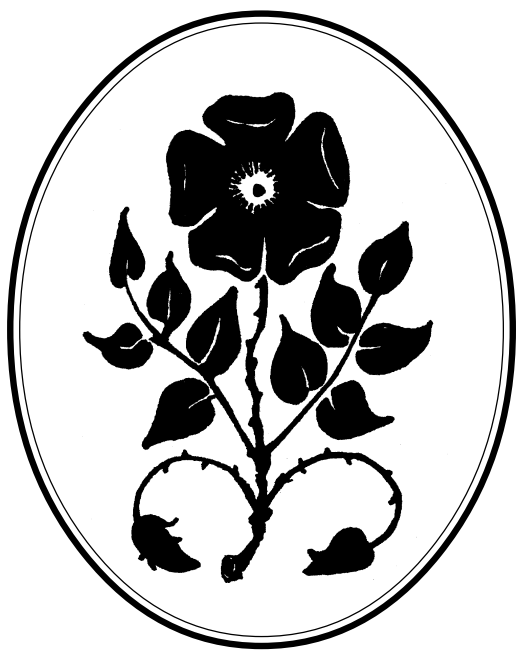


Acton Garden Club

1934 – 1994

With Millennium Updates



**A
Retrospective**

Cover Graphic:
From the 1937 Program and the 60th Yearbook 1993-1994

**The Acton Garden Club, Inc.
Acton, Massachusetts**

Presents

Acton Garden Club

1934 – 1994

With Millennium Updates

A

Retrospective

By Virginia C. Hahn

**Graphics reproduced from Yearbooks
of
The Acton Garden Club, Inc.**

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Preface

This is not a detailed or definitive opus. This is a gentle little history, done for an anniversary (our 60th) and one which I hope will be interesting and fun – nostalgic for longer-time members, and giving a sense of our past to newer members. Work on it has been fascinating – and frustrating (as a note of 1972 tells us, several early scrapbooks have simply disappeared – and then, too many early clippings that are not identified, and records that are not dated). But it's been an enjoyable challenge, and I would especially like to thank some people who have been helpful: Betsy Conant and the Acton Historical Society; Board members who have patiently come to the rescue with dates and proper terminology; and Betty Charter, who generously shared memories one afternoon at her wonderful Fort Pond cottage, and it should be noted, whose husband Frank and son Dean have through the years been so supportive to the work of the Garden Club.

VCH

Addendum Comment

You will note that in this reissue of our anniversary history, we have brought the reader up-to-date on the activities and accomplishments of the past six years. This proved more complex than anticipated and could never have been done without the enormous help of Judy Shuppert and her computer.

9/1/00

In the Beginning

The archives contain several brief reports of the first meeting of the Acton Garden Club, but it is perhaps most picturesquely recaptured from the following September 1937 clipping from the local paper: 'In June 1934, 12 [sic] interested lasses met at the home of Mrs. Edwin Hollowell in North Acton and organized the now flourishing Acton Garden Club.' These charter members were:

Mrs. Robert Bond
Mrs. Harold Clapp
Mrs. Walter Cook
Mrs. Allen B. Frost
Miss Lillian Frost (Mrs. Simon Taylor)
Mrs. J. Gagnon
Mrs. Edwin Hollowell
Mrs. George Horton
Mrs. O.W. Howe
Mrs. Leo Quinn
Mrs. William Tuttle

Eight of these women were still active members at the time of the 10th anniversary and three took part in the 30th celebration. As of 1993, two charter members were still living; Beth Cook, who died in December 1993 at the age of 96 and whose daughter, Phyllis Halladay, has sent on to us many interesting historical records; and Adele Frost, with whom we corresponded several times each year until her death in April, 1997.

Structure of the Club

At the time of its founding, the object of the Club was ‘to promote a greater interest in gardening, and to exchange experiences that shall be of mutual benefit to its members.’

At that first meeting, it was decided that there would be just three officers: President, Vice President, and Secretary (the feeling being that there would not be enough money involved to warrant a Treasurer).

It was also voted that there would be two meetings each month during April through September, and one meeting a month from October to April. These would be on the first and third Wednesdays of the month and would be held at members’ homes until it was found necessary to have a larger, central meeting place. It was stipulated that there were to be no refreshments; but this rule quickly became obsolete as hostesses apparently always served tea at these afternoon meetings. The early minutes frequently concluded with reference to the ‘dainty refreshments.’

There was great enthusiasm, and these first members forged quickly ahead with the Club’s organization. At the second meeting it was realized that finances must be considered. Dues of 50¢ were established as was the ‘monthly penny collection’ to help defray costs of projects (10¢ in pennies was collected at that meeting). To handle this complexity

of money, the duties of a Treasurer were added to those of the Club Secretary. It was also voted that the Secretary should draw up a Constitution and By-Laws. These were presented and accepted at the August 1st meeting.

In addition to the officers already in place, the new By-Laws called for a Treasurer (separated from the Secretary), a Program Chairman and standing committees for programs, 'hostesses,' exhibitions, and finances. These first By-Laws also decreed that the petunia should be the Club flower. Unfortunately, no reason for this choice can be found in the Club's records.

In May 1935, the By-Laws were amended to provide for an Executive Board of the officers and committee heads to hold special meetings regarding the business of the Club. Also, a newspaper clipping, apparently of 1935, reports the creating of the new position of Librarian and Historian.

One of the first acts of the new Executive Board, just a year after the organization of the Club, was to form the Good Cheer committee 'with a member from each precinct.' Through all the years this committee has borne testament to the friendship and caring of Garden Club members, taking note of happy as well as sad events within their immediate families. We note in the annual report of 1968 that Good Cheer had sent twenty-six cards, seven hankies, and one bouquet to members during that year.

