

# *Reflections of Rosedown*







# Reflections of Rosedown

A Rosedown Book by Ola Mae Word

*Catherine Fondren Underwood's restoration of Rosedown Plantation and Gardens in St. Francisville, Louisiana, reflects the beauty and grandeur of a Golden Era in America's 19th Century Plantation Society.*

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Catherine Fondren Underwood  
1908 - 1970

## *The Story of Rosedown*

... is the story of a house and a garden created by the inspiration, talent, hard work and a perseverance of two women who were born more than a hundred years apart.

In 1835, almost a century and a half ago, Martha Barrow Turnbull and her husband, Daniel Turnbull, a cotton planter, built their plantation home several miles off the eastern shore of the Mississippi at St. Francisville, Louisiana. A remarkable amateur horticulturist, Martha Turnbull on her wedding trip to the Continent had been inspired by Versailles and other post-Renaissance gardens. As a member of a plantation society whose affluence matched that of European nobility, she had the means — land, labor, plant material and climate — to create on the grounds of her Louisiana wilderness home a vast garden in the French style of the 17th century, one which was an accurate translation of the character and spirit of the gardens she had seen in Europe. She devoted more than sixty years to maintaining their perfection.

Her first azaleas were imported in 1836. She and her husband, in the 1830's, were among the first plantation families in Louisiana to import camellias. The gardens of Rosedown became an early proving ground for exotic flora of the Orient.

In the spring of 1956, Catherine Fondren Underwood of Houston, Texas, first saw Rosedown when heirs of the original builders placed the plantation on the market. Although the house was in a state of decline and the gardens were choked with jungle-like growth, she glimpsed signs of their original beauty and order. Dramatic vistas of azaleas, camellias, and other ancient flowering trees and shrubs still thriving on the grounds compelled her to buy Rosedown and begin an adventure in restoration.

*Reflections of Rosedown*, a Bicentennial publication, is a memorial to the late Catherine Fondren Underwood, whose love of beauty saved one of the great gardens of the 19th century and gave America one of its significant museums.









## *English Louisiana...* IN THE FLOWERING FELICIANAS

Rosedown Plantation is located in West Feliciana, one of Louisiana's most remote and verdantly beautiful parishes. The parish is bounded on the north by the timbered slopes of the Tunica Hills and on the south and west by chalk cliffs which tower above the Mississippi River. Ranging in color from white to muted shades of orange and brown, these cliffs are part of a band of loess which stretches from Memphis to Baton Rouge. Eons ago this loess, a volcanic flour, was swirled in infinitesimal amounts by transcontinental winds from glacial deposits and river deltas to the banks of the Mississippi, where it gradually created soil deposits of great depth. It accounts in part for the fertility of West Feliciana. When coupled with abundant rainfall, this yellowish soil assumes great agricultural importance.



These perfumed woodlands are the home of countless birds, for the region lies at the apex of the great Mississippi Valley migratory flyway, an avenue over which millions of birds fly to Yucatan and other warm climes. Many of them tarry for nesting in the Felicianas. Others are merely birds of passage, here for a few weeks in the spring and again in the fall as they pass to and from more southern winter homes. Their sojourns add color and variety to the avifauna of the flowering Felicianas.

For unnumbered centuries Nature ruled unchallenged along the lower Mississippi. Bands of Indians lived in the flowering woodlands like children of nature, enjoying the fruit of trees, hunting game and reveling in the idyllic beauty of the land.

Then the tempo of history quickened. Into this forest wonderland came the white man to complicate its simple life. Cabeza de Vaca in 1528 was shipwrecked on the coast of Louisiana. This was 57 years before the first Englishman set foot on Roanoke Island, and 79 years before the first English colony was established on the James River.

In 1543, DeSoto penetrated the lower Mississippi, where he lost his life and was buried in its boiling waters. Moscoso, leading the expedition after DeSoto's death, passed this way.

LaSalle in 1682 made his historic trip down the Mississippi to its mouth to claim the entire region drained by this stream for Louis of France. He became aware of the Houmas Indians' villages along its shores.

The first known white man to visit Feliciana was an Italian mercenary named Henri de Tonti (Tonti the "Iron Hand"), who descended the Mississippi looking for his French friend, LaSalle, in 1686.

Seventy-seven years before the American Revolution, Iberville, Bienville and another Frenchman, Sauvol de Villantary, visited the Houmas in Feliciana. In the early 1700's the Tunica Indians came down from the region of the Yazoo River in what is now Mississippi. They too liked this land. They

massacred many in the Houmas tribe, driving the rest to the south.

The first Europeans to settle along the long ridge which is now St. Francisville were the French, who established a fort there named St. Reine. This fort was abandoned in 1733. The little settlement which grew up there was called the "Village of St. Francis" in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan order.

In 1763 the region later called Feliciana was transferred to England by the Treaty of Paris following the French and Indian War. The rest of Louisiana had been given to Spain in 1762.

Eight months after the treaty of peace was signed in Paris, King George III divided his new territory into "East and West Florida," the latter colony including what is now West Feliciana Parish. The capital was faraway Pensacola. The *Gentleman's Magazine* in London, soon after the royal proclamation was issued, predicted: "The immense gain which this trade produces will probably soon make West Florida be numbered among our most flourishing colonies."

Retired British soldiers were rewarded with grants of land in this sparsely populated region. Before and during the American Revolution, many Tory sympathizers on the Eastern Seaboard looked for an area under the Union Jack in which to resettle. Some of them found refuge in the area, thus strengthening the English character of the land.

The early settlers raised cotton, indigo and tobacco with slave labor from Jamaica. Because of the difficulty of removing its seed, cotton was not as important as it was destined to become later in the century, when Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin.

Spain regained West Florida in 1779, when Galvez, acting governor of Louisiana at New Orleans, captured the area. The whole region received the name Feliciana, Spanish for "happy land," in honor of Galvez's wife.



Sometime about 1780 the Spanish Capuchins built a monastery on the ridge. Here their dead from the lowlands of Pointe Coupee were ferried across the river for burial. About 1785 the monastery burned, and the monks left the area. The name of "Village of St. Francis" remained. St. Francisville was later chartered under the Spanish colonial rule prior to 1808. Its streets, Florida, Prince, Royal, Ferdinand and Feliciana, are reminders of Spain's ownership.

At the mouth of a bayou down the hill from St. Francisville, a batture developed which was to become the largest riverport between Natchez and New Orleans. The settlement soon established there was called Bayou Sarah for the bayou of the same name. Historians say the bayou was named for an old woman who lived nearby.

The Industrial Revolution in England and the invention of the cotton gin in 1792 generated a land boom and cotton rush in the Southwest, especially in the rich river valleys. Many Southern plantation families left their worn-out acres and moved westward. So eager were they for fresh land that many came to Louisiana, despite the fact that the region was now ruled by Spain rather than England.

The stories of enormous profits to be made from raising cotton on land in the public domain had a profound influence on a branch of the Barrow family in Halifax County, North Carolina. Olivia Ruffin Barrow, after having been widowed for ten years, in 1797 journeyed overland to Tennessee with her sons, Robert, William III and Ruffin, her daughters, Mary and Sarah, and her slaves. Two of her sons, Bartholomew and Bennett, chose to stay in North Carolina. Later, they moved to Louisiana, too.

Instead of settling in Tennessee, the Barrows, after two years, decided to live in Nueva Feliciana. The entourage must have been a colorful procession as it moved toward Louisiana. According to family

legend, they came in thirty covered wagons with their slaves, gold and prized household possessions. The caravan arrived in Natchez during the latter part of 1800 and there awaited permission from the Spanish authorities to enter the territory of Nueva Feliciana. They acquired their land in 1800, but they did not settle on their plantations until early 1801. No one could have known at that time that this family would be leaders in a pageant of plantation life that would stretch out colorfully for the next sixty years.

*The 19th Century Bathroom at Rosedown*





## THE FLORIDA REBELLION

During the summer and fall of 1810, settlers in the Florida parishes participated in a series of events which were the most unusual and audacious in American history.

Build-up for the Florida Rebellion began with Thomas Jefferson's consummation of the Louisiana Purchase on December 20, 1803, giving France \$15,000,000 for the heart of the North American continent, a cost of 2½ cents an acre. West Florida was not included in the trade and continued to be governed by the Spanish.

In 1810 William Barrow III and other planters revolted against Spain and set up a tiny republic of seventy-six days' duration (September 26 to December 10, 1810). They drew up a constitution and adopted the first lone star flag in America, beating Texas by 16 years.

On October 27, 1810, while the Floridians were still wrestling with plans for self-government, President James Madison issued a proclamation declaring that West Florida was a part of the Louisiana Purchase.







## YEARS OF PROSPERITY

The Feliciana Cotton Kingdom was good to the Barrows and other planters in the mid-19th century. Late in 1860, J. W. Dorr, a member of the editorial department of the *New Orleans Crescent*, wrote:

*West Feliciana is one of the richest parishes in the state. Some of the planters of this parish rank among the largest in the state, and among the extra heavy men may be mentioned Messrs. Joseph A. S. Acklen (who owned what is now Angola), David Barrow (of Afton Villa), William Ruffin Barrow, Sr. (of Greenwood), William J. Fort (of*

*Catalpa), John Scott Smith, William H. Stirling and Daniel Turnbull (of Rosedown).*

As cotton brought great wealth to the Feliciana country, the grandchildren of the pioneer Olivia Ruffin Barrow built elaborate showplaces. Long before the Civil War the Barrows became widely known for their handsome houses and beautiful gardens. Four of them were considered to be among the outstanding country houses in America

Greenwood, Afton Villa, Ellerslie and

9 Rosedown.



## *The Turnbulls of Rosedown*

*In 1852, the famed artist Thomas Sully painted portraits of the Turnbulls of Rosedown while they were sojourning in Philadelphia and Saratoga. This art was created at the height of the Golden Era when the planter class took for granted that enjoyment of the finer things of life would go on forever.*





# The Golden Years

... when three good cotton crops in a row could create a 19th-century millionaire.

