

The Codman Estate—"The Grange": A Landscape Chronicle

ALAN EMMET

Before the Revolution, the sixteen acres which comprise SPNEA's Codman property in Lincoln, Massachusetts were only a tiny fraction of a seven hundred acre estate, albeit the essential fraction, since they held the house and barns. The estate was assembled soon after 1700 by Charles Chambers of Charlestown, Massachusetts, a merchant, legislator, and judge who had amassed a fortune in the West Indies trade. Although the configuration of the property changed over the years, the major part of this great farm remained in the Chambers-Russell-Codman family for more than two centuries, with the exception of one fifty-year interval, until SPNEA acquired it in 1969. The history of this landscape can be organized according to the succession of family members who had the greatest impact on it.

Chambers Russell

Charles Chambers bequeathed the land he had acquired to his grandson and protégé, Chambers Russell, who between 1735 and 1741 built the two-story Georgian house now encased within the present mansion. The original house was a mansion, too, according to the 1767 inventory of Chambers Russell's estate.¹ (See fig. 1.) Russell owned barns and farmhouses in Lincoln, as well as another family farm in Charlestown. Of his six slaves, five were listed as having no monetary value, probably because of old age or infirmity. Their master, who had always treated them as "entitled to the rights of humanity," provided in his will for them to be supported for life on his farm. Russell grew corn, hay, oats, and flax. He raised sheep, cattle, oxen, swine, and poultry. The three-page

list of his library reveals a person of broad culture. In addition to many books on law, history, and religion, Russell read Ovid, Pope, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, John Gay's *Rural Sports*, and practical volumes on husbandry by William Ellis and Edward Lisle.² Chambers Russell was a lawyer, legislator, and a judge, but not a merchant as were his grandfather, father, and brothers. He was as noted for his integrity as for his hospitality and generosity. Chambers Russell, a founding father of Lincoln in 1754, bestowed on the new town the name of his grandfather Chambers's birthplace in England.

After Chambers Russell died in 1767, the estate was administered by his executors during the disruptive years of the Revolutionary War, and by 1790, belonged to Chambers Russell, Jr. In that year he died, and, having no children, left the property to his six-year-old nephew, Charles Russell Codman. Little Charles's father, John, as one executor, began immediately and for the remaining thirteen years of his life to treat the place as his own.

The first glimpse we have of the house in its landscape setting comes from two brief phrases in an inventory of 1778. The appraisers list "The Mansion House with the Front Yard," and "The Octigon piece of mowing Front of the Grate House about Five acres."³ The particular mention of the "front yard" indicates that there may have

This article is a revision of a report prepared by Christine Fernandez and Alan Emmet for the SPNEA Properties Department. Alan Emmet, author of *Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Changing of a Landscape*, is a consultant in landscape history who is presently conducting an inventory of landscape-related photographs and engravings in SPNEA files.

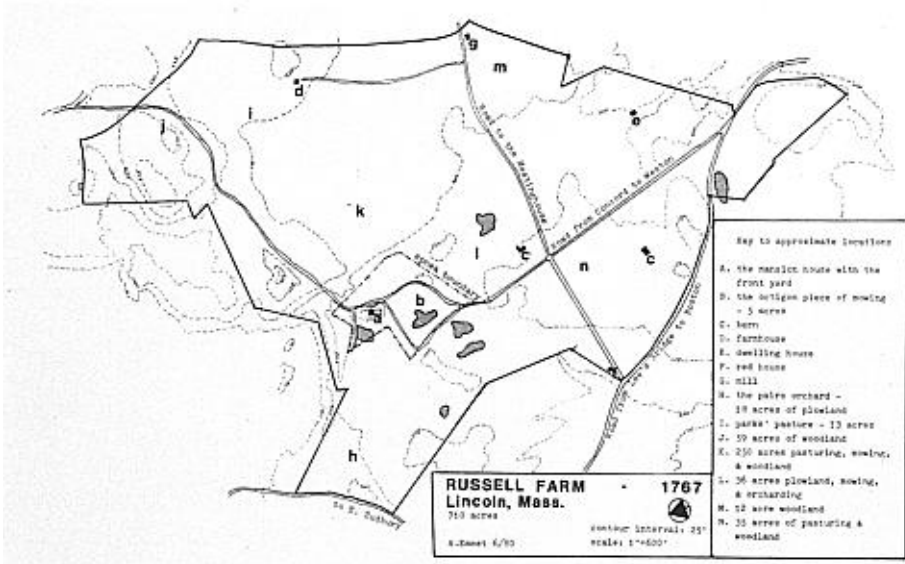


FIG. 1. CHAMBERS RUSSELL'S FARM, LINCOLN (ca. 1767). SPNEA's present holdings are indicated by a dotted line at the center. The balance of the acreage now includes conservation and residential land, Massachusetts Audubon Society's Drumlin Farm, and Lincoln's entire business district. (Drawn by the author.)

been something special about the treatment of that sloping ground.

The placement of the Russell-Codman house on an elevated site is typical of the eighteenth century. Landowners of wealth and culture in England through mid-century and in America for longer built their mansions atop hills to gain "prospect." The slopes were then shaped into a series of platforms, with terraces and steps axial to the façade. These features at the Russell-Codman house may well be contemporary with its construction shortly before 1740. One similar local example was Thomas Hancock's house on Beacon Hill, where a landscape gardener contracted in 1735 to "lay out the garden, trim the beds, and sodd ye Terras."⁴ Bulfinch's 1792 house for Joseph Barrell at Charlestown, "Pleasant Hill," was one of many set upon grassed terraces.⁵

A contemporary account describes Peter Faneuil's Boston mansion soon after 1738: "The deep courtyard, ornamented with flowers and shrubs, was divided into an

upper and lower platform by a high glacis [artificial slope] surrounded by a richly wrought railing decorated with gilt balls."⁶ The Russell-Codman forecourt may have been as ornate. In the 1920s it was still partially enclosed by a balustrade (fig. 8).

"Octagon" is a term which has continued to be applied to the wet meadow and pond embraced by the two access roads on the Codman property (fig. 11). Though neither pond nor meadow display the geometry implied by their name, it is likely that the pond was at one time a "bason" in a formal setting. John James, in his 1712 *Theory and Practice of Gardening*, included the octagon in his suggested forms for pieces of water. Or "if a bason be circular," he wrote, "the walk that surrounds it should be octangular."⁷ Stowe, one of the greatest and best known English landscape gardeners, included a "large Octagon Piece of Water" with an obelisk fountain seventy feet high at its center.⁸ The garden at Stowe was laid out in the 1720s by Charles Bridgeman, with parterres, terraces, and a

canal descending on an axis with the south front of the house to the Octagon Lake near the entrance gates (fig. 2). It is not unlikely that Chambers Russell had visited Stowe, even though the scant surviving records of his life provide no evidence of it. The garden was, in any event, well known through published plans and poems. It is entirely possible that Russell may have been creating a simplified imitation in Lincoln just when, ironically, William Kent, Bridgeman's successor at Stowe, was engaged in reshaping and "naturalizing" the Octagon there in the 1750s. The lake at Stowe, despite further softening of the outline by Capability Brown, continued to be called the Octagon, just as have the meadow and pond at the Codman estate.