Expenses for this were met originally from the 'penny collection' and later by passing a basket, monthly for many years and then several times a year, until 1990, when Good Cheer was finally made a budget item.



**Yearbook
1990-1991**

The Early Years

From its first meeting, the Garden Club was full of plans and activity, attracting a great deal of interest in the Town. By December of 1935, there were 60 members. Obviously larger quarters were needed for meetings. Several were held at the Congregational Church, but in the fall of 1935, the Acton Woman's Club was contacted and agreed to the Garden Club's use of its facilities for eight Thursday meetings a year (the first Thursday after the first Wednesday of each month). For this arrangement, a 'gift' of \$10 was given to the Woman's Club annually. Summer meetings were held in members' gardens or at picnics at nearby spots of gardening interest.

Almost all meetings seem to have been held during the day, usually in the afternoon. Minutes of September 1967 record the decision to start meetings earlier, with tea at 12:30, business at 1:00 and the program at 1:30. A newspaper report of 1955, however, announced a Garden Club 'guest night get-together, reviving a custom which the Club carried on in pre-war days.' In 1986, the decision was made to move the monthly meeting from Thursday to Tuesday mornings to accommodate mothers of young children.

The following program for 1936 shows the broad scope of interest and studies of these early years. As with the March program, a number of

‘Men’s Nights’ appear in the records over the years. The subjects would seem to give gentle nudges towards assistance to gardening spouses.

Program

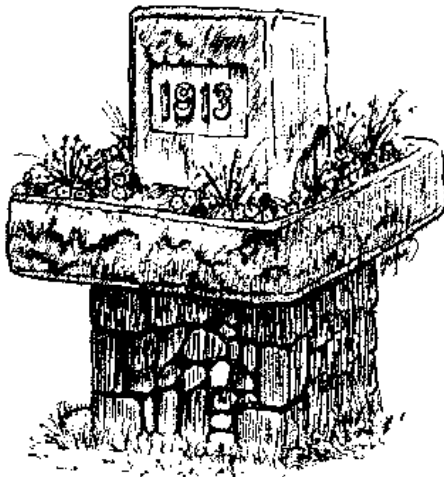
1937

- February New Flowers for Exhibition.
 Planning our Garden.
- March Men’s Night Lecture.
 General Spring Work by John C. Handy.
- April Illustrated Lecture on Rock Gardens
 by Miss Margaret I. Jardine,
 Groton, MA.
- May Illustrated lecture on
 Continuous Bloom in the Garden.
- June 1st Meeting
 Protecting Our Garden During the
 Dry Weather. Perennials from Seed.
- 2nd Meeting
 Lecture on Flower Arrangement and
 Judging Flowers by Miss Edna Cutter,
 Dracut, MA.
- July 1st Meeting
 Flower Arrangement Contest
 by Club Members.
- 2nd Meeting
 Wild Flowers and Their Haunts.
 Speaker - Mr. Will C. Curtis.

- August 1st Meeting
Picnic - Place to be announced.
- 2nd Meeting
Plans for August Flower Show.
- September 1st Meeting
Division of Perennials and Autumn
Care of Biennials.
Plant Exchange by Members.
- 2nd Meeting
Bulbs the Year Around.
- October Slipping and Propagation of Plants.
Winter Care of Perennials.
- November House Plants and Terrariums.
Birds.
- December Christmas Party.
Aquariums.

1937

- January Indoor Seed Sowing.
Garden Hobbies.



Early Membership

According to the Club's first By-Laws, proposals for membership could come from any Club member, be seconded by any member, and candidates elected by a two thirds vote of the membership.

In the '60s and '70s we note that a candidate for membership required two sponsors. After one year of active membership, a Club member was permitted to sponsor one candidate per year. The membership of anyone missing more than six meetings per year was automatically canceled. However, provision was made for leaves of absence for a year or more. With the payment of \$2, such a member could be reinstated as soon as a vacancy occurred.

Club records show membership waiting lists into the 1970s. Prospective members on the waiting list were permitted to attend four meetings a year with a payment of 50¢ per meeting. In 1974 this was raised to \$1.

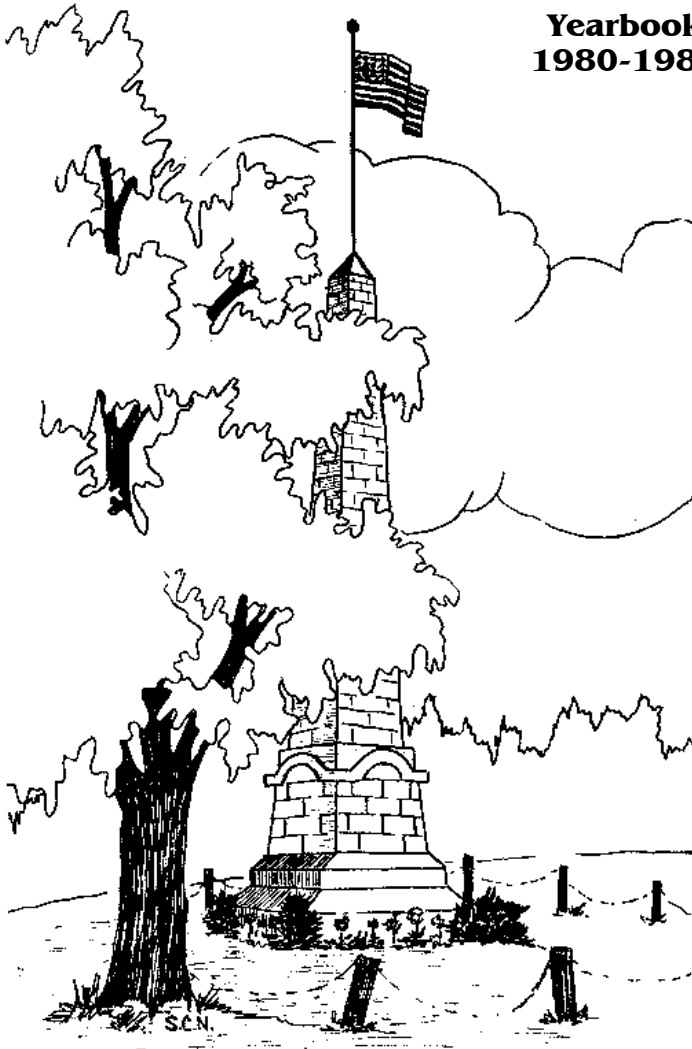
Membership numbers seem to have risen and fallen without much explanation as to reason. In 1957 there was a notice in a *Beacon* article stating that the Garden Club had 'membership openings. The only requisite is a garden.' Minutes of February 1965, however, show 15 new prospective members on the waiting list.