## Family Backgrounds

### A Plantation Society Wedding

On November 13, 1828, eighteen-year-old Martha Hilliard Barrow married Daniel Turnbull, who was ten years her senior. The wedding united two pioneer families of social prominence in West Feliciana Parish.

Martha Barrow was the granddaughter of the intrepid Olivia Ruffin Barrow, who had brought her family from Halifax County, North Carolina, to rich Nueva Feliciana. Her father was William Barrow III and her mother was Pheraby Hilliard, daughter of Robert Hilliard, a wealthy planter of Northampton County, North Carolina.

The Barrows were one of the first Anglo-Saxon families to settle in the South, having come from England during American colonial days. They settled first in Virginia and later in the Carolinas.

Martha's father built Locust Grove, later called Highland, the first Federal style house in West Feliciana. He had nine children, three of whom died in childhood: Robert Hilliard, Ann Ruffin, William Ruffin, Bennett, Martha, Martha Hilliard, Bennett Hilliard, Eliza Eleanor and James Barrow.

As was the Barrow custom, the children were tutored at home until they were old enough to go to finishing schools and universities. A great believer in education, William Barrow III sent two of his sons to Princeton. Martha Hilliard had just returned from Madam Legoin's Institute in Philadelphia when she was betrothed to Daniel Turnbull. In Philadelphia, she had acquired considerable style in clothing, manners and tastes.

When Martha's father died, he left an estate composed of eighteen tracts of land, which were divided into six plantations totaling 7,160 arpents.\* He owned 348 slaves. Thus, he endowed his family lavishly with land, slaves and cash. In addition to this material wealth, William III left his family the benefits of an intangible good, for he

had instilled in his children a sense of family unity, loyalty and respect for the agrarian way of life.

Because her engagement came after the death of her father, Martha's older brother, William Ruffin Barrow, gave Daniel formal permission to marry his sister.

Daniel Turnbull was a highly educated young man who graduated from an educational institution in the North. His father was John Turnbull, a native of Dumfriesshire, Scotland, who came to America in the last quarter of the 1700's and settled in Mobile, Alabama, establishing a trading post on Dauphine Street with an Irishman named Joyce. Later they opened up a branch in Mount Vernon, north of Mobile, among the Choctaw Indians. John married an Indian princess and by her had three children — George, William and ~~Mary~~ <sup>Lydia</sup>. The family records that the boys became Senators-at-Large in Mississippi when the state first came into the Union and were Choctaw leaders. Family records do not reflect what happened to the Indian princess.

John Turnbull's second marriage was to a 17-year-old girl, Catharine Rucker, whom he met as she was fleeing from her ~~step-mother~~ <sup>error she had 2 step-father</sup> in Natchez, Mississippi. When she traveled through ~~Mount Vernon~~ <sup>Natchez area</sup>, she met John Turnbull, and soon after they married.

John Turnbull tried to expand his business as far as Yazoo City, Mississippi, but he encountered difficulties. A half-Indian, half-Scot by the name of McGillivray was the leader of the Choctaw Nation, and he resented the presence of other Scotsmen lest they take away some of his power. He would not allow John to establish a business in Yazoo City.

So John Turnbull in 1783 <sup>NO</sup> decided to take his bride into ~~West Feliciana, Louisiana~~ <sup>Miss to Baton Rouge</sup>, where they settled on a Spanish land grant. By his second marriage he had six children, one of whom was Daniel Turnbull.

11 \*Arpent is a French land measurement representing .83 of an acre.

error she had 2 step-father  
Natchez area  
John + Catharine  
Miss to Baton Rouge  
area in 1792.  
John died  
24 Aug 1799







## THE *Grand Tour*

In eighteenth-century England, the Grand Tour was the last event in the education of a lady or gentleman. Italy, its art and gardens drew 19th-century Americans as would a magnet. Following their brilliant society wedding in West Feliciana, and in keeping with their station in life, the young Turnbolls decided to make their wedding trip the Grand Tour of Europe.

Enroute, the couple saw a romantic play entitled "Rosedown." The artistic backdrop of the mansion in this production inspired the young couple to choose this name for their future home in Louisiana.

At Versailles and in the gardens of Italy, Martha Turnbull saw avenues of trees, statuary, formal parterres and garden ornaments in the French style of the 17th century. Plans for her own garden began to form in her mind.

While in Paris, Martha and Daniel Turnbull purchased a scenic wallpaper for Rosedown, a design by Joseph Dufour, the most celebrated craftsman in the field. The vogue for panoramas of historic subjects had developed in France late in the 18th century, and their popularity spread to America. The blue panorama selected by the Turnbolls was used in the Entrance Hall at Rosedown.









## *A New Home in Feliciana*

When they returned to Louisiana from Europe, Martha and Daniel Turnbull began the serious business of creating their plantation empire. Because the days of large, cohesive land grants in the public domain were over, young planters built their estates by purchasing tracts of land to add to those they possessed by virtue of inheritance. Cotton was in such worldwide demand that it was easy for a young man in West Feliciana to buy land on credit. If he had a good crop several years in a row, he could be well established financially.

Both Daniel and Martha had inherited land from their families. However, Rose-down, the plantation on which they built their home, was composed of seven tracts of land which Daniel purchased over a period of years. Two tracts were purchased from Mrs. Ann Benoist, sister of Martha Turnbull. Both were part of the Spanish land grant to John Mills, an early merchant in the area, in 1789. With one of these tracts Daniel received seventy-four Negro slaves for life, farm utensils, horses and stock of

every description. The Turnbolls were already in residence on this land when the terms of the purchase were made.

The next addition to Rosedown Plantation was acreage designated as "The Flower Tract." In 1840 Daniel paid \$6,333.36 for two hundred sixty-two arpents of land called "Race Track" purchased from former owners of the defunct St. Francisville Jockey Club, William R. Barrow, Bennett H. Barrow, William H. Barrow, Ira Smith, William Hamilton, Robert H. Barrow, Richard Haile and John B. Hereford.

In 1841, when Daniel bought a piece of land called the Taylor Tract or Cypress Swamp and later bought land and buildings referred to as the "Johnson Place," Rosedown grew to a total of 3,455 acres.

In those days, Daniel referred to Rose-down in his Journal as "Rose Down." The brand he used for cotton bales and cattle was "R/D."

In addition to Rosedown, Daniel Turnbull owned three other plantations, which he called "Inheritance," "DeSoto" and

*The original furnishings purchased by the Turnbolls for Rosedown include a Regency mahogany dining table, Phyfe chairs, a mahogany sideboard with marble top, Empire circa 1830, and a French Empire serving table with console marble top and mirror back. On one side of the specially-dyed cotton covering of the punkah are flowers and cotton blossoms. On the reverse is an eagle with a rabbit in its claws, a design from an Audubon print. The punkah was introduced on Southern plantations by settlers who had been English officers in India. A popular name for the punkah is "Shoo Fly."*



"Styopa." The last two plantations were located on Red River Island near Simmesport and Fort Adams.

Daniel Turnbull made an entry in his Journal on November 3, 1834, which signaled the beginning of work on the new house he and Martha had planned for six years. He simply wrote, "Commenced hauling timber cypress for house."

About this time the Woodville-West Feliciana Railroad, the first standard gauge railroad in the United States, connecting Woodville, Mississippi, with Bayou Sarah, was completed, and one of its contractors, W. Wright, was available to build the Turnbulls' new home. In a file marked "Papers relating to Dwelling House, 1834," Daniel Turnbull filed the agreement he made with W. Wright:

**Proposition for doing the carpenter and joined work of a certain frame house the whole to be complete after the most modern stile the front to be executed with full gretio doric collums and cornice the inside to be finished throughout the two stories complete one finish above the second story nor Dormer windows. The workmanship and stile not to be surpassed in the state all the materials to be furnished on the ground or at the place where the building is to be built or Set up (by the employer) for the sum of Seven Thousand Five Hundred Dollars. Or may be measured at the Cincinnati Book of Prices or valued by Competent Mechanics of the Conty, with any one I shall be satisfied.**  
W. Wright

The Rosedown papers contain the original penciled floor plan of the house, but they give no clue as to its architect. The design was similar to Highland, the Federal style plantation house which was Martha Turnbull's childhood home.

Rosedown was a typical "hill plantation" house a style of architecture which symbolized the fact that its owner, being a planter, had attained upper-class status. Its columns, elaborate stairs and stylish trim may indicate the owner's association with the affluent tastes of the Tidewater culture.

The core of the hill plantation house resembles a "box" two rooms wide across the front, one room deep toward the rear, two stories high with an end-gabled roof. This style house usually has chimneys outside the wall, a two-story gallery across the front, and a two-story shed across the back. 16

Most of the cypress and cedar used in Rosedown House came from a swamp woodland on Rosedown property and was processed at the sawmill on the place, some of it by hand. The eighteen columns on the galleries and verandas were molded and fluted at the plantation sawmill. Family records indicate that "the fancy tachings are all of cedar, and the labor was furnished by slaves." Some of the lumber was purchased in Cincinnati and was shipped to Rosedown by steamer, a delivery which required between ten days and two weeks in those days.

One of the interesting invoices in the "Dwelling House" file was handwritten in French and was submitted for 485 feet and 70 feet mahogany (acajou) in the amount of \$129.73. The mahogany was used for the stairway of the "Dwelling House."

