

Memorable Woman, Memorable Home Belinda Crompton Straight, 1920-2015

DR. BELINDA CROMPTON STRAIGHT died on December 5th, aged 95. During a remarkable life she bucked the gender stereotypes of her generation; she was a psychiatrist, a civil rights activist, an advocate for abused children and a mother of five herself. She was also the last woman to live in the Historic House. In 1970 she and her husband Michael Straight jointly gifted the house, springhouse and 16 of our present-day 31 acres to the Fairfax County Park Authority.

On September 30, 2002, former Green Spring historian Sherrie Chapman interviewed Dr. Straight at her home in Washington, D.C. Following are excerpts from that interview, describing her memories of Green Spring Farm as “home.”

Belinda and Michael married on September 10, 1939. The young couple rented a house on Prince Street in Alexandria. When the lease expired, they searched for a home to call their own:

“We both liked the country..... I went out with the real estate agent and I was looking around and saw this house in the distance and I said, ‘What’s that, can we see it?’ So we drove up. And I just thought it was wonderful, and he said, ‘Well as a matter of fact it’s coming on the market tomorrow.’ We looked at it



Historic Green Spring Archives

and that same night we decided absolutely. It had an old log cabin, and the springhouse....and the wonderful old house...it was so lovely.... something to fall in love with, so we did.”

The Straights bought the house and 32 acres in late 1941 for \$32,500. The house needed repair and America was at war so they moved quickly to restore it and install a garden. They were young but had the advantage of prominent social connections. They commissioned two American masters of 20th century design: distinguished restoration architect Walter Macomber and pioneer landscape gardener Beatrix Farrand. The 1942 collaboration later earned Green Spring its Virginia Landmark status and a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

On Walter Macomber:

“I was very young, I was just 21 by then and I was just told that

Walter Macomber was a very good architect....We knew we wanted a fireplace and he brought in the old paneling....I thought he was quite handsome, greying hair and tweedy jacket, and quite comfortable to be with and much revered evidently in Williamsburg. He was very much a gentleman.”

On Beatrix Farrand:

“I was a little in awe of Beatrix Farrand when she came out and she was definitely not into having all the goods in the shop window....I thought a border of flowers and she said ‘no, absolutely not.’ I thought there would be different flower beds and she very early on said, ‘No, we can’t do that.’ And she was very precise and her carriage was fine and upright...and very decisive. I think she came out three or four times.” (At the time, Farrand was completing her signature work for Mildred and Robert Woods Bliss at Dumbar-ton Oaks in Washington, D.C.)

Belinda and Michael entertained many important guests on the lawn that Farrand created behind the house. On hosting atomic physicist Leo Szilard of the Manhattan Project in June, 1961:

“Well, we were sitting out there and somebody said something like aren’t you afraid of a nuclear

Manager's Message



Access for All

By the time you read this, the new bridge across Turkeycock Run will be open. It's been a long 12 weeks and I know many of you have been anxious to complete your walking loop from the main garden area, through the Virginia Native Plant Garden, around the ponds and back to the Historic House. We think the new bridge design fits well into the landscape. Considering the equipment required to remove the old bridge and install the new one, McKee Civil Engineering has been as gentle on the site as possible. There will still be numerous plantings to restore over the next year to enhance your enjoyment of the area.

Reopening the bridge is not the only access improvement you will see over the next year or two. The Fairfax County Park Authority has made a commitment to upgrade a number of its facilities for physical mobility accessibility, and Green Spring Gardens is on the list. There are federal standards outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to which we must adhere, but perhaps you have had an idea for a change you would like to see.

The revised master plan will be completed in the spring. One of its goals is to improve circulation. For example, one of our annual appeal donors spoke with me about having a railing along the pedestrian sec-

tion of old Green Spring Road. She wants to be able to reach for something if needed along the route. It's a great idea and one that we will investigate in our planning.

