

The Public Historian at Home

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A Collaboration with the Rutgers University Alumni Association

Transcript

[Description of opening: The opening depicts a fast-motion video of the host raking leaves outside. The words “THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN AT HOME” appear at bottom in all caps in a white sans serif typeface. At the end of the clip, Nicole walks over to the camera and appears to wipe the Rutgers University-Camden logo onto the screen. The opening is accompanied by upbeat music.]

[Scene 1: Nicole Belolan is depicted leaning against a brick wall with paint splatters. She has long brown hair swept to the side. She is wearing glasses, pear earrings, and a pastel-striped shirt. Nicole Belolan says the following.]

Hi, I’m Nicole Belolan, and I’m the Public Historian in Residence at the [Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities at Rutgers Camden](#). And welcome to The Public Historian at Home.

[Scene 2: Viewers see a photograph of the front of a brick house with wood trim. There is a small subcompact car parked at left. There are large cedar trees surrounding the house. The movie

effect makes the house look like it's in an old silent movie. There are birds signing in the background.]

[Scene 3: Nicole Belolan is depicted leaning against a brick wall with paint splatters. She has long brown hair swept to the side. She is wearing glasses, pearl earrings, and a pastel-striped shirt. She says the following:]

Hi, welcome to The public historian at Home. Today we're going to be talking about preserving historic lawns and gardens. One of my jobs at Rutgers-Camden is to direct a [continuing education program in historic preservation](#). And if you're not familiar with historic preservation, that's fine! We're going to be talking a lot about it over the next couple episodes. It can take a lot of different forms. It could mean simply living in a historic house like ours built in 1916 in Riverton, NJ. Or, it could mean collaborating with your local historical society to put up an interpretive sign about an important event that happened in your town 100 year ago, or, perhaps 150 years ago. I'm really looking forward to sharing some insights with you about doing research on historic houses.

[Scene 4: Nicole Belolan is depicted sitting in front of a wooden porch with different colored paint tests. She has long brown hair swept to the side. She is wearing glasses, pearl earrings, and a pastel-striped shirt. She says the following:]

I'm lucky enough to be working from home during the coronavirus pandemic. So because I don't have a commute, that has given me a little bit more time to work on restoring our house. Today we're focusing on the outside of the house, and more specifically, we're talking about our lawn and garden.

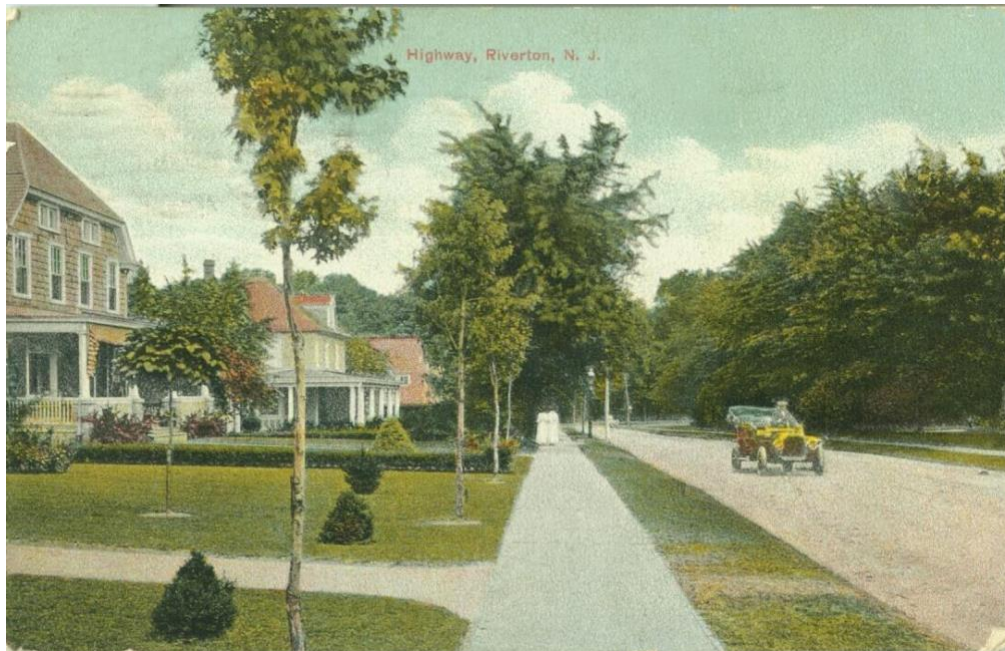
Have you ever wondered how to do some research on what the outside of your house looked like when it was first built?