In his Journal, Daniel Turnbull noted that W. Wright commenced work on Rosedown House November 1, 1834, and finished May 1, 1835. The summation of costs in the "Dwelling House" file reflects that he paid a total of \$13,109.20 for his new home.



### The Parlor

*The Victorian Walnut parlor set with rich red velvet coverings was made by Prudent Mallard of New Orleans. Other original pieces in the parlor include a black marble top console with a white marble reclining cupid, a black marble top occasional table with a pattern top and a walnut "whatnot" desk. In the Rosedown papers is an 1835 pencil drawing of the parlor curtains with hand and arm tiebacks.*







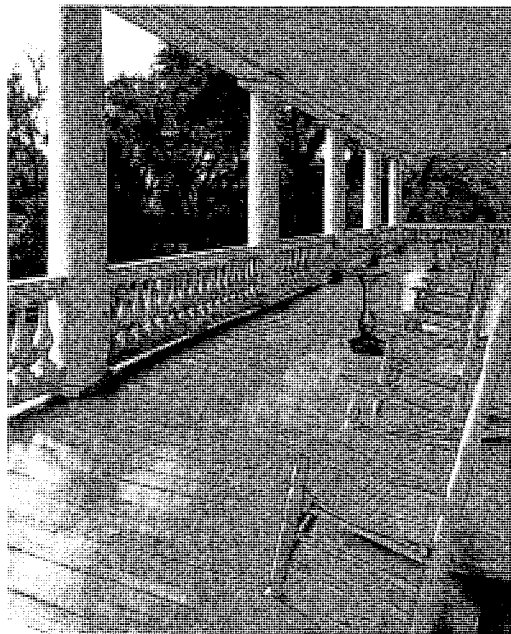


## *Entertainment and Leisure Hours*

Like all the great houses of the Barrow clan, Rosedown was a social center in West Feliciana, providing the background for a leisured, pleasant way of life. Music and reading were favored indoor pastimes. Men and boys enjoyed fishing and hunting. Cards and gambling intrigued the planters.

The Turnbulls and the Barrows were part of a galaxy of plantation families in West Feliciana which shared mutual interests — family ties, cotton culture, watering places, horse racing, and other sports of the gentry. Serenading was a pastime of this social set, and many happy evenings were spent in going from one plantation to another singing songs of the period and the season.

Informal balls, sometimes spontaneous events, were favorite entertainments in the fall and spring. Professional musicians were brought in from New Orleans and Natchez.





Saddle horses were maintained for family use and for guests. Carriage drives through the countryside were popular.

Hunting was sport for the men and occasionally for the ladies. Many of these plantation families kept blooded hounds, which they followed as their forebears had in Virginia, Maryland and other states of the Old South. Planters hunted deer, bear and wild fowl. Boys concentrated on shooting rabbit from horseback.

All of the Barrows and their kin shared entertainment events on the pleasure boat of W. H. Barrow, Martha Turnbull's brother. He had ordered that a steamboat be built for his family expressly for sporting expeditions. Called the "Nimrod," it was seventy-five feet long, and in it were permanent stable accommodations for twelve horses and six packs of dogs.

The *Spirit of the Times*, a sporting magazine of national interest which covered activities of the Barrows regularly, in the July 10, 1841, issue reported that "The Nimrod is finished and there is no prettier craft afloat . . . In the cabins are comfortable cushions, the best rifles, fowling pieces and fishing tackle." This publication also indicated that on the boat was a bar and that the Negro crew wore longtail coats.

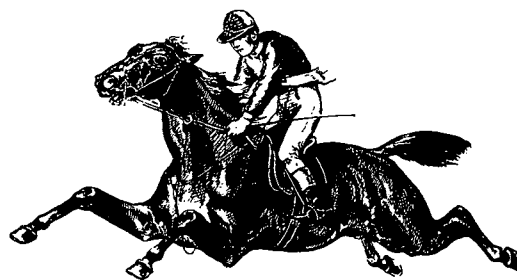
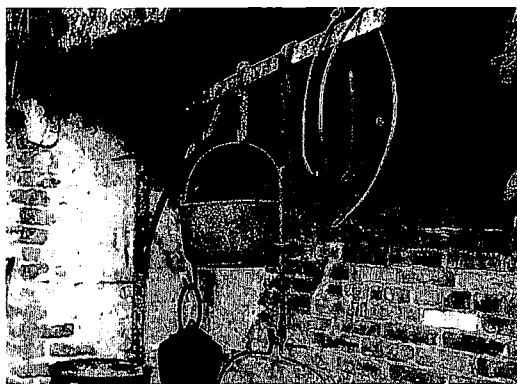
Evidently the boat was the scene of an open-house at Bayou Sarah, for the paper reported a question asked of one of the Negro attendants:

**Question:** "Where is the boat from?"

**Answer:** "From the Barrow settlement . . . can't you tell that from its fixins?" replied the Negro.

**Enquirer:** "Never heard of it in my life."

**Answer:** "Well perhaps Massa, you never heard of Heaven."



## Horse Racing

Probably the most exciting outdoor sport for the planter class in West Feliciana was horse racing, an institution brought over by their Anglo-Saxon forebears. Jockey clubs sprang up rapidly along the Mississippi. A racing season was reported at St. Francisville as early as March 1, 1831, with purses that were quite respectable. Racing gave the planters a chance to evaluate their horses.

*A housewarming was held to celebrate completion of the Turnbull's new home. Martha Turnbull made note of this party in her diary\*:*

We had 30 people at our first party & we had 6 chickens for Chicken Salad — 2 Turkeys, 2 Ducks, 1 Ham, 1 Tongue, Roast Mutton, 2 Roast Chickens, 1 Pig — Henrietta took 12 dozen eggs and made a great deal of cake — it took 6 eggs for Salad — 16 pints for the Cream — Jelly — Blancmange — 50 spoon fulls of Coffe given out and not the 3rd used — 4 Decanters Wine — 4 Decanters Brandy — 8 Bottles Champaign — We had 6 lbs. Secrets and but little used — 4 lbs. candy fruit — 2 ornamental pound cake, 12 lbs. each — 1 fruit cake, 10 lbs. — 6 lbs. mixed cakes — Macaronas lady fingers and 1 Jar Grapes — 24 Bananas — 2 Hogshead Ice — 6 Pine Apples — It appears useless to make so much cake — 2 Neuga Ornaments costs 74 dollars — Musicians 60 dollars indeed to induce everything it cost 224\$.

*\*The above excerpt reflects the grammar and punctuation in Martha Turnbull's diary notes and has been typeset exactly as originally written, as have been all excerpts from original records and journals throughout this book.*



## *Plantation Routine*

Rosedown was one of the most productive plantations in the South.

Daniel Turnbull of Rosedown was oriented around his money crop, cotton. He did not allow himself to be diverted from its cultivation by the promising sugar cane industry or the wish to become self-sufficient. His staff raised corn, hogs, "beeves," vegetables, chickens, ducks and geese. Because an acre of land brought more money from cotton than could be saved by planting corn and other items, he supplemented the minor production items with purchases when necessary.

Because he concentrated heavily on his own operation, Daniel Turnbull probably had no perspective on his relative position in the cotton industry. The entire planter aristocracy in the South was limited to 10,000 families, of whom only 3,000 num-

bered among the extremely wealthy who owned more than 100 slaves. Of this select group, thirty-eight lived in West Feliciana Parish in the 1850's. Only two of these owned more than 500 slaves. Only five had between 200 and 500. Thirty-one owned over 100. Daniel Turnbull averaged 450 slaves in his operations.

Work on the plantation developed into a rigid, dependable routine. To grow cotton, a planter needed 122 frostless days. Daniel could depend on from 200 to 260 frostless days in West Feliciana. He fertilized soil on his plantation with guana from Peru.

The men on whom Daniel depended each year were far-flung. Men in Liverpool, England, set the price for his cotton. He received the news from his factor in New Orleans, the man who made the decision on when to sell.





*Cotton was King*



## The Factor — Buyer, Agent and Marketer

The factorage system was one of the features of cotton culture which made the industry work. Washington, Jackson & Co. of New Orleans, Daniel's factor, made it possible for him to pay his bills only once a year — after his crop was in. The factor simply kept a record of bills paid for the Turnbells, added a 2½% fee, and deducted the entire amount from cotton sales late in the fall.

As buyers, agents and marketers for planters, factors were an effective bridge between conservative bankers and "plunging planters." The business relationship between Daniel Turnbull and his factor continued for more than three decades, during which a strong bond of friendship developed.

The second most important man in the plantation system was the overseer. When Frederick Law Olmsted, a landscape architect, visited Feliciana in 1853 to see the land of the exceptionally large planters, he tried to get information one day from a local overseer who rode alongside him. He was astonished that the man could not even tell him the distance to Woodville, a small town 28 miles north of St. Francisville. He was surprised that a plantation owner would go away for months at a time, leaving his operation in the hands of an illiterate overseer.

When he mentioned cotton to the man, however, Olmsted readily found the an-

swer to that enigma. Immediately the overseer came alive and informed Olmsted that Feliciana had the "richest sile God ever shucked down." He confided that his boss was away in "Paris or Saratogy, or some of them places." He also was proud that he worked for one of the "big bugs," as the most prominent planters were sometimes known.

George Washington in those days was still considered the model planter. Daniel kept George Washington's rules of plantation management on the inside cover of the *Rosedown Journal* so that the overseer would see it daily when making records.

For their work, Turnbull paid his overseers \$500 a year until the 1850's, when the expense was inflated to around \$1000 annually.

