

THE FLOWER GARDEN AT PANACELLA

'There is an old spinning wheel in the parlor
Spinning dreams of long, long ago
Spinning dreams of an old fashion garden
A maid and her old fashion beau.'

As I listen to this song I imagine I see a dear old lady of medium height, very plump, with blue eyes, gray hair and wearing a white lace cap, the strings tied under her chin and a little cape around her shoulders, walk out of the door at Panacella to look at her flower garden.

This lady is Rachel Davis Mitchell Litchfield, known to all who knew her as one of earth's saints, never being satisfied without she was doing something for the happiness of others. I will make an effort to describe the old garden as I remember it, though Grandmother had passed away about five years before my birth.

On the west side of the porch was a lovely pink rose known as the 'Couch Shell'. The color, the most delicate pink, shading to a deep pink in the center. Buds perfect, and there never was a more fragrant or wonderful bloomer. Between this and a large boxwood bush which stood a few feet from the end of the house was a flower bed filled each summer with pink geraniums, mignonette, and bordered all around with heliotrope. Out from the boxwood was a weigela, spirea, mock orange and another bush I do not know by name. It had a small slick leaf, little thorns and tiny yellow flowers shaped like the lily-of-the valley. In the center of the west half of the yard stood an arbor vitae

tree and around it a bed bordered with small boxwoods. In this bed were different colored crocus, white violets, hearts-ease, perennial sweetpeas and pollyanthus, pink, yellow and red tipped with yellow. On the south side of this bed stood two trees that bore the most delicious fruit - a June apple and a big white Heath peach. What is more beautiful than the bloom of a fruit tree? On the north side of the bed was a forsythia bush, another kind of spirea, and a bridal wreath. These bushes were clumped close together and it was here many birds found a home. The ground sparrows and Jenny wrens delighted in the small boxwoods.

On the east side of the porch was a large frame covered with two kinds of honey-suckle, one with a scarlet trumpet and a thick, dark green leaf, the other the golden honey-suckle, white flowers and beautifully netted yellow leaves. Between the honey-suckles and the boxwoods that stood at the corner of the house, corresponding to the one on the other side of the porch, was a flower bed filled each summer with red, sweet-scented rose-geraniums and bordered around with pansies. I suppose Grandmother used these beds for the flowers mentioned as Mama had them fixed this way each season. At the other end of this bed stood a dentzia-gracitis bush, which was lovely, covered in its white blooms.

In the east half of the yard stood another arbor vitae and around it a flower bed bordered with boxwoods and filled with crocus, violets, jonquils and snowdrops. On the north side of this bed was a spirea bush, bridal wreath, syringa and kerria japonica. Another *bird* apartment. On the east side of this bed

was a Siberian crab-apple tree that was one of the joys of my childhood when in bloom. Many are the hours I have spent lying on the ground looking up in this tree filled with birds, butterflies and bees and all the world seemed a happy dream.

We come back to the porch and walk down the three rock steps and on either side are violets and lilies-of-the-valley. Then we start down the path through the arbor to the garden. This arbor has a flower bed about four feet wide on either side and goes from the porch to the garden gate. In these beds we find quantities of hyacinths, pink, white and blue, single and double, six kinds of lilies, lemon, regal, leopard, tiger, spider and one I do not remember by name, violets, snowdrops, blue-bonnets, narcissus, jonquils, peonies, red, white and two shades of pink, and ~~May~~ pinks (Grandfather's favorite flower). Roses! How beautiful they were!

As we enter the arbor we pass under Baltimore Belle which has an exquisite pink and white bud and blooms in clusters. A little farther down on the west side a lovely pink rose, then a white rose (names unknown) and next the daintiest, most beautiful one that Grandmother called her 'Bird-Egg Rose'. The bush grew about two and a half feet tall, was covered with tiny roses, white with brown specks over them. Looked exactly like a speckled bird egg. Next came the lovely moss rose and at the end of the arbor stood the old 'Hundred Leaf' or 'Cabbage Rose'.

On the east half of the arbor we find another Hundred Leaf, then an old fashion yellow rose, and a pink rose (names unknown). Now we come to the rose my mother adored - the White

Microphylla. It was a dream of loveliness - a creamy white and so pure that it made you think of the flowers that bloom in the Heavenly land. Some feet from the Microphylla is a gorgeous red rose known as 'Mrs. Honaker' - a gift to Grandmother from Mrs. S. U. Honaker - and it always carried her name. All around the yard fence are flowers and trees. On the west side a pine, arbor vitae, althea bushes of all colors, syringa and mock orange, a white and purple lilac. Here and there a rose bush, not handsome but fragrant. We also find an Ox pippin apple tree and a pear tree on this side of the yard.

