

Floral Park Historical Society

The Docent's Digest

Summer – Fall 2019 Edition

John Lewis Childs as a Young Man

Over the years I have presented many programs related to the history of John Lewis Childs, the Founder and First President of Floral Park. That said, it never fails to amaze me at how the letter sent by Childs to Mr. C.L. Allen seeking employment sparks respect and curiosity about a young man who would grow to be an extraordinary businessman, horticulturalist, floriculturist, botanist, ornithologist and mineralogist, as well as an education leader and public servant.

John Lewis Childs was born in Jay, Maine on May 13, 1856. His parents were Stephen and Lydia (Chandler) Childs. He was the youngest of a family identified with agricultural pursuits. He only received a simple grade school education in Buckfield, Maine. At the age of 17 in 1874 he wrote this letter to Mr. Charles Linnaeus Allen of East Hinsdale, Queens, and Long Island. His age in the photo below is unknown.

Ann V. Corbett, President



Dear Sir:

Undoubtedly you receive numerous applications for workman—from persons you know nothing about, as to ability, honesty, steadiness—and were you to accept them all you would probably find many unfit to be in your employment.

Now just what I address this note to you for—is to see if you can give me a situation in your gardens or greenhouses. My age is 17 10/12. I have kept the best flower garden in this county and it has been my determination that my occupation through life...shall be that of a florist. I have studied the best work on the subject.

Now if you want a young man that “minds his own business” one that does not (and never will) use tobacco in any form; one long ago signed the pledge of total abstinence (from alcohol)...spend evenings in study instead of loafing about...and never gives up...whatever he undertakes...I wish you would try me.

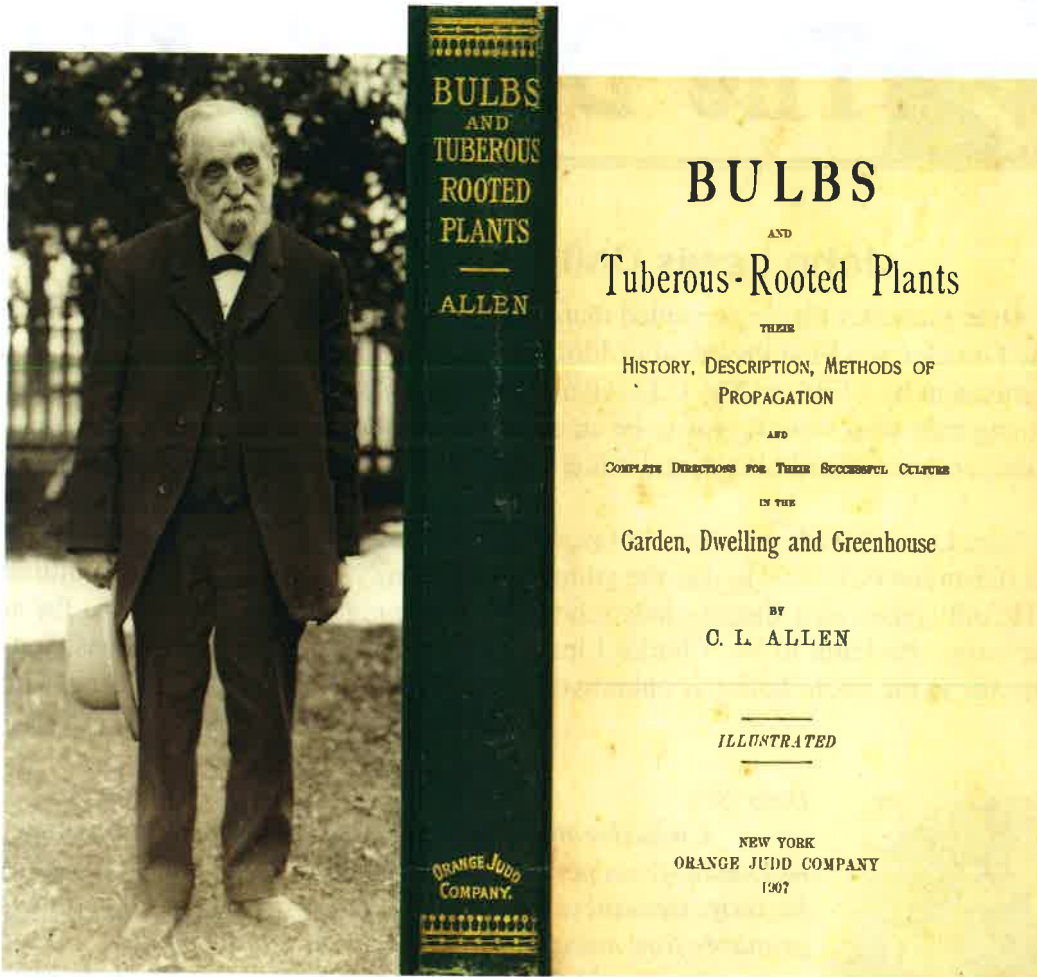
Now if you would give me a chance...do so...and see if I let this opportunity pass unimproved. I trust Mr. Allen I have not written in vain.