It should be noted that, in its history, the Garden Club has had three male honorary members. The first, Willis Holden, whose farm off Hammond Street included a remarkable wild flower garden, was a life member of the Acton Grange and extremely knowledgeable about gardening. A newspaper clipping of May 3, 1935, reporting on his being made an honorary member of the Garden Club, noted that Mr. Holden was 'keenly interested in the efforts of the ladies and has been of much assistance to them,' and, happily, 'the old gentleman was much pleased with the thoughtfulness of the ladies.'

George Greenlaw was made an honorary member in 1971. A past president of the American Rose Society, Mr. Greenlaw moved from Concord to Acton in his later years, and quickly became an active and valued member of the community with close ties to the Garden Club and Suburban Manor which became his home after the death of his daughter. He was an active as well as honorary member of the Club (the annual report of 1974 refers to him as 'our beloved and only male member'), attending meetings, searching out historical information, building bookshelves for Club use, writing poetry, and helping to organize Club volunteer work at Suburban Manor. Following his death on July 27, 1973, the Garden Club established a memorial fund contributing equipment for the greenhouse at the new High School and providing for the annual contribution of a species plant for the greenhouse in his memory.

Our third honorary male member was Albert R. Jenks, one of the early developers of Acton land and one of its leading and most beloved citizens. He was made an honorary member of the Garden Club in May 1975 in recognition of all he did to make Acton an attractive town in which to live, and his generosity to the Garden Club.

**Yearbook
1980-1981**



Floats and Flower Shows

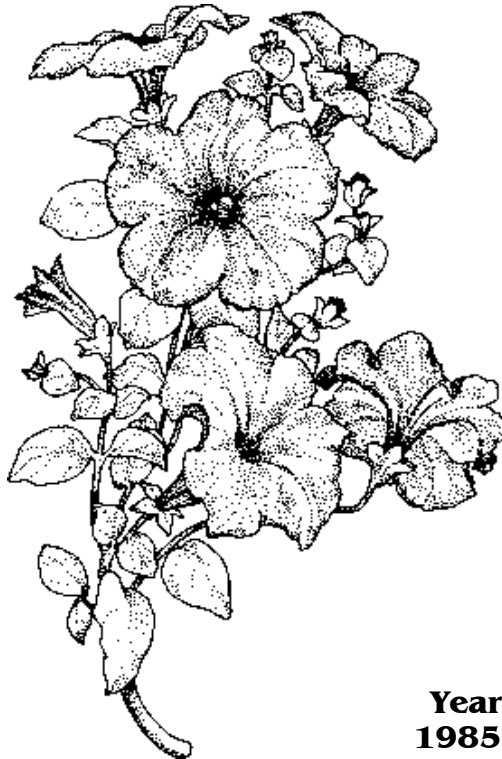
In the first By-Laws, only months after the Club's inception, provision was made for an 'Exhibition Chairman.' Thus the stage was set for the Garden Club's long and successful history of exhibiting its floral designs and horticultural talents.

Its first venture was the creation of a float, 'which received much favorable comment,' for the parade of Acton's bi-centennial celebration in the spring of 1935.

This was followed late that summer by a 'very splendid flower show' as the Garden Club participated for the first time in the annual *Acton Agricultural Association Fair*; an important civic group in the Acton of those days. A letter of thanks from its president in September 1935, states 'I have heard many express their opinion....the consensus being: the loveliest display of flowers ever staged in Acton.'

In keeping with the professional approach the Club has always shown in preparing for its exhibits, the Club's very first flower show was, according to a newspaper clipping of 1935, preceded by 'a most interesting talk by the president of the Concord Garden Club. She was present to cooperate and tell of the experience of her club in the conduct of a flower show....the information she was able to give this new organization was greatly appreciated...' (and obviously successfully acted upon).

The Club's second flower show (their first to be done totally on their own) was held in September 1936 on the upper floor of the Woman's Club. The lower rooms were decorated to resemble a garden (photo in our archives) and luncheon, afternoon tea, and coffee were served there. All classes in this show were open to the public, and a special feature of the show was a class for men in both flowers and vegetables. All exhibits were judged by 'the A-B-C method in horticulture and originality.' The local press reported that the ladies 'had worked indefatigably' and 'the most attractive displays were the wonder of the many visitors during the day.'



**Yearbook
1985-1986**

From subsequent miscellaneous press clippings, it would appear that the Acton Garden Club Flower Show became an annual event for several decades (except during the war years). Some years even held twice, both in spring and in fall. These shows were held sometimes at the Woman's Club; but often, according to newspaper reports of the '50s, in member's homes, occasionally being spread over two or three homes. Tickets for the May 1953 show were 75¢, children 25¢, with 'Tea' and tax included. The show of 1955, held in 'the new Blanchard Memorial Auditorium' included displays of garden-related products by local merchants.

