugene F. Ladd as president. The first elected officers were Mrs. Alanson Bigelow, Mrs. Delano Wight, Mrs. Charles F. Cutler, and Mrs. William H. Brown. The Club constitution defined their objectives: "To stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs; to share the advantages of association through conference and correspondence in this community, country, and abroad to aid in the protection of native plants and birds; and to encourage civic planting."

Two years later, in 1927, the Cohasset Garden Club, proposed by the North Shore Garden Club and seconded by the Chestnut Hill Garden Club, was elected to the Garden Club of America (GCA). Records note that "many other clubs of higher standing had failed to meet the high standards of this national organization." Affiliation with GCA offered wider horizons to Club members but also imposed restrictions. Membership would be limited to 40 active members and 13 associate members, and a portion of the Club dues would be allocated for GCA dues. This limited membership had the advantage of keeping the Club

small and informal but imposed burdens on the active members and kept new blood to a trickle. In 1963 the members voted to revise the categories of membership in accordance with suggestions from GCA. The new standards provided for 53 active members; a new category of affiliate members, not to exceed five, for nonresident members and others who qualified; and a new provisional category, not to exceed five, for new members. The members voted to retain categories for five summer memberships and honorary members. The former associate list was abolished. These revised standards created space for new workers without challenging the GCA-imposed limitation of 53 members.

After 1963, the Club voted minimal changes in membership, always in accordance with GCA standards. Bylaw changes in 1999 directed that Club membership be divided into five classifications: active, limited to fifty three members; affiliate, limited to ten; provisionals, limited to five members; summer, limited to five members; and honorary. Several years later, the Board voted to permit five candidates residing outside of Cohasset to join, and to allow active members who move nearby, but out of town, to apply for continued active status.

An important task for any club is the selection of new members. Provisionals are elected for their interest in horticulture, flower arranging, conservation, and civic service. The membership committee is challenged to select new members who are willing to vigorously take on the Club's work, enthusiastically serving on committees, cheerfully assisting in the civic and other activities of the Club, faithfully attending meetings and acting as hostesses, regularly exhibiting at in-club shows, and serving as an officer when invited to do so. Older members, many of whom have served in every possible position, sometimes two or three times, are encouraged not to rest on their laurels but to stay as involved as possible and to continue contributing to the operation of the Club.

By the early 2000s, the Board had come to realize that some of our valued provisionals were not being integrated into the Club in a timely way. In 2003, then-vice president Marguerite Borden and an ad hoc committee announced a new provisional member program to assure that these new members are immediately introduced to the many Club opportunities. A provisional has six requirements which must be fulfilled within two years or less. She must participate in at least two of the CGC workshops, assist in setting up one horticulture or design show or serve as an assistant clerk at one show, participate in a club civic project, exhibit in at least one horticulture and one design show during each year, serve on both the horticulture and conservation committees within the first two years, and attend a minimum of four regular membership meetings each year. Feedback from the provisionals on the merit of the program has been uniformly positive.

From the beginning the Cohasset Garden Club has been a "summer club", that is, membership meetings are held from March through October, although for its first thirty years the season commenced in April. Most of the founding members lived somewhere else in the winter, usually Chestnut Hill, Back Bay, Cambridge, or Beacon Hill, and moved their families to Cohasset in the warm months.

Nowadays, a number of senior members spend their winters in the south, so the system still works well. Board meetings are held throughout the year, unless the president makes an exception.

Since its founding in 1926, the bylaws of the Club had been adjusted periodically in a piecemeal fashion to reflect changes in the times and the membership. In 1999, an ad hoc bylaw committee reviewed the entire body of the bylaws and completely overhauled them. Later that year the revised bylaws were passed by the Board and accepted by the membership.

Club members enjoy several established traditions that have added to the members' pleasure, while keeping them in touch with their gardening and flower arranging roots. In 1977, then-president Lucia Woods set up a horticulture competition, for which she donated a silver cup named after Virginia Knowles. The Knowles Cup competitions are held twice each summer, and are judged by GCA judges from other clubs. Every member is expected to enter a minimum of one plant once a year, so that all members can learn the basics of good gardening practice and display.

In the early eighties, Roland Crampton established a design competition, donating the Barbara Crampton Bowl as a perpetual trophy in memory of his wife, a fine gardener, flower arranger, and dedicated member of the Club. Held twice each summer (on different months from the horticulture competition), the design competition was set up to encourage both beginning and seasoned flower arrangers. GCA judges are selected to evaluate and comment on each arrangement.

The Club staged its first flower show in 1926 at the Cohasset town hall, where Mrs. Eugene Ladd created a replica of the blue-ribbon-winning Myles Standish house. A picture of this house became the Cohasset Club logo and appears on the annual year book today. Club members chose the town hall as the site of flower shows for the next six years and the estate of Mrs. William Henry Brown for three years after that. The Garden Club of America awarded Mrs. Brown a medal for her 1930 exhibit. That same year the Club won a Bronze Medal Award from the Hingham Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society bestowed its Silver Medal on the Club in 1928 for an exhibit arranged by Mrs. Malcolm Seymour, Mrs. B. Preston Clark, and Mrs. Charles F. Cutler at the New England Spring Garden Show. In 1983, the National Council of State Garden Clubs accorded the club a Purple Rosette for Flower Show Achievement for a show entitled "A Fall Festival of Arts and Flowers."

The Club has exhibited regularly in the New England Spring Flower Show, sponsored by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and individual members have won numerous awards for flower arrangements and horticultural exhibits. The Amateur Garden Section is a highlight of the show, and as early as 1934 Cohasset won a first prize for its garden. Unfortunately, records of Club achievement at the show were lost for more than 20 years.

