

BIG BOSS: THE STORY OF THE BIRCHES AND THE ROOTS, PART 3 BY J. KENT PLANCK



Clay Bartlett, Hugh Taylor Birch, Helen Birch
and Frederic Bartlett

In 1893, Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition captured the imagination of 19-year-old Frederic Bartlett. Though legend has it that Hugh Birch was not so amused, it's likely that not only did Hugh attend the fair, but that his own imagination also was captured by something he saw there.

Henry Flagler, then building his Florida East Coast Railroad, had created one of the fair's most eye-popping exhibits: his "Rolling Florida Exposition," a \$50,000 railroad car – \$1.2 million in today's dollars – made of Florida wood, lined with Florida paintings, and laden with tropical Florida produce. One visit to that car may have been all it took to whet Hugh Birch's appetite for Florida land. So once the fair was over, Hugh left town for Florida in search of property for a long-term refuge – not from the fair, as often claimed, since it was already over, but from the chaos of a burgeoning Chicago.

Though Birch went to St. Augustine to meet with Henry Flagler for advice and help with buying land, it appears unlikely that Birch was previously acquainted with him. What's more probable is that John Macgregor Adams, a Highland Park neighbor facilitated the St. Augustine meeting.

James Ingraham ran Flagler's land department and he and Flagler told Birch to go further south from St.

Augustine where there was even more land up for grabs. Ingraham then accompanied Birch by train – possibly, along with Flagler – from St. Augustine to the railroad's southern terminus at Titusville. There Ingraham helped Hugh borrow or rent a sloop to travel on further south.

Birch sailed further south alone until bad weather forced him into New River Sound near what is today Bahia Mar. Birch immediately fell in love with the area's wild tropical beauty and isolation. He'd later say New River was "the most beautiful spot upon which I had laid eyes in all my travels." The only structure in sight when he landed was the U.S. Life-saving Service's House of Refuge for shipwrecked sailors.

Just exactly what Birch did while he was at New River in 1893 is not clear. But, on May 1, Hugh and John Macgregor Adams bought their first Florida land (possibly through a land agent recommended by James Ingraham): 63 acres lying north of New River Inlet and east of the Intracoastal Waterway. They paid \$3,000 for it – about \$72,000 in today's money.

In 1898, Birch and Adams began construction on a two-room, wood-framed lodge set high on cement blocks at what is now the south side of Las Olas Boulevard where it meets A1A – right across from today's Elbo Room. Adams christened the lodge "Las Olas" – or, "the waves." Construction took two years because of difficulties transporting materials from the mainland, so Adams and Birch spent their first winters on a houseboat.

Birch and Adams had hired Dennis O'Neill, the 5th Keeper of the House of Refuge (from 1888 to 1890), to be their first property manager, and in 1898. Birch then hired 46-year-old Jeff Lockett to manage their property. A native of Pennsylvania, Lockett was a well-connected black man who later owned a dredge and also bought and sold real-estate. Lockett coined the soubriquet "Big Boss" for Birch and over the years became Hugh's close friend and confidante.

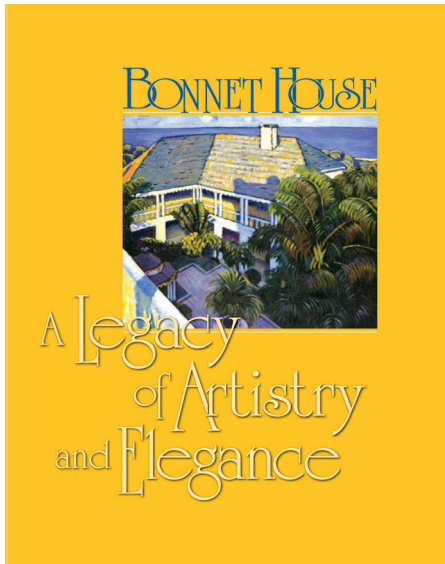
(Continued on Page 7)

LETTER FROM THE CEO

BY KAREN BEARD

Bonnet House a Legacy of Artistry and Elegance

When I first joined Bonnet House in 2002, I was given a copy of the coffee table book *Reflections of a Legacy—the Bonnet House Story*. The book was written by Jane Rice. Jane was associated with Bonnet House when Mrs. Bartlett was still in residence in the winter. *Reflections* is a beautiful, well written book.



