

Professional Gardeners In Early South Carolina

Gardeners in South Carolina produced gardens not just for their necessity but also for the pleasure of their beauty and fragrance almost from the conception of the province. As early as 1682, twelve years after the settling of the Province and only two years after the establishment of Charleston in its present location, Thomas Ash wrote that "now their Gardens begin to be supplied with such European Plants and Herbs as are necessary for the Kitchen, viz. Potatoes, Lettice, Colesworts, Parsnip, Turnip, Carrot and Reddish...Their Gardens also begin to be beautified and adorned with such Herbs and Flowers which to the Smell or Eye are pleasing and agreeable, viz. the Rose, Tulip, Camation and Lilly, &c."¹

1697

The first professional gardener on record in South Carolina was French. Mathurin Guerin was a French Huguenot who took refuge in the province and requested to be naturalized as an English citizen under the act passed on March 10, 1697, designed to grant to all aliens that were Inhabitants of the Province of South Carolina the same privileges as those persons born of English parents. The act was limited to the persons therein named and to those who might petition within three months. An oath of allegiance to King William was required.² Mathurin Guerin was a native of St. Nazaire, in Xaintonge, son of Pierre Guerin, and of Jeanne Bilbau. His wife was Marie Nicholas, daughter of Andre Nicholas and of Francoise Dunot.³

1719

South Carolina's next gardener of record was Bartholomew Garret who was dead in 1719 when his widow Elizabeth (Major), originally of London, declared her "love and affection" for Thomas Hayward, a feltmaker of Charleston.⁴

1736

In July, 1736 Robert Hume advertised in the South Carolina Gazette for an overseer "that understands Gardening to live at his Plantation near Charlestow."

1738

In May 1738 Sarah Blakeway advertised in the South Carolina Gazette that she had a gardener to hire out.

1752

In several notices in the South Carolina Gazette during November of 1752, John Barnes advertised, "This is to give Notice, to such Gentlemen and others, as have a taste in pleasure and kitchen gardens, that they may depend on having them laid out, leveled, and drained, in the most compleat manner, and politest taste, by the subscriber; who perfectly understands the contriving of all kinds of new works, and erecting wa(ter) works, &c. as fountains, cascades, grottos, &c. Plan(ting) vineyards and making of wines. As his stay in this prov(ince) will be but short (if he does not meet with sufficient en(cou)rageinent) he desires those who are inclined to employ (him) will signify their pleasure as early as possible to him, at Thomas Doughty's, and they shall be waited on by JOHN BARNES, Garden Archite(c)."

1767

In the South Carolina Gazette of May 12, 1757 Henry Middleton placed a notice to settle the estate of his

deceased gardener, George Newman.

1755 - 1789

John Watson was an immigrant gardener from England who advertised in the June 12, 1755 South Carolina Gazette, "JUST come from England, a Man that is a good gardener. Any gentleman that has occasion for one, or any planter that would employ him as an overseer, may hear of him by enquiring of the Printer."

Watson was to become a long-lasting figure in the South Carolina gardening scene. He imported plants and gardening tools for sale. He was still advertising in the Gazette of December 10, 1763, "GARDENING in all its various branches will be done by him, either by the day or year. 11 He placed a similar ad in the same paper on September 16, 1765, and on February and November 10, 1768. On April 27, 1767 he placed a notice in the Gazette of his moving.

"THE Subscriber returns his most hearty thanks to all his friends who have been pleased to favour him with their custom, and hopes for a continuance thereof; and begs leave to acquaint them that he has removed to the house known by the name of the Brew House, where he still continues gardening, selling of seeds, tools, fruit-trees, American plants, etc. as formerly.