From 1958 through 1973, Genevieve Good designed several gardens, beginning with a blue ribbon holly garden that also won the Arms Cup for horticultural excellence. Mrs. Good's 1961 design garnered the Beacon Hill Cup and a second Silver Medal. The 1964 schedule required "A Garden for the Birds" and featured a colonial birdhouse surrounded by bird-friendly berry plantings. Crowds of admiring spectators proclaimed this exhibit to be especially

beautiful. However, judges awarded the garden a "B", noting that the surrounding black chain fence reminded them of "a cemetery, not a happy bird garden"!

Again in 1973, the club was awarded the Beacon Hill Cup and the prestigious Mrs. Edwin Sibley Webster Cup for a blue-ribbon back yard garden designed by Genevieve Good and Libby Wilson. The following year, the Club bow window was presented a blue, and in 1975, a Victorian garden captained by Jo Ford and Gretchen Stone captured a "B plus". In 1985, a beach garden entitled "She Sells Sea Shells," planned by Betsy Hoopes and Lydia Bishop, won the Massachusetts Horticulture Society's Trustees' Trophy, the Purple Rosette, the Gold Medal, the American Horticulture Society's Certificate, and the GCA Bulkey Medal. In 1991 the Club entered a garden featuring an old well, designed by Betsy Hoopes and Margaret Cotter. This garden received a red ribbon, as well as the Beacon Hill Garden Club Cup for the "most charming garden," The Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Silver Medal, the Garden Club Participation Prize, and the Arno Nehrling Award. In 1994, the Club entered a begonia window designed by Charlotte Sommerfeld, Genevieve Good and Dee Dee Rousseau, in 1996, a door arrangement designed by Barbara Henderson, and in 2003, an east-facing bay window, designed by Heidi Condon.

Every year Club members enter their plants into the amateur horticulture competition section at the New England Spring Flower Show and reap ribbons galore. Challenge classes are an annual occurrence at the show, and the Club horticulture committee usually holds workshops to encourage proper growing of the plants. In addition, each year the members grow GCA-selected plants, the best of which are taken to plant exchanges at Zone I meeting in greater New England and the GCA Annual Meeting. Hauling containers of delicate plants cross-country, along with luggage, pocketbooks, and briefcases, is one of the minor challenges the annual meeting imposes on GCA representatives.

Individual CGC flower arrangers have won many awards and blue ribbons. Some of the most outstanding arrangers have been: Mrs. Henry B. Pennell, Mrs. George E. Newton, Mrs. Delano Wight, Mrs. B. Preston Clark, Mrs. David Reed, Mrs. Clarence Hovey, Mrs. G. Roland Crampton, Mrs. Robert C. Knowles, Mrs. Henry F. Howe, Mrs. Prescott T. Cumner, Mrs. Frederick L. Good, Mrs. Robert L. Littlehale, Mrs. John M. Bleakie, Mrs. James B. Grinnell, Mrs. Jeffrey Power, Mrs. C. Earle Michaud, and Mrs. William P. Elwell.

Louise Littlehale was invited to exhibit at the International Design Symposium in England in 1990. Genevieve Good was awarded a blue in the class "Geometric Challenge" at the International Flower Show in Bermuda. She received three awards: the Mary Woodruff Armstrong Award, the Tourism Award, and the Challenge of Form Award. Many other major awards, such as the John Taylor Arms Award, the GCA Award of Excellence, and the GCA Bowl, have been won by our master arrangers.

In addition, most members regularly arrange their own garden flowers at home and in the winter keep their houses fragrant with plants and cut flowers acquired at the local florist or supermarket. GCA master arrangers pride themselves on avoiding the excesses of competitive design and strive to create flower arrangements that look like flower arrangements. Expressing her own inclinations in this direction, Virginia Knowles reflected

poetically in a short poem entitled "Thoughts on Returning From a Flower Show". Her poem appears as the heading for this History.

A number of kinds and categories of awards fall under the umbrella of the Garden Club of America. GCA makes available awards for those who have demonstrated outstanding excellence or dedication in various areas of horticulture, conservation, and civic excellence. The three major categories of GCA awards are national awards, zone awards, and club awards. Winners of the various GCA awards are listed in the Cohasset Garden Club yearbook under AWARDS. CGC members have won a respectable number of GCA Zone I awards and a plethora of GCA Club awards.

In addition, the Club awards its own Special Cohasset Garden Club Awards. There are six of these. (1) The Knowles Cup for horticultural excellence was presented in 1977 by Mrs. Edward F. Woods in honor of Virginia W. Knowles. It is awarded to the grower who has accrued the most points, exhibiting in both horticulture competitions each year. (2) The Golden Trowel Award, established in 2003, is awarded to the novice member who accrues the most points in the Knowles Cup Competition for horticulture, participating in both competitions each year. (3) The Crampton Bowl was presented in 1983 by G. Roland Crampton and his family in memory of Mrs. Crampton. It is open to designers who have graduated from the intermediate class (Class II) and is awarded to the designer in Class I who has accrued the most points, exhibiting in both designs shows. (4) The Silver Scissors Award, set up in 2003, is open to flower designers who have graduated from the novice class and can be awarded only until they have won three blue ribbons in this class (Class II). The winner is the intermediate designer who has accrued the most points in the Crampton Cup competition, exhibiting in both shows. (5) The Novice Bowl, also established in 2003, is open to designers in their first three years of membership or until they have won three blue ribbons in this class (Class III). It is also open to any new exhibitor. The winner is the designer who has accrued the most points in the Crampton Cup competition, exhibiting in both shows. (6) The Louise G. Littlehale Bowl, established in 1993 by the Club in honor of Mrs. Littlehale, is given in recognition and appreciation of dedicated and sustained participation in the activities of the Club.