Here are two almost hidden available accommodations. Did you know there is an elevator outside the Historic House kitchen that can be used by those who cannot climb steps? Give us a heads up before you come or when you arrive, and we will operate it for you. Our main restrooms in the Horticulture Center were not built large enough for a wheelchair to enter an individual stall. We can assist you in finding the restroom in the staff area, which is fully wheelchair accessible. Please ask at the front desk for directions if you are not sure where it is.

Most access accommodations address mobility issues, with ramps instead of curbs, railings to provide support, automatic doors, etc. There are ways to ensure equal access for those with other limitations, such as vision or hearing loss. If you encounter a great strategy for accomplishing an accommodation, let me know by calling 703-642-5173 or sending an email to mary.oliem@fairfaxcounty.gov. If you need an accommodation for one of our programs, especially for a sign language interpreter, please call 7-10 days in advance, so we can schedule someone.

We strive to have Green Spring Gardens be an enjoyable respite and place to learn for people of all abilities. Be sure to let us know how we can ensure that your visit meets your needs each time we have the pleasure of seeing you around the gardens. ♻️

Mary Olien
Park Manager

Gardenline

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The editorial staff would like to
hear from you.

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Gardenline is a newsletter published jointly by Green Spring Gardens and Friends of Green Spring (FROGS). Green Spring Gardens is administered by the Fairfax County Park Authority's Resource Management Division. For more information, call the park at

703-642-5173

or write:

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A publication of
Fairfax County, VA



If accommodations or alternative formats are needed, please call 703-324-8563 at least 10 working days before the event.



FROGS Talk

Mary Jane Medeiros, FROGS President
Tatiana Lisle, FROGS Vice President

Spring! What a perfect time to visit Green Spring Gardens (GSG) and watch everything come alive! This is a time of rejuvenation and renewal for all as we leave our firesides and wander through our gardens, envisioning them in full bloom. And who can resist the temptation of more plants? After attending the Harry Allen Winter Lecture Series (the lectures run through March), we are ready for the Garden Gate Plant Shop to open on April 9th. Watch for a reminder postcard and a chance to win a prized plant from GSG. Spring Garden Day follows on May 14th. That's when you can find the plants still on your shopping list.

FROGS proudly hosts the Summer Concert on June 28, Fall Garden Day September 17, and the

annual Gardeners Holiday in December. These functions allow us to meet and greet our members, neighbors, and friends. Over 600 people attended our Gardeners Holiday this past December. Be sure to mark your calendars and join us at these events. We want to get to know you!

Did you know the FROGS Board also hosts a GSG Staff Appreciation Event? Every March we gather one evening for a few hours to socialize and thank the staff for all the hard work they contribute to the success and beauty of GSG. It is fun to take them away from their desks and gardens, giving us a chance to express our appreciation. Next time you are visiting GSG, be sure to say "hello" and thank these hardworking folks for all they do. And, if you have a gardening question or want to learn

more about the historic house, they are more than happy to share their knowledge with you.

Our 2015 list of accomplishments was quite something! The gazebo renovation, purchase of two club cars for the staff, painting the parking lot lines, and the front entrance signs are just a few. Thanks to everyone who attended meetings and sent in comments for the GSG Master Plan. All comments are now being reviewed and the final proposal will be presented to the Park Authority Board for a vote. We will keep you posted on what happens with this plan. Lastly, through the generosity and support of our members and donors, the 2015 Annual Appeal was one of our most successful with over \$23,000 to date. We will watch and wait with great anticipation as the Glasshouse Renovation project begins this fall.

Let's keep Green Spring growing ... come visit and get involved; you'll be happy you did!

And visit us at www.friendsofgreenspring.org; follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. ♻️

DOWNTON ABBEY: The Titanic to the Twenties



History Symposium

**Saturday, March 19, 2016
9am - 1pm**

Downton Abbey has transported viewers from the Titanic era through the tumultuous years of World War I, and into the Roaring Twenties. As *Downton* closes its doors, celebrate the popular series that showcased British estate life in the early twentieth century

and the separate but interconnected lives of landed aristocrats and their servants. Through lectures and exhibits, discover the history lessons that the fictional story wove into its plots, from the impacts of the Great War and advances in women's rights, to fashion, dining and social etiquette. Test your "Downton"

knowledge and look back at memorable moments as we bid a fond farewell to the landmark drama.