John Codman III

When John Codman took over the rundown estate in 1790, he began immediately to build and refurbish the property for him-

self and his heirs.⁹ Up went a new barn, stable, farmhouse, and fences. Fields were ditched and wells were dug. Agricultural production rose swiftly under a new manager. In 1792 Codman became founder of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, organized to share knowledge and encourage experimentation. John Codman's major impact on the estate was the transformation of the house into a three-story high style Federal mansion, its design attributed to Bulfinch. With respect to the landscape, we can read in his letters what he admired and what he wanted to do, but it seems probable that he accomplished no major change. His accounts include bills for repairs and refurbishments between 1791 and 1796. Thomas Clement, his estate carpenter, charged Codman for "fences and espaliers", "arches, steps, and border boards", "pickett posts and rails for garden", "poles for trees", "fence at house" and a "large hottbed."¹⁰ In 1799 Codman ordered thirty-nine "Alm" trees.

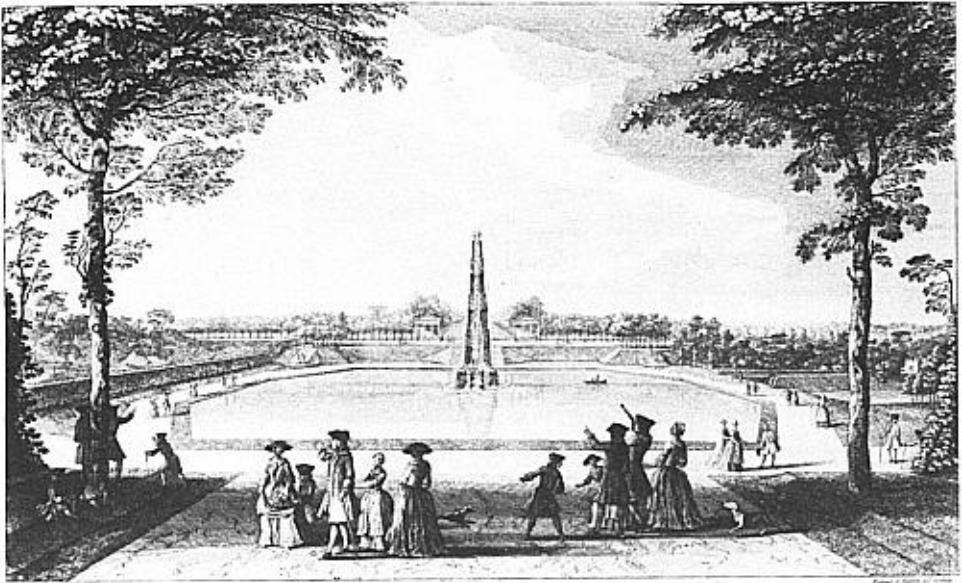


FIG. 2. THE OCTAGON LAKE AT STOWE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, 1739. One of Rigaud's drawings from Sarah Bridgeman's *Plans of Stowe*. This view shows the lake in its original geometric shape, with the long axial approach rising to the great house far beyond. (Photograph from Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University; Courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.)

John Codman's delightful letters to his beloved second wife Catherine, written during a business trip to England in 1800, reveal a pride in his own estate, as well as his changing tastes in response to what he observed as he traveled. He was charmed by the seclusion of the English country seats. The hedges and clumps of trees encircling them—products of the Enclosure Acts and of deliberate reforestation, as much as of fashion—were to Codman pleasantly unlike his homeland. He visited several seats, where he was impressed by the fine distant views, and the deliberate concealment of roads and structures. Kitchen gardens, greenhouses, and farm buildings were all "covered from sight" and "of course hid by trees."¹¹ He marveled at the clean gravel walks "in serpentine and twisted forms,"¹² which circumnavigated the grounds. The grandest seat he visited was Wilton, where old geometric gardens and canals had been remade in the new natural style, as at so many English estates during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Codman sent messages through his wife Catherine to his manager, Isaac Goode-nough, telling him to plant more trees so as to hide the barns, the road, and the schoolhouse. He wanted to emulate the English houses and gardens in every respect. His most cherished scheme Codman attributed to Mrs. Christopher Gore, a Boston friend who was living in England during the term of her husband's diplomatic mission from 1796 to 1804. Within two weeks of his arrival in England, John Codman wrote to his wife,

Mrs. Gore and myself have been planning improvements at Lincoln, she says it is the handsomest place in America and might be made a l'Anglaise with ease. I like her plan that the foreyard should be thrown down into a lawn that carriages may drive to the front door . . .¹³

And six weeks later:

I do not know any place in America so much like Gentlemen's seats in this country as Lincoln (dear Lincoln) all it wants is the foreyard all knocked away and the house to stand in the midst of a lawn . . .¹⁴

At the start of the eighteenth century, nearly every English country seat portrayed by Kip, Knyff, and others in their bird's-eye view engravings had an enclosed front courtyard. A hundred years later, however, when John Codman made his tour, most great houses had had their foreyards "knocked away," along with every other formal element. Lawns and drives now swept up to the very door, a result of the stylistic revolution which Capability Brown had carried to its extreme.

Proud as John Codman was of his own place, he now realized that it was old-fashioned in its formality. "I think I shall make some improvements when I return," he wrote to Catherine. How much he was able to accomplish in the remaining two years of his life is not known. The terraces exist today, however, and the tree that later Codmans referred to as "grandfather's mulberry" survived on the second terrace until 1920. Apparently the foreyard was not made "a l'Anglaise" after all.

Even though he did not live to fulfill all his dreams, John Codman's improvements to his house and his 450 acres must have brought the place to a dazzling elegance. His death in 1803 at the age of forty-eight put an end not only to landscape changes, but to his expressed wish that one of his older sons carry on the estate after him. Charles Russell Codman, who came of age soon after his father's death, sold the place without apparent remorse as soon as he could. His ostensible reason was that he needed the money to establish himself. It was his children and grandchildren who grew up to regret the sale.

Charles Russell Codman sold the estate in pieces. The main parcel passed through a succession of owners: de Wolfes, Homers, Percivals, and Minnses. When in 1815 Andrew Homer advertised the sale of "A Valuable Farm" of 280 acres, he made it sound a magnificent place still. He boasted that it was "formerly the residence of the late John Codman, Esq."¹⁵ The Percivals, however, stored farm tools in the house, a hint of diminished grandeur. Tax records, inventories, and sale notices reveal a steady decline in livestock, crops, and real value. The most significant impact of the Minns family—which owned the property for twenty-seven years—was the sale in 1844 of a seven-acre strip to the Fitchburg Railroad. The right-of-way cut a swath through the estate, and the train ran—as it still does—less than two hundred yards from the house.