Watson was Henry Lauren's gardener among others.⁵ He was the son of James and Jan Watson of North Britain, and he had a brother William, a "planter" in West Florida who died there in 1781.⁶ John Watson's wife Catherine was buried in St. Phillip's Parish on June 8, 1782, 7; and he died, in the spring of 1789.⁸

His sons James Mark and John carried on his nursery business until 1802 when John left South Carolina for health reasons. The Charleston Times ran the following notice on April 30, 1802,

"The Subscriber BEING obliged to leave the country on account of his bad state of health, offers his handsome retreat for sale-There is on the premises a small Dwelling House, Stable and Fowl House, known to be a part of Watson's Gardens. Lot No. 3; In the vicinity of Hampstead. It is well worth the attention of any gentleman wishing a situation of the kind, as there is none for miles equal to it; the land is in the highest state of cultivation, both with vegetables and as complete a Nursery as Carolina can produce. He likewise offers his valuable NEGRO FELLOW, complete gardener and understands perfectly the management of raising, grafting, budding and pruning of trees- it is unnecessary to mention any particulars about him, as he is well known in this city. JOHN WATSON".

1753

When the elder Watson had arrived in South Carolina in the middle of the 18th century, much gardening work was being carried on by slave artisans. Ceasar was the slave gardener of Joseph Wragg who died in Charleston County in 1753.⁹ Ceasar was valued at 400 pounds when his ownership transferred to Elizabeth Manigault, wife of Peter Manigault.¹⁰ Quashi was the slave gardener of Joseph Wragg as well. He was valued at 120 pounds, and his ownership fell to Charlotte Wragg.¹¹

1765

During this period notices appeared in the South Carolina Gazette searching for gardeners. On March 16, 1765, "A GARDENER, who understands laying out and executing work in the - present taste, and skillful in a Kitchen-Garden" could hear of a good place by applying to the printer of the Gazette. In April 1765, Christopher Gadsden advertised for a "Person that understands the managing of a garden and orchard (particularly a kitchen garden) and is willing to tend the markets constantly"; and in that June a gardener "that understands the management of a garden, orchard, marketing" was offered

"employment on a pleasant place within two miles of Charles-Town".

1760 - 1771

Before 1760 another English gardener immigrated to Charleston, William Bennett.¹² The May 13 and June 11, 1771 issues of the South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal carried the following ad.

GARDENING. The Subscriber takes this Method to acquaint the Public, That he will undertake to MAKE, or put in COMPLEAT ORDER, the GARDEN of any Gentleman or Lady in or within Two or three Miles of Charles-Town, at an easy Expence, either by the Day, Year or Quarter, as may best suit them; and can be well recommended by the Gentleman he came out of England with. Enquire at Mr. Harper's, Taylor, In Church-Street, opposite Thomas Laughton Smith, Esq.

WILLIAM BENNET

Bennet also sold seeds in Charleston during this period.¹³ Bennet appears to have come into the province under an indenture, served his time, and gained his independence.

1767

Some Indentured gardeners did not chose to serve their contract as evidenced by this ad in the Gazette on September 28, 1767,

ABSENTED on the 26th of Sept. 1767, from the ship Two Friends, Samuel Ball, master, Indented servant, JAMES FOSTER, aged about 22 years, well set, about 5 feet 6 inches high, his complexion ruddy, but a good deal sun-burnt, with short brown hair, inclined to curl; born in Norwich, and a gardener by trade, had on when he went away a brown coat, but may have changed his dress.

1767

The only knowledge of gardener Robert Hunter comes from his June 15, 1767 notice in the Gazette, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT frequent and repeated trespasses have been committed, at Mr. Daniel Cannon's garden, up-the-Path, This is therefore to inform and forwarn all persons whatsoever, for the future, as they must expect to answer the consequences by a gun, or dog, or both. ROBERT HUNTER, Gardener.

1768 - 1798

Alexander Petrie who advertised with much the same concern as Hunter appears to have moved throughout several Southern states offering his services. He made his first appearance in three South Carolina periodicals in the spring of 1768, with the following notice,¹⁴

"ALEXANDER PETRIE, gardiner, having hired the land of Mr. Pike, lately belonging to Mr. Marshall, on the neck; gives this public notice, that the same is now occupied for a Gerden, and as such, hopes no person will attempt to break down his fences, under the pretence of shooting, etc. etc. as he is compelled from the damages lately received by persons running over his plants, to prosecute the first offender to the utmost rigueur of the law."