Well, we usually primary sources to try to figure that out. And, primary sources are things like letters and photographs made in the time period. The only problem is that with our house, we don't actually have any photographs from when it was built in 1916 to give us a sense of what it looked like outside. So we're going to use other sources like magazines and other photographs from our town to get a better sense of what this lawn and garden might have looked like.

[Scene 5: This is a static image of a digitized historic postcard. The postcard is in color. It depicts a row of houses on the left. They are bordered by a white sidewalk. Each house has a large yard covered with green grass and accented with trees and small ornamental bushes. There is an early twentieth-century style car being driving toward the viewer. There are two women in white dresses walking toward the viewer. Nicole Belolan says the following:]

One of the first places I went looking for images of Riverton was the Burlington County Library's digitized collection of historic postcards. You can visit that web site at postcard.burlico.org. There's a list of municipalities in the area including Riverton, so I clicked on "Riverton," and this postcard of a road in town called Highway is the one that I'm showing you here today. And, quite frankly, the aesthetics of the town haven't changed a whole lot since around the time this postcard was made around 1912. We still have lots of tall trees lining the streets, green grass in the front yard, and some ornamental plants.

Lots of people collect these postcards. And one way that you can do that is by saving a search for your municipality and the state and “postcard” on eBay. That’s a great way to start a small collection of images where you live.



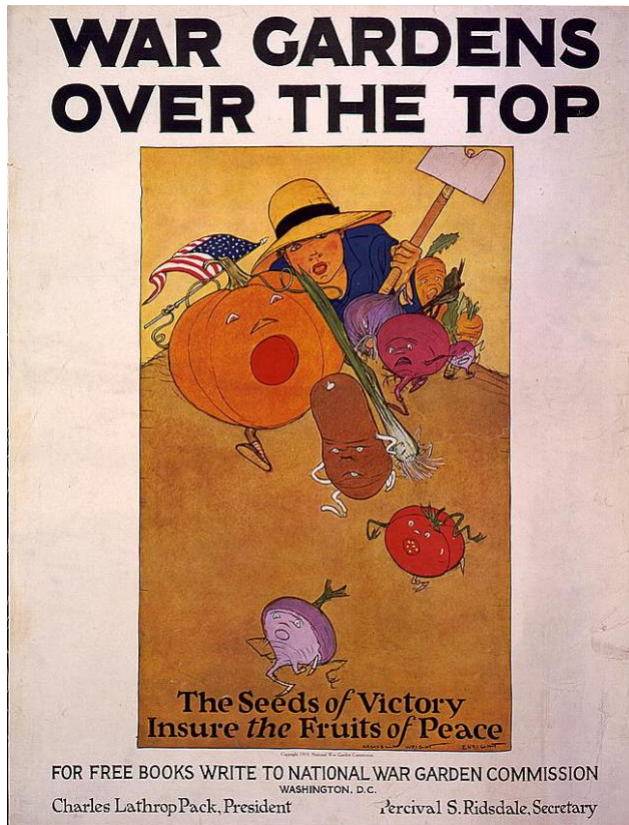
Postcard of “Highway” in Riverton, NJ, 1912. Available online through the Burlington County Library:
<http://postcard.burlco.org/?id=81&size=b>

[Scene 6: Nicole Belolan is depicted sitting in front of a wooden porch with different colored paint tests. She has long brown hair swept to the side She is wearing glasses, pear earrings, and a pastel-striped shirt. She says the following:]

If we were living here in the nineteen-teens and twenties, there would have been a number of considerations to keep in mind when deciding what to plant in our front yard, in our back yard, and on the side of our house.

