

# FERRELL GARDENS: A DESIGNED LANDSCAPE OF THE 19TH CENTURY

by

CHRISTINE DONHARDT

(Under the Direction of Mark Reinberger)

## ABSTRACT

Ferrell Gardens, an 1840s garden in LaGrange, Georgia, is noted for its boxwood-bordered paths, its living green symbols and mottos, as well as its creator, Sarah Coleman Ferrell. The unique qualities of this garden abound in its design, the use of symbolic plant materials, and the images created in boxwood that are mainly drawn from religious sources. The garden is better understood through a knowledge of the life and character of Sarah Ferrell as well as documentation of her sixty-one years of gardening history.

**INDEX WORDS:** Sarah Coleman Ferrell, Ferrell Gardens, Hills and Dales, Troup County, LaGrange, Georgia, Garden symbols, Religious symbols, Southern gardens, Boxwood.

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## DEDICATION

To my family:

My parents, Dr. Gary and Pat Donhardt

My sister and her husband, Dr. Amy and Jeff Wiles

My grandmothers, Mrs. Marie Smith and Mrs. Irene Donhardt &

In memory of my grandfathers, Rev. Harold Smith and Mr. Ben Donhardt

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
A Brief History of Southern Parterre & Tidewater Terraced Gardens.....	2
CHAPTER 1. Sarah Coleman Ferrell: Landscape Designer .....	6
Sarah Ferrell’s Heritage.....	6
Clinton Academy.....	8
Female Academy at Sparta.....	9
Scottsborough Female Institute.....	10
The Ferrell Family in LaGrange.....	12
Sarah Ferrell’s Marriage.....	14
Blount Coleman Ferrell.....	15
Sarah Ferrell’s house: The Terraces.....	21
The Ferrell Farms.....	24
Sarah Ferrell’s Religious Ties.....	25
Sabbath School.....	28
Southern Female College.....	30
Conclusion.....	33
CHAPTER 2. The Design and Layout of The Terraces.....	34
Starting the Garden.....	34
A Designed and Planned Landscape.....	35
The Estate.....	37

The Vegetable Garden.....	40
The Formal Gardens.....	42
Terrace A: The Upper Terrace.....	44
Terrace B: Sentinel Avenue.....	46
Terrace C: Bower Avenue.....	48
Terrace D: Labyrinth Avenue.....	49
Terrace E: Magnolia Avenue.....	50
Terrace F: The Valley.....	52
Terrace G: The Church.....	54
Conclusion.....	55
<b>CHAPTER 3. Symbols and Symbolism at Ferrell Gardens.....</b>	<b>57</b>
Terrace A: Upper Terrace.....	59
Terrace B: Sentinel Avenue.....	60
Terrace E: Magnolia Avenue .....	61
Terrace G: The Church .....	65
Plant Materials.....	68
Freemasonry in the Ferrell Family.....	74
Masonic Symbols in the Garden.....	75
Conclusion.....	77
<b>EPILOGUE.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Management.....	79
The Deaths of Sarah and Blount Ferrell.....	80
Continuation.....	82

Ida Cason Callaway.....	84
Alice Hand Callaway.....	85
Conclusion.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	87
APPENDICES.....	109
Appendix A: Ferrell Gardens Plant List 1842-1903.....	109
Appendix B: Supplemental Drawings.....	111

## **Introduction**

Ferrell Gardens, now part of the Hills and Dales Estate, is a 165-year old Southern boxwood garden located in LaGrange, Georgia. This garden, started in the 1840s, expresses the creative imaginings of Sarah Coleman Ferrell (1817-1903), a highly educated and philanthropic woman who was active in her community. Sarah had strong ties to the Southern Female College in LaGrange and supported a number of women in their studies there. She was an active member of the First Baptist Church of LaGrange where she taught young women from the college in Bible study. Her immediate family consisted of state and local leaders, a judge, authors and poets, teachers, and numerous Civil War leaders. In her lifetime, Sarah received great acclaim for her gardens and gained notoriety throughout the South.

A rich history of symbolism is present in the design and layout of Ferrell Gardens. The boxwood speaks a message today as it did 165 years ago, a message shrouded in symbolism that still has resonating power. The distinctiveness of this garden lies in the symbols it contains as well as its continuance which sets it apart from other boxwood gardens of the antebellum period. By studying Sarah Coleman Ferrell as a historic figure and the incorporation of various symbols, the purpose behind the layout of her garden becomes clearer. This study adds to the body of knowledge of great women landscape gardeners of early America and uncovers a rich history of symbolism within the Ferrell Gardens on the Hills and Dales property.

In 1842, Sarah began to lay out her garden on a terraced tract of land. She utilized the existing terraces to create formal paths bordered with boxwood, a sunken garden, and a series of garden rooms. Ferrell, by all accounts, was a woman of deep faith who expressed her fervent devotion to God through her garden. What makes her garden unique is the religious expression

that is evident in her choice of mottos, boxwood patterns, and plant materials. Strong religious symbols are incorporated into her garden -- images in boxwood of a harp, cross, circle, butterfly, cluster of grapes, organ, pulpit, and mourners' benches. Sarah even used boxwood to spell out words like 'GOD' and 'God is Love.'

Sarah's garden was always open to the public and she took great joy in explaining to others the religious meaning contained within the boxwood symbols. The design and much of the plant material remain today thanks to the preservation ethic and gardening talents of Ida Cason Callaway and her daughter-in-law Alice Hand Callaway who served as stewards of this landscape. This garden was carefully maintained and preserved due in part to its history and its unique boxwood symbolism. It was part of a private residence until 1998 when it was acquired by the Fuller E. Callaway Foundation that maintains it today as a house and garden museum.

Sarah died at the age of 86, after having worked in her garden for nearly 61 years. She left a tangible legacy of her devotion to God for future generations to enjoy. The iconography of the boxwood symbols designed by Sarah Ferrell remains filled with meaning for present-day visitors and her tradition of sharing her garden continues. The gardens were truly Sarah Ferrell's passion and her garden gate was always open.

### **A Brief History of Southern Parterre & Tidewater Terraced Gardens**

The use of boxwood patterns in garden design originated in ancient times with the Greeks and Romans. The garden style spread to Europe as the knot garden and developed further in France in the 1600s as the parterre.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1500s, the English had knot gardens, a simple

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Cothran, Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003) 47.

design edged with herbs or boxwood, possibly borrowed from Italy or the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> By the mid 1600s the knot garden was out of vogue and by the close of the century the elaborate parterres gained notice. There were four types of parterres. “Parterres of embroidery” were comprised of boxwood edging laid out like filigree with colored earth on the interior of the beds, in “parterres of compartments” the decorative design was repeated in four squares, and “parterres in the English manner” consisted of boxwood-bordered turf with gravel or sand paths around the entire parterre grouping. The fourth was the “parterres of cutwork” where flowers were grown inside the boxwood edging and paths between the boxwood were comprised of sand. Shrubs were set out in pots but were never allowed to grow taller than five feet so the view of the parterre was unobstructed.<sup>3</sup>

The cutwork style of the parterre garden came to the colonies by way of England and served as the model for colonial gardens in America. This in turn was the parterre of choice in the antebellum South.<sup>4</sup> The typical Southern garden of the antebellum period, owned by wealthy cotton planters, consisted of boxwood parterres in front of or on the side of a great house surrounded by a picket fence.<sup>5</sup>

The Battle-Friedman House in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was a noted parterre garden displaying the Southern boxwood garden typology. The Battle Garden, laid out in the 1840s had a symmetrical design of boxwood parterres repeating a diamond shape motif. This garden was positioned in front of a columned mansion, and was surrounded by a fence.<sup>6</sup> A similar garden appeared in the late 1850s in Athens, Georgia at the Thomas Grant House. This symmetrical

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Hyams, A History of Gardens and Gardening (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971) 147.

<sup>3</sup> Reginald Theodore Blomfield, The Formal Garden in England (London: Macmillan and Co, 1901) 131-134.

<sup>4</sup> Cothran, Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South 48.

<sup>5</sup> Cothran, Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South 9. James R. Cothran, "Parterre Gardens of the Old South: A Treasured Tradition" The Southern Heirloom Garden (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1995) 40.

<sup>6</sup> Cothran, Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South 50-51.

parterre garden was surrounded by a picket fence and was located in front of a white columned mansion as well.<sup>7</sup> The Casulon Plantation near Athens is another example of the same. Even though it was on a large plantation of 6,000 acres, the 1860s garden in front of the antebellum mansion was a symmetrical and intricate boxwood parterre surrounded by a white picket fence.<sup>8</sup> Further south in Columbus, Georgia was The Elms, yet another example of a boxwood garden. The boxwood-bordered beds edged in brick were irregular in shape instead of straight geometric forms. Even with the irregularity, this parterre still maintained its symmetry. A picket fence surrounded this garden and its columned mansion.<sup>9</sup>

With Ferrell Gardens located in the South, one might expect a typical Southern boxwood garden; however, Sarah Ferrell's garden differs from this predominant model. Her boxwood parterres were neither symmetrical nor located in the front of the house and there is no evidence of a picket fence surrounding the garden. Sarah's boxwood shapes were not true parterres as defined by Mrs. J.C. Loudon in her 1845 book Gardening for Ladies, as this classification is dependent upon symmetry.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Sarah's boxwood garden does not fit the typical model of a Southern boxwood parterre garden.

Terraces, just like parterres, were another landscape feature used copiously in Italy, adopted in England, and brought to America by early colonists. Wealthy plantation owners in the Tidewater or mid-Atlantic region often situated their houses on the tops of hills overlooking a

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<sup>7</sup> Cothran, Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South 103-104

<sup>8</sup> Loraine Meeks Cooney, et al. Garden History of Georgia, 1733-1933 (Atlanta, GA: Garden Club of Georgia, 1976) 124-126.

<sup>9</sup> Cooney 102-103.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. J.C. Loudon, Gardening for Ladies; and Companion to the Flower-Garden (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845) 309.

waterway and had terraces sloping in that direction.<sup>11</sup> Terraces were frequently employed for agricultural purposes and were ideal for growing an orchard.

The combination of boxwood designs and terraced landscapes can be seen throughout the Tidewater region. These gardens drew from the formal English style and were often planted on terraces.<sup>12</sup> The home of Dr. John Adams, an early 1800s building in the Church Hill section of Richmond, Virginia, had a terraced landscape descending to the river. Each terrace consisted of a flowerbed with boxwood lining the terrace edge.<sup>13</sup> Hickory Hill in Hanover County, Virginia had an 1820s terraced boxwood garden with a 300-foot allée of tree-box as tall as 40 feet. This garden, watched over by the mistress of the plantation, was full of arbors, avenues, shrubbery, and a variety of roses.<sup>14</sup> Lawson Hall near Norfolk, Virginia had a garden from the 1700s with tree box and cedars growing in long avenues. The terraces on this estate descended from the side of the house to a little stream below and on the edge of each terrace were rows of boxwood.<sup>15</sup> The 1730s garden at Sabine Hall in Richmond County, Virginia, is another fine example of a terraced garden. Boxwood bordered the length of the terraces that lead down toward a river. The level areas of the terraces were planted with blooming flowers and trees.<sup>16</sup>

Sarah Ferrell's house, like the plantation homes of the Tidewater, sat atop a series of terraces descending north toward a small creek and fish ponds. Sarah built her boxwood garden on the southern side of her house on another series of terraces. Perhaps when the Ferrells first sited the location for their new home atop the terraces they recalled the plantations and the gardens of the colonial times in the tidewater region.

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Wells Sarudy, Gardens and Gardening in the Chesapeake, 1700-1805 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) 24.

<sup>12</sup> Earle S. Draper, "Southern Plantations II" (Landscape Architecture Jan. 1933) 120.

<sup>13</sup> Edith Tunis Sale and James River Garden Club, Historic Gardens of Virginia (Richmond, VA: William Byrd Press, 1930) 74-75.

<sup>14</sup> Sale 93-98.

<sup>15</sup> Sale 151-153.

<sup>16</sup> Sale 217-220.

## **Chapter 1: Sarah Coleman Ferrell: Landscape Designer**

*Mrs. Ferrell ... has been a literary woman all her life, an earnest worker in her church, and the designer and graceful mistress of "The Terraces," the most beautiful flower garden in the South.<sup>1</sup>*

Sarah Coleman (Ferrell) Ferrell (1817-1903) was a woman of wealth and education, raised in a prosperous home and educated at an elite school. She was a cultured woman of exceptional intelligence and a keen wit.<sup>2</sup> She was by her nature a very philanthropic woman, giving her time, money, attention, and flowers to those less fortunate. She was truly a neighbor to the poor, relieving their suffering and lessening the evils of poverty as best she could with loving sympathy. Her devotion to God and the Christian faith were noteworthy and her religious character and piety were remarkable.<sup>3</sup>

It was Sarah's talent for garden design and flower cultivation that drew widespread acclaim to her home at The Terraces in LaGrange, Georgia. She spent years cultivating her garden and sharing that passion and her flowers with the community. She is remembered most for this garden today, but there is more to Sarah Ferrell than just her gardening legacy.

### **Sarah Ferrell's Heritage**

Sarah Coleman Ferrell came from a decidedly patriotic family. Her maternal grandfather, Captain Benjamin Andrew Coleman (a1753-1813) fought in the Revolutionary War in both the

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<sup>1</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-31-1897.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Frank M. Ridley, *In Memory of Sarah Coleman Ferrell* (Atlanta: Ward and Darrington, printers, 1904, Troup County Archives) 18, (a tribute to Sarah Ferrell from Dr. A. B. Vaughan, pastor of First Baptist Church, LaGrange). *LaGrange Reporter* 12-31-1897.

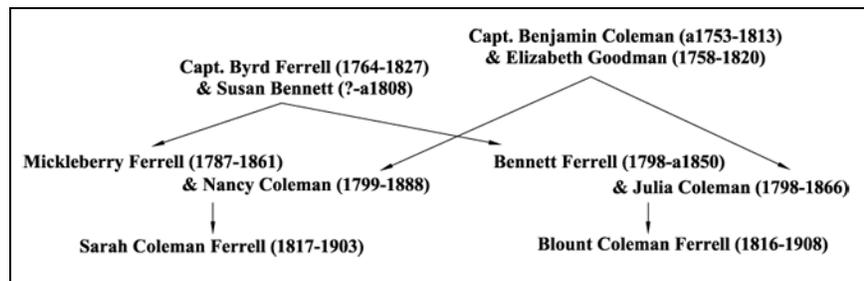
<sup>3</sup> Ridley 18-20, (a tribute to Sarah Ferrell from Dr. A. B. Vaughan, pastor of First Baptist Church, LaGrange).

5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiments of North Carolina.<sup>4</sup> He served under General George Washington at Valley Forge during the harsh winter of 1777 and signed an oath of allegiance the following spring.<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Coleman was captured at the siege on Charleston on May 12, 1780 in a significant defeat for the Patriots.<sup>6</sup>

Sarah's paternal grandfather, Captain Byrd Ferrell (1764-1827), also a veteran of the Revolutionary War, served with a regiment in South Carolina.<sup>7</sup> His son, Mickleberry Ferrell (1787-1861), who was

Sarah's father, served in the War of 1812 under Captain James Hamilton.<sup>8</sup>

Mickleberry's second wife, Nancy Coleman



**Fig 1. Ferrell/Coleman Lineage.**

(1799-1888), was the daughter of Captain Benjamin Coleman.<sup>9</sup> Mickleberry's younger brother Bennett Ferrell had married Nancy's older sister Julia Coleman (fig 1).

Mickleberry and Nancy Ferrell lived in Jones County, Georgia, which at that time was the western edge of the Georgian frontier. After the War of 1812, the population of the county experienced a great increase and by 1820, it had become the most densely populated county in

<sup>4</sup> Francis B Heitman, Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army During the War of the Revolution, April, 1775, to December, 1783 (Baltimore: Genealogical Pub. Co, 1967) 164. Coleman was made Captain of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment on 4-30-1777 and was transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment on 6-1-1778.

<sup>5</sup> William Walton, The Army and Navy of the United States, 1776-1891 (Philadelphia: George Barrie, 1890) 16.

<sup>6</sup> Heitman 164. Trevor Nevitt Dupuy and Gay M Hammerman, People and Events of the American Revolution (Dunn Loring, Virginia: T.N. Dupuy Associates, 1974) 206.

<sup>7</sup> Daughters of the American Revolution and Linda Tinker Watkins, DAR Patriot Index (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, 2003) 922.

<sup>8</sup> Virgil D White, Index to War of 1812 Pension Files (Waynesboro, TN: National Historical Pub. Co. 1989) 710. Captain James Hamilton later became governor of South Carolina.

<sup>9</sup> LaGrange Reporter 4-30-1888. LaGrange Reporter 8-27-1888. Nancy Coleman was born in Lenoir County, North Carolina.

Georgia.<sup>10</sup> It was there on October 24, 1817 that the couple had their first child, Sarah Coleman Ferrell – a daughter with “soft brown eyes” (fig 2).<sup>11</sup>

### **Clinton Academy**

Sarah Ferrell’s earliest formal education began in Clinton, the county seat of Jones County, Georgia.<sup>13</sup> Sarah likely attended the Clinton Academy as it was the first and most noted school in the county, founded circa 1824 by Rev. Thomas B. Slade.<sup>14</sup> Slade ran the school with the goal to teach the girls practical knowledge of integrity and a diligent work ethic that would prove useful in their future endeavors.<sup>15</sup>

Prominent families from the surrounding counties sent their children to this school because it was highly regarded throughout the state. The boarding school was a large two-story frame structure facing the courthouse square with the



**Fig 2. Sarah Coleman Ferrell, 1817-1903.<sup>12</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> Georgia Humanities Council, The New Georgia Encyclopedia (Athens, GA: Georgia Humanities Council and the University of Georgia Press, 2004). <<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2356&hl=y>>.

<sup>11</sup> Ridley 5, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Photo courtesy: Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library/University of Georgia Libraries. Image found in Southern Female College Catalogue 1917-1918.

<sup>13</sup> Ridley 5. As Sarah’s younger sister was later enrolled in a seminary by the age of 7, Sarah was probably of a similar age when she began her studies in Clinton (Southern Female College Catalogue 1845-1846).

<sup>14</sup> Carolyn White Williams, History of Jones County, Georgia, for One Hundred Years, Specifically 1807-1907 (Macon, GA: J.W. Burke Co. 1957) 285-287. By 1837, it was renamed Clinton Female Seminary (Williams 288).

<sup>15</sup> Thomas B Slade, “Handbill for Clinton Female Seminary” 12 May 1837, as sited in Williams 289.

classroom on the ground floor toward the rear and the sleeping quarters on the second story. The grounds were landscaped with beautiful flowers filling the terraces in the front yard and delicious pear trees in back.<sup>16</sup>

### **Female Academy at Sparta**

Sarah's education continued in Sparta<sup>17</sup> in Hancock County, Georgia, likely at the Female Academy at Sparta.<sup>18</sup> This academy, chartered in 1818, was located on West Hamilton Street.<sup>19</sup> Her grandfather, Captain Byrd Ferrell, had a farm not far from this school on the road from Sparta to Montpelier.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps Sarah boarded at her grandfather's farm while her parents were in Jones County. The academy adopted an unusual plan of education not common in female schools -- the Rensselaer Plan of Education. This was a method of teaching whereby the students took on the role of teacher by lecturing and conducting experiments themselves in the subjects of geography, history, geometry, and botany.<sup>21</sup>

Botany was frequently taught to women in seminaries at this time as it was considered an acceptable study for ladies. Consequently many textbooks were published in the early 1800s for this purpose, such as Dialogues on Botany by Maria Edgeworth (1819), and Familiar Lectures on Botany by Almira Hart Lincoln (1829).<sup>22</sup> Botany was taught each term at the Female Academy at Sparta, and Sarah would have been required not only to give a discourse on each lecture but

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<sup>16</sup> SH Griswold, "Clinton and her Schools" Jones County News 10 Sep. 1908.

<sup>17</sup> Ridley 5.

<sup>18</sup> This school initially operated on West Hamilton Street in a structure built for this purpose circa 1817, it is currently a private residence (John Rozier, The Houses of Hancock, 1785-1865 (Decatur, GA: J. Rozier, 1996) 93). Various names used for the school include the Female Academy at Sparta in 1829 (Sherwood 1829, 161), Sparta Male and Female Academy (Rozier 93), Sparta Female Academy in 1832, and Sparta Female Model School in 1838 (Boogher 341).

<sup>19</sup> Boogher 172. Rozier 93.

<sup>20</sup> Farmer's Gazette 3-3-1804, as cited in Faye Stone Poss, Hancock County, Georgia Supplement to Early Newspaper Abstracts, Farmer's Gazette, 1803-1806 (Snellville, GA: F.S. Poss, 2002) 40.

<sup>21</sup> Sherwood 1829, 161.

<sup>22</sup> Farnham 80.

also to draw, analyze, and label plants as well as establish an herbarium.<sup>23</sup> This perhaps was Sarah's first introduction to botany.

### **Scottsborough Female Institute**

Sarah Ferrell next attended Scottsborough Female Institute in Scottsboro, Baldwin County, Georgia under the direction of Dr. Robert C. Brown, an Englishman.<sup>25</sup> Nestled in an oak grove, this exclusive and respectable boarding school was established in 1828.<sup>26</sup> The school operated out of the Scott-Carter-Furman-Smith House that was built in 1806 and owned at the time by Colonel Farrish Carter (fig 3).<sup>27</sup>



**Fig 3. Scott-Carter-Furman-Smith House.<sup>24</sup>**

Attending multiple schools was common during this time period not only because the population was mobile as the frontier was opening up, but also because wealthier families typically sent their daughters from nearby schools to boarding schools once they reached a mature age.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Adiel Sherwood, A Gazetteer of the State of Georgia (Philadelphia: Printed by J.W. Martin and W.K. Boden, 1829) 161. Boogher 172-173.

<sup>24</sup> Photo courtesy: Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, BAL-63. Photographed c1941, the house was destroyed in 1968.

<sup>25</sup> Ridley 5, 27, (tribute to Sarah Ferrell by Mrs. Addie B. Tomlinson). Ridley 37-40, (Brown's obituary written by Sarah Ferrell).

<sup>26</sup> Cook 41. Sherwood 1829, 160. Adiel Sherwood, A Gazetteer of the State of Georgia (3rd ed. Washington City: P. Force, 1837) 234. Anna Maria Green Cook, History of Baldwin County, Georgia (Spartanburg, SC: Reprint Co., 1978) 41. Boogher 189. James Calvin Bonner, Milledgeville, Georgia's Antebellum Capital (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985) 98.

<sup>27</sup> Hines 36. Bonner 98. This was considered to be the first frame house built in the interior of the state and thus the oldest in Baldwin County (Cook 39, Hines 36).

<sup>28</sup> Christie Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle: higher education and student socialization in the antebellum South (New York: New York University Press, 1994) 71.

Many prosperous families sent their daughters to Scottsborough Female Institute to be educated, and the school had more than 100 students.<sup>29</sup> Mary Ann Lamar, who became the wife of Governor Howell Cobb of Georgia, was one of Sarah's classmates at the boarding school.<sup>30</sup> Tuition was \$60 a year with an additional \$80 for boarding.<sup>31</sup> There were few distractions in Scottsboro. Dr. Robert C. Brown, the rector, wrote in 1830, "there are no stores to tempt youth to extravagance, nor parties of luxury and fashion given, to break in upon the even tenor of mind so necessary to mental improvement."<sup>32</sup>

The standard curriculum for young ladies at Scottsborough included "sewing, embroidery, painting, drawing, the making of wax flowers, and music," but Dr. Brown went further, instructing the young ladies in higher mathematics and science.<sup>33</sup> In 1834, Brown was teaching English grammar, composition, algebra, geography, general history, astronomy, calisthenics, Greek, French, drawing, and painting.<sup>34</sup> The institute was considered one of the better schools because it offered not only Latin before others but also Greek which was even more elite.<sup>35</sup>

Brown's method of teaching was not the norm for those days.<sup>36</sup> Sarah wrote that Brown "esteemed it a privilege to battle against the errors of the fashionable mode of instructing females" and encouraged the ladies to pursue literary interests as well as embrace nature.<sup>37</sup> Dr. Brown was a professed Christian and the daily activities of the school started with prayer and

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<sup>29</sup> Woodbridge 1833 as cited by Dorothy Orr, [A History of Education in Georgia](#) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1950) 109.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Ann (Lamar) Cobb was born 1818, one year after Sarah Ferrell (Elizabeth Mays, "The Making of an Ante-Bellum Lady – Mrs. Howell Cobb" [The Georgia Historical Quarterly](#). (Vol. 24, 1940) 3). Mary's family lived in Milledgeville while she attended the school in Scottsboro and was enrolled in French classes (Mays 6-7).