*Yours very respectfully,
John Lewis Childs*

Childs became an employee at the greenhouses of seedsman Charles Linnacus Allen, whose business on 1873 was relocated to Little Neck Road and Jericho Road, Queens County, New York. When Childs arrived, the hamlet consisted of a small group of houses, one store, the Hinsdale United States Post Office and a Central Railroad of New York Station. From a young age, Childs possessed a spirit of entrepreneurship, energy and enthusiasm, and horticultural instincts.

After working for Allen for nearly a year, Childs ventured to rent a parcel of land to cultivate flowers and plants and begin to sell seeds. This was Childs' first step in what would become a magnificent horticulture enterprise that historians consider colossal in nature.

C. L. Allen



C. L. Allen was a Hempstead Plains successful seedsman and respected horticulturalist who hired 17-year old John Lewis Childs of Maine to work in his business. Allen authored a book "Bulbs and Tuberous - Rooted Plants in 1893." A second edition published in 1915 was recently acquired and is now in the FPHS archives. In the 1890s, Allen frequently wrote articles for the *Mayflower*, a Childs' publication.

The following excerpt from a speech Allen read at the Eastern New York Horticultural Society in 1898 attests to his expertise as a respected horticulturalist. Note his references to *climate*.

Selection, in Its Relation to Horticulture Every living form, animate or inanimate, capable of reproduction, develops both according to its environments and parentage. In other words, growth or development is proportionate to the conditions necessary for such growth or development, being favorable or unfavorable. In creation the fauna and flora of every clime are adapted to each other's necessities; each feeds on the wastes of the other, and each in its native clime can reach the highest possibilities of its being. This is harmony in creation. We find that in every latitude there is a vegetable growth suited to existing conditions of temperature, and at high elevations in the tropics, the same genera of plants that we do in the North under the same climatic conditions. This order of creation cannot be changed, the plant created for a given latitude will not remain the same if removed to another. If a native of the tropics, it can never be made to endure the rigors of a northern winter; it was not provided with cells that will resist frost, and man cannot change the order of its being. On the other hand the tree born to resist the icy temperature of the north soon becomes enervated and dies, when removed to the tropics.

In Memory



Arthur Bradley

April 6, 1926 – August 3, 2019

Arthur Bradley and his parents moved to Floral Park from Sunnyside, Queens in August 1939. Friends of the family told them about Floral Park and the great opportunities that were available. They bought the land and had a house built on Beech Street.

That September, 13-year old Arthur started school at Sewanhaka and insisted that he be permitted to take a chemistry class. From age 11 he became interested in chemistry. Although unprecedented for a sophomore, Arthur would be the youngest student ever to take chemistry in the school. He also ran cross-country in high school. After graduating, he started going to Columbia University. In September 1944, he entered the Navy and served as an Electronic Technician's Mate Second Class. He was discharged in 1946, and finished his college education at Columbia using the GI Bill, earning his Doctorate in Chemistry.