[Scene 7: This is a static image of a digitized historic poster. The poster is in color. The central image depicts a woman crawling in the dirt wearing a large straw hat and carrying a garden implement. She is crawling with anthropomorphized fruits and vegetables (carrots, beets, radishes, onions, and a potato). The pumpkin is carrying a flag. The poster reads: “WAR GARDENS OVER THE TOP/The Seeds of Victory Insure *the* Fruits of Peace./FOR FREE BOOKS, WRITE TO NATIONAL WAR GARDEN COMMISSION/WASHINGTON, D.C./Charles Lathrop Pack, President Percival S. Risdale, Secretary.” Nicole Belolan says the following:]

Shortly after our house was built in 1916, the United States got involved in World War I. So some people probably gardened with World War I and food shortages in mind. During the War, the United States government issued posters like this one. This one is in the collection of the Library of Congress and is digitized for you to check out online at [loc.gov](https://www.loc.gov). The poster encouraged ordinary people to fulfill their food needs with their own gardens so the government could send more food overseas where there was a need. Now, concern for the food supply should resonate with us too. In fact, [The New York Times recently reported](#) that there is an uptick in Americans planting fruits and vegetables due to concerns over the viability of the modern food supply and its relationship to the current coronavirus pandemic.



Maginel Wright Enright, "War gardens over the top. The seeds of victory insure the fruits of peace," Poster, [Washington, D.C. : National War Garden Commission, 1919?], available online through the Library of Congress: <https://lccn.loc.gov/95506484>

[Scene 8: This is a static image of a page from a digitized historic garden magazine. The magazine page includes print and black and white photographs of houses and the grounds. Nicole Belolan says the following:]

Other people with a house like ours might have worked on their lawn or garden as a hobby. We could have looked to our neighbors for ideas. Or, we might have turned to magazines such as *House and Garden*, *The Garden Magazine*, or, if you were out

west, *The Sunset Magazine*, for inspiration. Here, we are looking at a page from the July 1916 issue of *The Garden Magazine*. The original is in the collection at the University of California and made available to you online through the HathiTrust at catalogue.hathitrust.org. On their web site, you can look at the entire issue of this particular magazine, and, this page, is showing us a garden beatification campaign in Rochester, NY. Rochester is not Riverton, but a lot of these houses are similar to the ones in town here. And so, this gives you a sense of some ways that people in other parts of the country were decorating their lawns and gardens.



Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Excerpt from Roland B. Woodward, "How One City Improved Its Gardens," *The Garden Magazine*, July 1916: 333-335, available online through HathiTrust, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.c043363932>.

[Scene 9: This is a static image of a page from a digitized historic seed catalogue. The catalogue page includes print and a black and white photograph of a house and the grounds with vegetation. Below the photograph, you can read about shade trees, shrubs, and hedge plants. Nicole Belolan says the following:]

In 1916, we might have gotten some inspiration from seed catalogues. This is one from Rutherford, NJ. It is also digitized and freely available for you to check out online through the Biodiversity Heritage Library. So that's biodiversitylibrary.org.



Excerpt from Bobbink & Atkins, *Autumn catalog* (Rutherford, N.J.: Bobbink and Atkins, [1917]), available online through the Biodiversity Library, <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.113758>.

[Scene 10: In this scene, Nicole belolan stands across the street from a blue house with a white storefront and signage for a Mexican restaurant. Nicole Belolan has long brown hair swept to the side. She is wearing glasses, pearl earrings, and a pastel-striped shirt. She says the following Nicole Belolan says the following:]

In 1916, when we were ready to do some planting, we could have walked just five minutes down the street to W.F. Becker's. Becker's was in the building that's behind me here. I learned about it when I was going through [some digitized historic newspapers at our historical society's web site](#). Currently, the building is occupied by our favorite Mexican restaurant. You can see that it retains some of those great, big windows that would have been perfect for displaying whatever goods were for sale on a particular day.