<sup>31</sup> Bonner 98.

<sup>32</sup> *Augusta Chronicle and Georgia Advertiser* 12-30-1829.

<sup>33</sup> Mays 5. Boogher 189.

<sup>34</sup> *Southern Recorder* 12-9-1834 as cited in Boogher 244.

<sup>35</sup> Boogher 189. Farnham 25.

<sup>36</sup> Orr 107. Brown published an article on his teaching philosophy entitled "The Inductive Method of Instruction" in the *Southern Recorder* (7-14-1831) using the pseudonym 'Scrutator' (Orr 106).

<sup>37</sup> Ridley 38, (Brown's obituary written by Sarah Ferrell, reprinted from *Columbus Enquirer* 10-26-1842).

scripture readings.<sup>38</sup> Sarah thought highly of him<sup>39</sup> and there is little doubt that he had an influence on the formation not only of her love of plants but also her devotion to God.

### **The Ferrell Family in LaGrange**

While Sarah was in the midst of studying at the Scottsborough Female Institute, the Ferrell family decided to move further west to LaGrange in Troup County, Georgia and they took Sarah with them. The west was opening up, and her father, Mickleberry, had already acquired land in Troup County while he was still living in Jones County. At first there was speculation on where the new county seat would be -- the “unborn” Vernon or a point west of present-day Mountville. LaGrange was between these two and became the alternative. Vernon, nine miles west of LaGrange, had already been laid off and lots sold to speculators, but the city was never established.<sup>40</sup> In 1829, Mickleberry and others were selling subdivided parcels of land in Vernon.<sup>41</sup> LaGrange was advertised that year as a “new place, situated 130 m[iles] W[est] of Milledgeville” and boasted of its seven residential dwellings, courthouse, jail, and Methodist meetinghouse.<sup>42</sup> A few years later, in December of 1831, Mickleberry purchased land lot 111 of the 6<sup>th</sup> District of Troup County for \$2,200 (fig 4).<sup>43</sup> This initial parcel, situated one mile from the center of LaGrange, is where the family established their homestead after moving from Jones County. Three months later, he purchased land lot 114 to the south for \$1,100.<sup>44</sup> It was on this

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<sup>38</sup> Ridley40, (Brown’s obituary written by Sarah Ferrell, reprinted from Columbus Enquirer 10-26-1842). Mays 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ridley 6.

<sup>40</sup> Smith 39.

<sup>41</sup> *Georgia Journal* 3-16-1829 as cited in Tad Evans, Georgia Newspaper Clippings, Troup County Extracts, 1826-1888 (Savannah, GA: Tad Evans, 2005) 15.

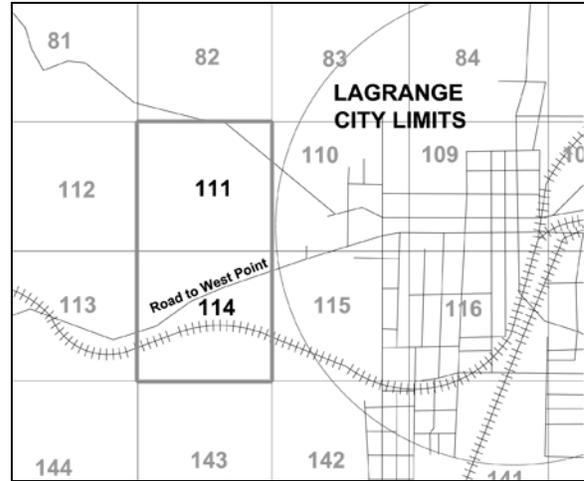
<sup>42</sup> Sherwood 1829, 122.

<sup>43</sup> Deed Book B-418, Troup County Archives. Robert M. Browning sold the whole of land lot 111 (202.5 acres) to Mickleberry Ferrell (of Jones County) on 12-14-1831.

<sup>44</sup> Deed Book C-3, Troup County Archives. Robert M. Browning sold the whole of land lot 114 (202.5 acres) to Mickleberry Ferrell (of Troup County) on 3-9-1832.

acreage where the Ferrell-Holder house was built and where Sarah later established the Ferrell Gardens.

At the Ferrell homestead, Nancy Ferrell, Sarah's mother, created a garden described as having been "made most attractive ... in the cultivation of rare flowers and in the tasteful grouping of shrubbery."<sup>46</sup> In 1894, at the age of 60, Florida (Ferrell) Presley Reed, Sarah's younger sister, published a book entitled Vesta; or, the Hidden Cross. This work was a piece of



**Fig 4. Land lot map of LaGrange.**<sup>45</sup>

Victorian literature with characters and scenes based upon her family and the gardens Sarah created. In this novel is a description of the garden that represented the one Nancy tended. Florida wrote that "she planted the first flower garden that was ever known in this part of Georgia."<sup>47</sup> This character in the novel representing Nancy had "every nook and every corner ... filled with flowers, wherever it was possible for a shrub to grow," with "summer houses scattered in every direction, covered with ivy and creepers of every imaginable hue."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Map of Troup County, Georgia, 1910 (redrawn by Chirstine Donhardt).

<sup>46</sup> Ridley 5-6.

<sup>47</sup> Florida Presley Reed, Vesta; or, The Hidden Cross (Atlanta: Foote & Davies, 1894) 15.

<sup>48</sup> Reed 23-24.

## Sarah Ferrell's Marriage

By the time the Ferrells moved to LaGrange in 1832, Sarah had bloomed into a young woman.<sup>50</sup> She had just come from school in Scottsboro, but was able to resume her Latin studies in this infant town at Troup County Academy. This academy was chartered in 1827 and was the first school in LaGrange.<sup>51</sup> Sarah was instructed in Latin by Orville Augustus Bull, later a prominent judge, who was one of the first teachers in the town. Another teacher at the school, Blount Coleman Ferrell (1816-1908), was Sarah's double-first-cousin (fig 5).<sup>52</sup> He had recently moved to LaGrange to study at the Academy where he then stayed to teach.<sup>53</sup> Thus the double-first-cousins were thrown together quite often and romance ensued.



**Fig 5. Blount and Sarah Ferrell.**<sup>49</sup>

At least three times a week, Sarah would ride her pony nearly two miles to the Academy for her Latin lesson.<sup>54</sup> Blount routinely helped her down and they would exchange love letters. Blount would take out a note from one of Sarah's textbooks and replace it with one in his own

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<sup>49</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>50</sup> Ridley 27, (tribute to Sarah Ferrell by Mrs. Addie B. Tomlinson). *LaGrange Reporter* 8-27-1888.

<sup>51</sup> Smith 138. Troup County Academy was located where the present-day Hill View Cemetery is today (Smith 138, Ridley 27).

<sup>52</sup> Ridley 27, (tribute to Sarah Ferrell by Mrs. Addie B. Tomlinson). Smith 138.

<sup>53</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>54</sup> Ruth Bradfield Slack, "History of Ferrell Gardens," unpublished manuscript (Lecture to the Garden Club of America, April 1932, Troup County Archives) 2. Ridley 27, (tribute to Sarah Ferrell by Mrs. Addie B. Tomlinson). Addie Tomlinson, daughter of Orville Augustus Bull recalls this incident as told by her mother.

pen. This went on in secret until her grandmother found a letter in the garden that was clearly a love letter Blount had written to Sarah.<sup>55</sup>

Sarah's parents thought highly of Blount but felt the couple was too young to marry; Sarah was just 18 and Blount 19. Mickleberry and Nancy did not think that Blount could provide an adequate living for their daughter at such a young age. The couple decided to marry despite this

**Recipe for Making a Home Happy**

One ounce each system, frugality and industry, one ounce each gentleness, patience and forbearance, six ounces Paul's Christian charity, that covers a multitude of failures. These ingredients thoroughly kneaded with the salt of good common sense, flavored with the "graces of nature and art," music and flowers, will make a paradise of a desert, a palace of a hovel.

– Mrs. S.C. Ferrell, LaGrange GA (Ferrell's Gardens)<sup>56</sup>

opposition and left LaGrange the same day they wed, November 26, 1835.<sup>57</sup> They rode a horse to Marianna, Florida where they lived with Blount's parents until he could financially support Sarah on his own.<sup>58</sup>

### **Blount Coleman Ferrell**

Blount and Sarah both had the same maternal and fraternal grandparents because the Ferrell brothers had married the Coleman sisters. Captain Byrd and Susan (Bennett) Ferrell had both Sarah's father Mickleberry and Blount's father Bennett; and Captain Benjamin and Elizabeth (Goodman) Coleman had both Nancy, Sarah's mother, and Julia, Blount's mother.

Blount was born in North Carolina in 1816 but moved with his family as a young child to Wilkinson County, Georgia where his father, Bennett Ferrell, was a farmer.<sup>59</sup> In 1821, the

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<sup>55</sup> Slack 2. Ruth Bradfield Slack was a childhood friend of Sarah's granddaughter Helen (Ferrell) Huguley Nolan and received this story from her. The grandmother mentioned was likely Elizabeth (Magruder) Ferrell, Byrd's second wife.

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Coleman Ferrell, "Recipe for Making a Home Happy" (unpublished manuscript) Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers II/D/box 4/Ferrell Gardens Scrapbook.

<sup>57</sup> Ridley 6. Troup County Marriage Record Book A:127 as cited in Merle Massengale Bruce, Early Marriages, Troup County, Georgia, 1828-1900 (LaGrange, GA: M.M. Bruce, 1982) 103.

<sup>58</sup> Slack 2.

United States acquired the Florida territory from the Spanish and a year later Jackson County, Florida was established.<sup>60</sup> The land was described as some of the finest in the southern part of the country.<sup>61</sup> It was between 1825 and 1830 that Bennett Ferrell moved his young family to the new territory of Jackson County to plant cotton.<sup>62</sup>

The family lived on a plantation outside of Marianna, the seat of Jackson County, Florida where Blount received his education.<sup>64</sup> He was then sent to study the classics and mathematics at Troup County Academy in LaGrange where he stayed afterward to teach for two years.<sup>65</sup> After Blount moved back to Marianna with his wife, he practiced law.<sup>66</sup> By 1840, Blount and Sarah Ferrell were living in Jackson County, Florida on a farm with four slaves and their two oldest children.<sup>67</sup> Sarah Napoleana, known as Napoleana but occasionally referred to as ‘Nipson’ by her mother, was born in 1837 (fig 6), and Clarence Augustus was born in 1839 (fig 7).<sup>68</sup>



**Fig 6. Napoleana (Ferrell) Moses, 1837-1863.**<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893. 1820 Census, Wilkerson County, Georgia. Blount C. Ferrell (1816-1908) as recorded on his tombstone in Hill View Cemetery, LaGrange.

<sup>60</sup> J. Randall Stanley, History of Jackson County (Marianna, FL: Jackson County Historical Society, 1950) 15.

<sup>61</sup> Stanley 10. As described by Capt. Hugh Young who participated in the Jackson expedition of 1818.

<sup>62</sup> The Ferrell's are not included in the 1825 Jackson County Census (Shofner 567). 1830 Census, Jackson County, Florida (Note: indexed as Bennet Terril).

<sup>63</sup> Photo courtesy: Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library/University of Georgia Libraries. Image found in Southern Female College Catalogue 1917-1918.

<sup>64</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>65</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893. Smith 138. In Vesta, the character representing Blount was fluent in both Latin and Greek (\*Reed 30).

<sup>66</sup> Ridley 6.

<sup>67</sup> 1840 Census, Jackson County, Florida.

<sup>68</sup> Hill View Cemetery headstone. Ridley 8. (Ridley is the only known source to site Napoleana's first name as Sarah). Ferrell Correspondence, Letter from Sarah Ferrell written to Blount C. Ferrell, Esq. Manhattan Hotel, NYC, 25 July 1860 (Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers MS-9/box 1/folder 1). Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, Pinewood (West Point, GA: Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, 1977) 59. The 1850 Census for Troup County states that all of Sarah's children were born in Georgia. Possibly she came to her parent's house to deliver her children.

Before Blount and Sarah's marriage, his father, Bennett, bought 125 shares of the Union Bank of Florida at \$100 each, most likely mortgaging his land and slaves instead of paying in cash.<sup>70</sup> In the years between 1839 and 1845, a great financial crash resulting from the Panic of 1837 affected Florida. Local banks began to fail and many wealthy planters lost their fortunes.<sup>71</sup> The Union Bank did not last beyond the 1840s.<sup>72</sup> It is believed that Bennett died before 1850 as his wife Julia went to live in Russell County, Alabama with her daughter Frances (Ferrell) Ellington.<sup>73</sup>



**Fig 7. Clarence A. Ferrell,  
1839-1915.<sup>69</sup>**

It was during the financial depression that Blount and Sarah moved back to Troup County where her father, Mickleberry, transferred 80 acres of his farm to the couple in 1841.<sup>74</sup> Around 1840, Blount was admitted to the bar in Georgia, and began practicing law with Colonel Augustus C. Ferrell, Sarah's brother.<sup>75</sup> Together they conducted a financially rewarding business until Augustus moved to Alabama.<sup>76</sup> In 1844, Sarah and Blount had a third child, Palman Ernest, known as Pal (fig 8).<sup>77</sup> The next year Blount served as judge on the Inferior Court, a county court.<sup>78</sup> Blount

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<sup>69</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation. Based on the others family members appearing in this 1879 photo it is determined that this is most likely Clarence Ferrell.

<sup>70</sup> Stanley 116-119. Bennett Ferrell purchased his shares between 1833 and 1835. In this particular banking scheme, the planters bought the shares through mortgaging their land and slaves instead of using cash.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel D. Irwin's memories of Marianna between 1832 and 1842 (written in 1895 and published in West Florida Journal) as cited by Stanley 56-58.

<sup>72</sup> Stanley 119.

<sup>73</sup> 1850 Census, Russell County, Alabama.

<sup>74</sup> Smith 188.

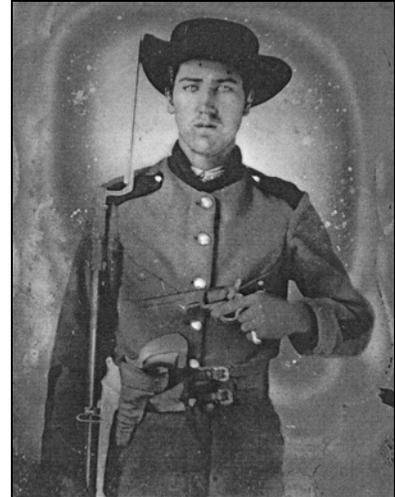
<sup>75</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893. *LaGrange Reporter* 8-27-1888.

<sup>76</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>77</sup> Ridley 8. (spelling of name taken from Ridley) 'Pal' appears on his war record, tombstone, and all other known sources.

<sup>78</sup> Smith 44, 272.

later served as a state senator for the 1849-1850 session.<sup>79</sup> By the time of the 1850 census, Blount was an attorney-at-law, held property valued at \$6,000, and owned 34 slaves.<sup>80</sup> Additional law partners of Blount's included Judge Orville Augustus Bull, with whom he had served as teacher at Troup County Academy, Colonel R.J. Morgan, and Colonel Gustavus Adolphus 'Gus' Bull.<sup>81</sup> In 1866, Blount served as judge of the County Court.<sup>82</sup>



**Fig 8. Pal Ernest Ferrell, 1844-1861.**<sup>85</sup>

By 1868, Blount had formed a partnership called Ferrell, Hammond and Brother with Colonel N.J. Hammond of Atlanta and E.W. Hammond of LaGrange. They practiced in Troup County where they advertised that their cases received “personal, prompt, and careful attention.”<sup>83</sup> In a poem by Orville Gustavus Cox about the building of a new courthouse in LaGrange, Blount Ferrell is described as “clear and brilliant!” in his law practice.<sup>84</sup>

By 1877, the firm of Ferrell and Longley was formed with Judge Fuller M. Longley as law partner.<sup>86</sup> In 1883, at age 67 Blount was still practicing law with Longley.<sup>87</sup> By the end of Blount's career, he was specializing in commercial law.<sup>88</sup> Even after his retirement he would still take a case in order to defend one of his former slaves.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Smith 272.

<sup>80</sup> 1850 Census, Troup County, Georgia. 1850 Slave Schedules, Troup County, Georgia.

<sup>81</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>82</sup> Smith 43, 272.

<sup>83</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893. *LaGrange Reporter* 12-4-1868. *LaGrange Reporter* 2-4-1870.

<sup>84</sup> Orville Gustavus Cox, Midst Elms and Roses: A Book of Poems (Lagrange, GA: The Lagrange Graphic Job Print, 1905) 58. Poem entitled: From the Old to the New.

<sup>85</sup> Photo courtesy: Troup County Archives.

<sup>86</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-7-1877. *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>87</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 3-22-1883. *LaGrange Reporter* 1-12-1882.

<sup>88</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893. *LaGrange Reporter* 2-21-1908.

<sup>89</sup> Ida Callaway, “Memories of Fuller Earle Callaway, Sr. of LaGrange, GA” (unpublished manuscript, 1929. Hills and Dales Archives) 102.

While Blount Ferrell did not enlist in the army during the Civil War, he did contribute to the war effort by equipping and financially supporting the troops and by fighting in one of the very last battles of the war.<sup>91</sup> Blount, nearing the age of 50, fought in the battle at Fort Tyler in West Point, Georgia under the command of his brother-in-law, Colonel James H. Fannin. This confrontation took place on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1865 and was part of a larger campaign directed by Union Major General James H. Wilson and his Raiders. By April 16, General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox and President Lincoln had been shot, but news of these events had yet to reach Georgia and the fighting continued. This battle at the tiny earthen works involved 3,750 Union

July 25, 1860

Dear Blount,  
I told you before you left home that I shouldn't write to you at all, but feeling your absence *a little* more than I thought I should, the decision to hold some sort of communion with you constrains me to violate my word. Don't flatter yourself now, that I am half crazy to see you or that I am pining away with grief because you are so far away from me. Tis not so. I eat more and *grow fatter* every day. Visit my neighbors, and attend all the Tuesday night prayer meetings. ... In short, I am taking every advantage of your absence, to do just as I please. If I could only have you here about an hour each day (*to scold at or sigh over*) ... But, let me quit this vein of humorous and write more ... *your ever affectionate and faithful wife*<sup>90</sup>

troops and 64 Confederate soldiers.<sup>92</sup> The engagement lasted for seven hours.<sup>93</sup> Five units of the Union Army were involved in this struggle and the Union commander, Colonel Oscar H. LaGrange wrote that “resistance was stubborn and our loss severe.”<sup>94</sup> Blount was taken prisoner, along with Fannin and their other brother-in-law Major Mickleberry P. Ferrell. They were

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<sup>90</sup> Ferrell Correspondence, Letter from Sarah Ferrell written to Blount C. Ferrell, Esq. Manhattan Hotel, NYC, 25 July 1860 (Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers MS-9/box 1/folder 1).

<sup>91</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>92</sup> Colonel James H. Fannin, “How the Battle of West Point was Fought a Week after General Lee’s Surrender” *Atlanta Journal* 26 Sep. 1896. Toccoa Cozart, “Last Battle of the War Between the States” (Unidentified newspaper, after 1909, p16 Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers/II/D/Box 4/Ferrell Garden Scrapbook). The number of confederate prisoners reported were as high as 300, but that included prisoners from other local skirmishes (Letter from J.H. Wilson to Headquarters 5-3-1865 as sited in United States War Department, ed, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Series I, Vol 49, part I, Washington MoA: Government Printing Office, 1880 – 1901) 352.)

<sup>93</sup> Cozart 16.

<sup>94</sup> *The War of the Rebellion* (Series I, Vol 49, part I) 364. Letter from Colonel O. H. LaGrange to Major-General Upton 4-16-1865 as sited in *The War of the Rebellion* (Series I, Vol 49, part II) 367.

marched to LaGrange for the night before proceeding to Macon for imprisonment.<sup>95</sup> Once they reached Macon, the rumors of the armistice were confirmed and the prisoners released.<sup>96</sup>

The Judge's interests stretched beyond law and into politics. During Reconstruction after the Civil War, many citizens urged him to seek office which he refused. He did, however, enter the fray against carpetbaggers, Northerners who moved south seeking financial and political advantages. Over the years Blount devoted his resources to fight their influence. Others helped him as well, including Colonel James H. Fannin and his long-time friend Dr. Robert A.T. Ridley.<sup>97</sup>

Blount was heavily involved with the Democratic Party and was appointed as its chairman in 1870.<sup>98</sup> In 1872, he was nominated to the legislature without his knowledge or consent and had to withdraw his name from candidacy.<sup>99</sup> In 1877, Blount was Chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee of Troup County and by 1878 was president.<sup>100</sup>

Besides supporting Sarah's benevolence, Blount's philanthropic activities included giving land to LaGrange Baptist Church, an African-American church, to build a schoolhouse. He also gave food and necessities to poor families during the Christmas season.<sup>101</sup> Through a local physician, Blount was able to anonymously distribute hundreds of dollars to needy families.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Fannin "How the Battle of West Point was Fought a Week after General Lee's Surrender." Cozart 16. Janet B. Hewett, ed. United States War Department Supplement to the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Serial 27, Part II, Vol 15, Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Co, 1994) 285.

<sup>96</sup> Fannin "How the Battle of West Point was Fought a Week after General Lee's Surrender."

<sup>97</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>98</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 8-5-1870.

<sup>99</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 9-13-1872.

<sup>100</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 11-8-1877. *LaGrange Reporter* 7-18-1878.

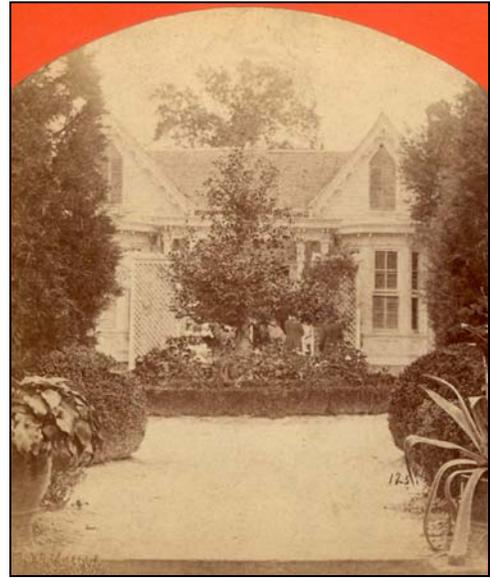
<sup>101</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 8-3-1882. *LaGrange Reporter* 1-6-1893.

<sup>102</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

### Sarah Ferrell's house: The Terraces

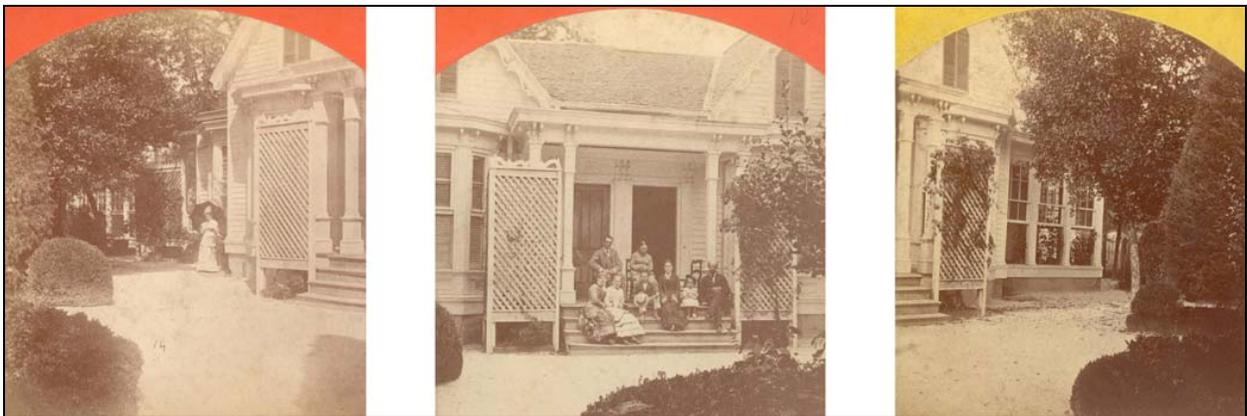
Sarah and Blount built their Gothic Revival home at the top of a hill on the farmland given to them by her father Mickleberry (fig 9 and 10). The house overlooked terraces that had been created for agricultural purposes, and thus they named their estate The Terraces.<sup>104</sup>

The house, no longer extant, was a one-and-a-half story<sup>106</sup> frame cottage with brick foundation and at least three chimneys. The characteristics of the Gothic Revival are apparent in its steep gables with decorative



**Fig 9. South façade of the Ferrell House.**<sup>103</sup>

edge, cross gables, bay windows, one-story porch, and paired upper-story arched windows. The south side facing the garden had two gables and three bay windows. Four steps led to a recessed porch with two separate entry doors that stood side by side and four pillars supported the porch



**Fig 10. South façade of Ferrell House: west wing, middle, and east wing.**<sup>105</sup>

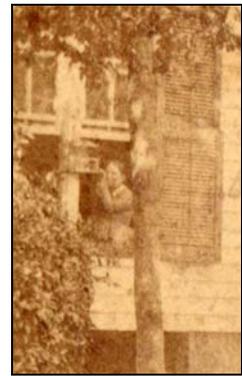
<sup>103</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

<sup>104</sup> Ridley 6.

