RECONSTRUCTED STATE HOUSE OF 1676
(1934 State House)
(Replica State House)
(Tercentenary State House)
47418 Old State House Road
St. Marys City
St. Mary's County
Maryland

HALS MD-24
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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(1934 State House, Replica State House, Tercentenary State House)

HALS NO. MD-24

Location: 47418 Old State House Road, St Mary's City, St. Mary's County, Maryland.

Latitude: 38.186834, Longitude: -76.434491 (Center of State House, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

The Reconstructed State House of 1676 (State House) is located within the St. Mary's City National Historic Landmark District (NRIS No. 69000310).

Significance: The State House and its site of approximately1.3 acres are part of the larger commemorative and interpretive landscape of Historic St. Mary's City, located on the site of Maryland's first capital and its settlement (Figures 1 and 2). The State House was reconstructed 1933-1934 based on the original design of the 1676 state house. The landscape designed by Rose Greely for the site was to be a Colonial Revival garden that reflected Greely's design principles, which arose from a combination of the Beaux-Arts and Arts and Crafts schools of design (Greely, n.d.) (Figure 3).

Description: The red brick State House stands atop a plateau overlooking the St. Mary's River, which runs along its southern edge and features a waterfront exhibit featuring a period ship. When the symmetrical building is open, its doors frame strong axial views to the river. To the west is Trinity Episcopal Church; its cemetery contains the archaeological remains of the 1676 state house. To the east lies the reconstructed town center of Historic St. Mary's City, and to the north across State House Road is the campus of the St. Mary's College of Maryland. The State House was constructed to commemorate the Tercentenary; it is now used as a museum exhibit and is frequently rented out for weddings and other events.

The building stands in the southwest corner of the National Historic Landmark. It is encircled by a four-foot-wide brick walkway set eight feet from its walls. The location of this walkway survives from 1934 when it was constructed with gravel. Greely's plans indicated brick, but they were not actually paved in brick until 1967 (Tongue, Brooks & Company, 1968; Annual Report, 1968). Other modifications of Greely's design are also evident through a comparison of the plan with photographs from the 1930s and 1940s and were likely made with an eye towards cost reductions.

For example, Greely's design also included expanded corner nodes at the southern corners of the walkway, each comprising a circular walk around a center island planted with Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) and

periwinkle (*Vinca minor)*, outlined with English boxwood, and furnished with curved benches. However, as constructed each corner was simplified to have a simple circular node around six to eight feet wide. The north corners were to feature flag poles, but it appears that these were not installed.

A brick walk aligned with the entrance door extends to State House Road through an opening in the four-foot-tall brick wall that encloses the site's north side. Both features were designed by Greely and installed in 1934. Another pathway, indicated by Greely as "cut grass," extended from the perimeter walkway down the bank of the plateau towards the river. The path was later redeveloped to end at a restroom that was installed on the edge of the plateau in 1938. In 2002, this path was reconfigured in gravel with wooden sleeper steps. An asphalt pathway leading from the south door of the State House to the southeast was installed as a gravel path in 1984 to represent the location of one of the original roads of the early St. Mary's City settlement. It was repaved in asphalt in 2001-2003. This pathway was not designed by Rose Greely, but represents a later interpretive layer.

The entrance walkway on the north side of the State House is lined with large English boxwoods (*Buxus sempervirens 'Suffruticosa'*); clumps of other large English boxwoods stand at the building's four corners. These shrubs were indicated in Greely's planting plan and are kept in good condition by the museum's horticulturalist. The walkways on the east and west sides were to be flanked by rows of specimen English boxwood, but these were not installed. Another feature that was not installed was an arrangement of American holly (*Ilex opaca*) specimens in allées extending from the south walkway nodes at a slight diagonal so as to both frame the view to the river from the south entrance door. The formal south nodes and false perspective created by the holly allées are interesting features that point to Greely's grounding in the Beaux Arts tradition. At the end of each allée, Greely had designed a seating area enclosed with a hedge of unspecified shrubs, also not installed.

