

# A Guide to the Leesburg Garden Club Collection, 1920-

Leesburg Garden Club Collection 1920-2013  
1920-2013



A Collection in the Thomas Balch Library M 044

Thomas Balch Library

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## History

**Processed by:** Teckla H. Cox

## Title Statement

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**Author:** Teckla H. Cox

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## Profile Description

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## Descriptive Summary

**Collection number**

M 044

**Language**

English

**Abstract**

The collection contains records of the Leesburg Garden Club and includes directories, histories, minutes, committee reports, annual reports, scrapbooks, GCV information, information on the Leesburg Garden Club's participation in Garden Week in Virginia, photographs, information on the club's part in the adoption of zoning and a sign ordinance in Loudoun County, membership lists and information on the club's 501c3 status and other miscellaneous material.

**Creator**

Leesburg Garden Club, Loudoun County, VA

**Repository**

Thomas Balch Library

## Administrative Information

**Access Restrictions**

Collection open for research.

**Use Restrictions**

Physical characteristics and conditions affect use of some of this material. Photocopying of fragile items not permitted. Special handling of scrapbooks required.

**Acquisition Information**

Leesburg Garden Club, Loudoun County, VA.

**Processing Information**

Teckla H. Cox, 7 July 2011; Updated 8 November 2013

**Preferred Citation**

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## Accruals

2006.0200, 2010.0101, 2013.0041, 2014.0026

## Alternative Form Available

None

## Adjunct Descriptive Data

## Related Material

Lewis/Edwards Architectural Surveys of Loudoun County, Virginia, 1971-1983 (M 022); Loudoun County Architectural Surveys Supplement, 2003 (M 011); Leesburg Architectural Surveys, 1971-2001 (M 016), Lyndon LaRouche Collection, 1979-1986 (SC0075), Follow the Green Arrow: The History of the Garden Club of Virginia, 1920-1970, Mrs. James Bland Martin, V REF 635.9 MAR

## Bibliography

Ancestry Library Edition, U.S. Census, Social Security Death Index, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com) (Accessed 19 July 2011).

Blue Ridge Herald

Blue Ridge Herald

"A Brief Biography of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.," <http://www.larouchepub.com/resume.html> (Accessed 21 July 2011).

Find a Grave, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) (Accessed 19 July 2011).

Leesburg Garden Club Collection, 1920 - (M 044), Thomas Balch Library, Leesburg, VA.

Loudoun Times Mirror

The Washington Post

Follow the Green Arrow: The History of the Garden Club of Virginia, 1920-1970

## Other Finding Aid

None

## Technical Requirements

None

## Historical Information

The Leesburg Garden Club was founded 9 December 1915 by four women, Mrs. Page (Bessie H.M.) Laughlin (1876-1950), Mrs. John (Frances P.) Gibson (1882-1964), Mrs. J.R.H. (Cora L.) Alexander (1884-1972), and Mrs. William (Norita F.) Martin (1876-1952). Early in 1916 eight additional women were invited to join, and by the end of 1917 there was a total of 22 members. By 2010 membership was limited to 40 active members, 10 associate members (members who for reasons acceptable to the Executive Board can no longer be active but who are entitled to the privileges of the club including voting), one non-resident member and such honorary members as the club and the Executive Board vote to include. Honorary members are people who have benefitted the club to a considerable extent. For example, the husband of a member was made an honorary member because of his work growing and hybridizing lilies which the club entered in many shows and with which it won many ribbons.

The club began as a group who met to read aloud from the works of Charles Dickens (1812-1870). One member mentioned hearing of something called a "garden club" and so Dickens was abandoned in favor of plants. Although named the Leesburg Garden Club, members came from all sections of Loudoun County and in the beginning many of them lived on farms as well as in the Town of Leesburg. Almost all had vegetable gardens, so there was initially as much emphasis on vegetables as on flowers.