<sup>105</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

roof. Balustrades with round finials on the newel posts were added after the early 1880s. On either side of the porch, lattice panels stood reaching to the height of the porch overhang; these were removed after the early 1880s. On the eastern side of the house were two additions each with a chimney and a row of windows and a covered arcade of pillars with decorative lattice work.<sup>107</sup>

Also on the eastern side, a little bird cage hung in the window of the house (fig 11). In the early 1880s, Sarah is pictured sitting in the window checking on the birds in the cage. In Vesta, Florida mentions a “large cage from which two parrots greeted the young people as they passed through the upper terrace.”<sup>109</sup> Blount Ferrell indeed was fond of birds. The local paper said he would pet his parrots so often they called ‘Papa’ whenever they would hear him approach.<sup>110</sup>



**Fig 11. Sarah  
Ferrell.**<sup>108</sup>

On the western façade of the house was a one-story portico supported by pillars. The view of this portico from the garden on the south side was obscured by another lattice panel. Directly off of this portico was a greenhouse-type structure with an entire wall of at least five nine-over-nine double-hung windows.<sup>111</sup> There was another greenhouse and

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<sup>106</sup> Mary Robinson Myrick, “Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell’s [sic] Terraces” (Garden Gateways, The Garden Club of Georgia Vol. 20, Feb 1951).

<sup>107</sup> Descriptions based on photographs owned by the Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>108</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

<sup>109</sup> Reed 157.

<sup>110</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 1-18-1883. Canaries are also mentioned

<sup>111</sup> Descriptions based on photographs owned by the Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

some cold frames in Sarah’s garden on the eastern side of Terrace D, Labyrinth Avenue.<sup>112</sup> There were a total of four hothouses on the property containing many rare ferns and flowers.<sup>113</sup>

The exterior of what represented the Ferrell house in Florida (Ferrell) Presley Reed’s Vesta, was described as having a circular porch and bay windows on each side. Bay windows did indeed exist on the Ferrell house (fig 12), and although there does not appear to be a circular porch on



**Fig 12. South façade of the Ferrell House.**<sup>114</sup>

the south side, it is possible this was on the north. Reed also wrote that there were double parlors, one with hand decorated Anglo-Japanese furniture, the other furnished in the Queen Anne style. It is probable that the double doors on the Ferrell house did open into double parlors. Behind these parlors, Reed described a library room with a secretary and an old chair considered to be a family heirloom as it was crafted by a friend; a large suite of bedrooms each with a private bathing-room with highly decorative tubs and commodes; and a dining room with sideboards laden with silver service, cupboards for china, and extension tables. Described as well were the elaborate paintings with both scriptural and historical references imitating works from Raphael and Canova.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> W.B. Marquis of P.J. Berckmans Co., Inc Landscape Architects Augusta, GA. “Report on the Improvement and Maintenance of the Property of Mr. Fuller E. Callaway, LaGrange, GA” (3 Jan 1916. Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers II/D/box 4/Ferrell Garden Scrapbook) 8. Home and Garden Section. Hills and Dales. Fuller E. Callaway owner. LaGrange, GA Blueprint, 12-8-1913, Hills and Dales archive.

<sup>113</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888).

<sup>114</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, after 1881.

<sup>115</sup> Reed 35-36.

Also in the house was a medical chest belonging to Sarah's father that Blount had purchased at the estate sale as well as a set of silver spoons, silver teaspoons and a silver waiter.<sup>116</sup> Sarah's niece, Retta (Fannin) Coney referred to the house as "Noah's Ark" because the attic was a treasure-trove of family relics.<sup>117</sup> The wedding knife used at Sarah's brother Major Mickleberry P. Ferrell and Mary Jane Wilkinson's wedding and Sarah's three-piece creamware butter dish are all that is known to still exist (fig 13).<sup>118</sup>



**Fig 13. Sarah Ferrell's creamware butter dish.**<sup>119</sup>

Below The Terraces was the home of Sarah's youngest sister, Julia E. (Ferrell) Fannin. Her father, Mickleberry, had given Julia and her husband Colonel James H. Fannin the "Lower Terraces" as a wedding gift just as he had given Sarah the "Upper Terraces." These two places were separated only by groves of trees.<sup>120</sup>

### **The Ferrell Farms**

Blount held extensive tracts of land, including a large farm in Chambers County, Alabama that his son Clarence worked. Before the Civil War, Clarence maintained his father's holdings in Alabama which included 54 slaves.<sup>121</sup> Blount had two farms in Troup County in 1870; one was 265 acres with 200 acres of improved land and the other farm of 102 acres had 40 acres of improved land. On the larger farm Blount grew cotton and had three mules for working

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<sup>116</sup> Returns, Book 6 p622 (Troup County Archives, Inventory and sale of Mickleberry Ferrell's estate 12-6-1865).

<sup>117</sup> Myrick "Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell's [sic] Terraces."

<sup>118</sup> Both are housed at Hills and Dales.

<sup>119</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, courtesy Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>120</sup> Myrick "Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell's [sic] Terraces."

<sup>121</sup> 1860 Slave Schedules, Chambers County, Alabama. These 54 slaves were housed in 9 slave houses, 2 additional slaves were the property of Clarence and lived in his own house.

the crop. On the smaller farm he raised milk cows and swine, grew winter wheat, Indian corn, oats, cotton, and potatoes, and produced cheese.<sup>122</sup>

In 1888, Blount had nearly 800 contiguous acres stretching for nearly a mile to the north and northwest of the Ferrell house (fig 14). Part of this land was a rolling field of Bermuda grass fenced in with barbed wire and surrounded by woods. This bucolic landscape dotted with grazing cattle and a stream running through the center was “captivating to the eye.”<sup>124</sup>



**Fig 14. A drive on the Ferrell estate.**<sup>123</sup>

### **Sarah Ferrell’s Religious Ties**

Sarah Ferrell had a noted religious fervor and strong ties to the Baptist denomination. She was reared in a religious home during the Second Great Awakening. This was a Protestant movement that started in the North in the early 1800s and continued in the South into the antebellum era.<sup>125</sup> Sarah’s religious devotion directly influenced the design of her garden in the creation of religious symbols in boxwood and use of plant material.

In June of 1832, a few months after the Ferrell family moved to LaGrange, Stephen, one of Mickleberry’s slaves, joined the Baptist Church of Christ in LaGrange, later called First Baptist Church.<sup>126</sup> Isham, another of Mickleberry’s slaves, joined the next month.<sup>127</sup> Sarah

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<sup>122</sup> 1870 Agricultural Census, Troup County, Georgia.

<sup>123</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>124</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 5-31-1888.

<sup>125</sup> Farnham 29.

<sup>126</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 (First Baptist Church LaGrange, Georgia Archives) Entry for 6-10-1832. Stephen joined by letter.

wrote later in a letter to her daughter, Napoleana, that the “poorest African whose heart is influenced by the grace of God, can teach the most learned Potentate, ignorant of the religion of Jesus.”<sup>128</sup>

Sarah’s mother, Nancy, originally an Episcopalian, joined the Baptist church in June of 1838 followed by her husband Mickleberry the next week.<sup>130</sup> For the remainder of her life, Nancy clung to her faith and church. She studied the Bible devoutly and could repeat chapters from memory.<sup>131</sup> Upon her death, the church recorded a lengthy passage in their record book to honor her, writing: “As a church we place on record our high estimate of her Christian attainments and our sense of loss in her death.” It was recorded that Nancy was



**Fig 15. First Baptist Church.**<sup>129</sup>

“one of the strong pillars of the Church of Christ” and that “[t]he stamp of her earnest convictions and strong character are upon her descendants.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 7-29-1832. Isham joined by letter. [Isham married Maby and had three children, John, Peter and Binlah. The family was valued at \$2,600 (Returns, Book U p731, Troup County Archives.)]

<sup>128</sup> Ridley 57-58, (Letter from Sarah Ferrell to her daughter Napoleana).

<sup>129</sup> Photo courtesy: Troup County Archives as published in Troup County Historical Society’s Troup County in Vintage Postcards (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002) 102.

<sup>130</sup> Ridley 7. Reed 15. First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 6-10-1838. First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 6-17-1838. Nancy and Mickleberry both joined by experience.

<sup>131</sup> LaGrange Reporter 8-27-1888.

<sup>132</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book II: 1888-1906 (First Baptist Church LaGrange, Georgia Archives) Entry for 10-28-1888, p19-21.

Sarah joined the church in October of 1838<sup>133</sup> even though her residence at the time was in Florida. It is likely the couple traveled back and forth frequently. Many joined the church the day Sarah did, including Glasgo, a slave of Mickleberry's.<sup>134</sup>

Sarah was by no means the only Ferrell involved with First Baptist Church (fig 15). Construction of the first edifice began in 1855 with both Mickleberry Ferrell and his son-in-law Colonel James H. Fannin donating money.<sup>135</sup> Mickleberry was active in the church, serving on numerous committees including investigating wayward church members, committees to discuss issues with other churches in town, as well as a committee to correspond with a potential new pastor.<sup>136</sup> In Vesta, the character representing Mickleberry was described as “a worldly man [who] greatly aided in building up churches – ever considering *religion* as an essential principle in a national state government.”<sup>137</sup>

Sarah Ferrell was an active member of the church and enjoyed regularly attending the services. Church involvement to Sarah was more than just having her name on the membership list.<sup>139</sup> She practiced her faith by relieving the suffering of the needy through the giving of her time and resources, teaching the Bible to young ladies, and giving flowers to members of the LaGrange community. Sarah

Sarah Coleman Ferrell ... was charitable and beneficent [sic] in her personal relationships. Schools and churches were contributed to liberally: she educated innumerable pupils, and only Heaven knows the list of poor people for whom she provided. – Ida Cason Callaway <sup>138</sup>
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<sup>133</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 10-13-1838. Sarah joined by experience.

<sup>134</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 10-13-1838. Glasgo joined by experience. [A slave named Glasgan, possibly the same person, is listed in Mickleberry Ferrell's inventory for \$300.00 (Returns, Book U p731, Troup County Archives.)]

<sup>135</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 10-9-1858. Mickleberry's estate was valued at \$50,000 so he was asked to subscribe \$500. The building was completed in 1859 at a cost of \$17,063.13 (*LaGrange Reporter* 10-5-1922).

<sup>136</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entries for 10-24-1839, 7-10-1840, 9-10-1840, 10-10-1840, 5-8-1841, 6-12-1841.

<sup>137</sup> Reed 14.

<sup>138</sup> Callaway 97.

<sup>139</sup> Ridley 7-8.

was a friend to the poor, seeking them out in order to bring them some measure of relief, and served on a committee in her church to help the indigent.<sup>140</sup> Sarah bought cloth from the local dime store to make dresses for the poor. During one event, the annual Masonic picnic given as a holiday for the Troup Factory mill workers, Sarah presented a dress to each of the 29 female workers. It was her custom to make a generous gift at this annual event.<sup>141</sup> She also gave generously to her church.<sup>142</sup>

Sarah also was an active member of the Woman's Missionary Society, organized at First Baptist Church in 1882 with 28 members.<sup>143</sup> She was one of the prominent members during its early years, along with her sister Julia (Ferrell) Fannin, and a Mrs. Ferrell.<sup>144</sup>

Sarah's pastor, Dr. A.B. Vaughan, spoke of her in a tribute: "For while she knew that her works could constitute no ground of her acceptance with the Lord, yet she was as abundant, as patient and persistent in her works as if her salvation depended upon nothing else."<sup>145</sup> In a newspaper article about the church, published 19 years after her death, Sarah was still remembered for her philanthropic nature and her Christian devotion.<sup>146</sup>

## **Sabbath School**

Sarah taught a Sabbath School that met once a week. It was a small study group for the purpose of educating youth and her pupils were young ladies from the Southern Female College.

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<sup>140</sup> Ridley 34, (tribute for Sarah Ferrell by SC Todd). First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Entry for 3-5-1882.

<sup>141</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-25-1888. This particular event took place a few months before Fuller E. Callaway opened his store and thus would have been made from full price material.

<sup>142</sup> First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887. Sarah gave \$5 for purposes of a sexton (2-8-1863), BC Ferrell gave \$100 "for his wife" and \$50 "for himself" (subscriptions for 1857), Sarah gave \$50 (subscriptions for 1858), Sarah gave \$100 for pastors salary (undated), Sarah gave \$100 for reasons unknown (undated).

<sup>143</sup> Smith 181. This was a precursor to the Woman's Missionary Union (Grady Fowler, One Hundred Fifty Years of History First Baptist Church LaGrange, GA 1828-1978 (Tallahassee: Rose Printing, 1978) 167).

<sup>144</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 10-6-1922. Mrs. Ferrell could have been Nancy Ferrell or her daughter-in-law Mrs. M.P. Ferrell (Mickleberry P. Ferrell's wife) (First Baptist Church Records Book I: 1828-1887 Membership list of 1881).

<sup>145</sup> Ridley 18, (a tribute to Sarah Ferrell from Dr. A. B. Vaughan, pastor of First Baptist Church, LaGrange).

<sup>146</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 10-6-1922.

In a letter written to her students at the end of the fall term of 1851, she expressed a Christian love for them and genuine interest in their welfare. Sarah wrote, “I have been impressed with an obligation to write you a few lines of admonition, that you can take to your homes and read perhaps, when the hand that traces them will be mouldering into dust ... they are the solemn truths of the ‘Word of God.’” She uses the letter as a vehicle to encourage the ladies to continue to study the Bible, pray, serve God, and rely on the forgiving power of Jesus Christ. Sarah also wrote about the recent death of a few of their companions and cautioned them that “youth is not secure from the shaft of death.” She ends with a plea for them to “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” The earnest pleading contained within the letter displays Sarah’s fervent religious devotion and urgency with concern to the ladies’ salvation.<sup>147</sup>

Ever focusing on soteriological issues, Sarah wrote to her own daughter, Napoleana, urging her to seek salvation, asking “when will you learn to attach the importance due so momentous a subject?” Sarah felt that “now... is a time most opportune for you to seek salvation; situated as you are, in a family whose very breathings are piety and love, with a dear good aunt to pray for and instruct you... what doth hinder you?”<sup>148</sup> In 1857, Sarah gave a Bible as a wedding present to Napoleana with an inscription that encouraged her to let the scriptures be her guide in marriage.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ridley 43-18, (Letter from Sarah Ferrell to her Sabbath School Class). Her pupils were: Misses Cox, Baldees, Everett, Holmes, Jones, Santon, and Pope. Sarah quotes Matthew 6:33.

<sup>148</sup> Ridley 57, (Letter from Sarah Ferrell to her daughter Napoleana).

<sup>149</sup> Ridley 59-60, (Inscription in a Bible given from Sarah Ferrell to her daughter Napoleana).

## Southern Female College

Education was a life-long interest to Sarah. She supported Southern Female College both financially as well as with her time and devotion.<sup>150</sup> Twenty-seven ladies and two young boys of the extended Ferrell family attended this college, and Sarah often boarded these family members during their stay in LaGrange.<sup>151</sup> For more than 50 years the institution was the “apple of her eye” and she was passionate about it in much the same way as she was with her other interests.<sup>152</sup>

Southern Female College (fig 16) was a Baptist school begun in 1843 under the direction of Rev J.E. Dawson. Shortly after its opening, Milton E. Bacon succeeded him and graduated five young ladies in the first class.<sup>154</sup>

The school’s motto was “Equal opportunities for our daughters and at the same cost as enjoyed by our sons.”<sup>155</sup> In its first few years of existence, Mickleberry Ferrell sent his two youngest daughters to the



school. Sarah’s sister Florida was 12 and Julia was eight when they

**Fig 16. Antebellum Southern Female College.**<sup>153</sup>

attended classes in 1845. In 1848 Napoleana, Sarah’s oldest child, at age 11 enrolled in preparatory classes along with others of the extended Ferrell family. The next year Sarah’s brother, Captain Coleman B. Ferrell, became a professor, second to the president. He remained

<sup>150</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-18-1903.

<sup>151</sup> Based on Southern Female College Catalogues from 1845 until 1918.

<sup>152</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-18-1903.

<sup>153</sup> Photo courtesy: Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, TRP-69.

<sup>154</sup> Charles Edgeworth Jones, *Education in Georgia* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889) 71. The school operated under the names LaGrange Collegiate Seminary for Young Ladies in 1850, Southern and Western Female College in 1852, and finally Southern Female College in 1854.

<sup>155</sup> Southern Female College Catalogue 1896-1897.

there for four years, teaching Greek, Mathematics, and English.<sup>156</sup> Sarah's sister, Florida (Ferrell) Presley Reed returned to teach for the spring of 1870.<sup>157</sup> She was widely known as an accomplished musician, teaching piano and presenting a glee club concert while at the college.<sup>158</sup> The school was noted for its music education and its Christian atmosphere.<sup>159</sup>

The original site of the college before the war, on Davis Street,<sup>160</sup> was described by a student as "beautiful with grass plots, exquisite flowers and shrubs that bordered a circular drive that led to the front entrance, a terrace with steps entirely across the front." This building accidentally burned toward the end of the Civil War in the spring of 1865 when it was used as a confederate hospital.<sup>161</sup> Ichabod F. Cox served a 30-year presidency at Southern Female College and managed to keep the school going during the war years. In the fall of 1870, a new site was purchased on the block bounded by Church, Battle, Lewis and Smith Streets where it remained.<sup>162</sup>

In 1895, members of the Cox family decided to move the college to Manchester, now College Park south of Atlanta.<sup>163</sup> The equipment was moved in the summer and then the announcement of the relocation was made to the surprise of the LaGrange townspeople. The citizens felt they had been wronged and reacted by purchasing the grounds and electing Dr. G.A.

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<sup>156</sup> Southern Female College Catalogues from 1849 until 1853 continuous.

<sup>157</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-17-1869, 5-20-1870, 8-5-1870.

<sup>158</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-17-1869. She had previously taught at the LaGrange Female College (*LaGrange Reporter* 1-22-1869). Southern Female College Catalogue 1869-1870. *LaGrange Reporter* 12-17-1869, 1-14-1870, 2-18-1870, 5-20-1870.

<sup>159</sup> Dovie Edwards Carter, "Memories of the War Between the States, During and After Twined and Intertwined," Confederate Reminiscences and Letters 1861-1865 (Ed. Georgia Division United Daughters of the Confederacy, Atlanta: The Georgia Division United Daughters of the Confederacy, 1996) 40.

<sup>160</sup> Louise Barfield 'Biddy' Hammett, I MUST SING! The Era With Carrie Fall Benson A Biographical History (LaGrange, GA: LaGrange College, 2007) 126.

<sup>161</sup> Mrs. I.F. Cox, "Items of College History from Memory" 5 April 1892 (Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia/MS-72 Cox College Collection/box 6 scrapbooks/book IV 1881-1892) 205. Carter 40.

<sup>162</sup> Cox, "Items of College History from Memory." Southern Female College Catalogue 1894-1895. Jones, Education in Georgia 72.

<sup>163</sup> The school at College Park took the name of Southern Female (Cox) College then later Cox College and Conservatory.

Nunnally as president. The financial assistance was provided by Lewis J. Render and the board of trustees, with Judge Blount Ferrell at the helm. The college was reopened in LaGrange under the same name in time for the new matriculates.<sup>164</sup>

Nunnally asked for endowment subscriptions in 1896 and Blount Ferrell gave the first gift of \$2,000 on the condition that it would be matched within two weeks by the people of Georgia.<sup>166</sup> With these funds and others, it was possible for new buildings to be built. One, likely already under



**Fig 17. Sarah Ferrell Lyceum at Southern Female College.**<sup>165</sup>

construction, was “College Home,” a three-story brick dormitory with 100 rooms, completed in 1896.<sup>167</sup> The other building, also a three-story brick structure, completed by 1899, was the Sarah Ferrell Lyceum (fig 17). This building with verandas spanning the front contained a study hall, 13 recitation rooms, 30 practice rooms, an art studio, and a gymnasium.<sup>168</sup>

The dormitory and chapel burned in July of 1908 leaving only the Sarah Ferrell Lyceum standing.<sup>169</sup> This was outfitted to accommodate 50 borders with classrooms and a dining hall and a new dorm was built on the site of “College Home,” but the financial devastation caused by the fire resulted in the school’s closure in 1919. The Sarah Ferrell Lyceum and the new

<sup>164</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 5-29-1896.

<sup>165</sup> Photo courtesy: Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library/University of Georgia Libraries. Image found in Southern Female College Catalogue 1911-1912.

<sup>166</sup> Letter by G.A. Nunnally in the *Christian Index* as reprinted in *LaGrange Reporter* 6-19-1896.

<sup>167</sup> *Salmagundi*, Published by Seniors of Southern Female College (Vol II, No.1-4, 1900, Troup County Archives). *LaGrange Reporter* 7-10-1896.

<sup>168</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 7-9-1897. \*Southern Female College Catalogue 1901-1902 (p37).

<sup>169</sup> Southern Female College Catalogue 1909-1910.

dormitory were turned over to Lewis J. Render to account for financial losses and became the Render Apartments.<sup>170</sup>

In a tribute to Sarah, her friends at the college wrote, “Our main college building is a monument to her memory, and the good she has accomplished along educational lines will live long after this brick and mortar [sic] have crumbled into dust.”<sup>171</sup> Indeed dust it has become; the structure has since been torn down and replaced initially with a post office, and today is the site of a bank.

## Conclusion

Sarah Coleman Ferrell was a highly educated woman for her time with numerous interests and abilities that she used to the benefit of others. Sarah’s educational experiences shaped her as a cultured intellectual.<sup>172</sup> In 1904, a friend described Sarah:

... she was thorough in the sciences; she understood astronomy, and could entertain you in discoursing upon the stars, this planet, and that... She was familiar with Geology and could tell you much of the formation of the earth and the stones... She knew Botany well; and what a pleasure it was to follow her through her lovely gardens and have her point out the beauties of the different flowers.<sup>173</sup>

Her resources of time and money helped the needy; she gave clothing to the poor, educated young ladies in Sabbath School, served at her church, and gave flowers to the sick and dying. Not the least of her accomplishments is the creation of the garden at The Terraces. This look at Sarah Ferrell and her passions in life contribute directly to a fuller understanding of her garden. Like the college she loved, her gardens serve also as a “monument to her memory.”

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<sup>170</sup> Sanborn Map of LaGrange, Georgia 1921. Troup County in Vintage Postcards 90. In the 1960’s, one of the first sales by Sally Culpepper, Sarah Ferrell’s great-great-granddaughter and the first woman realtor in LaGrange, was the Sarah Ferrell Lyceum (Sally Culpepper, Oral History by Mike Moncus 2003, Troup County Archives).

<sup>171</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-18-1903.

<sup>172</sup> Ridley 23.

<sup>173</sup> Ridley 23.

## **Chapter 2: The Design and Layout of The Terraces**

*The gardens are the soul of the estate and their spirit is the spirit of Sarah Coleman Ferrell. No form of artistic expression seems so potent for the conveyance of atmosphere -- the aroma of the spirit of its creator -- as a garden.*<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after moving back to Georgia with her husband and children, Sarah created her gardens at The Terraces. This boxwood garden became the focus of Sarah's creative energy over the next 61 years. Ferrell's Garden, as it was called, was as well-known throughout the South as Shaw's Garden in St. Louis (the present-day Missouri Botanical Garden).<sup>2</sup>

Sarah's garden was a floral scrapbook of color and form, "Mrs. Ferrell loves flowers, and by her no effort has been spared to collect the prettiest and best for her scrapbook."<sup>3</sup> This garden was a growing collection of plant materials and designs that held significance for her. The gardens were an extension of her hospitality and love for her neighbors. They were part of her outreach to the community as she freely gave flowers to soothe those in need.

### **Starting the Garden**

In an 1888 interview with Sarah Ferrell, published in the *LaGrange Reporter*, the author of "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" took a significant look at Sarah's gardens. The two walked the gardens together as Sarah explained her garden creation. From this interview, it is revealed that Sarah began her garden in 1842.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara Madison Tunnell, "The Garden of Memories" *Country Life* (August 1920 Troup Co Archives/Callaway Family Papers/II/D/box 4/Ferrell Garden Scrapbook) 44.

<sup>2</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 3-21-1890.

<sup>3</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888).

