

Woman's Club of Rock Hill, Rock Hill, South Carolina
SC Historic Preservation Conference - Education Session Proposal
April 22, 2014

Session presenter:

Marlene Milstead, Chairman of the Armstrong-Mauldin House Historic Preservation Group (consisting of Club members and community leaders); member and past president of the Woman's Club of Rock Hill

1543 Colony Road, Rock Hill, SC 29730
803 366-9681(h) 803 323-7835(c) 803 817-1798(f)
msmilstead@comporium.net

Proposed Title

Case Study: The Mauldin Gardens at the Woman's Club of Rock Hill: Funding, Restoring and Preserving historic gardens

Components of the Project: pergola, reflecting pool, lily pond, brick walks, landscaping

Goal

In 2008-09 the Club embarked on an ambitious project, first to make plans and later to restore the formal gardens established by Mrs. William Mark ("Mamie") Mauldin during the early 1930s. The Club purchased the property which included a beautiful family home of Italianate design, in 1971.

Background and Condition of the gardens

During the 70's, shortly after the purchase, the Club covered over brick walks and a reflecting pool to create a parking lot. An 18 column pergola, which existed at the time, collapsed later in the decade and only a deteriorated tile floor and underground brick foundation remained. A lily pond to the side of the yard was filled with rocks and covered over in the early 90's.

In 1992, the house was named a contributing property in the Charlotte Avenue/Aiken Avenue Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is known as the Armstrong-Mauldin House. An adjacent property which includes a smaller house was originally part of the Mauldin property and was purchased by the Club in 2011. It is in the final stage of being listed as a historic property.

Financial Considerations for the Garden Restoration

The Club raised more than \$200,000 from Club members, businesses and individuals in the community, and from Club fundraising events. No government money was involved; no professional fundraisers were hired; no money was borrowed.

The Club has no staff. Minor repairs and on-going garden work for maintaining the property are done by Club members and their family members, except house-cleaning and lawn service.

Restoration of the Pergola

The restoration project included reconstruction of the pergola, using drawings prepared by an architect who used just a few old photos. Original bricks, floor tiles, and roof tiles were used. (Members and husbands scrubbed tiles with Simple Green and removed mortar and adhesive from the floor tiles). These materials were supplemented where necessary with purchased vintage materials and a limited amount of perfectly matched new ones. The late James Cothran, FASLA, historic landscape architect and author of several books on southern gardens (Gardens of Historic Charleston; Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South; and Charleston Gardens and the Landscape Legacy of Loutrel Briggs) said:

The restored pergola at the Armstrong Mauldin House represents one of the finest examples of "high-style pergolas" constructed in the South during the American landscape period (1880-1940), known as the Country Place Era. The pergola's unique design, creative use of decorative roof tiles, classical columns, and ornamental brick foundation creates a beautiful piece of garden art both in terms of scale and design.

The reflecting pool, lily pond and brick walks were unearthed by hand-digging by a member and her husband; bricks and stone were saved and re-used. The pools were rebuilt, and modern crane fountains were installed at the reflecting pool, since similar ones to the originals were not found. The couple also unearthed the brick paths which were in remarkably fine condition; only small portions needed re-building.

Landscaping with plants and containers; soft lighting

After restoration of the pergola and water features, a landscape architect worked with Club members who are Master Gardeners to include original, heritage, and modern plants to create a garden refuge which would be beautiful year round. The newly established landscaping added to the existing landscaping installed around the house during the Club's 2002 Designer Showhouse.

Soft lighting was installed to shine on the pergola, the clubhouse and various areas of plantings.