Daniel divided his slaves among his plantations — *Rosedown*, *Styopa*, *DeSoto* and *Inheritance*. The slave quarters at *Rosedown* were laid off on the plan of a small city, according to family records. The cabins were well-built and comfortable. In the center of the complex was an underground well, water being drawn up by a windlass — "pure water as cold as ice." Over the well was a fancy latticed shed. Bricks molded in a kiln on the place formed paths leading in all directions to the cabins.

Martha Turnbull directed the work of household servants and those assigned to



the gardens. Daniel had his overseers manage the others. While there were men trained as millers, smiths and carpenters, the majority of the slaves worked in the fields. Of these a few were trained as foremen or drivers.

"The slaves were well taken care of and were happy," according to family notes. Daniel Turnbull built a large barn or dancing hall for their "frollicks." During the Christmas holidays they formed a musical band of fiddlers, banjo and windpipes. The melodies of their "frollicks" drifted over the grounds to the plantation house, affording the greatest pleasure to the Turnbulls and their guests.

Turnbull built a church for them, but some of his slaves, along with a few from other plantations, attended services at Grace Episcopal Church in St. Francisville. He employed a Baptist minister to hold services on the grounds on Sunday mornings. The minister, a Mr. Ranaldson, taught them hymns, and they sang with great pathos and melody, according to family notations.

Most of the ground was prepared for cotton in February or March, the time for plowing varying from year to year by weather conditions. Most planting began in mid-March or later.

Mexican or Petit Gulf cotton seed was generally used at Rosedown. This brand

was developed by Dr. Haller Nutt of Winter Quarters Plantation, Newellton, Louisiana, and Longwood, Natchez, Mississippi.

When the cotton plants started their growth, around the middle of April, cultivation would begin. To make hoeing or chopping easier, the field hands would first bar off, scrape and mould the cotton. Cultivation continued until August, when harvest would begin.

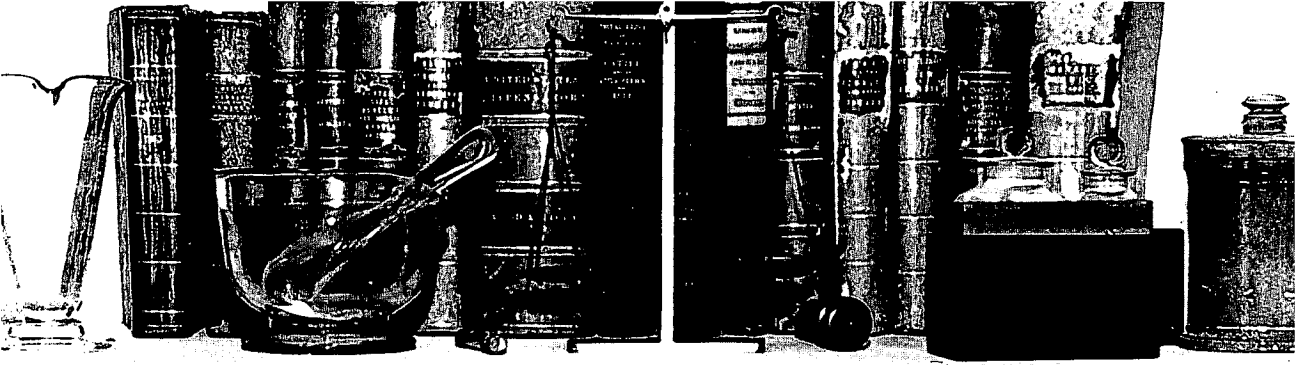
In his Journal, Daniel usually reported his first cotton blossom in early June. When the crop was "laid by," the Turnbulls sailed for Saratoga for the summer. They usually returned in September or October.

Cotton picking sometimes lasted through December. When the crop was in, there was time off for a "frollick."

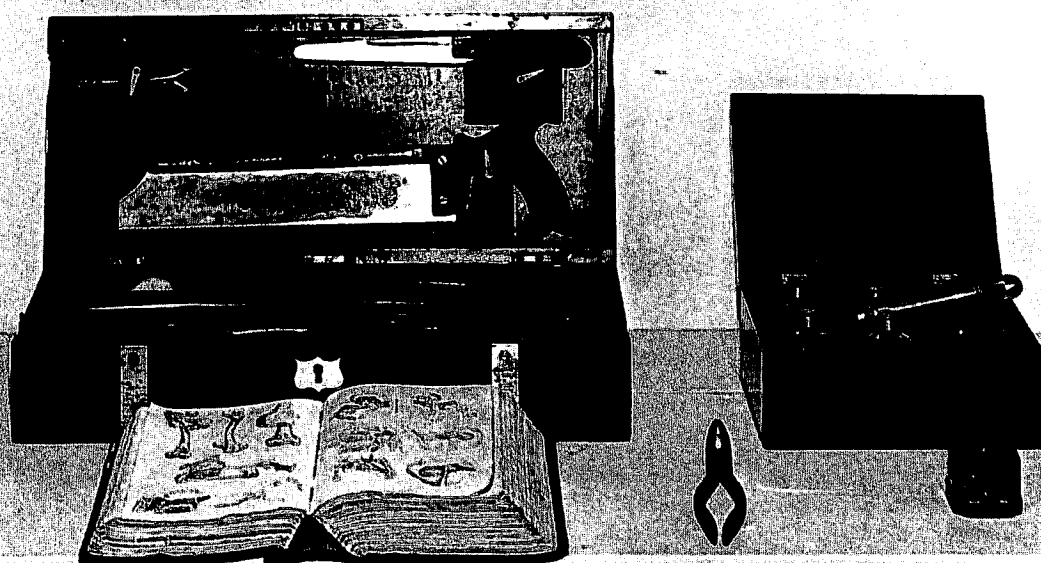
Daniel Turnbull maintained a gin on the plantation. When the seed was removed, the cotton was pressed into 400-pound bales. In New Orleans, the bales were compressed even more for shipment to Liverpool, the receiving port for Manchester mills.

The year 1835 was a good one for the Turnbulls. Not only was the new dwelling house finished, but the price of cotton was excellent. From the Rosedown Plantation alone he had a crop of 170,624 pounds, or 426 bales, which he sold from 13¢ to 18½¢ a pound. He made a report of his crop on one of the covers of his Journal.





# *Plight of the Plantation Doctor*



One of the most difficult problems Daniel Turnbull faced on the plantation was caring for the health of his family and the slaves. Fever and ague shook the lower Mississippi Valley in the early 1800's. The region grew only because settlers and opportunists, lured by riches, poured into the valley faster than pestilence could destroy. New Orleans became known as "the sickliest city in the world." When rumors of pestilence in the Crescent City reached ocean-going vessels, many turned back rather than risk death. When planters upstream heard of epidemics in New Orleans, they sealed off the great port and delayed doing business there until time and cool weather changed the situation.

To protect his family, Daniel Turnbull usually "sojourned" with his family during

summer months. For some reason the Turnbulls did not travel in the summer of 1843. On the evening of August 15, their seven-year-old son died of fever.

A marble headstone was sculpt in the form of a broken shaft symbolic of a life cut off in youth.

To the Memory of  
**JAMES DANIEL TURNBULL**  
born 2nd of August 1836 departed this  
life the 15th of August 1843  
Age 7 years 13 days

The following year, 1844, Daniel Turnbull built an office for his plantation doctor. Here the physician cared for the ills of some five hundred human beings.

# *Gardening at Rosedown*

was Martha Turnbull's Joy

*"My gardens are in perfect order"* — Martha Turnbull

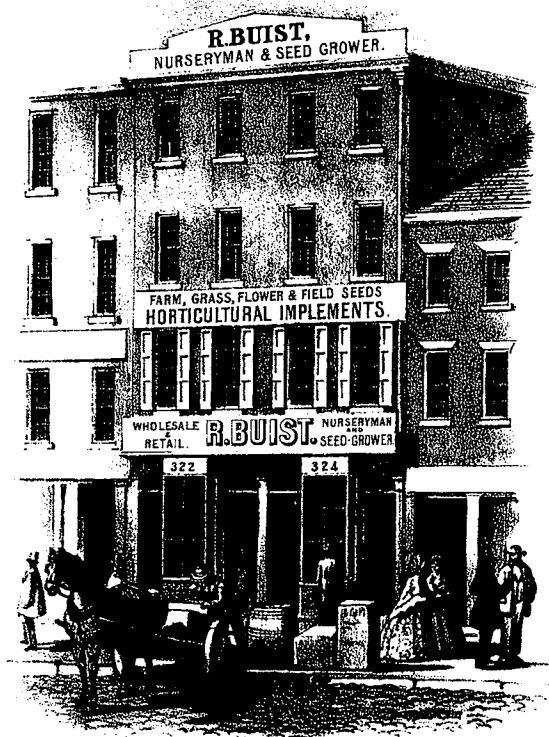
In the Pleasure Garden of Rosedown is an old sundial on which are inscribed the words: "I measure only the happy hours." This was an appropriate garden ornament for Martha Turnbull, for the grounds of Rosedown were the passion of her life. She was to devote almost sixty years to maintaining their perfection.

Throughout her life, beginning when she moved into her home until her death in 1896, Martha Turnbull kept a garden diary delineating the activities of each day she worked in the gardens, recording her successes and failures. She was a dauntless experimenter in the "try and fail, but try again" school. Often, at the end of a day's work at gardening, she completed her journal entry with the words: "My gardens are in perfect order."

Of significance to the horticultural world was the Turnbulls' importation of Oriental trees and shrubs. Old invoices in the Rosedown papers indicate that they purchased azaleas, camellias and other plants from Wm. Prince & Sons, Blue Flushing, N.Y., and R. Buist in Philadelphia as early as 1836. Old roses planted at Rosedown included Marechal Niel and the Mary Washington, said to have been originated by George Washington and named for his mother. Moss roses were also set out in the Rosedown gardens.