<sup>4</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888).

An oral tradition claims that Sarah had an illness that sparked her desire to be out-of-doors for her health's sake.<sup>6</sup> In a speech in 1927, Sarah was described as a frail and delicate woman who was only expected to live a few years.<sup>7</sup> While she once suffered from an attack of catarrhal,<sup>8</sup> and later that year took a trip to Warm Springs with a group of friends,<sup>9</sup> no other writings including the interview and a memorial book written



**Fig 1. Terraces north of the Ferrell home site.<sup>5</sup>**

after her death mention any kind of health problem. While this possibility seems unlikely, doctors often advised their patients to be out-of-doors for health reasons.<sup>10</sup>

## **A Designed and Planned Landscape**

Sarah Ferrell did not implement all of her garden design at once, but in stages over a period of time.<sup>11</sup> She methodically planned her garden and added plants and terraces over the years (fig 1).<sup>12</sup> It is traditionally believed that Sarah took a stick and began to draw designs in the soil to lay out her garden. One tradition states that she started her garden near an old well from which her husband preferred to get his drinking water as he could recognize any water not

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<sup>5</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> "A Little of the History of Ferrell Gardens" (ephemera likely written by Alice Callaway) n.d. Troup County Archives. Constance Knowles Draper, "Ferrell Gardens" (Manuscript of lecture to the Peachtree Garden Club, n.d. (approx 1920s) Cherokee Garden Library at the Atlanta History Center/Draper Collection/box 1/folder 6) 2.

<sup>7</sup> C.K. Draper 2.

<sup>8</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 2-8-1883.

<sup>9</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 8-2-1883.

<sup>10</sup> Rev. John Drayton in the early 1800s took his doctor's advice and created the Magnolia Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina in the process (Earle S. Draper, "Southern Plantations II," *Landscape Architecture* (Jan. 1933) 121).

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Frank M. Ridley, *In Memory of Sarah Coleman Ferrell* (Atlanta: Ward and Darrington, printers, 1904, Troup County Archives) 27 (tribute to Sarah Ferrell by Mrs. Addie B. Tomlinson).

<sup>12</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888).

from this particular well.<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to imagine which well this could be because there were at least three in the formal garden.<sup>14</sup> Another source gives a more logical scenario that the Upper Terrace, closest to the house, was first created and other terraces added to this.<sup>15</sup> This theory is supported by a friend of Sarah's granddaughter who wrote that the first boxwood planted was 'God is Love' on the Upper Terrace.<sup>16</sup>

One of Sarah's pathways, Bower Avenue, was well enough established by the end of the Civil War to provide a leafy shelter to one of the local ministers who used the secluded spot to write his sermons.<sup>17</sup> During the conflict, Sarah continued with improvements on her terraced garden. In an 1864 letter by Sarah's brother, Captain Coleman B. Ferrell to his wife Missouri, he asked, "What kind of gardens have you and how is Sister getting on with her yard?"<sup>18</sup> Sarah's brother was well aware of Sarah's continual work on the garden. After the Civil War she planted seeds from magnolia trees on a lower terrace. In 1888, a walk was being prepared between Sarah's home and that of her son, Clarence, at the old-homestead. The area already consisted of native trees and she planned to cover the ground under these with blue grass.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Robinson Myrick, "Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell's [sic] Terraces" (Garden Gateways, The Garden Club of Georgia Vol. 20, Feb 1951). Wylly Folk St. John, "Five Acres of Heaven" Atlanta Journal Magazine (20 June 1948) 13. The Ferrells did not have city water hooked up (Ida Callaway, "Memories of Fuller Earle Callaway, Sr. of LaGrange, GA" (unpublished manuscript, 1929, Hills and Dales Archives) 102).

<sup>14</sup> Home and Garden Section. Hills and Dales. Fuller E. Callaway owner. LaGrange, GA Blueprint, 12-8-1913, Hills and Dales archive.

<sup>15</sup> Tunnell 44.

<sup>16</sup> Ruth Bradfield Slack, "History of Ferrell Gardens," unpublished manuscript (Lecture to the Garden Club of America, April 1932, Troup County Archives) 2.

<sup>17</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). Rev. Eustace W. Speer served in the pulpit at LaGrange First Methodist Church from 1865-1867 (Forrest Clark Johnson, Where Your Treasure Is: A History of LaGrange First Methodist Church (LaGrange, GA: Sutherland-St. Dunston Press, 1996) 154).

<sup>18</sup> Ferrell Correspondence, Coleman Ferrell to wife Missouri Ferrell, Ferrell's Battery near Corinth, Mississippi, 6-20-1864 (J. Fairley McDonald collection, Montgomery, Alabama). Coleman was at the time stationed with his troops in Corinth, Mississippi near the close of the war.

<sup>19</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888).

Sarah was a landscape artist who manipulated the boxwood forms to showcase both light and shade.<sup>20</sup> Her garden was described as having good spatial proportion and being like outdoor rooms with their walls of green.<sup>21</sup> Her artistic landscape design skills were espoused on by her close friend, Professor Charles ‘Charlie’ Carson Cox:

... the work of Mrs. Ferrell in floral culture and landscaping was more than passive appreciation; it implies the constructive imagination, in creating and harmonizing beautiful forms. The artist expresses his idea and character in blending the colors on the canvas, in modulating musical tones, in projecting immortal verse, and so she has written herself in the stately, aristocratic cedar and cypress, in the graceful undulations of shrubbery, and in the modest loveliness of flowers.<sup>22</sup>

Sarah’s horticultural design skills were outspoken and she had definite vision when it came to her garden.

## **The Estate**

The main entrance to the Ferrell estate from present-day Vernon Road was through a grove of oak, pine, hickory, and sycamore trees (fig 2).<sup>23</sup> All trees and shrubs within this area were of native vegetation.<sup>24</sup> Included in this grove, near the entrance, were seven pine trees Blount planted in memorial to his friend,<sup>25</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Gustavus ‘Gus’ Adolphus Bull, who died on June 1, 1862 following the Battle of Seven Pines at Fair Oaks Station, Virginia.

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<sup>20</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>21</sup> C.K. Draper 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ridley 22 (Speech given by Charles C. Cox at Sarah Ferrell’s funeral service). Professor Cox headed Southern Female College in LaGrange and later Cox College in College Park outside of Atlanta, GA.

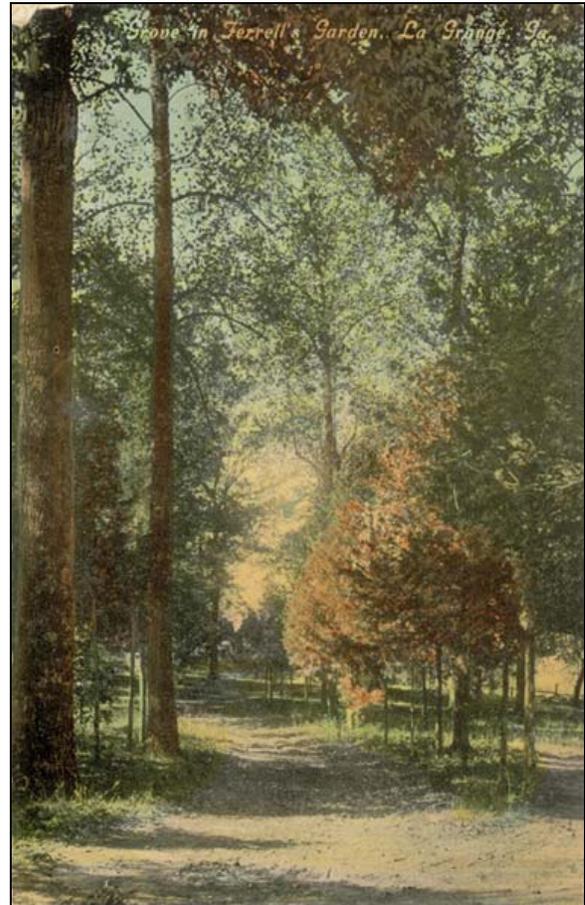
<sup>23</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888). Nep Cody, “Ferrell Gardens Described Vividly by Mrs. Michael Cody” (*The Montgomery Advertiser*, 1 Apr 1934) 16.

<sup>24</sup> W.B. Marquis, PJ Berckmans Co., Inc Landscape Architects Augusta, GA, “Report on the Improvement and Maintenance of the Property of Mr. Fuller E. Callaway, LaGrange, GA” (3 Jan 1916, Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers II/D/box 4/Ferrell Garden Scrapbook) 4.

<sup>25</sup> Some sources claim this as a memorial to his brother instead (Tunnell 44).

In 1911, a private in Bull's regiment noted that Judge F.M. Longley and others were considering erecting a monument in Bull's honor.<sup>27</sup> Long before this discussion, however, Judge Ferrell had planted the seven pines on his estate as his own personal memorial to his friend. (In the Victorian Era, it was common to plant trees to commemorate important events in a person's life).<sup>28</sup> Tulip poplar trees were planted in a semicircle around the grove of trees on the estate.<sup>29</sup> This was possibly another memorial that Blount planted as well.

This entry drive was likely made of a sandy clay surface like the minor roads on the property.<sup>30</sup> Lining the main drive from its connection on Vernon Road was an allée of red cedar trees leading to the house. The drives throughout the property had short connections and curves that were considered by a landscape architect in 1916 to be unnecessary and unpleasant in appearance. In addition, there was a lower drive running behind the formal gardens to



**Fig 2. Postcard of the grove.**<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, n.d.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards 6.

<sup>28</sup> Rudy J. Favretti and Joy P. Favretti, Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings: A Handbook for Reproducing and Creating Authentic Landscape Settings (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1978) 49.

<sup>29</sup> Cody 16. Mittie Holt Nicrosi, "A Garden of the Old South" (Junior League Magazine 1928) 46.

<sup>30</sup> Marquis 3. The Ferrell's entrance was more than 100 feet further east than the location of the present-day entry gates (Map of Drives at Hills and Dales. Estate of Fuller E. Callaway, LaGrange, GA, Cason J. Callaway Engineering Dept, LaGrange, GA, Line drawing 19 June 1929, Hills and Dales archive).

the south and connecting to the main drive.<sup>31</sup> Another very steep and straight road lined with trees led from the Ferrell's house northward down the terraces to the farm buildings across the valley.<sup>32</sup> Traces of this road, on the north side of the present-day house, can still be seen leading from the house down the steep terraces and over a little white bridge installed years later toward the area of the present-day visitor's center.

Part of this land was a working farm. Blount Ferrell had an orchard and two well stocked fish ponds on the north side of the house (fig 3).<sup>34</sup> In the winter, when the leaves were off of the trees, the African-American residences located on the hill across the valley could be seen from the Ferrell house.<sup>35</sup> Florida (Ferrell) Presley Reed wrote in Vesta that the fish ponds, 200 yards to the rear, were filled with carp and trout, and that fishing was one of the Judge's favorite hobbies.<sup>36</sup> In addition to the two fish ponds shown in the 1929 line drawing Map of Drives at Hills and Dales by Cason J. Callaway is a lagoon,



**Fig 3. Fish pond at the base of the terraces on the north side.<sup>33</sup>**

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<sup>31</sup> Marquis 3-5. The lower drive still exists and is used as a service road.

<sup>32</sup> Marquis 5. Map of Drives at Hills and Dales line drawing 1929, J. Leon Hoffman Plan of Hills and Dales (Dec 1936, Hills and Dales archive). Numerous aerial photographs also show this road lined with trees.

<sup>33</sup> Photo credit: Troup County Archives (n.d. before mid 1930's).

<sup>34</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). LaGrange Reporter 7-21-1881. Map of Drives at Hills and Dales line drawing 1929. J. Leon Hoffman, "General specifications to accompany plans for Hills and Dales Estate of Mr. and Mrs. Fuller E. Callaway, Jr., LaGrange, Georgia" (manuscript, 1937, Hills and Dales archive) 8.

<sup>35</sup> Marquis 5.

<sup>36</sup> Reed 36-37.

further west of the fish ponds. Although now drained, the basins of the lagoon as well as the fish ponds are still evident in the topography and the soil consistency.

### **The Vegetable Garden**

Sarah, while known for having beautiful flower gardens also had a vegetable garden which produced especially fine produce.<sup>37</sup> In 1870, Sarah grew a rather curious cabbage stalk that had “seven perfectly formed heads” on it. She presented this to the *LaGrange Reporter* office that in turn challenged anyone else with a cabbage like that to submit it as well.<sup>38</sup> Horticultural oddities involving giant or deformed vegetables were newsworthy items like the ‘Giant Asparagus’ in *The Illustrated London News* in 1851 that showed 12 asparagus heads fused together and the ‘Monstrous broccoli’ with six heads published in *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* of 1856.<sup>39</sup>

The 1913 survey of the Ferrell house just before it was razed shows a section outside of the formal gardens, labeled “garden.” It is likely that this was the vegetable garden as the formal gardens were not labeled the same. The vegetable garden was located north of the Church garden and west of the house. The western boundary of this garden likely extended further by the way it was represented on the line drawing.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 7-15-1870.

<sup>38</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 8-19-1870.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Carter, *The Victorian Garden* (London: Bracken Books, 1988) 26, 36.

<sup>40</sup> *Home and Garden Section* blueprint 1913.

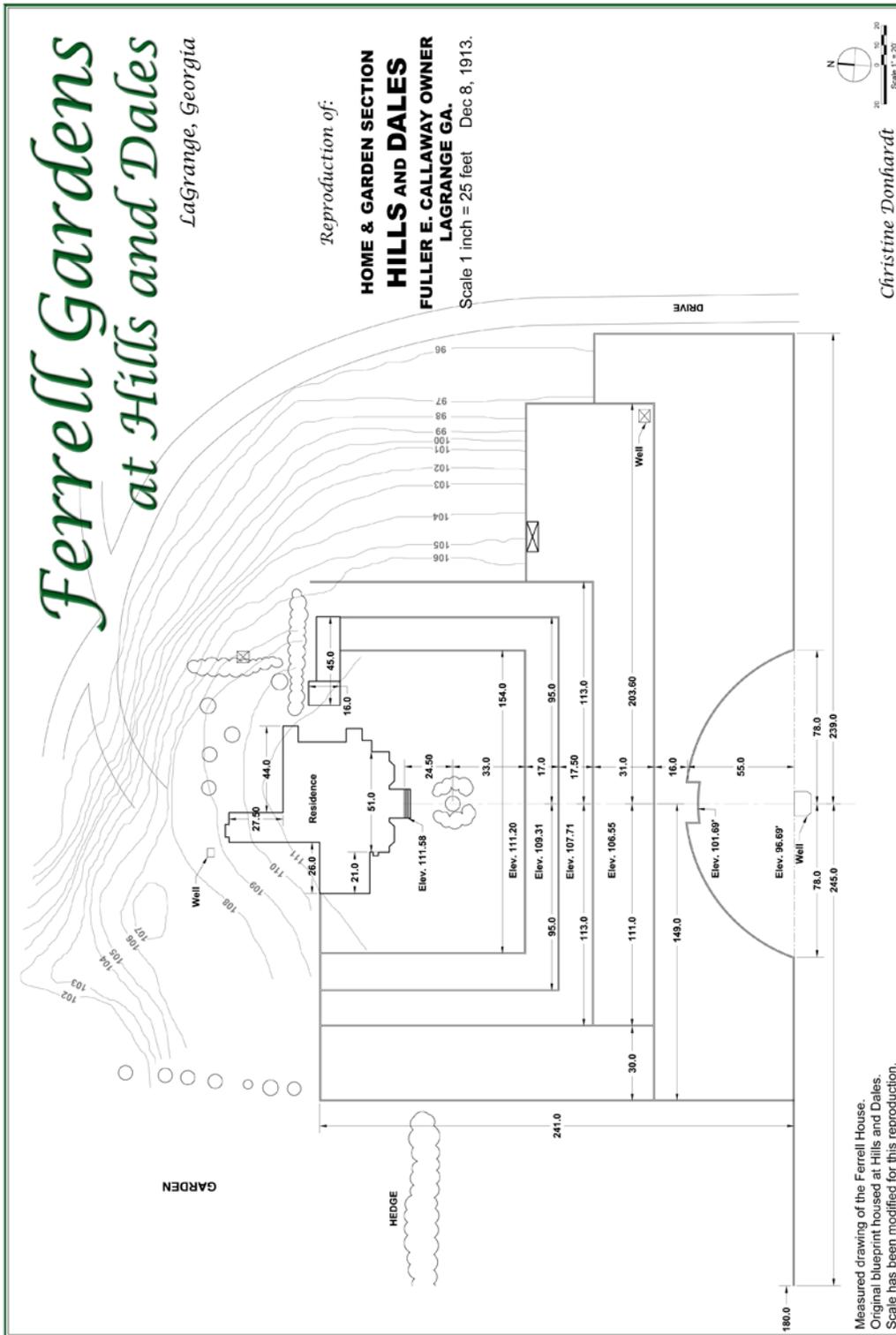


Fig 4. 1913 survey of Ferrell house and garden.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Reproduction of Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913. Reproduction drawing by Christine Donhardt.

## The Formal Gardens

Sarah Ferrell's formal boxwood garden comprised approximately 2.3 acres of terraced land.<sup>43</sup> It was planted next to the south façade of the Ferrell house, giving direct access to the gardens from the house. The

Upper Terrace is rectangular in shape with terraces descending from each of the three sides. The five terraces mentioned in the 1888 article were from top to bottom the Sentinel Avenue, Bower Avenue, Labyrinth Avenue, Magnolia Avenue, and the Valley. These



**Fig 5. Postcard of Ferrell Gardens.**<sup>42</sup>

same descriptions appear nearly word-for-word in Florida (Ferrell) Presley Reed's Vesta as she borrowed from this article. The name "upper terrace" in reference to Sarah's garden is mentioned in Vesta as well.<sup>44</sup> It is presumed that these are the names Sarah used when referring to the spaces within her garden (fig 5).

The lowest terrace, the Valley, sits approximately 14.9 feet in elevation below the Upper Terrace and falls over a distance of 194 feet.<sup>45</sup> The low retaining walls that hold the shape of the terraces were made of a rough fieldstone and are still extant (fig 6).<sup>46</sup> Numerous wells,

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<sup>42</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, n.d.

<sup>43</sup> Based on measurements of the formal garden from Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>44</sup> Reed 8, 157.

<sup>45</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>46</sup> Marquis 3.

wellhouses, summerhouses, greenhouses, and cold frames existed within the formal garden; however, there were no fountains or statues in Sarah’s garden.<sup>47</sup>



**Fig 6. Southern most retaining wall paralleling the present-day service drive.<sup>48</sup>**

A guidebook to LaGrange in 1881 boasts that the splendor of Ferrell Gardens is in its design and construction. Sarah used the boxwood in such a fashion, with foliage so dense and edges so sharp that that it looked as if it were solid material. She formed “stately columns, grand arches, comfortable chairs, elegant baskets” all out of boxwood.<sup>50</sup> The attraction was also in the variety of flowers that Sarah grew.<sup>51</sup>

The public entered the formal garden via a pedestrian path leading from the drive on present-



**Fig 7. Public entrance.<sup>49</sup>**

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<sup>47</sup> Descriptive Lagrange (LaGrange, GA: Printed at the LaGrange Reporter Job Office, 1881) 6.

<sup>48</sup> Picture taken by Christine Donhardt, 2006. Note the various size stones and the large ginkgo tree.

<sup>49</sup> Picture taken by Christine Donhardt, 2006. View to the east toward the drive.

<sup>50</sup> Descriptive Lagrange 6.

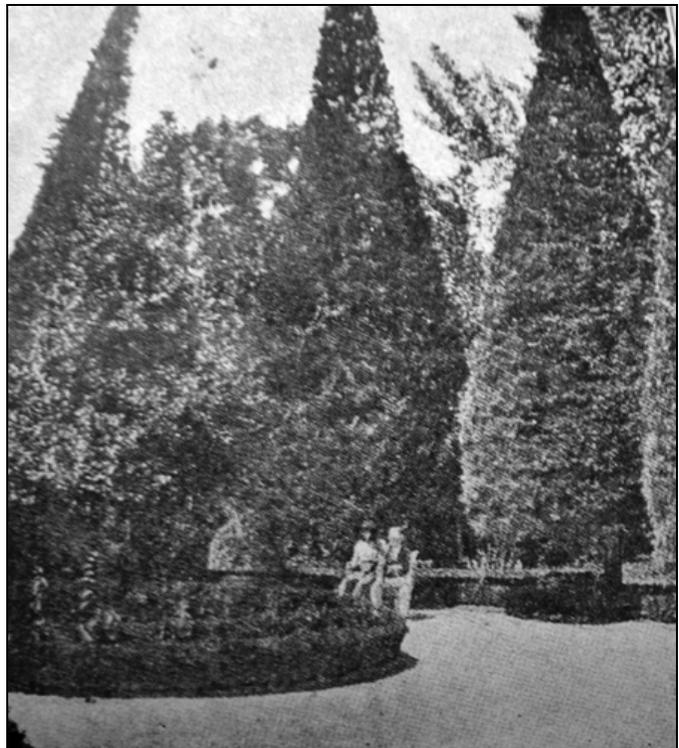
<sup>51</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

day Vernon Road up an incline to the garden. Both sides of the path were lined with boxwood as it is today (fig 7).<sup>52</sup> At the head of this path, was a gate that Sarah kept open for the public to enjoy her gardens.<sup>53</sup> Sarah's grandson, Fortune Chisholm Ferrell, who lived on the Ferrell property for 55 years, described the gate in a poem: "A lattice gate through garden wall / Stood wide to welcome one and all."<sup>54</sup> It is quite plausible, with the quantities of white lattice work on the house itself and the outbuildings that this gate was made of like material.

Much valuable information about the garden comes from a landscape management plan that Fuller E. Callaway commissioned in 1915 and created by W.B. Marquis in 1916, a landscape architect working for P.J. Berckmans Co., Inc. in Augusta, Georgia. Although most of what is mentioned are plants or objects that he felt should be removed or changed, this document does give facts about what the garden was like before any modifications were made to Sarah's design and plant materials.

### **Terrace A: The Upper Terrace**

The Ferrell house opened directly onto the Upper Terrace, the highest plateau of the gardens. This level was a



**Fig 8. "Front Circle" on the Upper Terrace.<sup>55</sup>**

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<sup>52</sup> Marquis 4.

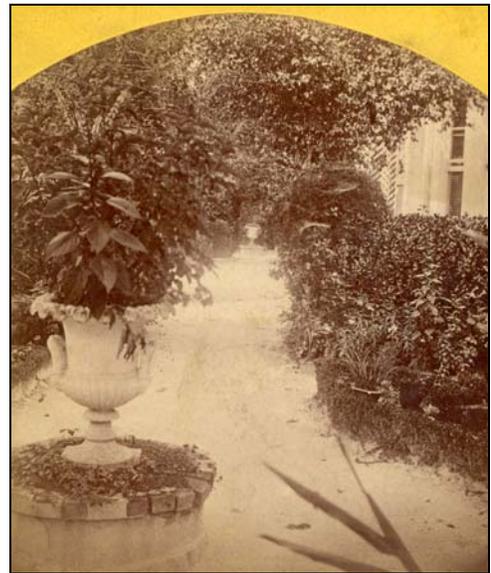
<sup>53</sup> Ridley 35 (tribute for Sarah Ferrell by SC Todd). Tunnell 47.

<sup>54</sup> Fortune Chisholm Ferrell, *My Grandmother's Garden and Other Poems* (Atlanta: Harper Printing Co, 1956) 1.

<sup>55</sup> Photo courtesy: Troup County Archives, as printed in *Southern Female Catalogue 1909-1910*. This picture was also printed in Ridley 15, labeled as "Front Circle." Picture pre-dates 1904.

rectangular area approximately 154 feet by 57.5 feet,<sup>56</sup> and in the center of this terrace was a large holly tree encircled by boxwood at the location of the present-day fountain.<sup>57</sup> The Ferrell house was set further south into the garden than the present-day house, it was only 24.5 feet from the top step of the porch to the center of the holly on the main axis.<sup>58</sup> In a concentric pattern emanating from the location of the holly tree, were two semi-circular shaped boxwood bordered beds and in each grew four evenly spaced cedar trees. These very tall cedar trees at one time were trimmed in a cone shape (fig 8). While the cedars are no longer there, the boxwood beds are still extant. Iron settees appear in several photographs at this location and are turned facing the holly. When Sarah’s husband was in Manhattan in 1860 on business, he likely bought her some “little cast iron settees” at that time.<sup>59</sup>

Within a few feet of the southern façade of the house, Sarah planted two additional sets of circular beds divided in half and edged with boxwood.<sup>61</sup> In these beds Sarah wrote mottos in boxwood, one for her stating “God is Love” and the other for her husband a judge and freemason “*Fiat Justitia*” and the Masonic symbol of the compass and square. Sarah had two planting vases sitting in the center of each of these circular boxwood mottos. The planting vases were atop short round planters also filled with soil and plants. These round



**Fig 9. Planters sitting amidst the boxwood mottos.<sup>60</sup>**

<sup>56</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>57</sup> Marquis 11.