Other awards not falling into either GCA or Special Cohasset designations are listed also in the Club yearbook AWARDS section.

The Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts also gives awards for meritorious achievement. Most recently, Eleanor Bleakie received the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts Award of Merit; Barbara Power was awarded the Federation Roberta Clark Award for Outstanding Horticulture; and Anne Elwell won the Leverne Collard Crystal Bowl for Design.

Over the years a number of CCC members have been design and horticulture judges. Members of the Garden Club of America can qualify to be a horticulture judge, a design judge, or both. The Club boasts three GCA judges: Anne Elwell, Pat Michaud, and Barbara Power. Eleanor Bleakie, Genevieve Good, Louise Littlehale, and Lucia Woods are GCA emeritus judges.

The National Council of State Garden Clubs requires judges to be qualified in both design and horticulture. Anne Elwell, Genevieve Good, Louise Littlehale, Patricia Michaud, and Barbara Power are NCSGC judges.

Although many of the records have been lost, a number of the Club's judges have achieved high reputations for their skills. Genevieve Good, for example, judged at major shows in Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Francisco, Chicago, Bermuda, Japan, and Canada, in addition to countless shows in New England, in the years from 1965-90.

Each year the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston stages its Art in Bloom celebration, in which arrangers from clubs across the Commonwealth are invited to use flowers in the interpretation of selected works of art. Thousands of visitors attend the celebration each year. Starting in 1972, when Eleanor Bleakie and Louise Littlehale exhibited, the Club has entered an arrangement almost every year, thereby supporting the fundraising effort of one of the region's notable institutions and helping to make the art of flower design available to a wide audience.

The Cohasset Garden Club has received many other awards since its inception. In 1956 a unique Village Flower Show was staged by Mrs. G. Roland Crampton, heading a joint effort by CGC and Amateur Garden Club of Cohasset. Forty-two store windows in the town displayed flower exhibits. This show received the Award of Merit from the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts and the Purple Ribbon, a special award, from the National Council of State Garden Clubs.

During the war years when the Garden Club of America conducted mailing classes for the International Flower Show in New York, the Cohasset Garden Club and its individual members received a number of awards, the exact titles of which have been lost. Later the National Council of State Garden Clubs awarded a blue ribbon to our Club for its 1955 "Springtime by the Sea" house and garden tour, planned by Mrs. Henry F. Howe. In 1966, the Massachusetts Federation of Garden Clubs awarded the Club a citation for a poster displaying before and after pictures of the Historic House Garden (later renamed the Virginia W. Knowles Garden.)

The good works of our Club in the fields of conservation and civic projects have been numerous. Members have launched campaigns against billboards, tent caterpillars, ragweed, poison ivy, elm tree beetles, Japanese beetles, opium poppies, and litter, all efforts to make our town more livable. To beautify the village the Club has planted trees near the old in-town railroad station, at the King Street triangle, on the common, at the Community Center, in front of the post office, at Veterans' Park, at the Joseph Osgood School, and at the bus stop at the edge of the common. A gift from Mrs. J. Franklin McElwain in 1950 enabled the Club to begin landscaping the Cohasset Community Center, where trees, shrubs, and vines were planted. Indeed, it was the McElwain family who had earlier saved the Community Center from being replaced by an A&P grocery store. In the eighties, the Club researched and posted labels with both common and Latin names on the trees in the common.

In a history such as this, we do well to remember how the members of small associations have reacted in times of national crisis. When World War II convulsed the country from 1941

to 1945, President Roosevelt and other national leaders exhorted American citizens to do all they could for the war effort. The energies of the CGC members naturally were devoted to patriotic work. The women of the Club under the auspices of the Fruit and Flower Mission donated hampers of garden flowers to veterans' hospitals, until wartime conditions rendered nurses too busy to care for flowers, and trains too crammed with passengers to allow for flower bundles. One member whose mother was involved with the project remembers helping to place huge wicker baskets of garden flowers cooled with wet newspapers at the Cohasset station in the evening. Train workers on the early-morning train heaved the baskets into railway cars for the trip to Boston, where in-town garden clubbers picked them up, fashioned cheerful flower bouquets, and delivered them to hospitals of wounded soldiers and sailors.

In 1942, the Club donated a mobile canteen to the local Red Cross. Every Sunday for two summers, volunteers served supper to servicemen. Over 2,000 visitors received meals from this canteen. Much attention was given to victory gardens and the growing and canning of vegetables. Food was even canned to send abroad, and seeds were collected and contributed for overseas food projects. The members made and sent Christmas wreaths to Camp Edwards. They collected contributions for the Horticultural Therapeutic Committee to aid in its work at military camps.

Until the early eighties, when the effort was entirely taken over by clubs nearer the hospital, Club members regularly placed flower arrangements, plants, and Christmas wreaths in the main gathering rooms of the Veterans' Hospital in Jamaica Plain, this in continuation of the work done by the Horticultural Therapeutic Committee in World War II.

In 1963, members of the three town garden clubs (the Cohasset Garden Club, the Amateur Garden Club, and the Community Garden Club of Cohasset) formed the Council of Garden Clubs. Its first act entailed planting Veterans' Park in 1965. Over the years, the Council has dedicated its combined efforts to conserving the best aspects of Cohasset and has been vocal in opposing the commercialization of inappropriate areas and unrestricted growth.