Ogden Codman

Ogden Codman, the son of Charles Russell and grandson of John, married Sarah Fletcher Bradlee in October 1861. The following July, according to Sarah's diary, Ogden proposed his "Lincoln plan."¹⁶ This plan, which he may have dreamed of as a boy, was to buy back and restore the estate which his father had sold long before Ogden was born. Ogden thought of his grandfather as if he had been the lord of an English manor. The grandson idealized his grandfather, and modeled himself after him. Over the years Sarah, and eventually their children, came to share this idolatry.

Even the "stump and last branch of grandfather's mulberry," according to Ogden's caption on an 1890s photograph, were preserved as living eighteenth-century artifacts in front of the house, long past the time when the tree was an object of beauty.¹⁷ When the woods were thinned out in 1908 Sarah wrote happily to her son Ogden, "it looks now as I think it must have looked in Grandfather John's time." Ogden, Jr., in a 1935 letter to Fiske Kimball

stated proudly, "My father's country house at Lincoln was thoroughly of the 18th century."¹⁸ His letters to his brother Tom frequently praised the taste of "the Honorable John," their great-grandfather, as evidenced by their ancestral demesne.

When Ogden, Sr., reacquired the family estate in 1862, he named it "The Grange." The word grange is defined as a country house with associated barns and other farm buildings, which indicates that Codman intended to develop the estate agriculturally. He purchased at least seventy-five books on agriculture and horticulture during the 1860s. Even before Ogden gained title, he took his brother-in-law, the architect John Hubbard Sturgis, out to look over the run-down property. Sturgis designed a new farm cottage, and recommended that the deteriorated 1790s stable be torn down to make way for the new one, which is still standing.

There was a fever of activity on the grounds, too. For seven months during 1863, Ogden's accounts show that "stone men" and other laborers were at work with horses, cement, lime, drills, blasting powder, stone posts, and two granite door steps. The retaining wall between the house and the Octagon was constructed or re-constructed. Wells were dug, drains were laid, and stone fence walls were built. Roads and walks were improved. Ogden embarked on reclamation of the wet Octagon meadow for a hayfield and an ornamental pond, while Sarah noted progress of the work in her diary.

Even as these improvements were being carried out, Ogden entered into a diverse and extensive farm program. He kept work horses, ponies for sport, hens, pigs, and a dairy herd. To feed the animals, he grew corn and hay. All vegetables for the family and their tenant employees were raised on the place—a custom which was to continue through the 1940s. Ogden established an asparagus bed in 1864. His March 1866 vegetable seed order included cucumber plants for forcing, indicating the existence of a

greenhouse or a sun-heated pit, perhaps in accordance with J.C. Loudon's instructions in *The Horticulturist* (1860). Ogden's copy of this comprehensive practical treatise is well worn. Like his others, it was an English book.

Estate accounts show that Ogden planted fruit trees and began raising small fruits. In 1864 he purchased raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, and currants from a nursery in Dorchester. His farm equipment purchases included a wheeled Whitcomb rake, a "garden engine," pruners, and weeders. In 1866 Ogden ordered Peruvian guano, an exotic fertilizer highly recommended for field crops by another of his books, John Wilson's 1862 *British Farming*.

The books Ogden read and used were oriented more toward the practical side of horticulture than toward the ornamental and design aspects. This suggests that he believed a satisfactory design already existed, and had since the days of Grandfather John. In 1871, Codman obtained Augustus Mongredien's newly-published *Trees and Shrubs for English Plantations*. He may or may not have been familiar with American literature on similar topics, such as the work of Andrew Jackson Downing, that popular arbiter of "taste." Nonetheless, Codman was busily planting ornamental trees and shrubs. In 1872 Sarah noted in her diary that her husband had gone to see about some trees sent from England. Practicality did win out over his



FIG. 3. "THE GRANGE," LINCOLN, 1872. Barton Sprague, photographer. Ogden, Sr.'s newly-planted trees and rhododendrons dot the lawns under eighteenth-century elms. "Grandfather's mulberry" is visible on an upper terrace. Young Ogden and Alice pose with their ponies, while little Tom sits on the grass. (SPNEA, Codman Family Photograph Collection.)



FIG. 4. VIEW FROM THE HOUSE TO THE OCTAGON, ca. 1890. The pond had recently been dug out, and its edges were kept clear. Outlines of flower beds can be seen on the terrace. (SPNEA, Codman Family Photograph Collection.)

anglophilism, and most of his purchases came from American nurseries.

Photographs taken in the 1870s and 1880s show a host of newly-planted trees on the front lawn, west of the terraces (fig. 3). The combination of evergreen and deciduous trees, densely planted, does reflect the fashionable Downing influence. Pictures from the late 1890s show the slope quite clear of these trees, however, reflecting a change in taste favoring open lawns.

In 1866 Codman ordered nineteen different deciduous trees from the Ellwanger and Barry nursery in Rochester, New York. These included several weeping varieties, which were much in fashion at the time. Also popular then was the concept of collecting trees in what were essentially private arboretums. The sales receipts that have survived show that Ogden, Sr. set out an enormous number of trees during his first years in Lincoln. A 1939 letter from his son Tom to Ogden, Jr. refers to a "big English elm the pater must have planted when

he set out most of the trees some 75 years ago," or about 1870.¹⁹ Several old eighteenth-century elms survived when Ogden bought the place, and one of them lasted until 1922. There were two larches, or tamaracks, in front of the house. These are shown in a pencil sketch still in the house, which was probably done by Sarah in the 1860s.

Ogden, Sr. ordered climbing vines—wisteria, honeysuckle, and clematis—from nurseries in Jamaica Plain and Brighton, Massachusetts. In 1867 he purchased ninety-four assorted herb plants, although herbs are not commonly associated with Victorian gardens. The annual vegetable seed order from Schlegel, Everett, and Company of Boston for many years included seeds for one flower, the fragrant mignonette.

Typically the Codmans would have had gardens of carpet bedding, as they did until recently on the front terraces. (See figs. 4, 8.) An 1872 sales slip includes heliotrope

and red and blue verbena, in quantities sufficient to make a stylish show. Photographs depict beds of tall cannas. Ogden also ordered fuschias, carnations, "assorted plants for vases," and perennials, but locations of other 1860s and 1870s gardens are not recorded. Spiraeas, of varieties then newly introduced from Japan, are the only shrubs for which receipts survive. Other old survivors which Ogden probably planted about 1870 are philadelphus or mock-orange—then called syringa—and Japanese quince. The rhododendron beds, well established by the time they appear in 1890s photographs, were planted in 1872, according to Sarah's diary.

Sarah Codman's diary, kept meticulously during the years from her engagement until her death in 1922, provides a vivid picture of family life during the first years of ownership of "The Grange."²⁰ After several construction delays, they settled in July 1864, with their small son, Ogden, Jr. The cistern promptly gave out, and persistent servant troubles began. "The cook wretched"; "new cook comes"; "servants fight about church";—the phrases form a litany throughout all the Codman years in Lincoln.

