

# Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle



Issue 4

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## Hello, Gardeners!

Christmas is past, and a new year is upon us. Before long we will be planting spring flowers and looking forward to summer vegetables.

I certainly hope that 2017 has been a good one for you...in your personal life, as well as in your garden.

For me, so many great lessons are learned in the garden. Perhaps patience is the greatest reward! That said, working in my garden is not merely a physical activity to achieve something aesthetically pleasing. It is practically spiritual. When I'm pulling weeds, I do a lot of thinking. Sometimes I do a lot of praying! Life has a way of throwing us curve balls from all directions, and a garden seems like the best place to ponder such matters.

Yes, a garden is a wonderful place to contemplate, but it is also a hub of activity if you are keenly aware of your surroundings. There is something very special about the buzz of insects, the songs of birds and the fragrance of flowers. Distraction, even subtle distraction, is a blessing, isn't it? Sometimes, if nothing else, a garden reminds us that life goes on.

In this issue of *Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle*, I will explore a world-renowned

statesman who found inspiration while painting flowers and landscapes, and I'll talk about some of my recent travels.

In the meantime, I wish you all a happy New Year!

*Greg Freeman*, Publisher

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## Churchill's Art Reveals a Love of Landscapes and Flowers

On September 14, 2017, I had the pleasure of attending a lecture on Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965) by historian Dr. Warren Kimball. Dr. Kimball's lecture "Winston Churchill: painter as politician, or politician as painter?" was presented near the close of the art exhibition, "Passion for Painting: The Art of Sir Winston Churchill," at Wofford College's Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts (Spartanburg, South Carolina, USA).

Having thoroughly enjoyed the PBS television documentary series, *Chasing Churchill: In Search of My Grandfather* (2008-), presented by Churchill's granddaughter, Celia Sandys (b. 1943), I had already become familiar with the art of the great statesman. When I learned of the lecture, I immediately marked my calendar and made plans to attend. Needless to say, I was not disappointed.

Dr. Kimball, Professor Emeritus at Rutgers University, is the foremost authority on Winston Churchill in the USA. Within his body of work are numerous publications related to Churchill, including *Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997). Dr. Kimball's talk proved enlightening and entertaining, as he explored Churchill's illustrious life and liberally incorporated Sir Winston's famously witty quotes. While the presentation was not from the vantage point of art historian, it served as a fitting segue to my perusal of the Churchill paintings in a gallery just down the hall from the auditorium following the lecture.

### *Passion for Painting: The Art of Sir Winston Churchill*



*Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts*  
*May 17- September 16, 2017*

On loan from the [National Churchill Museum](#) in Fulton, Missouri, *Passion for Painting: The Art of Sir Winston Churchill* brings together artwork rarely seen in North America. The exhibit includes ten of Churchill's paintings from the museum's collection or on loan from private collections. Objects used by or associated with Churchill as well as paintings of Churchill by other artists will also be on display in the Richardson Family Art Museum in the Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts from May 17 through September 16, 2017. Admission to the exhibit is free.

#### *Hours:*

Sun. Mon.: closed  
Tue. Wed. Fri. Sat.: 1-5 pm  
Thu.: 1-9 pm

#### *Upcoming Events:*

August 17, Thursday, 7 pm: "Painting as a Pastime: Churchill's Contemplative Life," lecture by Dr. Rob Jeffrey

September 14, Thursday, 7 pm: "Winston Churchill: painter as politician, or politician as painter?" by Dr. Warren Kimball

September 15, Friday, 6 pm: Closing reception and curator's talk (The National Churchill Museum)

## From Hoe Farm to the Côte d’Azur

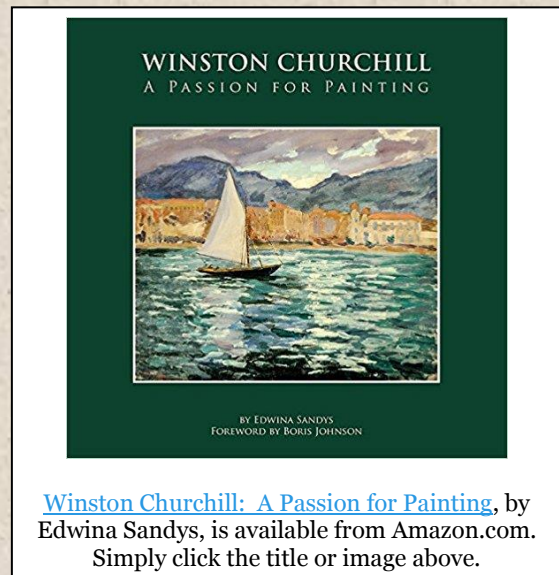
“Passion for Painting: The Art of Sir Winston Churchill” proved to be an enjoyable exhibition. Churchill’s skillful use of light and shadow reveals aptitude, even in his earlier works. Perhaps it was more than philosophical when Sir Winston proclaimed, “The glory of light cannot exist without its shadows.” Churchill had not studied at the great Parisian ateliers or apprenticed with one of London’s premier artists. He rather was known for describing his foray into art in a more slightly irreverent, comedic fashion. Edwina Sandys (b. 1938), Churchill’s granddaughter and sister to television presenter Celia Sandys, is an internationally acclaimed artist and widow of architect Richard D. Kaplan (1933-2016). Her book, *Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting*, catalogs a number of her grandfather’s paintings, including all those I viewed in the “Passion for Painting” exhibition in Spartanburg. She recalls Churchill’s journey into painting thusly:

In his 1921–22 essays *Hobbies* and *Painting as a Pastime*, Churchill describes how it was at Hoe Farm that his sister-in-law Gwendoline “Goonie” Churchill first encouraged him to experiment with painting. He began with watercolors borrowed from his young nephew, John, but quickly abandoned them in favor of the brighter and bolder colors of oil paints. He later described his experience as ‘a joy ride in a paint box’” (Sandys, 2015, p. 38).

