**History of The HSA Awards**

**Awards Committee**: There is considerable conflict over the origins of the Awards Committee. One author states that it was Hester (Mrs. Hammond) Crawford (Western Reserve Unit) who, while serving as President (1950-52), felt that some members possessed skills and expertise that should be recognized. The Awards Committee was formed to identify and honor these individuals. That much is true.

Other writing claims that it was Helen de Conway (Mrs. Winslow) Little who suggested honoring The Society’s outstanding members, and that she became the Chairman of the Awards Committee in 1947. Yet, per the archived The Herbarist issues, the Awards Committee does not appear as a standing committee until 1953. The Chairman at that time was Mrs. Steeble. In 1954, the Chairman was Mrs. D. H. Pond. Mrs. Little’s name first appeared as a Director in1950, and she became Chair of the Nominating Committee in 1952.

The first award, the Award of Merit, was presented in 1952. Also, The HSA archives contains a letter from Mary Lines Wellman to Mrs. Little, dated June 21, 1955, thanking her for “taking on the Chairmanship of the Awards Committee.” Per The Herbarist, Mrs. Little became Chair of the Awards Committee in 1955 under President Mrs. Sargent Wellman. When Mrs. Little passed away in 1965, Mrs. Crawford succeeded her as Chairman.

**Award of Merit**: In 1951, at the annual meeting in Philadelphia, Mrs. Crawford initiated the Award of Merit. The criteria: “That person who has given service in either a specialized field or in a number of capacities to The Herb Society of America. He or she should be nationally known to our members for his or her contributions to the aims of The Society for the furtherance of its objectives”.

In 1952, under the leadership of President Mrs. Frances Ellis (Robert K.) Price (1952-54), the Awards Committee organized with Louisa M. N. Steeble as Chairman. Procedures were adopted for presenting those to be honored: “Names should be presented to the Awards Committee three months in advance of the annual meeting. Letters accompanying these names should contain information and qualifications relative to the candidate”.

The first recipient was Frances Ropes Williams.

Mrs. Williams, of Winchester, MA, was one of the first women to graduate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She joined The HSA on February 3, 1936, and held the position of Corresponding Secretary for many years. In the 1940s, The HSA created a Herbarium for an exhibit at Horticultural Hall in Boston, and Mrs. Williams was appointed Curator. It remained her special interest, and under her care and guidance the Herbarium expanded from 100 to over 2000 sheets. In her own garden, her work and hybridization in hostas brought Williams worldwide fame, and she replied to queries from around the globe. Mrs. Williams received the Award of Merit on June 26, 1952 at a meeting in Lexington, MA. The award was an illuminated scroll.

In 1953, two awards were presented: Adeline P. Cole and Martha Genung Stearns.

Adeline Philbrick (Mrs. Edward B.) Cole was one of the seven founders. The first organizational meeting was held at her farm in Wenham, MA. She served as the second Chairman (1934-1935), as well as being a director for many years. She is also credited with starting the Herbarium. Mrs. Cole had an insatiable curiosity and used the acreage behind her house as a laboratory. During World War II, as Chairman of the Commercial Research Committee, Mrs. Cole corresponded with drug companies in an effort to learn what they could no longer import from Europe, and how The Herb Society could assist. Mrs. Cole acted as teacher and thinker for the group; she was an “idea” person, who was known for her common sense approach to growing herbs and conducting the business of the organization. It was always her desire that The HSA remain relevant. “We should become intelligently aware of the international situation in agriculture, of which our special crop, herbs, is a small part”, she is quoted as saying. “But without a broad outlook, any specialized group such as ours, runs the danger of becoming just ‘folksy” and that we should avoid”. She was fascinated by the study of chemurgy, which she defined as “a combination of the efforts of agriculture, industry and science”.

Martha Genung (Mrs. Foster) Stearns had lived in Rome while her husband was the librarian for the Vatican. She named Editor Emeritus after editing The Herbarist from 1942-56. She was also editor of The HSA newsletter for 17 years, and compiled an extensive bibliography, as well as writing the Herb Common Book – a collection of “ephermeral works of fiction that will probably not survive to become classics, and yet such gives many interesting references to herbs”. In 1957, Mrs. Stearns donated a medal, which became the one-time only Stearns Garden Medal. (see below)

In 1954, the Award of Merit went to: Dr. Edgar Anderson and Elizabeth Remson Van Brunt.