The outdoor staff proved equally difficult: "The farmer and the coachman quarrel"; "the farmer leaves"; "a fuss with the farm men about their board, and they all leave." Meanwhile, more babies are born, Sarah's sister Alice spends the summers, they go out riding or driving in the buggy. They take walks and picnics, and explore the local ponds. The children learn to ride ponies; they fall off. Sometimes they go in the yellow wagon or the sleigh. Every year they all go to the Concord Cattle Show, and sometimes to a fair at Lowell. Ogden goes to the steeplechase, and one year lays out a race course at "The Grange." They play croquet, a fashionable new lawn sport. Mr. H.H. Hunnewell of Wellesley, a famous gentleman-gardener, comes to dine. Sarah, later an avid gardener, makes her first modest planting ef-

forts. Resembling Marie Antoinette, she makes butter in a glass churn.

There is a continuous counterpoint, however, to this rural idyll. Visitors come and go. Sarah and Ogden make frequent trips to town—to balls, to the theater, to the opera. They travel to the mountains, to the sea, to Europe. Suddenly, in 1873 Ogden is going to town "nearly every day." The great Boston Fire of 1872, by destroying his holdings in Boston, almost ruined him financially. In 1874 the whole family sailed for France for a ten-year exile in the little town of Dinard, on the coast of Brittany. The quasi-eighteenth-century pastoral at Lincoln was over.

While the Codmans were away, the mansion "pleasure grounds, garden, and pasture" were leased out, while Ogden's brother James rented the farm on the property. In his increasingly gloomy letters, James kept Ogden abreast of the deterioration of "The Grange," and urged his brother either to resume living there or to sell the place. The tenant farmer was quarreling with the caretaker, he reported, and both were undoubtedly cheating Ogden. The horses were "abused," most of the cows "not worth their keep," the grassland "much run out," and the orchard trees "old and worthless."²¹ Even Ogden's old dog had become "a thief and a chicken killer." Only the recently planted trees and shrubs were growing well.

Ogden did bring his family home at the end of 1884, but his financial situation was still precarious. He had to lease out the farm, and in summer the mansion house, too. The family's relationship to their estate was oddly tentative into the 1890s, when they again lived in Europe for several years. Finally, in 1897, they settled permanently at "The Grange." Sarah developed a new interest there in gardening with wild plants during the 1880s. Her diary mentions several expeditions to dig up ferns, marsh marigolds, and yellow violets. Copies of *Wild Flowers and Where They Grow* (1882) and *Flora of Middlesex County* (1888),

which are still in the house, probably were acquired by Sarah at this time.

The older four of the five children seemed to be developing their talents and reaching out toward life. Ogden, Jr., born in 1863, spent a miserable two years in Lowell as an apprentice architect, followed by a stint with the Boston firm of Andrews and Jacques. In 1892 he opened his own Boston office. Alice, or "Ahla," three years younger, studied painting and often went to parties at the Lyman estate, "The Vale," in nearby Waltham. Tom, two years behind Ahla, had taken up photography, while Hugh, born in 1875, showed great promise on the violin. Dorothy, eight years younger than Hugh, was the baby of the family.

Ogden Codman, Jr.

Young Ogden was always intensely interested in his family's place. He drew up plans for changes that were made to the

house and the stable. He also proposed a tall, elegant, and unnecessary addition to the east side of the mansion. (See Metcalf, this issue.) Several of his sketches survive, which are plans for an imposing axial entrance court adjacent to his proposed ell.²² One of these little drawings shows, underlying the proposed layout, the casual tear-drop shape of the drive as even today it loops up to the side door. Another sketch shows two old elms which Ogden was determined to retain (fig. 5).

Much as he admired his eighteenth-century great-grandfather, Ogden, Jr.'s splendid formal schemes are the opposite of John Codman's dreams. If built, young Ogden's design would have created a landscape similar to the gardens so ruthlessly demolished by the English landscape improvers whose work John so admired in 1800. Ogden's plans would have extended the architecture of the house into the landscape, and imposed a unified, symmetrical

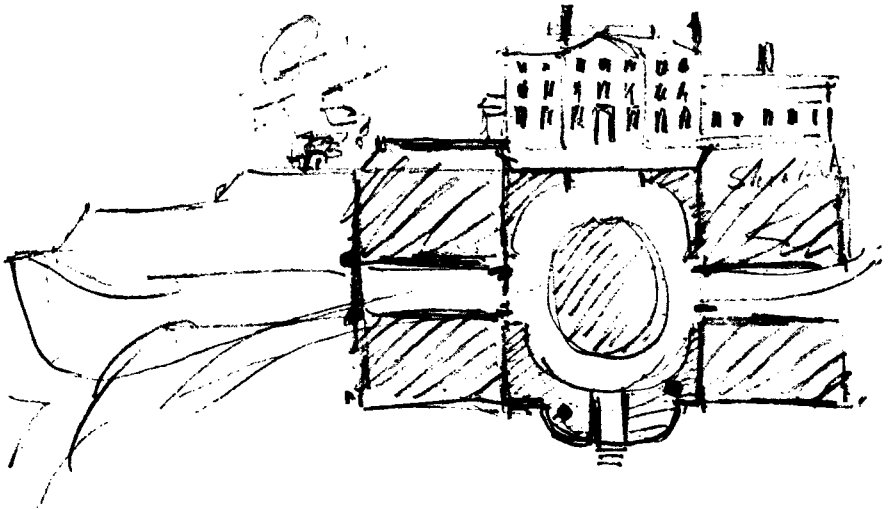


FIG. 5. SKETCH PLAN AND ELEVATION OF "THE GRANGE." Drawn by Ogden Codman, Jr., 1890s, showing his proposed new east ell and formal treatment of the approach drive. Two dark spots at the lower edge represent old elms of the John Codman era which were to be preserved. (SPNEA, Codman Family Manuscripts Collection.)

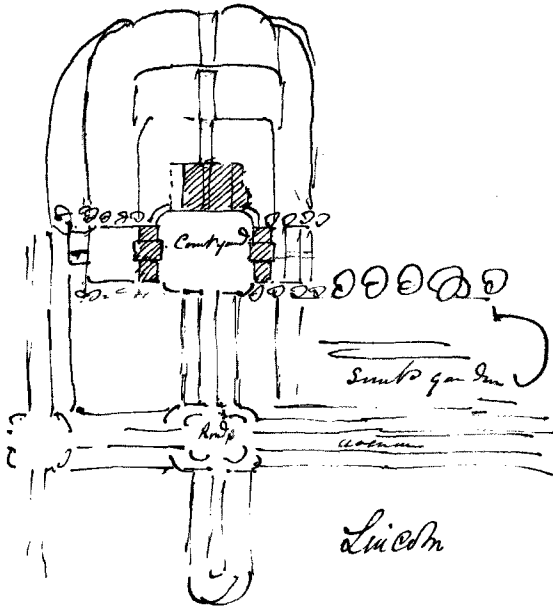


FIG. 6. LANDSCAPE PROPOSAL FOR "THE GRANGE," 1890s. By Ogden Codman, Jr. The existing house and its front terraces are shown at the top. Courtyard, flanking wings, avenues, rond point, and terracing west of the house remained merely paper plans, but Sarah's Italian garden with its curved western end was soon to be built on the spot marked "sunk garden." (SPNEA, Codman Family Manuscripts Collection.)

plan. The impact on "The Grange" in its totality would have been far more significant than the effect of the Italian garden of 1900, which is so oddly unrelated to the house.