On 18 May, 1926 the Leesburg Garden Club became the 14th member of the Garden Club of Virginia (GCV) which had been founded in 1920 with the object of encouraging preservation, conservation, beautification, and restoration in the state. The GCV organized Garden Week in Virginia to earn money for this purpose and in 1929 the Leesburg Garden Club opened two historic houses and made "about \$16." Proceeds have increased tremendously and by 2010 the club's gross receipts surpassed \$10,000 for Garden Week, which takes place at the end of April each year.

From the beginning the club had a number of civic projects as well as the members' own interests in gardening. Starting in 1917 members supplied fresh vegetables to the local hospital from their own gardens and from a garden which they established on the hospital grounds. They canned produce to provide vegetables for the staff and patients in winter in the days before freezers. This program continued until the early 1940s when the club switched its attention to landscaping at the hospital. Members also planted flowers to cheer up patients. Another early project was to help elementary school children plant flowers and teach them about beautification. This project expanded to become the Highway Development Committee and eventually the Beautification Committee which promotes the aesthetic improvement of Loudoun County and its towns and highways.

The club's concern with county beautification led it to work actively in opposition to the use of billboards. One member, Vinton Liddell Pickens (1900-1993), particularly urged the use of zoning to prevent the construction of billboards. She regularly attended meetings of the Board of Supervisors until the board agreed to appoint a Planning Commission to write a zoning ordinance. Vinton Pickens was the commission's first and longest serving chairman. Through the work of the Leesburg Garden Club, in 1942 Loudoun County became the first rural county in the country to have a zoning ordinance.

In 1985 the club became embroiled in a conflict with Lyndon LaRouche (1922 - ), an extremist political figure. LaRouche moved his headquarters to Loudoun County, and one of his organizations, Campaign Publications, Inc., filed for a variance to change the use of its agriculturally zoned property. The Leesburg Garden Club joined other concerned groups and citizens to protest the request. The Board of Zoning Appeals denied the request in February of 1986, and LaRouche and his supporters targeted those who opposed the variance with media attacks. Leesburg Garden Club members were described by LaRouche in an interview as "these clacking busybodies in this Soviet jellyfish front sitting here in Leesburg oozing out their funny little

propaganda making nuisances of themselves."

The Leesburg Garden Club became a non-profit 501c3 organization in 1999 and has continued its civic work in order to maintain that status. The club has worked with Oatlands Plantation and Dodona Manor in preserving and maintaining these historic properties, which are open to the public. Each year it sends a child to Nature Camp where he or she learns the value and interest of nature conservation. A college scholarship is awarded each year to a high school student who will be studying in a horticulture related field. A long established custom has been for the members to meet in December to create wreaths and decorative greens to hang on Leesburg's unique swinging courthouse yard gates and the doors of Thomas Balch Library, the town's history and genealogy library. Other projects undertaken in the past have included encouraging homeowners to beautify their yards by giving them daffodil bulbs, planting dogwood trees in public spaces, and persuading the town of Leesburg to place hanging baskets of flowers on utility poles. The club monitors the county's sign ordinance and works with the county when amendments are necessary; this has happened only twice in the 70 years since it was adopted as part of the zoning ordinance.

The club also is active in gardening activities such as horticulture, flower arranging and flower shows. It takes part in the major GCV shows as well as sponsoring them when its turn comes in the GCV rotation. Members have won statewide awards for their work in conservation, preservation and beautification including, the GCV Massie Medal four times for saving the Broad Run bridge, introducing zoning to the county, for horticultural achievement and for donating trees for the Douglass Community Center "Park for all Ages." The club won the GCV Common Wealth Award for that park, and a member won the GCV deLacy Grey Memorial Medal for her work to protect the natural resources of the commonwealth. 10 members have won the GCV Horticultural Award of Merit.

