

A Little Provenance Goes a Long Way
by
Karen Schock, Janice Dehod, and Mary Baker

There has been a resurgence of efforts by Americana collectors in the past few years, and this movement is making a huge difference in preserving our cultural heritage.

Bryce Farnsworth is a long time collector of regional ceramics from the North Dakota area. Collectors know you can tell a lot about the cultural times from the things that are made in an era. Bryce is also a botanical authority and potato breeder for the North Dakota State University College of Agriculture's Plant Science Department. It is no surprise that Bryce jumped at the chance to preserve a historic collection of daylilies when Geraldine Couturier put it up for sale after her garden was featured as part of the AHS 1995 National Convention in Knoxville, Tennessee. Curtis and Linda Sue Barnes of Region 15 in North Carolina acquired part of the collection. Bryce persuaded NDSU to acquire the remaining part of the collection to ensure its preservation. Bryce and Plant Science Department Liaison Barbara Laschkewisch catalogued the collection and planted it at the agricultural test plots on the university campus.

While the collection has adapted quite well to its new location and is becoming established in the new climate, the campus itself was growing and flourishing. NDSU's growth created a dilemma, as the best site for the new College of Business Administration building is adjacent to the site of the agricultural test plots containing the daylilies and companion perennials. Many of the agricultural test crops could be easily relocated to the university's locked and unmanned satellite test site 40 miles outside of the city, but this would make them inaccessible to the public.

With this in mind, Bryce contacted AHS Region One RVP Mary Baker to help him explain the value of the AHS Display Garden's historical collection with its rare cultivars to the NDSU administration. NDSU's favorite "potato guy" put on his one of his other hats as an experienced collector.

Glad to help, Mary Baker contacted Karen Schock, President of the new Central North Dakota Daylily Society and Janice Dehod, President of the new Canadian Prairie Daylily Society in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. All three arranged to meet in Fargo with NDSU President Dr. Joseph Chapman and Vice President and College of Agriculture Dean Pat Jensen to request plans that would save the historical daylily collection and keep the horticultural collections accessible.

AHS representatives Mary, Karen, and Janice met Bryce and Plant Science Department Liaison Barbara Laschkewisch to view the site and consider the problem. All proceeded to Dr. Chapman's office and were pleased to meet with Dr. Chapman, Vice President Jensen, and other department heads. Dr. Chapman expressed surprise that the AHS had requested the meeting since the site analysis to locate the new building was just decided. It turned out to be a very opportune moment for planning. The AHS team explained the cultural and historical significance of the daylily collection to the NDSU administration

by presenting numerous letters of support from our membership. Dr Chapman and Vice President Jensen replied that the landscape plan for the entire campus was having its first major upgrade and enrichment in 40 years. Dr Chapman also pointed out major efforts to restore historic gates, monuments, and landscaping. The administration was happy to learn they owned such an important historical collection and talked about how the collection could be made more accessible and given a more prominent location. NDSU officials promised that the daylilies and companion plants would not only be saved but would be showcased by incorporating them into a botanical garden setting. The professional services of the Landscape Architect Department would be available for site planning and funds would be allocated for soil improvement and irrigation.

After the office meeting, Dr Chapman personally conducted the AHS members on a tour of the NDSU campus, beginning with the impressive landscape improvements and historical restoration works in progress. The quality and careful design of the first projects sets the standard bar high, and that bodes well for the future horticultural display gardens.

After the meeting, everyone involved felt genuinely excited about the opportunities the site dilemma exposed. The provenance of the collection made the difference between mere interesting plants and a collection that highlights the developmental history of what should truly be considered America's flower, the daylily. In this century we can reflect on the huge horticultural progress made in the hybridization of a single genus, a plant that will grow in all USDA zones of the United States and Canada. America has been as involved with the development of daylilies as the Dutch were involved with the development of tulips. It is time to celebrate our achievements. An exciting opportunity has been created and we eagerly await the new botanic garden plots at North Dakota State University.

Janice, Karen, and Mary enjoyed seeing the excellent daylily collection at both NDSU as well as at Bryce Farnsworth's home in Fargo, North Dakota. Though late in the season, there were many blooms on a variety of daylilies. Our next visit will be during peak season. We look forward to seeing blooming seedlings originating from the coldest AHS Display Garden in the USA. Congratulations, Bryce, on your personal garden's new status as an official AHS Display Garden.

Thank you, Bryce Farnsworth and Barbara Laschkewisch, for everything you've done. The NDSU Plant Science Department's historic AHS Display Garden is one of the three largest in the world as well as the only historic AHS Display Garden located at a university. You're true pioneers of the northern frontier – we salute you!