Young Ogden approved of the existing terraced front, in part because it was so firmly related to the façade. His embryonic plans show on the east a geometrical court, with an opening out into the wilder terrain, and, on an axis with the north side of the house, a circle with radiating allées (fig. 6). A Le Nôtre-like landscape might have appeared in South Lincoln, but these changes, so reflective of Ogden, Jr.'s continental classicism, did not progress beyond the drawing board.

A brief phrase in Sarah's diary announces the three day visit in 1892 of "Trix" Jones. Beatrix Jones Farrand, a niece of Edith Wharton, became a founder in 1899 of the American Society of Land-

scape Architects, and one of the nation's leading garden designers. She and young Ogden may well have shared ideas as to how the grounds of "The Grange" might be improved.

After the family's return to Lincoln in 1897, Sarah's diaries continue for years to refer to the "children," when they were hardly children anymore. By 1900 Alice and Tom were in their thirties, Hugh was twenty-five, and Dorothy seventeen. Yet all of them but Ogden remained at "The Grange," unmarried, for the rest of their lives, gradually abandoning their independence and their talents. They lived much as they did when they *were* children: snapping pictures of each other, taking walks, riding bicycles, playing tennis or tether ball, and looking after their pets. Ahla made lovely watercolors of the Lincoln landscape until her mysterious ailments kept her from pursuing what was obviously a real ability.²³



FIG. 7. SARAH PRESIDES AT THE TEA TABLE, AUGUST 1899. White geraniums bloom by the house, and a lawn roller attests to maintenance standards in this snapshot from one of Alice's albums. (SPNEA, Codman Family Photograph Collection.)

Ogden, Sr., who died in 1904, seems a shadowy figure in his last years. He had apparently decided that farming and gardening were not for him, after all, although he continued to buy trees of many varieties. Curiously, one book which he signed in 1898 may be the only American volume he acquired in connection with his estate. This was Liberty Hyde Bailey's *Garden Making*, a thoroughly practical manual for ordinary folk of modest means and modest grounds who would actually work the soil themselves, as Sarah began to do. Even before she was widowed, Sarah, with advice from her son, Ogden, took charge of "The Grange" by 1900.

Sarah Bradlee Codman

Near the west corner of the house were a locust, an old elm, and the horse chestnut which is there still. In this shady spot, reclining in canvas deck chairs, the Codmans gathered on summer afternoons at the turn of the century around a cloth-covered tea table and a huge silver samovar, presided over by Sarah (fig. 7). The family spent other hours in the rocking chairs on the side piazza, where rolled awnings of striped canvas sheltered them and the potted palms from the heat of the noonday sun.

The English garden writer, Gertrude Jekyll, whose *Wood and Garden* (1899) was in the Codmans' library, wrote that gardening required a true artist to create a living

picture. The old and, according to her, ugly practice of "bedding out" tender plants in parterres of brilliant colors was entirely out of fashion, she wrote. The Codmans—artists though they indeed were—still kept up the old practice in front of their house. Geraniums, ageratum, and petunias from a Roxbury nursery were planted in the lower terrace.²⁴ Schlegel and Fottler, suppliers of vegetable seeds to the Codmans since the 1860s, prepared a plan for round beds surrounded by arcs and smaller circular beds. The central beds were to include phlox, while the arcs and small circles were to be devoted to scarlet, blue, and yellow annuals.²⁵ The outlines of these beds can still be discerned (fig. 4). Dorothy's garden book for 1913 includes her sketch for the same plan. Every year Sarah noted the date of the first hard frost which killed the salvia and heliotrope there.

Sarah and Ahla, both watercolorists of skill, sat and painted in the Octagon one

afternoon in 1898. They both painted the same view of their house rising above its verdant terraces (fig. 8). Both show what photographs of the period do not: color. The geraniums near the house and the salvia in the round beds were flaming red.²⁶



FIG. 8. VIEW OF THE CODMAN HOUSE AND TERRACE GARDENS FROM THE OCTAGON, 1898. A watercolor signed and dated by Sarah Bradlee Codman. Alice painted the same scene. All flowers in both paintings are red. (SPNEA, Codman Family Manuscripts Collection.)

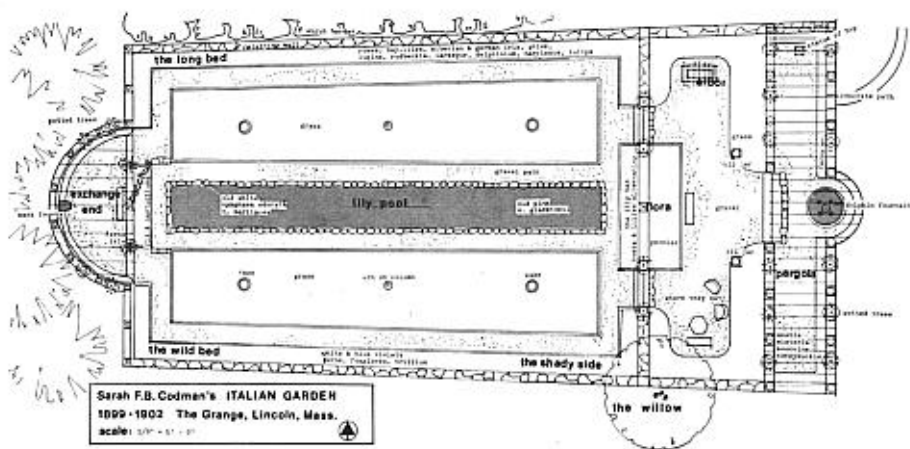


FIG. 9. PLAN OF THE ITALIAN GARDEN, "THE GRANGE," LINCOLN. Construction extended from 1899 to 1903. (Drawn by the author.)

The propped-up remnant of the old John Codman mulberry on the second terrace lasted until 1922, the year Sarah died. By the steps were Italian pots with small trees in them, while at the outer edges of the terraces were urn vases planted with yucca or aloe. The grass in the Octagon looks well tended in photographs, but Sarah was unsatisfied. Weeds kept appearing, despite frequent ploughing and replanting. In a 1907 letter she reported having trees cut down so that "we can now see the end of the road from the porch as we used to do."²⁷ At that time the pond in the Octagon was larger than now, and its banks were clear of brush.