As with most historic properties, new information about the property and the people who lived here became available to us after the printing of *Reflections of a Legacy*. As the years passed, it became clear that the book needed a fair amount of updating. Further, *Reflections* was lovely homage to Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett and their many winters

at the house. At the time when *Reflections* was written, Bonnet House was open to the public only when Mrs. Bartlett was not in residence. Even when it was open to the public, tours were by reservation and were given a couple of days a week. So, not only did we have some informational updates, but the Bonnet House story needed to be told from today's perspective: a year round Major Cultural Institution, accredited by the American Association of Museums with multiple offerings and services for more than 70,000 visitors annually.



Photo by J. Christopher Gernert

How to go about getting the book written and then published was a very large project, one that was talked

about for quite a while. It really wasn't until Libby Bartlett Sturges, Frederic Bartlett's granddaughter, decided to take on the task of raising funds to print a new book that work on *Bonnet House: A Legacy of Artistry and Elegance* began in earnest. Patrick Shavloske took on the daunting task of shepherding the project. Kent Planck, long time Bonnet House volunteer docent, BHI board member, writer, and artist agreed to taking on the rewriting on a pro bono basis. Bonnet House Fine Artists and photographers Jay Christopher Gernert, Sandy Dolan and Annie Gerrick and Dan Rhoutier took many new photographs for the book also on a pro bono basis. HCI Publishing was secured to print the book where Sandy Dolan guided the "birth" of the book. SMarkGraphics worked with Patrick on the design for the new book. Patrick and Stephen Draft, Bonnet House Curator, located old photographs that were used in the first book. Patrick took care of all the details behind the scenes. All in all it was a labor of love. The book signing event was truly a great celebration. Thanks go out to all the people who made *Bonnet House: A Legacy of Artistry and Elegance* possible.



Author J. Kent Planck

On November 14th, the sale of the book was officially launched. Author Kent Planck was on hand to sign copies. The book is very beautiful and we sold many copies on the launch night. *Bonnet House: A Legacy of Artistry and Elegance* can be purchased at the Bonnet House Museum Gift Shop and online at www.bonnethouse.org. The book makes a great gift especially for the holidays. Discounts are offered on multiple book purchases.

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

BY PATRICK SHAVLOSKE, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Orchid, Garden & Gourmet Food Festival is a Run-away Success

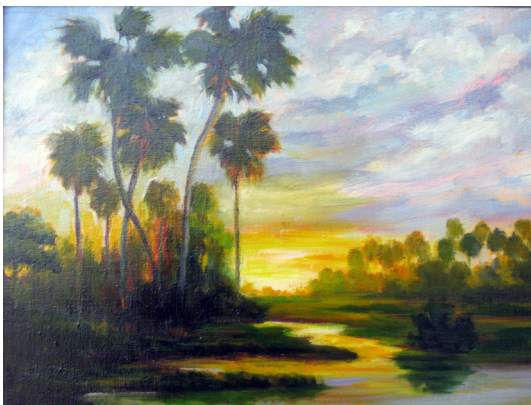
In 2007 Bonnet House Orchid Curators Sandi Jones and Tom Wells staged the first Orchid Fair at Bonnet House. That first year on the first weekend in December, about 1,000 people came to Bonnet House to enjoy and purchase beautiful orchids and attend lectures on orchid care. One food vendor served hotdogs and hamburgers for lunch. Everyone knew then that Bonnet House had hit on something special though. Even for non-orchid growers, the Orchid Fair provided an opportunity to enjoy Bonnet House at a leisurely pace—taking in the grounds and enjoying the home in a casual self-guided setting at the start of Florida's paradise weather season.

How the event has grown! Renamed the Orchid Garden and Gourmet Food Festival at Bonnet House, the 2011 edition of the event saw attendance surpass 2,200 people with 40 plant vendors, cooking demonstrations, gardening lectures, children's activities, beer and wine sales, musical entertainment, and food trucks serving a variety of cuisine. Once again, Sandi and Tom coordinated a magnificent plant sale, and Bonnet House owes a huge debt of gratitude to board member Paige Brody for coordinating food sales and children's activities and building new bridges to Bank Atlantic, Whole Foods, Home Depot, Market 17, and a variety of other sponsors.

The 2012 Festival will be even better—be sure to set aside the first weekend of December next year!

Impressions Set to Expand in 2012

A signature annual fundraising event for Bonnet House for the past twelve years has been an annual juried art exhibit



Impressions 2010, 3rd Place Winner
Douglas Williams, *Everglades Sunset*

and sale. The event was last known as Impressions of Florida. This year the event will be Impressions: A Juried Art Exhibit or more simply put Impressions. Why the change? This year, the

steering committee decided to broaden the theme of the exhibit to include more than tropical or Florida settings. The goal is to attract art with a broader subject matter, not

only to encourage increased art sales, but to promote and showcase more working artists. We think Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett would wholeheartedly approve! The opening night cocktail party cosponsored by LXR Luxury Resorts & Hotels and Ryder Systems, Inc. will be on February 10, 2012. Be sure to save the date and plan on joining us for our expanded exhibit!