Since joining the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts in 1946, Acton Garden Club has followed the National Council's standardized guidelines for flower shows. The Federation encourages its member clubs to hold a show at least every few years, and available records would indicate that we have done so, with considerable recognition by way of Federation awards (see current yearbook).

Through the years, Acton Garden Club members have also exhibited at the Topsfield Fair and similar events throughout the State.

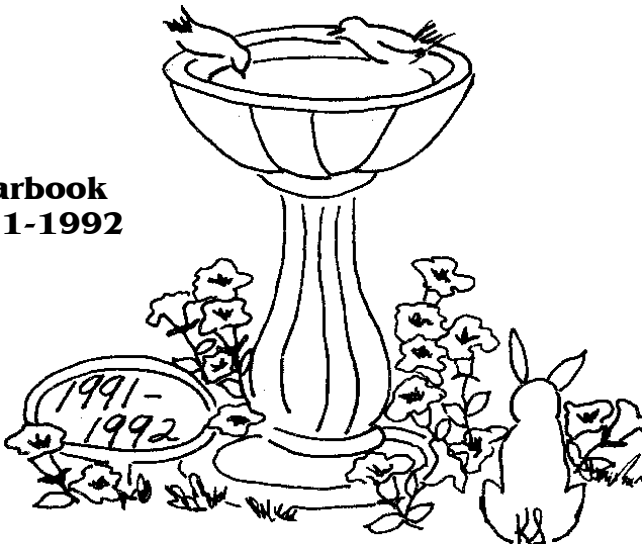
The New England Flower Show is another arena where individual members of our Club continue to exhibit in categories of both design and horticulture. In 1973, the Horticulture Committee

assembled an exhibit for a bow window. Though the Club's entry took only a third place that year, each of the judges commented on its educational value.

In 1975, the Club again submitted an entry in the bow window class of the Amateur Horticulture Section, this time winning the blue ribbon of first place, as it did again in 1978 for a north window sill. Although, from the records it would appear that these windows have been the only concerted Club entry into the New England Flower Show, it should be noted that in recent years, members of this committee, now known as the Horticulture Study Group, have exhibited in the challenge class.

And finally, since 1984, Acton Garden Club designers have taken part in the prestigious '*Art in Bloom*' exhibit each spring at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

**Yearbook
1991-1992**



Outreach

In addition to involvement with neighboring garden clubs as well as the townspeople of Acton through programs and flower shows, our Club has reached out often and generously to support other organizations.

During the years of World War II, Acton joined other garden clubs in providing decorations, particularly at holiday times, for hospitals and USO clubs, and a clipping of 1956 mentions Acton Garden Club furnishing flowers for patients at Fort Devens. During the war years, when vegetable gardens replaced flower beds, the Club also 'reached out,' this time across the sea, to Acton, England, sending onion seeds as a gesture of support and friendship. We have the English newspaper reporting the Lord Mayor of Acton's presentation of this, but unfortunately details of the background of this exchange have been lost.

Since 1973 the Chamber of Commerce has relied on Garden Club members to serve as judges in their annual '*Acton Looks Good*' (formerly '*Business Looks Good in Acton*') contest.

For many years Garden Club volunteers provided a weekly donation of either a plant or a live or dried flower arrangement for the Memorial Library. This not only gave pleasure to the library patrons but provided an opportunity to launch both the design and horticultural talents of aspiring Garden Club members.

Unfortunately, increasing work pressures made it impossible for the Library staff to care properly either for these donations or, indeed, for its own permanent plant population. The Library requested that the Club take on responsibility for this maintenance, but it was not deemed feasible and so the Library Flower Committee came to an end. The Club's relationship with the Library remains close, with our contributions over the years of books to their gardening collection, and floral arrangements which we enjoy providing for their special events.

Similarly, in 1972 at Emerson Hospital, we joined with other garden clubs in the area, each taking a one-month responsibility to furnish a timely floral arrangement for the front desk, a happy collaboration for almost two decades. Unfortunately, the arrangements, 'victims of the times,' started to disappear and in 1989 Emerson's Head of Volunteer Services, with appreciation and apologies, advised the garden clubs that she could no longer ask them to continue this service.

In recent years our Club has provided arrangements for events of the Council on Aging, the annual '*Tastes of Our Towns*' benefit of the Concord Family Services, for a home for 'battered women' in Sudbury, and for special museum shows such as the *Old Concord Christmas*, celebrations at Fruitlands in Harvard, and the exhibition of antique dollhouses at the Salisbury Mansion in Worcester.

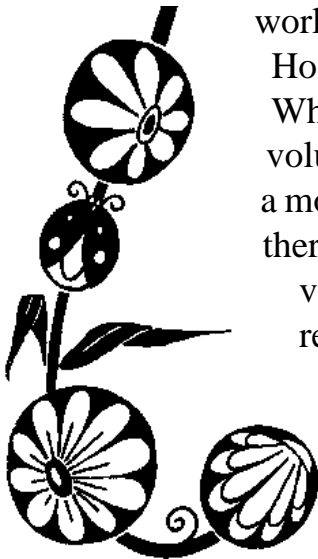
Through our benevolence, the Garden Club has made it possible for the Memorial Library to furnish

a family pass to the Garden in the Woods in Framingham. We also contribute to The Children's Discovery Museum in Acton.

This would seem the proper place to speak of our two Garden Therapy programs, now organizationally grouped with the other 'service' committees under the newly reconstituted Community Services Program.