Dr. Anderson of St. Louis (formerly Arborist at Harvard) was then director of the Missouri Botanical Garden. He is often referred to as the eighth founder because he was a mentor to the ladies when they first formed the group that would become The HSA. He invited them to use the testing grounds at Harvard Laboratory, as well as his advice and expertise on horticulture. Dr. Anderson was made President of The HSA, the first person to hold that title. He went on to achieve international recognition for his work, but always retained his connection to the organization he helped to found.

Elizabeth Remson Van Brunt was invited to join The HSA after traveling from New York to Boston to attend her first meeting in 1936. It was she who went on to found the New York Unit. In 1976, she was made an honorary member.

In 1956, the Awards Committee, chaired by Mrs. Little, looked into the possibility of a three-inch medal for the award, but found the price prohibitive. However, an anonymous donor provided for the new award: the bronze Medal of Honor. Mrs. Little designed it and a duplicate of the medal was put on permanent display in the Library of Horticultural Hall in 1957. Mrs. Little died in 1965 and in honor of her many years of devoted service to The HSA, the medal was named for her. (see below)

**Martha Stearns Garden Medal for Horticulture**: In 1957, Mrs. Stearns gave, to Executive Secretary Mrs. Robert K. Miller, a medal to be given by the Awards Committee at their discretion. She said, “Here – keep this safe – the Awards Committee may award it at their discretion. It is a pleasure for me to give it.” The enclosed note said: “Garden Medal, donated by Mrs. Stearns, to be awarded once by the Awards Committee to somebody worthy.”

In 1971, they found that person: Miss Mittie Arnold (15 Oct 1889-12 Jan 1972). She was presented with the one-time-only Garden Medal, along with a poem written by Deborah Greeley (daughter of Helen Noyes Webster). Miss Arnold was a director, vice-president and member of the Ways and Means Committee. She was honored for “her knowledge of horticulture and the growing of herbs in particular.” When WWII created a shortage of culinary and medicinal herbs, Arnold and a friend, Margaret Thomas, organized Greene Herb Gardens in the village of Greene (near Coventry, RI) which was to become the country’s largest producer of organically grown herbs, never using insecticides or artificial fertilizers.

**The Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor**: This award honors someone who has made outstanding contributions to The Herb Society of America or to the world of horticulture in general.

In1965, Mrs. Noreen Sheridan (Oliver) Capen gave $500 to the Awards Committee in honor of Helen de Conway Little. Mrs. Little, who had recently died, was a cherished and dedicated member from the New York Unit who had held a position on the Board for a number of years. Mrs. Little also provided “long, devoted and wise leadership as the Award Committee Chair.” She was responsible for the award – the Medal of Honor – and was its chairman from the beginning through 1964. In 1966, the medal was named The Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor.

Helen de Conway was born in France, and when World War I broke out she enlisted as the youngest ambulance driver for the Red Cross. At the end of the war, her father moved the family to New York City. There she met and married Winslow Little. When World War II began, Mr. Little enlisted and was sent overseas. Mrs. Little one again joined the Red Cross. From her home in Katonah, NY, she drove each morning to New York City to hand out coffee and doughnuts to departing soldiers. This is how she met Mrs. Capen, who was engaged in the same commute. They became fast friends, and it was Mrs. Capen who sponsored Mrs. Little for membership in the New York Unit. In 1947, when she became Chairman of the Awards Committee, Mrs. Little suggested that the society should honor its outstanding members. It was she who designed the first Medal of Honor.

A custom associated with the Littles was the sending of a dozen red roses to the president of The Society when she presided over their first Board Meeting (always held in those days in Boston at Horticultural Hall in September). The custom was initiated by Mr. Little in 1948 to compliment Mrs. Capen whose presidency began July 1948. The practice was continued through 1964 with Mrs. Atherton’s presidency. Both Littles died in the 1960s. Helen Little was buried – at her request – in her Red Cross uniform. First recipient of the Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor: Olive Willett Smith.

Olive Willett Smith was from the New York Unit. She served as a Vice-President, Chairman of the New York Unit, and Chairman of Gardens and Planting. Smith was appointed by New Jersey Governor Hughes to the Arbor and Garden Commission for the New Jersey Tercentenary and to the New Jersey Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair. Smith also supervised the redesigning and planting of the Knot Garden at the New York Botanical Garden, a replica of her own St. Fiacre garden in Plainfield, NJ. She was awarded the Certificate of Merit by the Veterans Administration for the many hours she spent conducting Garden Therapy. Olive Smith received the Little Medal of Honor for “her educational contribution of lectures, writing and gardens; for her devotion to the ideals of The Herb Society of America and for her deep interest in its future.” She replied: “I am so happy to be the recipient of the first medal struck off in the name of Helen de Conway Little. It was through Helen Little’s vision and persistence that the Medal of Honor was created and I served on her committee for many years.”

