

Sustaining a Country House and Garden in a New Republic

When Charles Drayton purchased Drayton Hall from his stepmother, Rebecca Perry Drayton, in 1783, the house and property needed significant repair following the American Revolution. Charles envisioned Drayton Hall as an impressive country house and garden in a similar way that his father, John Drayton, used the home. While Charles now did so as a citizen of the United States and not as a British colonist, he retained many of the same tastes and practices that embodied British aristocracy. Charles spent much of his adolescence in Britain and received a medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. At the University, he made several important connections with likeminded individuals of the Scottish Enlightenment. When Charles returned to South Carolina to start a career as a doctor and planter, he had considerable means and access to study and obtain rare plants from his peers, other gardeners, and some famous botanists. Facilitating the business and intellectual pursuits of Charles was the labor of an enslaved workforce that stretched across the network of plantations inherited from his father.

Stop one: NORTH FLANKER BUILDING

1 The flanker buildings, constructed simultaneously with the main house, survived the American Revolution. The colonnade that connected the three buildings did not. Potentially, the British Army occupying the property during the American Revolution used the colonnade as firewood or destroyed it for other reasons.

The practical purposes for the flankers remain unclear, and we hope further archaeological research will help determine their function. The flankers may have served as guest houses or offices. Charles notes in his diary in 1791 that enslaved carpenters "finished the roofs of the two Offices & went from D. hall to Savannah" (Savannah was a nearby plantation owned by Charles). Since Drayton Hall was a commercial hub as well as a country house and garden, perhaps the flankers served business purposes for Charles's agriculture empire.

Stop two: PRIVY

2 The privy is one of two intact 18th century buildings still on the property (the other being the main house.) Charles likely used enslaved labor to build the privy after purchasing the property. This seven-seated privy took an impressive amount of planning. Beneath the privy was a two-foot wide brick-lined tunnel connected to a ditch that flushed waste toward the Ashley River (Image B). On the eastward side of the privy, archaeologists identified a pit likely used as a collecting basin for the water needed to flush waste out of the brick drain. Charles's medical training perhaps led to his desire for a flushing system to routinely remove waste in a somewhat hygienic manner. In 1793, Charles wrote in his diary that enslaved laborers



Do you see the fingerprint? It likely is from an enslaved bricklayer building the privy (ABOVE).

"Began a double sloped ditch. Leading from the garden ditch. . . to the ditch leading from the lake to the river." This may be a reference to the waterway system meant to flush the waste from the privy. Look closely at this brick on the riverside of the privy.

Stop three: HA-HA

3 This ditch or "ha-ha" is a European concept and is one of the few surviving features of Charles's late 18th century gardens. The ha-ha consisted of little more than a ditch with a fence placed at its base intending to provide a nearly invisible barrier to keep grazing animals away from the ornamental garden. Charles wanted to highlight the ornamental garden that displayed plants from across the world, and the ha-ha on the property allowed Charles to incorporate a European concept to preserve the view. The ornamental garden at Drayton Hall was between the ha-ha and the Ashley River. There are several ha-has on the property, and Charles referred to one in his diary, noting in 1789 that work began on the "ha-ha across the garden." Eight years later he wrote: "began to repair the garden fences of the S.E. ha-ha," which may be referring to another ha-ha you will see later on the walking tour.

Stop four: GARDEN HOUSE

4 Charles, like his father, used the garden house as part of the overall guest experience for those visiting Drayton Hall. After the American Revolution, elite white Charlestonians still desired to exude gentility. Drayton Hall was not solely a showplace for guests, however. Roughly 100 yards to your left (if you are facing the river) is a wooded area that served as an industrial space for Drayton crop commercialization. While Charles did not use Drayton Hall for large quantities of rice cultivation, rice was still an extremely profitable cash crop on many of his other properties. On those plantations, enslaved laborers cultivated rice and various other crops, and Charles used Drayton Hall as a commercial hub for processing, weighing, and packaging products before shipping off to sell (Image C). The "Tidal Slough" just beyond the path to your left potentially served as a way to collect freshwater of which enslaved people would use to water Charles's plants.

