



Forgotten Contributions: The Overlooked Impact of Ellen Harrison and Early 20th Century Women in Urban Greening

By Maggie L. McNulty and Lara A. Roman

Abstract. Many women and women-run associations were involved in historical urban beautification in the United States, especially tree planting, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While men had formal roles as city foresters, arborists, horticulturalists, and landscape architects, women from elite families sometimes labored for free to organize and advocate for urban tree planting. Tightly knit social circles of high-society women in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, yielded much greater influence in nascent tree planting and park creation movements than has generally been recognized. They often contributed their time, finances, input, and skill to landscape planting projects; however, they were not considered equal to the men who were compensated employees. These women planted, plotted, studied, and persevered, overcoming preconceived notions of womanhood, although their meaningful efforts were often viewed as merely an offshoot of their feminine domestic role. For women, limited by opportunities in male-dominated arenas, shaping their cities was a socially accepted means for empowerment. Ellen Waln Harrison (1846 to 1922) was a key figure in civic beautification in her hometown of Philadelphia and beyond. Ellen Harrison was married to Charles Custis Harrison, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and she personally oversaw campus landscaping efforts, and was referred to as his “right hand.” Her story is emblematic of a larger trend regarding women in botany, horticulture, and urban forestry around the turn of the 20th century.

Keywords. Campus Landscape; Gender; Urban Beautification; Urban Forest History; Urban Tree Planting.

INTRODUCTION

In his resignation speech in 1910, Charles Harrison, Provost of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, USA, proclaimed that, “The visible signs of Mrs. Harrison’s work are many, but the invisible are greater, and what Mrs. Harrison has done for the University will never be known” (The University Archives and Records Center 1910). Ellen Waln Harrison (hereafter referred to as Harrison)(Figure 1) led the greening and beautification of the university’s campus during her husband’s tenure (1894 to 1910). Harrison was an important figure in Philadelphia’s high society, and her advocacy and fundraising for these causes were representative of similar developments throughout the United States. Yet while Harrison was sometimes recognized for her work during her husband’s provostship, she was—as predicted by her husband—quickly forgotten in the dominant historical narrative about urban greening on campus and in Philadelphia.

Harrison initiated the first efforts to beautify the University of Pennsylvania campus (Thomas and Brownlee 2000). In 1921, however, an article was published in *Garden Magazine* by John Harshberger, botany professor at the university, about the green spaces on and near the campus. The article credited botany professor John Muirhead MacFarlane with creating Hamilton Walk and the Botanic Garden—2 spaces that formed the campus core in the late 19th century—completely omitting Harrison’s advocacy, fundraising, and labor (Roman et al. 2017). However, in a letter to Harrison’s granddaughter in 1977, a university archivist stated, “The entire campus was under [Harrison’s] direction. Every tree, shrub and blade of grass that grew on the campus she either had planted or supervised and she paid for the lot” (The University Archives and Records Center 1977). As a professor who was active on campus during Charles Harrison’s provostship, it is unlikely that Harshberger



Figure 1. Image of Ellen Harrison, the provost's "right-hand man." Photograph used with permission from the University Archives and Records Center, Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

would not have known about Ellen Harrison's role in campus beautification.

Harrison's story is emblematic of a larger trend regarding American women in urban greening, botany, horticulture, and forestry around the turn of the 20th century. Many women and their civic associations were involved in city tree planting and park advocacy. For women, shaping their cities was a means of empowerment (Dümpelmann 2015), and wealthy women like Harrison used their high-society status and influence to beautify their cities. The work of women like Harrison was typically overshadowed by their male contemporaries; men were celebrated and women largely forgotten. In this paper, we first discuss the history of women's contributions in urban greening and then situate Harrison amongst her female contemporaries, discussing her contributions to the university campus and other landscapes. Finally, we demonstrate the need for further research on gendered roles in historical and current urban greening and urban forestry.

To research Harrison's story and that of her contemporaries in Philadelphia, we conducted archival research at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, viewing the Harrison Family Papers and society records from women's groups involved in urban greening. In addition, archival work was undertaken at the University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center, specifically examining the Charles Custis Harrison Collection and Office of the Provost Records C. C. Harrison Family Papers records (The University Archives and Records Center 2000). We also searched local newspapers such as *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and university magazines for mentions of Ellen Harrison and other women's urban greening activities during the years Harrison was active. This original research enabled us to construct a narrative of Harrison's roles in tree planting on campus and beyond.