By the fall of the same year Petrie was advertising in the Savannah Georgia Gazette that, "GENTLEMEN in town or country may have their Gardens made in the neatest manner, or looked after by the year, by their humble servant, ALEXANDER PETRIE, at Mr. O'Connor's. N.B. Work to be done by the day or piece."¹⁵

On December 13, 1783 he placed the following ad in the Richmond Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser,

"Alexander Petrie, Gardiner (sic) and Ground-Workman, INTENDS living near this city, to carry on the different branches of his BUSINESS. He will take two or three boys as apprentices, if affable; their masters may have them taught to any particular branch, as may be agreed on, such as ditching, ground-work, &c necessary to every Gentleman's plantation, who wishes to improve it. He would be obliged to those Gentlemen who may choose to employ him, to acquaint him of it before the last of this month, that he may procure a number of hands to discharge what work he may undertake with punctuality and satisfaction."

His name was listed as having an unclaimed letter at the Richmond Virginia Post Office in the Virginia Independent Chronicle of April 16, 1788. But, in October 8, 1796, he was advertising in The Norfolk Herald, Virginia,

ALEXANDER PETRIE, GARDENER, HAS FOR SALE, Asparragras Plants, of the best quality, N.E. Old beds replanted, where the ground is high and dry it is proper to plant this fall; if low and wet to plant in the spring, when the sap is rising.

By March 31, 1798 he had returned to Charleston and was involved in the 1798 Fire.¹⁶ His wife, Eliza, died in Charleston in 1801,¹⁷ after which nothing more appears about gardener Petrie.

1768

In 1768 "James Callahan, lately from Philadelphia perfectly acquainted with all branches of gardening" advertised for work in the Gazette on December 22.

1769

In 1769, William Bethune, identified as a gardener of Charleston sells two slaves to Daniel Cannon, a carpenter.¹⁸

1774

In 1774, John Bert is identified as a gardener in a land transaction.¹⁹

1782 - 1790

George Reynolds is listed in the 1790 Charleston City Directory as a gardener at 42 George Street. He also appears as a gardener in sureties²⁰ and administrative estate settlements.²¹

1782

Quomina was a slave gardener at the Snee Plantation of Charles Pickney when Pickney died in 1782.²²

1776 - 1783

Peter Bouton was a French gardener who also signed his name Pierre. He was active in the Charleston area from 1776 until his death in 1783. He married the widow Mary Air on January 9, 1777 at St. Philip's. Mary Air was the granddaughter and heir of Charleston merchant, Peter Benoit. On July 21 of that year he placed the following notice in the Gazette of the State of South Carolina in Charleston,

PETER BOUTON, Gardener, near and wit in the town gate, having suffered...frequent robberies of the produce of his hard labour, and greatly also by loss of rest, in watching by himself and two negroes, and frequent firing of guns, with no other intent than to deter the thieves—which not having answered his purpose—he now gives public notice and warning, That whoever hereafter shall presume to enter his inclosures in the night, must do it at the risk of their lives."

Boulton was identified as having been a gardener in Charleston during the settlement of his estate in 1783 and in South Carolina records for several years thereafter.²³

1776 - 1785

Anthony Farasleau was another French gardener. His was alternately listed as a gardener and a weaver in several land transactions and at the settlement of his estate,²⁴ in the Charleston papers. He was active in Charleston records from 1776 until his death in 1785. Weavers often were also gardeners who grew their own dye plants.

1786

William Kirkpatrick appeared in 1786 in the will of a friend mentioned as the gardener to the estate of the late Colonel Maurice Simons.²⁵

1786

John Champney's purchased his property from William Williamson's estate in 1786. Williamson's plantation, known as "The Garden", was on the Stono River near Wallace's Ferry. He died in November 1783 and his property was advertised for sale in the State Gazette of South Carolina (Charleston) for February 23, 1786. Twenty acres were set aside as a pleasure garden and seven or eight acres, including three canals or fishponds, were "laid out and improved in a taste no where excelled in this State. ...The most curious Botanists may here be entertained. ...In short, nature and art are happily united: nature is improved but no where violated in this delightful spot." A plat was made by Joseph Purcell in 1786 and appears in John McCrudy Plat Book No. 4 ~ p. 48 showing the layout of the garden.