Broward County Awards Operating Grant to Bonnet House

Bonnet House offers its sincerest thanks to the Broward County Cultural Division and in turn, the Broward County Board of County Commissioners for its grant of \$117,700 to aid the operations of Bonnet House in its 2011-2012 fiscal year. The grant was the result of a competitive annual request process and highlights the community's on-going support for arts and cultural organizations.

The grant is an operating support grant, meaning that it will fund a variety of needs from helping on utilities and maintenance to supporting education programs. Too often our elected officials only hear complaints. Please take a moment to contact your County Commissioner and thank him or her for the County's support of Bonnet House.

Support Bonnet House Forever—

Here's How

Bonnet House is incredibly fortunate to have a wide base of members, annual fund donors, and event sponsors that make the continued operation of the historic estate possible. Supporting Bonnet House permanently is easier than you might think. Simply multiply by 20. Let's say you contribute \$1,000 per year to Bonnet House. By designating a bequest of \$20,000 to Bonnet House's endowment through a will or lifetime gift, you are ensuring perpetual support for the museum at \$1,000 per year forever as our investment objective is to obtain an average return of 5% per year. Contact Director of Development Patrick Shavloske for more information on endowing Bonnet House at 954-703-2603.





THE LILY PAD

NEWSLETTER OF THE BONNET HOUSE ALLIANCE

A NOTE FROM THE ALLIANCE PRESIDENT BY KEN FARLEY



As we fast approach the end of 2011, I would like to take a brief look back on this year as we had many well attended events. The Taste of History at Hugh's Catering was a huge success with many requests to do more of this type of event. Then we had Jazz and Chocolate where we had the pleasure of listening to the Dillard High School Jazz Ensemble—now we all understand why they took place in the National Competition! And lastly, we had the Alliance holiday party which was a savory delight at the Hyatt Pier Sixty-Six rooftop. If you missed any of these events, sign up early for them in 2012, as they usually book up quickly. And by the way—2012 is starting to look even more exciting than 2011!

Our first event of 2012 is Entirely Entertaining on Monday, February 27th. Be sure not to miss this event as it is already filling up fast. Entirely Entertaining is always a wonderful event and it is always fun to see how the table designers use the backdrop of Bonnet House as inspiration for their designs.

Evelyn Bartlett, the epitome of hospitality and gracious entertaining, continues to inspire this great event and the table designers year after year.



ENTIRELY ENTERTAINING

Entirely Entertaining has the wheels in motion as many of our loyal and new Alliance members begin volunteering for the terrific committees that make this one of the most exciting events at Bonnet House.

This is the 17th anniversary of dressing the Veranda with the creative tablescapes produced by our members and professional designers in the community. At this writing as Chairperson I am very pleased to announce that we have reached our 30-table limit. The linens will be laid, the china set, silver polished and crystal glowing topped with centerpieces that will surely delight the imagination.

Not to be missed, EE is a day of charming guests, lovely baskets, gifts, and a special program, featuring ANCHINI LINENS, from The DCOTA, Design Center of the Americas. I encourage you, our membership to invite your guests and reserve early, as this will be a sellout. There will be a delicious gourmet three-course luncheon paired with superb wines.

Mark your calendars.... FEBRUARY 27, 2012.....11AM
"May it never change"...Evelyn.....THE BONNET HOUSE

Entirely yours,
Elaine Faber





THE LILY PAD

NEWSLETTER OF THE BONNET HOUSE ALLIANCE

6th Annual Jazz & Chocolate

♣ November 18, 2011, marked the 6th annual Jazz and Chocolate event again hosted by the Bonnet House Alliance. As the guests arrived, the intermittent rain had finally stopped and a cool breeze picked up. The evening started with wine and passed hors d'oeuvres as the band warmed up. This year's highlight was the Dillard High School Jazz Band, winners of the 16th Essentially Ellington competition at Lincoln Center in New York City. The group has even performed at the White House for the President of the United States. The band was accompanied by two vocalists also from Dillard High.

This year's performance was dedicated to three very special individuals: Paul Powell (parking lot coordinator and Jack of all trades), Jerry Dick (tram coordinator whose friendly smile and charming personality touched everyone who had the pleasure of riding on his tram) and Diane Linder (the woman who single-handedly revived this event by breaking through barriers, rallying volunteers and inspiring each of us to do more—even if you wanted to say “NO” you said “YES”).