In 1960, Virginia Knowles initiated the Club's earliest continuing project, which involves the design, planting and maintenance of the gardens of the Cohasset Historical Society's museum houses in the middle of the village. An enormous effort transformed the ledges and rubble around the houses into a charming old-fashioned garden in keeping with the period of the houses. Over the years, the Club has continued to improve the garden, adding steps, walkways, fencing, and walls. One major improvement coincided with the country's bicentennial in 1976. The Club has allocated thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours of weeding, watering, and pruning to the garden. In 1988, the Club voted to change the name from the Historic House Garden to the Virginia W. Knowles Garden, in honor of Mrs. Knowles. Now in 2005, the museum buildings are in dire straits and the Historical Society is involved in extensive renovations, resulting in hardship to the surrounding plantings. When the houses are stabilized, the Club will mm its attention again to redesigning and restoring the damaged parts of the plantings.

In 1966, the Club initiated Anti-Litter Day, in which teams of school children were organized to clean up litter in the streets and parks of the town. For some years in the seventies and eighties, the Club provided small bouquets for Meals-on-Wheels trays, which are made available to elderly shut-ins. Members serve on the Conservation Commission of the town of

Cohasset, fostering good relations between the Club and the Commission and maximizing their joint efforts. Members have also been active in other town committees connected with growth and planning, and members frequently attend critical meetings of these boards to speak in favor of environmental causes.

The 1970s saw the beginning of the recycling movement. Now, more than thirty years later, recycling is part of our lives. From the beginning of this crusade, the CCC was involved in promoting recycling. In 1976, Barbara Power, among others, organized a demonstration, involving the Council of Garden Clubs, the Board of Selectmen, the school department, the tree and park department, and local churches, for the purpose of highlighting the need for bottle and can recycling. Volunteers piled forty-five thousand non-refundable, no-deposit bottles and cans, as well as bags of detachable flip-tops, on the town common to illustrate the need for the passage of Referendum Question No. 6, the historic Massachusetts bottle bill. Boston newspapers took note and ran pictures of the piles of debris. The Referendum was adopted due to many such citizen-inspired initiatives.

Beginning in that same decade, several Club members in the Beach Street and Atlantic Avenue area began to plant and maintain an empty antique horse trough at the junction of those roads. Member Virginia Knowles' husband had been a relative of Henry Knowles, to whom the trough was dedicated and who died in 1903. The Knowles, residents of Scituate, drew neighborhood attention to the Henry Miles Knowles Memorial Trough with some modest plantings in the sculptured bowl. Neighbor and Club member Mitzi Railsback offered help and later, June Hubbard and Patsy Leggat. For years those few kept the trough brimming with well-chosen flowers and greenery every summer, attracting admiration from walkers, cyclists, and passing motorists. Now that most of the original gardeners no longer live near the trough, the Club has taken over its management. More eye-catching than ever, it is lovingly cared for by several neighboring members.

In 1977, the Club voted to begin a long-term landscaping project at Joseph Osgood School on the corner of Ripley Road and Sohier Street, work which continued until the students were moved into a new school (with the same name) on Deer Hill next to the existing Deer Hill School. Club members devised a design plan and each year donated and planted trees, vines, shrubs, flowers, and mulch, often in observance of Arbor Day. The Club sponsored Arbor Day every year, the horticulture or conservation chairman spoke to the students on the importance of planting, recycling, and picking up litter. In 1990, member Margaret Cotter designed a nature trail with a vernal pool to teach students about wildflowers. Later, after the Joseph Osgood School on Ripley Road became the Joseph Osgood School on Deer Hill, the Club donated a portion of the new school's landscaping, including shrubbery and the automatic sprinkler system.

CGC was always a good friend to the old Paul Pratt Memorial Library on South Main Street, voting funds and women power to landscape the grounds, although routine maintenance was the duty of the Friends of the Library. In 1999, the town voted to move the library to the newly abandoned Joseph Osgood School building on Ripley Road, preserving the library's name. Happily, many of the plantings the Club had donated for so many years to that site were preserved and continue to flourish, in spite of the construction necessitated by the transformation of the school building into a working library. Within months the Historical

Society put its headquarters on Summer Street on the market and bought the old South Main Street Library, now referred to as the Pratt Building, which thrives, landscaping and all.

By 1993, the venerable Lightkeepers' Residence on Governor's Island overlooking Cohasset Harbor was falling down, and some of the townspeople established an ad hoc committee to restore it for public use. Volunteers provided materials and labor for the house and sounded a town-wide appeal for reconstruction funds. The Council of Garden Clubs accepted responsibility for landscaping and maintenance of the gardens around the building. Talented members of CGC and the Community Garden Club planned a thoughtful and harmonious design appropriate to the location and history of the structure. Because the Lightkeepers' Residence was especially intended to serve the town citizens, including private clubs and committees, the CGC voted to move a majority of its meetings from members' houses to the newly renovated Residence, although annual meetings are still held in private homes. Club bylaws require every member to work for four days a summer at either the Knowles Garden, the Beach Street horse trough, or the gardens at the Lightkeepers' Residence. Thanks to the unremitting maintenance provided by the clubs, the gardens remain beautiful throughout the season, in spite of setbacks like the deeply cold winter of 2002-3, when a whole planting of mature heather was wiped out. In 1998, Massachusetts Horticultural Society bestowed its Special Award of Merit for the design of this garden.