It is worth pointing out that his painting, *Hoe Farm* (1915), depicts a home with an ivy-covered wall and a landscape filled with trees, shrubs and beds of flowers, proving that gardens and landscapes provided him with subject matter for even his earliest efforts.

Like so many great artists, including Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Churchill would fall in love with the French coastline along the Mediterranean. An ample number of seascapes or landscapes from southern France includes paintings executed within the environs of Cannes and Marseilles, as well as charming locations such as the hill town of Eze.

Perhaps my favorite Churchill work is *Coast Scene on the Riviera* (c. 1930). Not to be confused with at least one more painting by the same title and painted during the same time period, the work to which I refer is anchored by two seaside villas with a pair of pencil-thin cypress trees juxtaposed to add dimension. A foreground of trees and low-growing, blooming shrubs contrasts with a backdrop of Mediterranean coastline replete with high rugged ridges that are traversed by terraces, an arched bridge, a horizontal line (indicative of a cliff side highway...perhaps the coastal motorway between Marseille and Nice) and a waterfront Côte d’Azur town.



[Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting](#), by Edwina Sandys, is available from Amazon.com. Simply click the title or image above.

## Painting in the ‘Paris of the Sahara’

Churchill’s love for the south of France is very evident in his work, but his fascination with Morocco especially stands out. I recall from the PBS documentary that Churchill found great

inspiration just outside his window at Marrakech's famed [Hotel La Mamounia](#), which is still in operation today and proudly offers exceptional suite accommodations in what it calls *La Suite Churchill*, a luxurious hotel suite distinguished by its English style, Moroccan art and a replica of Churchill's statue on London's Parliament Square. "Churchill began his love affair with Marrakesh during the 'wilderness years' of the Thirties when, frustrated by the Baldwin government's refusal to give him a cabinet position, he spent the winter of 1935-36 on a painting holiday in Morocco. He was particularly attracted to a city he called the 'Paris of the Sahara' because of the striking contrast between the city's arid desert location and the backdrop of the imposing Atlas Mountains that surrounded Marrakesh, which inspired him to paint some of his finest watercolours" (Coughlin, 2013). The stunning view of the gardens and Atlas Mountains from his Mamounia balcony must have been a much needed diversion during difficult times. However, it is interesting to note that *Tower of the Koutoubia Mosque* (1943) is the only picture Churchill painted during the entire duration of World War II. "After the Casablanca Conference in 1943, Churchill gave it to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom he insisted on taking to Marrakech for them both to enjoy the spectacle of the setting sun on the snow of the Atlas Mountains" (Sandys, p. 112).

### Churchill Paintings Today

Weeks before the Churchill lecture, I had been following online an upcoming auction at Sotheby's in London, namely *Vivien: The Vivien Leigh Collection*, which was to be held on September 26, 2017. The auction catalog was filled with an array of paintings, furniture, photographs, jewelry and various *objets d'art* once belonging to actress Vivien Leigh (1913-1967), who had starred in films such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939), as well as Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Many of the items had been owned by Leigh and her second husband, actor and director Sir Laurence Olivier (1907-1989). I was interested in acquiring one lot consisting of two works by artist Lila de Nobili (1916-2002), which was projected to fetch between 100 and 150 British pounds. To my dismay, the pair of paintings sold for 2,000 GBP! Among the Churchill-related items in the sale were a signed letter (22,500 GBP) from Churchill to Lady Olivier, an inscribed special presentation copy (15,000 GBP) of *Painting as a Pastime* (London: Oldhams Press Limited & Ernest Benn Limited, 1948) and the lovely still-life oil painting, *Study of Roses*, a gift from Churchill to Leigh, which sold for 638,750 GBP (well above its 70,000-100,000 GBP presale estimate).

Of course, the Vivien Leigh collection was further enhanced by the celebrity status of its former owner, but the same can be said of Churchill's works, with or without a Vivien Leigh connection. As Dr. Kimball recalled in his lecture, a chauffeur once approached Sir Winston with work of his own, hoping for a reassuring critique. Sir Winston responded that the artworks were quite good, but unlike his own paintings, the chauffeur's would be judged by talent alone. Today, discerning collectors and art historians alike recognize the depth and breadth of Churchill's artistic ability, but the statesman primarily regarded his painting as a mere hobby, although he did send five paintings to be exhibited in Paris, selling four. "For the Paris test of his ability he hid his identity under an assumed name: Charles Morin" (Robbins, 2017).

"There was art in Churchill's politics, but no politics in his art," Edwina Sandys writes, adding, "Unashamedly, he painted for pure pleasure, channeling his *joie de vivre* onto the canvas" (Sandys, p. 12). Whatever Churchill's motivation, art lovers today are able to enjoy his wonderful paintings and the locations which inspired him, thanks in large part to the National Churchill Museum

(Fulton, Missouri, USA) and publications such as Sandys' book, *Winston Churchill: Passion for Painting*. It is an added bonus for art lovers – who happen to be garden enthusiasts – that Churchill enjoyed painting the myriad shapes, colors and textures found in gardens and complex landscapes. As a result, we share in the joy of this larger-than-life figure, who once advised: “Plant a garden in which you can sit when digging days are done. It may be only a small garden, but you will see it grow. Year by year it will bloom and ripen” (Churchill, 1921/1922). As Churchill grew older, becoming less of a public figure, painting gave him pleasure and distraction, and his advice about growing rings true today whether one is planting a garden or painting it.

