

Garden Week 1999: Newest Club Presents Premiere Tour

by Suzanne Munson, Executive Director of Garden Week

New to Garden Week this year is the first tour organized by The Garden Club of the Middle Peninsula, recently admitted into membership in The Garden Club of Virginia. Not only have club volunteers produced a first-rate tour, but they also organized it more than a year and a half in advance, submitted their guidebook copy on deadline, secured new guidebook ads, and developed an excellent brochure and marketing plan. The club's tour in Essex County on April 23 features five magnificent historic 18th and 19th century homes and one historic church. Congratulations, ladies!

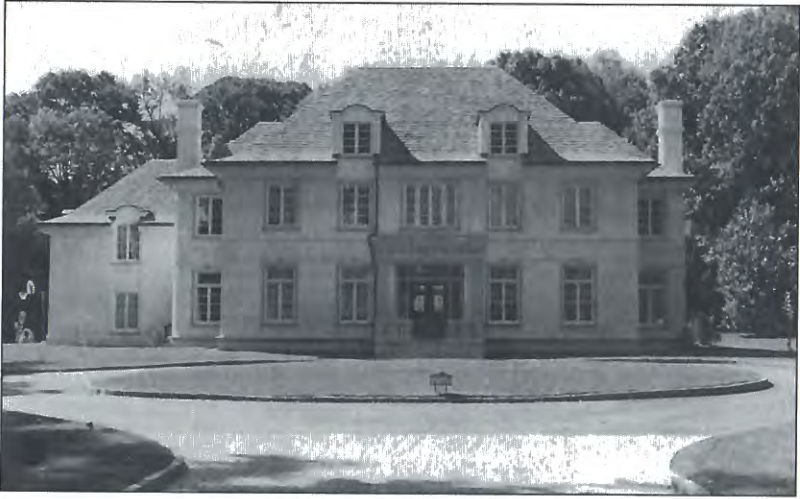
Once again throughout the Commonwealth, visitors will lift the latch of the garden gate and view more than 250 of Virginia's outstanding homes, gardens and historic landmarks during Garden

Week. The program's 66th season is scheduled for April 17-24, and tour groups from California to Canada are making plans to attend. Dozens of major magazines and newspapers are publishing Garden Week features, which will further enhance attendance.

Among the famous and near-famous homeowners opening their properties this year are popular musician Bruce Hornsby, well-known Virginia artist Parks Duffey, former U.S. Senator Paul Trible, and State Senator Emily Couric, sister of NBC TV's Katie Couric. The Hornsby family's spacious new colonial-style home will be on the Williamsburg tour April 20, along with handsome old dwellings in the restored area open in celebration of Colonial Williamsburg's 300th anniversary. Mr. Duffey's 200-year-old home, filled



Blandfield, owned by Mrs. James C. Wheat Jr., is one of five stately historic houses on the Essex County tour planned by The Garden Club of the Middle Peninsula for April 23.



The stunning new Urban French style house of Mr. and Mrs. Murray H. Wright will be among the featured properties on Richmond's "Urban Tranquility" tour April 20.

with antiques and original artwork, will be featured on the same day in Petersburg. Senator and Mrs. Tribble occupy the President's House at Christopher Newport University, one of several attractive houses and gardens open on the Newport News-Hampton tour April 21. Senator Couric's garden is among eight delightful properties on Charlottesville's "Friendly Gardens" tour April 17 and 18.

Properties Span Three Centuries

Houses on tour span more than three centuries, from the circa 1680 Adam Thoroughgood House in Virginia Beach to Mr. and Mrs. Murray H. Wright's spectacular Urban French residence in Richmond, competed this past year and open April 20. The notable Lynchburg tour, also on April 20, is typical of many, with its eclectic mixture of homes dating from the 1880s through the 1990s, all fur-

nished with fine antiques and artwork from diverse periods.

Architectural styles this year range from charming log cottages to sumptuous mansions. The Fairfax club's tour in the McLean area April 23 will present a sensational Georgian Colonial home with a baroque-style regal ballroom complete with 20-foot ceilings, 3,000 square feet of marble and teakwood floors, and a Waterford chandelier with 15,000 prisms, thought to be the largest such chandelier in a private residence. Among five contemporary waterfront homes featured on the Virginia Beach tour April 20 is one with a Martha Stewart-designed kitchen and scenic views of Linkhorn Bay. Two of the properties on Lexington's April 24 event are a Japanese-style house with panoramic mountain vistas and a frontier tavern modernized and enlarged as a home over many generations.

Many of the houses on tour were built by prominent Virginians and were the settings of lavish entertainments for dignitaries of the day. One of the carefully renovated historic houses on the Ashland Garden club's tour April 17, in Western Hanover County, is an 18th century Georgian-style plantation home where Thomas Jefferson first met Patrick Henry at a Christmas party and where the French General Lafayette and his army encamped during the Revolutionary War. The antebellum mansion and extraordinary brick stable of two-term Virginia Governor William "Extra Billy" Smith will be featured on the Warrenton tour April 21 and 22, along with showings of the Warrenton Foxhounds.