In addition to landscaping and maintaining regular Club sites, the Cohasset Garden Club belongs to a number of organizations and contributes regularly to others. Each year members meet to decide the most timely and deserving programs and cause to support. Some of these have been the American Forestry Association, Gore Place, Fairchild Tropical Garden, Massachusetts Tree and Forestry Association, Seeds for Peace, the GCA International Fellowship in Horticulture, GCA Founders' Fund, Contributors' Fund, Blue Star Memorial Highway, Black Pond Bog in Norwell, Garden-in-the-Woods and the New England Wild flower Society, the Student Conservation Program, the Trustees of Reservations, the Social Service League of Cohasset, Save-the-Redwoods, the Audubon Society, the Junior League Embankment Garden, Scenic America, the North and South River Association, Boston Urban Gardens, the Magnolia Fund, the Arnold Arboretum, and the Manomet Bird Sanctuary.

In recent years, rather than make small contributions to many organizations, the Club has concentrated its financial efforts. Substantial donations were made to landscape the new elementary school on Deer Hill and to the GCA Butterfly Garden project in Washington D.C. Our Project 2000 plan entailed the donations of landscaping skills, plants, and a significant monetary gift to the Trustees of Reservation's new Turkey Hill property on Route 3A just over the Hingham boundary line. In 2003, the Board voted to concentrate our efforts on local organizations, including the Cohasset Conservation Trust, the Gulf River Association, the South Shore Natural Science Center, the North and South Rivers Association, the New England Wild flower Society, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society for the benefit of the Boston Nature Center in Mattapan.

In the field of education, the Club has undertaken projects with school children, including an Arbor Day gift to Osgood School of a tree, shrubbery, or ground cover, as well as informal courses to teach school children the names of common plant varieties. During World War II, when victory gardens flourished, members assisted children in planting and taking care of

vegetable gardens. The Club has donated funds to be used for greenhouses for handicapped children and for a steam table at Deer Hill School. Contributions have been made to the Deer Hill fifth-grade outdoor classroom week at Camp Wing and to the GCA Interchange Fellowship programs. Club members have visited Girl and Boy Scout troops to interest children in Cohasset's historic museums. For a time, GCA produced educational packets for school children and the Club made them available to local public classrooms.

New and updated books on gardens, forests, conservation, and recycling are published every year. For many years, the Club has made a practice of donating an appropriate book to the Cohasset Library in memory of each member who has died. On several occasions in the past, the Club remembered deceased members by placing a tree in their memory somewhere in town, as on the common or in the cemetery overlooking Little Harbor.

In 2000, the Club conservation committee set up two well-attended workshops to study genetically modified food. Rather than bring in an outside expert, each member researched the pros and cons of this controversial agricultural advance. Although not repeated, the success of the program suggests that the Club might profit from occasionally scheduling environmental workshops on critical issues. The members also have considered establishing a book committee as a subgroup within the Club, for the purpose of familiarizing ourselves with new thinking on biological and environmental developments.

In order to carry out Club programs and support worthwhile projects, the treasury is in constant need of funds. Fund Raising: the very term evokes a shrug of tired resignation in all garden club members, no matter how enthusiastic. Still, our money-raising efforts have resulted in thousands of dollars of contributions to town, state, and Club charitable undertakings. Over the years every possible stratagem has been exploited to pump funds into the thirsty budget. Annual flower shows in the town hall were successful in the early days. The Ways and Means Committee mounted several bridge parties to cap-fund funds. The Club has sponsored talks on flowers or food, either by traveling GCA members or professionals. In the seventies, the noted English arranger George Smith entertained a full house at the town hall with his talent and wit. Several years later a well-known television cooking team instructed an enthusiastic crowd in Italian gourmet cooking, including the use of fresh garden herbs to enhance ordinary foods, something out of the ordinary at the time. A small amount was realized by an exhibit of coordinated paintings and flower arrangements at the South Shore Arts Festival. Several fashion shows proved moderately successful.

For many years the Club held annual plant sales, marketing special cultivars from members' own gardens, but the blanketing of suburbia with commercial plant nurseries, many of them discount, put home-grown and home-dug plants at a disadvantage. And, although the assumption once existed that every gardener either was a superb cook or employed one, and the addition of home made cakes, cookies, or relishes to a plant sale guaranteed a sell-out, the advent of small gourmet food stores and bakeries has largely met the demand. In 1977, for example, the Ways and Means committee mounted a plant and food sale which netted \$623.76 in exchange for hours of toil. Subsequent sales did somewhat better, but the format was eventually abandoned. A trial return to the plant-sale form in 1992 realized \$650.00.

Club members were challenged to find new methods of raising money. One of the most successful has been a Derby Day Party, held every two or three years, to which members contribute food, sell mint juleps, wear hats and lend husbands to be bet makers and bartenders. Everybody loves a good party, especially when the work is shared and the party-goers can depend on the good company of other members and their friends. Derby Day celebrations can be counted on for a solid transfusion to the Club treasury.

Since the American public has evidenced a continuing desire to peek at private houses and gardens, CGC, like other clubs has capitalized on the enthusiasm, echoing the successes of earlier years when garden tours provided a steady stream of income. As in the past, recent tours have raised substantial sums. Yet with both a small membership and a limited number of blockbuster houses and gardens, the Club can undertake garden tours only occasionally. Even then, members must exert themselves to the utmost and unpredictable New England weather can ruin the flower beds and discourage visitors. Nancy Garrison and Carmen Schramm ran a garden tour in 1990, entitled "Landscapes and Seascapes." A success, despite disastrous weather, the profits topped off the Club budget for several years.

In June 2004, another garden tour was mounted. Fortunately, the weather was cooperative, sunny and cool, for the numbers of visitors who converged on seven beautifully manicured gardens. A box lunch at the town beach was distributed to the guests, who could choose their own time to pick up the lunch, and eat at the beach or at several other destinations around town. Cohasset had never looked more beautiful, the gardens were gemlike, and every visitor must have commented on both.