Churchill, Winston S. “Hobbies,” *The Strand Magazine*, December 1921.

Churchill, Winston S. “Painting as a Pastime,” *The Strand Magazine*, January 1922.

Coughlin, Con. “Marrakesh: where Churchill and Roosevelt played hookey,” *The Telegraph*. 10 April 2013.

Robbins, Ron Cynewulf. “The Artist Winston Churchill: Half Passion, Half Philosophy.” *National Churchill Museum*. <https://www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org/the-artist-winston-churchill.html> Accessed 17 December 2017.

Sandys, Edwina. *Winston Churchill: A Passion for Painting*. Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Company Publishers, 2015.

## **Just What the Doctor Ordered South Carolina Physician’s Passion for Gardening Helps Make One Holy Space an Inviting Place**

My father and I were called to [Holy Trinity Episcopal Church](#) (Clemson, South Carolina, USA) in August 2017, where our family upholstery business was hired to reupholster the seating for the choir.

It was there that we met Dr. Byron Harder, who tends the landscape around the church. His plantings rival some beds and groupings at the nearby South Carolina Botanical Garden, in my opinion. Dr. Harder’s wife, Lillian “Mickey” Harder, former director of the Brooks Center for Performing Arts, informed me that her husband spends many hours each week laboring in the church gardens and views his work as a way to serve God and be a blessing to the church. His work certainly makes an impression on those who bring their children to the church’s school, as well as the many college students and campus visitors who stroll past.

A variety of colorful perennials and flowering shrubs fill a sunny, eastside bed, which is anchored by a lovely magnolia. Shady spaces occupied by hostas, hellebores and other



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interesting plants encourage visitors to rest for a while on one of the benches near the main entrances to the church and school.

During the time in which we worked at the church, Dr. Harder, a retired team physician, flew with the Clemson University men's basketball team to Spain for an exhibition game. While they were in Barcelona, a terrorist drove a van into a crowd of pedestrians just outside their hotel on August 17, 2017, garnering international news coverage. No one from Clemson was among the injured or dead.

Safe and sound, Dr. Harder was back at the church within days, faithfully toiling among the shrubs and flowers, bringing a small dose of beauty and harmony to a broken world that desperately needs healing. His labor of love plays a part in making a holy space an inviting place where spiritual healing can be found. Perhaps that is just what the doctor ordered.



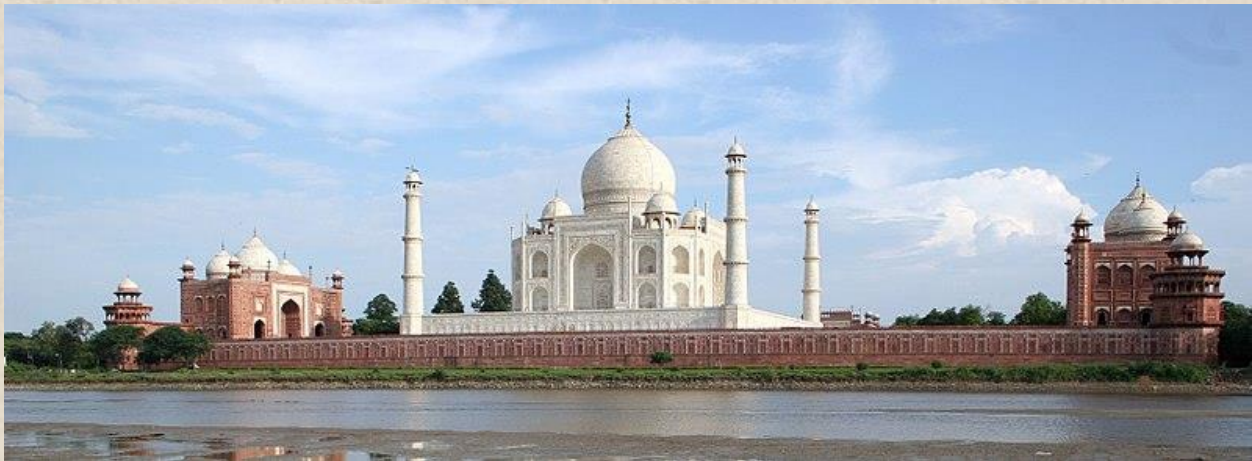
Greg Freeman

**Dense plantings of trees, shrubs, perennials and flowering annuals surround the church, adding color and texture to the landscape.**

## The Taj Mahal

### A Symbol of Love Situated in a Garden of Paradise

Believed to have been completed in 1653, the Taj Mahal is one of the most recognizable architectural marvels in the world. The white marble mausoleum, located on the south bank of the Yamuna River in Agra, India, was commissioned by Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan, to house the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, who was said to be his favorite wife. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Taj Mahal, having become a symbol of love, “is visited by an estimated 3.5 million people every year and is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world” (Syed, 2018). At the time of this writing, it is the final hours of 2017 in the USA. Hours ago, 2018 began in India, at which time the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) banned entry into the crypt. The ban has since been “revoked apparently after numerous complaints from tourists, particularly foreigners, who were miffed at the sudden prohibition, despite having paid full tickets for visiting the monument, including the crypt” (Jaiswal, 2018). Therefore, it appears for now that the Taj Mahal, its outlying buildings and garden will continue to grant unfettered access to millions of tourists annually, but some limits are expected to be put in place as some fear the historic structure will become endangered.



