

## Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park Audio Tour

Hello, and welcome to Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park. We are happy that you have decided to use the Audio Tour to enhance your visit to our beautiful gardens. We encourage you to take your time as you explore the gardens and use this audio tour as a supplement to your experience. You will note on your map, there are numbers listed and a brief description of the areas that make up the gardens. These numbers will also be referenced in our Audio Tour and when you hear the chime, that means we are going to the next area of the Gardens. But don't worry; you don't have to rush through the Gardens, in fact we want you to take your time and enjoy the scenery. If you want to revisit a section or forward to another section, simply use the reverse and forward buttons on your audio device, and you can move through the different stations as you choose. Also, if you have any questions, feel free to ask any one of the park rangers you may see. They are always glad to assist you. So why don't we get started.

Before you head through the Garden Entrance, we invite you to enjoy the area around the visitor center while we give you a brief history of the park and the area. Then we will begin our tour at the Garden's Entrance.

As you may know, Tallahassee doesn't reflect the typical image of Florida. It is abundant in rolling hills, deciduous trees, and fertile soils. Maclay Gardens also has a rich *cultural* history starting with the Native Americans who inhabited the land before European settlers. The property associated with Maclay Gardens was part of the Lafayette Land Grant, given by the US government to a gentleman named Marquis de

Lafayette for his assistance with the Revolutionary War. However, Lafayette never visited Tallahassee and eventually sold his land.

In antebellum times, this land was part of Andalusia Plantation. Emile Dubois, a Frenchman who established a vineyard on the property, purchased twenty-seven acres of this fine agricultural land in 1882. By 1890, the land produced 4,000 gallons of wine a year. Soon, though, Dubois sold the land after Leon County voted to go dry in 1904.

In 1905, Chicago insurance entrepreneur Colonel John H. Law began amassing land in the area and soon established a quail hunting estate he called Lac-Cal after the first initials of each of his six children's names. He built a hunting lodge in 1906, holding grand parties for friends and families that lasted for days.

In 1923, New York financier Alfred B. Maclay purchased the 1,935-acre Lac-Cal quail hunting plantation and adjoining land. Along with his other land holdings, he created a 3,760-acre estate he called Killlearn after his family's ancestral village in Scotland. When Mr. and Mrs. Maclay purchased the land in 1923, a narrow wagon trail led to the property from the unpaved Thomasville Road, now known as U.S. Hwy 319. Now, Maclay Gardens State Park serves as a portal to nature and a refuge of peace and solitude as well as beauty in the busy Capital City of Florida.

Now, let's begin our tour with Station number 1 which is the Garden's Entrance.

(Chime)

## **Station 1: Garden Entrance**

As you arrive at the Garden's Entrance, you are greeted by an antique wrought iron gate supported by large Brick Pillars. These are flanked by Mediterranean Fan Palms. Towards the left is a dogwood tree. And take note, several steps down the brick walkway to your left past the dogwood and beneath a memorial stone is a time capsule that was buried on Florida State Parks' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The time capsule will be opened on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so come on back around in the year 2035 and find out what's in it!

Now let's head through the gate and onto the walk way that leads to the Maclay Home as we enjoy the first half of The House Walk, Station 2. (Chime)

## **Station 2: House Walk, Part 1**

This walk from the garden gate to the house was a clay surface until the brick paving was laid in 1968. Take note of the many different names on the bricks that make up the surface – Baltimore, Augusta, Birmingham. These bricks didn't come from all of the same companies; in fact they were recycled from an old street in Tampa, Florida and used to make this wonderful walkway. The plantings throughout the gardens are maintained as closely to the original design as possible. As you continue along the walk, note the use of native plants in landscaping to complement the exotic flora that you see here and throughout the gardens. We invite you to listen as Park Services Specialist

