

1976

ReTree Abbot Hall Bicentennial Campaign

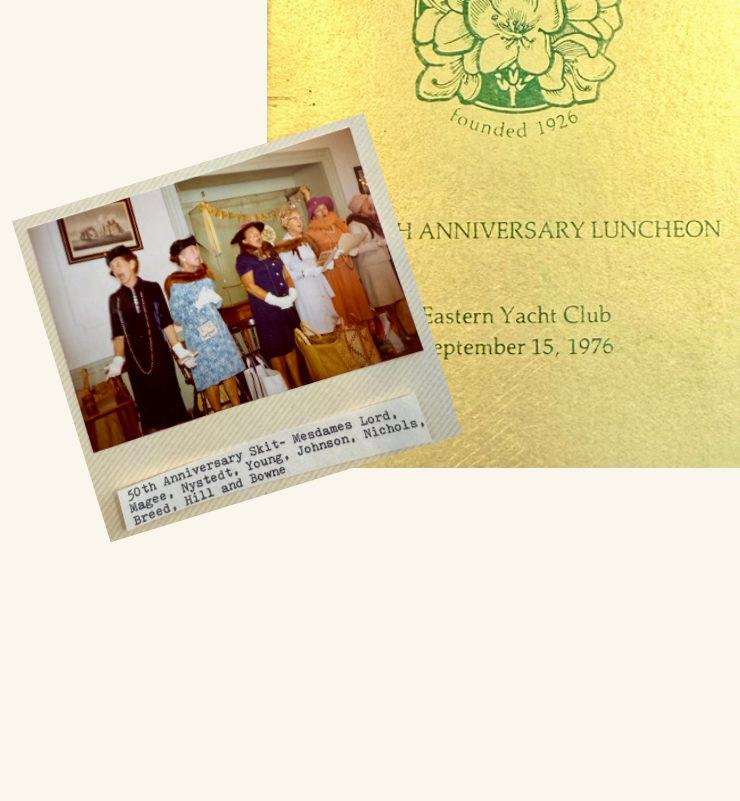
As Dutch elm disease decimated Marblehead's elm population, the Marblehead Garden Club marked its 50th anniversary and the nation's Bicentennial by raising funds to replace trees lost at Abbot Hall. After 18 trees were removed, the Club launched its highly successful "ReTree Abbot Hall" campaign, planting 11 large trees of various species. At the town's Bicentennial celebration, the Garden Club presented a plaque commemorating the project.



1976

50th Anniversary Celebration

"We come here today, both young and perennial, to celebrate this, our demi-centennial," began member Frances (Franny) Bowne's poem recounting the first fifty years of the Marblehead Garden Club. The anniversary celebration featured skits, songs, and a luncheon. As the poem concluded: "Without a doubt, we're the club at the top. We will dig in the dirt 'til we drop! ... Oh, the Marblehead Garden Club forever! Three cheers for the cream of the crop!"



1978

"Gardens in a Coastal Town"