THE GENDERED HISTORY OF WOMEN IN URBAN GREENING AND RELATED FIELDS

In order to situate Harrison and the role of other women in urban greening, botany, horticulture, and forestry, we here provide background on the gendered history of these fields. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in the USA, women have been present in science, but their involvement has been neglected (Oreskes 1996). In the early 20th century, women embodied roles as "protectors of the environment." However, their contributions were "rendered all but invisible by conservation historians" (Merchant 1995). Prior to an examination of overlooked women, some definitions are needed. Urban greening is defined as "a social practice of organized or semi-organized efforts to introduce, conserve, or maintain outdoor vegetation in urban areas" (Horte and Eisenman 2020). Tree planting is one aspect of urban greening, and urban tree programs broadly fall under urban forestry, defined as "the art, science and technology of managing trees and forest resources in and around urban community ecosystems" (Konijnendijk et al. 2006). Urban tree planting became popular during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including street tree planting and the creation of urban park systems. In the 19th century, public health concerns stemming from industrialization, increased population, and subsequent pollution resulted in city elites pushing for public parks and parkways (Eisenman 2016). This created the first urban tree movement in the USA

(Jonnes 2016). Urban greening and urban forestry are also closely related to botany (“the scientific study of plants and plant-like organisms”)(Shipunov 2021); horticulture (“the science and art of growing fruits, vegetables, flowers, or ornamental plants”)(Relf 1992); and forestry (“the profession dealing with understanding, managing, and conserving forests”)(Helms 2002). Today there are clear distinctions between these disciplines, but during Harrison’s time, scholarship across these fields was more fluid (Stichweh 2008).

During the Progressive Era of the early 20th century in the USA, women made significant contributions to greening their cities (Merchant 1984). Women played important roles as horticulturalists, street tree planters, activists, and professionals in botany and the nursery trade (Roman et al. 2018). This stemmed, in part, from Linnean botany being a popular and fashionable science in the early 19th century. Botany attracted more women compared to other fields of science (Lightman 2007). Additionally, botany was considered a “feminine science” (Shteir 1997): floral subjects were considered by many Victorians to be “naturally” acceptable for women (Tucker 2006). By the late 19th century, the association of women with flowers had become so profuse that botany had become known as the “feminine science *par excellence*” (Schiebinger 1993). The study of botany, interest in flora, and gardening as a hobby were seen as an extension of women’s domestic sphere (Morin 2008), or even referred to as an “outdoor branch of household management” (Madsen and Furlong 1994). The study of plants, rather than the study of insects, was regarded as an “innocent pursuit for women as it did not involve cruelty” (Wulf 2009). Botany was seen as delicate and elegant, as described in a *Gentleman’s Magazine* article that stated, “nurture of exotics not only being an elegant *home* amusement, but because of there being much delicate work, essential to the welfare of plants that is more dexterously performed by the pliant fingers of women, than by the clumsy paws of men” (Shteir 1996).

During the same time period, forestry and wilderness were gendered masculine. As environmental historian William Cronon has observed, “In the wilderness, a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity” (Cronon 1996). Other scholars have described the historical wilderness

movement in the USA as idealizing “the physically fit, masculine, and white body” (Ray and Sibara 2017). Wilderness was a place for men to escape civilization and restore their masculinity, while for women, urban greening was part of their “domestic” work, reinforcing gendered divisions (Dümpelmann 2019). Women, like Harrison, pushed the boundaries of what was deemed appropriate feminine work at the time; however, women’s involvement in urban greening projects was considered an appropriate means of being socially involved in their cities.

Dating back to the mid-19th century, women have been concerned with and cared for domestic architecture, health reforms, and environmental hygiene (Adams 1996; Flanagan 2002; Kiechle 2017). Prior to the Civil War and in line with miasma theory, women worked to protect household air quality and olfaction from disease through cultivating fragrant smells from recipes, making potpourri, and planting flower beds (Kiechle 2017). Stemming from women’s actions toward improving environmental hygiene within the domestic sphere during the 19th century, in the 20th century, this idea was extended onto city streets as addendums to household domestic spaces, as demonstrated by Dümpelmann (2019). In New York City, for example, sanitation engineer George Waring considered women’s involvement in street tree planting to be “naturally out of the habit of good housekeeping,” and the early feminist Mary Ritter Beard stated that, “Arboriculture for decorative purposes has always been an interest of [women] in their own home plots and now they have extended it to the decoration of their municipal homes” (Dümpelmann 2019). The term “municipal housekeeping” was utilized to describe women’s work in civic improvement. While male professionals built boulevards and civic monuments, female volunteers “built the places of everyday life, the neighborhood institutions without which a city is not a city,” demonstrating the role of gender in the creation of an urban landscape (Spain 2001). Women’s roles in city beautification allowed them to push the boundaries of what they could do in their civic life while participating in activities that were still considered appropriate for their gender. Most of the women involved in early urban greening, botany, horticulture, and forestry were members of the upper class, where philanthropic or charitable pursuits were common, and “tree planting and protection held a special appeal” (Dümpelmann 2019). The

women highlighted in the remainder of this section had varied formal training and advocacy roles within urban greening, botany, horticulture, and forestry, and their stories have been largely neglected in scholarship about the history of urban greening.