The first is Suburban Manor, which from Club records would seem to have started in 1972 with 'doing the flowers' at the local nursing home. In 1976, there is indication of a small group from the Acton Garden Club arranging flowers in the dining room there. Now of course, member volunteers work weekly directly with the residents in teaching and supervising a variety of garden-related projects.

Minutes of January 1975, report that Garden Club therapy work had begun at Emerson Hospital's psychiatric section, Wheeler III. Here member volunteers worked directly twice a month with the occupational therapist. The program has been very successful and, at the request of the hospital, was recently expanded to a weekly session.



Yearbooks

1972-1973 & 1974-1975

Environmental Involvement

Although our constitution spoke only of ‘promoting a greater interest in gardening,’ almost from its beginning, the Garden Club was involved in the environmental concerns of the Acton community. A newspaper clipping of September 1936 was to comment ‘this club not two years old has been one of the outstanding organizations in point of civic achievement in the town.’

The Club’s first project along these lines was the landscaping of the ‘new High School’ (now McCarthy-Towne) which snapshots of 1935 show proudly sitting in the midst of barren, rocky terrain. The local paper reported ‘Evergreens are being planted and the rock garden is a thing of beauty at this time. Mountain laurel, rhododendrons and other attractive shrubbery are being placed at advantageous points about the grounds.’ In the very same paragraph we read that it was voted to hold a food sale (foods and donors are listed) opposite the library, apparently to pay for the High School landscaping.

On numerous occasions, the Club encouraged and enlisted the help of young people in its work to improve the environment. In the early years it donated cash prizes ranging from 50¢–\$3 to 4-H Club members who achieved ‘the best gardens in

all the Actons.’ Later, following a program where the speaker emphasized the ravages caused by ragweed, the Club offered a \$5 prize to the Girl or Boy Scout who would bring in the largest amount of ‘that obnoxious weed’ to be destroyed. Records mention that 50,000 plants were destroyed.

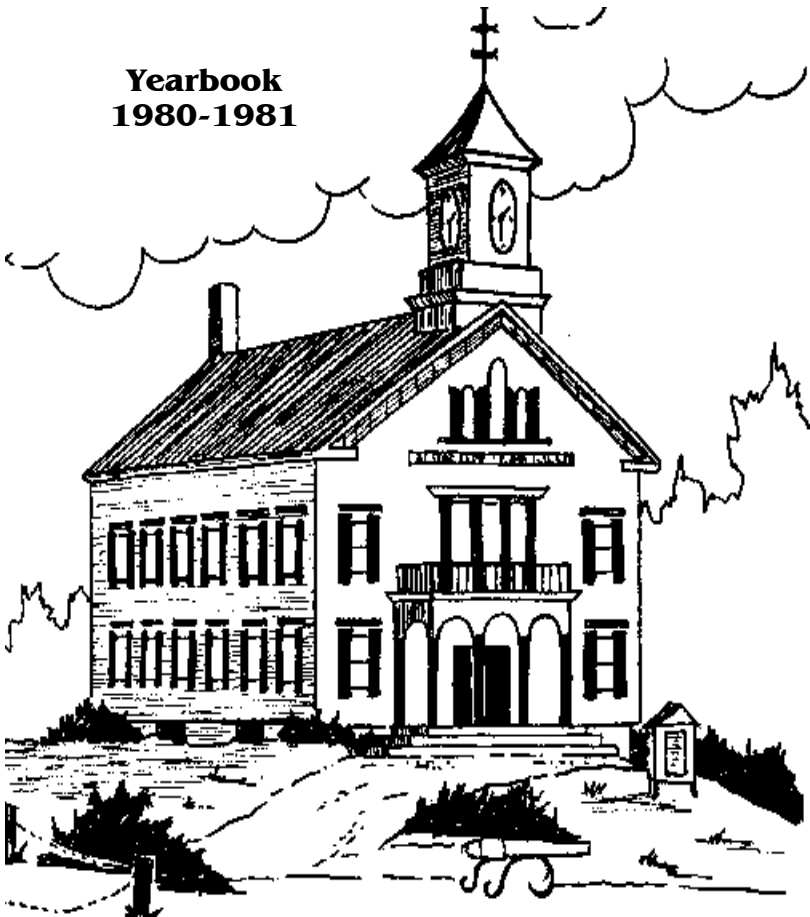
In conjunction with a period of the Federation’s particular focus on roadside beautification, there was a great emphasis in the ‘50s, and again later in the ‘70s, on combating litter in the community. A ‘Litterbug Chairman’ was appointed; work parties were organized; posters were produced; scouts helped to paint the litter baskets which were placed strategically around town, and Garden Club members were authorized to take down and report to the Bureau of Motor Vehicle Registration the license plate numbers of cars from which trash was being thrown.

Another project of delicate but astonishing endeavor was ‘*Operation Rescue*.’ In October 1976, when the Briar Brook area of North Acton was about to be bulldozed for development, Garden Club members dug in to save as many Ladyslippers as possible, transferring them to the Spring Hill Conservation Area.

Through the years, the Garden Club has worked closely with the Conservation Commission of the town, and was involved in promoting good communication between town boards and conservation groups for effective joint efforts. In the 1970s

the Club was instrumental in organizing the building of the floating boardwalk and viewing platform at Will's Hole and worked with the Town on situating new trails, the mapping and clearing of old ones, and in providing signs for the conservation areas. In the mid 1970s, the Garden Club organized and led a series of walks over town conservation areas to acquaint Acton citizens with the beauty and environmental importance of these lands.

**Yearbook
1980-1981**



Beautifying of Public Grounds'

A 1935 newspaper article on the Garden Club stating that 'the ultimate object of the club is to assist in the beautifying of public grounds in the town' was to prove itself again and again over the years.