To register: Go to **Parktakes** online: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes and enter program code 290 103 4601, or call 703-642-5173. For more information, call 703-941-7987. ♻️





Left: First place winner in Family category. Right: First place winner in Adult category. Both photos by Kathy Trichel; all rights reserved.

Gingerbread House Contest Winners

Adult Category:

- First place: Lisa Bridges
- Second place: Susan Jewett
- Third place: Becky Van Meter

Family Category:

- First place: Kramer family
- Second place: Schuttinga family

Youth Category:

- First place: Nico Granieri
- Second place: Thomas Granieri



First place winner in Youth category. Photo by Tatiana Lisle; all rights reserved.

Congratulations and thanks to all who entered.

What's New in Children's Education

Birthday Parties at Green Spring Gardens

Happy birthday! Not your birthday? It is for many children who celebrate their special day at Green Spring Gardens. Green Spring's Children's Education staff regularly host the birthday child and their family and friends at the Horticulture Center. The kids enjoy fun educational games and activities with themes like Fairy Gardens, Animal Tracks, Pond Party, or Beatrix Potter, followed by family-hosted cake and presents. Find more information about our party programs at our

website, www.greenspring.org.

Introducing Our Newest Staff Members and New Programs

Children's Education has added two members to our already wonderful staff. Amelia Vogel and Priscilla Plumb have joined our team and will help out with garden education curriculum. Look for new program offerings starting this summer, including the new *Go Native! Community and Scout Workshops*, which offer education on native plants and their importance to our Virginia ecosystem. The workshops, cosponsored by the Virginia Native Plant Soci-

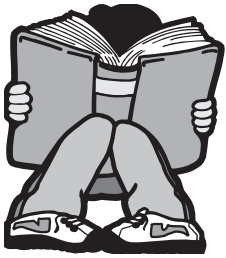
ety, include a "take action" project of invasive plant removal and a chance to purchase discounted native plants from the Virginia Native Plant Society. Another new series to look for is our Thursday afternoon *Let's Grow Garden Club* programs which offer youngsters the chance to work in the Discovery Garden planting flowers and edible plants, make garden harvest pizza in a solar oven, learn about pollinators and more. Find out more about these wonderful programs and our summer camps at www.greenspring.org or in your Green Spring Program and Events calendar.

Looking for Education Volunteers

Are you looking for a way to get involved at Green Spring? Join the Children's Education team as a volunteer. Children's Education needs volunteers to help out with weekend programs, summer camps and school field trips. Duties include helping with children's craft programs, assisting with Scout programs, educational walks and teaching nature related topics. This is a perfect volunteer opportunity for people who enjoy working with children, love plants and nature and have a special interest that they can share. We have been especially fortunate to have volunteers share their expertise in bee keeping, geology, gardening and art. What talent would you like to share with the youngsters? Green Spring staff will provided all needed curricula and materials to help you be successful. Send an email to susan.eggerton@fairfaxcounty.gov for more information.

We look forward to seeing you and your children at Green Spring Gardens! 🌱

*Susan Eggerton
Senior Interpreter*



Lines from the Library

SSHH! The seeds are sleeping! But not for long, as spring will arrive soon.

If you have started seeds or are considering starting them, now is the time for gardening tips. You can find a wealth of information in numerous books in our Horticulture Center library, including:

Plant Propagation, by Alan Toogood. Expert guidance on the propagation of over 1,500 garden plants. Learn which seeds need special treatment before sowing and how to provide the conditions to ensure a good rate of germination. This invaluable handbook enables gardeners to propagate plants with ease and confidence.

Seed Sowing and Saving, by Carole Turner. Step-by-step techniques for collecting and growing more than 100 vegetables, flowers, and herbs.

Gardening with Heirloom Seeds, by Lynn Coulter. Tried-and-true flowers, fruits, and vegetables for a new generation. It includes countless tips on enjoying and making the most of your garden.