Below, we discuss examples of women's efforts that demonstrate how Harrison's work was emblematic of her time. We briefly review the accomplishments of 3 women across the USA during the Progressive Era and then describe the urban greening activities of Philadelphia women who were in Harrison's social circles. The Philadelphia women have not yet been the focus of historical research; however, recent scholarship has illustrated the importance of women to street tree planting in the Progressive Era in other locales. For example, landscape historian Sonja Dümpelmann examined how women were involved in tree planting and urban forestry at a variety of levels in New York City, including serving at the Tree Planting Association, as director of the General Federation of Women's Clubs Forestry Committee, and as founder of the City Gardens Club of New York City in 1918 (Dümpelmann 2019). As demonstrated in the remainder of this section, the trend of women's involvement in urban greening in Philadelphia was similar to other US cities at the time (Merchant 1995).

Professional Women in Botany, Horticulture, and Forestry Across the USA

In 1881 Katherine (Kate) Sessions graduated with a degree in chemistry from the University of California, Berkeley, where she wrote an essay on "The Natural Sciences as a Field for Women's Labor." Sessions moved to San Diego, California, USA, where she established a florist shop and supported young women and girls interested in botany through employment. She was known for her advocacy in the creation of Balboa Park and was affectionately known as the "Mother of Balboa Park." Sessions never had children, but it was said that, "Her plants were always her children" (MacPhail 1976). In 1939 Sessions was the first woman to receive the Frank N. Meyer medal for her work in plant introduction (Howard-Borjas 2001).

Meanwhile, on the East Coast, in Washington, DC, USA, Eliza Scidmore lobbied for the planting of exotic Japanese cherry trees (*Prunus serrulata*). She became the first woman to sit on the Board of Managers at the

National Geographic Society in 1890, and she had a reputation for being a well-traveled correspondent during a time when societal norms confined women to domesticity. It was through her relationship with First Lady Helen Louise "Nellie" Taft that cherry trees were widely planted throughout Washington, DC, USA, which is still famous today for its flowering cherries (Jonnes 2016).

In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, USA, Mira Lloyd Dock was actively involved in professional forestry, conservation, and civic beautification. She was trained as a botanist at the University of Michigan. Admirers of Dock said she "did more for forests than any woman in America." On December 20, 1900, Dock gave a speech in Harrisburg called "The City Beautiful," which inspired the city's elite to organize a City Beautiful planning program that continued for 40 years, including tree planting (Wilson 1975). Dock was the first woman in the world to be on a public forestry commission, the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission. However, even Dock thought that the "profession of forestry was a man's work." From 1901 to 1902, Dock's letterhead read "M. L. Dock" in an effort to disguise her gender. Dock shared that her letterhead was generated out of a genuine concern of being considered the "weak element on the board" (Rimby 2012). Her concerns aligned with the beliefs of the time that forestry and wilderness management were masculine endeavors, as previously discussed. Dock worked closely with Joseph Rothrock at the University of Pennsylvania to promote forestry course work at the university and at Pennsylvania State College (Wirt 1939; Dudley and Goddard 1973). It was Rothrock who recommended that Dock should be part of the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission. Rothrock "[a]cknowledged women's contributions to the conservation movement, even as male dominated groups such as the American Forestry Association marginalized female supporters" (Rimby 2012).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, US women were active in the conservation movement, working to save the nation's parks, forests, and wilderness. However, it is primarily men that have received the credit (Merchant 1995). The important contributions of select women in rural conservation have been highlighted in scholarship, yet the role of women in urban greening has largely been neglected, especially in comparison to the volume of scholarship on men in urban forestry labor (Ricard 2005). Likewise, in

urban greening, women's historical contributions have been largely overlooked. Yet women such as Sessions, Scidmore, and Dock engaged in and initiated advocacy for urban greening, with Dock also working in rural wilderness conservation. These women mobilized resources and pushed the boundaries of what women could accomplish during this era for their cities and the environment.

Female Advocates for Urban Greening in Philadelphia

Several women were prominent in urban greening in Philadelphia and deserve credit for green spaces still enjoyed today. Crucially, many of the women we discuss here were in Harrison's social circle, often living in her neighborhood around Rittenhouse Square, one of the town squares from the city's original 1683 plan (Milroy 2016) and an area where many elite families lived around the turn of the 20th century.

Elizabeth Price Martin (Mrs. J. Willis Martin) was a member of Philadelphia's high society and was the sister of Eli Kirk Price II, commissioner of the Fairmount Park Commission (FPC)—the agency responsible for Philadelphia's municipal parks at the time (Heinzen 2009). Martin, along with Dr. J. William White, traveled to France in the early 20th century in search of inspiration for the revitalization of Rittenhouse Square. Unfortunately, during that time, Rittenhouse Square had many dead trees, and no planting had been done in years (Rivinus 1951). Martin was motivated by the perceived health and social benefits of European city parks and ultimately recruited the French architects Jacques Gréber and Paul Cret, who were already working in Philadelphia (Baratta 2002), to help with her endeavor (Rivinus 1951). At an initial meeting of neighborhood residents about the beautification of the square in 1913, a committee was selected to enhance the space, including Ellen Harrison and Elizabeth Martin (Heinzen 2009). This group became the basis for the Rittenhouse Square Improvement Association, spearheaded by Martin. In addition, Martin founded and was president of the flower market in Rittenhouse Square, which raised money for the park's improvement (Baratta 2002).