In addition to the Club's work in Acton and West Acton centers, planting was done at Hayward and Main Streets, at Concord Road and 2A, at Strawberry Hill and 2A, the Isaac Davis House, the various schools, and around Town Hall, and the Police and Fire Stations. Kelly's Corner was planted with bulbs and day lilies, and there were plans to join with the Junior Chamber of Commerce in more extensive landscaping there. Gardens were planted at Windsor Green senior housing complex; trees were given to the Town at the South Acton Railroad Station and by the tennis courts at Elm Street, and our present 'Bulbs Over Acton' program had many precedents in past decades.

These projects seem to have been fairly randomly prompted by individual or group interest, and available records do not show exactly when they either started or finished. Eventually it was realized that for the Club to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to the beautification and environmental improvement of the Town, available funds and energy had to be limited and focused.

Working towards this goal, a special committee was set up and in January 1989 presented to the board a proposal for a reorganized and strengthened Environmental Improvement Program. For this project the Club later received the Federation's *Four Seasons Award* for civic beautification.

With very slight modification to this program in 1993, all 'service committees' are now under the Community Service Program, supervised by the Vice President and with the same Environmental Improvement Program requirement that active members work in one of the Club's areas of responsibility at least four times each year.

Historical background on three of our permanent areas of responsibility follows. In addition to these, we now do seasonal plantings and maintenance at the Memorial Library, the Acton Center trough, the West Acton trough and barrels, the fire and police stations, and the Town Hall Oval which was a gift to the Town in celebration of the Club's 50th anniversary.

Separate mention should be made of three areas that have become important parts of our permanent Community Service Program:

Meeting House Hill

This area, bounded by Nagog Hill Road and Main Street, was brought to the Club's attention by the Selectmen in 1963. This site, the geographical center of Acton, had been used for the construction

of the first meeting house, the establishment of which was one of the conditions of the act of incorporation of the Town of Acton from Concord land in 1735.

In more recent years, the land had been occupied by a village school which was demolished in 1960. In 1963, a stepping stone from the original meeting house was returned to the site, and the Selectmen, promising that the town would furnish loam, labor and seeding for an attractive grassy area around it, asked the Garden Club to place some plantings there.

Investigating the situation, some of the members became excited about the possibilities of developing the area into a park with special historical significance. Club records of the '60s refer to it as 'the Historical Site,' and indicate that a committee was appointed and the sum of \$200 of Club funds voted for the project.

Enthusiasm grew rapidly, not only within the Garden Club, but throughout the Town. A proposal, submitted by the Club to the Bay State Beautification Program, which was sponsored jointly by Sears Roebuck with the Massachusetts Garden Club Federation, won a first prize of \$200 for 'seed money.' Landscape architect Dorothea Harrison of Concord was commissioned to prepare a plot plan for landscaping the site, and the original work and funds of Garden Club members was augmented by the donations of time and money by

many civic groups, community businesses and individuals.

It is interesting to note in Club minutes of June 1965 that in its early years, Meeting House Hill, as it was coming to be called, was a much broader Club concern than today. Members were reminded that ‘as a Club project, all members of the Club will be expected to give some time during the spring and summer seasons to aid in the success of this park.’ Of further interest is the decree that ‘the Conservation Committee is to take over a small area in the park which will contain wild flowers labeled and preserved for study as well as appreciation.’

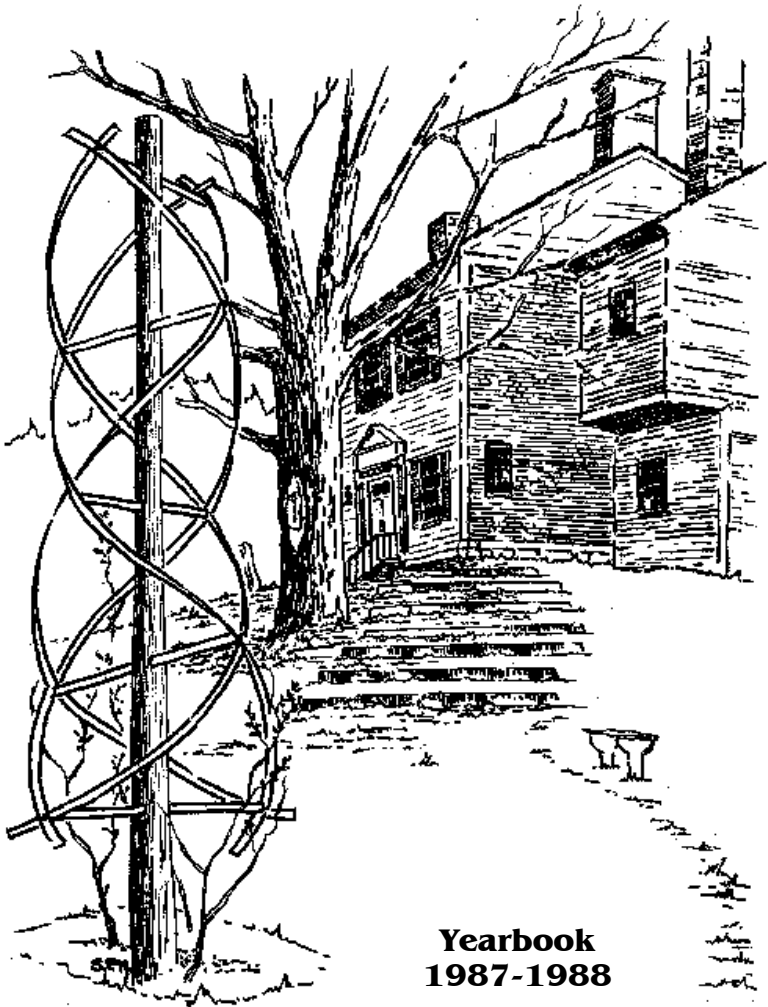
Mabel Jenks Memorial Rose Garden

On October 26, 1972 Mabel Jenks, a very active and much loved member of both the Garden Club and the Woman’s Club, died. Her husband, Albert Jenks, gave the Garden Club funds to establish a garden in her memory on the grounds of the Woman’s Club. Mrs. Isadore Smith, a landscape designer from Concord, was engaged to draw up a three-year plan for its development which would include 31 old fashioned roses, an unusual trellis, four rustic benches, and railroad tie steps leading from the house down to the garden.