Seeds: The Ultimate Guide to Growing Successfully From Seed, by Jekka McVicar. If you are looking for the best way to sow and grow, take inspiration from this author's wide ranging experience to produce outstanding results.

Botany for Gardeners, revised edition by Brian Capon. A clear explanation of how plants grow.

Plant Propagation A to Z, Growing Plants For Free, by Geoff Bry-

ant. More than 1,000 garden plants are covered in the extensive tables, detailing which propagation technique to use, whether seed, cutting or division.

Seeds of Change: The Living Treasure: The Passionate Story of the Growing Movement to Restore Biodiversity and Revolutionize The Way We Think About Food by Ken-ny Ausubel.

Reading these books just might help you to "reap what you sow." Happy spring gardening!

Memorable Woman

Continued from page 1

bomb being used and isn't the world frightening....and Leo said 'I'm really not frightened of anything.' Just then the heifers broke through the fence and came trotting up in a very friendly way. We told him they were very friendly, not at all scary. He hid behind a big tree looking ghastly white and then rushed into the house."

On entertaining famous writers, journalists and politicians at Green Spring Farm:

"We did give big parties. We had a lot of reporters and friends....Eric Sevareid and other commentators and writers and senators and so on. We had one for Dylan Thomas at which we had the Hubert Humphreys. We had Stephen Spender...and Julian Huxley....and Aldous Huxley....a lot of interesting people. There were parties and picnics. It was very comfortable and we were very informal."

In 1966 Belinda and Michael moved from Green Spring to a new home in Georgetown. Their "country" home of almost 25 years was no longer in the countryside but becoming hemmed in by suburban

Oh, and be sure to take a look at our used book section just in front of the library entrance. We also accept book and gardening magazine donations for resale.

"The love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies." Gertrude Jekyll. 🌸

Pauline Perry
Librarian

Library Hours: Monday – Saturday: 9:00am – 4:30pm; Sunday: noon – 4:30pm

sprawl. The donation of the house and surrounding land to the Park Authority in 1970 was predicated on its preservation as a park; and so our gardens grew.

On Green Spring Gardens:

"I never thought it would become an art center or a horticultural center. I thought people would stroll there and feed the geese. I think the horticultural center is just wonderful."

Of the place where she came of age and her children grew up, Belinda said: *"I have so many memories about happy times and it's quite an emotional thing to go back....It was easy to live in....It was home."*

Thanks to the generous gift of that family home, Green Spring continues to enrich lives. Visitors, staff and volunteers forge strong emotional bonds with the park and create their own memories here. It's still a cherished place. It's still, as Belinda put it, *"something to fall in love with."*

To learn more about Belinda Straight's exceptional life and legacy, please visit us at the Historic House. 🌸

Debbie Waugh
Historic House Coordinator

Bob Brown's Puppets a Hit at Gardeners Holiday



Photos by Kathy Trichel;
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BOB BROWN PUPPETS have been a major children's theater company for the past fifty years, offering the finest in children's education and entertainment and performing to over 300,000 children a year.



Spring Blooming in the Gardens

Come and enjoy a few of the many plants that will bloom here this spring:

MARCH

- Amelanchier (serviceberry)*
- Corylopsis (winter hazel)
- Crocus
- Helleborus (hellebore)
- Lindera benzoin (spicebush)*
- Narcissus (daffodil)

APRIL

- Cercis canadensis (eastern redbud)*
- Cornus florida (flowering dogwood)*
- Epimedium
- Magnolia
- Mertensia virginica (Virginia bluebells)*
- Phlox subulata*
- Prunus (ornamental cherry)
- Syringa (lilac)

MAY

- Aquilegia (columbine)
- Deutzia
- Fothergilla
- Itea virginica (Virginia sweetspire)*
- Peony
- Salvia
- Spyrea

*Native to Virginia



NPR INTERVIEW WITH DEBBIE WAUGH

Check out the December 20, 2015 NPR interview with Historic House Coordinator

Debbie Waugh discusses the origin and significance of "figgy pudding," a traditional British Christmas favorite served during last December's holiday tea programs at the house. She also shares the amazing recipe so you'll be able to make it yourself. Kudos, Debbie!