In 1899, when Sarah was fifty-seven, she embarked on her grandest project at "The Grange." Northwest of the house was a low, wet area known to the Codmans as the "Pond Hole," which may once have been a pond. Here, over the course of two years, a walled Italianate garden was built (fig. 9). The Codman's coachman and handyman began clearing and digging in September 1899. The following spring, although the walls were only partially completed, Sarah

began putting in plants. The site was so wet that a pool—which Sarah ever after referred to as "the ditch"—was a necessity. Men were digging and pumping all through the spring of 1900. That summer she wrote, "Neptune comes to lay the Pond Hole steps."

The pergola nearest the house was built next. The columns were made by Tom, who had learned to work with concrete. Rough poles were placed across the columns. A year later the curved arbor at the far end was built, using delicate marble columns and heavy corinthian capitals from a building which Ogden, Sr. had owned at Exchange Place in Boston. Squared timbers were laid across the columns at this, the so-called "Exchange end." Statues of Bacchus and Flora, free-standing decorative columns, and two fountains were in place by 1903.²⁸ Soon clematis, wisteria, and honeysuckle clambered over the pergolas. Huge oil jars, potted trees, and benches were placed symmetrically here and there. Plants everywhere soon gave the garden a look of maturity (fig. 10).

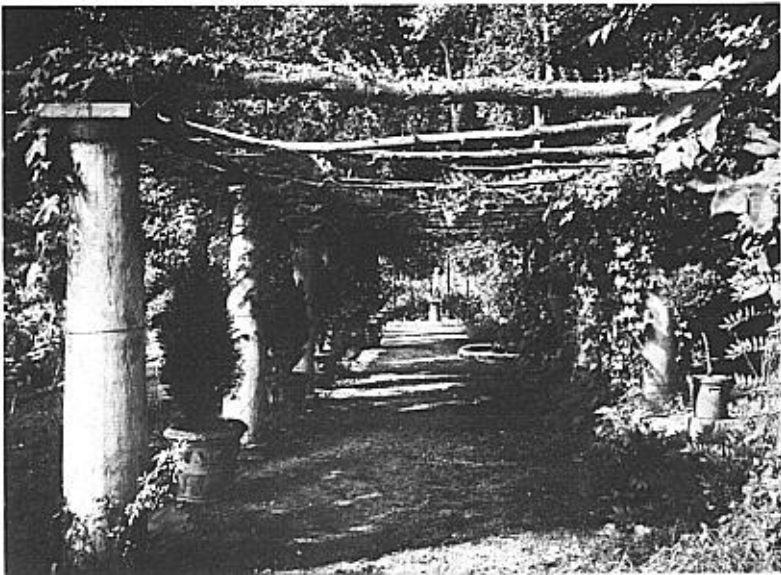


FIG. 10. PERGOLA IN THE ITALIAN GARDEN AT "THE GRANGE," ca. 1903. Pots, statuary, and vines have given the new garden a look of age. (SPNEA, Codman Family Photograph Collection.)

Sarah herself called it simply "the garden," while her daughter Dorothy in her garden book referred to it as "SFC's garden." "The Italian garden" is its current appellation. The garden was carefully planned and laid out by someone. That someone was probably Ogden, Jr., but Sarah's diary, usually so inclusive, is silent as to the planning phase. No rendering of it has been found among the architectural drawings in the Codman collection. The design may have been measured and carefully staked out directly on the ground.

The garden's enclosing architectural elements, its statuary, and its use of water are of Italian derivation. This garden is a walled outdoor room—a *giardino segreto*. Lacking in any visual links to the house or the countryside, the garden is more medieval than Renaissance. Its sense of enclosure is increased by its location in a hollow. The trees along the ridge and nearby knoll increase this sense, while softening the transition between its formal lines and the natural landscape. The narrowing perspective within the garden, which increases its apparent length, was planned with assurance and skill.

Outside the garden, the slope from the house is treated poorly. The steep narrow steps which drop obliquely across the hillside are inadequate. There is no good approach to the garden. Perhaps the major contribution to landscape art of the great Italian villa gardens lies in their adaptation of sloping sites, whereas the so-called Italian garden at "The Grange" entirely ignores the slope.

For Sarah, the garden became her passion. She worked on it continually, and when not working she sat there at a little table shaded by a willow in a corner near the pergola. She planted many sorts of vines. Along the shady southern border Sarah planted foxgloves, wildflowers, and ferns. From Mr. Pratt's Concord Nursery she bought white lilacs, forsythia, yellow caragana, and other shrubs to set out above the wall.²⁹ In the pool were water lilies.

Hostas and lilies grew in the bed at Flora's feet. In front of Bacchus, at the far end, were iris bordered by nasturtiums. Every year the big Italian pots were set out with their little citrus and cypress trees.

The "long bed," as Sarah called it, sunny and sheltered by the north wall, required the most work. She grew many perennials there, as well as bulbs. She was always revising it, raising it for better drainage, trying new plants, or dividing the old. She had roses there, and phlox, tulips, daylilies, lupins, delphiniums, and dozens more.³⁰ Dorothy worked with her mother in the garden day after day. When the outdoor gardening season ended, they potted bulbs and flowering plants in the greenhouse which was built in 1904.

In 1911 Sarah, almost seventy, was in pain. Her doctor diagnosed her problem as "housemaid's knee." If he knew her well he should have called it "gardener's knee." After that it was Dorothy who did the garden work for her mother.

Dorothy Codman

Dorothy remained close to her mother and lived out her entire life in her childhood home. Her interest in gardening and her knowledge grew apace with Sarah's, but this avocation played an even more central role in the younger woman's life. Thirty-five years after her mother's death Dorothy was still tending a garden which she continued to think of as her mother's.

Dorothy was a compulsive collector and record-keeper. She tried in her own garden next to the stable to grow a multitude of different plants. Some of them were not hardy or were otherwise unsuitable, thus insuring failure, but many succeeded. Her careful plans, with lists of exactly what grew where, would make a restoration of her special garden easy.³¹ Maintenance would be less easy. Dorothy devoted her life to it.

Despite so complete a written record, there are almost no photographs of

Dorothy's garden. Even if family members considered it unworthy of preserving on film, why did she not do so herself? She filled many albums with her snapshots, taken on trips and at home. The Italian garden, by contrast, was photographed repeatedly from every angle. Among the few photographs of her garden by the stable are two taken by Ahla about 1900, showing blue larkspur and the picket fence. The only other pictures date from 1958, and show roses, foxgloves, arches to support climbers, and water lilies in the pool.

In July 1908 Sarah wrote, "Dorothy's made over garden has been very successful and she takes a good deal of pleasure in it."³² Tom made a circular pool for Dorothy in 1909, and Dreer's, the Philadelphia seed merchants, filled an order for water lilies.³³ Dorothy and her mother made frequent trips to local nurseries. In June 1905, "Ogden, Tom, D. and I to the Shady Hill nursery [of Bedford] in the auto," wrote Sarah in her diary. The Codmans had bought their first car in 1903, which made possible expeditions further afield.

Dorothy's creation was in the style of an English cottage garden. Gertrude Jekyll was among the first to acclaim and popularize the small, crowded, and colorful garden enclosures of rural villagers. In this century, old-fashioned cottage flower gardens were often self-consciously copied. The sunny and protected site of Dorothy's garden was ideal for her purposes; it was far from the formal manor house with its elegant appurtenances, and close, not to a cottage, but to the horses and hens of a simple pastoral life.