Our Annual Report of 1975 notes that ‘Several trees were cut to let in the sun. A big project was cleaning out the bushes and poison ivy along the wall but the hardest part of the work is now

completed. This rose garden is to be on our garden tour in the spring.' Plantings around the edge of the garden are in keeping with the historical background of the house.

The Mabel Jenks Garden is maintained by the Garden Club under its Community Services Program with special work, for which the Club receives a fee, at times of weddings there.



**Yearbook
1987-1988**

It should be noted that, in 1976, for the creation of the Mabel Jenks Garden, the Club received the *Federation's Civic Projects Award IIC*, for the landscaping of a historic place.

The Herb Garden of the Acton Arboretum

In 1986, an amended town article specified that conservation land which had been purchased earlier was to be used for the Acton Arboretum. In 1989, an invitation was extended to the Garden Club to research and develop a period herb garden in a historical foundation on the site. Garden Club member and landscape designer Sue Whitcomb prepared a design plan for herbs representative of the mid-19th century.

The foundation in which the garden is situated was probably that of the house of John Cragin in 1738, the only home ever built on the land.

Town staff cleared out the foundation to a depth of approximately two feet, restored the stone walls and filled in the raised beds. Planting by Garden Club members began in the fall of 1989. Two years later a flourishing and extensive herb garden was in place. It is maintained by a special committee of the Club's Community Services program. The Garden Club received the Federation's *May Duff Walters Trophy for Preservation of Beauty* in recognition of the development of this garden.

Finances

With the Garden Club's rapidly growing involvement in projects and civic improvement, it was soon evident that the income from the 'penny collections' and modest dues of the earliest years were not going to be enough. But the members were dauntless, and filled with enthusiasm and imagination.

Once a project was approved, they simply set out with verve and hard work to raise the funds to pay for it. Club records as well as newspaper accounts over the years tell of luncheons, teas and bake sales; elaborate House Tours and/or Garden Tours almost always seem to have been accompanied by 'Tea,' sales of plants and baked goods, and boutiques with handmade contributions from all members. Many of these frequent 'money makers' (and there is reference in minutes of the mid '60s to the 'Money Making Chairman') were later expanded and formalized into the fund raising responsibilities of the Ways and Means Committee which was created in 1968.

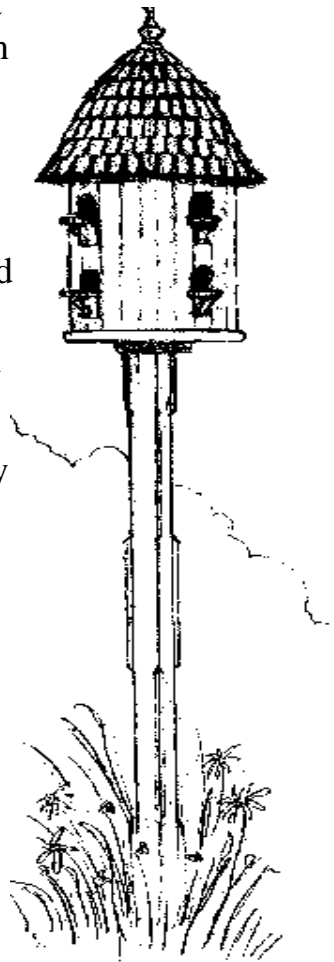
Within the Club structure, dues of course rose gradually but steadily, and for many years there was a guest fee which had started at 5¢ a meeting, but eventually rose to \$1 before its demise. As mentioned earlier, Good Cheer was self-sustaining and for a while even contributed to the Club's other undertakings. Minutes of February 1969 show that it was voted to donate the Good Cheer collection

that month to fight Dutch Elm disease; some time later the contents of the basket were given to the '*Isaac Davis Trail*' project.

Over the years, prize money as well as gifts from community groups and individuals helped finance some of the Club's undertakings. A very special one of these was Albert Jenks' gift for the establishment of the Mabel Jenks Memorial Garden at the Woman's Club. It should also be noted here that in our 60th anniversary year, endowment funds were established for all three of our gardens (the Mabel Jenks Rose Garden, Meeting House Hill and the Herb Garden of the Acton Arboretum) to ensure continued support for their maintenance.

Today of course, a carefully worked out budget governs the Club's myriad activities and responsibilities.

A final note on the financial history must record that in 1985, after years of intensive work, Acton Garden Club received 'not for profit' and incorporated status, and was given tax exemption and liability protection.



Yearbook 1995-1996

And Always Learning

One of the objectives of the Garden Club is to provide an atmosphere in which to learn – about gardening, about floral design, and about our environment. From the very beginning, rich opportunity for this has been available within the Club through the monthly programs and the Horticulture Study Group.

In addition, early records show that even in the mid-1930s, members were taking advantage of the ‘interesting and instructive data’ offered at the Massachusetts State College Experimental Field Station in Waltham. Now the Eastern Agricultural Center of the University of Massachusetts, this site is used for the design and horticulture workshops sponsored by the Federation and which Club members are encouraged to attend.