The garden plan of many Louisiana plantation homes began with small formal areas in front of the house. The Turnbulls started their gardens with this concept, but following each trip to Europe they extended and formal areas and imported statuary and other garden ornaments in the French style of the 17th century.

At the time of the Turnbulls' first European tour there was no precedent for gardens of the scale and scope that they developed at Rosedown. Even Mount Vernon, Williamsburg and other 17th - 18th century gardens in America were much smaller in concept. The famous Magnolia and Middleton Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina saw their greatest growth after the 1860's.









# Rosedown and Henry Clay

*Henry Clay, skilled in political compromise, could not hedge on Texas.*

Many planters of the South admired Henry Clay; tall, rawboned and awkward, he was an American product, a self-made man. His early instruction was scant. However, he read books, talked well, and studied law under George Wythe, the teacher of Jefferson and Marshall. In his ceaseless political activity he met, either as friend or foe, men like John Quincy Adams, Madison, Webster, Monroe, Calhoun, Randolph and Benton.

Clay championed the War of 1812 with Great Britain, of which Daniel Turnbull was a veteran.

Of all the causes he championed, Clay's career is associated most closely with that of Slavery. Daniel Turnbull no doubt admired Clay's anti-slavery views, for he himself considered slavery as a factor "fixed on him," not of his own choosing.

The honor Clay wanted most in life was the office of President of the United States. He entered the political race for this office in 1824 and lost. When he announced again in 1844, a few of his friends engaged the firm of Crawford Riddle 'N Journeymen, Cabinetmakers in Philadelphia to create a

great Gothic bedroom suite which would be a gift to Clay for use in the White House.

While a candidate for the presidency, Henry Clay took a stand against the annexation of Texas because he did not want to see slavery territory expanded in the nation. He was lukewarm about Texas' independence, but he wanted to see himself right with the South. He therefore announced that he objected to bringing Texas into the Union, but on grounds other than slavery. He succeeded only in having the abolitionists denounce him as a slaveholder and the slave-holders proclaim him to be an abolitionist.

Clay's ambivalence cost him the election, and his friends put the Victorian Gothic furniture up for sale. Daniel Turnbull bought it for Rosedown. The suite was so large he had to construct a wing on the north side of Rosedown House to accommodate it. So that the house would be in balance, he constructed a second wing on the south side for use as a library. The second wing, built at the height of the South's interest in Greek Revival architecture, closely resembles a small Greek temple.









# The 1850's

## The Last Decade

*"... when the song of the mockingbird sounded more clearly than the deathknell of a way of life."*  
— Margaret McDonald

Although the golden years in the South had peaked by the 1850's, the Daniel Turnbulls and other planter families ignored the temper of the times and went on with life as usual.

This decade was a time of happiness and sorrow in the extreme. Both of the Turnbull children married during these years. William, a young gallant in West Feliciana, married Caroline S. Butler, whose mother was the great-grand-daughter of Martha Washington. Sarah married James Bowman of Oakley Plantation in St. Francisville.

The elder Turnbulls took Sarah to Europe in 1851 to show her the classical landscape designs of continental gardens. They also shopped in Italy for statuary to be used in their own gardens. They made their selections at the firm of F. Leopold Pisani in Florence. In 1852 the statuary arrived at Bayou Sarah and was transported by oxen to the oak avenue of Rosedown.

The Turnbulls continued to "sojourn" in summer months, a program especially interesting to Sarah as she was very popular at the watering places. Like many Southern families in the 1850's, the Turnbulls began

to choose spas in the South to avoid regional tensions so evident at Saratoga. At White Sulphur Springs, family records reflect, Ike Marvel mentioned Sarah in his column "Dream Life." A fearless equestrienne, she attended drills at West Point on horseback. An officer dared her to take the hurdle. She sat erect and said: "A Southern girl has never been known to refuse a dare," and gracefully leaped the hurdle. According to family records, the cadets saluted her and the band played "Dixie" in her honor.

In 1856 tragedy struck the family. On November 12, 1856, the newspaper *Picayune* in New Orleans received a notice from the clerk of the steamboat *Bella Donna* that William B. Turnbull had drowned while crossing Old River at his DeSoto Island Plantation by the upsetting of a skiff. Other passengers were saved by swimming ashore.

In 1858 Edward Stauch, a foremost portrait sculptor of Philadelphia, executed a classical conceit of William. The family stationed it in the Entrance Hall of Rosedown.

## The Last Season

Ironically, the last cotton season in the South on the eve of Civil War was the largest in the nation's history. This statistic may have been responsible for the euphoria of residents in New Orleans and along the river, for the lightness and gaiety of social life went on as usual. New Orleans papers gave as much coverage to the introduction of "paper cigarettes" as to the rumbles of war news.

In November 1860 Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States. In April 1861 the tensions between northern and southern states flamed into open battle in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Civil War had begun.

On October 30, 1861, Daniel Turnbull died, leaving his wife, Martha, to face social and economic upheaval alone.



# Civil War—

## AND LONG, LONELY YEARS

Louisiana endured the longest experience of Reconstruction of any Southern state. Federal troops entered New Orleans on April 24, 1862. They did not leave until April 24, 1877. During this span of fifteen years, the Confederacy fell and a social revolution destroyed life as the Southerners had always known it. Women who had been brought up in luxury were face to face with poverty. Former governmental leaders were stripped of power. Former slaves became masters. Outsiders came in to assume the role of overlords.

Martha Turnbull made only scattered entries in her *Garden Journal* during Civil War years, a fact which reflected the trauma of the times.

Several undated entries, however, reflect the demoralized climate on the plantation as established patterns began to break. Factors' reports and tax notices at this point were directed to Mrs. Turnbull.

One requirement of the Confederacy was a tax on slaves. In making this inventory and report, her lists revealed that 129 slaves had deserted to the Yankees, 4 had joined the Confederate Army, and Caro B. Turnbull, William Turnbull's widow, had taken eight. Over a period of time, 37 had died, leaving her with only 260 altogether.

Martha Turnbull further entered in her *Journal*:

Pete - Kitty & Jones - Dempsey - Lairhart - Atrium returned to Island (DeSoto and Styopa Plantations) . . . Ned at Morganza . . . Robert & family - Grace & family at Algiers . . . Hardy & Juba at St. Louis . . . Josy - Frank Gray - Philip - Florida . . . Rubin - Florida

The most poignant entry at this time concerned the reaction of her household servants when she asked for help:

When I ordered Celiame to scrub my kitchen she walked off and sat in her house for 3 days. Stepsy was impudent and would not cook. Elry laid up regularly every 12 days. For 9 days Lucinda refused to come and wait on me. Virg got sick when sent for to come up here to work. Diley impertinently went off from cookpot in kitchen. Harry Berry-Miles went up to Inheritance when it was plundered. Augustus said he would not cut wood to put in my wood house when I told Ben to tell him to do it. Simon would not weave. Sabry went off one night and did not come back until sent for.

In January 1864 Martha Turnbull made a *Journal* entry which betrayed her mood:

Up to this time, since the Federals landed in May, neither field or garden has been worked. The garden is a wilderness, sedgegrass. It looks melancholly.

Not to be overcome by a change of fortune, this woman who had been mistress over hundreds of slaves began bargaining with them to save her garden. The *Journal* contained entries which reflected payments in cash or food to former slaves.

Julia one week at 40¢ . . . Penny and Lancaster 2 days each, \$1.60 . . . Penny cleaning front yard, gave her 2 lbs. coffee — 2 lbs. sugar — pint Molasses. Ben hawled all leaves from the Avenue . . . Kitty and children cleaned up with Clabber paying . . .

In January 1869 Martha Turnbull wrote that she could not keep up with her work:

Jan. 4th. No hands in Garden but John & John Prenter — not one speck of ground yet plowed. Hay all over the truck patch & no manure yet hawled or leaves yet taken out of front yard ready to be plowed — All work that ought to have been in October &

November yet to be done . . . Can do nothing — no hands yet in garden but John Prenter and he is worse than nothing . . .

Jan. 19th . . . Prenter trimming hedges — Penny cleaning front yard gave her 2 lbs. coffee — 2 lbs. sugar — pint Molasses . . .

Feb. 10. I feel perfectly discouraged — not one thing toward making a garden done — garden looks deplorable. I see no seed coming up — the repeated and heavy rains since Christmas . . .

March 15 and 16 . . . 8 women in lower garden

March 17th . . . began Eliza's side with still the 8 hands — Darling alone in Truck patch — John working again for himself.

Jan 16, 1871. No one in garden but John — February 1st. Everything in Greenhouse killed — Not one Negro in the field & only made contracts today — terrible trouble.

Martha Turnbull, like most landowners after the Civil War, entered into sharecropping contracts. Also she rented land in exchange for work in the garden and around the place.

January 27, 1873 — All renters at work on the fences — 2 plowing — 40 Renters — Not the first thing done in my garden.

February Mr. Wilcox took the Garden & gave me vegetables — One Squad of 3 men for the help system — Mr. W. gets his share. One Squad of man & wife for help only with Mrs. Bowman — Hope to get 50 bales \$3500 — \$1,000 for bales — Mr. Haroldson \$400 + Taxes \$700 Carriage & Horses — \$1,500

\$5,000

\$1,500

\$3,500

May 20th . . . not cutting out my cotton yet. Too wet. Only 25 acres of cotton & 10 of corn.

## PENSION AND WAR CLAIMS

In an effort to offset the attrition of income in the wake of Civil War, Martha Turnbull, as a widow of a veteran of the War of 1812, applied for a pension. This was granted. In 1878 she began receiving a monthly check of \$8.00.