All this would not have been possible without the Bonnet House and Alliance volunteers, the underwriters, and sponsors. A very special thanks is also extended to the Event Chair, Larry “Peanuts” Wick, who spent countless hours securing the band and most of the donated items. So let's give everyone a big round of applause!



Bonnet House Alliance Holiday Luncheon

♣ This year's holiday luncheon was held at Pier 66, in the historic rotating tower. While we were being served a scaled-down version of their fabulous Sunday brunch, we also enjoyed the breath-taking views as we took a “spin” around Fort Lauderdale. The event was well attended and we enjoyed a very festive afternoon. Our guest speaker was Judy Smith, the president of America's Moms for Soldiers, and Lauren Ackerman, the VP of Relations. Their motto is “Never let a soldier walk away from mail call with nothing.”



BONNET HOUSE ALLIANCE CALENDAR JANUARY - MARCH 2012

JANUARY 2012

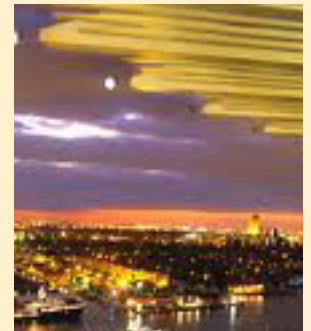
- 16 Executive Committee Meeting, 10:00 am; Board of Directors' Meeting, 11:00 am at Patti Kearson's residence, 2666 NE 35th Dr., Ft. Lauderdale
- 16 Entirely Entertaining Designer Info-Social, 3:00 pm at Bonnet House
- 21 General Alliance Membership Meeting, 11:00 am, Super Surprise Venue TBA

FEBRUARY

- 26 Entirely Entertaining event set-up and designer drop-off at Bonnet House
- 27 Entirely Entertaining XVII, 11:00 am at Bonnet House

MARCH

- 12 Executive Committee Meeting, 10:00 am; Board of Directors' Meeting, 11:00 am
- 19 General Alliance Membership Meeting, Induction of 2012-13 Officers, 12:00 pm, Afternoon Tea at Pier 66 Garden Room



BONNET HOUSE VOLUNTEERS

BY LINDA SCHALLER

THREE SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS

The Bonnet House family may be large, but it's close. Any loss is deeply felt. However, this summer, we experienced a triple tragedy with the deaths of Diane Linder, Paul Powell and Jerry Dick.



Chris McElhane & Diane Linder

Diane began volunteering in 1995. She logged more than 200 hours of volunteer work each year and then, two years ago, she joined the staff and still volunteered in her "off" hours.

She originated the idea of the successful fundraiser Jazz & Chocolate and served as its chairperson every year until this year. She was also Entirely Entertaining chairperson at least twice. Diane did it all. She and Bill Hines changed the seasonal table settings in the dining room and she always created a table setting for EE. She guided, gave nature trail tram tours, and helped with weddings and school programs. When my requests for volunteers via e-mail didn't produce enough people, Diane would get on the phone and call. VERY few people could resist her personal request! Relying on her career as a registered nurse, Diane helped in many emergencies at Bonnet House. She



Paul Powell & Linda Schaller

always made the "patient" feel calm and secure. She loved people and was always able to see the good in everyone. The jacaranda tree was her favorite.

She said over and over, "when I die, I want a jacaranda tree planted in my name." I always told her we would do that but she couldn't die since I couldn't get along without her. I miss her so much!

Since Paul began volunteering in 2004, he did everything; he was a jack of all trades. He set up the sound

system, helped prepare for lectures and special events, served as courtyard coordinator and nature trail tram driver, and helped with the gardening. He took care of the orchids and lady palms in the courtyard and the ferns on the veranda. He was a great help to Nicholle Maudlin with weddings. While he did not conduct student education programs, Paul put in over 400 hours of volunteer service per year. I can't look at any part of Bonnet House without seeing Paul—he was everywhere and did so much! He always knew just where to be, what to do, and how to do it. Since 2004, Paul and I manned the parking lot for the Music Series and other events. He and Randy Mayweather could get more cars in that lot than you can imagine. When school tours topped 100 students and competed with regularly-scheduled tours, Paul would act like a traffic controller in the courtyard, telling everyone where to go and how long to stay—invaluable! I'll never forget Paul's laugh which rose all the way from his toes.

Jerry Dick was a volunteer since 2007. He would arrive at Bonnet House early in the morning when his wife Kelly came to work in the museum shop. He would wash trams or do anything else that was needed and he was present the entire weekend, helping with everything from gardening to driving tram, to assisting with weddings in the evening.