Martin and her neighbors' daughter, Ernestine Goodman, were 2 of the founders of the Garden Club of Philadelphia. While in Martin's garden in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia, the 2 agreed that, "Since a 'range of gardening' had 'swept

across this country' there was good reason to link American gardeners through an association of garden clubs" (Seale 2013). The Garden Club of America was a direct product of the Garden Club of Philadelphia. The founding meeting for the Garden Club of America would follow in 1913, in the home of Jane Irwin Robeson Henry (Mrs. Bayard Henry) in the Germantown neighborhood (Seale 2013). The tree-filled Rittenhouse Square park, and the prestigious neighborhood surrounding it, became the verdant landscape it is today as a result of these women's activities.

Several other Philadelphia women were prominent in the City Parks Association (CPA), and like Harrison, they used their social standing and wealth to advance urban greening. Mary S. Linton Lundy (Mrs. J. P. Lundy) was a manager and officer of the CPA from its founding in 1888 until her death in 1907. The CPA advocated for park space as a means to improve urban conditions. The CPA and FPC gradually built up Philadelphia's park system as individual parcels that were donated and became public land (Armstrong 2012). Lundy "gave her whole heart to securing open spaces." She acquired 45 parks and squares which were given to the city. In addition, she was an organizer of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association (Rimby 2012). A CPA report said of Lundy that, "No other Philadelphia woman of her time has had a more effective share in leaving the conditions of her City and her State better than she found them" (The City Parks Association of Philadelphia 1907).

Mary Johnson Brown Chew (Mrs. Samuel Chew) was a member, and later manager, of the CPA in Philadelphia from 1906 to 1927. Chew was interested in the "open spaces of the city and in their preservation and beautification." She gifted Cliveden Park to the city and led a movement to preserve Stenton Estate as a park (The City Parks Association of Philadelphia 1928). Giving estates as gifts to the city park system was a trend among elite Philadelphians (Armstrong 2012). Chew gave speeches on behalf of city parks, advocating for their conservation (The City Parks Association of Philadelphia 1928), and she was also present for the aforementioned meeting that launched the Rittenhouse Square Improvement Association (Heinzen 2009).

During the time that Lundy and Chew were active in the CPA, the organization was comprised of approximately 45% female members, and approximately 30% of leadership roles were filled by women

(The City Parks Association of Philadelphia 1905–1906). Local newspaper society pages showed that Harrison attended social events with Martin (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1899), Chew (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1907), and Lundy (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1904). Furthermore, Chew and Lundy were members of the Pennsylvania Society of Colonial Dames along with Harrison. These stories from Philadelphia illustrate how tightly woven social circles of elite women were contributing to urban greening and city beautification during the Progressive Era. Crucially, these upper-class women who dedicated their time and efforts to conservation and advocacy for landscape planting were volunteers. As previously explained, these voluntary actions and projects were justified within the structure of the home during this era—with these women seen as expanding their domestic spheres to urban public spaces. Women volunteered their unpaid labor and were involved in urban greening projects from the start, yet men were hired as foresters.

ELLEN HARRISON'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO URBAN GREENING

Although not professionally trained as a botanist, horticulturalist, or forester, Harrison left an indelible mark on the University of Pennsylvania's campus (*The Pennsylvania Gazette* 1917). Her sustained involvement in beautifying the campus is clear from her correspondence with Oglesby Paul, Landscape Gardener of the FPC, regarding the planting and design of Hamilton Walk (The University Archives and Records Center [date unknown]). A campus newspaper from 1910 when Charles resigned as provost stated:

Mrs. Harrison has ably seconded the efforts of the Provost by her work in beautifying the campus. Practically all of the shrubbery, the ivy, and the flowers which now add their beauty to the University are her personal gift, while the maintenance of the grounds has been carried on at her expense. It was largely through her influence that the Botanic Gardens have been so greatly beautified, memorials erected, and Hamilton Walk finished. (Old Penn Weekly Review 1910a)

Upon her death, the university's *Alumni Register* wrote:

During the term of Mr. Harrison's Provostship, Mrs. Harrison had charge of the entire University

Campus. Not only was all the planting done under her direction, but for these seventeen years, the trees and shrubs and grass and the roads were all kept in order by a head-gardener and his men, the funds being provided through Mrs. Harrison. The University was under no charge for the care of its grounds during Mr. Harrison's term of service as Provost. Hamilton Walk from 39th Street to 34th Street, was entirely Mrs. Harrison's work. (The Alumni Register 1922)

As the above quotes make clear, Harrison deserved credit for creating these core campus landscapes. Furthermore, Harrison was the leader and financier of greening efforts on the university's campus, for which she established a Campus Fund (The University Archives and Records Center 1902a). Harrison requested contributions to the fund from her elite social circles (The University Archives and Records Center 1902b) and managed the fund directly with the university treasurer (The University Archives and Records Center 1902a).