In the summer of 1997, the Ways and Means Committee authorized a Boston travel agency to bring a small group of visiting doctors' wives to view several gardens. Since then, other groups of carefully selected guests have traveled down by motor coach ever so often. Usually, the Club has provided coffee or tea at a member's house after a short tour. Occasionally the guests have enjoyed an elegant lunch on a deck or terrace overlooking the ocean or harbor. A 2005 visit by a group of Atlantans to three beautiful gardens included a fine lunch on the terrace of Eleanor Bleakie's splendid Gulf River house. These excursions have netted a satisfying sum for the treasury.

The Club has mounted other successful fundraisers, including the sewing and raffling of a superb needlepoint rug and several "treasure sales," which attracted antique collectors and dealers. Silent auctions have been successful. A well-publicized silent auction at the town hall in the early seventies harvested surprising profits. In July 2003, Eleanor Bleakie's new house on the Gulf was the site of a cocktail party and silent auction on a beautiful evening. Over one hundred people attended, some bringing guests. The food was contributed by many of the members. Such a delightful time was enjoyed that the Board decided to pursue the format after a decent interval. Thus, in July 2005, the Club hosted a summer celebration and silent auction at Jackie Ralston's elegant house overlooking Cohasset Harbor, where guests were offered a vodka tasting, a sushi table, a mashed-potato bar, and other enticing treats. About 125 members and guests attended. The silent auction, expanded from 2003 and consisting primarily of services offered by Club members, including a clam bake, a wine-tasting, and sunset cruises to Minot's Light, reaped thousands of dollars. In addition to yielding record-breaking receipts, the party was innovative and a good deal of fun.

Roughly every twenty years each garden club in Zone I is host to the GCA Zone I annual meeting. This important event requires dedication from almost every member. In 1954, the Northern New England Zone Meeting was held in Cohasset and Milton. Adelaide Pratt was the Cohasset Chairman. In 1959, Cohasset again hosted the meeting with Eleanor Bleakie and Libby Dean as heads.

More recently, in 1975 and 1993, the Cohasset Garden Club welcomed our New England colleagues for the Zone I assembly. A comparison between the two meetings shows how much the lives of our members and all American women changed in the years between 1975 and 1993.

Genevieve Good and Lib Holt led the 1975 meeting, which was held on May 20, 21 and 22. The sun shone, which was a great relief, and our town appeared at its best. All of the guests were put up in the houses of the Club members. CGC members taxied visitors without cars from the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Boston to their hosts in the town. Mary Collins offered her newly-renovated house on the common for the Tuesday afternoon registration.

The schedule of events was impressive and included a standard flower show in tandem with the annual zone horticulture meeting at the Episcopal church parish hall. Mrs. Clifford Fifield spoke on "Planting to Attract Birds." The flower show, entitled "The Many Wonders", continued the theme of nature and birds through both artistic arrangement classes and horticulture classes. The zone conservation meeting, held in the Unitarian parish house, had as its highlight a talk by Kathleen Anderson, director of the Manomet Bird Observatory on "Birds as Environmental Monitors." Mrs. Anderson brought along several live and feathered environmental monitors to enliven her observations.

A number of Club members had worked vigorously to prepare their gardens for an afternoon of visitors. Other members offered refreshments at small cocktail parties in their homes, and two lunches and two dinners at the water-side houses of yet other members completed the celebration. The final annual dinner, held at Jessie Cox's impressive harbor-side house, concluded with a talk by James Rouse, developer of the trend-setting Faneuil Hall Marketplace. All events were held at a private home or a church parish hall. All meals were offered at the houses of garden club members.

By 1993, The Garden Club of America had decreed that zone meetings be simplified, but the demands on the host club were still intense. Patsy Rabstajnek and Anne Vanderweil took on the responsibility of arranging a first-class Zone I meeting, and their efforts met with success, everyone agreeing that the meeting had been memorable.

The assembly was held from May 25 through May 27, May 27 being devoted to an optional tour of World's End for those guests not in a hurry to get home. The weather was sunny and cool, perfect for registration at Frannie Wakeman's beach front house on Tuesday afternoon. The business and presidents' meetings on Tuesday, and the horticulture and conservation meetings on Wednesday were held in air-conditioned Kimball's By The Sea, where most of the delegates had taken rooms.

The South Shore Art Center was selected to be the site of the past presidents' cocktail party, and the cocktails and awards dinner was held at the Cohasset Golf Club. A number of members offered to have dinner parties at their houses on Tuesday night, and Jane Cook hosted the Wednesday al fresco luncheon. David Wadsworth, curator of the Cohasset Historical Society, led interested delegates on a "captains walk" of some of the historic houses and streets in Cohasset on Tuesday afternoon.

Wednesday afternoon was set aside for a tour of five outstanding gardens owned by CGC members. David Clapp, the director of the South Shore Regional Center of the Audubon Society spoke on "Acquiring Conservation Land" at the conservation meeting. All the members were delighted when the Virginia W. Knowles Garden received the GCA Zone I Award for Historic Preservation. At the same meeting, a Special Cohasset Garden Club Award was presented to Louise Littlehale in recognition of her many achievements and contributions. John Faulkner Hubbard, nominated by the CGC, was given the GCA Zone I Conservation and/ or Civic Improvement Award. (The following year, David Clapp, also nominated by the Club, received the same honor.)

The Cohasset Garden Club is tentatively scheduled to host the 2013 Zone I meeting.