1788

Philip Hartz was also mentioned as a gardener in a will in 1788.²⁶

1790 - 1802

Charles Gross was listed as a gardener in the 1790 Charleston City Directory at 152 King Street. He moved to Hampstead in 1792-1793²⁷ and began to garden and sell seed²⁸ from there, until he died in 1802.²⁹

1794

Englishman James Sommers appears in the settlement of his estate after his death in 1794 as having been a gardener in Charlestown.³⁰ In his will he mentions being from Ilfordcombe in the County of Devon in England.³¹

1795 - 1810

Another Englishman, John Bryant, advertised as a gardener in the City Gazette and The Daily Advertiser in Charleston on June 6, 1795,

"GARDENING. THE subscriber, well acquainted with the European method of gardening, being a native of England, and likewise well acquainted with it in this state, having been in constant practice for some years, takes this method of informing his friends and the public in general that he proposes superintending ladies and gentlemen's gardens in or near the city, whether intended for pleasure or profit. He also plans and lays out gardens in the European taste on moderate terms."

Bryant also sold seeds, trees, and shrubs. On October 4, 1794 he married Jane Thornton in St. Philip's Parish in Charleston.³² In 1796 he advertised for an apprentice to help him.³³ "An Apprentice is wanted to the above business, either white or colored. A Lad that is honest and industrious will meet with every encouragement."

Bryant continued in the gardening and seed business until the fall of 1809, when he died.³⁴ Jane Bryant, his wife, kept the business going into 1810.³⁵ The inventory taken at his death included a greenhouse in the garden and pots, shrubs, and trees in the garden valued, at \$675.³⁶

1795

The will of gardener Robert Johnston noted that he came from Greenwill Street, Newtownards, Ireland, where he owned a house and land.³⁷

1795

Morris Conner was a gardener from St. Bartholomew's Parish who died intestate in 1795.³⁸

1795

Andrew Smith was a gardener in 1795 who advertised to train apprentices in the "art of gardening" in the March 12 edition of the City Gazette and The Daily Advertiser,

THE Subscriber has taken a lease of Widdernburn Lodge, formerly called the Grove; he will take in apprentices for three years, to be instructed in the art of gardening and farming in general, to the best advantage; as great improvement will be made on the farm, in the garden, orchard, and in the common field, the sooner they were to enter to work the better. He does not wish any gentleman to send any negro unless of good principles, obedient to orders, and of a good genius. There is good accommodations on the farm for negros of every size and description.

Andrew Smith.

1780s - 1806

Robert Squibb flourished as a botanist, seedsman, writer and gardener in Charleston and other parts of the South from the 1780's until his death in 1806 at Silk Hope Plantation near Savannah, Georgia where he was buried.³⁹ After several years as a gardener Squibb placed the following notice in the June 29, 1786 issue of the Columbian Herald in Charleston.

"FROM the frequent solicitations of a number of gentlemen of this and the adjoining states, the subscriber has been induced to undertake a work, entitled, THE SOUTH CAROLINA, GEORGIA, AND NORTH CAROLINA Gardeners Calender; Which, from its general utility, he flatters himself will meet the approbation of the public at large. The English publications hitherto made use of to point out and direct the best methods of Gardening, by no means answer the purpose, as they tend to mislead instead of instruct, and suit only the European parts for which they were designed. This work is deduced from practice and experience in this climate, wherein the most certain and simple methods are clearly pointed out, so as to render the art of gardening easy and familiar to every capacity."

When Squibb's work was published in 1787 it stated that Squibb's garden was located at the upper end of Tradd Street and this his nursery was near "Rumney Bridge". Squibb called his garden "The Botanic Garden".⁴⁰

1796

Michael O'Brian was another gardener advertising for work in the City Gazette and Daily Advertiser on September 8, 1796.

MICHAEL O'BRIAN RESPECTFULLY acquaints the Citizens of Charleston, and its environs, that he proposes to undertake the LAYING OUT OF GARDENS, in all the different branches, comprising taste and utility. He has been regularly brought up to the above undertaking, and practiced in Europe for many years with great success.

1796

William Aitkin advertised in the same periodical on December 7, 1796. "A Gardener. WANTS A PLACE, a regular-bred Gardener. He can be well recommended. A line left for him with the Printers will be duly attended to."

1798

Robert Day advertised as a "projector and gardener" in the January 9, 1798 issue of the Charleston City Gazette and Daily Advertiser.