David Castor, Public Domain

**Taj Mahal and outlying buildings as seen from across the Yamuna River (northern view)**

### The Taj Garden

A perusal of the Indian government’s official [website](#) for the Taj Mahal reveals that there is both rhyme and reason to the garden design, down to the minutest of details. The paradise garden (*charbagh*) concept had made its way to India’s Mughals from the Persian-influenced Timurid Empire. Even the pools and fountains are key to the design, and an aqueduct from the slow-moving

Yamuna River was put in place to keep the garden watered. Charbagh means ‘four gardens’ and the quadrilateral layout is based on the four gardens of Paradise described in the Qur’an. At the Taj Mahal, each of the four parts of the charbagh contains sixteen flower beds.

It is interesting to note that there is symbolism in the various plants and trees located in the Taj Garden. The Italian cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*) and various fruit trees were not planted by accident, as it is “believed that the cypress plant represents death or eternity, and flowering fruit trees represent life or fertility” (Benfield, 2013, p. 34).

Throughout the decades, some famous photographs have been taken in the foreground of those cypress-flanked pools at the Taj Mahal. An unmarried Charles, Prince of Wales (b. 1948) expressed at the time of his photograph in 1980 that he would like to bring his bride to the Taj Mahal one day. A strained relationship between he and his subsequent wife, Lady Diana Spencer (1961-1997), was quite apparent when the two had the opportunity to travel to India in 1992. The *Daily Mail* would later declare: “Charles, who had once vowed, ‘One day I would like to bring my bride here,’ was not going to be where we needed him most — seated next to his wife on a bench in front of the bloody Taj Mahal!” (Arbiter, 2014). Ultimately, the prince was obligated to a business forum 1200 miles away in Bangalore while the Princess of Wales sat alone on a bench, prompting sympathy, rumors and tabloid articles. The union between Prince Charles and Princess Diana did not last, and the princess would later perish along with her male companion, Dodi Fayed (1955-1997), and their chauffeur, Henri Paul (1956-1997), in a tragic automobile crash in Paris in 1997 while fleeing *paparazzi* at a high rate of speed. On their first official visit to India, Prince William (b. 1982) and Kate Middleton (b. 1982) made a stop at the Taj Mahal in 2016. Happy moments with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge amid the Taj gardens were captured on film, and news outlets around the world compared the contrast between their photographs and those of Prince William’s mother sitting unaccompanied by her husband more than twenty years earlier.

## **The British Raj**

While a great polarization along religious lines might exist today throughout India, it has not been that long ago that India was part of the vast British Empire. India’s quest for self-rule was led in large part by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), who organized the Quit India Movement in 1942. His nonviolent civil disobedience inspired American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968). As portrayed in *The Jewel in the Crown*, the acclaimed 1984 television series, the transition from British rule to self-governance was not an entirely smooth one. India gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1947, but the nation had been under Crown rule since 1858, and the East India Company had ruled prior to that point beginning in 1757.

## **One Artist’s Perspective**

In October 2017, I had the opportunity to acquire from a British dealer an original watercolor rendering of the Taj Mahal by Irish-born artist Colonel Robert Charles Goff (1837-1922), a veteran of the Crimean War who was later transferred to Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), during the reign of Queen Victoria (1876-1901). Noted for his etchings, Goff was influenced by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Having achieved the rank of colonel in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces, Goff retired from military service and devoted much of his time to art and travel. Elected Fellow of the

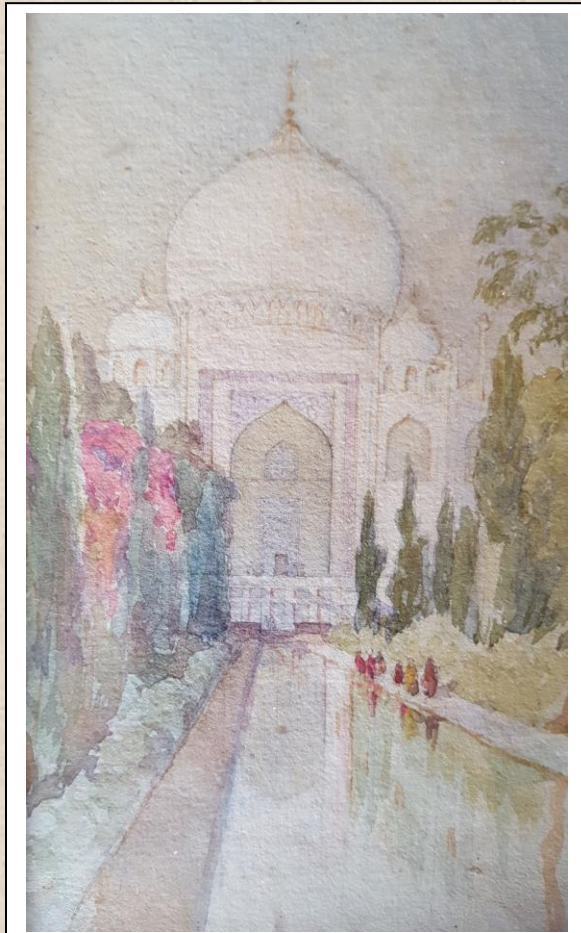
Royal Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers in 1887, Goff is best known for his etchings, but his body of work includes drawings and paintings as well.