In 1874 she initiated a Civil War claim covering property forcibly taken on the family's plantation by Navy and Army Forces of the United States sometime in the month of June 1863.

The items claimed were:

Three hundred hogsheads of sugar, then worth \$60,000; Six hundred barrels of molasses, then worth \$18,000; Two hundred head of mules then worth \$30,000; One hundred head of horses, then worth \$10,000; Seven hundred head of cattle then worth \$14,000; Eighty cane and other wagons, with harness, then worth \$12,000; Three hundred head of hogs, then worth \$3,000; Six thousand bushels of corn then worth \$6,000; fifty bales of cotton, then worth \$18,000; One hundred barrels of pork, then worth \$4,000; One lot of 3,000 lbs. of salted meat valued at \$6,000; Twenty sacks of Coffee, then worth \$2,000.

Martha Turnbull continued to make these claims during her lifetime. Subsequently, her daughter made periodic claims, but they were never satisfied.

Martha's last Journal entry, dated September 1, 1895, one year before her death, included a reference to her small pension check.

My pension came. I had not one dime to pay Emma \$2 — this month, August or any debt whatever.

Martha Turnbull died September 14, 1896, having lived 87 years and two days. She left Rosedown and other plantations to  
31 her daughter, Sarah Turnbull Bowman.





## *Strangers on the Sill*

The early twentieth century was not kind to West Feliciana Parish. The Barrow mansions continued to be social centers, but the high gloss of the golden days was diminished.

Sarah Turnbull Bowman died in 1914, leaving her plantations and other assets to her children. She endowed her four unmarried daughters, the Misses Corrie, Isabel, Sarah and Nina, with Rosedown Plantation, its house and lands, as a joint inheritance. On August 25, 1927, her husband, James Bowman, who had been running the plantation, died also. Two years later, on January 16, 1929, Miss Corrie Bowman died.

In the early 1900's the parish lost its money crop. The boll weevil wiped out cotton culture forever. In its lowest year, only 400 bales of cotton were harvested in West Feliciana, as compared with the almost 24,000 bales exported in 1853.

By the late 1930's, traveling Americans had discovered that there are more old houses reminiscent of the antebellum South along the Mississippi between Natchez and New Orleans than in any other region in the United States. As if to

offset the parish's loss of its money crop, visitors from over the world began to throng the old 19th-century houses in West Feliciana. Many of these nostalgia-hungry visitors knocked on the door of Rosedown. The Misses Bowman were glad to show these travelers how their grandparents had lived. They became widely known for their hospitality and the beauty of their house and gardens.

As the years passed, the house and gardens began to deteriorate. One by one, death came to the remaining Bowman sisters, Miss Isabel in 1951 at the age of 75, and Miss Sarah in 1952 at 91.

Alone now, Miss Nina moved into the wing where she had lived as a little girl with her grandmother. For the rest of her life, she and Rosedown House were cared for by the granddaughter of one of Martha Turnbull's slaves.

Miss Nina, at 87, died on June 30, 1955, leaving Rosedown to her nieces and nephews. The Misses Bowman, because of their genteel grit, had won. Rosedown was intact, with not a single mortgage or bill outstanding.

# *Renaissance* of Rosedown

In the spring of 1956, the late Catherine Fondren Underwood, then president of the River Oaks Garden Club of Houston, Texas, accompanied several members to Natchez, Mississippi, to attend a Zone meeting of the Garden Clubs of America. She did not dream that within days she would be planning the restoration of one of Louisiana's most loved plantation houses and gardens.

In Natchez, a realtor told her of the death of Miss Nina Bowman, the last of the four spinster sisters who had inherited Rosedown from their mother in 1914 and who had held the country estate together against staggering odds. The realtor advised Mrs. Underwood that heirs of Rosedown had placed the plantation on the market.

Arriving at Rosedown, Mrs. Underwood found ancient camellia trees in full Spring outburst alongside giant azalea bushes. While she found the house in a state of decline and the gardens choked with jungle-like growth, Mrs. Underwood could see signs of their original beauty. One week later she brought her husband, Milton Underwood, to see Rosedown. He agreed that there was enough left of the original estate to justify restoration. As enthusiastic an amateur horticulturist as Martha Turnbull, the first mistress of Rosedown, Mrs. Underwood decided to buy Rosedown and restore it in order to save one of the great gardens of the 19th century.





## An Eight-Year Restoration Program Begins

Catherine and Milton Underwood went to work setting up priorities for the Rosedown restoration. A practical businessman, Mr. Underwood wanted to get the twenty-four hundred acres of rich loessal soil into the production of cattle and timber. Consequently, their first act was to find a general manager.

R. O. Butler of St. Francisville, whose family was among the early settlers of the area, was tapped for the job. Not only was Butler to manage Rosedown as a working plantation, he was also to supervise the work of specialists and to keep the restoration work moving.

Early in the planning stages, Mrs. Underwood made it clear that authenticity and perfection were her goals. The technicians would be given all the time they needed for the restoration.

## Metal Building

After a new roof was built on Rosedown House to prevent further deterioration from humidity and rainfall, every piece of furniture, every artifact, every toy, as well as research papers, were removed from Rosedown House to a metal building constructed about two hundred yards from the big house. Here papers were sorted and inventories were made, with each item catalogued. Craftsmen were employed to handle the meticulous work of returning each piece of furniture to its former appearance and function. Workmen, directed by Euwin Poche of St. Francisville, took care of large and small details involved in this careful work.

## Policies of Perfection

A perfectionist, Mrs. Underwood early in the program gave her architect and other restoration specialists the following directive: "If there is a better way to do it, then do it that way. If you can't find what you need, have it made." As a result, the restoration team achieved an unbelievable degree of perfection.



**The Entrance Hall Before Restoration**

*The graceful stairway is made of San Domingo mahogany. The original invoice for the wood is in Daniel Turnbull's papers.*

## The Entrance Hall After Restoration

*Wallpaper in the rooms of Rosedown was duplicated with the exception of the entrance hall. During the restoration a scenic paper was found which was created by the same Frenchman, Joseph Dufour, who had designed the original panorama for the Turnbulls in 1828. The Angelique et Medor wallpaper depicts adventures from the Song of Roland. The ivory inset in the newel post in antebellum days reflected the fact that the home was debt-free.*







## Restoration of Rosedown House and Dependencies

George Leake of New Orleans was retained as architect for the Rosedown restoration in 1960. Before that time, Mrs. Underwood had decided to restore Rosedown, its gardens and auxiliary buildings as they were in the 1844-55 period, but no definite plan had been laid out to accomplish this. Leake recommended that the kitchen wing be moved to what was its approximate original location. Even though Miss Nina's wing is of a later period, 1859-60, it is such a gem in itself that it was resited to a low hill overlooking a small reservoir and ravine to the right rear. A dovecote and coalhouse of log cabin-type construction were also moved to conform to the new site plan, which was as close to the original as practical.

"There are many diverse views on how a restoration should be approached," said Leake. "Some say that the progressive changes, additions and deletions over a great many years of the life of the property

should be restored to reflect the various changes sustained through the years. The reasoning is that the property will then mirror the cultural and economic history of the owners. This theory is, of course, more applicable to a large house or plantation complex than to small urban properties. I cannot say that I agree with this method of proceeding. I believe that the goal of historic preservation should be to restore an area or building in the context and spirit of the time in which it was originally conceived. Williamsburg is the obvious example of this philosophy.

"Williamsburg carries the theory to the extreme, however, in their methods of reconstruction. As far as possible, old construction systems are followed throughout. This is good, but terribly expensive and in most cases would completely eliminate nearly all private or individual restoration.

"Rosedown Plantation is one of the most extensive restorations ever undertaken in this area or even the United States. The owners wanted everything to be absolutely authentic; however, in some places we used the old systems, mortise and tendons with wood pegs. On exposed framing or boards, we had the timber hand split and dressed with old tools such as foot adze and draw knife. Hand forged square nails were used wherever they would be exposed, but not in concealed areas. These are, of course, sophisticated and expensive methods, but restoration is not remodeling.

### Child's Bedroom

*Scattered about the nostalgic Child's Bedroom are toys found in the house when restoration began. The child-size walnut desk, spiral-turned rosewood chairs and walnut bed are also originals.*



**Rosedown Furnishings Are 85% Original  
to the House**

*The Turnbulls were especially proud of the furnishings at Rosedown. Many of the pieces were done by Prudent Mallard, an outstanding American craftsman from New Orleans, Louisiana 1838-1879. The furniture collection at Rosedown represents one of the best documented collections in the nation with over 8,000 historical documents in the museum files. Almost every object in the house retains its original purchase invoice*





"The core section of Rosecliff House was basically sound, but nearly all corners and porches were in an extremely dilapidated condition. Surprisingly, only four corner columns of the porch had to be replaced. These columns are solid cypress and were hand turned. The replacements are not solid, however.

"We tried to recreate the image of the house and grounds as they had been and to avoid any evidence of modern conveniences — electricity, air conditioning, etc. This was especially difficult since the framing is basic 'barn construction,' which is very similar to a steel column and beam system. There are no bearing walls and great care had to be taken in cutting certain structural members. We feel we were very successful since these things are 'concealed' even when in plain view. The sup-

#### North Bedroom

*The four-post tester bed, large double armoire and bureau in the North Bedroom were crafted in mahogany for the Turnbulls by Mallard in New Orleans. The brightly colored French needlework rug (circa 1870) is composed of individual squares, each design different from the rest.*

ply registers are slots in the 'shadow' of the baseboard molding. The electric outlets were papered over and then cut out around the slots. The sprinkler system is visible, but heads are painted the same color as the ceiling and blend in almost invisibly.