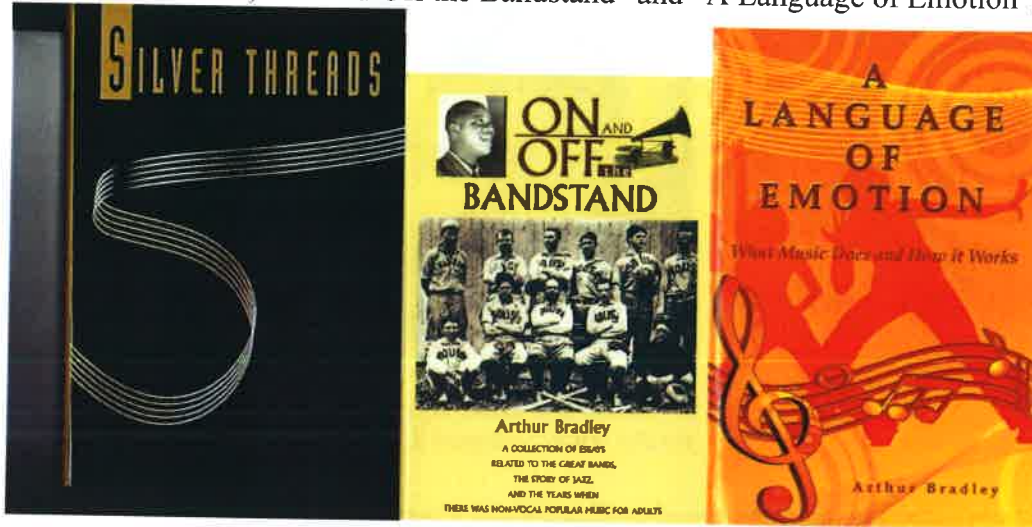
After spending a few years in Washington D.C., he came back to Floral Park and bought the family homestead. He is the father of two children and has three grandchildren. He enjoyed many activities in Floral Park such as running in races and acting with Theatre Box. He was in several plays: "You Can't Take It with You"; "Twelve Angry Men"; "Christmas Carol"; "Don't Drink the Water", and many more. After he retired in 1997, he and his wife, Pat, enjoyed traveling to Florida to get away from the snow. He also enjoyed playing bridge, watching the Dodgers, reading and listening to the jazz records from his collection.



Arthur played the clarinet in a band in his early years.

Arthur Bradley (cont.)

Because Arthur had such a love of music he decided to write some books. The titles of his three books are: “Silver Thread”, “On and Off the Bandstand” and “A Language of Emotion”.



For several years Arthur served as FPHS Recording Secretary and most recently as a Director. His interest in local history and his support of FPHS activities will always be appreciated.

The Floral Park Historical Society has several local resident oral histories that were recorded over the years. The interviews were transcribed. In 2012, Arthur Bradley sat for an interview that was conducted by John Lockwood and Jeanne Petta. At the September 15 meeting/program excerpts of Arthur's oral history will be read. The oral history and pictures related to his life will be placed in the archives

Floral Park Resident's Day

On Floral Park Resident's Day at the Recreation/Pool Building FPHS Recording Secretary Lynn Henry answered residents' questions about Floral Park history and the activities of the FPHS. Historical objects, such as a bowling pin recovered from the Tulip Bowling Alley Gas Explosion of 1987, were displayed along with wooden replicas from the "Then and Now" Collection of homes and buildings in Floral Park. Historical Marker map/guides, *Docent's Digest* newsletters and FPHS brochures were made available.



FROM THE FPHS ARCHIVES

Percy Loomis Sperr Collection

During this past year, the FPHS was fortunate to acquire seven photographic negatives related to Floral Park in 1927. The seven negatives appeared at auction at the same time and were all dated to the same day - March 1, 1927.

Normally these photos would be significant on their own because we do not have these photographs in our archives. But this is not the only reason why these photographs were important to us. These photographs were created by a well-known photographer named Percy Loomis Sperr. Sperr was known as the "Official Photographer of the City of New York".

Throughout Sperr's productive life from the 1920s to the 1940s, he was photographing literally every street and building in the five boroughs of NYC. He specialized in streetscapes usually focusing on buildings and infrastructure. It is estimated that 30,000 of his photos reside in the Milstein Photograph Collection of the New York Public Library.

His photographs are an important document of the history of the development of New York City from the 1920s to the 1940s. That Percy Loomis Sperr was venturing out to the eastern-most sections of NYC and happened to walk into our village can only be considered a blessing to us. We can only assume that he considered our village to be Floral Park, Queens in 1927.

The FPHS has established the Percy Loomis Sperr Photograph Collection in our archives to record the photographs presented below.



Looking east from north side of Jericho Turnpike - The Glynne Theatre (eventually the Floral Theatre) just after its construction.



Looking east from the north side of Jericho Turnpike at Tyson Avenue with billboard advertising for the Howard and Glynne Theatre. Note police booth at corner.

Percy Loomis Sperr Collection (cont.)