In 1877, Goff married Beatrice Teresa Testaferrata-Abela, daughter of Baron Testaferrata-Abela of Malta. With her, he had a son, but both his child and wife later died. In 1899, he married Clarissa Catherine de Hochepped-Larpent, daughter of the eighth Baron de Hochepped-Larpent. They left England to live near Florence, Italy, where they collaborated to publish *Florence and Some Tuscan Cities Painted by Colonel R. C. Goff. Described by Clarissa Goff* (London: A. & C. Black, 1905). During World War I, Goff moved to Villa Valerie, Bellaria, La Tour-de-Peliz in Switzerland where he died in 1922.

Goff's travels had taken him around the world, and his pictures reflect his journeys to such inspiring destinations as Italy, Egypt and Japan. It is not clear how many works by Goff depict his time in India, or more specifically his time at the Taj Mahal, but my painting is, no doubt, unique among his artistic creations. That said, it bears mentioning that my watercolor's provenance includes one British auction house in Bristol describing the work as "attributed to" rather than "by" Colonel Goff. However, close examination of the signature reveals that it matches that of other known works by Goff. Though Goff's etchings and paintings have not fetched excessive prices at auction, I think it is important that I challenge the "attributed to" designation.

Goff's *Taj Mahal* is a small painting, measuring 7" x 3 1/2", and is probably more than a century old, given Goff's confinement to Switzerland during World War I and his death shortly thereafter. If Goff painted this work before his retirement, it is plausible that he opted to paint on a small scale because small paintings were easier to pack and carry in baggage, especially if one's military service called for efficiency and ease of travel. Also unclear is whether Goff employed much artistic license in his rendering. Early photographs and paintings suggest that plantings in the Taj gardens were more dense and colorful than they are today. Goff's *Taj Mahal* shows a reflective pool with densely planted alternating cypress and flowering trees to one side. Could these flowering trees be his interpretation of the fruit trees which symbolize life? Note the figures in traditional dress walking alongside the pool, which give scale to the enormity of the Taj Mahal.

While Goff's military service was well within the timeline of the British Raj, it is reassuring to note that he had nothing to do with the atrocious Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 at which time members of the British Indian Army reportedly slaughtered more than 1,000 unarmed protesters with machine gun fire. At the time of this unspeakable act of brutality, Goff, an octogenarian, was



Colonel Robert Charles Goff (1837-1922), *Taj Mahal* (pre-World War I), watercolor on paper

living out his last days in Switzerland, and would not live to witness India's independence from Britain. For that matter, he probably could not have envisioned the partitioning of India into two sovereign states, the Dominion of Pakistan (present-day Islamic Republic of Pakistan and People's Republic of Bangladesh) and the Dominion of India (present-day Republic of India). The dissolution of the British Raj and partition of India led to the displacement of millions, largely along religious lines, and tensions persist today between predominantly Hindu India and its Muslim neighbor, Pakistan. It is interesting that Gandhi's attempt to reconcile the two nations led to his assassination in 1948. India, once regarded as the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, would spend the remainder of the twentieth century redefining, and perhaps rediscovering, itself. Twenty-first century India is innovative and influential on a global scale, but its vast poverty and age-old caste systems still limit opportunity for its most vulnerable citizens.

### **The Taj Mahal Today**

Colonel Goff experienced an India devoid of automobile traffic snarls, blaring horns and smog, but India saw its share of famine and disease (primarily Bubonic plague) in the late 1800s, claiming millions of lives. Whether Goff bore direct witness to these events is uncertain, but his *Taj Mahal* reveals that he beheld, in all its glory, an iconic landmark, a landmark that one hundred years later is reportedly slightly discolored due to pollution and increasingly at risk due to large-scale visitor traffic.

Still, the gleaming Taj Mahal majestically towers above an immense paradise garden that was designed with forethought and ingenuity, making it fit to be enjoyed by a Mughal or passing peasant, a tourist or visiting prince. For that reason, those fortunate to see firsthand the Taj Mahal and its environs admire in awe, as did Colonel Robert Charles Goff.

Arbiter, Dickie. "The real story behind the photos that laid bare Diana's despair: For 12 years he guarded the most intimate secrets of Charles, Diana (and Camilla). Now, in a new memoir, their former press officer reveals all," *Daily Mail*. 19 September 2014.

Benfield, Richard. *Garden Tourism*. Boston: CAB International, 2013.

Jaiswal, Anuja. "Ban on entry to Taj Mahal crypt: ASI proposes, Minister Mahesh disposes," *Times of India*. 1 January 2018.

Syed, Dr. Amir. "Op-Ed: Some Indians disown the Taj Mahal," *Daily Times*. 1 January 2018.