<sup>58</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>59</sup> Ferrell Correspondence, Letter from Sarah Ferrell written to Blount C. Ferrell, Esq. Manhattan Hotel, NYC, 25 July 1860 (Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers MS-9/box 1/folder 1).

<sup>60</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

<sup>61</sup> Photo documentation, see figure 10.

planters, made of brick and likely covered with stucco, faced each other on opposite sides of the Upper Terrace (fig 9).

On this level were at least three varnish trees, one Carolina poplar, and a silver leafed poplar. On the eastern side of the terrace were yucca plants and on the western side was a large shittim tree.<sup>63</sup> In the northeast corner was a water oak, and in the southeast corner were located three magnolias, two of which are still extant. The boxwood under these magnolias was regular in shape, but edging on the southwestern side opposite this was irregular in design. Around the perimeter of this terrace were planted tree box with some crape myrtle in between.



**Fig 10. Postcard of circular beds on western side of Upper Terrace.**<sup>62</sup>

Two of the planting beds on this terrace had concrete edging, and wooden arbors were at the various entrances to the terrace (fig 10).<sup>64</sup> One arched arbor was on axis with the planting vases and another sat at the steps on the main axis leading down to the lower terraces.<sup>65</sup>

### **Terrace B: Sentinel Avenue**

Sentinel Avenue, the terrace below the Upper Terrace, was named by one of the pastors of First Baptist Church of LaGrange, Rev. Martin B. Hardin. He chose this name because it was

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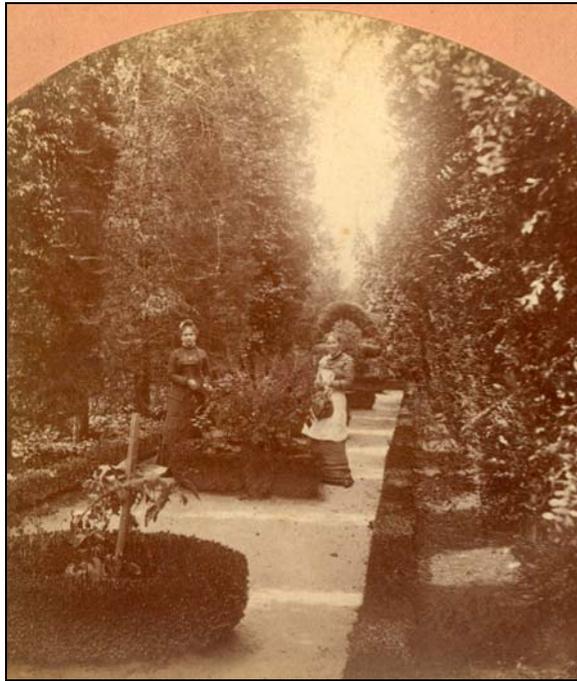
<sup>62</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, n.d. Picture taken facing southeast; notice the arbor on the main axis and the circular planting bed.

<sup>63</sup> Marquis 11. C.K. Draper 4.

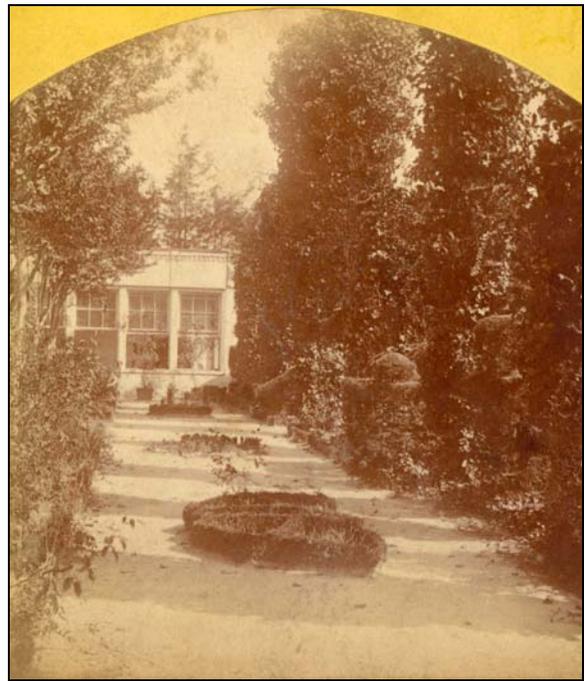
<sup>64</sup> Marquis 11-13.

<sup>65</sup> Photo documentation as found in Troup County Historical Society, Troup County in Vintage Postcards (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002) 119.

lined with tall, straight cedars that reminded him of sentinels (fig 11).<sup>66</sup> This second terrace is composed of three sections, a 190 foot path running east-west (section B-2) which then turns north toward the house on both the westside (section B-1) and the eastside (section B-3). At the northern ends of both B-1 and B-3 were greenhouses (fig 12).<sup>67</sup>



**Fig 11. A path on Sentinel Avenue.**<sup>68</sup>



**Fig 12. A Greenhouse in the garden.**<sup>69</sup>

Section B-2 is 17 feet wide<sup>70</sup> and had cedars and Carolina cherry trees along the edges as well as lantana and other herbaceous perennials and annuals. At the terminal ends of section B-2 were circular beds in the middle of the walk. These circular beds still exist, and the one on the eastern side is part of a series of religious symbols represented in the boxwood that occurs on section B-3. These boxwood symbols of a cross, butterfly, and circle are in the middle of the

<sup>66</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). Rev. Hardin was the pastor from 1871-1883 (Grady Fowler, One Hundred Fifty Years of History First Baptist Church LaGrange, GA 1828-1978 (Tallahassee: Rose Printing, 1978. 81).

<sup>67</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913. Photographic documentation, Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>68</sup> Photo courtesy Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

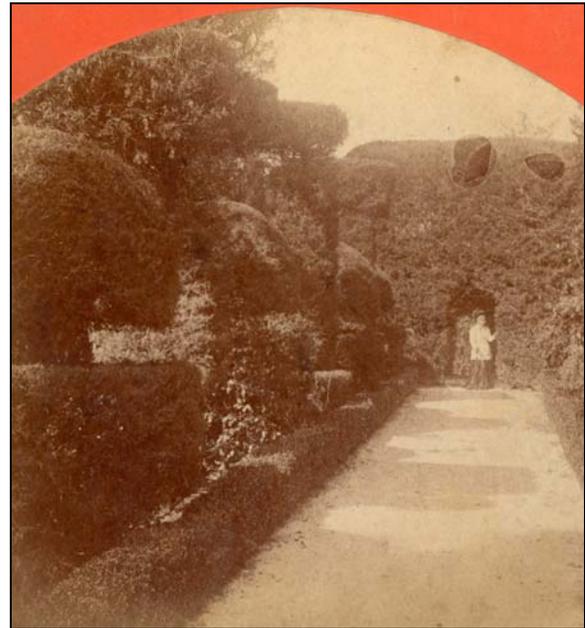
<sup>69</sup> Photo courtesy Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

<sup>70</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

path in this section. The same scheme existed in section B-1 with boxwood bordered flower beds in the middle of the path but these have since been removed.<sup>71</sup>

### **Terrace C: Bower Avenue**

This terrace is comprised of a 226 foot path running east-west (section C-2) that is 17.5 feet wide<sup>73</sup> and additional paths running north-south on the western side (section C-1) and the eastern side (section C-3). Bower Avenue, as it was called in Sarah's day (now termed Lover's Lane) was named because of the bowers at each end of section C-2 (fig 13). Rev. Eustace W. Speer, a minister at LaGrange First Methodist Church, used this quiet spot to write his



**Fig 13. Bower Avenue.**<sup>72</sup>

sermons;<sup>74</sup> however, many amorous couples used the bowers for courting instead. Many vows of love were spoken here<sup>75</sup> and numerous ladies from the women's colleges claimed that their grandparents or parents were engaged there in the gardens.<sup>76</sup>

The south side of section C-2 of this terrace was lined with tall red cedar trees, and a multitude of annuals and perennials were grown in the beds opposite the cedars (fig 14). The western end of this section had a large amur privet and yaupon holly. The east end of section C-

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<sup>71</sup> Marquis 11.

<sup>72</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

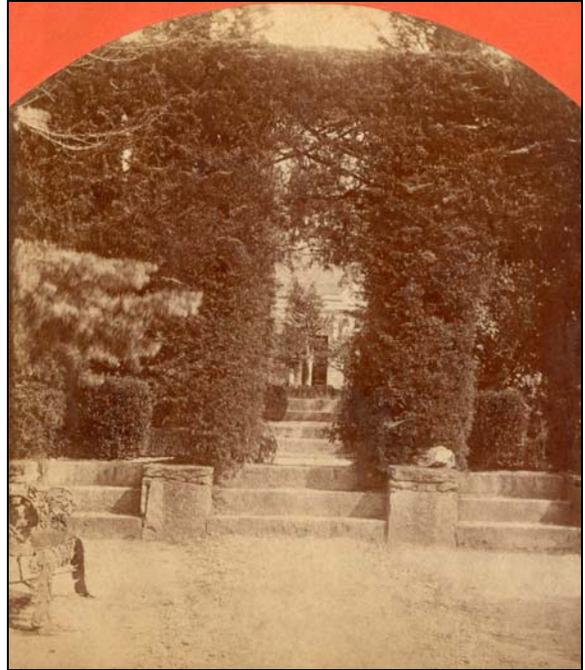
<sup>73</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>74</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888). Rev. Eustace W. Speer served in the pulpit at LaGrange First Methodist Church from 1865-1867 (Johnson 154).

<sup>75</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>76</sup> Callaway 98.

2 had a wisteria vine growing among the cedars, a Japanese euonymus growing within the boxwood, and yaupon holly were abundant. At both ends of this path, where the bowers were, cedar trees grew with tree box at their base. Section C-3 had an entrance to the garden, marked by a tall cedar tree. Boxwood trimmed into globe shapes were also on this terrace.<sup>77</sup>



**Fig 14. Row of red cedar trees lining Bower Avenue.<sup>78</sup>**

#### **Terrace D: Labyrinth Avenue**

Labyrinth Avenue had a winding and irregular walk, 314.6 feet long and 31 feet wide, with boxwood edging laid out in an irregular pattern.<sup>79</sup> On the east side of this level stood Sarah's greenhouse and cold frames.<sup>80</sup> The greenhouse was located about 15 feet to the east of the wall of the terrace above, and measured approximately 15 feet by six feet in dimension.<sup>81</sup> The structure was oriented east-west with the long side facing north. The wall on this terrace ended near the greenhouse and did not continue to join the wall of the higher terrace.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Marquis 9-10.

<sup>78</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image. Photo taken from Terrace D: Labyrinth Avenue looking north.

<sup>79</sup> T.J., "Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces" (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913. Marquis 9.

<sup>80</sup> Marquis 8.

<sup>81</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>82</sup> Marquis 8.

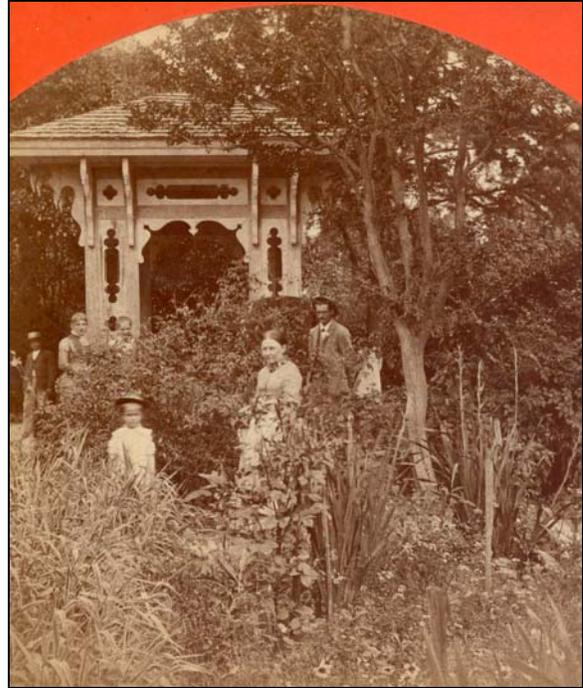
Also on the east end, was a well covered by a wellhouse in the Victorian style (fig 15). Near this was a cedar arbor that supported an elaeagnus vine with boxwood at its base. Gardenias grew at the base of the wall and a large magnolia tree stood with tree box growing underneath.<sup>84</sup>

On the west end of this terrace, iris grew within the boxwood beds and climbing roses were surrounded by honeysuckle and privet. A bay tree and a dogwood were also on this end. Standing next to a varnish tree grew an English laurel circled by boxwood.<sup>85</sup>

China fir and Japanese cryptomeria trees as well as rhododendrons were planted in beds on this terrace. The steps on the main axis that lead to the terrace above had four stone buttresses that are still in existence (fig 14).<sup>86</sup>

### **Terrace E: Magnolia Avenue**

The fifth terrace, Magnolia Avenue, is the longest terrace, spanning 388 feet.<sup>87</sup> Magnolia Avenue is directly accessed by the gate at the public entrance and is therefore the terrace where the community would enter. This avenue starts at the public entrance and terminates at the



**Fig 15. Sarah Ferrell in front of wellhouse on Labyrinth Avenue.<sup>83</sup>**

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<sup>83</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

<sup>84</sup> Marquis 9.

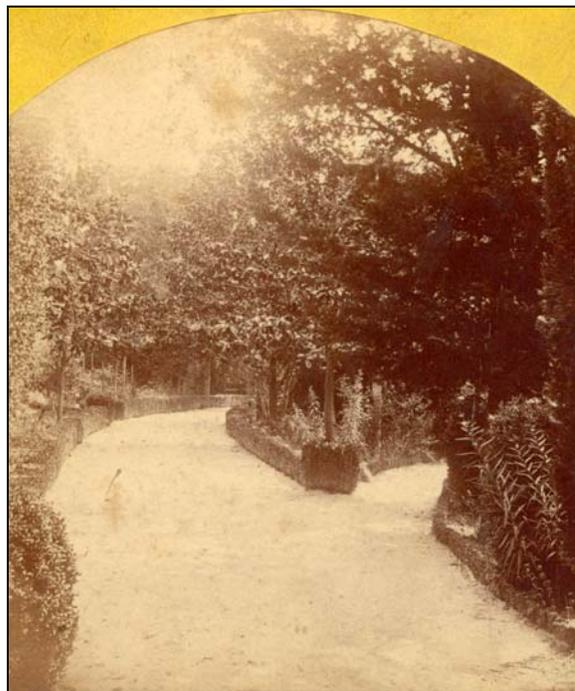
<sup>85</sup> Marquis 9.

<sup>86</sup> Marquis 9.

<sup>87</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

entrance to the Church garden. The grand magnolias now lining this walk were small trees in the oldest photographs (fig 16). Some of the trees were planted during the Civil War from seeds given to Sarah by Southern soldiers.<sup>88</sup>

On this level, on the east end, was a wisteria arbor bordered with violets. Also, growing along the wall on the eastern side were roses, honeysuckle, a cherry tree, and Oregon grape.<sup>90</sup> Bush roses were growing within the boxwood bordered beds on this side,<sup>91</sup> perhaps growing within the very wide boxwood shaped letters at the entrance that spelled the word ‘GOD.’



**Fig 16. Magnolia Avenue.**<sup>89</sup>

On the southwestern end of Magnolia Avenue, a ginkgo tree, now more than 100 years old, stands over boxwood representing a very large cluster of grapes. At the head of this grape symbol was an ivy-covered arbored seat.<sup>92</sup> Wisteria abounded in this section, climbing high into the magnolia trees.<sup>93</sup> Also here, north of the ginkgo was a circular bed and along the western edge of this terrace was a tall hedge of privet.<sup>94</sup>

Continuing from this point, running north up a few stone steps is what later became known as Florida Lane (section E-1). This was a rather open area 170 feet long and 38 feet

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<sup>88</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888).

<sup>89</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image. View to the east.

<sup>90</sup> Marquis 7-8.

<sup>91</sup> Marquis 7.

<sup>92</sup> Hoffman 7 (in the garden section).

<sup>93</sup> Photographic documentation in the collection of the Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>94</sup> Marquis 8. Circular bed is still extant.

wide.<sup>95</sup> On the western edge of section E-1 were Carolina cherry trees intermixed with deciduous vegetation and at least two varnish trees. Two red cedars marked the exit of the formal garden into what was likely part of Sarah's vegetable garden, now the herb garden and greenhouse area.<sup>96</sup>

### **Terrace F: The Valley**

The area Sarah called the Valley (now called the Sunken Garden) is the lowest terrace in the garden, approximately 14.5 feet lower in elevation than the Upper Terrace. It is a semi-circular space with a pair of gently curving steps leading along the edge of the stone wall down into the Valley with a drop in elevation of



**Fig 17. Linden tree at the top of the wall as seen from the Valley.<sup>97</sup>**

approximately five feet.<sup>98</sup> Directly in the center at the top of these steps was a large European linden tree (fig 17).<sup>99</sup> Also at the head of the steps, Sarah had a planter-vase sitting atop a six-sided pedestal (fig 18). Descending the steps, the north side followed the retaining wall and the south side was exposed with no handrail.<sup>100</sup> Behind this dry stone wall is a clay brick retaining wall that shows beautiful craftsmanship and was said to be made by slaves.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>96</sup> Marquis 8.

<sup>97</sup> Photo credit: Troup County Archives, n.d.

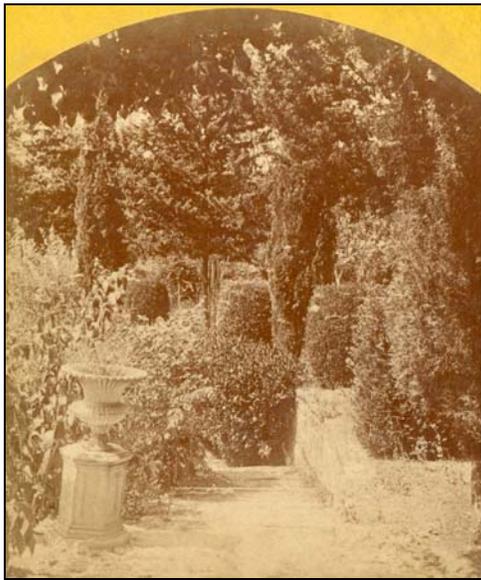
<sup>98</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>99</sup> Marquis 6, 13. The current axial view from the Valley toward the house to the north was not possible in Sarah's design because of the linden tree obstructed the view. This tree remained in existence until sometime after 1936 (J. Leon Hoffman Plan of Hills and Dales Dec 1936, Hills and Dales archive).

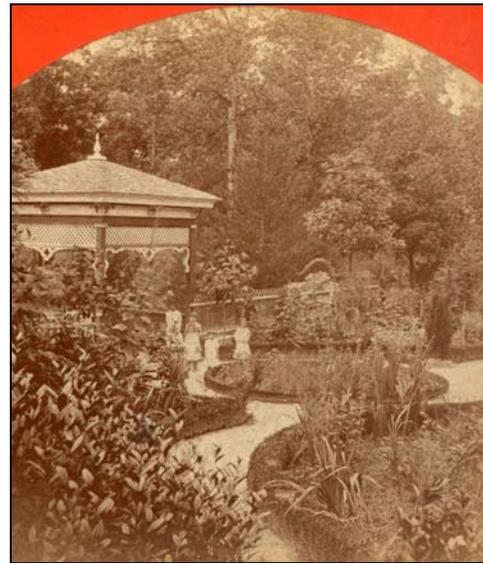
<sup>100</sup> Handrails were not installed until after 1962.

<sup>101</sup> Alice H. Callaway, Ferrell Gardens: A Growing History Troup County Archives and Kinekom video production, 1995.

The Valley was “a spot given over to flowers.”<sup>104</sup> In the center of this terrace was a circular bed bordered in boxwood, and coming out from the wall in a curvilinear shape was a flowerbed also bordered in boxwood. There were copious amounts of flowers in this terrace and in this bed, at the base of the retaining wall, gardenias were planted.<sup>105</sup> Also on this terrace was a relative of the Canadian hemlock, likely a Carolina hemlock, as well as a large China tea plant.<sup>106</sup>



**Fig 19. Steps leading down into the Valley.**<sup>103</sup>



**Fig 18. The Valley with summerhouse and well.**<sup>102</sup>

Along the south side of this terrace, running parallel to the current service driveway, there is an iron fence. The gates in this fence are on axis with the curved steps and lead to the driveway. At the south side of this terrace in the center, against the fence, was a

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<sup>102</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image. The chain used to lift the well-bucket can be seen hanging from the summerhouse.

<sup>103</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1879 or 1881 stereoscopic image.

<sup>104</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888).

<sup>105</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). Marquis 7.

<sup>106</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888).

summerhouse.<sup>107</sup> This summerhouse, perhaps nine feet in height, was in the Victorian style, with ornate gingerbread work and a finial at the apex (fig 19). A well existed under the structure as evident on the drawing of 1913.<sup>108</sup>

### **Terrace G: The Church**

The Church, as it was named by Sarah,<sup>110</sup> is an area west of the other terraces, comprising a square area of about 135 feet by 135 feet.<sup>111</sup> It was accessed from the terminus of Magnolia Avenue through a narrow passage of steps and under a wooden arbor, similar



**Fig 20. Octagonal wellhouse in Church garden.**<sup>109</sup>

to the arbor on the Upper Terrace. In this garden, on axis with the entrance from Magnolia Avenue, was an octagonal shaped wellhouse made of wooden slats with a tall spike at the apex (fig 20).<sup>112</sup> West of this structure was another boxwood symbol of a harp or lyre. Other symbols in this garden that Sarah planted in boxwood are an organ, mourner's benches, a pulpit and an offering plate.<sup>113</sup> The harp, mourner's benches, offering plate, and organ are still extant.

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<sup>107</sup> Marquis 6. Figure 19 shows the fence which is still extant, and the summerhouse which is the current location of a curved bench.

<sup>108</sup> Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913.

<sup>109</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>110</sup> Smith 188.

<sup>111</sup> E.S. Draper "The Gardens at Hills and Dales" (House Beautiful, May 1932) 416.

<sup>112</sup> Marquis 13 notes the presence of a well and wellhouse. Photographs document its shape. On the spot where the wellhouse was, a gazing globe and later an armillary were placed.

<sup>113</sup> Loraine Meeks Cooney, et al, Garden History of Georgia, 1733-1933 (Atlanta, GA: Garden Club of Georgia, 1976) 94-95. Callaway 99-100.

The wellhouse and wellhead were removed from their original location and were replaced with a gazing globe and later an armillary. Currently, a stone wellhead sits further west in the garden on axis with the entrance and surrounded by vestiges of old cedar trees planted by Sarah. There are no known photographs of the west section of this garden from Sarah's time and therefore it cannot be determined if this was an original feature. The odd configuration of the stone edging around the octagonal wellhouse, the only edging appearing in photographs of the period, is replicated at the foundation of the western well. It is unclear if the wellhead and stone edging were later moved to the western location or if there were in fact two wells in this garden, but Marquis does not mention a second well in the Church garden in his landscape report of 1916.

In 1916, this section of the garden was more open than any of the other terraces. On the south side of this area Sarah planted a China fir tree which has



**Fig 21. China fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*).**<sup>114</sup>

become quite large. Other plants Sarah grew in the Church garden were wisteria, yucca, amur privet, Japanese privet, bush roses, and rose acacias all bordered in boxwood.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

Sarah Ferrell was a landscape designer with artistic and horticultural skills, working with her garden for more than 60 years. She designed and laid out her boxwood gardens over time in

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<sup>114</sup> Picture taken by Christine Donhardt, 2006. Photo taken in the Church garden.

<sup>115</sup> Marquis 13. The large *Cryptomeria japonica* tree currently in this garden was not planted until after the 1930s.

a series of graduated terraces. These defined sections of garden rooms and avenues likely evolved from the highest terrace to the lowest.

Each terrace had a unique design and plan. Terrace A, the Upper Terrace, was rectangular in plan, but the space was divided by tall cedar trees forming a circular garden room. To the sides of it were Sarah's mottos in circular beds. Terraces B and C were linear paths that wrapped around three sides of the higher terrace, providing peaceful and meditative reprieves. Terrace D, Labyrinth Avenue, had irregular beds, a multitude of trees, cold frames, and a greenhouse. The path of the longest terrace, Terrace E (Magnolia Avenue), was a gentle arching curve and was lined with magnolia trees. Terrace F, the Valley, was the lowest terrace and consisted of a semi-circular shape in plan with curved stairs on each side. The Church garden, Terrace G, was square in shape and was accessible from Magnolia Avenue. Sarah's labor in this garden produced not only expressions of color and form over the 2.3 acres of formal garden, but also unique shapes representing religious sentiment.