1797

Ellsha Diven was a gardener in Charleston in the same era. He is identified as a gardener in a 1797 estate proceeding⁴¹ and at his own death in 1798.⁴²

1800

John Hope was listed as a gardener of Charleston at the administration of his estate upon his death in 1800.⁴³

1803

Edward Otter was a gardener who arrived in Charleston from England in 1803. He brought seeds and trees with him and advertised in the Charleston Courier on December 28, 1803 that "He may be found in the Market on the Bay all the forepart of the season, or at the City Hotel. He would contract with any person to lay out ground and plant it."

1806

John Renauld was a gardener who immigrated from Rambouillet, France⁴⁴ to Charleston some years after his birth in 1772. His only newspaper notice occurred in the Charleston City Gazette and Daily Advertiser when he lost his young garden apprentice on July 7, 1806.

Strayed, From the subscriber, a small new Negro Boy named JIM; about four feet 5 or 6 inches high; slender make and thin visage; has a scar on the right side of his face ~ above his eye; had on an oznaburgh shirt and blue cassimere trowsers. Whoever will deliver the said Boy at No. 34 Tradd-street, shall receive a reward of Five Dollars. JOHN RENAUD.

1806

Unfortunately the ad appearing in the March 19, 1806 edition of the Charleston Courier does not identify the English gardeners mentioned.

"The subscriber offers for Sale.... his PLANTATION, adjoining Wallace's Bridge, containing 160 acres, 120 of which are very fine marsh land, above 30 of which are under bank, with good trunks and drains. On this tract is the handsomest Garden in the state, and laid out when

1805 - 1818

John Jarman is another gardener of Charleston identified through estate matters between 1805 and 1818.⁶⁷

1819

And Daniel A. Stark was a gardener with wanderlust who preferred not to walk, according to a notice in the Charleston Times on April 19, 1819.

Caution. A MAN, who said his name was DANIEL A. STARK, and has been working as a Gardener for Mrs. Kennedy, at Gordon & Spring's Ferry, absconded on Wednesday week last, taking with him a Gun, Shot-Bag and Powder-Flask; and on the next day a Horse belonging to Mrs. K. was missing.

1818 ++

In the same period, a French gardener advertised in the December 12, 1818 Courier in Charleston, "Mr. MENANT, Gardener, A PUPIL of Mr. THGUIN, one of the Brothers of Mr. THOUIN, Professor of Culture of the Museum of Natural History of Paris, has the honor to inform the public, that he undertakes to construct all kinds of Terraces, lay out Ornamental Gardens, and attend to the Planting of Fruit Trees and Ornamental Shrubberies. He also arranges the Decorations for Entertainments; and requests those persons that wish to employ him, to have the goodness to address themselves to Mr. FRANCIS CARMAND, No. 96 Queen-street, or to Mr. NOISETTE, Botanical Agriculturist, King-street Road."

1809 - 1824

Philip S. Noisette was a gardener who was very active in Charleston at this time. He was listed as a gardener in Hamstead in the 1809 Charleston City Directory. In the November 14, 1814 Charleston Courier, he placed an ad to sell plants stating that he had been operating his garden "for some years past" at Romney Village, opposite Mr. Turpin's farm. He said that he was growing sugar cane there as well as other plants, and Menant's advertisement referred to Noisette as a "Botanical Agriculturist."

Noisette appeared as a witness to the 1824 will of Robert DuBois 68 who was also listed as a gardener in the 1809 Charleston City Directory, working out of King Street. At the time of his will, he was living at Charleston Neck in the forks of the road of King Street.

1783 - 1823

James Waddell was another gardener and weaver originally from Ireland.⁶⁹ He and his wife Ann, the widow of Benjamin Wood, appear in 1783 and 1785 estate matters.⁷⁰ In 1798 and 1799 they appear in land records as residents of Charleston Neck and members of Christ Church parish.⁷¹ In 1804 Waddell conveyed 1,082 acres he owned on John's Island.⁷² The City Gazette in Charleston on June 5, 1823 reported his death.

1821

Marmaduke Jenny was identified as a gardener "late of Charleston and the village of Washington" when he died in 1821.⁷³

1809 - 1823