## **A Charleston Excursion Meeting Picasso, Touring Middleton Place**

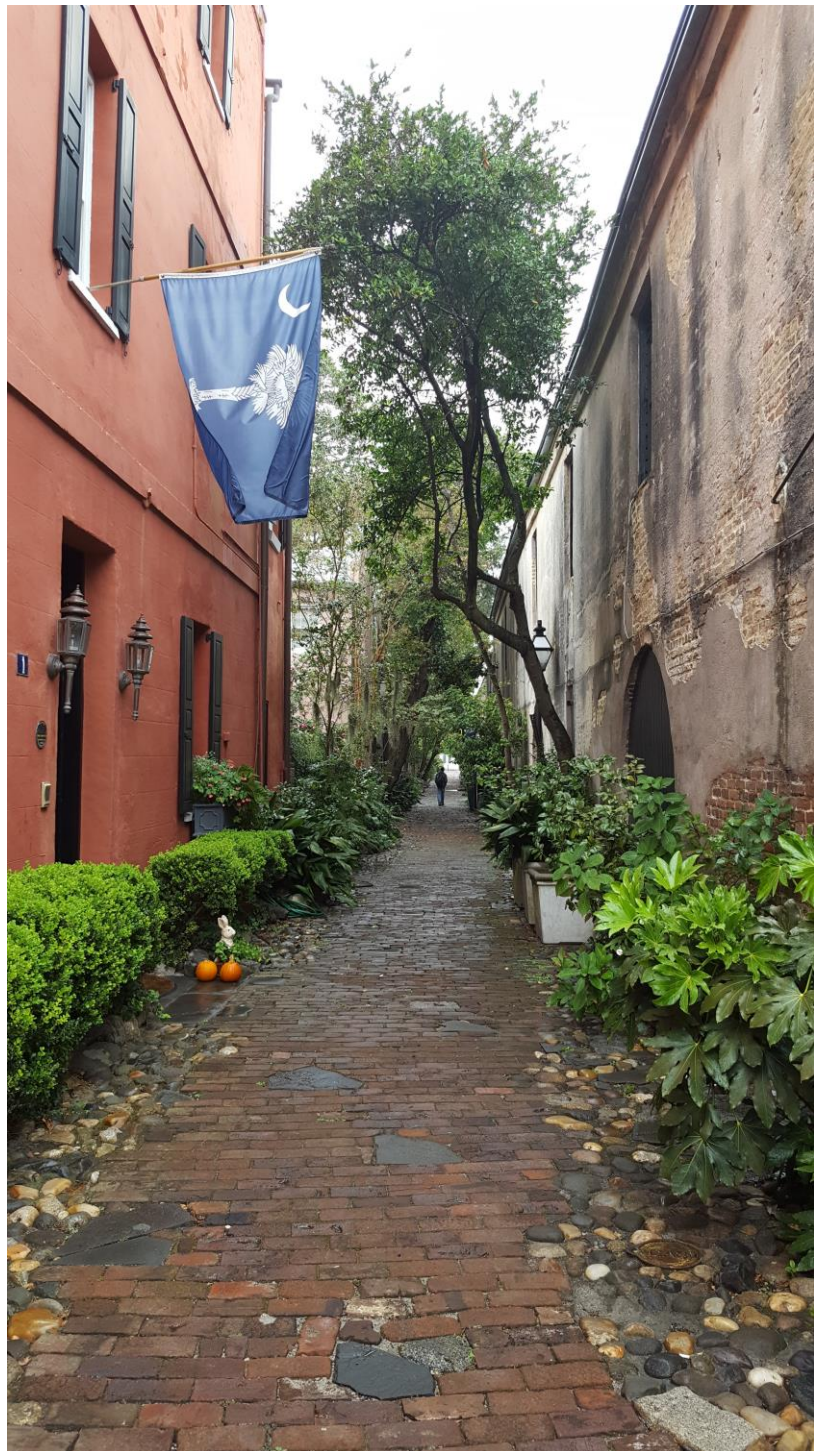
In November 2017, I drove to the South Carolina Lowcountry for a most memorable two-day solo adventure. Less than two weeks prior to venturing to Charleston, I had learned that Olivier Picasso (b. 1961), grandson of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), was slated to be a guest lecturer for the

Gibbes Museum of Art Annual Distinguished Guest Lecture Series. The talk was to be given at the College of Charleston. Intrigued, I bought a ticket on a whim, booked a hotel room and made plans to attend.

I arrived in Charleston on the afternoon of November 9. It was somewhat chilly and drizzling rain, but the weather neither dampened my spirits nor kept me from exploring the city on foot. I strolled to the harbor front where, oddly enough, I was the only human in sight, except for some workers on a nearby barge. I toured the Gibbes Museum of Art. I walked several blocks to reflect at the historic and poignant Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church where a hate-filled, 21-year-old gunman killed nine parishioners in June 2015. And, of course, I visited the famous City Market where I purchased benne wafers and pralines for family and friends.

After exploring the city, I drove across the landmark Ravenel Bridge to Mount Pleasant where I checked in at the Hilton Garden Inn Charleston/Mt. Pleasant. By the time I had rested a bit and changed clothes, it was time to return to the city for the Picasso lecture.

The Picasso talk was very insightful and certainly provided me with a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hear the grandson of the great Picasso expound on the artist's exciting life. However, I am quite embarrassed to admit that I



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**A beautifully planted alley way between residences along Queen Street, Charleston**



**Olivier Widmaier Picasso signing my copy of *Pablo Picasso: Family Album* (Málaga, Spain: Museo Picasso Málaga, 2013). At my request, Picasso inscribed ‘Genius inspires genius’.**

remember more from my conversation with a member of the Danish aristocracy, who conversed with me at length as we waited in line for Mr. Picasso to autograph our books! She was fascinating, and we shared many mutual interests from art and history to books and genealogy. We were at the end of the line, and I tried to draw as little attention to our conversation as possible amidst the crowd and noise, but it amused me that several individuals in front of us stopped mid-sentence in conversations of their own to listen in on ours. Born a Danish baroness, this lady – clearly well-educated, well-traveled, well-dressed and well aware of the sense of responsibility her unique breeding and upbringing had imposed upon her from birth – possessed a commanding presence. Opinionated, but polite and gracious, she revealed that she always kept an open mind to ideas, and preferred to form her own opinions of public figures rather than rely on members of the media to do her thinking. For this reason, and to my disdain, she was planning to go hear Steve Bannon speak at the Citadel the following night!

