COMMENTS FROM THE EDITOR

With the hot, dry days of summer waning from us, the cool days of fall are upon us. Though we may still have a few weeks of what seems to be summer with very warm temperatures and refreshing days of rain, Mother Nature has begun to make her “Autumn Announcement” that the ‘fall bloomers’ are just beginning to say “hello world” and ready to give us the beauty of autumn. This editor hopes that everyone had the opportunity to sit back, relax, re-charge and enjoy the bounty of summer. However, as fall approaches, Garden Club activities and events are gearing up already across our State for an awesome autumn season. With the summer quickly fading in the distance, it is time for The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. to get busy and to reach for the goals set before its members.

This editor would like to give his appreciation to Whitney White, Main House Museum Manager, at Pebble Hill Plantation. This editor has gleaned much information about this wonderful plantation and gardens from her. Though a personal visit to Pebble Hill Plantation has not be possible during the past months, you KNOW that Camellia District Annual Fall Meeting will be held in Thomasville, Georgia! Guess where Pebble Hill Plantation is located? If you guessed Thomasville, Georgia, you are right! Camellia District is the first of all seven districts to hold its Annual Fall Meeting, so why not go a day early to enjoy the fall beauty of Pebble Hill Plantation. Camellia District will meet on Tuesday, October 6 and all of the attendees will surely want to visit this awesome Plantation and Gardens! [And for a side note, Whitney is a graduate from Berry College.]

Sowing Seeds of Knowledge Reaps Conservation with Beauty: Landscape Design newsletters are intended to encourage, enhance, and enlighten The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. members with the beauty of hundreds of landscape designs. Hope you all have an AWESOME AUTUMN!

Dr. John Barnett, Landscape Design Editor
A Short History of Pebble Hill Plantation

The history of Pebble Hill Plantation starts with the Georgia Land Lottery of 1820 and the opening of Southwest Georgia for European settlement. The land that became the heart of the plantation was purchased by Thomas Jefferson Johnson in 1825. Johnson became a typical Southern Planter, raising first cotton and then introducing rice farming to the area. Upon Johnson’s death in 1847, the plantation passed to his daughter Julia Anne who managed the plantation along with her husband John Mitchell. In 1850 a lovely plantation home, designed by English architect John Wind, was built by the Johnsons. “Pebble Hill” became the plantation’s name around this time. John Mitchell died in 1865 and Julia Anne struggled on with the property during the chaotic period of reconstruction until her death in 1881. The history of Pebble Hill in the nineteenth century revolves around the Johnson family.

By the mid-1880’s Thomasville was developing into a popular winter resort where wealthy northern industrialists hoped to escape the cold winters in cities like New York, Chicago and Cleveland. Many came for “the season” and stayed in Thomasville’s elegant hotels; others purchased land and began yearly pilgrimages to the area. Over the next twenty years or so, hundreds of thousands of acres of working farm land were transformed into “Shooting Plantations.” It was to these shooting plantations that the new owners came to hunt, ride, entertain, and relax during the winter months.

In 1896 Cleveland’s Howard Melville Hanna purchased Pebble Hill and the land passed into the hands of the plantation’s second great family. Three Hanna family members owned the property. Howard Melville Hanna (Mel) gave the property to his daughter Kate in 1901. Upon Kate’s death in 1936, Pebble Hill passed to her daughter Elisabeth (known to everyone as Miss Pansy). Pansy was mistress of Pebble Hill until her death in 1978. Pansy decided around 1950 that she would like for Pebble Hill to become a museum open for all to enjoy. To that end she formed a trust to receive the property upon her death and set aside an appropriate endowment. The museum opened in 1983.

Museum boards restore historic properties to a particular time period and informational materials emphasis events of that period. At Pebble Hill the restoration period covers approximately 1915 through 1960. This period includes most of Kate’s major modern building projects and her establishing the lifestyle patterns, the grand entertaining and the traditions that were so much a part of Pebble Hill Plantation. The period ends with Miss Pansy the sportswoman, her love of horses and dogs, and the planning for the museum.

Mel Hanna was drawn to Southwest Georgia and encouraged to put down roots by his brother Marc and his cousin, C.M. Chapin. Chapin sold Melrose Plantation to Mel for $5 in 1896. Later that year Mel purchased
the adjacent property, Pebble Hill. Like much of the property in the area, Pebble Hill was in such a state of disrepair that Mel was required to begin a program of restoration immediately. By 1901, when Mel gave the property to his daughter Kate Hanna Ireland, Pebble Hill was cleaned-up, spruced-up and looking like a proper Hanna property. Mel began to build up a prize-winning herd of Jersey Cows and the stables were filled with “good” horse.

Kate loved the plantation and set about making it the perfect winter retreat. Kate was the great builder at Pebble Hill. She secured the services of Cleveland architect Abram Garfield in 1911 to build the Plantation Store. Over the next 30 years Kate and Garfield worked together planning and building all the major structures on the plantation. Their last major project was the spectacular Main House completed early in 1936.

Kate set the tone. Life at Pebble Hill was gracious and comfortable, lived in beautifully appointed surroundings where good taste and social correctness were the norm. Hunting, picnicking, golfing, fishing and other outdoor activities were enjoyed along with afternoon tea, reading, sewing, elegant dining and good conversation. She loved the Jersey cows and improved the herd by going to the island of Jersey to select her stock.