In cottage garden style, Dorothy's is enclosed by a wall and a modest fence. The small flower beds are geometrically arranged, with no central axis, and the walks are quaintly narrow. Dorothy carefully arranged her plants so that their height would complement the curves of the scalloped picket fence. Each bed was edged with

some homely little plant, such as violets or pinks. Up the wired arches grew roses and clematis. Dorothy grew herbs among her flowers and grapes on a little arbor. She had a hotbed in which rhubarb still grows. The lily pool, with Japanese iris around it, seems too exotic a feature, but Dorothy cared more for a pool than for stylistic purity.

At the time when Dorothy made her garden, the revived architectural and landscape styles of the American colonial period were widely popular. The Codmans shared this admiration. Dorothy and her family drove for miles to look at and photograph old houses. Nonetheless, the family's anglophile leanings were even stronger. In Dorothy's garden a direct English influence seems more prominent than any version filtered through an idealized colonial America. Even her failures can be attributed to the frequent choice of a plant better suited to the milder English climate than to Massachusetts winters.

The garden was a lot for one person to look after, unless she had help. But Dorothy did not think so, for she rambled off in all directions with plans and lists for beds of flowers, vines, and shrubs all the way to the railroad tracks. Evidently, there were so many plants she wanted to grow that she had to expand to make room. Three old locusts were spaced along the wall, and Dorothy added three more. She planted clematis at the base of each. Her ideal, she noted in 1913, was "to connect the trees by a garland of vines." A year later, she penciled in tragically, "but the trees are dying."

In 1913 the Codmans' greenhouse was refurbished with rooms of different temperatures. Dorothy ordered bulbs and exotic seeds from Vilmorin-Andrieux in Paris. From Japan the Yokohama Nursery sent her camellias, gardenias, and citrus trees.³⁴ Her banana trees produced fruit. Winter could not stop Dorothy from gardening.

Decline

After Ogden, Sr.'s death in 1904, Sarah continued during her own last two decades to try to maintain "The Grange" as she felt it should be. She and her children treasured their house and its setting. Any changes were intended to enhance the eighteenth-century ambience of the place. The last major structural addition to the landscape was the woodshed/carriage house in 1908. Sarah wrote to Ogden's wife that she, Tom, and Hugh drove about "looking for an old woodshed to copy."³⁵ The result, designed by architect Richard A. Fisher, may be a copy of a building they saw on one of their drives.

In the early years of this century Lincoln trees were being defoliated by an infestation of gypsy moths. Dorothy, Ahla, and their brothers spent hours in 1906, 1907, and 1908 killing the caterpillars. The local tree warden initiated spraying with arsenate of lead in 1907, but was more enthusiastic

about biological pest control. Sarah, too, was optimistic about finding a parasite "who will fight them." She also embarked upon a program of thinning out the woods. This was supposed to discourage the moths, but Sarah admired the aesthetic effect, as a reminder of how it must once have looked.

The vegetable garden was rehabilitated in 1907. Trees that had begun to shade the garden were cut down. Decaying old pear trees were removed, and new ones ordered. "We are going to put it back as it was in the beginning," wrote Sarah, in a comment which typifies her approach to the estate.³⁶ (See fig. 11.)

In 1922 one of the towering elms remaining from John Codman's time had to be removed from the front lawn. The same year Sarah died at the age of eighty. A year later Ahla died, too, at fifty-seven, after years of mysterious ill health, "good days," "bad days," and regular doses of Veronal.³⁷ Ogden, the only one who lived

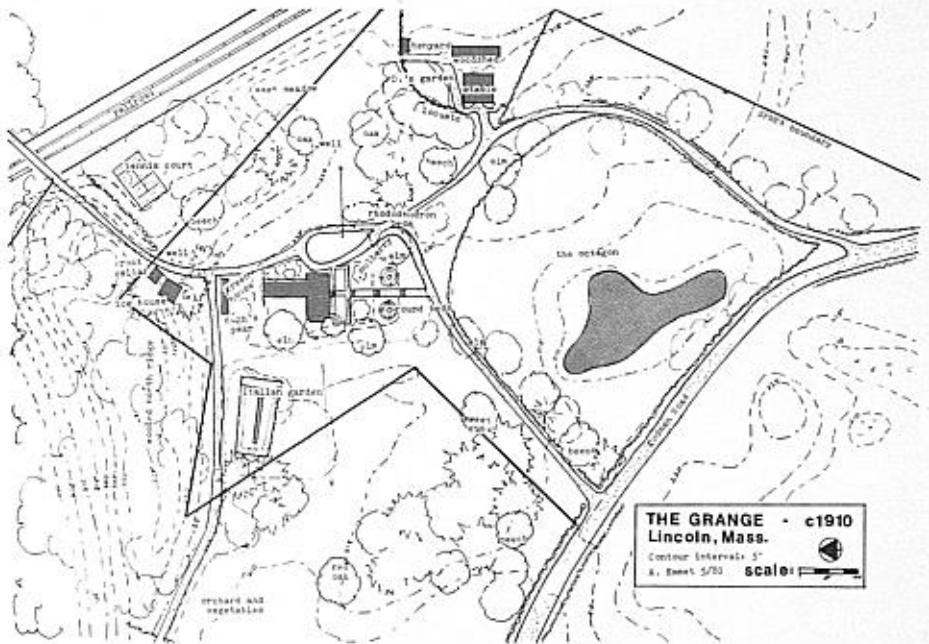


FIG. 11. PLAN OF "THE GRANGE" (ca. 1910). All gardens, structures, and plantings had been completed by this time. A heavy black line marks the present SPNEA boundary. (Drawn by the author.)



FIG. 12. HAYING IN THE OCTAGON, ca. 1930. From one of Dorothy's photo albums. (SPNEA, Codman Family Photograph Collection.)

away from home, seems to have made his last visit to "The Grange" at the time of his mother's death.

Ogden, Jr. did not lose interest in the place, however. Tom's letters kept him informed, and Ogden replied with advice. He felt that their mother had "let the place run down."³⁸ The farm, still rented out, was a bad investment, he thought. He told Tom wistfully that "Père Cot," their father, had once uncovered a sample of John Codman's exterior paint color: yellow. He wondered whether "any of the old elms around the Octagon still remain." Ogden wrote of his dream of re-foresting for the future. Perhaps Ogden introduced the ornamental well heads and the changes on the porch. A photograph taken about 1930 shows the porch railing removed, and in its place, wooden settees, their backs squarely to the edge, alternating with clipped trees in French-style wooden boxes. Ogden's hope, as he wrote Hugh, was that "The Grange" would "resume its place as the head of the big houses in Lincoln."³⁹

The hurricane of September 1938

downed ninety-six trees around the house and the Octagon. Cleaning up was an enormous task. Tom wrote Ogden that one elm had 167 rings, indicating that it had been there since the time of the Revolution.

