

Airlie Gardens Timeline 1545-2015

1545 - The Airlie Oak is an acorn taking root.

1735 - King George II of England grants 640 acres of land to Jonathon Ogden, a local leatherworker, and his brother Solomon Ogden, a carpenter. Portions of this tract are included in what is today called Airlie.

1800 - Joshua Grainger Wright purchases 320 acres of the Ogden grant on Bradley Creek for 110 pounds. His wife, Susan Bradley Wright, names the property Mount Lebanon because of the abundance of cedar trees in the area.

1835 - Son of Joshua and Susan Wright, Dr. Thomas Henry Wright, a physician, bank president, railroad director, merchant, and Episcopal minister, builds Mount Lebanon Chapel.

1835 - "John Hill" a man of mystery, dies and is buried in a lone grave on Airlie property. Rumored to be one of Napoleon's marshals, he spent his later years living at Wrightsville Sound under this assumed name, tutoring the children of Richard Bradley, Jr.

1869 - Henry Walters is a student of Coronel Wharton Green (Sarah's Father) at Georgetown College, which is how he may have first met a young 10-year-old Sarah Green.

1875 - According to Dr. Thomas Henry Wright's wishes, Mount Lebanon Chapel and its accompanying six-and-one-half-acre tract of land is deeded to St. James Church in Wilmington.

1879 - Carolina Rice Mills Company is created by Pembroke Jones and business partner Norwood Giles, a profitable endeavor that would begin the Jones fortune.

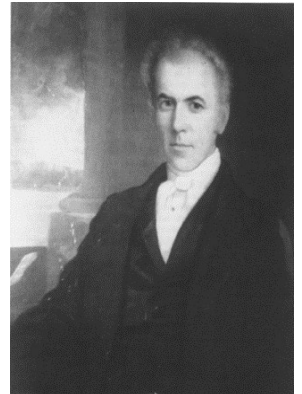
1884 - Along with other members of the Seaside Park Improvement Company, Sarah Green and Pembroke Jones buy a parcel of land and a recently built waterfront inn on the old Wright estate for a combined total of \$5,000. This land will become the core of the Airlie property and Sarah will eventually convert the inn into a rambling mansion known as the Airlie House.

1884 - Henry Walters moves the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad headquarters to Wilmington N.C.

1884 - Pembroke Jones and Sarah Green marry at St. John's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, N.C.



Susan Bradley Wright (1771-1842) c. 1811 (left)



Dr. Thomas Henry Wright (1800-1861) c. 1857 (right)

Courtesy of the Wright Family & Lower Cape Fear Historical Society



Sarah Wharton Greene c.1890 (left)

William and Henry Walters: The Reticent Collectors, by William R. Johnston Image Courtesy of a Walters family descendant

Pembroke Jones c. 1910 (right)

Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library



1885 – Construction of Shell Road (Wrightsville Turnpike) begins. Paved with crushed shells of local oysters, the picturesque, sun-bleached roadway provides Wilmingtonians relatively easy access to Wrightsville Beach for a small fee. This ran from a toll both near the intersection of 17th St. and Wrightsville Ave to the curve of the Present-day Airlie Road.

1886 - Sarah Jones purchases the Seaside Park Property for herself outright from the Seaside Improvement Company for \$1,250. Soon after, her husband names this property Airlie in honor of his ancestral home in Scotland.

1890 - Pembroke and Sarah Jones occupy the Governor Dudley Mansion at 400 South Front Street in Wilmington which is purchased by Sarah at the age of 26 for \$11,000.

c. 1900s - Renowned horticulturist P. J. Berckmans, owner of Fruitlands Nursery of Augusta, Ga., brings camellias and azaleas to Airlie. Fruitlands nursery would eventually become Augusta National Golf Course.

1901 - 1902 - Sarah Jones begins transforming Airlie into a garden estate by creating lakes and tree-lined paths. The design of the garden develops into a naturally curving and mysterious style that appears effortless, yet its maintenance depends on scores of full-time workers.

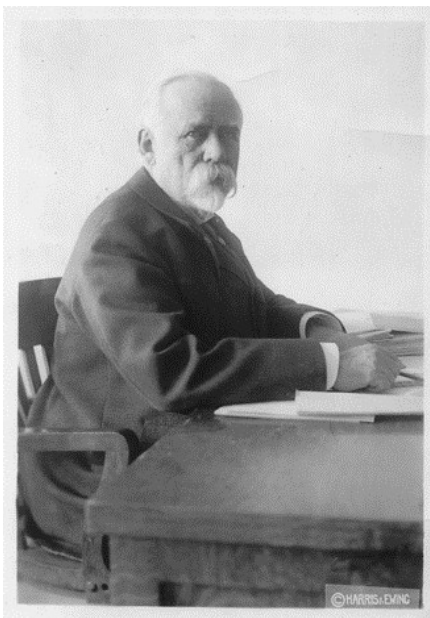
1901 - NY Times noted the Joneses' legendary entertaining. Sarah allocated \$300,000 for entertaining each summer.