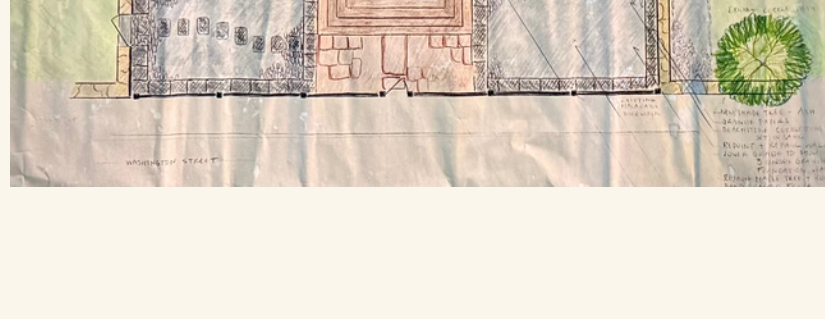
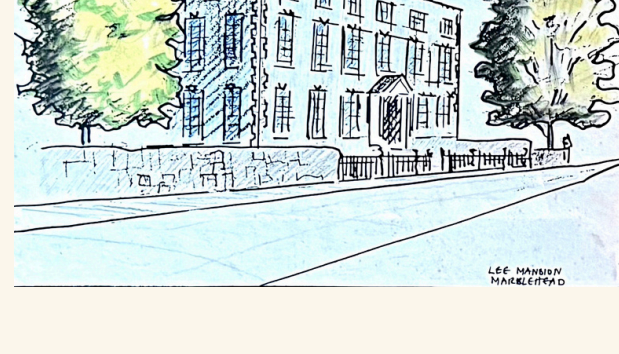
A longtime Garden Club tradition, garden tours have helped raise funds for community projects and the Lee Mansion Garden. In 1978, the Club presented "Gardens in a Coastal Town," featuring 13 member gardens. Proceeds helped fund projects including the installation of a sprinkler system at the Lee Mansion Garden, ensuring the continued care of the historic landscape.



1984

Dooryard Garden Restoration

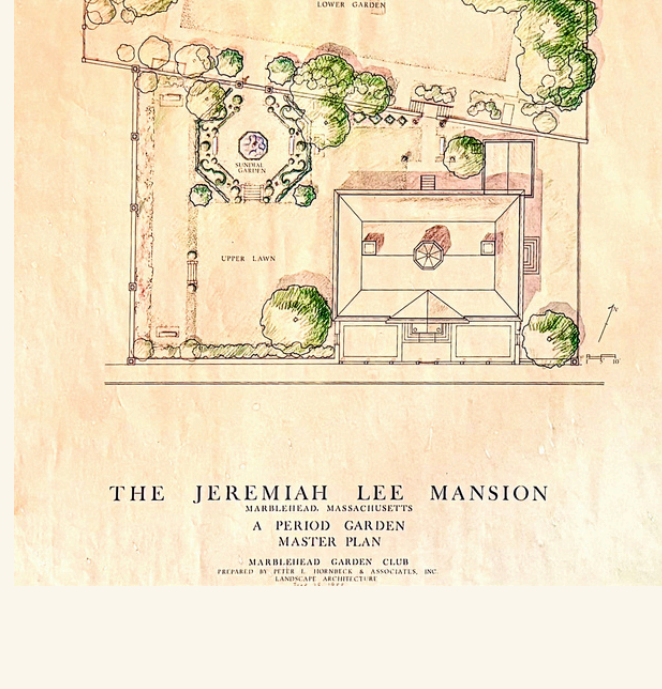
After the harsh winter of 1981–82 destroyed the boxwood in front of the Lee Mansion, restoring the Dooryard Garden became a priority. The goal was to create a historically appropriate design using plant material that would be harderier and easier to maintain. Landscape designer Patricia Pratt, an expert in historic garden restoration, was hired to develop a plan inspired by the English style of an eighteenth-century Georgian townhouse. Her elegantly simple design—still visible today—featured two courses of granite pavers surrounding a central panel of washed stone. Thanks to the perseverance of longtime Marblehead Garden Club member and former president Dorothy Creamer, the project was completed in 1988.



1988

Lower Garden and Upper Garden Unified

With the acquisition of the Boles property complete, the next step was unifying the Upper and Lower Gardens into a cohesive landscape. In 1988, the Marblehead Garden Club hired noted landscape architect and Harvard Graduate School of Design professor Peter Hornbeck to lead the effort. Implemented in stages, Hornbeck's plan established the overall design framework that continues to shape the Upper and Lower Gardens today.