Tom and Dorothy struggled to keep going. As Tom wrote in 1939, when he was in his seventies, "men are busy with haying, mowing the lawns the vegetable garden and the usual things. . . ."⁴⁰ These "usual things" had been done every year since their father had purchased the place nearly eight decades earlier. After Tom had gone to join Ogden in Europe in 1949, Dorothy wrote him, "The red geraniums are looking very well," as they had each season for more than fifty years.

Hugh died in 1946, and Ogden in 1951. Tom remained in Europe until his death in 1963. Dorothy was left alone at "The Grange." She had some help, her garden still bloomed, and she still walked in the woods a little. Hay was still cut by a horse-drawn mower, but baled in the field by machine, to Dorothy's amazement. "Lo! the Octagon was sprinkled with bales of hay!" she wrote.⁴¹ (See fig. 12.) In 1956

she received word from the Lincoln tree warden that two Codman elms were afflicted with Dutch elm disease. DDT was the recommended remedy.⁴²

The very dearth of records—written or photographic—from the 1930s to the 1960s is clear proof that these were decades of

inactivity and decline for the Codmans and for "The Grange." But by foresight and fortune, this landscape has not been and will not be paved over or built upon. It survives, a legacy of the accumulated efforts of generations of Codmans and their ancestors.

NOTES

1. Christine Fernandez and Alan Emmet, "The Codman Estate: A Landscape Chronicle," 1980, Appendix B (on file at SPNEA). Additional information on Chambers Russell was derived from John Langdon Sibley's *Harvard Graduates* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1968), 9: 81, and from "An Account of the Russell Family" by Miss Mary Russell (1806), in the Russell family papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

2. William Ellis, *The Modern Husbandman* (London, 1742); Edward Lisle, *Observations on Husbandry* (London, 1757); Middlesex County Probate Records (East Cambridge, Mass.), docket number 19591.

3. Fernandez and Emmet, "Codman Estate," Appendix C; Middlesex County Probate Records, docket number 19593.

4. Alice B. Lockwood, *Gardens of Colony and State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 1:32.

5. For a good analysis of the importance of view and the use of terracing in eighteenth-century English and American gardens, see Danella Pierson, "Shirley-Eustis House Landscape History," *Old-Time New England* 70 (1980), pp. 1-16.

6. Lockwood, *Gardens of Colony*, p. 31.

7. John James, trans., *The Theory and Practice of Gardening*, by Antoine Joseph Dezallier D'Argenville (London, 1712), p. 20.

8. Christopher Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1967), p. 96. Stowe was commemorated by Rigaud's drawings (1733), Seeley's guides, and William Gilpin's "Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honorable Lord Viscount Cobman at Stowe" (1748). In 1732, poems by Alexander Pope and Gilbert West sang its praises. These works are reprinted in *The Genius of the Place*, John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, eds. (London: Elek, 1975).

9. Codman Family Manuscripts Collection (hereafter referred to as CFMC), John Codman to Samuel Dexter (typescript), 29 December 1797, box 118.

10. CFMC, bill, Thomas Clement to John Codman, March 1797, box 5, folder 54.

11. CFMC, John Codman to Catherine Amory Codman (typescript), 24 August 1800, box 118.

12. *Ibid.*, 20 July 1800.

13. *Ibid.*, 18 July 1800.

14. *Ibid.*, 24 August 1800.

15. *Ibid.*, sale notice (typescript), 12 September 1815.

16. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman diary, July 1862, box 58.

17. Codman Family Photograph Collection, Album COD 3 OC.

18. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman to Ogden Codman, Jr., 23 June 1908, box 120, folder 1933; Ogden Codman, Jr. to Fiske Kimball, 17 March 1935, quoted by Pauline C. Metcalf, "Ogden Codman, Jr., Architect, Decorator: Elegance Without Excess" (M. S. thesis, Columbia University, 1978), p. 22.

19. CFMC, Thomas Newbold Codman to Ogden Codman, Jr., 28 May 1939, box 86. Nineteenth-century photographs of "The Grange" are located in the CFMC oversize file, album COD 3 OC, Jr., and file 54. (See index to Codman Family Photograph Collection, SPNEA.)

20. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman diaries 1864-1920.

21. CFMC, James McMaster Codman to Ogden Codman, Jr., 22 September 1878, 18 April 1880, and undated, box 35, folder 809.

22. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr., architectural notes, box 217, folder 3003.

23. CFMC, Alice Newbold Codman papers, box 133, folder 2127.

24. CFMC, bill, J. Lawrence Carney to Ogden Codman, Sr., 10 July 1902, box 40, folder 954.
25. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Sr. papers, box 46, folder 1083.
26. Codman Collection of Architectural Drawings, SPNEA.
27. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman to Leila Howard Codman, 18 September 1907, box 120, folder 1934.
28. Codman Family Photograph Collection, Italian garden photographs, COD 3 OC, Jr., COD 5 ANC, COD 12 ANC, COD 18 DC, COD 24 DC; files 20, 48, 49.4.
29. CFMC, bill, F.G. Pratt to Ogden Codman, Sr., 25 October 1900, box 40, folder 953.
30. CFMC, bill, Shady Hill Nursery to Ogden Codman, Sr., 18 October 1902, box 41, folder 956; *Ibid.*, 11 November 1902, box 41, folder 957; bill, F. H. Horsford to Sarah Bradlee Codman, 29 April 1905, box 59, folder 1293.
31. CFMC, Dorothy Codman notebooks, box 197, folders 2972-2974.
32. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman to Leila Howard Codman, 9 July 1908, box 120, folder 1936.
33. CFMC, bill, Henry A. Dreer to Dorothy Codman, 1 July 1910, box 193, folder 2893.
34. CFMC, bill, Suzuki and IIDA, the Yokohama Nursery to Dorothy Codman, 26 August 1913, box 161, folder 2383; bill, Vilmorin-Andrieux et Cie to Dorothy Codman, 9 February 1914, box 161, folder 2383; bill, the Yokohama Nursery to Dorothy Codman, 2 April 1914, box 161, folder 2383.
35. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman to Leila Howard Codman, 18 August 1908, box 120, folder 1936.
36. *Ibid.*, 13 October 1907, box 120, folder 1934.
37. CFMC, Sarah Bradlee Codman diaries 1913-1920, box 58.
38. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Thomas Newbold Codman, 21 June 1923, box 87.
39. CFMC, Ogden Codman, Jr. to Thomas Newbold Codman, 30 June 1934, 12 June 1935, 4 October 1935, box 88; Thomas Newbold Codman to Hugh Codman, 3 March 1929, box 174.
40. CFMC, Thomas Newbold Codman to Ogden Codman, Jr., 16 July 1939, box 86.
41. CFMC, Dorothy Codman to Thomas Newbold Codman, 17 June 1949, box 154, folder 2301.
42. CFMC, Robert Ralston, Arborway Nursery, to Dorothy Codman, 6 February 1957, box 189, folder 2862.