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/12/20/460488236/oh-bring-us-some-wait-what-is-figgy-pudding>



Grand Opening April 9

YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS the Garden Gate Plant Shop grand opening on April 9! For you herbaceous *Peony* lovers, we're offering 'Dr. Alexander Fleming' this year, a tried-and-true cultivar with a double-pink bloom. You'll find native *Azaleas* too, including the beautiful Pinxterbloom azalea, native to Virginia. We'll have a wide variety of *Hibiscus* too, including 'Cherry Cheesecake,' 'Blue River II,' 'Kopper King,' and 'Lord Baltimore.' These plants will be stunning additions to any garden.

For native spring bloomers, look for *Trillium luteum* (trillium), the wonderful yellow blooming trillium, or *Mertensia virginica* (Virginia bluebells) in lovely shades of blue, or *Stylophorum diphyllum*, our common yellow wood poppy. These natives tend to sell out quickly, so get here early! Try *Polygonatum biflorum* (Solomon's seal) or the variegated *Polygonatum odoratum* var. *pluriflorum* 'Variegatum,' for foliage interest in shady gardens. In addition, we'll have *Pachysandra procumbens*, commonly called Alleghany spurge, for a slow-growing, shade-loving groundcover. *Heucheras* will abound in the shop too, in a wide variety of colors from silver to red to almost black. Come check them out and take a few home.

To attract pollinators, we'll have many *Monarda*, *Phlox*, and *Coreopsis* to choose from, as well as *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed), and *Pycnanthemum muticum* (short toothed mountain mint). Bees, butterflies, and other pollinators will keep returning for more. If hummingbirds are what you love, try *Lobelia cardinalis* (cardinal flower), and *Spigelia marilandica* (Indian pink). Both of these natives do well in part shade.

Why not try a new shrub this year? We'll have two different *Potentillas* (bush cinquefoil) in our shop, Happy Face® Yellow and Happy Face® Pink Paradise. These little native shrubs grow two to three feet tall, are drought and deer resistant and will provide wonderful blooms all summer long. Or, how about a *Deutzia*? We'll be offering 'Yuki Cherry Blossom' this year. *Deutzias* love sun and are deer resistant. This particular one is covered with small pink flowers in the spring. For foliage interest, we'll have *Sambucus racemosa* 'Lemony Lace' and *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Lace.' These shrubs are also deer resistant, tolerate alkaline or acid soils and are beautiful additions to any garden. Of course, we'll also be carrying a wide variety of other shrubs to choose from including the ever-popular winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*).

Evergreen shrubs have an added benefit of providing structure and year round color to your garden. Why not try *Ilex crenata* Patti O? This wonderful small evergreen holly is perfect for smaller gardens and patios, and can be used in containers to flank formal entryways. It has a wonderful upright, columnar habit and can be used in a number of different ways in your garden.

Spring is such a great time to visit Green Spring Gardens! Come to the shop on April 9 and keep coming back throughout the season. We'll be putting out new plants all summer long. Be sure to mark your calendars for Spring Garden Day on May 14, and make plans to come and enjoy the day. Happy Shopping!

The Garden Gate Shop is open 9:00am-4:00pm, Monday-Saturday; noon-4:00pm, Sunday. ♻️

Diana Shannon
Plant Shop Coordinator



Spring Art Shows at Green Spring

Don't miss the beautiful artistic achievements you'll see throughout the Horticulture Center and Historic House this spring:

THROUGH APRIL 25:

East Indian brush painting from the Sumi-e Society of America
Reception at Green Spring: April 3, 1-3pm

FROM APRIL 27 THROUGH JUNE 26:

Watercolors from the Potomac Valley Watercolorists
Reception at Green Spring: May 1, 1-3pm



Gardenline

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*— friends don't let friends miss out
on what's fresh for spring... —*



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