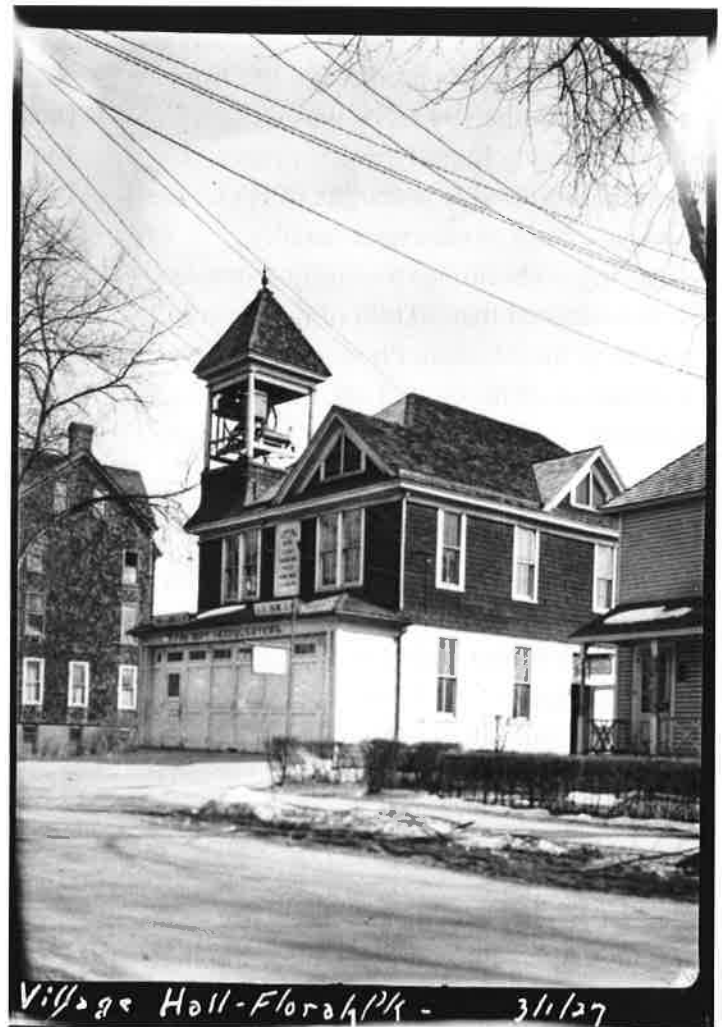
Two photos of the Floral Park School looking north from the spur. These photos show the original Floral Park School with the extensions that were made - the first photo shows the original school with its first extension. The second photo shows the large extension down Elizabeth Street with the new auditorium.



Looking north from Tyson Avenue - The Floral Park Bank building at the corner of Tyson and Jericho Turnpike.



Looking east from the north side of Jericho Turnpike - The First National Bank with the Lily Theatre to the left.



First Fire House became Floral Park Village Hall, Iris Avenue, Floral Park Hotel is to the left

FPHS's Fall Welcome Back Program
a la Silhouette



18th Century Silhouettist at Work
History of these Charming Keepsakes & the Master Cutters
Speaker, Ann V. Corbett
Sunday, September 15, 2019, 2 p.m.

FPHS Dates to Remember

Programs: 2:00 p.m. at the Floral Park Recreation/Pool Building

October 6

"North Shore Milestone Markers" – Speaker: Bruce Kagan

November 3

"Antique Roadshow FPHS Style" – Appraiser: Marian Zimmerman Rizzo
Attic Treasures; Knick-Knacks, Heirlooms, Vintage Curiosities
No furniture, large objects or books; No written Appraisals
2 p.m. Check-in: Appraisals: \$5 – one item; \$7 – two items

Community Event Reminder

Sat., October 5, Boy Scout Troop 4 Floral Park 105th Anniversary

Service at the United Methodist Church, 2 p.m.;

Gala Celebration, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.,

Plattdeutsche Park, 1132 Hempstead Tpke. Franklin Square

Tickets: \$50 adults/\$30 children under 12.

Visit: www.paypal.me/FPBSATROOP4 = select "family and friends" to avoid a service fee.

Checks payable to Troop 4BSA c/o United Methodist Church, 35 Verbena Ave., Floral Park, NY

Info and Journal Ads contact marinapav@aol.com or visit Facebook at **Troop 4 Floral Park.**

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