Included in Greely's design was a mass of Hugonis roses at each of the south corners of the building. These were donated by the Federation of Garden Clubs, who also funded the installation of the boxwoods (Garden Clubs, n.d.). The Daughters of the American Revolution also donated boxwoods, according to a commemorative plaque on the site, dated 1932. The north corners were planted in periwinkle. Neither the roses nor the periwinkle exist today.

To the east of the building stand four large Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) dating to 1934, and to the west stands a linear grove of evergreen and deciduous trees, some dating from 1934. In 2008, one of the cedars was in decline. Most trees specified by Greely, including laurel oak (*Quercus laurifolia*) and locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and many other plants, including a native rose, hawthorn, bayberry, and baccharis, and a meadow of poppy, cornflower,

and larkspur, were not planted. The rest of the site in 1934 was kept in mown lawn, as it is today; the trees growing along the east and west sides of the site frame a commanding view over lawn to the river.

Because the State House grounds are heavily used by visitors to Historic St. Mary's City, they contain numerous small-scale features that support safety, comfort, orientation, and education. Only two of these may be historically significant: a bronze plaque mounted on a brick base memorializing the planting of a tree adjacent to the State House and a brick gutter constructed along the foundation of the building. In 1971, the State House was serving as the Visitors' and Information Center, Museum, Book Shop and principal exhibit space for the historic district. In response to increased visitation, a gravel parking lot with wood rail fencing was constructed adjacent to the building in the 1970s. It was repaved with geo-block in the late 1980s and expanded in 2002. (St. Mary's City Commission Annual Reports 1971: 6; personal communication, Historic St. Mary's City staff).

Greely's plan was a rich expression of her design philosophy, which was grounded in the traditions of the Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts schools of design. It appears that lack of funding in the 1930s prevented its full expression on the ground. However, the site has been kept open and would be an excellent canvas on which to fully realize this garden today.

History: **The Tercentenary Project**

In the first half of the nineteenth century, St. Mary's City was a remote, inaccessible place, far distant from Maryland's state capital at Annapolis. The bicentennial of the state's founding in 1834 passed with no acknowledgement of the role of St. Mary's City and its environs as the site of the earliest English settlement. In 1838, however, this changed when John Pendleton Kennedy published a bestselling novel, *Rob of the Bowl: A Legend of St. Inigoe's*. Kennedy's fictional account of life in the colonial capital, drawing on rare historic documents, generated considerable interest statewide in the St. Mary's City site and what little remained of the first city (Fausz 1990).

Increasing awareness of Maryland's historic roots and the significance of old St. Mary's City prompted the state to form a Tercentenary Commission to plan the 1934 festivities commemorating the 300th anniversary of the founding of Maryland. Numerous means of commemoration were developed, including the construction of a replica of the original State House of the 1676 Colony of Maryland. The decision to construction the replica followed on extensive debate over how to commemorate the Tercentenary, including proposals to reconstruct the city's mill; however, in the end, the availability of a detailed description of the original State House eventually won over the Tercentenary Commission.

On June 22, 1933, descendants of Maryland's Brome family formally conveyed

a 1.18 acre parcel to the State of Maryland for use as the site of the replica State House. Although the original State House site was still part of the adjacent Trinity Church cemetery, the Brome parcel was within view and made a fine substitute. The original State House site was actually not appropriate for construction of the memorial replica, given the adjacent burials encroaching on the old foundation and the need to preserve the archeological remains (Forman 1938:286). In addition, the site was also in the middle of an active cemetery.

The Tercentenary Commission directed that the plans for the replica State House would closely follow the specifications set out for the original in the 1674 Act that authorized its construction. Additional detail was recovered through archaeological investigations of the original State House site directed by Herbert R. Shelton, an archaeologist with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. The Tercentenary Commission retained Baltimore architects Herbert G. Crisp and James R. Edmunds, Jr. in association with architect Horace W. Peaslee of Washington, D.C., to design the replica, with Rose Greely serving as landscape architect (Forman 1938:290). Both the State House and the wall in front of it were constructed using reclaimed brick from two then-recently burned colonial homes, Bushwood Manor and Cartagena (personal communication, Historic St. Mary's City staff).