As I departed from the College of Charleston, I was grateful for the unforgettable evening I had just experienced. Back at the hotel, I appealed to my social media friends and followers to recommend a plantation for me to visit the following morning. Middleton Place emerged as the most recommended, and I left Mount Pleasant on the morning of November 10 for the plantation, which is located along the Ashley River several miles outside downtown Charleston.

Declared “the most interesting and important garden in America” by the Garden Club of America in 1941, Middleton Place is noted for its parterre and terraces, its camellias, azaleas and roses and its famous Middleton Oak, a specimen of *Quercus virginiana* that had marked an Indian trail before the arrival of English settlers. In November, there are not many blooming flowers at Middleton, but following are some photographs I took during my limited time at the property, and these will certainly beckon me back for another visit in the not-so-distant future, if I have my way:

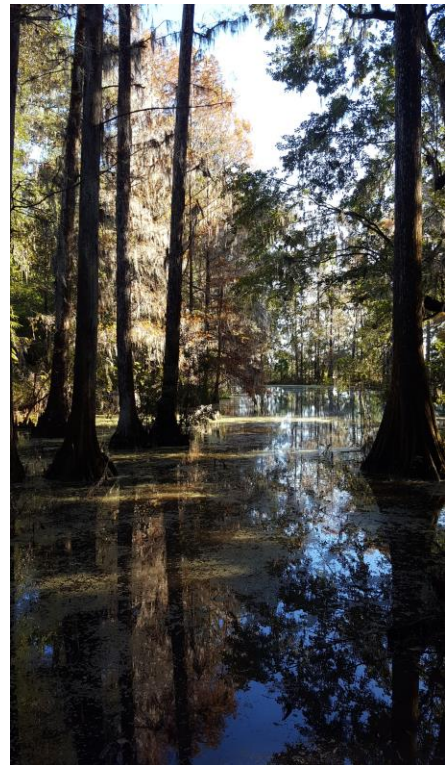


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**The Middleton Oak**



Greg Freeman



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Established by South Carolina planter, John Williams, the property that would become Middleton Place was part of a dowry bestowed to Mary Williams upon her father's death. In 1741, Miss Williams married Henry Middleton (1717-1784), and the idea for Middleton Place was conceived.

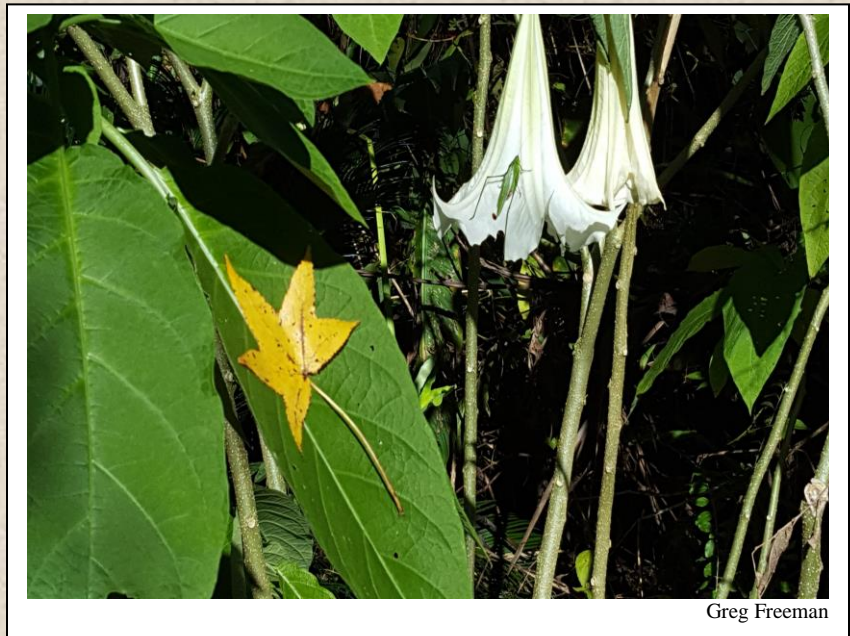
In partnership with an English gardener named Simms, Middleton set about making the estate both a working plantation and a garden showplace. Middleton and Simms drew inspiration from the garden book, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, by Dezallier d'Argenville. Today, Middleton Place is recognized as the oldest landscaped gardens in the USA.

Following Mary Williams Middleton's death in 1761, Middleton gave the plantation to his son, Arthur (1742-1787), a signer of the Declaration of Independence. During the British siege of Charleston, Middleton Place was ransacked. Even some of the sculptures throughout the gardens were beheaded. In 1783, the British committed to withdraw from the southern colonies in an agreement signed at Middleton.

In 1865, the main house at Middleton was destroyed by Union troops during the American Civil War. Further damage resulted from the 1886 Charleston earthquake. For years, Middleton's gardens remained neglected until the early twentieth century. Home to thousands of camellias, Middleton's parterre still contains a red double-flowering *Camellia japonica* that French botanist André Michaux (1746-1802) gifted to Arthur Middleton 230 years ago. Michaux