Ellen and Charles Harrison: Ancestry and Stature

Ellen and Charles Harrison both hailed from elite Philadelphia families. Ellen Nixon Waln Harrison was born in Philadelphia on December 4, 1846, to Edward and Ellen Cora Nixon. She was the great-granddaughter of Robert Morris, a prominent financier of the American Revolution, and great-great-granddaughter of John Nixon, the first President of the Bank of North America, who read the Declaration of Independence on July 8, 1776, to Philadelphia residents (*The Alumni Register* 1922). Ellen Nixon Waln married Charles Custis Harrison in 1870, and they had 6 children together (Harrison 1932).

The Harrisons both used their elite status to enhance the university. As a university archivist stated in a letter to the Harrisons' granddaughter during Charles' tenure, the Harrisons "together totally changed the face of the University" (The University Archives and Records Center 1977). The university experienced rapid growth during this time, and the Harrisons raised funds for dormitories and numerous academic buildings (Harrison family 2008). In 1889, before her husband's provostship, Harrison became 1 of the first 3 women to be elected to the Board of Managers of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (Lloyd 2001). Harrison remained active with this board

during her husband's tenure and was also affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. In his resignation speech from 1910, Charles referred to Ellen as his "right hand" (*Old Penn Weekly Review* 1910b). At a reception celebrating his retirement, Charles shared a letter from an alumnus expressing regret about his resignation. This same letter also "expressed the hope that Mrs. Harrison would never retire from her service, so long continued to the University of Pennsylvania" (*Old Penn Weekly Review* 1910b).

Ellen and Charles' Prominent Sociopolitical Standing

The Harrisons were heavily involved in civic activities outside of the university. For the majority of her life, Harrison was a prominent member and leader of several organizations, including women's patriotic societies, as well as an advocate for the preservation of historically significant structures and landscapes (McNulty 2020). Her affiliations included the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Society of Colonial Dames, both of which honor women who are descendants of colonial leaders. She was also involved with the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, which maintains and preserves George and Martha Washington's Mount Vernon plantation as a historic site in Virginia; and the Bartram's Association, which protects the Philadelphia garden and house of botanist John Bartram. Bartram's Garden is the oldest surviving botanical garden in the nation (Historic American Landscapes Survey 2002).

Belonging to Philadelphia's power structure of well-connected, high-society residents, both of the Harrisons were involved with the CPA (Armstrong 2012; Milroy 2016). The FPC and CPA, run by city elites, were the main groups working to improve and expand Philadelphia's parks in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Before the city had a planning commission, the FPC and CPA served as de facto planners of Philadelphia (Armstrong 2012).

The Harrisons were also politically connected at the national level. They dined with US President William McKinley and First Lady Ida Saxton McKinley on various occasions (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1898a). In February 1898, President and Mrs. McKinley stayed at the Harrison residence while visiting Philadelphia, and the Harrisons were later entertained by the McKinleys at the White House (*The*

Philadelphia Inquirer 1898b). Harrison, however, was opposed to appearing overtly political. At a Philadelphia Chapter DAR meeting in 1898, Harrison stated that she did not want to "mix education and politics" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1898c). This statement is humbly modest at best and potentially disingenuous in light of her undeniably powerful social and political standing.

Harrison also had a significant social influence among elite families in Philadelphia and was frequently mentioned in the society pages of local newspapers. She served as patroness at various university functions and hosted many events at her home near Rittenhouse Square, which was considered the center of old Philadelphia. Many of Philadelphia's elites had residences in her neighborhood during the late 19th and early 20th centuries (McCarthy 1987).

Ellen Harrison as a Local Leader in Civic Beautification

Harrison's interests in civic beautification extended beyond paying for planting efforts. She was also interested in and knowledgeable about horticulture. In 1900 a letter written by Emlen Hare Miller, a University of Pennsylvania law professor, proclaimed, "I respectfully support that the words—Mrs. Charles C. Harrison, preceptress of Horticulture, be added to the list of the faculty" (The University Archives and Records Center 1900). Due to the dearth of direct writings and quotes from Harrison, her thoughts about having women on the university faculty are unclear, nor is there evidence that she sought a faculty position in horticulture. There is evidence, however, of Harrison's sustained interest in botany. Both Ellen and Charles were members of the Botanical Society of Pennsylvania (*The Times* 1897). This society was created by the Biology Department at the university for anyone interested in botany (The University Archives and Records Center 1897). At the society's initial meeting on October 24, 1897, Harrison presented an arrangement of specimens to assist with lectures on trees, and she praised the work of botany professor MacFarlane (*The Times* 1897).