## Scope and Content

The collection contains records of the Leesburg Garden Club and includes directories, histories, minutes, committee reports, annual reports, scrapbooks, GCV information, information on the Leesburg Garden Club's participation in Garden Week in Virginia, photographs, information on the club's part in the adoption of zoning and a sign ordinance in Loudoun County, membership lists and information on the club's 501c3 status and other miscellaneous material.

Early records of the club were lost when the historian died. Consequently, most of the material begins with the 1940s although there are a few earlier items including histories and some meeting/yearbooks. Minutes from 1995 and 2007 are also missing. This is an open collection and additional material will be added at least every two years.

The collection includes seven scrapbooks dating from 1948 through part of 2008. The material which would have been placed in a scrapbook during and after 2008 is currently being put into folders for better preservation. Much of the material, especially in the early books, is in very fragile condition. Material which had come loose from pages has been placed in containers with interleaved notations of where those missing pages may be found. Some Garden Week material and yearbooks may also be found in the scrapbooks.

Files on Historic Garden Week note many addresses and locations of houses which may be compared with the Lewis/Edwards Architectural Surveys of Loudoun County, 1971-1983 (M 022), Architectural Surveys of Leesburg, 1971-2001 (M 016), and Loudoun County Architectural Surveys, Supplement, 2003 (M 011) for more information on many of the buildings.

## Arrangement

Box folder

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**Folder 5: Attendance Records, 1974-1985**

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**Folder 7: Executive Board Minutes, 1956, 1957**

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**Folder 28: Minutes (GCV Rose Show; interstate billboard bill), 1959**

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**Folder 32: Minutes (missing June: Riverbend Dam threat). 1963**

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**Folder 7: Minutes (see November membership system proposed change), 1976**

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**Folder 13: Minutes (2 sets & summaries April-November) (Common Wealth Award won by club), 1982**

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**Folder 16: Minutes (2 sets) (William Fitzhugh Rust (1916 - 1991) land donation to Leesburg for park; A.V. Symington (1916 - 2003), 1985**

**Folder 17: Minutes (2 sets), 1986**

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**N.W., 1975**

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**Folder 15: "Historic Garden Week in Virginia," booklet, 1979**

**Folder 16: Garden Week, brochure: Braddock House (In Leesburg), 19 (old street number) West (now northwest) Loudoun St. in Leesburg, 11 West (now northwest) Cornwall St. in Leesburg, Belgrove, Burr Ridge, Oatlands Hamlet, Little Oatlands, Oak Hill, 1979**

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**Folder 18: "Historic Garden Week in Virginia" booklet, 1980**

**Folder 19: "Historic Garden Week in Virginia" booklet, 1981**

**Folder 20: Garden Week, ticket, brochures (3 copies): (addresses are old street numbers) Shea house 49 (old street number) West (now northwest) Cornwall St., Conrad house 20 West (now northwest) North St., Rokeby, Oatlands Hamlet, Little Oatlands, Church of our Saviour, Oatlands miller's house, Oat Hill, 1981**

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**Folder 3: Garden Week, Information for chairman, 1983**

**Folder 4: Garden Week, Information about houses (Old Stone Meeting House, Goose Creek Friends Meeting House, Somerset, Lark Rise, Oakland Green, Wenona, Stonecrest), 1983**

**Folder 5: Garden Week, publicity, 1983**

**Folder 6: Garden Week, chronology, 1983**

**Folder 7: Garden Week, correspondence re: invitations and thank-you notes, 1983**

**Folder 8: Garden Week, Lincoln area: brochures (4 copies), badge, 1985**

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**Folder 11: Garden Week, correspondence (general), 1985**

**Folder 12: Garden Week, correspondence with GCV, 1985**

**Folder 13: Garden Week, advertising, 1985**

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**Folder 15: Garden Week, letters regarding complimentary tickets, 1985**

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**Folder 18: Garden Week, expenses, receipts, 1985**

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**Folder 20: Garden Week, Annual Report, 1985**

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Thomas Balch Library