**Certificate of Achievement**: The 1973 Awards Committee established the certificate to be awarded at their discretion to individuals they deem worthy. Per the 1974 Annual Report, the award is intended to be given “to a person who has made an outstanding contribution to the study of herbal lore.” Later writing expands that definition, adding that the certificate is to honor those people, members of The Society or not, who have made significant contributions in various ways to the work of The HSA or the world of herbs.

After establishing the award, the husband of New England Unit member Maris Platais designed the calligraphy for the certificate and his format was reproduced. No more than three certificates may be given in a year. The first Certificate was presented in 1974 to Dr. Emily Emmart (Charles K.)Trueblood.

Emily Walcott Emmart graduated from Goucher College with a BS in Biology, and went on to achieve both her Master’s Degree and Doctorate from Johns Hopkins. She became a Member-at-Large of The HSA in 1963 and was one of the founding members of the Potomac Unit. She was elected a Fellow of Harvard University in 1971. After her marriage, and while serving as a Director on the National Board, Dr. Trueblood proposed establishing a permanent endowment fund for the organization. She was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for her translation of the Badianus Manuscript of 1552 from Latin to English.

The award is generally given to one person; the exception was at The HSA’s 50th anniversary – in 1983 – when the award was given for the first time to a group: the New England Unit.

**Special Award of Honor**: Anne Bell Shirk Burrage, was respected for her vision and faith in the growth of The HSA. She was one of the seven founders and the first Chairman, elected in 1933. She gave the new organization its name and advised on the motto, and she authored the first by-laws. Through her efforts, The HSA acquired office space in the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. In 1934, Mrs. Burrage was asked to edit a small bulletin, which was to become The Herbarist in 1935. That same year, Mrs. Cole, as Chairman, appointed Mrs. Burrage as Chairman of Arrangements to organize the first-ever annual meeting, held at Horticultural Hall on March 26, 1935. In 1981, as the lone surviving founder, she was given a special award: an official citation and a bowl with the inscription “Si Monumentum Requiris, Circumspice” if you want a monument, look around you.

Certificate of Appreciation: This award was designed in 1982 to recognize those who – living or dead - have contributed a great deal personally to The Society or to those who have admirably completed a special assignment or project. No more than three certificates may be given in a year.

The first certificates were awarded to Booker and Mary Worthen, who became Treasurers of the National Herb Garden Fund and to Ruth and Roland Remmel, who raised $400,000 for the fund.

**The Nancy Putnam Howard Award for Horticulture**: This award honors an individual who perpetuates excellence in horticulture.

Nancy Putnam Howard was a graduate of Pennsylvania State University Temple School of Horticulture and received her Masters degree in horticulture from the University of Maryland. She had additional horticultural training at Longwood Gardens, Hillier Arboretum and Wisley Gardens in England, arboretums and gardens in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Howard joined the Philadelphia Unit in 1962. Her first assignment was Herb Sale Chairman (1962-64). She then served as the Unit’s Recording Secretary (1964-66). She was elected Chairman of the Philadelphia Unit (1966-68). The next two years (1968-70), Howard was Chairman of the Herb Garden at The College of Physicians in Philadelphia. She also served on the Executive Board as Botany and Horticulture chairman, Director of the National Herb Garden in Washington, Publications Chairman, Corresponding Secretary, Vice-President and was elected President for the term 1980-82, but had to resign due to ill health.

She was a skillful gardener and generously shared her vast knowledge of horticulture, collecting plant specimens and answering thousands of queries from around the world. She was known for her dedication to correct identification, culture, history and uses of plants. Howard was also a photographer, writer and lecturer, scholar and teacher. She received The HSA Certificate of Achievement in 1978, the Certificate of Merit and the Distinguished Achievement Medal of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. The Nancy Putnam Howard Award for Horticulture was approved by the board of The Herb Society of America in 1985.

In 1986, President Willie Sprague contacted Susan Wood, of the South Texas Unit, to design the award. Susan was also contacted by Dolores Weiss (Mrs. H. Eugene) who was Chairman of the Awards Committee. It was suggested that she produce something in the shape of a trowel, but that proved difficult to design and allow room for the engraving. Susan decided she wanted to create something to be “of use and delight”. In the end, Susan designed a sterling silver “posy holder” – a tussie mussie pin – for women awardees. In 1991, Susan designed a pocket magnifying glass in a sterling silver case – a more appropriate award for a man – when Cyrus Hyde became the first male recipient.