In addition to Harrison's urban greening activities on the university's campus, her positions in women's patriotic groups involved tree planting. As First Vice President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Colonial Dames (National Society of the Colonial Dames of America 1911), Harrison and 5 other members were



Figure 2. “Colonial Dames” plant elms in front of Independence Hall in 1904. Image from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, PA, USA. Public domain.

responsible for planting 8 sapling American elms (*Ulmus americana*) outside of Philadelphia’s Independence Hall on Arbor Day 1904 (Figure 2). The women of the Colonial Dames were to “look after” the saplings until full growth (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1904). In 1904 the CPA’s annual report stated that these elms were planted “on scientific principles” (Geddes 1904). This remark was in the context of the CPA disparaging the rest of the city’s street tree maintenance activities and lamenting the lack of proper techniques and resources for tree care. Other prominent local women were involved in tree planting that same Arbor Day in downtown Philadelphia. The Civic Club of Philadelphia planted 5 planes (likely London planetrees, *Platanus × hispanica*) (Roman and Eisenman 2022) as street trees (*The Philadelphia Inquirer* 1904). This club was established in 1893 by elite women “to promote by education and active cooperation a higher public spirit and a better social order.” The women of Philadelphia’s Civic Club were concerned with children’s health, electing women to school boards, and fighting for clean air and water (Civic Club of Philadelphia 1959). The concerns of the women of the Civic Club are representative of the interests of high-society Philadelphia women during this time, aligning with Harrison’s activities with the Colonial Dames and at the university campus. This was a national trend, as similar women’s clubs were active in cities across the USA (Spain 2001).

In 1921 Harrison was elected Vice President of the Bartram’s Association (*Philadelphia Bulletin* 1921). A local newspaper reported that Harrison said the following:

Bartram’s Garden is looked upon by American botanists as the first and greatest of all the developments of its kind, and is constantly a centre of the attention of the students of this important science. We have few historic spots in the city of more interest than this to which John Bartram brought strange plants and seeds and cuttings gathered in trips he made up and down the American colonies, and east of the Allegheny Mountains. Many of the trees and shrubs which he planted still remain as beautiful memorial and the old house and barn and other relics of his farm are only too little visited by Philadelphians to whom the park is easily accessible. (The Philadelphia Inquirer 1921)

Harrison’s quote on Bartram’s Garden provides a rare opportunity to learn about her clear reverence for and knowledge about botanical science, while suggesting that more Philadelphians ought to appreciate the historical significance of Bartram’s estate.

In the early 1920s, due to lack of funding, Bartram’s Garden became neglected while under control of the City of Philadelphia (Historic American Landscapes Survey 2002). Toward the end of her life, Harrison was an active voice advocating for the restoration of

this garden. Harrison had offered \$5,000 to pay for restoration efforts, specifically the lily pond; however, her offer was refused by city officials (*Philadelphia Public Ledger* 1922). Although it is unclear why the city refused Harrison's offer, what is unmistakable is that women like Harrison were crucial to the revitalization of this historic garden.

Remembrances After Ellen Harrison's Death

In October 1922, at the age of 76, Harrison contracted influenza while at the New Jersey seashore, and, upon returning to her summer home in suburban Philadelphia, she passed away. Her death came as a shock to the women of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, who wrote in commemoration, "It is hard to associate death with Mrs. Harrison: she was remarkable for her buoyant spirits; and her habit of always looking at the bright side of things made her a delightful companion" (Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union 1923). Shortly after Harrison's death, a University of Pennsylvania alumni magazine published an article entitled "The University's Friend." The author wrote, "By the death of Mrs. Charles Custis Harrison the University has lost a devoted friend. One of the tangible evidences of her ministration during the Provostship of her distinguished husband was the appearance of the grounds. Many of the trees and shrubs which we now admire were planted by Mrs. Harrison's direction" (*The Alumni Register* 1922). Harrison's death and this alumni magazine article came only a year after the *Garden Magazine* article which overlooked Harrison (Harshberger 1921), making Harshberger's omission all the more glaring.

While some of Harrison's contemporaries acknowledged her contributions, her work seems to have been largely forgotten shortly thereafter. Charles Harrison was celebrated for the "metamorphosis" of the university, having "transformed campus and the delights of college life," even though the university campus under his provostship was the result of his partnership with Ellen (Thomas and Brownlee 2000). Harrison's role in landscape design pushed the boundaries of what women could accomplish while still partaking in pursuits that were considered gender appropriate. While Harrison's story is one example linked primarily to a college campus, her role demonstrates how crucial women were to early urban greening and urban forestry.

DISCUSSION

Harrison and her contemporaries played substantial roles in advocating for, engaging with, and initiating greening projects in their cities, especially tree planting. Often, as with the case of Harrison and her female contemporaries in Philadelphia, these women were contributing their time, finances, input, and skill to landscape planting projects, but they were not financially compensated for their time and expertise. In the time that Harrison was active on campus, the head gardener and other landscape employees were men, and they were paid. Although the men were performing the physical labor of planting, Harrison was not paid for her landscaping guidance, supervision, or advocacy. Quite the opposite, in fact: Harrison personally funded these projects and raised additional funds on top of her contributions of time and skills.