Rose Greely (1883-1961)

Rose Greely (1883-1961) was born in Washington, D.C., to General Adolphus W. Greely, Army officer and Arctic explorer, and Henrietta H. C. Nesmith Greely. She studied interior decorating at the Art Institute of Chicago and ornamental metal work in Washington, D.C., and Florence, Italy. A Renaissance woman, she also studied farming at the University of Maryland and published her poetry in the *Atlantic* and *Youth's Companion* magazines (Birnbaum and Karson, 2000).

In 1919, she entered the Cambridge School for Domestic Architecture and Landscape Architecture for Women in Cambridge, Massachusetts, receiving certificates in both architecture and landscape architecture in 1920. When she graduated, she worked doing drafting for Fletcher Steele in Boston until 1923. That year, she left Steele's office to return to Washington to work for Horace Peaslee. In 1925, she became Washington's first female licensed architect and in 1926 opened her own landscape architecture practice (Lawson, 1998).

Working from a small office with a secretary, an assistant, and two draftsmen, during the next forty years, she designed over 500 landscapes, primarily in Virginia, Washington, and Maryland. While she specialized in residential design, later in her career, she began to work on designs for larger projects, such as museums, embassies, schools, government housing, suburban developments, and military installations. Greely was honored for her work by her peers, being the only female member of the Landscape Architects Advisory Committee for the

Williamsburg Restoration Project and was elected a fellow of the Society in 1936. She also published prolifically in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, *Country Life*, the Garden Club of America *Bulletin*, the *Washington Star*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Christian Science Monitor* (Birnbaum and Karson, 2000).

By the time the State House replica was initiated, Greely had become a well-known landscape architect. Her designs included the site and planting compositions for the Friends Meeting House of Washington (ca. 1930), the gardens at Col Alto in Lexington, Virginia (1932), and the Colonial Revival gardens for the Jefferson Patterson family at their Point Farm Estate in Calvert County, Maryland (Maryland Department of Planning).

For the State House, Greely composed a Colonial Revival-style design of geometric pathways lined with English boxwoods. These and other evergreens provided year-round structure for the deciduous Hugonis roses, hawthorn, and honey locust planned for the site, a combination of ornamental and native plants that spoke of her connection to the Arts and Crafts school of design. On the water side of the State House, Greely's formal walkway node gardens and double lines of American holly, angled to frame views to the river, express her connection to the principles of the L'Ecole des Beaux Arts.

Of particular note is the involvement of the Southern Maryland Society, the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, and the Daughters of the American Revolution in donating plantings for the grounds (Garden Clubs). The Southern Maryland Society donated $250 to provide 25-30 deciduous and evergreen trees of species native to Maryland to be planted around the State House for shade. The Federated Garden Clubs donated $1,200 to install English boxwoods and the Hugonis roses on the south side of the State House. The Daughters of the American Revolution donated boxwood, according to a commemorative plaque from 1932.

The State House, with its matching brick wall, was only one of many construction projects completed for that occasion. Other significant projects included the relocation of Route 5 further to the east, and the construction of a stage, grandstand, and tent city to house the celebrants. It appears that Rose Greely was also involved in the Route 5 project; an undated planting plan, also associated with Peaslee's office, was located and is labeled in the same hand as that done for the State House. Plantings include trees similar to those used at the State House, such as laurel oak, black locust, American holly, hawthorn, and red cedar; and also include other species such as dogwood, redbud, elm, sycamore, and fruit trees. These are underplanted with myrtle, "Virginia roses," spicebush, and winterberry, and further ornamented by jonquils and grape hyacinth (General Roadside Planting Plan).

The landscape plans for the State House and the Triangle appear to illustrate a memorandum dated ca 1933, likely from Greely, in which the author discusses in detail a vision of how the landscape should be developed, including the design of the Triangle point, utility locations, sign placement, shrub and tree massing, seasonal color, location of restrooms, roadway plantings, walls and plantings around the State House, grading changes, and even recommendations for censorship of "badly designed, stock monuments" in the Trinity Episcopal Churchyard (Memoranda).

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2013 HALS Challenge Entry: *Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women*

Figure 1. View of the south side of the reconstructed State House, ca. 1940. Source: St. Mary's College of Maryland Archives (P1940_0009).