[Scene 11: This is a static image of a digitized historic seed catalogue. The catalogue page includes print and a black and white photograph of a large nursery (Dreer's). The page includes information on a variety of shipping options. Nicole Belolan says the following:]

Also while I was going through those digitized newspapers at the historical society, I ran into another company called Dreer's. And Dreer's was a very large nursey that was based in Riverton, NJ. You can look through a number of their catalogues – again, digitized through [the Biodiversity Library](#) – they had a storefront in Philadelphia, but they advertised locally. And I wouldn't be surprised if you could get their products locally as well.

PLANT DEPARTMENT



ENTRANCE TO OUR EXTENSIVE NURSERY, FREEHOLD, N. J.

It is generally conceded that we have the most modern and best equipped general Plant Nurseries in the world today. The offerings of the various departments will be found in this catalogue as under—

<p>Garden and Greenhouse Plants..... 130 to 172</p> <p>Roses..... 173 to 194</p> <p>Hardy Perennial Plants..... 195 to 234</p> <p>Hardy Shrubs..... 235 to 256</p>	<p>Hardy Climbing Plants..... 257 to 261</p> <p>Small Fruits..... 262 to 264</p> <p>Vegetable Plants and Roots..... 264</p> <p>Water Lilies and Aquatics..... 265 to 274</p>
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The attention of our customers is respectfully called to the following notes regarding the filling and forwarding of orders for Plants, Roots and Bulbs:

TIME OF SHIPMENT—All orders, unless instructed to the contrary, are examined and forwarded on receipt. Customers placing orders for stocks to be received and sent later must distinctly specify this at the time of ordering.

HOW WE SHIP—All Plants, Roots and Bulbs are forwarded by express, purchaser paying charges, which are our very reasonable. For those of our customers who live at a distance from an express office, making it more convenient for them to receive their goods by parcel post, we will be pleased to forward in this manner each plant, etc., as can be sent in this way at the following additional cost to cover postage, which must be added to the value of each order for Plants, Roots or Bulbs: To all points East of the Mississippi River, 10 per cent. extra. " " West " " " 20 " " "

Heavy Plants, such as Andromeda, Camellias, Magnolia, Tree Roses, as well as the larger sizes of Palms, and other ornamental foliage and flowering plants, cannot be sent by mail.

We strongly recommend our customers to have all their orders forwarded by express, as our experience shows that this method is not only quicker and safer, but also cheaper than parcel post, except in small packages.

PLANTING TABLE—The table below shows the number of plants required to fill a circular bed of the dimensions given. In planting begin outside row—where 6 inches apart, 3 inches from edge of bed; where 12 inches apart, 6 inches from edge of bed. It is necessary among professionals in planting a bed to set the plants somewhat closer together in the two outer rows, giving more space between each plant towards the center of the bed.

Diameter of bed	Number of plants					Diameter of bed	Number of plants				
	6 in. apart.	12 in. apart.	18 in. apart.	24 in. apart.	30 in. apart.		6 in. apart.	12 in. apart.	18 in. apart.	24 in. apart.	30 in. apart.
3 feet	28	7				12 feet	452	113	36	28	18
4 "	48	12	6			13 "	538	132	39	31	22
5 "	66	19	8			14 "	612	151	46	39	25
6 "	112	28	13	7		15 "	704	176	54	44	28
7 "	152	38	17	9		16 "	804	201	60	50	32
8 "	200	50	23	12		17 "	904	226	69	57	36
9 "	256	64	28	16		18 "	1016	254	78	62	40
10 "	320	80	36	20		19 "	1132	282	86	71	46
11 "	388	95	42	24	12	20 "	1256	314	93	78	50

A square bed will take about the same number of plants. For an oval bed, add length and breadth and divide by 2. For example, an oval 7 feet long by 5 feet wide will require same number of plants as a circular bed 6 feet in diameter.

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Excerpt from *Dreer's garden book* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Henry A. Dreer, 1917), available online through the Biodiversity Heritage Library, <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/68155#/summary>.

