

Charleston Gardens

and the Landscape Legacy of Loutrel Briggs



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Frontispiece: *Camellia japonica*

Page v: A garden on Church Street, Charleston

Chapter Five



Community and Civic Projects

THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER Loutrel Briggs gave generously of his time and talents to assist with community and civic projects, many of which were carried out in concert with the Garden Club of Charleston. The following individuals were in attendance at the organization's first meeting in 1922: Mrs. Thomas Pinckney, Mrs. Daniel Ravenel, Mrs. Edwin Parsons, Mrs. D. Porcher, Mrs. C. Norwood Hastie, Mrs. Bessie Ravenel, Mrs. A. J. Greer, Mrs. B. A. Hagood, Miss Constance Frost, and Mrs. Annie L. Sloan. The primary objective of the organization was "to advance gardening in the city." The club's first civic project was the planting and care of the grounds at the Charleston Library Society at 164 King Street in downtown Charleston. Briggs assisted the Garden Club of Charleston with a number of significant projects, including Charleston's Gateway Walk, the Heyward-Washington House garden, and the garden of the Charleston County Free Library, located in the historic Jenkins Mikell House on Rutledge Avenue from 1936 to 1960. Briggs also assisted the Garden Club of South Carolina with several projects, including the design of the South Carolina Memorial Garden in Columbia, honoring soldiers who served in World War II. In addition Briggs frequently advised on camellia shows and spring garden tours as well as giving lectures and conducting classes in landscape design. Briggs was made an honorary member of the Garden Club of Charleston in 1950 in recognition of his many contributions to the community and the state. The following examples describe selected

civic and community projects in which Briggs played an important role.

The Gateway Walk

Following a trip to Paris in the late 1920s, which included an inspiring visit to La Madeleine Church and the surrounding gardens, Mrs. Clelia Peronneau McGowan returned home with a desire to create a similar setting in the heart of her native Charleston. Employing her persuasive skills as president of the Garden Club of Charleston and as an influential member of the Charleston City Council, Mrs. McGowan was successful in bringing her dream to reality with the development of Charleston's Gateway Walk.

Dedicated on April 10, 1930, to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the founding of the city, Gateway Walk combined several historic sites with an interconnecting system of landscaped walkways in Charleston's historic district. Beginning on Archdale Street in St. John's Lutheran and Unitarian churchyards, Gateway Walk continued across King Street through the grounds of the Charleston Library Society. From here the walk crossed Meeting Street, passed the Congregational Church, and concluded at St. Philip's Episcopal Church. The name "Gateway Walk" was derived from the fact that visitors passed through ten wrought-iron gates as they traveled the length of the walk.

Based on a plan prepared by Briggs, Gateway Walk was designed to provide visitors a series of experiences that appealed to the senses—historic monuments, beautiful wrought-iron gates, ornate