

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

March 2017



Azaleas in Luce Garden (Craig Clark)

February was ablaze with the first Azalea blooms—several weeks early! Luce is simply beautiful, which you will see on the section on Luce Garden.

February was a month of continuing cleanup, spraying (weeds love the warmer weather), de-vining the shrubs, pruning/feeding the Roses, pruning the Oleanders, and feeding the bulbs as they emerge.

We have had so many projects in progress, I look forward to March, when several will come to fruition. Look forward to the next newsletter, when I hope we will have photos of these projects completed!

Garden Updates:

The Store and Parking Court:

The Parking Court and Store are still a work in progress. We hope to have the Court planted in the next week and are awaiting a proposal for paving.

St. Clare:

Kathy has been busy this month raking, raking and more raking. We are experiencing the annual leaf drop and we wade through leaves! Along with the

leaves are weeds, which have been plentiful due to the extremely warm weather. I do not remember spraying for weeds in February before.

The Cloister:

The Cloister is slowly waking up as items are beginning to peep through the mulch. The pots in the Entry to the Church have been changed out.



Green Carolina replanting the pots with Pittosporum

The Hollies had outgrown their pots, and in our practice of re-cycling, we moved them to the edge of the Secular Cemetery, to delineate between the Cemetery and the woods (which the Luce crew has cleaned up).



Hollies at the Secular Cemetery

The Orchard:

The orchard crew has been busy but we do sometimes feel we are going around in circles. Of course, we aren't really that organized, we're more like the little boy in Family Circus running from one task to another.

Last week we planted two new 🍊 citrus. They are called cara cara, a cross between mandarin and naval oranges. I bought one for my yard and am looking forward to the fruit which have almost red flesh, are virtually seedless, and very sweet if we can delay picking until they are really ripe.

Howard

Luce Garden:

Here is the star of the month! I will let the photos do the talking. By the way, this is just the first wave. There is still time to come and see the ones that are still in bud!



(Craig Clark)



(Craig Clark)





Beautiful!

Greenhouse:

The Greenhouse is full of action at the moment. Ursula has gone on a mad tear of dividing ferns and also is making new baskets of various materials. We have also divided succulents and we will announce a surprise as Spring progresses.





Luckily, we will be taking some of these pots outdoors this month!

Odds and Ends:

Gretchen and Harry come faithfully each Monday and requested they be given “The Park”. That is the area between the Visitor’s Parking Lot and the Walk to the Church. What they have done is amazing! The Rock River actually has rocks to be seen, the shrubs are de-vined, and the latest endeavor is cleaning up the line of trees on the old road down to the Library. It was a tangle of vines and unpruned trees. Here is their result. A round of applause for them!



Tree Line along old road down to the Library

The Church:

We have new padded Kneelers—all matching—in the Church now. They are very comfortable and fade away when not being used. All of us with bad knees will appreciate these during the Lenten Events.



You can see the Kneelers under the benches here.

Old Dorm Steps-River Side:

We hired a mason to repair the Columbarium brick border which had separated from the stucco niche due to a lack of footers having been put in when the Columbarium was built. While the mason and his son were here, we had them take out the unused and dangerous steps down to the lower level of the Old Dorm on the river side.



Taking out the old steps

To continue our re-cycling, the unbroken bricks were used to brick the wet area that had been covered in plastic tarp, held down by cinder block at the Boiler at the back of the Bicycle Shop. It is un-planted at present, but will be a much neater and manageable area to maintain.



New bricked area at Boiler

Each February we do a "Prescribed Burn" to keep the diversity of plants. Howard and Norm managed it again this year and did a wonderful job. Thank you, Howard and Norm!



Prescribed Burn (Craig Clark)



Pottery Shed and grounds after Prescribed Burn

Volunteers:

Again we have new Mormon Volunteers:

Sister Faith and Sister Margaret are still with us, and Sister Laura has joined us. Elder Edward was transferred but we still have Elder Felix. Joining him is Elder Garth. Welcome Sister Laura and Elder Garth!



Sister Laura



As you can see, we put Garth right to work!

We are so lucky to have another new Volunteer:

Richard is a neighbor of George C and is also not only a gardener, but very handy with maintenance items also.



Richard Toller

More news on Volunteers!

Miss Doris, our keeper of St. Benedict gardens/roses, turned 80 last month! To celebrate, we had lunch with cake and all the trimmings. A good time was had by all!



L to R: Walter (Sylvia's Dad who was visiting), Joan (a friend of Miss Doris), Sylvia, Kay, Miss Doris, Jill, Kathy, Greg, Ursula, Nick, Sister Faith, Sister Margaret, Elder Edward, Steve, Elder Felix.



A party is not complete without a visit from Brother Joseph

Those Who Lived at Mepkin (the second in a series):

The Laurens Era: 1762 – 1911



Henry Laurens 1724-1792

On March 5, 1681, Peter, Thomas, and James Colleton received a Proprietary Grant for 3,000 acres along the western branch of the Cooper River. These brothers were the sons of one of the original Lords Proprietors, Sir John Colleton. The land remained in the family, managed by John Stuart (who called it Makkean), until 1762 when it was sold to Henry Laurens. The sale included the original 3,000 acres of the Proprietary Grant for which Laurens paid 8,000 £.