Public Recognition for the gardens

- *Garden Conservancy Open Days Tour 2010 - The Mauldin Garden was one of only about 300 gardens across the country and the only SC garden on this national tour of exceptional gardens*
- *GFWC Convention - The Club's Garden Restoration Committee was included as a workshop presenter at the General Federation of Women's Clubs 2012 International Convention held in Charlotte, N.C on June 12. The Club was 1 of only 2 clubs in the country invited to make a presentation. The Rock Hill Club hosted approximately 50 convention attendees from several states at the clubhouse and for a tour of the gardens*
- *Local Garden Tours - The gardens were twice included in the Master Gardeners of York County spring garden tour*
- *Named a Historic SC Garden - In the fall of 2013 the gardens were named by the SC Historic Landscape Initiative to the list of SC Historic Gardens, the only one in the Rock Hill area to be so listed.*

How the property is used

- *The main house is the meeting, project and administrative center for the Club*
- *Club committees welcome small groups of children whom they mentor*
- *Members use the facilities for their own private gatherings*
- *House and gardens are rented to the public for weddings, receptions, parties, seminars and meetings*

Building historic awareness and appreciation

There has been a gradual increase in awareness of the historic significance of the property among members and those who visit. This is particularly important since the City experienced destruction of many old buildings during the 1970's. There are now community-wide efforts to preserve what remains.

Of particular note in "spreading the word" are Club events open to the public. A good example: The Victorian Teas and Children's Tea during ChristmasVille, one of the largest and best known winter festivals in the Southeast. The festival is held in Rock Hill, usually the first weekend in December.

The Club has developed a "tour script" about the property as well as a comprehensive brochure on the plants in the gardens. Its current website which includes information about the gardens and the restoration www.womansclubofrockhill.org is being updated. Regular postings are being made on Facebook. A museum quality giclee of a watercolor of the pergola painted by a local artist is available for sale.

Challenges of the project and owning property

- *need to continually raise enough money for maintaining the clubhouse, gardens and the smaller, recently purchased house*
- *delays in responses from potential contractors and service providers*
- *shifting marketing efforts from print media (declining in circulation) to social media*
- *overseeing the functioning of equipment*

And triumphs of the project

- *seeing a big project completed*
- *seeing the impact that the Gardens can have in the community and among leaders*
- *knowing it is part of a national, state and local trend to preserve and protect historic properties*
- *demonstrating the ability of the Club to raise money*

Photo check list

Armstrong-Mauldin House 607 Aiken Avenue: the clubhouse

Faircloth- Mauldin House 600 College : adjacent property purchased by Club in 2011

Lily pond

- excavated lily pond
- restored lily pond

Pergola & Reflecting Pool

- cleaning old floor tiles
- removing old mortar
- unearthed reflecting pool
- deteriorated pergola foundation
- installing tiles
- roof hump
- completed pergola
- restored pool (shown in completed pergola photo)

Photos accompanying Education Session proposal for the 2014 Historic Preservation Conference

Woman's Club of Rock Hill



Armstrong-Mauldin House, the Woman's Club of Rock Hill, 607 Aiken Avenue, Charlotte Avenue/Aiken Avenue Historic District. Built 1921



600 College Avenue, adjacent to 607 Aiken. Built in 1939 by the Mauldin Family at the back of its property; purchased by the Woman's Club in 2011; in process of being added to the Historic District.



Partially unearthed lily pond.



Lily pond, summer, 2012



Club member scrubbing tiles of original pergola floor.



Club member gently tapping off mortar from pergola floor tiles using a tray of sand to cushion the tiles.

Woman's Club of Rock Hill

Photos accompanying Education Session proposal for the 2014 Historic Preservation Conference



Unearthed, badly damaged reflecting pool surrounded by reclaimed tile from the pergola floor and reclaimed brick from pool.



Remains of original pergola foundation



Roof hump being installed. One hump and some of the roof tiles are from the original pergola roof; second hump and remaining tiles are specially chosen vintage tiles.



Installing reclaimed pergola tiles with a few new ones interspersed

The reconstructed pergola with restored reflecting pool and crane fountains. Brick walks extend from either side of the pergola to the driveway and across to form a rectangle.

