

“Iristhorpe of Shrewsbury and Its Magnificent Gardens of the Early 20th Century”

Presented by Bill Yeomans of Shrewsbury to the Garden Club of Back Bay

Where: Tower Hill Botanic Garden Auditorium, - Boylston, Massachusetts

When: Tuesday, September 16th at 10:00 a.m. - Mark your calendar now!



In 1909, this 138 acre Shrewsbury homestead named Flint Farm was purchased and remodeled to be the summer home of Dr. Homer and Mabel Knowles Gage, prominent Worcester residents, industrialists and philanthropists of the day. They created and enjoyed its beautiful grounds and gardens until Mabel's death in 1948.



Flint Farm, circa 1890 and one of the many gardens created at Iristhorpe, circa 1914

Named “Iristhorpe” by the Gages, its award winning gardens were created by Mabel Knowles Gage with the assistance of her school chum, Henrietta Marquis Pope. Henrietta was a graduate of the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening for Women and became a leading landscape design architect of the early 20th Century.

Two schools founded in the early years of the 20th Century played a pivotal role for women in the profession; the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Gardening for Women, founded in 1901, and the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women, founded in 1915. These schools educated many of the outstanding designers of the period and had a lasting impact on the evolution of the entire profession.

Responding to the difficulty women faced in gaining admission to the few existing university programs, the Lowthorpe School was established in Groton Massachusetts by Judith Motley Low, who believed that “women were naturally adapted to this profession,” All officers, the board of trustees and members of the corporation were women. It became the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture in 1917, offering a two-year non-degree program. Low had been trained in England and Lowthorpe leaned heavily toward the English tradition of landscape design.

The above information was excerpted from the book “ Women Designers in the USA, 1900—2000: Diversity and Difference” by Pat Kirkham and published by Yale University Press in 2002. Conduct a Google search for—Henrietta Marquis Pope architect—for additional information about this informative book and the roles women played in the evolution of this profession.

Iristhorpe was the talk of horticultural societies in Worcester, Boston and beyond. The beautiful iris flower and French fleur-de-lis was prominently used and displayed throughout the property. The head gardener, Allen Jenkins [b.1881 – d.1962] oversaw the 12 to 18 men employed to maintain the many gardens. Today, Flint Farm at Iristhorpe still remains a beautiful, one of a kind Shrewsbury property.



For further information contact:

Bill Yeomans at 508-842-7173 or send an email to: billyeo@townisp.com