He took great pride in keeping the trams and Cadillac dust-free. Jerry volunteered about 400 hours of service a



Kelly & Jerry Dick

year. In fact, he and Paul developed a friendly rivalry to see which of them could work the most hours each year. He had a great sense of humor and was a pleasure to work with. If Jerry took on a job, it was always done and done well. He was a true professional and the sweetest, kindest man you could ever know.

These volunteers and friends are missed so much by me, their fellow volunteers and the staff of Bonnet House. Paul Powell passed away on September 7, Jerry Dick on September 14 and Diane Linder on September 15. May they rest in peace and know they enriched the lives of all of us.

cont'd from page 1

In March 1902, Adams and Birch split their land near today's Poinsettia Street. Birch's cottage was designed and built by Edwin King who built the original lodge.

Birch surrounded his cottage with coconut palms and orange trees, and he named it "Villa Moonflower" after an exotic plant already thriving here. Fragrant, six-to-nine-inch moonflowers bloom on vine-like plants up to 15 feet tall, opening only at dark to be pollinated by night-flying moths. They take only 30-to-60 seconds to open. There aren't any at Bonnet House today.

Hugh's interests remained focused on real estate. Helen now got into the act, too. In 1910, she paid \$153.54 for 77 acres that now comprise the eastern half of the Galleria Mall and the entire Sunrise Intracoastal sub-division to the south; for another \$100, Hugh bought the 40 acres now under the western half of the Galleria and the Border's Bookstore area. Hugh also now turned his sights even further inland and bought approximately 80 acres of land north along the Middle River – between NE 14th Street on the south and Northeast 26th Street to the north.

The following year, on May 1, 1911, almost exactly 100 years ago, Hugh made what we here at Bonnet House would have to consider his most significant purchases: the two government lots on part of which the Bonnet House estate sits today. He paid \$3,000 to Patrick Cunningham, a Duval County trustee from Jacksonville.

Also in 1911, Hugh paid \$1,100 to purchase the beach-front lot south of Bonnet House from John and Mary Macdonald, from whom he and Adams had purchased some of their earliest property in 1896. Birch property now extended from just north of today's Las Olas Boulevard all the way to what is now Sunrise Boulevard, and inland past today's Galleria Mall. Plus, it was also beginning to stretch north along the Middle River.

Now in his late 60s, the widower Hugh was earning a reputation as an eccentric recluse down here in Florida. Hugh was virtually blind in one eye, the result of a childhood accident when a playful towel snap had hit his face. He often wore an eye patch, and he dressed in overalls. Six-foot tall with a longish white beard, he cut a commanding and unusual figure.

Birch walked several miles every day on his Florida ocean-front land, and he worked side-by-side with his hired hands, adapting the land and experimenting with

exotic plants and fruit trees. He ate simply – a strict vegetarian diet – and drank only alfalfa tea and milk. A teetotaler, he also didn't drink coffee or smoke.

The Birches had also resumed expanding their Florida holdings. In 1915, Helen had paid \$800 to purchase 80 acres north of Sunrise Boulevard in what is now Birch Park. By 1920, Hugh had added more than 150 additional acres to the north and toward the beach. It would appear that by the early 1920s, the Birches owned virtually all of the land that would eventually become Birch State Park. Frederic Bartlett would deed Helen's 1915 purchase to Hugh in 1930.

Helen Birch's good friend Dora Bartlett died in New York in March 1917, fewer than six months after moving there with Frederic and their son Clay.

Helen and Frederic soon deepened their life-long friendship. In 1919, 46-year-old Frederic and 37-year-old Helen were married. Probably to encourage his beloved Helen – who was also his only surviving family member – to continue wintering near him, Birch urged her and Frederic to create an informal oceanfront estate on some of his land located immediately south of Sunrise Boulevard where they would all be able to live more comfortably than at Villa Moonflower.

Though construction on Bonnet House appears to have begun in 1920, it was not until late 1921 that Hugh officially deeded to the couple a two-thirds share of his acreage south of and closest to Sunrise Boulevard. But the newlyweds didn't spend much time at Bonnet House. Mr. Birch supervised much of the Bonnet House construction while they mostly traveled. Both were used to frequent travel abroad, so it wasn't surprising they spent much of their time in Europe. Summer days were often spent in Lake Geneva, and they also kept a Manhattan apartment near Columbus Circle.



Photo by Daniel Rhoutier

Monica Estevez, Marketing Manager,
is the editor of this issue of **The Newsletter**



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The Newsletter

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