1901- Joneses hire C.F.W "Will" Rehder, a local florist, to install a garden of spring bulbs around their newly renovated Airlie House. Rehder's floral business would become the oldest family owned floral business in North Carolina.

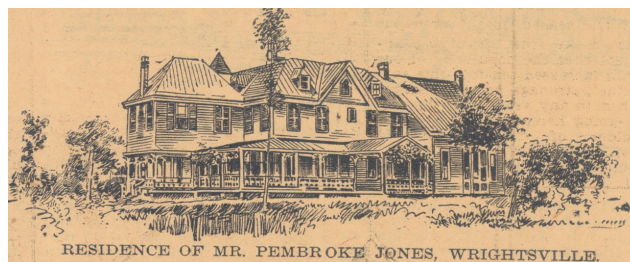
1901 - Sarah Jones continues to enlarge and embellish the house at Airlie in preparation for high class visitors.

1902 - Pembroke Jones begins to assemble parcels of land adjacent to Airlie into Pembroke Park, a 2,200-acre estate where he builds an Italian-style villa that he calls the Bungalow. Decades after his death, Pembroke Park will become the site of the Landfall residential community. Guests at the bungalow include famous names such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Henry Flagler, and W. K. Vanderbilt.

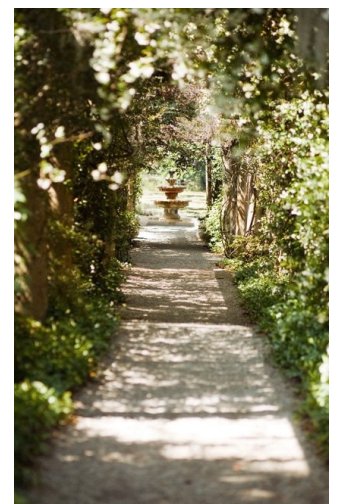
1904 - Sarah Jones adds a classical pergola constructed of tabby as a focal point of Airlie's lakeside.



Henry Walters c. 1912 (above)



The House at Airlie/Seaside Park c. 1897 (pre-renovations)
Courtesy of New Hanover County Public Library



The Pergola Fountain (above)

1906 - Sarah Jones hires German landscape gardener Rudolph Topel to develop and maintain Airlie's plantings. Topel would remain the head gardener at Airlie for 31 years until his death in 1937.

1908 - Minnie Eva Jones marries Julius Evans, a coachman for Pembroke Jones and a supervisor for the Pembroke Park property. They settle into their home, which is nestled close to the Bungalow. Minnie Evans begins working in domestic service for the Joneses.

1912 - The Joneses' daughter, Sadie, marries architect John Russell Pope, who is credited with the design of the Jefferson Memorial. They marry at Mt. Lebanon Chapel.

1912 - St. James Church of Wilmington establishes a mission at Mount Lebanon Chapel. Members of the Brotherhood of St. Andrews lead services filled with families who are Airlie's neighbors.

1915 - Thomas "Tommy" Tarrt begins working as a member of the garden staff at the age of 12. After Topel's death in 1937, he becomes head gardener. He works at Airlie continuously for 62 years until his death in 1977.

1918 - Pembroke Jones dies at age 61 after a scheduled surgery.

1920 - The present Airlie gate is installed on the Wrightsville Turnpike now called Airlie Road. This created a new entrance that replaced Seaside Fork and an earlier portal located east of the present Lebanon Gate.

1922 - Sarah Jones marries Henry Walters.

1922 - Sarah Jones Walters begins a campaign for a new church that will replace Mount Lebanon Chapel as a mission. St. Andrew's on-the-Sound, an Episcopal Church at 101 Airlie Road, is dedicated in 1924 and is still in use today.

1925 - Members of Wilmington's Tuesday Book Club decide to reorganize as a garden club and the Cape Fear Garden Club is founded. Most of the twelve charter members are frequent guests at Airlie. Today the organization is the oldest and largest garden club in the state, and one of the oldest in the nation.

1931 - Sarah promotes Airlie's first garden tour which brings in over 2500 people from 32 states. The gardens are opened for a fee of 50 cents from 8am - 6pm on April 24th & 25th for a public luncheon and garden tour.

1931 - Henry Walters dies at age 83. The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad drapes its office in black on the day of his burial.