"The main furnishings were in the house, including draperies, curtains and some bedding. On walls behind huge bureaus, which had not been moved for a hundred years, we could get usable samples of the original wallpaper. From the samples, new paper has been made, with all the master patterns being retained by the owners. The draperies and curtains were recreated in the same fashion as the originals, hand-woven and handmade in Europe."

#### Interiors

McMillen, Inc. of New York City assisted Catherine Fondren Underwood with interiors. Almost 85% of Rosecliff's furnishings are originals, the collection representing one of the best documented in the nation. The restoration technicians found the remaining pieces needed to complete the restoration mainly in Europe.





### The Library

Beside the doorway to the Library stands one of three French Empire walnut bookcases that were specially constructed in the 1840's to fit exactly their assigned spaces at Rosedown. Its mates flank the fireplace across the room and contain Daniel Turnbull's collection of books. Above the Carrara marble mantel hangs a portrait of Edward Livingston, a prominent statesman who was a

member of General Jackson's staff at the Battle of New Orleans in 1815. The writing table holds a pair of old reading glasses and a bamboo mailing tube (both original to Rosedown) in front of a Regency rosewood letterbox and Padouk bookrack. In front of the windows, which are draped in silk damask copied from the original curtains, stand two globes on Regency stands, one mapping the earthly continents, the other the heavenly bodies. They were purchased by Daniel Turnbull about 1848.





# *The Perfection of Rosedown*

## **The Perfection of Rosedown is Reflected in Architectural Details and Furnishings**

As Catherine Fondren Underwood guided the restoration of Rosedown, her dreams of perfection were expressed in careful attention to detail. The resulting authenticity creates the illusion that the Turnbulls, the original residents, are simply out for an afternoon stroll. Toys in the child's room, reading glasses in the library, poker hands laid out in the card room are just superficial manifestations of the care that was taken to create that illusion.

Furniture coverings, wallpapers, draperies and window treatments, if not originals, are duplicates in material and design, even to the gilded hands holding drapes back from the windows. Millwork,

cornices, moldings and ceiling ornaments accurately reflect the love of ornamentation characteristic of the Southern planter aristocracy. Furnishings added during restoration were evaluated for style and workmanship as well as age, to ensure coordination with the remaining originals. Twentieth-century intrusions, such as electricity, were cunningly camouflaged; even the candles in chandeliers are real wax, wired to simulate the warm, flickering glow of candlelight. Thus the restoration attained the perfection of preserving not just the material accessories but also the spirit of the house and its original owners.



### **South Portico**

*Perfection in millwork is reflected by the South Portico. The black mourning stripes memorialize the Turnbulls' son, William, who drowned in 1856.*



### Victorian "Whatnot"

*Among the objects found on the walnut "whatnot" desk in the Parlor are a pair of Old Spode ewers and several Sevres bisque figure groups. The curtains are Apremont striped Imberline caught up by a pair of brass hand and arm tiebacks, which were part of the original window dressing.*



### Upstairs Hallway

*The ivory checker set laid out on the Sheraton tea table in the spacious upstairs hallway is illuminated by the original whale oil chandelier hung at Rosedown in 1835. French needlework rugs highlight the area.*



### Card Room

*The five side chairs and settee found in the Card Room were made by John Belter, eminent cabinetmaker in New York, about 1840. Their pronounced curves and elaborate openwork are characteristic of Belter's style.*



### View From North Porch

*This view from the North Porch exhibits the detailing of the downspout, installed in 1835 when the house was completed, and the fine millwork. It also offers a dramatic vista of the entrance court.*









### The Music Room

Rich gold and blue characterize the Music Room at Rosedown. The Chickering piano and chair, covered in French silk and cotton velvet, were bought by the Turnbulls in 1841. Of special interest is the portrait above the piano, which is the work of John James Audubon, the great artist-naturalist. The subject is Eliza Pirrie, whom Audubon tutored at Oakley Plantation and whose son married the Turnbulls' daughter, Sarah.



### The Breakfast Room

The cheery apple-green Regency furniture in the Breakfast Room dates to 1835 and retains its original paint decoration. The two fire screens were intended to shield one's face from the intense heat of the fireplace. Although it appears to be metal, the chandelier is actually made of gilded wood trimmed with crystal drops.



### Master Bedroom

The half-tester rosewood bed in the Master Bedroom is part of a suite purchased by the Turnbulls from Prudent Mallard, prominent New Orleans cabinetmaker. A double armoire, bureau and single commode complete the set. Other original furnishings include a mahogany towel rack and two towels, a mahogany washstand and a Hepplewhite sewing table.



# *The Gardens that Saved Rosedown*

*"Martha Turnbull, your gardens are in perfect order."*

- Catherine Fondren Underwood

Restoration work on the gardens of Rosedown was initiated soon after long-range plans were made, for this phase of the program would require more time. "A garden is never finished anyway," Mrs. Underwood said. She chose the late Ralph Ellis Gunn of Houston, Texas, as her landscape architect.

"The scope of the gardens' restoration was unique," Gunn said. "Unlike Williamsburg, Mount Vernon and other pioneering restoration projects in this country, where archeological investigation was mandatory, all visual aspects of those areas having been obliterated by time and man, the gardens of Rosedown were still there in full wonder despite the overgrowth of vines and weeds. Magnificent horticultural

specimens had overpowered and survived the natural elements of cold, drought, wind and native growth, such as Spanish moss. One might say that the gardens had run wild, after the experienced, knowledgeable control of Martha Turnbull was no longer there.

"The inventory of plants still living in the gardens is proof of the value of the experiments in plant introduction conducted over a sixty-year period at Rosedown," Gunn said.

"Martha Turnbull's Garden Journal was the key to the spirit of the gardens' restoration and furnished specific instructions in the selection of plants which did not thrive well for her."











*Hydrangea macrophylla tricolor*

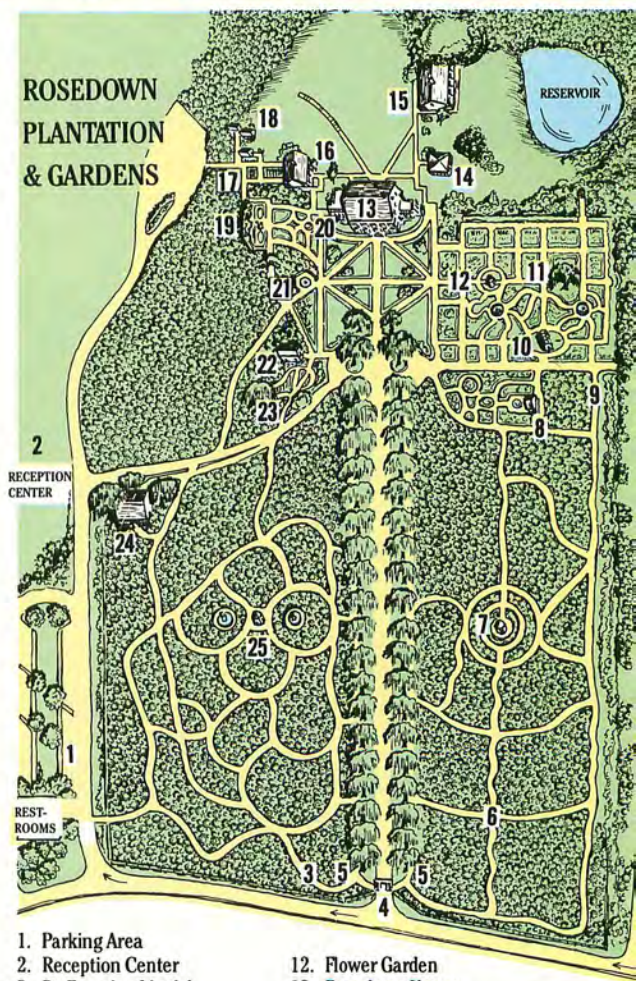
## The Gardens of Rosedown — A Miracle of Propagation To Save One of the Nation's 5 Most Important Historic Gardens

After several years of clearing jungle-like growth from the twenty-eight acres of formal gardens, Rosedown restoration technicians found that plants in the original inventory of Martha Turnbull were not available on today's market. It was decided that the only way to replant the gardens was to embark on a long, laborious schedule of propagating original plants still growing at Rosedown. This unique program was carried out by Larry Marshman, Head Gardener.

Plants which were regenerated for use in the gardens include the "hip" gardenia (*Gardenia thunbergia*). The blossoms of this rare gardenia are one-dimensional in character and extremely fragrant. Another popular name for the "hip" gardenia is "lantern" gardenia, for the seed pods in fall and winter are bright orange and are shaped like glowing lanterns.