### **Chapter 3: Symbols and Symbolism at Ferrell Gardens**

*Symbolism is the key to all mysteries ... Without an understanding of the meaning of symbols, one will never appreciate the beauty of life, or understand what his own religion is trying to teach him. But as the knowledge of the meaning of symbols comes to him, he becomes more and more a free man...*<sup>1</sup>

The most distinguishing feature of Ferrell Gardens is the boxwood symbols that were designed by Sarah Ferrell. The unique character of religious symbolism has contributed to the lasting and perpetual care of this garden. These symbols have inspired poems, plays, and a novel, and helped influence Fuller E. Callaway to purchase the land after Sarah's death. The religious expressions carved out of boxwood and found in the other plant materials set this garden apart from her contemporaries.

A small number of Southern gardens are noted for utilizing symbols within their boxwood. Mount Vernon, George Washington's estate in Virginia, is an excellent example of a tidewater plantation home that also fits into an even more narrow landscape category – a landscape with symbols formed out of boxwood. Washington's interest in Freemasonry inspired his landscape. In boxwood, Washington designed symbols representing Masonic concepts: two bare feet designs (representing an oblique angle), a broken triangle and pendant (representing faithfulness and regret), open and solid circles and squares (representing infinite expansion, the world, an apron, and salt), and open grave designs (representing resurrection and humility). He also had square planting beds symbolizing the Knights Templar Cross and circular beds

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<sup>1</sup> John L. Travis, "Symbolism of Freemasonry" Leaves from Georgia Masonry (Atlanta: Educational and Historical Commission of the Grand Lodge of GA, F. & A.M., 1946) 9.

symbolizing 90 degrees.<sup>2</sup> Other symbols included “hearts, moons, lozenges, and double circles.”<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Latrobe noted in his journal after a visit to Mount Vernon that Washington’s flower garden had been “boxed with great precision.”<sup>4</sup>

In Sarah’s boxwood garden, the prevalent use of symbols, instead of basic geometric patterns, aligns it more with Mount Vernon than other estates. In addition, Sarah’s use of religious symbols in her boxwood adds an additional layer of uniqueness, as this type of expression is very rare. Furthermore, evidence suggests that Sarah’s boxwood symbols were not directly evident to the casual observer despite some symbols being nearly 20 feet across.

Symbols have been used throughout history to express religious meaning. The purpose of symbols is to communicate beyond the written word. This is prevalent in nearly all religions including Christianity. Sarah’s motivation for creating the religious symbols in her garden is clearly a product of her pious approach to life and her evangelical nature. She strove to bring “glory to God” through the way she manipulated boxwood into words and symbols.<sup>5</sup> The garden as a whole and the task of gardening in and of itself was to Sarah a religious act likened to that in Genesis where a garden was created for man to tend.<sup>6</sup> She wrote to a friend, saying “Still I would pray that my employment in Heaven would be ‘to tend and water from the ambrosial fount the flowers that never would in other climates grow.’”<sup>7</sup> Gardening was another way of

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<sup>2</sup> Edith Tunis Sale and James River Garden Club, Historic Gardens of Virginia (Richmond, VA: William Byrd Press, 1930) 194-195. The Rite of Disalceation, or taking off of the shoes, is used in Masonic ceremonies (Albert Gallatin Mackey, et al. An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences: Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature As Connected with the Institution (Chicago: Masonic History Co, 1921) 214).

<sup>3</sup> Sale 193.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Henry Latrobe, The Journal of Latrobe. Being the Notes and Sketches of an Architect, Naturalist and Traveler in the United States from 1796 to 1820 (New York: D. Appleton, 1905) 52.

<sup>5</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888).

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 2:15.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Frank M. Ridley, In Memory of Sarah Coleman Ferrell (Atlanta: Ward and Darrington, printers, 1904, Troup County Archives) 21-22 (letter from Sarah Ferrell to Professor Charles C. Cox 1-10-1901 as read by Cox at her funeral service). Sarah references John Milton’s Paradise Lost Book 11.

expressing her devotion to God and to reveal to others through her mottos in boxwood that “God is Love.”<sup>8</sup>

Ferrell Gardens was “educative.”<sup>9</sup> To see the symbols in the garden, which were sometimes not readily apparent, the observer had to study the forms carefully. If the observer took the time to look for and consider the symbols and their meaning, a fuller experience could be obtained. Perhaps Sarah, being a proponent of education, felt that the journey to the meaning of the symbols and consequently the deeper enrichment of the observer was important. In contrast, if the symbol and its meaning were blatantly revealed, the observer would not experience this journey and not be as enriched.

### **Terrace A: Upper Terrace**

Within a few feet of the southern façade of the house, Sarah planted two sets of circular beds divided in half and edged with boxwood.<sup>10</sup> These semi-circles were likened to “out-stretched arms.”<sup>11</sup> The connection between out-stretched arms and semi-circular shapes in architecture can be found in Bernini’s design of the colonnades at St. Peter’s Square, Vatican where they are symbolic of the welcoming arms of the Catholic Church.

In the eastern pair are the words in boxwood “God is Love,” the motto Sarah planted for herself (fig 1). In the reflection are the words “*Fiat Justitia*,” Latin for ‘let justice be done’ as well as the Masonic symbol of the square and compass – a tribute to her husband who was a

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<sup>8</sup> Ridley 35 (tribute for Sarah Ferrell by SC Todd).

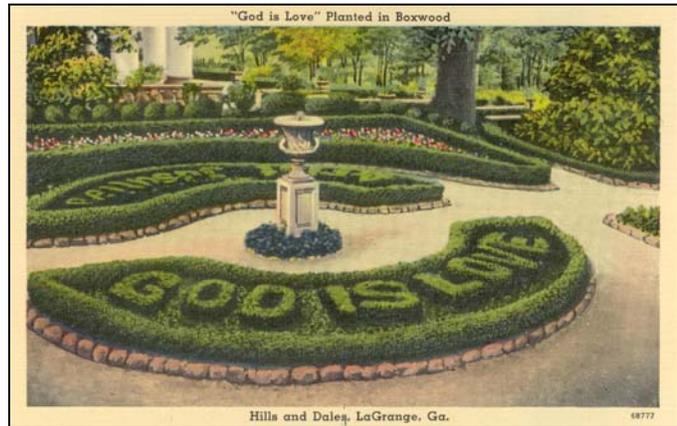
<sup>9</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>10</sup> Photo documentation from Fuller E. Callaway Foundation shows the western set of beds.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Robinson Myrick, “Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell’s [sic] Terraces” *Garden Gateways* (The Garden Club of Georgia Vol. 20, Feb 1951). Information for the article obtained from Retta Fannin Coney.

judge and a Freemason.<sup>12</sup> From documented photographs, it appears the other pair of semi-circular beds Sarah planted on the western side did not contain any words. Additional religious mottos were added to these beds in the years after Sarah's death by the Callaway family.

This was not the first time in history words were spelled out in boxwood. In describing his own Villa in Tuscany, Pliny the Younger wrote that the boxwood is cut into shapes as well as letters that spell out his name and that of his gardener.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps Sarah studied this description while in school and applied it to her garden.



**Fig 1. God is Love postcard.**<sup>13</sup>

### **Terrace B: Sentinel Avenue**

On the eastern section of this terrace (section B-3), Sarah planted symbols in boxwood: a cross, a butterfly, and a circle (fig 2). She explained the meaning of these symbols to Fuller Callaway when he was a child. He in turn shared their meaning with others throughout his life, saying: “The Cross, the instrument of our redemption by Jesus Christ, to be taken up daily and

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<sup>12</sup> Ida Callaway, “Memories of Fuller Earle Callaway, Sr. of LaGrange, GA” (unpublished manuscript, 1929, Hills and Dales Archives) 104. “A Little of the History of Ferrell Gardens” (ephemera likely written by Alice Callaway) n.d. Troup County Archives.

<sup>13</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1930.

<sup>14</sup> Pliny and P.G. Walsh, Complete Letters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 117.

borne by the one who would be the Lord's disciple; the circle, a symbol of the complete or well rounded life; the butterfly, a symbol of the life to which there is no end."<sup>15</sup>

This paints a beautiful picture of the Christian journey. The cross has long been an all encompassing symbol of Christianity, referring to the object on which Jesus was crucified. The circle represents perfection, completeness, and eternity.<sup>17</sup> It is without beginning and without end, similar to the view of God in Christianity. The butterfly is a symbol of the soul, immortality, transformation, and rebirth.<sup>18</sup> The metamorphosis of the life cycle of the butterfly can be transferred to the Christian concept of being born into a



**Fig 2. Cross, Butterfly, Circle.**<sup>16</sup>

'new body' in Christ. The concept of wings and flying away refers to the soul leaving the body after death and 'flying' to a new life. The western section of this terrace (section B-1) had similar flower beds in the center of the path, but they are no longer extant.

### **Terrace E: Magnolia Avenue**

On the eastern side of Magnolia Avenue, the first expression of religious fervor greeting visitors is "GOD" written in the dwarf boxwood just inside the gate (fig 3). The public entrance opens into this space and therefore "GOD" is literally "in the beginning" as stated in Genesis

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth Bradfield Slack, "History of Ferrell Gardens" unpublished manuscript (Lecture to the Garden Club of America, April 1932. Troup County Archives) 2. An additional interpretation: "if we bear our cross bravely our lives will be perfect as the circle, and some day we will have wings" (C.K. Draper "Ferrell Gardens" 6).

<sup>16</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2006. Picture taken facing south on Terrace B-3. A tree is growing within the circle symbol.

<sup>17</sup> Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962) 45.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew T. Cummings, *All About Symbols* (Hod Hasharon, Israel: Astrolog Pub. House Ltd, 2003) 51. Cirlot 33-34.

1:1.<sup>19</sup> This was obviously a deliberate design decision on Sarah’s part. The boxwood is only a few inches tall, but more than a few feet wide. Previously, it has been thought that this word was clearly visible to visitors just as it is clear from aerial photographs of today. In 1888, however, a writer who interviewed Sarah wrote, “near the gate ... is a word that very few persons have ever noticed. It is the word ‘GOD,’ in large letters.”<sup>20</sup> It is surprising that something so large and deliberate would rarely be noticed. It is possible that Sarah disguised this now blatant message in such a way as to escape the notice of the casual



**Fig 3. “GOD” in the beginning of the garden.<sup>23</sup>**

observer. This boxwood parterre was dedicated exclusively for growing flowers.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the bush roses growing within the boxwood on this end were within these letters.<sup>22</sup> If this symbol contained masses of blooming flowers, the defining edges would be indistinct. The seeker who was aware enough to discover this symbol would have a greater appreciation for its message than if it were directly revealed.

On this avenue is also the symbol of a chain and locket (fig 4). This symbol was not stated in the literature until 1937 when Alice Callaway wrote the word “locket” on the cover of

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<sup>19</sup> Slack 3.

<sup>20</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888).

<sup>21</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (*LaGrange Reporter* 28 May 1888).

<sup>22</sup> W.B. Marquis of P.J. Berckmans Co., Inc Landscape Architects Augusta, GA “Report on the Improvement and Maintenance of the Property of Mr. Fuller E. Callaway, LaGrange, GA” (3 Jan 1916, Troup County Archives/Callaway Family Papers II/D/box 4/Ferrell Garden Scrapbook) 7.

<sup>23</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2006.

her landscape management report.<sup>24</sup> In an article in 1948, a “necklace and a locket”<sup>25</sup> in boxwood is mentioned, and a pamphlet about the gardens, likely written by Alice Callaway, mentions the “chain and locket” symbol.<sup>26</sup> This boxwood design is on the east side of Magnolia Avenue, west of ‘GOD.’

The chain and locket could have held a completely different meaning, one that was neither Masonic nor religious. Sarah’s first born child and only daughter Napoleana (Ferrell) Moses, died in 1863 shortly after giving birth. The character in Vesta who represented Napoleana had a hidden necklace that she



**Fig 4. Chain and locket.**<sup>27</sup>

treasured and gave to her betrothed. While this reference appears in the second half of the novel, where the story deviates from what correlates to family history, it is possible this symbol was planted in commemoration of some event or item that was treasured. When her youngest son, Pal Ernest Ferrell died from malarial fever during the Civil War,<sup>28</sup> Sarah may have planted a memorial to him, like Blount Ferrell had planted the seven pines to memorialize Colonel Bull.

One source mentions a puzzle in Sarah’s garden located near the word ‘GOD.’ Children would entertain themselves in figuring how to get to a nearby summerhouse without stepping over the boxwood in the puzzle.<sup>29</sup> The puzzle, later called a maze, is a symbol of life’s

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<sup>24</sup> This symbol location was identified by Dee Smith, former Director of Horticulture at the Hills and Dales Estate. J. Leon Hoffman, “General specifications to accompany plans for Hills and Dales Estate of Mr. and Mrs. Fuller E. Callaway, Jr., LaGrange, Georgia” (manuscript, 1937, Hills and Dales archive) cover.

<sup>25</sup> Wylly Folk St. John, “Five Acres of Heaven” Atlanta Journal Magazine (20 June 1948) 12.

<sup>26</sup> “A Little of the History of Ferrell Gardens.”

<sup>27</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2005. Picture taken facing the east on Magnolia Avenue.

<sup>28</sup> Ridley 9.

<sup>29</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888).

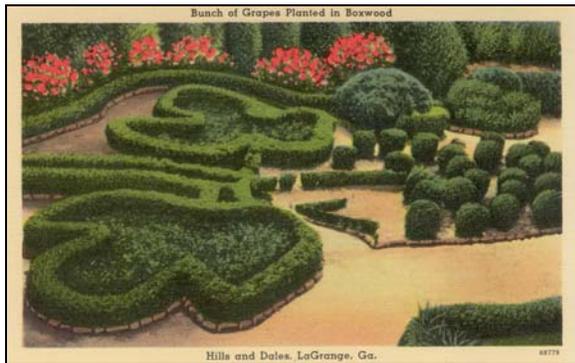
journey.<sup>30</sup> Pope Callaway, brother to Fuller E. Callaway, Sr. (a later owner of Ferrell Gardens), was once in the maze and found he could not navigate himself out of it. The boxwood had to be cut for his rescue and the maze was removed.<sup>31</sup> It is very likely that a portion of the boxwood chain which is no longer extant was what people referred to as the maze because of its winding nature.

Boxwood representing a very large cluster of grapes is planted on the western end of Magnolia Avenue under a giant ginkgo tree (fig 5 and 6). Globe-



**Fig 5. Gardeners tending the cluster of grapes symbol.**<sup>32</sup>

shaped boxwood form the grapes and boxwood clipped in a winding pattern represent the tendrils and leaves. This symbol is derived from the passage in the Bible telling of the spies who



**Fig 6. Postcard of the cluster of grapes.**<sup>33</sup>

went into the land of Canaan and brought back a bunch of grapes so large it had to be carried on a pole by two men.<sup>34</sup> There are additional symbolic meanings attached to grapes including fertility and sacrifice.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cummings 205.

<sup>31</sup> Oral tradition from Hills and Dales Estate.

<sup>32</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, n.d.

<sup>33</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation, 1930.

<sup>34</sup> Numbers 13:23. Slack 3.

<sup>35</sup> Cirlot 116.

## Terrace G: The Church

The Church garden Sarah designed is relatively square in proportion. Perhaps this was inspired from the account in I Kings where the sacred inner room of King Solomon's temple was built perfectly square.<sup>36</sup> Slack described the Church garden as having been "set apart in a sacred way."<sup>37</sup> It was not only sacred because of its religious symbols and proportions, but also by being separated from the rest of the garden.

The gardens themselves were oriented east-west. This positioning is logical for maximizing the amount of daylight on the garden, but it is also reminiscent of the Greek and Roman temples and Christian churches traditionally positioned in the same manner. Sarah had in effect built a holy place out of plants as a tribute to God.

The boxwood symbol of the harp or lyre is oriented east-west, and is approximately 15 feet long. A lyre represents harmony and reconciliation and is thought of as a connection between earth and heaven.<sup>39</sup> Sarah might have had that in mind, or perhaps was thinking about the Biblical account of David playing the harp to soothe King Saul when he was afflicted by spirits.<sup>40</sup> The harp was frequently mentioned in the Bible as an instrument of praise to God.<sup>41</sup>



**Fig 7. Wellhouse and harp design.**<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> I Kings 6:20

<sup>37</sup> Slack 2.

<sup>38</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation. Pictured is Cindy Cameron, n.d. approx 1920s.

<sup>39</sup> Cummings 207. Cirlot 133.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Samuel 16:23.

<sup>41</sup> Psalms 33:2.

The harp, like the word ‘GOD,’ was hidden in plain sight. While the later photographs of the harp in front of the wellhouse show a clear outline of the symbol (fig 7), in earlier photographs it is not as easily discernable (fig 8). Sarah’s harp was fashioned out of boxwood and blooming flowers.<sup>43</sup> As with the word ‘GOD,’



**Fig 8. Wellhouse and harp design.**<sup>42</sup>

having this profusion of flowers and shrubs inside of the shape distracts the eye from noticing the larger picture while the scale of the symbol further obscures it.

A circular bed, like others throughout the garden, was also found in the southeast side of the Church garden (fig 9). This symbol, approximately six feet in diameter, was first documented as a collection plate by Ida Callaway in 1929.<sup>45</sup> This symbol represents an object used in religious services to collect the offerings given to God.



**Fig 9. Collection plate and organ topiary.**<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>43</sup> Smith 188. Only later was alternanthera used to represent the strings of the harp.

<sup>44</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation. Offering plate is in foreground, organ topiary is in back as the block-like item, n.d. approx 1920s.

<sup>45</sup> Callaway 100.

<sup>46</sup> Marquis 14.

The other boxwood symbols existing in the Church garden were designed as topiary. Planted in boxwood was a life-size organ in the northeast section (fig 9), mourners' benches on the south side facing north (fig 10), chairs, and a pulpit in one of the corners.<sup>48</sup> The organ and mourners' benches, as well as the harp and collection plate still exist.



**Fig 10. A mourner's bench.**<sup>47</sup>

The remaining symbol in the Church garden, on the western side, is a symbol that could represent a waterway (fig 11). This symbol is not mentioned in literature pertaining to this garden until E.S. Draper's 1932 article in *House Beautiful*. He did not consider the image of the waterway as being religious at all, but instead proof that an itinerate Italian gardener worked on the property.<sup>49</sup> Draper did not state the source for his reasoning and passed it on as an unquestioned fact and now it appears in literature as such. Even though Howett states in "A Southern Lady's Legacy" that the notion of the itinerant Italian gardener is purely speculation, she does consider the boxwood object to be a cascade patterned after the ones at Villa Torlonia and Villa Lante.<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to note that a niece of Sarah's told of the Ferrells having Irish servants in the house and a landscape gardener from Ireland who was hired to help carry out Sarah's designs and maintain the garden.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2007, located on south side of the Church garden.

<sup>48</sup> Smith 188. Loraine Meeks Cooney, et al, *Garden History of Georgia, 1733-1933* (Atlanta, GA: Garden Club of Georgia, 1976) 94-95. Slack 2. Callaway 99. E.S. Draper "The Gardens at Hills and Dales" (*House Beautiful*, May 1932) 416.

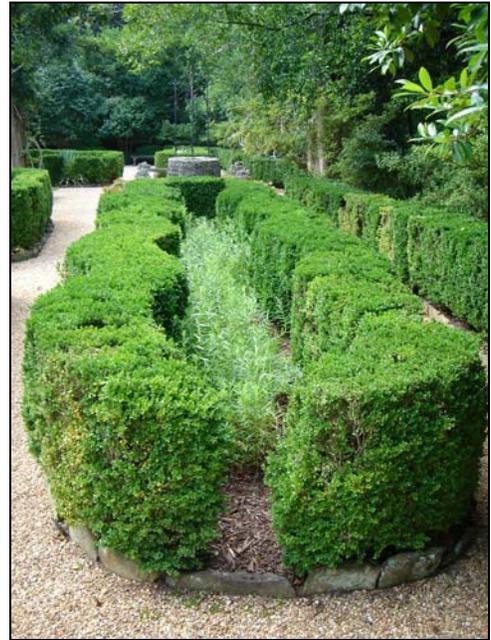
<sup>49</sup> E.S. Draper "The Gardens at Hills and Dales" 373, 416.

<sup>50</sup> Catherine Howett, "A Southern Lady's Legacy: the Italian 'Terraces' of LaGrange, Georgia" *Journal of Garden History* (Oct-Dec 1982) 353, 356.

<sup>51</sup> Myrick "Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell's [sic] Terraces."

This symbol has raised much speculation, but it is not difficult to imagine this wavy boxwood as a representation of the River Jordan, the site of Jesus' baptism; the parting of the Red Sea, one of the miracles of God; the river that flowed through the Garden of Eden; or even the life-giving waters of the New Testament.<sup>53</sup> In reflection to this symbol to the south is one of a similar size and shape but it is never discussed in the literature and is nearly impossible to discern. This could be a lost symbol, one that was not identified and therefore the shape not maintained.

Another symbol, the cloverleaf, is mentioned in a pamphlet likely written by Alice Callaway.<sup>54</sup> It is not clear where this symbol was in the garden; however, the cloverleaf is a symbol of the trinity.<sup>55</sup>



**Fig 11. Waterway symbol.**<sup>52</sup>

## **Plant Materials**

Throughout her garden, Sarah Ferrell not only used shapes in boxwood to represent religious ideas, but she used plant materials that held religious and cultural significance. Two themes are evident in the plant materials Sarah selected for her garden -- plants from around the world and plants of the Bible. These two themes overlap with a collection of plant material from the Holy Land.

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<sup>52</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2005. Located on western side of Church garden.

<sup>53</sup> Mark 1:9 (Baptism of Jesus), Exodus 14:21 (parting of the Red Sea), Genesis 2:10 (River in Eden), John 4:14 (life-giving water).

<sup>54</sup> "A Little of the History of Ferrell Gardens."

<sup>55</sup> Cirlot 48.

While a few sources boasted that the gardens had a “tree from every country in the world,”<sup>57</sup> it was more likely that Sarah collected representatives from each continent instead.

The article “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces,” listed numerous exotic plant materials growing in Sarah’s garden in 1888. Botanical names have been extrapolated from the common names listed. From Asia were the China tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*), hooded nun orchid (*Phaius tankervilleae*), photinia (*Photinia* sp.), banana shrub (*Michelia figo*), China fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*),<sup>58</sup> weeping arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* ‘Filiformis’), “Japan cedar” or Japanese



**Fig 12. Japanese cryptomeria (*Cryptomeria japonica*).**<sup>56</sup>

cryptomeria (*Cryptomeria japonica*) (fig 12), “Japan plum” or loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*), and the “varnish or umbrella tree” also called Chinese parasol or Japanese varnish tree (*Firmiana simplex*). From Africa came the spotted calla lily (*Zantedeschia albomaculata*), and from Australia “an Australian tree – the eleagnus” (*Elaeagnus triflora*). From Europe were the European linden (*Tilia* x. *europaea*) and the strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*). From the tropics and South America were palms, ferns, and fancy-leaved caladiums (*Caladium bicolor*). North American plants include the eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), rhododendrons (*Rhododendron* sp.), “illysium” (*Illicium* sp.), a “representative of the Canadian hemlock” (*Tsuga caroliniana*), and a California redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). The weeping

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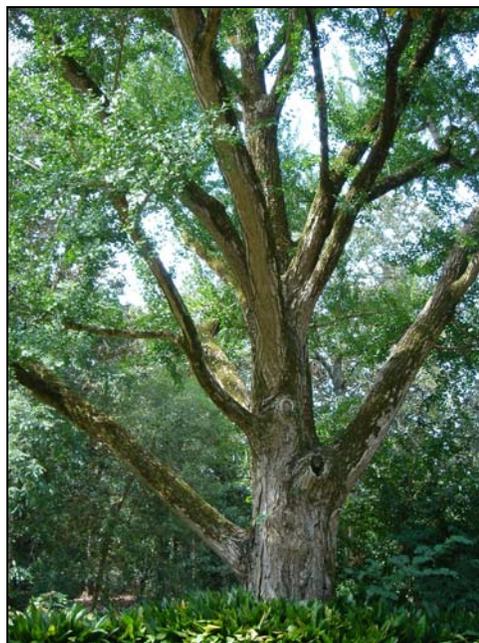
<sup>56</sup> Photo by Christine Donhardt, 2007. Located in northeast section of the Church garden.

<sup>57</sup> St. John 13. “A Little of the History of Ferrell Gardens.” Myrick “Hills and Dales, formerly the Terrell’s [sic] Terraces.”