In 1986, the prototype was sent to Nancy Howard for her approval. Howard died later that year. The first NPH Award was presented the same year to Holly Shimizu. Per letter dated August 9, 2005 from Susan Wood to Christine Liebson (The HSA Librarian) the artist explains that she makes each award by hand and has the hand engraving done by the top engraver in Houston, Lorenzo de Leon.

The 1987 recipient was Elizabeth Dibble Rollins (Mrs. Fitzhugh). In accepting her award, Betty Rollins said, “For many years, Nancy led us ever upward and onward in the fascinating world of herbs.”

The Gertrude B. Foster Award for Excellence in Horticultural Writing: This award honors those who have published a scholarly study of herbs, and was initiated by the Connecticut Unit in 1998. The author must be living at the time of nomination and may or may not be a member of The Society.

Gertrude Bates (Bunny) Foster was recognized in 1975 by The Herb Society “for her extensive contributions to the knowledge and interest in herbs and horticulture in this country and abroad through research, lecturing and editorial leadership”. Her exhaustive research was evident in her publications: *The Herb Grower* magazine, 1947-1984*; It Is Easy to Grow Herbs*, 1943; *Herbs For Every Garden*, 1969; and *Park’s Success With Herbs*, 1980, co-authored with her daughter Rosemary L. Louden. Legions of horticulturists and herb enthusiasts world-wide honor Bunny’s legacy of authoritative writings and cherish her boundless generosity with plants and encouragement, her voluminous correspondence and her profound modesty.

Foster joined The HSA’s New York Unit in 1958, later joined the Connecticut Unit as an active member and was awarded honorary membership in 1978. In 1975, she received the Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor for “her extensive contributions to the knowledge and interest in herbs and horticulture in this country and abroad through research, lecturing and editorial leadership.” That same year she was listed in the “Who’s Who of American Women”.

Foster and her husband, Phil, began their career in herbs by providing hard-to-find herbs seeds during World War II and led to the creation of Laurel Hill Herb Farm. Following the war, the Fosters opened Herb Grower Press, their own desktop publishing company, which produced The Herb Grower magazine. Their business flourished, with with subscribers in all 50 states and in Europe, India and South Africa. As a member of the Royal Horitcultural Society, Foster led groups of Americans through English gardens. On giving advice to a young couple, Bunny was quoted as saying: “If you have a garden in your heart, you will find a plac for it”.

The memento for this award is a crystal faceted paperweight by Jaffa Crystal, from Recognition Products International, Ridgefield, CT.

**The Joanna McQuail Reed Award for the Artistic Use of Herbs**: This award recognizes those who are able to express their 'delight' of herbs through their artistic and creative abilities, whether it be needlework, painting, photography, garden design, culinary or any other art form. The artist must be living at the time of nomination and may or may not be a member of The Society.

Joanna McQuail Reed served the Society in many ways during her 38 year membership (she joined the Philadelphia Unit in 1964), including as a President from 1980 to 1982. To many, Joanna McQuail Reed embodied all that The Herb Society of America stands for: a superb horticulturist and propagator, she was always the giver, the nurturer, the sharer, the artist and the teacher/mentor. Her four acre-garden – Long View Farm - attracted visitors from all over the world and Joanna, her garden, and needlework were featured in about 100 magazines and newspapers as well as many books. Joanna Reed served as The HSA’s president from 1980-82. She received a Certificate of Achievement in 1979; the Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor in 1984; the Nancy Putnam Howard Award in 1995. The Philadelphia Unit initiated The Joanna McQuail Reed Award in 2003. A Simon Pearce glass bowl was chosen as the actual award.

**Additional Notes:**

In 1998, the Board of Directors decided that the recipients of the Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor and the Nancy Putnam Howard Award would receive a certificate with their award. It was also decided that past recipients would receive a certificate to keep with their award.

In 2008, the Awards Committee looked into the history of the awards. Attached is the communication from then-President Joyce Brobst to the Awards Committee that includes questions and recommendations, as well as a history compiled by Mary Wohlleb. I have tried to condense what I feel is most important, and correct dates when I saw discrepancies.

Respectfully,

Chris Wilkinson

Special Projects

The HSA Headquarters

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