[Scene 12: In this scene, Nicole Belolan stands in outside in front of her brick house. She talks to the camera and then walks the viewer back around the right of the house and to the backyard. Nicole Belolan has long brown hair swept to the side. She is wearing glasses, pearl earrings, and a pastel-striped shirt. She says the following Nicole Belolan says the following:]

Now, we're looking at our front lawn. We actually haven't done of lot of work on our front lawn yet, so I'm actually going to take you to the back to show you what we've been working on. Now, as I

explained earlier, we don't know a whole lot about what our house looked like in 1916. So, we've been using a lot of the stuff that was already here when we moved in. In fact, we have a lot of historic plants here, because, the last person who lived here lived here for 40 years. So, let me show you some of the things that she left behind. We have, for example, a number of rose bushes, like this one. So, we've been working with what was here when we moved in. And, we've been adding to it stuff that we're really interested in cultivating—like these asparagus plants—and these raspberry bushes in the back.

Now, of course, whenever you're talking about historic preservation, especially when it relates to your own home, there are a lot of things that go into the decisions you make about what you want to do, with, for example, your lawn or your garden. How much money you have; your personal taste; what's already here; and what you can find out about the history that of the house itself. We talked about a lot of those primary sources you can investigate on your own. And, you should also consider giving your local historical society a call. They might have some great sources available for you to go through. And if you have any questions, I'm also happy to try to answer them for you. So thanks so much for joining me for this first episode of *The Public Historian at Home*.

[Description of closing: The opening depicts a fast-motion video of the host raking leaves outside. The words "THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN AT HOME" appear at bottom in all caps in a white sans serif typeface. At the end of the clip, Nicole walks over to the camera and appears to wipe the Rutgers University-Camden logo onto the screen. The opening is accompanied by upbeat music.]

Resources

Best Practices

Charles A. Birnbaum, “Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” Preservation Brief 36, Technical Preservation Series, National Park Service, September 1994, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/36-cultural-landscapes.htm>.

USDA, “Home Gardening,” <https://www.nal.usda.gov/topics/home-gardening>.

History – Secondary Sources

Joe Cialdella, *Grown from the Past: A Short History of Community Gardening in the United States* (Smithsonian Institution: Washington, D.C., 2020), <https://communityofgardens.si.edu/exhibits/show/historycommunitygardens/intro>.

Dolores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (Vintage Books, New York: 2003).

Historical Society of Riverton, “Dreer Nurseries’ Long Role in Riverton’s History Not Forgotten,” April 7, 2011, <https://rivertonhistory.com/2011/04/dreer-nurseries-long-role-in-rivertons-history-not-forgotten/>.

History – Primary Sources

Burlington County Postcards, Burlington County Library New Jersey Room Postcard Collection, <http://postcard.burlco.org>.

The Garden Magazine, HathiTrust Digital Library, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008607176>.

Maginel Wright Enright, "War gardens over the top. The seeds of victory insure the fruits of peace," Poster, [Washington, D.C. : National War Garden Commission, 1919?], available online through the Library of Congress: <https://lccn.loc.gov/95506484>.

Seed Catalogues, Smithsonian Libraries, <https://www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/SeedNurseryCatalogs/>.

Seed and Nursery Catalogues, Biodiversity Heritage Library, <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/browse/collection/56>,

Current Events

Amy Dixon, "Old Salem transforms plots into Victory Gardens," *Winston-Salem Journal*, April 9, 2020, https://www.journalnow.com/lifestyles/home-garden/old-salem-transforms-plots-into-victory-gardens/article_d852ce39-f51f-5626-8ab2-4dee8adb35b3.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share.

Mark Eichmann, “Delaware Boy Scouts offering ‘victory gardens’ to help ease burden,” *Why*, April 9, 20202, <https://why.org/articles/delaware-boy-scouts-offering-victory-gardens-to-help-ease-burden/>.

Tejal Rao, “Food Supply Anxiety Brings Back Victory Gardens,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/25/dining/victory-gardens-coronavirus.html>.

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