1998

Move to Organic Gardening

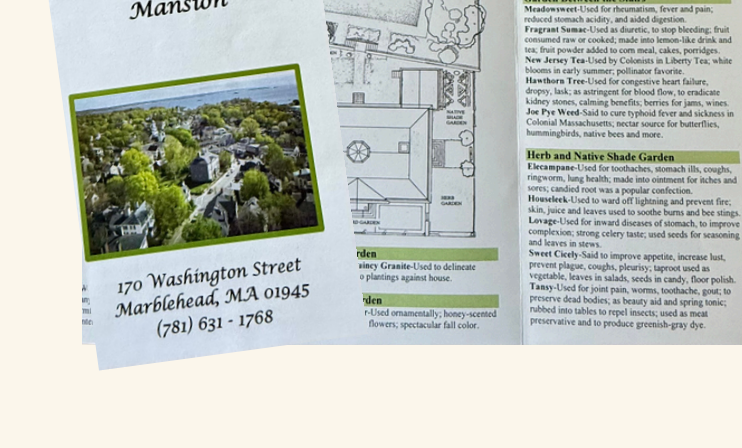
The transition to organic gardening methods began in 1998, when the Marblehead Garden Club responded to recommendations from the Marblehead Pesticide Awareness Committee by adopting an organic approach to lawn care. Support for chemical-free gardening continued to grow, and by 2009, organic methods were codified by the club.



2018

"The Gardens of the Lee Mansion" Brochure Created

Decades of research by Marblehead Garden Club members have helped shape the Lee Mansion Garden, where plants are selected to reflect the property's 18th-century period of significance. The Club produced "The Gardens of the Lee Mansion," a brochure that helps visitors explore the garden and learn how plants were used for food, medicine, and household purposes in colonial New England.



2019

Woodland Garden Expanded and Renewed

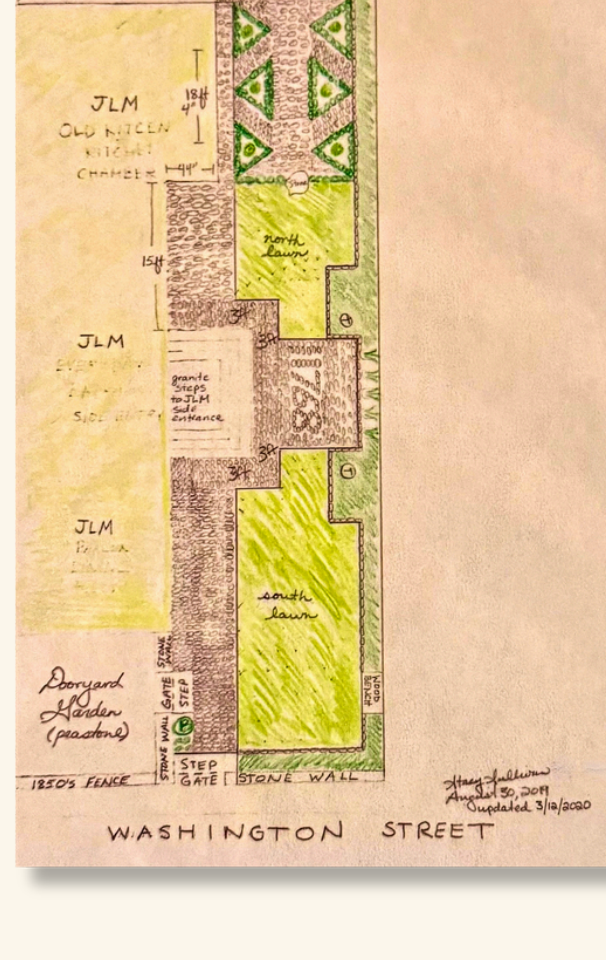
The Woodland Garden, originally designed as a tree-dominated landscape, was reimagined in 2019. Now encompassing three sides of the lower garden perimeter, it includes a layered mix of trees, shrubs, and native and historic perennials.