Tourists Check Out Internet

Like many industries, the tourism business is becoming increasingly "wired" for valuable customer infor-

mation. This year, many of our guests will receive their Garden Week information via Internet web-sites and e-mail. Courtesy of the Richmond Times-Dispatch, a "mini-guidebook" in the form of the paper's Sunday supplement "Springtime in Virginia" will be available on-line for tourists the week before Garden Week, helping those who are not able to obtain the real guidebook. The newspaper's Internet address is <http://www.gatewayva.com/spring99/>. During the past year, our own web page (www.VaGardenweek.org) has received more than 23,000 "hits" or accesses from throughout the nation and elsewhere.

Planning is already under way for Garden Week in the year 2000. Dates for that year are April 22-30. Candidates for the cover of the guidebook are considered a year in advance by the State Garden Week Committee.



Moriah, a 1988 interpretation of a circa 1833 plantation home from the Savannah River area, is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Steven Rodgers and will be presented to the public for the first time on the Warrenton tour April 21 and 22.



Sugar Loaf Farm, open on Staunton's April 24 tour and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is an early 19th century farm complex with rare survivals of farm house, grist mill, miller's house, spring house and barn. William D. Rieley, The Garden Club of Virginia's new landscape architect, will give a presentation at 2 p.m. on various Garden Club of Virginia restoration projects throughout the state. William T. Frazier, architectural historian, will present a slide lecture at 10:30 a.m. on the architectural highlights of Sugar Loaf Farm. The farm is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Gray Ferguson.

Once again, heartfelt appreciation and admiration are due to more than 3,200 Garden Club of Virginia members, 200-plus property owners, and countless other supporters for making Garden Week possible for more than 40,000 expected guests this year. Historic Garden Week in

Virginia has been widely imitated over the years but never excelled. Thank you, one and all, for your wonderful work on behalf of this most worthwhile program to benefit historic garden restoration projects across the Commonwealth.

Reminder

The new **Kent-Valentine House** phone number is **(804) 644-7778**. You should use this number when scheduling events and making arrangements for meetings at the KV House. Mary Wick (Mrs. John H. Wick III) is the Kent-Valentine House Chairman. Her home number is (804) 358-7452.

The Historic Garden Week phone number is (804) 644-7776.

Garden Week Business Report

1999 Proceeds Set All-Time Record

by Suzanne Munson, Executive Director, Historic Garden Week

Glorious tours, good weather, thousands of happy visitors, and dedicated work by Garden Club members culminated in the most successful season in Garden Week's 66-year history this year. Total proceeds reached \$586,963, an increase of \$72,849 over 1998 ticket sales.

Income for single, one-day tours ranged from \$1,884 to more than \$54,000. The Garden Club of the Middle Peninsula's blockbuster \$54,720 tour in Essex County, the first Garden Day organized by this new member club, has set a benchmark as the most financially successful tour on record.

Garden Week also set a new record in cyberspace this year. During the 12 months leading up to our 1999 tours, the Garden Week Internet web site received approximately 103,000 "hits" or accesses—more than the total number of guidebooks printed. E-mail inquiries via the Internet came from as far away as England, Ontario, California and Colorado. Guidebooks were printed a month earlier this year, resulting in additional weeks of publicity.

Local tour expenses varied from zero to more than 25 percent of ticket income. Typical expenses included payment for shuttles, off-duty police officers, flowers, and printing. The three Richmond tours incurred a combined bill of \$5,390 for an "admissions" tax imposed by the City of Richmond. Other expenses included \$17,064 in income returned to the Historic Richmond Foundation for their co-sponsorship of Richmond's

Wednesday tour and proceeds returned to certain James River plantations for their Garden Week participation. Total expenses reported by all 1999 tours were \$101,322.

At the state level, Garden Week headquarters expenses were favorably affected this year by substantial reductions in printing costs for the guidebook, state brochures, and posters, due to competitive bids from vendors. Additional advertising revenues also helped offset guidebook printing costs. Other key items in the headquarters budget include postage and shipping, office supplies, rent, equipment purchases and maintenance, salaries, telephones, fax and e-mail. The headquarters operating budget for the 1999-2000 fiscal year is \$227,114.

Tours for the year 2000 are already in place and are looking wonderful. We began receiving inquiries a year and a half ago from groups and individuals about our exciting "next millennium" events. Among those calling our office were the editors of *Southern Living* magazine, who traveled to Virginia this April to interview and photograph for an extensive article next spring about America's oldest and largest statewide house and garden tour program. In addition, *House Beautiful* magazine is scheduling for its October 1999 issue an article on gardens restored with Historic Garden Week proceeds. Future tour dates are April 22-30, 2000 and April 21-28, 2001. Thank you, one and all, for your important role in making Historic Garden Week in Virginia such a great success.