When Acton Garden Club joined the Federation of Massachusetts Garden Clubs in 1946, enormous resources became available through Federation programs, publications, workshops, specialized schools, and the opportunity for closer association with other garden clubs. The broad scope of the Federation’s numerous awards offers many challenges for the development of new Club programs and the satisfying recognition of its work. It should also be noted here that as a result of their studies, numerous members are presently serving the Federation as Flower Show Judges, Landscape Design Critics, and/or Gardening Study Consultants.

Other opportunities to advance our knowledge in gardening come through our memberships in the Arnold Arboretum, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, the New England Wildflower Society and the Worcester Horticultural Society. These all offer classes and on-site resources.

In addition to learning themselves, almost from the beginning, Club members have been concerned with fostering learning in young people. Earlier mention has been made of encouraging 4-H Club gardeners in their horticultural and environmental efforts. Records of 1938 show that members of the 4-H Garden Club were invited to meet with our Garden Club members several times a year and that we had given assistance in preparing their entries for a children's class in the Club flower show that year. As the local paper reported '.....each jolly little face lighted up for they too will have entries in the show next week.'

A perusal of the minutes indicates that it was in November 1970 that having our own Junior Gardeners group was first discussed. It was proposed that initially it be limited to children of Club members, with the possibility of later including non-affiliated youngsters. Although the group has had its 'ups and downs' over the past two decades because it was not always possible to find someone to take on this responsibility, it has had a great measure of success. Many, many members' children have developed an appreciation of nature, learned the value of our natural

resources, and just plain had fun with the wide range of its gardening projects.

A final note on the Club's encouragement to young people is our scholarship program. Through the years, funds have been given to many deserving individuals, but early records do not show any standardized procedures or qualification for this. In 1964, scholarship funds were awarded to an Acton student at the Stockbridge School of Agriculture; another year money went to a pre-med student at McGill; and still another year, a teacher in the Acton schools was the proposed recipient.

However, for some years now there have been established criteria for the selection of the recipient of Acton Garden Club's annual scholarship, which in 1990 was raised to the amount of \$1,000. The candidate, an Acton resident with a strong school record and an interest in environmental matters, is sought from either (or both) the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School or the Minuteman Vocational Technical High School. If no suitable candidate is found in any one year, that money must be spent that year in a charitable contribution.

Yearbook 1985-1986



Addendum

The Garden Club goes into the new millennium with exciting, challenging and productive programs and projects, and an ever-growing influence on the Acton community. Since this history was written six years ago, sixty-two new members have joined the Club.

The newly reorganized Junior Gardeners have become a whirlwind force, their activities strongly linked to the Acton community. They harvested and dried ornamental flowers and vegetables for Thanksgiving garden therapy at Suburban Manor, did a fall clean-up for the Council on Aging center and, in addition to their wild-flower planting at NARA, are immersed in their *Children's Garden* at the Acton Community Gardens in North Acton. Grandchildren, as well as children of members contribute to this group.

In recent years we have received grants from the *PETALS* project, a collaboration of the National Council of Garden Clubs and Shell Oil, to encourage horticultural beautification and/or environmental conservation.

The Club has had a dynamic role in the development of NARA, Acton's new recreation park. Members are involved in its ongoing landscaping, Junior Gardeners are digging and planting and the Garden Club has made a considerable financial contribution to the implementation of these projects with money from a *PETALS* grant, the sale of seedling trees by club members at Earth Day, and the Club's production and sale of the *Culinary Landscapes Cookbook*.

The Plant Sale, our annual fund-raiser which finances the Club's multi-faceted gardening for the Town, as well as the \$1000 scholarship awarded each year, is now held on the Town Center Green. The move was made because of the Library construction, but has proven so successful that it will probably remain the 'venue of choice.'

'*Hort Hints*,' given by one of our Master Gardeners, has become a brief, but important part of each monthly meeting.

The *Acton Looks Good* competition is no longer sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, but will be continued by a committee of the Garden Club, and limited to Acton businesses.

Although we have received many Federation awards over the years, in 2000, for the first time, we received a blue ribbon for our Yearbook, its new spiral binding adding greater facility to its already useful and attractive contents.

Since 1997, the Garden Club has participated in the celebration of *Earth Day* at the Arboretum.

Since 1998 we have participated in the Federation program of *Gardens on Tour*, and also in the decoration of the Wayside Inn in Sudbury for the Christmas holidays.

Through memorial contributions of families and friends, a scholarship grant, honoring Janet Bubier and Elinor Miller, active members who died in 1996, was established for teachers involved in environmental projects. In addition, reflecting Jan's long and close association with the Federation and special interest in miniature floral displays, a silver bowl was presented to the Federation to be awarded to the club whose standard flower show displays the greatest creative interpretation of a miniature section.

Inspired by members' interest in flower shows over the years, the Design Study Group was started in 1996. Meeting four times a year, this popular group serves both to guide and inspire home arrangements and/or as an exciting launch pad for future floral designers. A special flower show, *Millennium Milestones*, in October 2000 will reflect this.

And so we go — on into the new millennium.

Check our World Wide Web Page

<http://www.ultranet.com/~actongc>

Silver Bells and Cockleshells

For many years it was the custom to include some pertinent poem in the printed yearly program of the Club. Also in the early years, each regular meeting was opened with one or more poems about flowers or gardens. It seems appropriate therefore, to conclude this little retrospective with part of a poem written, we believe, by Mrs. John Milliken, for the 30th anniversary celebration of the Club's founding:

*' . . . To that very special day,
When women with inspiration
And information too,
Met to organize this club
To exchange the truths they knew,
To master techniques in gardening
And to cultivate a pride
In making their home sites places
where Beauty could abide.
In Acton – in 1934 – it was
This club was given birth
By dedicated women
Who loved to cultivate the Earth.'*

Acton Garden Club, Inc.

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