Every GCA club in the nation sends delegates to the Garden Club of America Annual Meeting, which is held in a city big enough to accommodate the guests. Other delegates involved with the national committees and the overall administration of GCA come as well, which makes for a sizable affair. In 1975, Boston hosted the Annual Meeting and all the GCA Boston-area clubs spent months preparing for and staging the meetings and festivities. Mitzi Railsback and Genevieve Good were in charge of decorations for the large annual dinner held at the Copley Plaza. To recall Boston's China trade past, they chose porcelains as their inspiration and primary decorative feature.

Twenty years later in 1995, the GCA Annual Meeting was again held in Boston, and, again, most members of Boston-area GCA clubs participated in some way, including acting as hostesses, guiding at one of the cultural or historic destinations, or carpooling delegates. The Cohasset Garden Club entered wholeheartedly into the activities. Genevieve Good was chairman of the transportation committee, responsible for the conveyance of the 400 delegates from place to place and on tours. A Cohasset subcommittee devoted many hours to creating dozens of mussel-shell wreaths to decorate the tables at a Boston dinner, suffering some finger abrasions in the process. The GCA Annual Meeting is scheduled to return to Boston in 2007.

Founded in 1948, the Interchange Fellowship program provides funding for a British recipient annually to attend a graduate program in landscape architecture or horticulture in the United States for one academic year. In return, a U.S. student studies in the U.K. each year as a Martin McLaren fellow. The representatives of the zone nearest the fellow's American college or university has the privilege and responsibility of overseeing the fellow's time in America. In 2005-6, Ian Wale is attending a graduate program in landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. CGC'S Sarah Pease, as representative for Zone I, is planning visits and activities to enrich his stay. An enthusiastic former fellow, Peter Thompson, visited in 1999 and acquainted the Club with the real benefits he had received from the program.

From 1983 to 1987, CGC member Lucia Woods served as vice chairman and then chairman of the national Interchange Fellowship Committee.

Club representatives have attended annual meetings of both the Garden Club of America and the Garden Club Federation for many years. One CGC president, Mrs. John Vosoff, served as president of the Federation in the fifties. Louise Littlehale was chairman of the Federation Judging Council and Genevieve Good has served on the same council.

Members have demonstrated their abilities in GCA administration as well. In 1967, Grace Russell was elected a GCA director and Caroline Thayer was accorded the same honor in 1975, Lucia Woods in 1988, and Jane Goedecke in 1999. Mrs. Goedecke was appointed GCA Parliamentarian in 1998, served until 2002, and was reappointed in 2005. She was GCA Corresponding Secretary from 2003-5. Grace Russell was chairman of the GCA Conservation Committee in 1962. Virginia Knowles was vice chairman of the GCA Judging Committee in 1972. Patsy Rabstajnek became a member of the National Affairs and Legislative Committee in 1997, eventually becoming vice chairman. She was also representative to the GCA National Conservation Committee from 2002-4. Jane Goedecke from 2001-3 served as chairman of the National Conservation Committee. Caroline Thayer was chairman of Zone I of the GCA in 1968. CGC Club members who have served as Zone I vice chairman include Mitzi Railsback in 1975, Shirley Neer in 1976, Jane Goedecke from 1993-5, and Sarah Pease from 2003-5. Genevieve Good was chairman of the Judging Committee for Zone I, Barbara Power of Zone I Flower Show Committee from 2003-5, and Pat Michaud of the Zone I Horticulture Committee from 2003-5. Other members who have served as zone representatives to various GCA committees are: Mrs. Laurence N. Thomas for the National Parks Committee in 1966, and later Eleanor Bleakie in the same position; Virginia Knowles for the Horticulture Committee; Mitzi Railsback and Barbara Power for the Conservation Committee; Tish Grinnell and Louise Littlehale for the GCA Flower Show Committee; Anne Manchester for the Program Committee; and Marguerite Borden for Visiting Gardens from 2001-3. Mrs. Borden was vice chairman of the national Visiting Gardens Committee from 2003-4.

The opportunity to learn more about plants is one of the great draws of membership in the Cohasset Garden Club. Each year the program committee works hard to stimulate members' enthusiasm and interest with a series of lectures and workshops. There is hardly a plant that grows that has not been a subject for speakers at the regular meetings of the Club, when professional and member lecturers share their detailed knowledge of horticulture, flower arranging, and conservation. Birds are always a popular subject and have been brought to meetings. At regular intervals, the subject of a July or August meeting is selected with an eye to the joint interests of members, children, and grandchildren. Thus, when the Club invited children to join us for a talk on owls, five owls were present and glaring around. On other occasions, our adult audiences tried not to flinch as the soft hands of their offspring gently cradled giant cockroaches at one meeting, and nervous snakes and lizards another time. The lecture on bats was popular with the youngsters, if not with every one of the members.

Courses in applied gardening impart practical knowledge in horticulture and design, and at horticulture workshops, experienced members or imported experts instruct new gardeners in the nurturing of wildflowers, new cultivars, and gardening under lights, as well as the

perils of damping off, wilt, and pests.

Flower arranging programs cannot be scheduled too often, and our own Club master arrangers are generous with their expertise. In 2005, club workshops programmer Joan Shockman set up ten such meetings, including workshops on: orchids; advanced flower design; plant swaps; centerpieces on a budget; floral photography; the crafting of mussel shell wreaths and votives; mushrooms in the wild; planting spring bulbs; making Christmas wreaths, and designing Christmas arrangements with flowers and greens.

Conservation lectures are also an ever-appealing and educational experience. In the nineteen sixties and seventies, questions concerning the filling of salt marshes and the destruction of songbird habitat attracted attention in the news media. In the next thirty-five years, additional anxieties surfaced, including global warming and plant genetics. Preserving woodlands and meadows and establishing more green space in cities, towns, and the countryside require enormous outputs of energy and dedication from all citizens, and garden clubs try to lead the way in these efforts.