<sup>58</sup> Besides the China fir in the Church Garden, Sarah planted three on either Terrace D or E, Labyrinth or Magnolia Avenue (Tunnell 45). Cody also mentions the three *Cunninghamia* trees (Nep Cody, “Ferrell Gardens Described Vividly by Mrs. Michael Cody” ([The Montgomery Advertiser](#), 1 Apr 1934) 16).

cypress (*Cupressus* sp.) listed could be from a variety of locations.<sup>59</sup> Sarah also had a ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), a plant from Asia, that was installed at the end of Magnolia Avenue (fig 13).

The Japanese varnish trees Sarah had in her garden had been grown from seeds sent to her by “friends who were traveling in the Orient” (fig 14).<sup>61</sup> The Upper Terrace had at least three varnish trees, and additional trees were located on either Terraces D or E, Labyrinth or Magnolia Avenues.<sup>62</sup> Some descendents of these trees ended up at Nolan Place (later called Magnolia Hill) in Chambers County, Alabama at her granddaughter, Helen (Ferrell) Huguley Nolan’s home. Much of the shrubbery at this home was provided by Sarah including magnolias, holly, and tree box.<sup>63</sup> Cuttings from these varnish trees at Nolan Place eventually made their way back to Ferrell Gardens around 1977 as a gift from Helen’s grandson to Alice Callaway, owner of Ferrell Gardens at that time. Three were planted on Ferrell Drive where they remain today.<sup>64</sup>



**Fig 13. Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*).**<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). Origin of the plants from James R. Cothran, Gardens and Historic Plants of the Antebellum South (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003) 266-269.

<sup>60</sup> Photo by Christine Donhardt, 2005

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Nolan Fletcher of Fletcher Landscape Service and Flower Farm to Alice Hand Callaway 5 December 1977, Hills and Dales archives.

<sup>62</sup> Marquis 11-13. Tunnell 45.

<sup>63</sup> Sarah Nolan Fletcher, “Nolan Place: The Plantation of Burnt Village” Ed. Chattahoochee Valley Historical Society, War Was the Place: A Centennial Collection of Confederate Soldier Letters (Alexander City, AL: Outlook Publishing Co, 1961) 167-171.

<sup>64</sup> Letter from Nolan Fletcher of Fletcher Landscape Service and Flower Farm to Alice Hand Callaway 5 December 1977, Hills and Dales archives.

Biblical plant materials or their representatives added to Sarah's collection of foreign plants as they were associated with the Holy Lands. Plants have a role in Biblical texts, serving as metaphors in the Old Testament and as integral parts of the Parables of Jesus in the New Testament. Plants themselves are symbols through which religious truths can be gleaned.<sup>66</sup> A



**Fig 14. Japanese varnish tree (*Firmiana simplex*).**<sup>65</sup>

A few books on plants of the Bible were available to Sarah at that time: Lady Maria Callcott's A Scripture Herbal, published in 1842 and William Westmacott's Historia Vegetabilium Sacra published in 1695.

Quite likely Sarah was familiar with a passage from Isaiah that stated, "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together."<sup>67</sup> All of these were represented on her estate. Cedar trees (*Juniperus virginiana*) lined her driveways and were found throughout the gardens, and a shittah tree (*Acacia seyal*) was located on the Upper Terrace.<sup>68</sup> The myrtle tree which symbolized "divine generosity" as well as "peace and joy"<sup>69</sup> could have been interpreted as true myrtle (*Myrtus communis*), crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), or as wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*). Crape myrtles grew on the Upper Terrace as well as other places in the garden.<sup>70</sup> The

<sup>65</sup> Picture taken by Christine Donhardt, 2007. Not taken in Ferrell Gardens.

<sup>66</sup> Eleanor Anthony King, Bible Plants for American Gardens (New York: The Macmillan Co, 1941) xiii.

<sup>67</sup> Isaiah 41:19, KJV.

<sup>68</sup> Callaway 72, 101. Slack 3. Tunnell 45. C.K. Draper 4.

<sup>69</sup> King 62.

<sup>70</sup> Marquis 12.

oil tree, a wild or Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), was found growing on Magnolia Avenue.<sup>71</sup> Sarah grew a fir tree in the Valley, pine trees on the estate, and a plethora of boxwood and tree box ran throughout her garden.<sup>72</sup>

What is even more interesting is the mention of the trees in relation to a sanctuary for God in Isaiah 60:13, “The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”<sup>73</sup> These specific trees compose a sanctuary for the Lord, a place created for him to dwell and all of which are located in Sarah’s garden. Perhaps it is this particular verse that inspired Sarah to create her garden as a sanctuary for God. These plants create something that is considered good and pleasing in the eyes of God and reveal his handiwork.<sup>74</sup>

Boxwood, the predominant plant material used at Ferrell Gardens, originated in Europe, Asia and Africa in ancient times and had been used in America since the Colonial period. Three species of boxwood were planted by Sarah: common box (*Buxus sempervirens*), tree box (*B. sempervirens arborescens*), and dwarf box used for edging (*B. sempervirens suffruticosa*).<sup>75</sup> Boxwood is only found in the Bible in the two verses in Isaiah previously mentioned.<sup>76</sup>

Around 1879, Sarah received a small shittah or shittim tree (*Acacia seyal*) and planted it on the western side of the Upper Terrace.<sup>77</sup> This tree was a prominent plant in the Bible and its wood was used to build the Ark of the Covenant, the box designed to hold the Ten Commandments.<sup>78</sup> Other furnishings used in the Sacred Tent where the Ark was stored,

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<sup>71</sup> King 65. Cooney 95.

<sup>72</sup> T.J., “Beautiful Homes of LaGrange: The Far Famed Terraces” (LaGrange Reporter 28 May 1888). Cody 16.

<sup>73</sup> Isaiah 60:13, KJV.

<sup>74</sup> Isaiah 41:19-20 and 60:13.

<sup>75</sup> Cothran 266.

<sup>76</sup> Isaiah 41:19 and 60:13

<sup>77</sup> Callaway 72, 101. Slack 3. Tunnell 45. C.K. Draper 4. This tree was located near the present-day breakfast room at Hills and Dales. By 1929 the tree was 60’ tall.

<sup>78</sup> Exodus 25:10 and 37:1. Deuteronomy 10:3.

including the altar, were made from this wood as well.<sup>79</sup> Sarah also received a cedar of Lebanon tree (*Cedrus libani*) that had two very large trunks and leaned toward the southwest, supposedly “away from the sea” as its ancestors had done. This was located near the larches and magnolias on Magnolia Avenue and all were covered by elaeagnus vines giving the whole an appearance of a two-towered cathedral.<sup>80</sup> This tree species, in Biblical times, was considered a symbol of “power and strength” as it was the grandest tree in Israel.<sup>81</sup>

Additional plants in Sarah’s garden had a Biblical connection. The cypress was a plant considered to be the gopher wood used by Noah to build the Ark.<sup>83</sup> The bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*) is noted as a spice and is mentioned in Psalms.<sup>84</sup>

One of these trees stood at the west end of Terrace D, Labyrinth Avenue.<sup>85</sup> The palms Sarah grew at The Terraces were a symbol of rejoicing and were used in celebration on Palm Sunday.<sup>86</sup> The olive (*Olea europaea*) a highly valued economic plant in Biblical times as well as today, is in the same family as the sweet olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*) likely found in Sarah’s



**Fig 15. Sweet olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*).<sup>82</sup>**

garden (fig 15). Olive oil was used in the anointing of the Sacred Tent and the Covenant box.<sup>87</sup>

The European linden tree is mentioned in Callcott’s Scripture Herbal as being the same as the tiel

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<sup>79</sup> Exodus 25-27 and 30.

<sup>80</sup> Callaway 72, 101. St. John 13. Cooney 95. Tunnell 45. This tree fell over in the spring of 1929 in a wind storm.

<sup>81</sup> King 49. Ezekiel 31:3.

<sup>82</sup> Photo by Christine Donhardt, 2006. Not taken at Ferrell Gardens.

<sup>83</sup> King 54. Genesis 6:14.

<sup>84</sup> King 56-57. Psalms 37:35.

<sup>85</sup> Marquis 9.

<sup>86</sup> King 34. John 12:13.

<sup>87</sup> Exodus 30:23-26.

tree in Isaiah, representing the restored nation of God.<sup>88</sup> Sarah grew this tree at the head of the stairs to the Valley.

Some plants in Sarah's collection came from P.J. Berckmans' Fruitland Nurseries in Augusta, Georgia. In February of 1858, she ordered "roses and shrubs" from this nursery at a cost of \$20 to be delivered on the Express.<sup>89</sup> This was one of the earlier orders from Fruitland Nurseries which was established in 1858.<sup>90</sup> Sarah had a vast collection of rose varieties of the best quality.<sup>91</sup> Roses are mentioned in the Bible in Isaiah 35:1 and Song of Solomon 2:1.

### **Freemasonry in the Ferrell Family**

Many of the founding fathers of the United States were Freemasons -- George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson among others. The influence of Freemasonry abounds not only in architecture but in city planning and other designed landscapes. The plan of Savannah, Georgia for instance has elements of Freemasonry design.<sup>92</sup>

In LaGrange, the Union Lodge No. 28, F. & A. M., formed in 1842, was one of the earliest organizations established in the county. The charter members included Blount C. Ferrell, Mickleberry Ferrell, and William B. M. Ferrell, with Blount serving as Senior Warden in the first year and Worshipful Master in the second. These men were already Freemasons before founding the lodge in LaGrange.<sup>93</sup> Other members of the Ferrell family soon after joined the lodge.<sup>94</sup> In

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<sup>88</sup> Isaiah 6:13. Lady Maria Callcott, A Scripture Herbal (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1842) 494-499.

<sup>89</sup> Prosper Jules Alphonse Berckmans, Fruitland Nursery Order Book 1858-1860 (Cherokee Garden Library at the Atlanta History Center) Entry #157.

<sup>90</sup> Georgia Humanities Council, The New Georgia Encyclopedia (Athens, GA: Georgia Humanities Council and the University of Georgia Press, 2004) <<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2064>>.

<sup>91</sup> LaGrange Reporter 6-23-1893.

<sup>92</sup> Mark Reinberger, "Oglethorpe's Plan of Savannah: Urban Design, Speculative Freemasonry, and Enlightenment Charity" Georgia Historical Quarterly (Vol. 81, 1997) 862.

<sup>93</sup> Smith 176. Union Lodge #28 Record Book: Ledger I (22 Oct. 1842, MS-120/Ledgers/Troup County Archives) 1.

<sup>94</sup> Freemasons, Grand Lodge of Georgia, 1854 (Signal Mountain, TN: Mountain Press, 1999) 76.

Vesta, the figure representing Mickleberry is described as being “a zealous royal arch mason.”<sup>95</sup>

Sarah was no stranger to Freemasonry within her family, and was likely exposed to it as a young child through her father.

In contrast to Sarah’s devotion to the church and religion, her husband, Blount, was never a member of any church. He believed in doing good to help his fellowman like any Freemason would.<sup>97</sup> The character in Vesta representing Blount was described as a man of morals that “seemed to regard religion as little above politics, except as it related to social virtues and civil government.”<sup>98</sup> Nancy Ferrell, Sarah’s



**Fig 16. Blount C. Ferrell’s Masonic apron, 1842.**<sup>96</sup>

mother, sewed a Masonic apron for Blount in 1842.<sup>99</sup> It is a white cloth apron trimmed in wide purple edging to signify his office of Worshipful Master and embroidered with colorful symbols of Freemasonry (fig 17).<sup>100</sup>

### **Masonic Symbols in the Garden**

Freemasons are a fraternal group that promotes morality while acknowledging the existence of a higher deity. Freemasonry is noted for its use of allegory and symbolism to instruct initiates. Sarah utilized this same idea to instruct others about her own faith through

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<sup>95</sup> Reed 29.

<sup>96</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2006. Apron housed at Troup County Archives.

<sup>97</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 2-21-1908.

<sup>98</sup> Reed 36.

<sup>99</sup> Inscription on back reads: “Worked by Mrs. Nancy Ferrell in LaGrange, 1842” according to Troup County Archives.

<sup>100</sup> Freemasons, Revision of the Constitution, by-Laws and Regulations, Edicts, Forms, Etc., of the Grand Lodge of Georgia, A.F. & A.M (Macon, GA: J.W. Burke, 1891) 21.

symbolism. This was not a Masonic invention; mosaics, frescos, and stained glass windows decorating the walls of churches have long conveyed the stories of the Bible to masses of illiterate people. This was a mode of communicating in ancient times.

The most widely recognized Masonic emblem, the square and compass, is located in Sarah's garden next to the words "*Fiat Justitia*," Latin for 'let justice be done' (fig 18). Blount Ferrell planted this as his own motto.<sup>102</sup> Just as 'God is Love' was Sarah's motto to live by, "*Fiat Justitia*" and the Masonic emblem were what Blount esteemed. The compass, as a drafting tool, represents the "act of creation" and its shape which resembles the



**Fig 17. Masonic emblem.**<sup>101</sup>

letter "A" is symbolic of the beginning.<sup>103</sup> The square and compass together are the symbol of brotherhood. At one time this emblem was only worn by the Worshipful Master to signify his higher degree.<sup>104</sup>

Freemasons adopted many symbols of the Old Testament as their own because their traditions are rooted in the era when King Solomon's temple was built.<sup>105</sup> Some overlap occurs with a few of the symbols at Ferrell Gardens. The butterfly, in masonry, symbolizes the human soul because of its various stages of metamorphosis which are likened to the three degrees of masonry and the enlightenment of the mind.<sup>106</sup> The circle, used in masonry to verify that squares are at 90 degree angles, represents eternity.<sup>107</sup> The maze itself has a place in Masonic rituals

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<sup>101</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2006.

<sup>102</sup> Callaway 104. Tunnell 45.

<sup>103</sup> Cirlot 58.

<sup>104</sup> Mackey 708.

<sup>105</sup> Manly Palmer Hall and J. Augustus Knapp, An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Cabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy: Being an Interpretation of the Secret Teachings Concealed Within the Rituals, Allegories and Mysteries of All Ages (San Francisco: Printed by H.S. Crocker Co, 1928) LXXVII.

<sup>106</sup> Hall LXXXVII.

<sup>107</sup> Mackey 151.

where it is used in ceremonies as a symbol for the “anxieties of life.”<sup>108</sup> In addition, the concept of the east is considered especially sacred because King Solomon’s temple was oriented east-west. Masonic lodges too are built with an east-west orientation because the sun rises on the east, and symbolically knowledge does as well. Freemasons express this concept further in lodge meetings when the Worshipful Master sits on the east to symbolically instruct other Freemasons.<sup>109</sup> In Ferrell Gardens, the sun rises and reaches the word ‘GOD’ in the east before setting in the Church garden in the west. Perhaps Sarah was making a statement about God being the source of all knowledge.

Freemasons also had symbolic plant materials: the oak, pine, ash, cypress, palm, and acacia. The acacia, found at Ferrell Gardens, is of utmost importance to the Freemasons, symbolizing immortality because of its evergreen nature, and thus used in burial ceremonies.<sup>110</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Symbolism dominates Ferrell Gardens, and the boxwood symbols within its bounds are a rarity. Religious statements such as “God is Love,” symbols of the cross, butterfly, circle, grape cluster, harp, collection plate, and topiary like the organ and mourners’ benches are distinct and easily interpreted. The origins of other symbols like the waterway and the chain and locket remain obscure.

From early photographs, it does not appear that Sarah had edging around her boxwood paths and designs, except for the wellhouse in the Church garden.<sup>111</sup> As Sarah kept her paths

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<sup>108</sup> Mackey 420.

<sup>109</sup> James Stevens Curl, The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry: An Introductory Study (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1993) 53-54.

<sup>110</sup> Hall XCV.

<sup>111</sup> The earliest photograph showing edging, taken when Ida Callaway cared for the gardens, shows edging around the wellhouse in the Church garden, but not around the boxwood symbol nearby. Other photographs do not indicate any edging material.

swept, the edging could have disappeared under years of debris or possibly never existed. Because of the ephemeral nature of gardens in general, this can account for the loss of some of the symbols overtime. The topiary chairs and pulpit, and the cloverleaf as well as other symbols that existed at one time but never thoroughly explained in the literature are simply lost.

Sarah Ferrell's religious attitudes inspired her to create her garden as a tribute to God using symbolic plant materials from the Bible and religious symbols in boxwood. Sarah's Christian symbols are poignant and written documents support their interpretation. The garden was Sarah's own "apron" but she sewed her symbols with seeds instead of thread.

## Epilogue

*But the soul of her who lived inside / Has flown beyond the shining tide. ... A garden somewhere in the sky / Where flowers never fade or die, / And there her patient soul will wait, / Her hand upon the open gate.<sup>1</sup>*

## Management

Sarah Ferrell's husband, Blount reportedly spent in excess of \$30,000 over the course of 46 years for improvements and care of Ferrell Gardens.<sup>3</sup> While this figure included labor, a great deal of help was provided by the Ferrell's slaves.<sup>4</sup>

In the beginning, Sarah's philosophy was to make her garden available to the public. While financed and cared for by the Ferrell's, the community considered it a public park and all well behaved townsfolk were welcomed.<sup>5</sup> A guidebook to LaGrange, in 1881, boasted of the garden as a public



**Fig 1. Sarah Coleman Ferrell, 1895.<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Fortune Chisholm Ferrell, *My Grandmother's Garden and Other Poems* (Atlanta: Harper Printing Co, 1956) 1.

<sup>2</sup> Photo courtesy: Troup County Archives

<sup>3</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 5-31-1888.

<sup>4</sup> E.S. Draper "The Gardens at Hills and Dales" (*House Beautiful*, May 1932) 373. "A Hundred Years a-growing: the Ferrell Gardens in Georgia" (*Harper's Bazaar*, Aug. 1940) 85. Alice H. Callaway, *Ferrell Gardens: A Growing History*, Troup County Archives and Kinekom video production, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 5-31-1888.

attraction and welcomed all who visited LaGrange to see it.<sup>6</sup> Maintaining a garden open to the public has its own set of difficulties. In 1870, Blount put a notice in the *LaGrange Reporter* requesting that children not run amuck through his gardens on Sundays. He wrote:

... my garden is thronged with small chaps, half grown boys and girls, racing and romping over the yard without regard to walks or beds – injuring the shrubbery, breaking the iron seats, and frequently disturbing the quiet of the family by their noisy and boisterous conduct.<sup>7</sup>

While he enjoyed offering his private property for all to use, he stated that he might have to withhold that privilege because of these abuses.<sup>8</sup>

In 1890, when Sarah was 73 years old, the Ferrell's offered to sell the gardens to the City of LaGrange for use as a parade ground, park, and cemetery.<sup>9</sup> This did not occur, and in 1893, the gardens were being thronged once more by poorly behaved children and Blount again urged the community to “keep their half-grown children ... out of my wife’s flower-garden on Sundays. ... it will save my wife the worry of an intolerable nuisance.”<sup>10</sup> These visitors “mar its beauty and pilfer its treasures.”<sup>11</sup>

### **The Deaths of Sarah and Blount Ferrell**

Sarah and Blount Ferrell celebrated their 68<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on Thanksgiving Day, 1903.<sup>12</sup> Less than two weeks later, Sarah fell ill with pneumonia and died on December 7, at the age of 86.<sup>13</sup> Her illness was not serious at first, but once it became pneumonia, Sarah knew her

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<sup>6</sup> *Descriptive Lagrange* (LaGrange, GA: Printed at the LaGrange Reporter Job Office, 1881) 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 2-18-1870.

<sup>8</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 2-18-1870.

<sup>9</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 3-21-1890.

<sup>10</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 3-17-1893.

<sup>11</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 6-23-1893.

<sup>12</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 11-27-1903.

<sup>13</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-11-1903. Ridley 13.

life was nearing an end (fig. 1). She spent time with her family and wrote notes to her friends.<sup>14</sup> Her funeral at the Baptist church was so well attended that many were unable to get into the church and were turned away. School children attended *en masse* and several speakers gave a tribute to Sarah Ferrell. They processed to Hill View Cemetery where she was buried.<sup>15</sup> Sarah's tombstone reads: "Saved by Grace" with a poem based on John Greenleaf Whittier's Gone: "Still let thy mild rebuking stand / Between us and the wrong. / And let thy dear memory serve to make / Our faith in goodness strong."<sup>16</sup>

A letter Sarah had written two years before her death to her friend Professor Charles C. Cox was read aloud at the service. In a lyrical metaphor she relates Heaven to a garden and its occupants as gardeners:

You know how I have ever loved beautiful plants and flowers. I do not say they were parts of my life; they were life itself. My idolatry has gone so far as to feel that Heaven must be the home of flowers, and without them would be incomplete. Wicked, was it not? Still I would pray that my employment in Heaven would be "to tend and water from the ambrosial fount the flowers that never would in other climates grow." Oft in anticipation I picture a future home, a vast garden with the blessed Savior as head gardener, and all my congenial friends and loved ones waiting His commands to prune, to prop and nurture the rare and tender plants, in order to bring their beauty and loveliness to perfection. Oh! What a blissful employment, and how through their immaculateness we would love, adore and worship the great Master and Fountain of celestial joy. We will be happy in such a home, ever drawing nearer and nearer to each other and nearer to our dear Lord.<sup>17</sup>

In 1904, Dr. Frank M. Ridley, her grandson-in-law gathered letters Sarah had written to friends as well as tribute letters written after her death and letters of condolence to Blount Ferrell. These were compiled in book form along with pictures of her garden.

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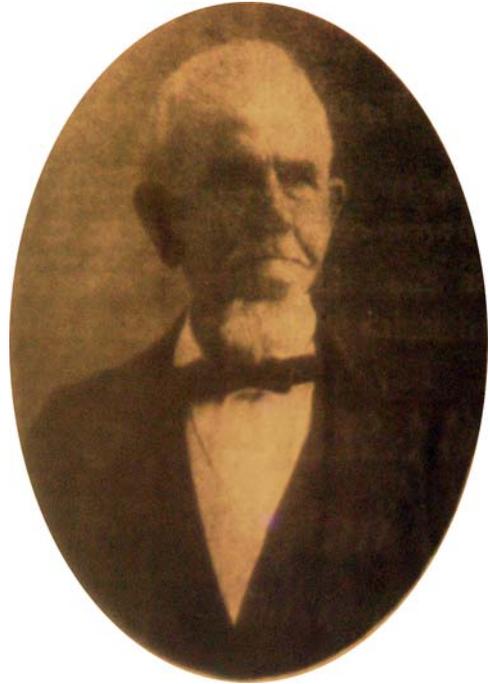
<sup>14</sup> Ridley 13.

<sup>15</sup> *LaGrange Graphic* 12-15-1903 as cited in Ridley 14.

<sup>16</sup> The monument and slabs for both Ferrells were installed by September of 1908 (*LaGrange Reporter* 9-11-1908).

<sup>17</sup> Ridley 21-22 (letter from Sarah Ferrell to Charles C. Cox 1-10-1901, read by Cox at her funeral service). This was reprinted also in newspapers and in Ida Callaway's book. Sarah references John Milton's Paradise Lost Book 11.

On January 19, 1908, Judge Blount Ferrell celebrated his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday with a family gathering at dinner (fig. 2). Even into old age, the Judge continued to go into town to chat with his friends who were of all ages and class.<sup>19</sup> Less than a month later, on February 13, he succumbed to a short illness and followed Sarah to the grave. He was carried to the Baptist Church by his Masonic brethren and then buried with Masonic honors in Hill View Cemetery.<sup>20</sup> A monument of the Masonic symbols of two columns capped with an urn stand at the gravesite. The inscription on Blount's tombstone is based on the poem by Sam Walter Foss, The House by the Side



**Fig 2. Judge Blount Coleman Ferrell in the twilight of his life.**<sup>18</sup>

of the Road: “He never sat in the scorner’s seat, / Nor hurled the cynic’s ban; / But lived in a house by the side of the road / And was known as the friend of man.”

### **Continuation**

The gardens were not as well tended after the death of Blount and Sarah.<sup>21</sup> Clarence Ferrell, their only living child, was nearly 70 years old and could not take on the responsibility of maintaining his mother's garden. In her later years, Sarah had indicated that her extended family would not maintain the garden when she was gone.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Photo appears in the *LaGrange Reporter* 2-14-1908.

<sup>19</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 1-24-1908.

<sup>20</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 2-14-1908. *LaGrange Reporter* 2-21-1908. Union Lodge #28 Record Book: Ledger III (15 Feb. 1908, p268, MS-120/Ledgers/Troup County Archives).

<sup>21</sup> “A Hundred Years a-growing: the Ferrell Gardens in Georgia” 114.

<sup>22</sup> Ida Callaway, “Memories of Fuller Earle Callaway, Sr. of LaGrange, GA” (unpublished manuscript, 1929, Hills and Dales Archives) 98.