Philadelphia's CPA and FPC were mainly made up of elite businessmen and other wealthy men who used their political power to create the park system Philadelphians enjoy today (Armstrong 2012). Similar to the male social circles at the CPA and FPC, tightly knit social circles of high-society women in Philadelphia yielded greater influence in urban greening and nascent tree planting movements than has generally been recognized. Perhaps since these women were not formally paid, their stories have been overlooked in history due to their position in society and the economy, while their male contemporaries were both recognized and compensated. Historian Daphne Spain articulated the invisibility of women's unpaid labor in urban improvement projects between the Civil War and World War I: "Since traditional histories focus on the transformation of the formal economy and the polity, both of which were largely closed to nineteenth-century women, it is not surprising that the unpaid, informal work of women failed to enter the written record" (Spain 2001).

Harrison was part of a larger constellation of women in urban greening around the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, Harrison's role as the provost's wife makes her story distinctive, as she also fulfilled representational duties which sometimes, but not always, overlapped with her self-selected roles in urban greening. There is little research on the roles of university presidents' or provosts' wives historically. Traditionally, in the early 20th century, the role of the nation's First Lady involved acting as an organizer of societal events and publicly supporting worthy causes

(Krausert 1998). On a smaller and more local scale, Harrison's role as the provost's wife resembles that of the nation's First Lady during this time.

The urban greening efforts of Harrison and other elite women occurred, in part, because of the privilege afforded to these women. The roles of non-elite women, such as women of color and immigrant women, are absent from our research, which is representative of the general trend in other scholarship about this period in urban greening history (Campanella 2003). While some recent investigations have highlighted the role of women of color in the latter part of the 20th century in urban tree planting (Dümpelmann 2019), further research is needed about the roles of diverse communities in urban greening.

As we have demonstrated through the stories of Ellen Harrison and her contemporaries in Philadelphia and beyond, women have historically been crucial actors in urban greening, although their work has been largely overlooked. The natural resources fields have been historically male-dominated in North America, and this trend continues today despite the significant roles women have played (Bardekjian et al. 2019). Indeed, women are still underrepresented in urban forestry and arboriculture and have faced prejudice, discrimination, and sexual harassment in the industry (Bardekjian 2016; Bardekjian et al. 2019). However, this workplace environment is transforming as more women pursue careers in urban forestry (Bardekjian 2016). At the same time, unpaid labor continues to be a major component of many urban forestry programs (Hauer et al. 2018), with women and white residents often overrepresented among volunteers (Johnson et al. 2018), although some urban greening programs also rely on the unpaid labor of women of color (Riedman 2021). Further research is needed to uncover the roles that diverse women volunteers have played (and continue to play today) in urban greening and urban forestry history, and the ways in which this unpaid labor pool intersects with paid professionals.

CONCLUSION

Harrison's story demonstrates her exceptional unpaid engagement in tree planting and landscape beautification on the University of Pennsylvania campus, in Philadelphia, and beyond. Her influence and contributions to early urban greening and urban forestry are emblematic of broader trends in the USA. Women

who volunteered their efforts towards urban greening projects found these roles to fall within what was considered appropriate for their gender, an extension of their perceived feminine interests and abilities. While women who were involved in landscape planting projects were generally unpaid, they did not stand on the periphery of such projects, but rather on the forefront. Although Charles said, "what Mrs. Harrison has done for the University will never be known," this paper brings her contributions to light (The University Archives and Records Center 1910).

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Maggie L. McNulty (corresponding author)
University of Colorado Boulder
Department of History, Hellems Arts & Sciences
Boulder, Colorado, USA
maggie.mculty@colorado.edu

Lara A. Roman
USDA Forest Service
Northern Research Station, Philadelphia Field Station
100 N. 20th St. Suite 205
Philadelphia, PA, USA