1935 - Following the direction of a vision, Minnie Evans begins drawing, using everyday materials at hand.

1936 - Sarah Jones Walters, with friends Annie Gray and James Laurence Sprunt, give a spring tour of Airlie and Orton Plantation.



Miss Sadie Jones' engagement announcement c. 1912 (above)



John Russell Pope c.1933

Architect of Empire, by Steven McLeod



Minnie Evans painting c. 1969

1940s - Bradley Creek is closed to shell fishing.

1943 - Sarah Jones Walters dies at 84 in New York City. Daughter Sadie Jones Pope inherits the Airlie Property and Pembroke Park Property.

1948 - The Corbett Package Company, owned by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Corbett, purchases Airlie for \$150,000 from Sadie Jones Pope.

1948 - March 6th, the Corbett's first open Airlie to the public for the day.

1948- The first annual Azalea Festival begins on April 9th with a downtown flower show sponsored by several area garden clubs. During the festival, Queen Jacqueline White and her entourage pay a visit to Airlie. This visit becomes a "royal tradition" that continues today and is known as the "Queen's Luncheon" garden party.

1948 - Minnie Evans is hired by the Corbett Family to manage the gate at Airlie. Her husband Julius is also brought on as a tour guide for guests, telling visitors stories from the Jones/Walters era.

1951 - The Corbett Family plant 5,000 azaleas to try and replace the damage due to ice storms of the late 1940s.

1954 - Hazel, a category 4 hurricane, floods underlying areas of Airlie.

1954 - James "Jim" Ferger serves as a consultant at Airlie following the hurricane, developing a slightly formal area known as the "Spring Garden." He will work as a consultant for the gardens until 1980.

1958 - The house at Airlie is dismantled. Mr. and Mrs. Waddell A. Corbett replace it with a more contemporary style home in 1960, where they raised their family for many years.

1963 - The original wooden bridges over Airlie's Lakes are burned by vandals and are replaced with earthen causeways.

1970 - James Ferger, Airlie grounds consultant, develops area called "Four Seasons" or "Waddell Walk" which is known today as the "Bridal Walk," located at the Pergola Garden.

Minnie Evans & Garden Caretaker, Bud Taylor, at Front Gate c. 1949 (right)



**Spring Garden Prior to ice storms
c. 1948 (above)**



Damage from Hurricane Hazel c. 1954

1984 - Jane Pope Akers Ridgeway, daughter of Sadie Jones Pope, sells Pembroke Park to developer J.P. Goforth. Though the Lodge burned in 1955, the Temple of Love, designed by J. R. Pope, still stands today in the Landfall community.

1998 - First Airlie Oyster Roast is held at Mary Lou McEachern's home on Cedar Island. This tradition continues to this day with the event now held at Airlie Gardens on the Oak Lawn.

1999 - New Hanover County purchases 67 acres for a public garden, Airlie Gardens. A portion of the money comes from a N.H.C. Tidal Creeks Program with grant funding from the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. Airlie's Environmental Education is instituted for schools and the public.

2001 - Airlie Foundation, Inc., publishes "Airlie the Garden of Wilmington", by Susan Taylor Block

2004 - The Bottle Chapel, the centerpiece of the Minnie Evans Sculpture Garden, is designed by Virginia Wright-Frierson with sculptural contributions from seven other local artists.

2005 - Airlie's holiday light exhibit, Enchanted Airlie opens for the first time.

2010 - Airlie becomes a part of New Hanover County's Parks & Gardens Department.

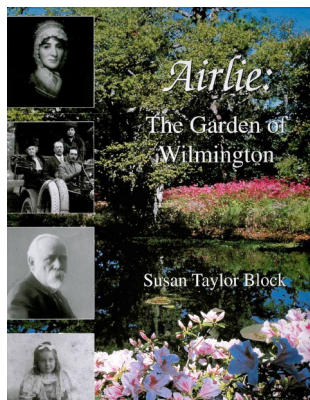
2010 - Butterfly House is completed.

2012 - President's Garden is erected on the Bradley Creek lawn to recognize past Azalea Festival Board Presidents.

2013 - The Airlie Gardens Bug Zoo opens, and new Airlie Timeline is added to the lobby of the Garden Services Center.

2014 - The white Iron gates at the front entrance are restored to their former glory (late 1700s to early 1800s), by local artist Ben Kastner

2015—Stables Dismantled



"Airlie the Garden of Wilmington", by Susan Taylor Block (left)



Airlie Gardens Ribbon Cutting c. 1999 (above)



The Temple of Love, Pembroke Park

Courtesy of Cape Fear Museum (above)



The Bottle Chapel during Enchanted Airlie