

GARRARD ARDENEUM
501 North Fifth Street
McAlester
Pittsburg
Oklahoma

HALS OK-23
OK-23

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

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

GARRARD ARDENEUM

HALS NO. OK-23

Location: 501 North 5th St, McAlester, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma
Lat: 34.935045 Long: -95.76172

Significance: The Garrard Ardeneum, opened in 1990 by Allece Locke Garrard, in McAlester, Oklahoma, is home to a local history museum that is surrounded naturalistically styled gardens. Today the Ardeneum is owned and operated by the Ardeneum of Oklahoma Charitable and Educational Foundation and serves as an important cultural and historical resource for the citizens of McAlester.

History: Originally granted to the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations in the treaties of Doaks Stand (1820) and Dancing Rabbit Creek (1830), the land where the Ardeneum is located was later the site of a limestone quarry that served as a source of building material for numerous structures in McAlester at the turn of the 20th Century, including buildings in the downtown area and McAlester's first high school. Around 1910, the private residential structure that currently houses the Ardeneum museum was built, and in 1918, under the ownership of Mattie O. Webster, it was expanded and remodeled into its current style as a Swiss chalet. In addition, it was during this time that Mrs. Webster started the development of the current gardens. The property exchanged ownership a number of times before it was deeded to Allece Locke Garrard in 1986. In 1990, after minor renovations to the structures and grounds on the property, the Garrard Ardeneum opened to the public with the intent to provide a source for Oklahoma history and a place of serenity for the citizens of McAlester and Oklahoma. Mrs. Garrard created the word "ardeneum" as a combination of the words that characterized the intended use of the property: arboretum, garden, and museum. Since Mrs. Garrard's death in 1999, the three-acre, hillside property has been owned and operated by the Ardeneum of Oklahoma Charitable and Educational Foundation ("The Foundation").

The museum contains collections of art, sculptures, china, period furnishings, and a library with extensive archives. In addition to the main museum building, there is a small house known as the Oklahoma Cottage, along with a garage. The grounds contain a variety of individual gardens of native trees, shrubs, flowers, and rocks. Walkways made from on-site limestone meander throughout the property. At various points, there are several vistas overlooking sections of the gardens.

From the site's establishment as a private residence with surrounding gardens to the time it opened to the public under Mrs. Garrard's ownership, there had never been an official design plan. After the Foundation acquired the property, local gardener June Boyd along with Master Gardener Mickey Cogburn, oversaw improvements and enhancements to the site. In 2008, Leider & Associates, Inc. of Stillwater, Oklahoma was retained to prepare a master plan for the restoration of the property.

- Sources: Garrard, Allece Locke. Untitled and undated written history of the property at 501 N. 5th Street.
- Loftis, Carrie Jane. Personal interview conducted by Francine L. Bray on Sunday, 25 April 2009.
- Master Plan, Leider & Associates, Inc.
- “McAlester One of First To Found Public Schools.” Kiamichi Magazine, Sunday, October 8, 1967.
- “Outstanding Beauty Surrounds Home on Hillside.” McAlester News-Capital, McAlester, Oklahoma. Monday, October 6, 1958.
- Plat of Survey, Key Brothers and Associates Consulting Engineers, McAlester, Oklahoma, 28 May 1986.
- Property Records, Pioneer Abstract Company, McAlester Oklahoma. Abstracts 26809, 36314, 5549, 34082, 21364, & 73775.
- Records, Pittsburg County Court House, McAlester, Oklahoma.
- Shirk, George H (1974). Oklahoma Place Names Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged. University of Oklahoma Press, Publishing Division of the University, Norman, OK.
- Warranty Deed. Frank Garrard Edwards (aka Frank G. Edwards) and Clono Edwards (aka Clono Bell Edwards and Clono B Edwards), husband and wife, Grantors to Allece Locke Garrard, Grantee. 30 May 1986.
- Historian: Steve Eilers, April 26, 2009
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Garrard Ardeneum Swiss Chalet with "historic" red tulips (Charles Leider, Spring 2003).



Rock Stairway to Ardeneum Rock Gardens: This stairway leads up into the extended rock gardens. It has been the backdrop for many McAlester wedding pictures. Mrs. Garrard traditionally had all visitors' pictures taken, standing on the third step from the bottom (Steve Eilers, 2009).