GCA keeps all its members up-to-date on various legislation to do with conservation, and Cohasset members regularly receive letters and e-mail requesting that letters be written in support of a national, state, or local initiatives. In addition, representatives of the Club visit Washington, D.C., on occasion to attend meetings on conservation legislation and to be briefed by environmentalists, lobbyists, and staff members of our congressional representatives.

The Garden Club of America has instituted a program promoting photography as a way to further member appreciation and knowledge of horticulture, conservation, flower arranging, and artistic design. During the summer of 2005, both a program and a workshop introduced experienced and amateur club photographers to the particular techniques appropriate for garden photography, and the Board voted to sponsor a series of further workshops on the subject.

The Club always has harbored fine photographers. In 1979 and 1980, funds were raised from the sale of two postcards picturing *cornus canadensis* in both a summer and winter rendering. The Club had adopted that flower for study at the time. The flower pictures were taken by Adelaide M. Pratt, a member and notable photographer. Mrs. Pratt's sparkling slide of a fringed gentian which graced the cover of the New England Wild flower Society Journal in 1999, was one of 10,000 flower slides she donated to the Wildflower Society.

The visiting of gardens is always popular, whether in our town or other towns or states. The GCA Visiting Gardens program aims to satisfy this yearning, and the national committee regularly keeps the clubs apprised of major garden-and conservation-oriented trips around the country and overseas. Locally, in 1991 and for several years thereafter, our members visited the gardens of fellow Club members in an "at home" program. There have been trips to the Arnold Arboretum, White Flower Farm, Mount Auburn Cemetery, the Garden in the Woods, and other interesting venues. One memorable trip in May 1987 took us to Long Island. There we visited outstanding estate gardens, including the gardens at Old Westbury House, and we were royally entertained by the local GCA hostess clubs. On other occasions,

Club members visited the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the Doris Duke Garden in New Jersey, Naumkeag in Lenox, the Cloisters, gardens in the York, Maine vicinity, and gardens belonging to GCA club members in central New Hampshire.

Groups of Club members are often invited to drive to other Zone I clubs for shorter trips, usually for the day but sometimes as slightly longer excursions. From these visits with our far-flung GCA friends, we return with fresh approaches to our own planting spaces. Members have been known to come home, get out of the car, and immediately rip up a shabby spot in the garden, planning to replace it with a planting inspired by one just seen in New Hampshire or western Massachusetts.

By the same token, women from other GCA clubs may visit our gardens during the summer. Recently, a group of elderly visitors tramped gamely through several Cohasset gardens on a blistering day. When lunchtime finally arrived and the ladies had settled themselves into deck chairs with a fresh ocean breeze, they were offered iced tea by solicitous Cohasset hostesses. Courteously declining, the visitors suggested that gin and tonic would do nicely.

The year 1994 saw the founding of the Boston Committee. The Committee is comprised of eleven GCA clubs and three associate clubs from the areas surrounding Boston. The goals of the committee are to educate the public regarding regional ecological concerns and horticultural practices; to assist individuals, organizations and public officials in the design and beautification of parks and green areas; to meet with political representatives to exchange views on issues and concerns; and to encourage civic achievement by presenting awards. In 1999, the Boston Committee was awarded the GCA Historic Preservation Award for its valuable work in the Boston area preserving and enhancing the historically precious Emerald Necklace as part of our common heritage. The Cohasset Garden Club and the Milton Garden Club sponsored the Boston Committee for this honor. CGC members regularly serve on the board.

The Club newsletter, an informal yearly informational publication founded in 1959, was greatly expanded in 1997 when Nancy Garrison became its editor. The letter, renamed "The Garden Door", blooms with color and graphics and appears several times a year. No longer merely reporting on committee activities, an issue of "The Garden Door" may air concerns of national importance on one page and horticultural tips on the next. Our members have improved their technical skills to the point that most issues of "The Garden Door" are delivered on line, as are the minutes of the board and membership meetings, and last-minute communications of the kind once covered by the now almost-defunct telephone tree.

As we arrive at the year 2006, it has been eighty-one years since a group of energetic women founded the Cohasset Garden Club in a boom economy, soon to be followed by a devastating depression. The charter members are gone, but they would recognize us beavering away in one garden or another in our baseball hats, gloves, and trowels. They might smile in recognition at our earnest endeavors to restrain husbands and landscape workers from weeding out the phlox and leaving the ragweed, yet they would see that, though Cohasset has changed and must now be classified as a suburb, its ocean views, winding roads, and quiet, rocky harbors are unaltered.

Time has brought change, and the membership is increasingly involved in varied and far-reaching activities, but each Club member is also a gardener, who has chosen to join with other gardeners in order to indulge a mutual passion. Our membership meetings are crowded, a quantity of plant material adorns our horticulture and design competitions, and virtually every member works hard each summer at the hands-on maintenance of our local garden projects. The projects and programs of the Club reflect the current needs of changing times, but our goals remain the same as those earlier members: "To stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs ... to aid in the protection of native plants and birds, and to encourage civic planting."

This Club history and the 2006 revision was prepared by Anne Manchester, with the help of Eleanor Bleakie, Marguerite Borden, Patsy Dean, Jo Ford, Mary Hartshorne, Nancy Garrison, Genevieve Good, Louise Littlehale, Susan McVeigh, Sarah Pease, Barbara Power, Patsy Rabstajnek, Mitzi Railsback, Carmen Schramm, Joan Shockman, Charlotte Sommerfeld, Lucia Woods, and other obliging long-time members.