Ginger Nichols discusses some of the plants you will see along the house walk. The camellias are really the backbone of the gardens here. We have over 160 different cultivars and we have over 65 different varieties of azaleas. The first plants here on the left and right of the brick walk are the Christmas Cheer Azaleas, said to be Mrs. Maclay's favorite, and they would bloom in time with her first visit, usually. In addition, there are many fine old live oaks and magnolias. There are also a number of smaller trees like the dogwood that we saw at the entrance and the redbud. Specialist Nichols discusses the year round beauty found at Maclay Gardens. When you walk along this path, it's always pretty, even in the middle of the summer, even though it's designed to be a late-winter, early-spring blooming garden. This is always shady, and the different shades of green are really pretty, even in the middle of the summer. One of the taller understory shrubs along this walk is the mountain laurel. Like the other native plants, it was collected from the wild and planted in the gardens. The shrubs make a splendid show during its late spring blooming season. You will also note several native azaleas planted in the shrubbery. The majority of the garden's plants named the "coontie" are found along this stretch of the house walk. These plants provide an interesting change of texture in the border plantings. The massive starchy roots of this plant furnished the Native Americans with a kind of flour. Now continue to enjoy your walk along the brick path and when you get to the Lakeside Pavilion at Lake Hall, we will resume there with Station number 3 (Chime).

### **Station 3: Lakeside Pavilion**

From the house walk, there is a short path to the right paved with newer bricks. This leads to the lakeside pavilion and a splendid vista of Lake Hall. As you face the lake, a large native red maple stands to the left of the pavilion and a honey locust stands on the other side. Along the shore, southeast of the pavilion, the lakeside path is bordered by magnolias, black gum and oaks, with under plantings of numerous azaleas of several species, including some natives, collected from the wild throughout North Florida and South Georgia. Lake Hall has the distinction of having one of the best water qualities of all lakes in Leon County according to a local water quality and conservation group. The lake is suspected to be spring fed although it has no known connection to the Floridan Aquifer via a sinkhole. Take some time to rest in antique garden furniture and enjoy the cool breeze from Lake Hall. Native bald cypress, the only such specimen in the gardens, grace the water's edge to the right. In the summer, aquatic plants bloom yellow, white and purple. Take your time and enjoy the surroundings. The next station is number 4, where we will enjoy part two of the house walk. (Chime)

### **Station 4: House Walk, Part II**

As you leave the lakeside pavilion, turn right to continue along the second half of the house walk along the antique brick walkway. As you continue along the path, you may be able to get another scene of Lake Hall on the right framed by palm trees. Across from this on the left is the "Gold Dust Plant", an *aucuba japonica* with variegated leaves of

green and gold. Exotic plants such as these and the Oriental Magnolia complete the House Walk Border. You will also find the backbone of the garden plantings, more azaleas and camellias. Red Berries of Yaupon and American Holly add nice winter color to the shaded beds. As you walk along the path, you will come across a green ribbon of open lawn to your left. Up the slope, there are two urns, and further up the slope, a blue and white plaque. We will hear more about this area and hear more about the plaque when we discover the Walled Garden a few stations away. As you make your way toward the house, you will notice a large oak tree on the right with a circular walk way around it. This is a great area to relax as you prepare to enter our next station, the Maclay Home. (Chime)

### **Station 5: The Maclay Home**

The Maclay home is set on a hillside with a sweeping lawn sloping down toward Lake Hall. The Maclays hosted many parties on the terrace and expansive lawn. They remodeled Colonel Law's 1906 hunting lodge between 1923-1925. They painted it a burnt sienna color Mrs. Maclay called "Georgia Clay." The house, furnished much as it was when it was used by the Maclays, is open to the public during specified hours from January through April each year.

If the home is open for visitors, please, take a trip through the house that holds so many memories of the Maclay family. You'll be glad you did.

Because there are so many interesting things to discover in the home, feel free to pause the audio as you move from room to room. This way, you can enjoy the house at your own pace and ask the docent any questions you may have.

Pamala Lovell, one of the docents you may meet should you tour the home, tells us a little bit about the history of the Maclay home and introduces us to the living room. The house was built between 1906 and 1909 as a hunting lodge. The Maclays purchased it in 1923 and did some extensive renovation on it to bring it up to the current status. When you first enter the living room, you come through a door that was installed by the Maclays. It was made during the Federalist period in New England and it features some very fine old glass with lead. It has glass on either side of the door and sort of a medallion-type design over the door that's in glass. Entering the living room, the living room's a wonderful room. It's 30 by 33 feet, very open, very large, would hold a lot of people. And it would accommodate many of the family gatherings and entertaining. There are windows around the room which allow the gardens and the lake to be brought into the room. To the right of the room there's a large built-in bookcase that was designed by the Maclays and it holds a variety of books. They had many subjects that interested them. They have books on botany, on sporting games; there are a couple of novels, plays. The house had one bedroom, and usually one of the first questions people will ask is, "Where are the bedrooms?" When Mrs. Maclay donated the house to the State in 1953, she requested that her bedroom be turned into a museum that would give some history on the family and some of their interests. So when you first enter the house and turn to your right, you will walk into the museum.