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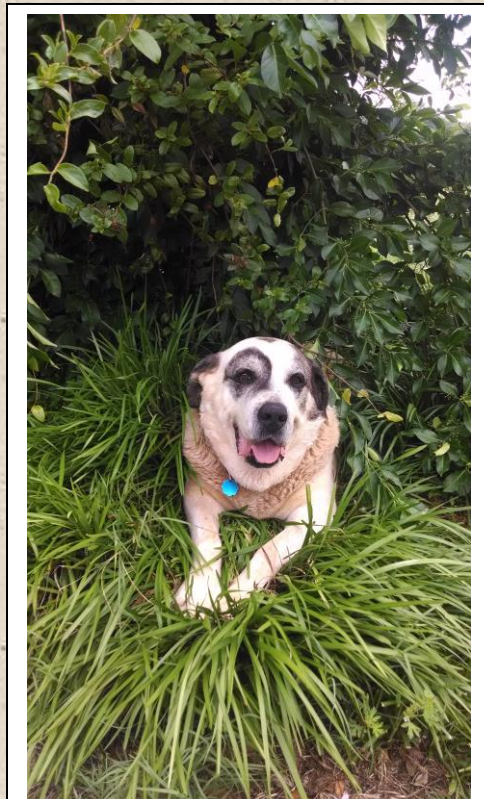
called it “reines des fleurs” or “queen of flowers.” Middleton Place, now a museum, is part of a National Historic Landmark District, and is immensely popular as a tourist destination.

## Late 2017 Garden Additions and the Loss of a Special Friend

My last plant acquisitions in 2017 included daffodils and primroses.

From [Esker Farm Daffodils](#) (Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, UK), I ordered some exciting daffodils that will hopefully prove useful in my 2018 show season and springtime hybridizing efforts. Among these are the early-blooming trumpet, ‘Feline Queen’; the pink-cupped ‘Subtle Shades’; a superb all-white cultivar, ‘Sheelagh Rowan’; an impressive winner in Northern Ireland, ‘Treasure Hunt’; the white/pink double, ‘Hibernian’; and Sir Frank Harrison’s poet hybrid, ‘Barr Hall’. I planted the bulbs on Thanksgiving Day, and Boomer, my canine companion of ten years, joined me in the garden and kept me company while I worked. He had been declining physically, and I knew the inevitable was coming. Making the decision to put him down on November 29 was heart-breaking for me, and he is missed by everyone who got to know him. An impulse purchase of cheaply priced bulbs of the historic daffodil cultivar, ‘Thalia’, at a local box store preceded Boom Boom’s death by a few days. Following his burial, his grave seemed like the perfect location for the bulbs of ‘Thalia’.

Other recent plant purchases came from [Gilbert H. Wild and Son, LLC](#) (Reeds, Missouri, USA), namely the dwarf butterfly bush, *Buddleja* ‘Orchid Annie’, and several primrose selections from the breeding program of Kerley & Company (Willingham, Cambridge, England, UK). The primroses include: *Primula* ‘Belarina® Nectarine’ PP16,365 (‘Kerbelnec’); *Primula* ‘Belarina® Pink Ice’ PP16,598 (‘Kerbelpice’); and *Primula* ‘Belarina® Valentine’ PP24,691 (‘Kerbelred’). I am excited about these shade-loving plants, and I look forward to exploring how I can incorporate more rock garden settings and alpine plants into the garden. I will keep you posted of my progress, or the lack thereof.



Greg Freeman

**Boomer (part Great Pyrenees/Saint Bernard), resting in the *Liriope muscari* in 2014**

## Photograph: *Glorious Sunflowers*



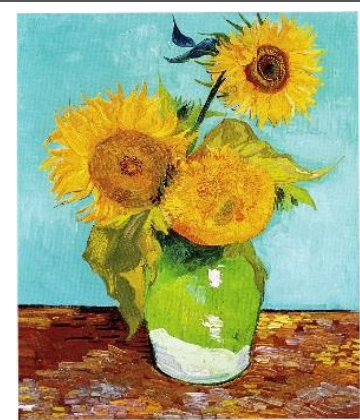
Greg Freeman (b. 1974), *Glorious Sunflowers* (2017), Digital photograph

Photographed in the summer of 2017 near the historic [McPhail Angus Farms](#) (just outside Fair Play, South Carolina, USA), *Glorious Sunflowers* shows a vast field with sunflowers to the left and soybeans to the right. Acres of sunflowers prove to be a stunning display, as well as a source of income for the farmers who plant them, but sunflowers are also enjoyable on a much smaller scale. Consider planting some in 2018. My friends at [Heavenly Seed](#) offer some lovely selections, including the 1871 heirloom ‘Mammoth Grey Striped’, the boldly colored ‘Indian Blanket’ and the delightful 15-20” variety, ‘Incredible Dwarf’.

HEAVENLY SEED

Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) loved sunflowers! In anticipation of Paul Gauguin’s visit to his home in Arles, France, van Gogh wrote to his brother, Theo:

*I am working with the enthusiasm of a man from Marseilles eating bouillabaisse, which shouldn’t come as a surprise to you because I am busy painting huge sunflowers.*



Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890), *Three Sunflowers* (1888), oil on canvas

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In addition to being an avid gardener and daffodil hybridist, judge and exhibitor, Greg Freeman is an author, editor, singer, songwriter and amateur visual artist. His nonfiction writing on a number of subjects has appeared in magazines, encyclopedias and books of academic and scholarly interest, as well as *Southern Edition*, Freeman's digital publication devoted to the American South. Recently published academic/encyclopedic contributions by Freeman include a chapter in Nadine Farghaly's edited volume, *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations Since 2009* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2015), as well as multiple entries in the 2017 release, *Race in American Film: Voices and Visions That Shaped a Nation* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood, 2017), edited by Dr. Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green. In 2015, Freeman released a country music radio single, "Sunlight and Shadows," garnering international airplay, and his gospel music has received national exposure through television, radio and commercial recordings.

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