On the east side next to the fence, and by the side of the old ice house, we find what was to me in childhood the largest blackheart cherry tree that ever grew. I do not know who enjoyed the cherries most, the birds or Mary Connally. We find more white and purple lilacs, another weigelia, and roses, then a big red cherry tree and an apple tree.

In the southeast corner of the yard we find worlds of sweet white violets, periwinkles, Star of Bethlehem and blue bottles.

In the corners of the old rock chimney, on the east side of the house, the loveliest white violets grew - Oh! Such quantities of them, and behind the parlor was an immense forsythia bush.

Now, we go down to the old garden which was both for vegetables and flowers. As we go through the gate we pass under two Ox pippin apple trees (delicious fruit), and out from these

trees was a terrace about five feet wide which ran full length across the garden. On this terrace next to the front yard fence we find an arbor vitae tree, snowball bush, white and purple lilacs, sweet shrub and lilies, phlox, jonquils, snowdrops, violets bleeding heart, peonies, columbine of several colors.

On the west side of the garden and just below this terrace was where Mama said Grandmother grew her flowers for summer cutting such as zennias, sweet williams, marigolds, asters, fox-gloves, canterbury bells, verbenas and many other kinds.

We start down the big garden and we pass the strawberry bed planted by Grandmother and when we left Panacella it was still bearing. After passing several large vegetable beds we come to another terrace, the west half filled with rock lilies and roses of every kind. One rose such a deep red it was almost black, one red spotted with white and for some reason called the 'Marble Rose', then another red rose I adored because of its loveliness in bud as well as bloom. On the east side of this terrace, there were roses, roses galore! Passing more vegetable beds we come to another terrace where two big purple lilac bushes stood and they can now be seen in Miss Mary Litchfield's garden. The rest of this terrace was full of lilies, hollyhocks and phlox. All around the fence of this large garden were freuit trees, cherries, damsons, apples, peaches, pears, quinces, green gauges and between the trees were gooseberries, currants and raspberries. One apple tree was burdened with a fox-grape vine and it was here I had my grapevine swing.

Grandmother planted and enjoyed her flowers, then Mama enjoyed them through all of her life until I came along to admire them with her, and I enjoyed them fourteen years, then we moved to my present home. The flowers from this garden were pulled, given away in quantities, but each year came back just as fragrant and beautiful as ever. Old fashion flowers and old fashion people were, and are, substantial.

Not one trace of this once beautiful yard and garden is left but four arbor vitae trees.

My mother, Sue Litchfield Cosby was very gifted in arranging bouquets and a short while ago Mrs. Alexander Stuart, her niece, in writing to me from Washington said:

"I loved to watch Aunt Sue make those lovely bouquets, some with arbor vitae as a background, and others built around like a pyramid. Oh! Such lovely flowers! And as I watched her it always seemed to me such a work of art."

Hospitality! Rachel and George Victor Litchfield were noted for this far and wide and numbered their friends by the score. I have been told this since I was old enough to remember, by people in all walks of life and by numbers of colored friends.

Panacella was known as the "Rubber House" - it always stretched to make room for one more.

Just back of Panacella was a grove of giant oak trees, four chestnuts and two hickorynut trees. This grove contained about three acres and never was there a more beautiful place

from early spring until late fall. A great place for picnics. Then around the hill outside of the yard and garden at Panacella were oaks, walnuts, chestnut and locust trees. Three of these large oaks being around the spring and springhouse. These trees were cut down about twenty-five years ago by a man who did not appreciate the beauties of nature though, of course, they were getting very old.

I must mention that this was the home of one or two families of crows and owls. One owl family had their home in the hollow limb of a giant oak and the lazy things would sit with their heads just in sight and sleep away hours. There were also gray squirrels and lots of little ground squirrels or 'Chip-monks' running around on the old rail fence.

In writing about the old flower gardens in and around Abingdon, Miss Minnie Baugh mentioned this one but said she never saw it, so - here it is as I remember it.

(Mrs.) Mary Cosby Penn

(This article was written between 1942 and 1944 by Mrs. Mary Cosby Penn, granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Victor Litchfield, Sr.)