Humanitarian Kate hired locals and provided job with on the job training, if needed, for folks in the economically depressed area. She provided nursing service and well-furnished housing for her employees along with a school for their children. Christmas and Easter celebrations were provided for all, with gifts and games surrounding large holiday dinners.

Miss Pansy continued the lifestyle and the traditions began by her mother. Pansy was known far and wide for her largess, her community spirit, her amicable personality and her respect for the dignity of all people. When asked by a friend what she found most interesting and important at Pebble hill, her answer was “the people.”

Pansy was also one of the premier sportswomen of her day. She loved horses and hounds and all of the events that revolved around them. She rode her hunter/jumper Show maid at the Grand National Horseshow in 1929 winning 1st place in her class. Pansy was one of the first women to play polo and participated as a member of both women’s and men’s teams. She bought Shawnee Farms in Kentucky where she raised champion thoroughbred racehorses. Additionally, Pansy owned a breeding and training operation in Ireland from which her horses won major races in the United Kingdom. She took her dogs to field trials here in the U.S. where she was an avid and winning participant.

Miss Pansy put in place all that was necessary for Pebble Hill to become a museum. The art collections of both Kate and Pansy are highlighted in the exquisite Main House. Additionally, Pebble Hill Museum contains splendid collections of antique furniture, china, equestrian paraphernalia and turn of the century carriages.

**Pebble Hill Plantation Main House**

The Main House at Pebble Hill is a combination of 1914 and 1936 construction. In 1850, Julia Ann Mitchell, daughter of Pebble Hill’s original owner, commissioned noted architect John Wind to build a lovely large plantation house at Pebble Hill Plantation, (known as the Wind House). When Howard Melville (Mel) Hanna bought the property in 1896, the somewhat neglected Wind House was still the primary residence. Mel gave Pebble Hill to his daughter Kate Hanna Ireland Harvey in 1901. Kate updated, enlarged and totally renovated the Wind House and in 1914 employed her good friend and favorite architect Abram Garfield to add a 100 foot long loggia, 3 bedrooms and a large sitting room to the structure.
In 1934 a disastrous fire totally destroyed the Wind House. However, the loggia wing was saved, as the story goes, by a bucket brigade dipping water from the swimming pool. Kate called Abram Garfield back to Pebble Hill and together they planned an elegant Main House rebuild and completed construction by January 1936. The new structure attaches to the Loggia Wing and provides for a total living space on two floors of 26,000 square feet.

The Main House Archive

The magnificent neo-classical structure is filled with fine art, antique furniture, fine china, crystal, silver trophies and so forth that are the collections of both Kate and her daughter, Elisabeth Ireland Poe (Miss Pansy). Pansy inherited Pebble Hill upon her mother’s death in 1936 and continued to purchase fine art, in particular Sporting Art, and other praiseworthy objects. Everything in the house is original. All of the items on exhibit were in the house at the time of Pansy’s death in 1978.
The Loggia

The Arbor
Rose garden to the east wing door, which leads into the Big Room of the Main House.

Going to the back acres at Pebble Hill

This little tortoise has found a new home in the back acres of Pebble Hill.
A view across overlook pasture toward the stables.

Several different varieties of camellias can be found at Pebble Hill.

Kitchen view toward the Waldorf

A view of the Kitchen Garden.

Loropetalum
And what better way to end a day at Pebble Hill Plantation than to view an awesome and glorious sunset! Make your plans to visit this breathtaking Plantation, grounds and Gardens!

REMEMBER that Camellia District Annual Fall Meeting will be held in Thomasville, Georgia just minutes from Pebble Hill Plantation! Camellia District is the first of all seven districts to hold its Annual Fall Meeting, so why not go a day early to enjoy the fall beauty of Pebble Hill Plantation. Camellia District will meet on Tuesday, October 6 and all of the attendees will surely want to visit this awe-inspiring Plantation and Gardens and take at least a half day to walk and bask in the splendor!

This editor would, again, like to take this opportunity to thank Whitney White of Pebble Hill Plantation for her help and information. Any items that were borrowed from the web site of Pebble Hill Plantation has been used by special permission.

Keep Your Ears Open…..

LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCHOOL

Plans are in the making for a Landscape Design School in Georgia. Dates have not been set at this time but information will be shared across the state as soon as all registration procedures are confirmed. More information about this school will be included in Sowing Seeds of Knowledge Reaps Conservation with Beauty: Landscape Design newsletter as soon as possible and will also be on GCG Website for registration information.
Objectives of the Landscape Design Study Program:

YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS THE NEXT CLASSES!

- Develop a greater sense of appreciation, pride, and knowledge about our private and public gardens.

- Become better educated to make changes in our surroundings so that they will be more beautiful, useful, and convenient, ecologically sound, and easily maintained.

- Stimulate interest in all phases of landscape design, including community planning that will affect all of our lives.

- Develop a contingent of qualified Landscape Design Consultants to serve in such decision-making areas of public life as providing leadership, educational programs, scholarships, awards, and promoting better landscape design.

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A State President’s Workshop and Tri-Refresher
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