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Résumé. De nombreuses femmes et associations sous la gouverne de femmes furent impliquées dans l'embellissement historique des villes aux États-Unis, notamment par la plantation d'arbres, à la fin du XIXe siècle et au début du XXe siècle. Alors que les hommes jouaient un rôle plus formel en tant que forestiers, arboriculteurs, horticulteurs et architectes paysagistes, les femmes issues de grandes familles de prestige travaillaient parfois gratuitement pour organiser et promouvoir la plantation d'arbres urbains. Les cercles sociaux très fermés de femmes de la haute société de Philadelphie, en Pennsylvanie, ont exercé une influence beaucoup plus grande sur les mouvements émergents de plantation d'arbres et de création de parcs que ce qui a été généralement reconnu. Elles ont souvent contribué par leur temps, leur argent, leur implication et leurs compétences aux projets paysagers de plantation; cependant, elles n'étaient pas considérées comme égales aux hommes qui étaient des employés rémunérés. Ces femmes ont planté, tracé, étudié et persévéré, surmontant les idées préconçues sur la féminité, bien que leurs efforts significatifs aient souvent été considérés comme une simple conséquence de leur rôle domestique féminin. Pour les femmes, limitées par les possibilités offertes dans les milieux dominés par les hommes, l'aménagement de leur ville était un moyen socialement acceptable pour leur émancipation. Ellen Waln Harrison (1846–1922) fut une figure clé de l'embellissement civique de sa ville natale de Philadelphie et au-delà. Ellen Harrison était mariée à Charles Custis Harrison, doyen de l'université de Pennsylvanie et elle a veillé personnellement aux efforts d'aménagement paysager du campus. Elle était considérée comme son “bras droit.” Son histoire est emblématique d'une tendance plus large concernant le rôle des femmes en botanique, en horticulture et en foresterie urbaine au tournant du XXe siècle.

Zusammenfassung. Viele Frauen und von Frauen geführte Vereinigungen waren im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert

an der historischen Stadtverschönerung in den Vereinigten Staaten beteiligt, insbesondere an der Baumpflanzung. Während Männer formell als Stadtförster, Baumpfleger, Gartenbauer und Landschaftsarchitekten tätig waren, arbeiteten Frauen aus elitären Familien manchmal unentgeltlich, um städtische Baumpflanzungen zu organisieren und sich dafür einzusetzen. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, übten Frauen aus der gehobenen Gesellschaft in engen Kreisen einen weitaus größeren Einfluss auf die aufkommenden Baumpflanz- und Parkgestaltungsbewegungen aus, als allgemein bekannt ist. Sie trugen oft ihre Zeit, ihre Finanzen, ihren Beitrag und ihre Fähigkeiten zu Landschaftsbepflanzungsprojekten bei, wurden jedoch nicht als gleichberechtigte Partner der Männer angesehen, die als Angestellte bezahlt wurden. Diese Frauen pflanzten, planten, studierten und hielten durch und überwandten dabei die vorgefassten Meinungen über das Frausein, obwohl ihre sinnvollen Bemühungen oft nur als Nebenprodukt ihrer weiblichen Rolle im Haushalt angesehen wurden. Für Frauen, die in männerdominierten Bereichen nur begrenzte Möglichkeiten hatten, war die Gestaltung ihrer Städte ein gesellschaftlich akzeptiertes Mittel zur Stärkung ihrer Position. Ellen Waln Harrison (1846–1922) war darüber hinaus eine Schlüsselfigur bei der Stadtverschönerung in ihrer Heimatstadt Philadelphia. Ellen Harrison war mit Charles Custis Harrison, dem Rektor der Universität von Pennsylvania, verheiratet und beaufsichtigte persönlich die Landschaftsgestaltung auf dem Campus und wurde als seine "rechte Hand" bezeichnet. Ihre Geschichte steht stellvertretend für einen größeren Trend in Bezug auf Frauen in der Botanik, im Gartenbau und in der städtischen Forstwirtschaft um die Wende zum 20. Jahrhundert.

Resumen. Muchas mujeres y asociaciones dirigidas por mujeres estuvieron involucradas en el embellecimiento urbano históricamente en los Estados Unidos, especialmente en la plantación de árboles, a finales del siglo 19 y principios del siglo 20. Mientras que los hombres tenían roles formales como arboristas urbanos, horticultores y arquitectos paisajistas, las mujeres de familias de élite a veces trabajaban gratis para organizarse y abogar por la plantación de árboles urbanos. Los círculos sociales estrechamente unidos de mujeres de la alta sociedad en Filadelfia, Pensilvania, produjeron una influencia mucho mayor en los movimientos nacientes de plantación de árboles y creación de parques de lo que generalmente se ha reconocido. A menudo contribuyeron con su tiempo, finanzas, aportes y habilidades a los proyectos de plantación de paisajes; sin embargo, no se consideraban iguales a los hombres que eran empleados compensados. Estas mujeres plantaron, trazaron, estudiaron y perseveraron, superando las nociones preconcebidas de la feminidad, aunque sus esfuerzos significativos a menudo se veían como simplemente una rama de su papel doméstico femenino. Para las mujeres, limitadas por las oportunidades en los ámbitos dominados por los hombres, dar forma a sus ciudades era un medio socialmente aceptado para el empoderamiento. Ellen Waln Harrison (1846–1922) fue una figura clave en el embellecimiento cívico en su ciudad natal de Filadelfia y más allá. Ellen Harrison estaba casada con Charles Custis Harrison, rector de la Universidad de Pensilvania, y ella personalmente supervisó los esfuerzos de paisajismo del campus y se refirió a ella como su "mano derecha." Su historia es emblemática de una tendencia más amplia con respecto a las mujeres en botánica, horticultura y silvicultura urbana alrededor del cambio del siglo 20.