Fuller E. Callaway, the young man who at one time sold Sarah affordable cloth from his store so that she could make clothes for the poor, bought the property. Sarah told him that she “thanked God every day for him” because cloth from his store was so affordable she could make two dresses for the price of one.<sup>23</sup> Fuller had grown up in LaGrange and had frequented Ferrell Gardens. He had been intrigued by the gardens and spent time learning from Sarah the meaning of each symbol made in boxwood. Fuller was both a Baptist and a Freemason, attending the same church as Sarah and the same lodge as Blount.<sup>24</sup>

A short time before Sarah died, Fuller was showing some of his customers through the gardens when Sarah expressed a desire for him to purchase the property when she died because he was the only person she trusted to maintain it.<sup>25</sup> He had a love for the gardens and a long held appreciation for their significance and the deeper meaning that could be gleaned from Sarah’s symbols.

At that time Fuller lived with his wife Ida Cason Callaway on West Haralson Street<sup>26</sup> in LaGrange with their two sons, Cason and Fuller Jr. By the time of Blount’s death, Fuller was quite successful with his Callaway Department Store<sup>27</sup> and various business ventures including the Unity Cotton Mills. The Ferrell property, valued at \$20,000, was auctioned off on December

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<sup>23</sup> Callaway 98.

<sup>24</sup> Freemasons, Roster of Georgia Lodges and Membership, F. and A.M. Corrected to August 31, 1924 (Macon, GA: Masonic Home Print Shop, 1924) 29. Union Lodge #28 Record Book: Ledger V (Feb. 1928, p263, MS-120/Ledgers/Troup County Archives). Callaway 18. Fuller was baptized and joined First Baptist Church at age 10 (1880) and continued his membership there.

<sup>25</sup> Callaway 98.

<sup>26</sup> Waights G. Henry, Fuller E. Callaway, Jr.: A Three Dimension Man and Callaway Foundation, Inc. (Newcomen publication, no. 1093, New York: Newcomen Society in North America, 1979) 13.

<sup>27</sup> Donna Jean Whitley, Fuller E. Callaway and Textile Mill Development in LaGrange, 1895-1920 (Garland studies in entrepreneurship, New York: Garland Pub, 1989) 143.

5, 1911 by the executors of Blount C. Ferrell's estate.<sup>28</sup> Fuller purchased the 80 acres, including the Ferrell gardens and house for \$8,150.<sup>29</sup>

### **Ida Cason Callaway**

Fuller Callaway's wife, Ida Cason Callaway, cared for Sarah's gardens from 1916 until her death in 1936 (fig. 3). During this time, Hentz and Reid, an Atlanta based architecture firm, was commissioned to design a house that fit into the surrounding landscape with each window offering a pleasing view of the garden and doors aligning with the garden axis.<sup>31</sup> The Ferrell house was razed and a three-story Neoclassical mansion was completed in 1916 (fig. 4). The property was renamed Hills and Dales because of the surrounding topography. Water features and statues were added to the gardens but the basic design and paths remained unchanged.



**Fig 3. Ida Cason Callaway.**<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *LaGrange Reporter* 12-8-1911. *LaGrange Reporter* 10-13-1911.

<sup>29</sup> Deed Book 11 p511-513, Troup County Archives, 1-4-1912.

<sup>30</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

<sup>31</sup> E.S. Draper "The Gardens at Hills and Dales" 372.

Ida continued as Sarah had, in planting trees with religious meaning, adding a carob tree from Jerusalem as well as others to the gardens. A fountain replaced the holly on the Upper Terrace and the water fed to a grotto and a pool installed in the Valley. The summerhouses eventually rotted away and the greenhouses were torn down. A semi-circular stone

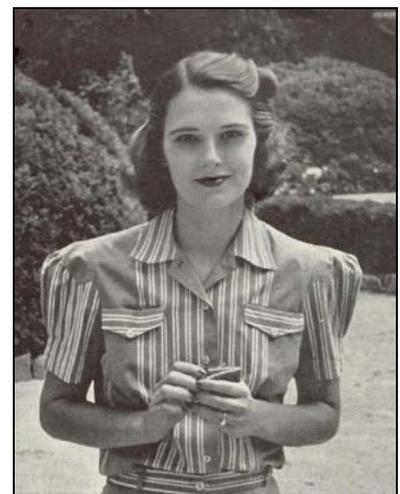


**Fig 4. Hills and Dales, 2007.<sup>32</sup>**

bench was added and a new greenhouse was built. Ida added the mottos ‘St. Callaway’ and ‘*Ora Pro Mi,*’ Latin for ‘Pray for Me,’ in boxwood to compliment what Sarah had written on the Upper Terrace. She also added a rock garden, rose garden, and a wild flower garden.

### **Alice Hand Callaway**

Fuller Callaway, Jr.’s wife, Alice Hand Callaway, took charge of the gardens from 1936 until her own death in 1998 (fig. 5). Alice was initially overwhelmed to have the care of such a vast estate with a great history behind it, but soon found herself suited for the task of landscape preservationist. She converted Ida’s rose garden into an herb garden, and added the Ray Garden to the north. Alice enjoyed giving tours of her garden to school children and landscape architecture students from the University



**Fig 5. Alice Hand Callaway.<sup>33</sup>**

<sup>32</sup> Photo credit: Christine Donhardt, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Photo courtesy: Fuller E. Callaway Foundation.

of Georgia.

Alice planned for the estate to become a house and garden museum after her death and thus worked toward this goal. When she died, the property was placed in the hands of the Fuller E. Callaway Foundation who now has the charge to care for the estate and gardens for perpetuity. A visitor's center was built and the estate opened to the public for tours.

## **Conclusion**

Gardens by their very nature are ephemeral. Time can be as destructive to a garden as exposure to the elements. To maintain and understand a garden as the designer intended, detailed plans, photographs, and written documentation prove helpful. It is equally important to plan for the perpetual care of a significant garden to insure its continuance.

Fuller Callaway's purchase likely saved Ferrell Gardens from destruction. The time he spent wandering through the garden and learning about the symbols from Sarah added to his appreciation for this historic landscape. This led to an additional attribute of Ferrell Gardens, its unique continuation. The layers of landscape history and preservation of this estate, the care given to Sarah's garden by Ida and Alice Callaway can be read as if it were a palimpsest. Through the Callaway's good stewardship we are able to enjoy what Sarah lovingly tended for 61 years. Today the gardens remain open to the public as Sarah had desired.

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**Appendix A:**  
**Ferrell Gardens Plant List 1842-1903<sup>1</sup>**

**Trees:**

Bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*)  
California redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*)  
“representative of the Canadian hemlock” -- likely Carolina hemlock (*Tsuga caroliniana*)  
Carolina cherry tree or Cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*)  
Carolina poplar (*Populus x canadensis*)  
Cedar of Lebanon tree (*Cedrus libani*)  
China fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*)  
Crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*)  
Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)  
Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
English laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)  
European linden (*Tilia x europaea*)  
Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)  
Hickory (*Carya* sp.)  
Holly tree (*Ilex opaca*)  
Illicium (*Illicium floridanum* or *I. parviflorum*)  
“Japan cedar” or Japanese cryptomeria (*Cryptomeria japonica*)  
“Japan plum” or loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*)  
Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)  
Photinia (*Photinia* sp.)  
Pine (*Pinus* sp.)  
Shittah or shittim tree (*Acacia seyal*)  
Silver leafed poplar or white poplar (*Populus alba*)  
Strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*)  
Sycamore (*Plantanus occidentalis*)  
Tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)  
Varnish tree, Umbrella tree, Chinese parasol, Japanese varnish, or Stericula tree (*Firmiana simplex*)  
Water oak (*Quercus nigra*)  
Weeping arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* ‘Filiformis’)  
Weeping cypress (*Cupressus* sp.)  
Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)

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<sup>1</sup> Botanical names have been extrapolated from the common names found in literature. Included in this list are trees growing in the grove on the estate.

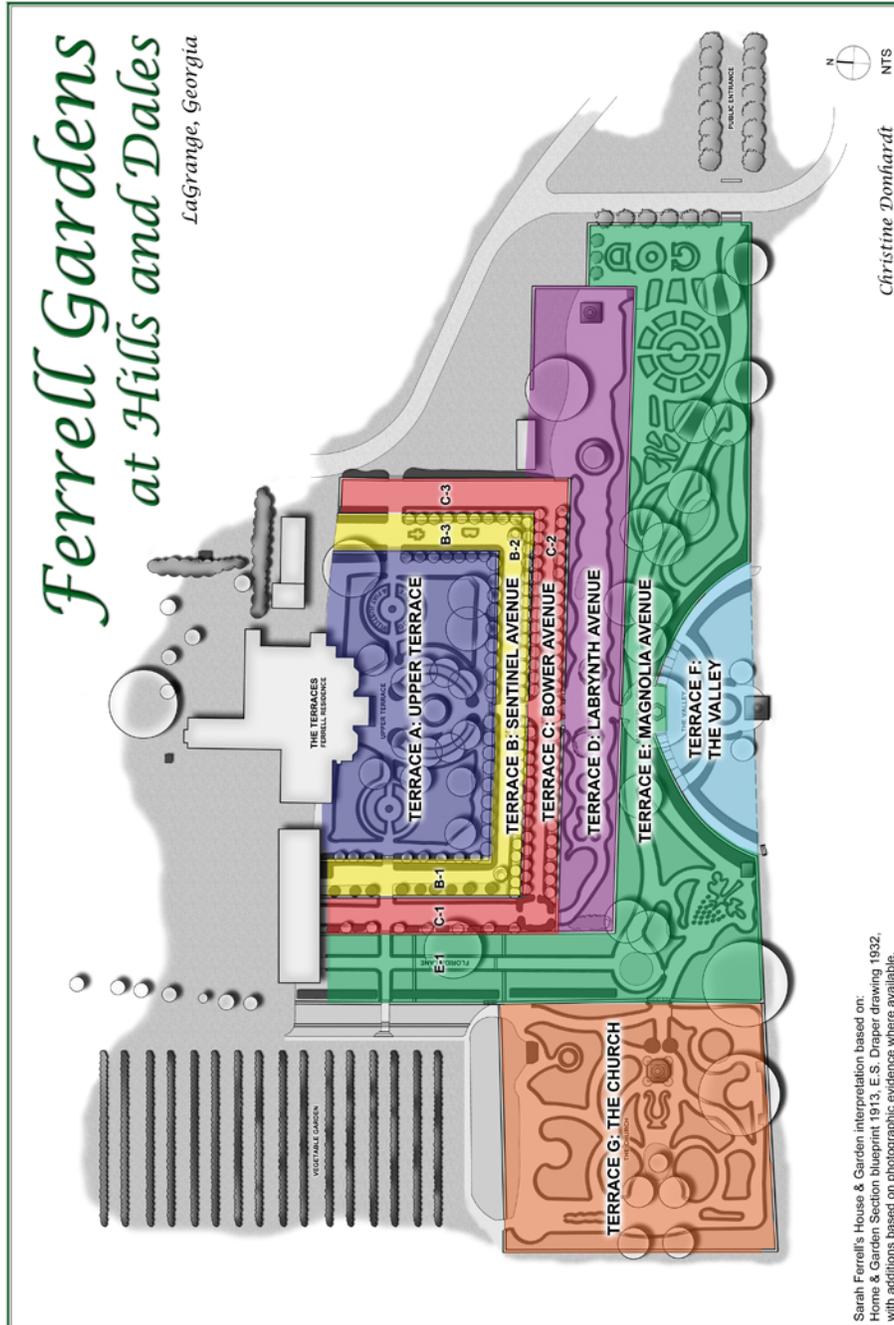
**Shrubs and Vines:**

Amur privet or Amur River privet (*Ligustrum amurense*)  
“an Australian tree – the eleagnus” (*Elaeagnus triflora*)  
Banana shrub (*Michelia figo*)  
Bush rose (*Rosa* sp.)  
China tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) [Thea bohea]  
Climbing roses (*Rosa* sp.)  
Common box (*Buxus sempervirens*)  
Dwarf box (*Buxus sempervirens suffruticosa*)  
Elaeagnus vine (*Elaeagnus* sp.)  
Gardenia (*Gardenia jasminoides*)  
Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* sp.)  
Japanese euonymus (*Euonymus japonicus*)  
Japanese privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*)  
Oil tree or Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)  
Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)  
Rhododendron (*Rhododendron* sp.)  
Rose (*Rosa* sp.)  
Tree box (*Buxus sempervirens arborescens*)  
Wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis* or *W. floribunda*)

**Herbaceous Annuals and Perennials:**

Fancy-leaved caladiums (*Caladium bicolor*)  
Ferns  
Hooded nun orchid (*Phaius tankervilliae*)  
Iris (*Iris* sp.)  
Lantana (*Lantana* sp.)  
Palms  
Rose acacia (*Robinia hispida*)  
Spotted calla lily (*Zantedeschia albomaculata*)  
Violet (*Viola odorata*)  
Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*)

**Appendix B:  
Supplemental Drawings**



**Fig 1. Map of Terraces.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Drawing by Christine Donhardt.

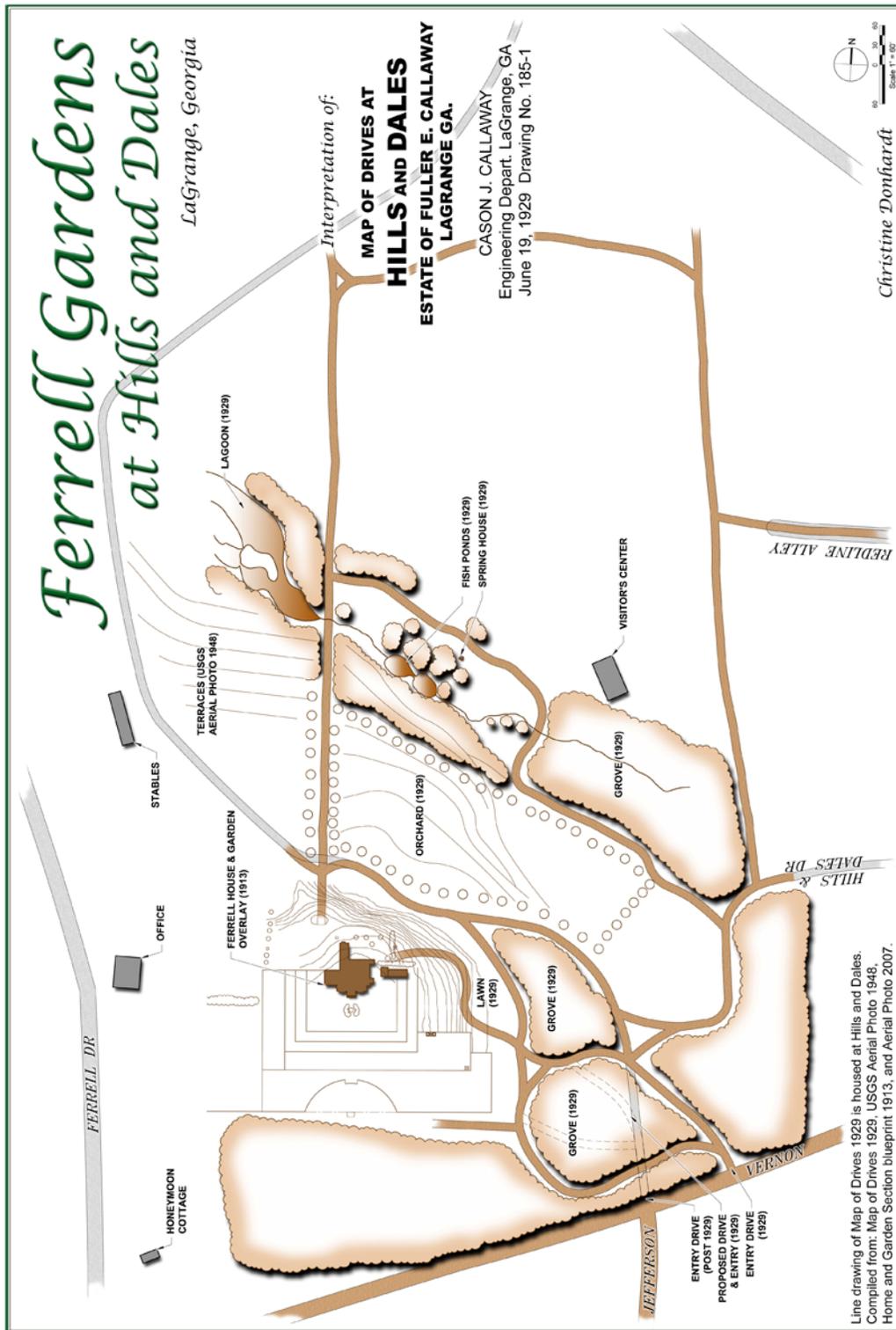
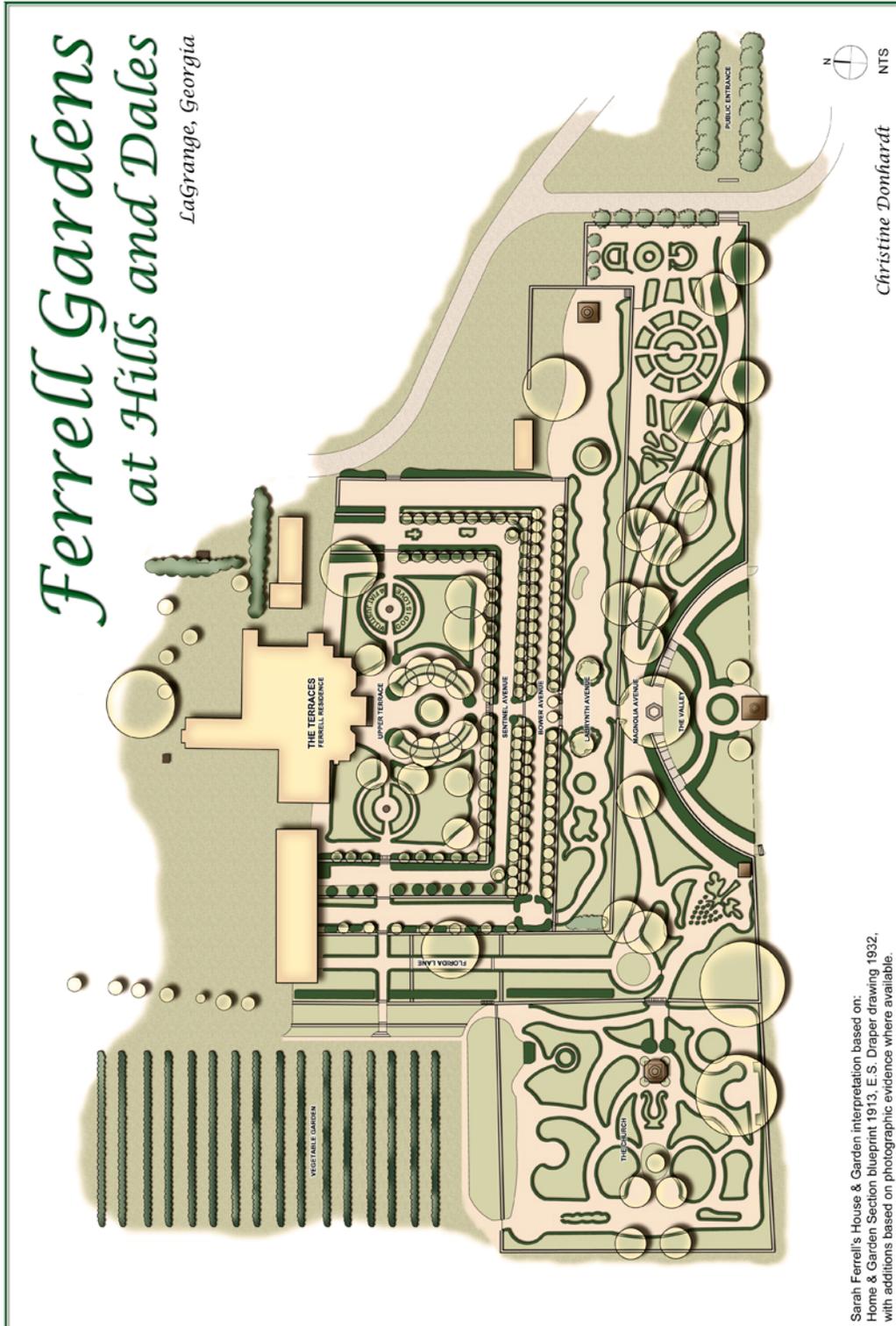


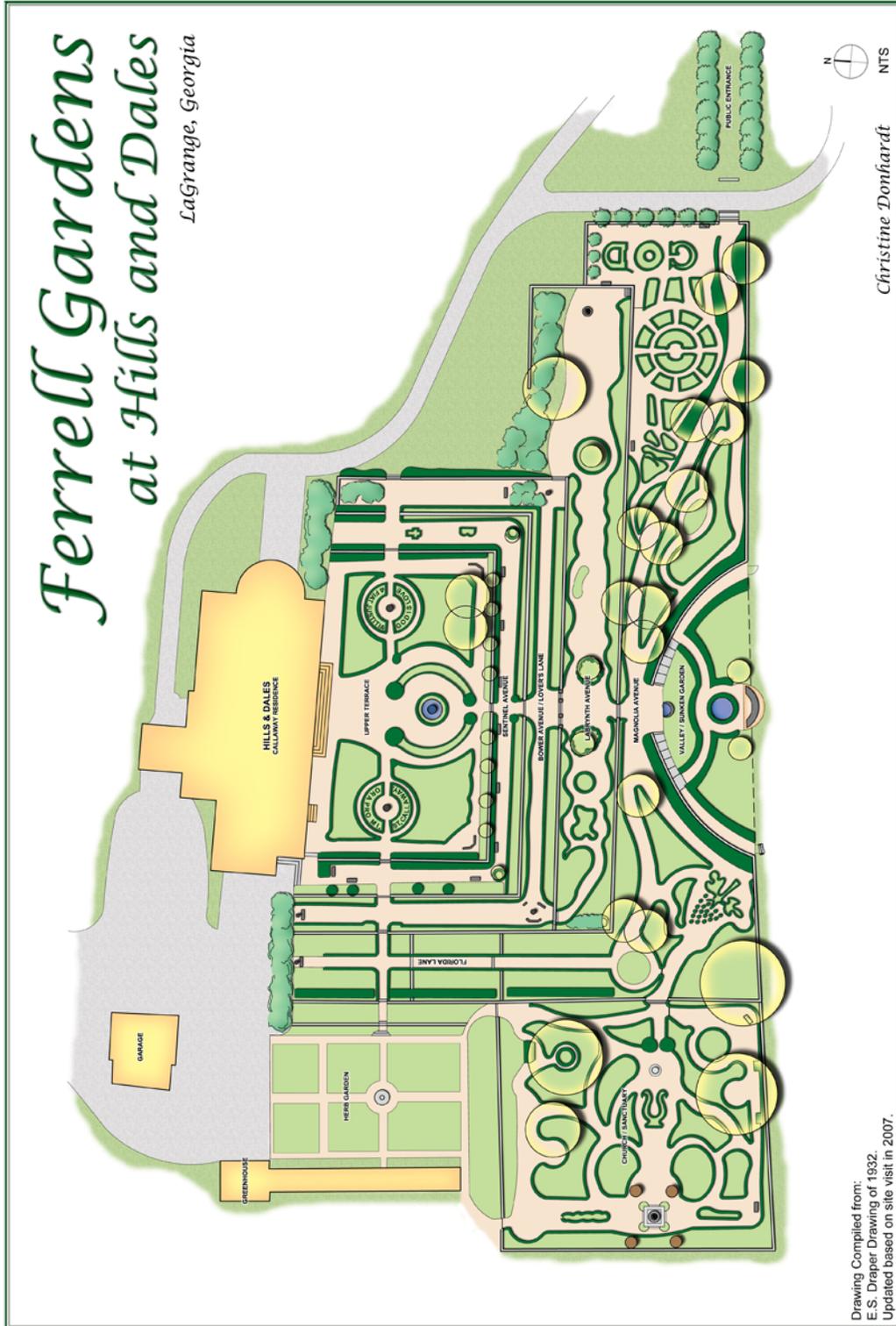
Fig 2. The Ferrell Estate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Interpretation of Map of Drives at Hills and Dales line drawing 1929. Drawing by Christine Donhardt.



**Fig 3. Ferrell House and Garden.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> Ferrell House and Garden interpretation based on Home and Garden Section blueprint 1913, E.S. Draper drawing 1932, and historic photographs. Drawing by Christine Donhardt.



**Fig 4. Callaway House and Garden.**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Callaway House and Garden interpretation based on E.S. Draper drawing 1932 and current conditions. Drawing by Christine Donhardt.