At the time of the Mepkin land purchase, Henry Laurens was a merchant in Charleston, SC. Laurens had earned great wealth as a partner in the largest slave-trading house in North America (Austin and Laurens). In the 1750s alone, this Charleston firm oversaw the sale of more than 8,000 enslaved Africans. He also imported and exported goods, including a wide variety of exotic plants. Many of these plants are considered invasive today including Chinese wisteria and Japanese privet.

In 1776 he quit the merchant business to become a rice planter and statesman. Laurens held several political positions including the Vice President of South Carolina and later the President of the Second Continental Congress, succeeding John Hancock. During this time, Mepkin Plantation became the main residence for Henry and his wife, Eliza Ball. It's thought that the Laurens decided to build their home at the end of the oak allee in what is now a field on the right side of the gravel road to the Luce Gardens. Their family cemetery is located down the ravine past the Columbarium and up the steps to the adjoining hillside.

Henry Laurens was also a devoted patriot during the Revolutionary War. In 1779, he was captured at sea by a British warship and imprisoned in the Tower of London for almost two years (he is the only American to ever be held prisoner in the tower). He was released in exchange for Lord Cornwallis and returned to Mepkin in 1784 only to

find that the British occupying forces from Charleston had burned the main home during his absence. Laurens and his family lived in an outbuilding while the great house was rebuilt. On December 8, 1792, Henry Laurens passed away. In his will he stated that he wanted to be cremated and his ashes buried on the property. It's reported that his was the first formal cremation in the United States. Mepkin Plantation was left to his son, John Laurens.



Henry Laurens

Spotlight on a Volunteer

In an effort to get to know each of you a little better, we are choosing a garden volunteer each month to answer a few questions and submit a brief bio for the monthly newsletter. This month we have chosen volunteer Nick Bruno. A true volunteer in every sense of the word. Nick was volunteering at Mepkin long before there was an official program in place (over 15 years). Nick took me (Dottie) under his wing when I first started and taught me the right way to do things, the wrong way to do things, and the Nick way to do everything else! Those of us fortunate enough to know Nick enjoy his sense of humor and storytelling, appreciate his willingness to help, and love being a part of his circle of friends.



Here is a brief bio from Nick:

I was born and raised in Trenton, New Jersey and attended Catholic grade and High school. I received a BS in Business from St. Vincent College in 1961. While in college, I enrolled in the USMC Platoon leaders Class and attended Marine Core boot camp. Upon graduation from college, I received a commission as a Second Lieutenant. My active duty was from 1961 - 1964. I was stationed on Okinawa and then Camp Lejeune.

After the service, I went into Bearing Manufacturing. I started as an assistant Foreman and ended my career as a VP of operations for a German subsidiary.

In 1963, my college sweetheart, Mary Elizabeth (Liz) Anthony and I were married. We have three adult children; two boys and a girl. We also have seven (7) Grand Daughters. While raising a family, I received my MBA from XAVIER University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

That's it folks!

- 1) Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island?
 - a) My wife, Liz.
- 2) If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be?
 - a) Do what I'm doing.

- 3) If money was no object, what would you do all day?
 - a) Do what I'm doing.
- 4) Where do you most want to travel, but have never been?
 - a) We are done with foreign travel and would like to tour more of the US.
- 5) What is your favorite memory?
 - a) Getting married.
- 6) What is your favorite movie?
 - a) I'm not a big movie buff.
- 7) What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn't already?
 - a) How to communicate without texting.
- 8) What one thing would you change if you had to do it over?
 - a) Nothing at all.
- 9) If you could share a meal with three people from the past, who would they be?
 - a) I don't like talking to dead people so Warren Buffet, President Trump, and Meghan Kelly.
- 10) What actor/actress would play you in your life movie?
 - a) I'm not sure anyone would want to. (Editor Craig-I vote John Wayne)
- 11) Why do you volunteer at Mepkin?
 - a) There are many reasons: friendly people, interesting lives of the monks, peace and quiet, fresh air and manual labor, a religious experience just being on the grounds.

Many thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Craig for providing photos throughout, for the "The Laurens Era" and The Spotlight on Volunteers features, and to Langhorne for editing.

Thanks for the wonderful emails about our Newsletter. I so appreciate all your kind

words and am so glad you are enjoying the Spotlights and the People who lived at Mepkin. I thought we might be getting a little bit too long, but many of you emailed that you even forward it to friends and family. Mepkin is an experience to be shared. Thank you for your support of our efforts. A special request was made to include Abbey, the dog, each month. Unfortunately, she stays with Father Guerric most of the time and at the Retreat Center. As the Retreat Center has its own publication now, I will ask Larry to include it in his Newsletter. To help you survive before the next Retreat Center Newsletter, here is a photo of Abbey taken last week!



Abbey

Recently I ran across the following. I think it typifies who our Volunteers are.

From Moments of Peace:

“At every stage of your life, you have been given unique and personal blessing by your heavenly Father, blessings He intends that you recognize and use to benefit yourself and others. If you hold the blessing of a positive outlook, share hope; if good health, share help; if intelligence, share insight; if curiosity, discover more about God’s goodness and tell others what you found. Celebrate your blessings by stepping out of the shadows and sharing with others.”

Blessings, dottie