2020

Herb Garden Restoration

In 2020, the Marblehead Garden Club launched a major multi-year restoration of the Herb Garden, returning it to landscape architect Paul Rubens Frost's original 1942 design. The project renewed the plantings and hardscape—including the distinctive beach stone cobbles—to better reflect the 1768 period of significance of the Jeremiah Lee Mansion. Completed in 2021, the restoration earned a Garden Club Federation Grant in recognition of the committee's commitment to preserving Frost's historic vision.



2021

Plant Sale Moves to Lee Mansion

When COVID-19 restrictions made indoor events difficult, the Marblehead Garden Club moved its annual plant sale to the Lee Mansion Garden. The outdoor setting allowed visitors to shop among the gardens where many of the plants were grown. What began as a pandemic-era adaptation quickly became a popular tradition that continues today.



2022

Unearthing the Lee Mansion's Past

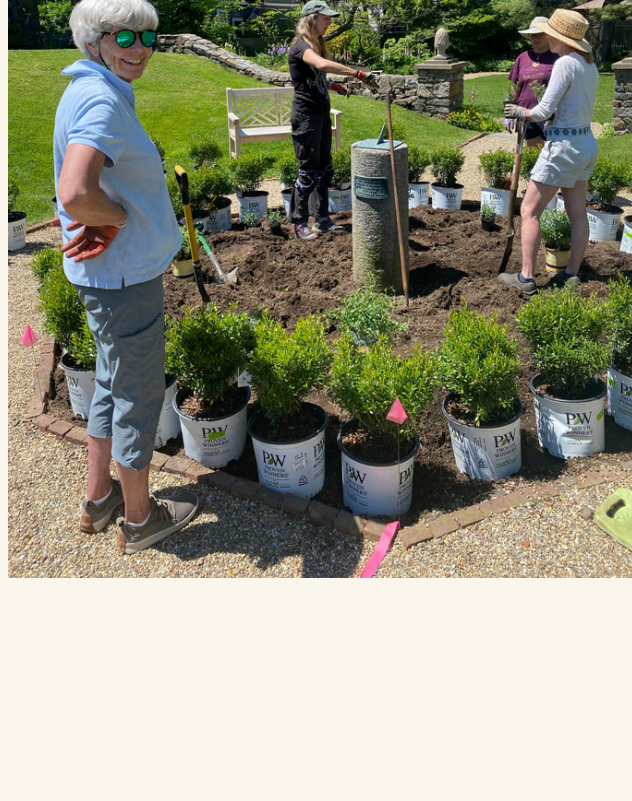
Starting in 2022, students and staff from UMass Boston's Fiske Center for Archaeological Research have conducted excavations at the Jeremiah Lee Mansion to better understand how the property was used over time. Working in partnership with the Marblehead Museum, the team is searching for artifacts from all periods of the site's history, with particular attention to the Lee family and the enslaved individuals who lived and worked there. The project continues to reveal new insights into life at the mansion and its grounds.



2024

Sundial Garden Redesign

The design of the Sundial Garden has evolved over the years through a series of renovations and plant replacements. Following the decline of the boxwood, the garden was replanted in 2024 with Inkberry (Ilex glabra 'Gem Box'), Winter Savory (Satureja montana), Germander (Teucrium chamaedrys), creating a more resilient and sustainable design. The garden's distinctive octagonal center reflects a detail found elsewhere on the property: landscape architect Peter Hornbeck drew inspiration from the shape of the Jeremiah Lee Mansion's cupola when redesigning the space. Today, the Sundial Garden serves as a focal point linking the architecture of the mansion with the surrounding landscape.



2026

Welcome Garden Expansion

Following the Marblehead Museum's acquisition of the Brick Kitchen building in 2021, the adjacent Herb Garden was reimagined as the Welcome Garden, creating a unified main entrance to the museum's properties. The redesign builds upon the original herb garden created by landscape architect Paul Rubens Frost, while adapting the space to better serve visitors. As the primary entry point to the Jeremiah Lee Mansion and Brick Kitchen, the Welcome Garden provides an inviting introduction to the site while honoring its historic character.