Figure 2. Similar view, taken in 2006. Source: John Milner Associates, Inc.

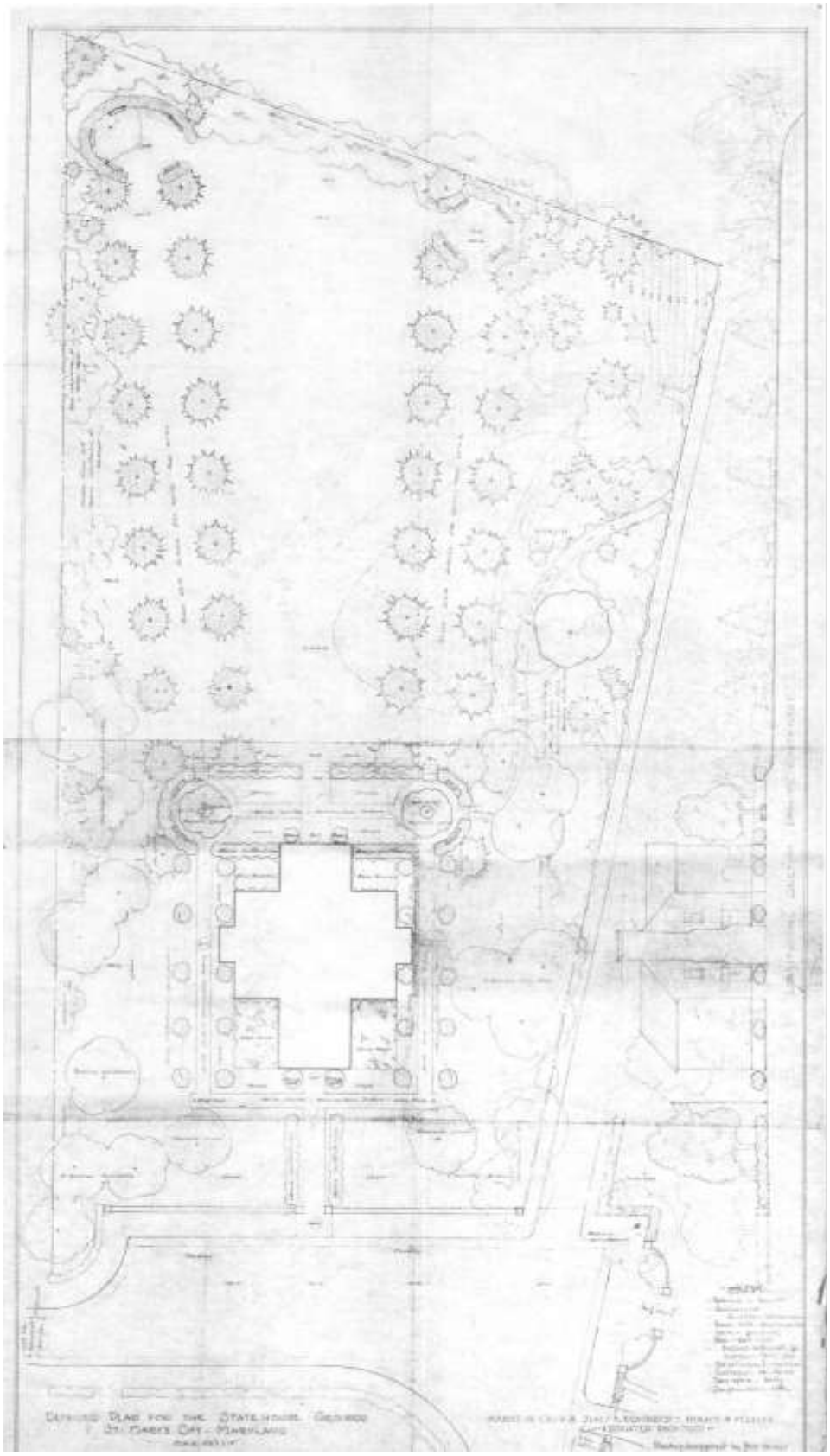

Figure 3. Rose Greely's Detailed Plan for the State House Grounds. Source: Historic St. Mary's City Archives.