Once you are in the museum, you may be able to catch a glimpse of the many different gardens from around the world that inspired the Maclays to create their own masterpiece. Also, many photographs relating to the Maclays' varied interests and their fascinating history are displayed.

Next, you will come to the Library. Listen as Miss Lovell discusses how the Maclays brought the outside indoors; in the construction of their library: The library is a beautiful room for many reasons. The paneling is exquisite. It's very rare bird's eye cypress and it was milled in Perry, Florida, which is about fifty miles south of here. It's very unusual wood; it has a real warm color to it. The floor is longleaf yellow pine, and it was milled from trees right here on the property. And what's distinctive about it is some of the planks are 18 inches wide, which is really wider than what you normally see on the floor.

Another part of the house that no doubt saw many fine dinners and lively conversation was the dining room. Take note of the interesting architecture and pieces that characterize this room: When you enter the dining room, it's a very unusual room in that the walls are wood paneling, but they're in a boxed effect. The walls are cypress but they've been stained mahogany. The ceiling is also cypress but has been painted white. There's a fireplace in the dining room, as there are fireplaces in every room in the house so you have warmth. At the time that the Maclays lived here originally, in the beginning there wasn't electricity, so the fires are what kept the rooms warm. The dining room table is simplicity itself. It's a lovely Hepple white table. There are six chairs around it. Across the room there's a red wooden plate rack. And according to legend, Mrs. Maclay bought the rack from a private owner during a trip through the

mountains in Hungary. Spanning approximately six feet in length, it's used to hold Maclay's antique pottery collection.

After your visit to the dining room, you can stay a while and enjoy another tour of the living room with its antique furniture and impressive furnishings. Once you have completed touring the Maclay home continue out the door to your right where we will begin the next section of our tour, the Camellia Walk.

### **Station 6: Camellia Walk.**

Among the oldest areas of the gardens is the Camellia Walk leading from the house to the Walled Garden. This area of the gardens was undertaken by both Mr. Maclay and his longtime gardener and caretaker, Fred Ferrell, who worked at Maclay Gardens for almost 50 years. The first Camellia planted in the gardens stands to the left at the beginning of the Camellia Walk. It is the original plant of the variety "Aunt Jetty," named after Angelica Robinson Gamble, prominent member of the Gamble family that was part of early Tallahassee history. The plant grew in the yard of the old Gamble home until 1923, when Mr. Maclay bought it for \$75. It is estimated that the plant is approaching 200 years old. At the time the gardens were being laid out and planted, the camellia, which had been somewhat out of style in gardening circles, was regaining popularity. Camellias that had long been neglected in old gardens throughout the south were being "rediscovered" and transplanted to the gardens of a new generation looking

for the antique plants. Among many things, Mr. Maclay was famous for his collections of camellias as he amassed a notable selection in his Tallahassee garden.

The camellia walk slopes gently down into deeper shade toward the Walled Garden.

Dwarf azaleas edge a section of the walk, but the main attraction is, of course, the camellias. They grow very tall on either side of the walk and their branches intertwine to form solid walls of glossy, dark green foliage that is accented in winter and early spring with thousands of beautiful blossoms varying in color from white to pink to deep red. Next, we will take a tour of the Walled Garden. (Chime)

### **Station 7: The Walled Garden**

As you enter this formal garden note how it is enclosed by brick walls green with climbing fig. Stately lions guard the entrance of one of the many gems of this park. Ornamental peacocks also adorn the tops of the walls.

Toward the west wall, or right, there is a blue and white plaque with a rendering of a child. Does this sound familiar? It should, because it is the same plaque that was mentioned in the second part of the House Walk from a distance preceded by the long ribbon of lawn. The plaque is a medallion of infants and was created by Andrea Della Robbia, the assistant and pupil of the Italian sculptor from Florence, Italy named Luca Della Robbia, noted for his terracotta roundels.

This fine piece was acquired by Mr. Maclay on his travels to Italy.

Now take a close look at the medallion and turn around 180 degrees to the east wall and notice the vista of the reflecting pool set in a meticulously kept lawn and a little further, Lake Hall

which is framed by white azaleas and palms from the nearby Gulf Coast. Now notice that the walkway has disappeared just as the reflecting pool was not visible when looking from the walkway to the walled garden. In either spot, here in the walled garden or on the house walk, there are “special effects” Mr. Maclay used. The slight elevation of the slope makes this spectacular effect possible. This aspect of gardening is reminiscent of the gardens in Italy and is a technique Mr. Maclay learned while studying in Europe.