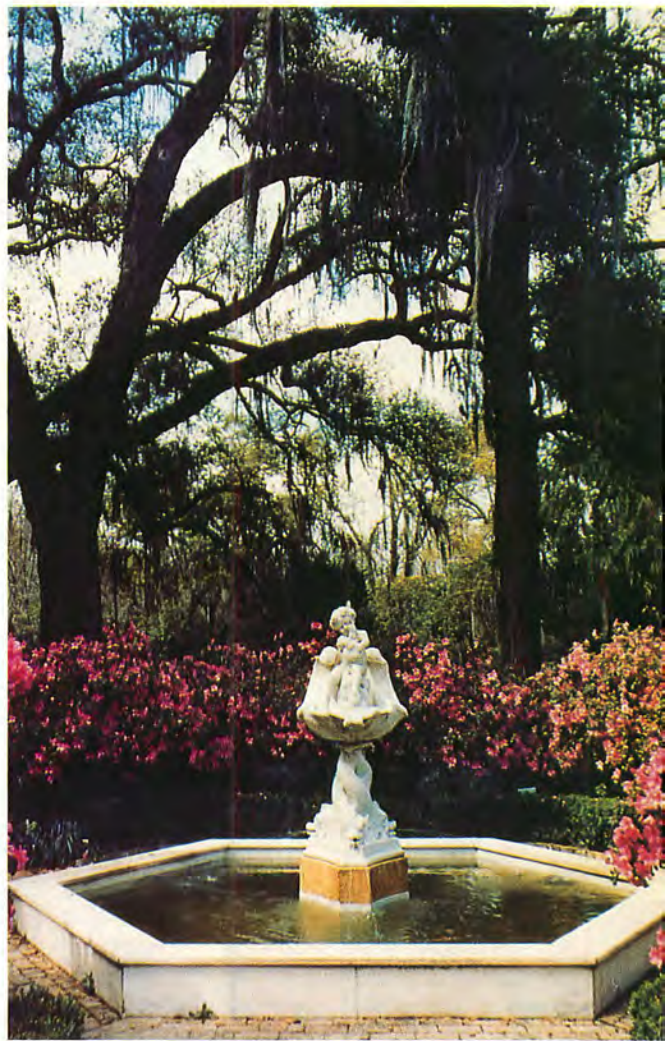
Another interesting plant which was propagated during the Rosedown restoration is the rare old *Hydrangea macrophylla tricolor*, which has a jewel-like blossom of one dimension. This hydrangea is often called "Lace Cap" and comes into bloom in May.

Other plants and shrubs propagated in the Rosedown restoration program include begonias, ardisia and several varieties of old roses.



- |                               |                           |                             |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Parking Area               | 12. Flower Garden         | 22. Doctor's Office         |
| 2. Reception Center           | 13. Rosedown House        | 23. Medicinal Herb Garden   |
| 3. St. Francis of Assisi      | 14. Old Milk Shed         | 24. Old Barn                |
| 4. Oak Avenue                 | 15. Miss Nina's Wing      | 25. Fountains & Summerhouse |
| 5. Statues                    | 16. Old Kitchen           |                             |
| 6. Old Garden & Arboretum     | 17. Herb Garden           |                             |
| 7. Summerhouse, South Garden  | 18. Old Wood Shed         |                             |
| 8. Original Garden Tool House | 19. Eve's Garden          |                             |
| 9. Natural Camellia Arboretum | 20. North Parterre        |                             |
| 10. Original Hot House        | 21. Carrara Marble Statue |                             |
| 11. Live Oak Tree             |                           |                             |





### Map of the Garden

*Useful in the restoration of Rosedown's gardens were a site plan and architectural drawings that had been prepared as a WPA project in the nineteen thirties. These drawings served as the guides for surveys made in 1957 and '58 which located all existing trees, plants, walks and structures.*

### Carrara Statue

*Giant cryptomeria and the abundant blooms of azaleas form an exquisite backdrop for the Carrara marble fountain in the restored gardens of Rosedown. Cryptomeria, the Sacred Cedar of Japan, is a fitting complement to this regal setting, where members of the Southern planter aristocracy once lived.*



# Old Trees

## AT ROSEDOWN

The Gardens of Rosedown were widely known for their rare old trees and shrubs before the plantation was restored. The giant trees and shrubs, which had grown to an enormous size since the gardens were established in 1836, appealed to Catherine Fondren Underwood when she first visited the plantation in the spring of 1956.

Thomas Hansbrough, then Professor of Forestry at Louisiana State University, was engaged to identify and determine the age of some of the old specimens on the grounds. Hansbrough, using an increment borer to make his determination, said that the live oaks along the avenue at Rosedown were planted in the early 1800's, soon after the turn of the century.

A large cone-bearing evergreen tree at Rosedown was identified as Japanese Sawara-tree (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*). A member of the "true" cypress family (*Cupressaceae*), it is a favored ornamental tree in many sections of the United States. In Japan, it is one of the major commercial species.

Hansbrough said that the giant *Cryptomeria* in the gardens of Rosedown belong to the redwood family (*Taxodiaceae*). This tree is monotypic and is found scattered through the forests of eastern and southern Asia, including Japan and Formosa. *Cryptomeria* is often referred to as the Sacred Cedar of Japan. In Tokyo, a long avenue of *Cryptomeria* leads to the entrance of the Emperor's palace.

Trees of the *Taxodiaceae* family were once very abundant and formed extensive forests throughout the world, particularly the Northern Hemisphere. Many forms have long since become extinct, and at the present time the family comprises only 9 genera and 14 species. Two genera are native to the United States, including the southern bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and *Sequoia*, which includes redwood (*Sequoia semipervirens*) and the giant *Sequoia* (*Sequoia gigantea*).















## *Flowering Shrubs*

Between 1830 and the Civil War, camellias and azaleas imported from England and nurseries of the North became popular in Southern gardens. The Turnbulls were among the first Louisiana plantation families to import camellias. Today, seedlings from their japonicas of the 1800's still thrive on the grounds near the garden toolhouse.

Dr. Neil G. Odenwald, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at Louisiana State University, in 1969 succeeded the late Ralph E. Gunn as consulting landscape architect at Rosedown. "The enormous size and age of plants rank among the most outstanding features at Rosedown," Odenwald commented. "While age at Rosedown is normally associated with the 200-year-old live oaks forming the main allee in front of the plantation home, there are other plantings known to have reached well beyond the century mark. These include azalea, camellia, sweet olive, deutzia, English boxwood, crepe myrtle and mock orange.

"Other old shrubs cannot claim fame for having reached 100 years themselves, but they were propagated from stock of the original gardens of the 1830's. These include the hydrangea, moss rose, cedar fern and gardenia.

"Azaleas are perennial favorites in the garden. Both new and old varieties highlight the garden in spring. The original stock of the very early blooming selection, 'Rosedown Pink,' is at Rosedown. This variety is found in only a few other Feliciana gardens.



A primary objective at Rosedown from the original inception of the restoration by Mrs. Underwood, and today still a major determining design factor in our work in the gardens, is the preservation of the old plant specimens in an unpruned state. Where space permits, plants are allowed to grow to full maturity and express their natural character in a manner seldom experienced in most garden settings. An example of an old planting which has been allowed to grow to full maturity with little control by man is the bosque or grove of camellia seedlings. The plants are well over 25 feet tall and occupy a prominent position in the garden. Single specimens

are even much larger and can be found throughout the garden as trees. Several sweet olives are estimated to be 30 feet tall with enormous spreads.

Rosedown offers horticulturists, landscape architects and others having a special interest in plants a unique opportunity to study old, mature plants in garden design settings. There are few public gardens where such a wide assortment of old specimens exist. We will continue to utilize these wise horticultural practices which preserve these century-old plantings for future generations to study and enjoy.



*The Catherine Fondren Underwood Oak*





### About Catherine Fondren Underwood

CATHERINE FONDREN UNDERWOOD was born in 1908 and was reared in Houston, Texas. In 1928 she received a B.A. degree from Rice University in that city.

Mrs. Underwood was an active participant in a number of Houston civic organizations. She was particularly active in the volunteer work of the Junior League of Houston, which she served as Treasurer and Second Vice President. She was an active member of the River Oaks Garden Club and was serving as its President when she first visited Rosedown.

During restoration, researchers of the Rosedown papers became aware of striking parallels in the minds, personalities and experiences of Martha Barrow Turnbull, the first mistress of Rosedown, and Catherine Fondren Underwood, who rescued the plantation from ruin. Each woman loved order in her life and set high standards of performance for herself and her assistants. Each was a perfectionist, a quality reflected in Rosedown from its inception in the 19th century through its restoration in this century.





Each woman married a man with strong business acumen, one who considered it a privilege to assist his wife in her interests. In the 1800s, Daniel Turnbull took his wife to Europe to study garden features of Versailles and post-Renaissance gardens of England and Italy. He helped her import azaleas and camellias for her gardens, ferreting out the best sources of plant materials.

When Catherine Fondren Underwood decided in 1956 to restore Rosedown and save its gardens, the late Milton Underwood worked alongside her in making plans, selecting restoration technicians and protecting her interests at every point.

Both Martha Turnbull and Catherine Underwood knew tragedy. Martha Turnbull had three children, a daughter and two sons. Her younger son, James, died of fever at the age of seven. Her older son, William, drowned in the Mississippi in 1856. Catherine Underwood also had two sons, Peter Fondren Underwood and David Milton Underwood. Peter was killed in an automobile accident at age seventeen. Shortly after his death, Mrs. Underwood began the task of restoring Rosedown.

Many honors came to her as a result of her work. In 1965 the Louisiana Live Oak Society accepted as members two of the giant live oaks at Rosedown, both of which are almost 200 years old. These trees are recorded as the Catherine Fondren Underwood Oak and the Lynda Knapp Underwood Oak, the latter being named for Mrs. Underwood's daughter-in-law.

In 1966 Mrs. Underwood was honored by Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson as one of America's "Women Doers." In the same year, the Garden Club of America awarded Mrs. Underwood the Amy Angell Collier Montague Medal for Outstanding Civic Achievement for her restoration of Rosedown, and the Southern Heritage Foundation cited her for her contribution to the preservation of the South's heritage.

In March 1969 Governor John McKeithen of Louisiana presented Mrs. Underwood with a citation for her contribution to tourism in that state.

Since Catherine Fondren Underwood's death in 1970, Rosedown continues to be operated as one of the South's most distinguished museum houses, preserving one of the nation's most important historic gardens.



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Photography by Dave Gleason, Carolyn Ramsey, Max Eckert and Tom Leonard  
Layout and Design by Graphics Etc. Inc., New Orleans  
Typography by Green's Typography, New Orleans  
Printing by Progress Printing Co., Lynchburg, VA

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