Stop five: THE ASHLEY RIVER

5 The Ashley River in front of you provided more than a scenic view. The river offered a critical waterway for travel and moving products to markets. The river allowed for the financial sustainability of Drayton Hall. Charles wrote often in his diary about products and people traveling on the Ashley River. His schooner, a popular type of vessel for transporting goods in this era, frequently receives mention. "Schooner in town from D.H. with 40. barrels rice. 5 bags of cotton, Jehosse. Rice, 13. barrels said to be damaged a very little," Charles wrote in 1800, as just one example of many in which he recorded the products coming to and from Drayton Hall and his surrounding properties. He also recorded upkeep to the schooner. In 1801, he mentioned, "Schooner arrived in town to be careened & caulked where necessary, & to put in anew bousprit of cypress." His diary also illuminates the enslaved people who often worked the schooner and moved goods throughout the region. Enslaved laborers Tim and Seaboy, for example, appear often in Charles's writing about the schooner. The financial means to own fertile land and to exploit enslaved labor was primarily how Charles funded his intellectual pursuits and sustained his influential acquaintances.

Stop six: TERRACED LANDSCAPE

6 In many ways, the landscape looks different today but there still are features from Charles's era that remain. If you look to the right from this tour stop, you will see a wooded area beyond the walking path. As you walk down the path, you may notice another ha-ha cutting through the property toward the Ashley River. The trees you see today are modern, but in the early 1800s, this area was clearer of trees. From that ha-ha and down toward the Ashley River, enslaved laborers created a terraced landscape that offered visitors to Drayton Hall a beautiful, elevated view of the river and the surrounding country side. (Image E) is a historic sketch of the back of the house drawn near this location.

NOTE: ALLIGATORS ARE COMMON IN THIS AREA AND CAN BE DANGEROUS. PLEASE KEEP YOUR DISTANCE.

Stop seven: HISTORIC PATH

7 The path you are walking on is the same path from Charles's era. Growing along this path is the plant *Ilicium parvifolium*, which is not native to South Carolina (Image D). Charles made many acquaintances that helped advance his horticultural ambitions, and he used those connections to acquire plants from across the world for his gardens. In his diary, he notes "Fraser botanist came. Gave him several plants: a *Cactola* - several *Stewartias*, *Capes*, & *Ilicium stellata*. & Seeds of *Halesia*. He gave me 3 cuttings of *Lonicera lutea* - & a plant, a vine, not named. He is about going to England with a cargo of plants he rates at £2000. Sterl. He promised to send 1. or 2 *Ilicia Florida* in pots."

Charles is referring to Scottish botanist John Fraser, who met with Charles on many occasions. Charles also frequently corresponded and visited with French botanists Andre Micheaux and his son François, who had a botanical garden near where the modern Charleston airport is today. These acquaintances furthered Charles's interest in horticulture and his vision to emulate other elite ornamental gardens and plant collections at Drayton Hall.

Stop eight: REFLECTING POND/CREEK

8 This manmade pond from the late 19th century has some potential remnants from Charles's era. Charles may have planted the trees on each side of the pond to create more of a balance of the Great Lawn with the Live Oak tree on the other side of the house (STOP NINE). The several trees stretching north/south likely date back to Charles's time owning the property.

As you look toward the house, take notice of the mound in front of the portico. While that mound dates to the late 1800s, it raises the location of a previous carriage roundabout put in by Charles, which replaced the driveway from the colonial era that went up to the portico steps. We know Charles made this change by the sketch (Image A) that shows the roundabout in front of the portico steps.

Stop nine: LIVE OAK

9 The oak tree you are next to predates the construction of Drayton Hall. Envision a more open and pastoral view of the landscape as you look around. The property and surrounding areas had fewer trees due to needs for firewood, fences, and open areas for grazing and planting. The (COVER IMAGE) sketch from the early 1800s, drawn nearby where you are standing, reveals that a fence kept the gardens out of view from those on the Great Lawn side of the house. Charles continued to emulate the British country garden experience at Drayton Hall. The gardens were intentionally not visible to those on the land side of the house to preserve the garden experience for those privileged to be brought to the riverside.

Stop ten: ORNAMENTAL PONDS

10 The road between the two ponds is a late 19th century alteration to the landscape. Historically, there was a pond to the left of the main roadway (see Image A). This watercourse was adapted for inland cultivation of rice by previous owners of the property. During Charles's ownership, these ponds largely served as ornamental features and as piscatories. Charles refers to the ponds several times throughout his diary. "The Saltiness of the water in the lower lake killed the fish" Charles wrote in 1791, showing that he struggled to keep fresh water in the lower pond. The upper pond was more elevated, which kept salt water from draining into it. While Charles writes about using the piscatories for food, he also used the ponds for gaming purposes as fishing became a hobby for the elite social classes in Europe and the United States.