This walled garden is sometimes called the pansy garden because it is always planted with pansies in the winter, a tradition begun by the Maclays and continued by park staff.

Now, let’s enjoy the center of the walled garden. A few small century plants accent the terraced beds around the central pool. They are copied realistically in the central bronze fountain, commissioned by Mrs. Maclay especially for this garden. Mrs. Maclay sent the sculptor a live century plant to his New York studio for use as his model. The century plant’s common name is derived from its habit of only occasionally flowering, but when it does, the tall stem grows from the center and bears many tubular yellow flowers, often reaching up to 25 ft. in height. The plant dies after flowering; however it will produce many “pups” to take its place.

After you have taken time to enjoy the Walled Garden, let’s continue through the east arched gateway and take a peek at the long reflecting pool and grand view of Lake Hall.

Our next station will be Station 8, the Secret Garden. (Chime)

### **Station 8: The Secret Garden**

From the Walled Garden, travel to the left across a lawn bordered by plantings that include wild azaleas beneath a group of large hollies. A second path to the right leads to the Secret

Garden. Soon the path will narrow and you will enter a secluded secret garden with small antique wrought iron benches and table. This intimate and cozy atmosphere is created by the use of small plants including the appropriately named heartleaf or wild ginger which is an endangered plant. Ferny selaginella, holly fern and mahonia grow around the perimeter of the small open space floored with pine needles. If you visit during the winter and early spring, the scent of tea olive perfumes the air around the secret garden.

After you have taken your time to enjoy the secret garden, return to the area between the walled garden and the reflecting pool. As you walk that direction, you should see a small path in front of you. This is called the pine needle path.

The pine needle path winds between large walls of spectacular camellia, gardenia and palmetto growing under fragrant tea olive and viburnum. Here the Florida anise is on the right, a native broad leaf evergreen shrub with dark green foliage and featuring starry red flowers in the spring. Once you reach the end of the pine needle path, make a sharp right to find the pond that gently curves to the left. Our next station will discuss this a little further. (Chime)

### **Station 11: Pond Walk and Pond**

A narrow bricked path curves past Japanese maples, flowering cherry and native redbud. The pond was built to reflect the azalea hillside beyond. Evergreens at the south end serve as a backdrop for smaller flowering trees and colorful foliage. At water's edge, daylilies, iris, lirioppe, pampas grass, shore juniper and a variety of bulbs add color and texture to the setting. This pond and the plantings that complement it took many seasons of experimentation to achieve the desired effect. Once you have enjoyed your walk along the Pond Walk, continue up the hill where we will explore our next station, the Azalea Hillside.

### **Station 12: Azalea Hillside**

Now that you are at the Azalea Hillside, head northeast, or to your left and enjoy the area.

Rising from the bank of the pond, the Azalea Hillside is planted with drifts of azaleas in many colors with native oak, pine, holly, dogwood and silver bells. Also included on the Azalea Hillside are the splendid Oriental Magnolias. In addition, you will note how the edging of border grass or liriopse that is used often throughout the gardens provides a nice defining line between the plant beds and the well manicured lawn. Behind the area of the Azalea Hillside and the Oriental Magnolia plantings is the former nursery established by the Maclays to grow the plants that provided stock for the garden's development and grace the property now. The large camellias currently there provided anchors of beauty as the other nursery stock and plantings grew around them. As you enjoy the variety of Azaleas and Oriental Magnolias along the hillside, continue toward the main brick path, otherwise known as the house walk. The next section is where we will conclude our tour. (Chime)

### **Station 13: Conclusion of the Tour**

Once you reach the house walk, continue to the right and uphill toward the main entrance. This will give you another opportunity to enjoy the fine brick path and the many different plants that border the walkway. When you reach the wrought iron gate at the head of the house walk, the circuit of the gardens will be complete. We invite you to come back to Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park during the different seasons to see how the gardens continually change, almost from day to day. Whenever you choose to visit us, there is always new beauty to enjoy as well as new things to learn from the legacy begun by the Maclay family and continued by the Florida Park Service.

On behalf of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Park Service,  
thank you for visiting Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park, and we look forward to seeing you  
again soon.