A Joy Forever:

BONNET HOUSE,
ITS LOCATION & OWNERS

by Mary McGreevy

A thing of beauty is a joy forever
Its beauty increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness, but still will keep
A bower of quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and
Quiet breathing.
—Keats

THE SITE
The most beautiful place in Fort Lauderdale today, and perhaps in all
times, may be Bonnet House, a
property now placed in a state trust.
Visitors are admitted at certain
hours to appreciate nature, the
house itself, and its furnishings,
decor and art. The former owner,
Hugh Taylor Birch, once said that
this site, part of a three-mile
beachfront he had purchased in
1894, was “the most beautiful spot on
which I have laid eyes in all my
travels.”1

Birch had first spotted the site
while sailing a yacht down the coast,
when he was forced to seek shelter in
New River Sound during a storm.2
He later remarked that he felt the
hand of Divine Providence had
driven him to the area. It was
probably after the storm had cleared,
The Easterly Trades had freshened
the air, and the sky had regained the
deep cerulean color that hot sun and
Caribbean weather produce, that he
decided to come back. The place
seemed special to him—and would
remain so throughout his life.

The wealthy Chicago lawyer,
born in 1848 and educated at Horace
Mann’s Antioch College in Ohio, was
beginning to tire of the life of

In 1983, Evelyn Bartlett deeded her Fort
Lauderdale estate, Bonnet House, to the Florida Trust
for Historic Preservation, to preserve its historic and
natural character. The following year, the house was
placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In
succeeding years it underwent painstaking restoration,
opening to the public during the summer months in

In “A Joy Forever,” author Mary McGreevy presents
a colorful and impressionistic view of the Bonnet
House, weaving together the property’s long history,
unique natural environment, architectural and
artistic significance and the lives and personalities of
its residents. Dr. McGreevy is a Fort Lauderdale
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Dora Achenbach McGreevy Poetry Foundation, Inc. A
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including the Broward County Women’s History
Coalition and the Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale
Historical Association, she has published several
books of poetry and articles in past issues of Broward
Legacy.
industrial civilization, the noise and rush hours of the quickly developing metropolis. He had particularly hoped to miss the hordes flocking to Chicago for the Columbian Exposition in 1893, and thus was in quest of tranquility in the Florida wilderness. Birch may have remembered the quiet grounds at Antioch College when he realized he needed a peaceful environment to live his life fully. He soon determined to buy up the beach site near Fort Lauderdale. “This is where God meant me to be and this is where I will stay,” proclaimed Birch. He was happy not only to be away from the stress of his business ventures and legal practice, but was relieved to leave the structured social life of a Chicago man of prominence behind for the more casual lifestyle offered by a beachfront location in Florida.

In 1921, almost three decades after he first arrived on Fort Lauderdale beach, Birch and his son-in-law, artist and philanthropist, Frederic Clay Bartlett, built Bonnet House for Birch’s daughter Helen, Bartlett’s second wife. Helen was a romantic, and often inspired others to see beyond the superficiality of appearances into the deeper meanings of life. A composer and poet, she enjoyed a vibrant enthusiasm for art, but was also extremely passionate about nature, the subject of most of her poetry. From early years spent with her father on his property, Helen Birch Bartlett learned to love Florida, and wasentranced with its trees, skies, winds and beach. In this regard, she was reminiscent of another young American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, who wrote, “Oh, world, I cannot hold thee close enough, Thy winds, thy wide grey skies....”

Like her father, Helen found consolation for the loss of her mother and siblings in nature’s beauty. The family tragedies worsened for Birch with the death of the sensitive, beautiful Helen in 1925. They had known “the splendor in the grass” and the “glory in the flower” which enabled them to develop a kind of philosophy that let them see through death. Few have had the time or are so fortunate to be able to do this!

THE CONQUEROR AND HIS CONQUEST: SEASIDE TREASURE

In geological time on the planet, Florida emerged as a latecomer to the North American landmass, lying just beneath the ocean until gradual landfill and the movements of sand and sea created the outlines of the peninsula. The coastal ridge holds back the unique wetlands of the Everglades. The Keys, protected by coral reefs, support their own unique natural environment. The Keys and the Everglades are bird and animal sanctuaries, plentiful with marine life, tempting to both environmentalists and lovers of wildlife. Such a diverse and unique environment interested and amazed Hugh Taylor Birch.

Centuries before Florida became an American territory and even before the Seminoles began moving into the peninsula, the Bonnet House site was chosen by

Left to right: Clay Bartlett, Hugh Taylor Birch, Helen Birch Bartlett, Frederic Bartlett, ca. 1924 (photo courtesy of Bonnet House).
European explorers as a promising landing. Some of their conch shells have been found opened in a wide-mouthed manner, and archaeologists have found that these shells bear the marks of the iron instruments with which they were opened. Further analysis indicated that some of the shells dated to the period between 1430 and 1580. This early site of European discovery contrasted dramatically with sites inhabited by southeast Florida's native Tequesta Indians, who always made small holes in their shells. Furthermore, to the sailor, this view of the shore was particularly appealing, seen either from a vessel at anchor or from the edge of the beach. Just past the beach, a high ridge arose, indicating the edge of what once had been a barrier island, now filled in by the "sands of time." Long, windswept dunes, blown clean except for some low brush, the measured lapping of the waves striking and then receding, the processes of eternity, were as rational to the European explorer as were his many mappings of the ocean seas and the lands they touched upon. The European explorer and the waves of settlers that followed exploited the natural resources of the "New World" and assumed a proprietary attitude toward the land.

At Bonnet House, shells are used frequently for decoration and preserved in the small museum that Frederic Bartlett built for his third wife, Evelyn Fortune Bartlett. Along with the shell museum, Bartlett designed and built a complex which included an orchid house and bamboo bar. The shell museum was circular and contained brightly lit cases for the varieties and unique shells collected by the couple. On the borders of these cases Bartlett glued a series of similar shells, uniting the setting with the contents. Bartlett also painted shells as a decorative motif. The shell motif also accents the dishes and pottery at the house. A Wedgewood pedestaled shell serves as a centerpiece.

A fitting logo, the nautilus shell has been chosen to represent the house. A sculpture of a nautilus shell on the east side of the property near the door to Evelyn's art gallery, served as the model for the logo appearing on Bonnet House stationary and flyers. In addition to mirroring the seaside location and decorative features of the house, a lovely preserved shell symbolizes the timelessness of experience. At Bonnet House, features that existed from the time the house was constructed and even earlier are still carefully preserved. Like painter Georgia O'Keeffe and natural philosopher Henry Thoreau, the owners of Bonnet House sometimes concentrated on a single object to reveal its mystical, spiritual beauty.

The example of the Bonnet House and neighboring Hugh Taylor Birch State Park is rare: leave nature as it is and understand its processes. With most of Broward County's beachfront paved over, the encroachment of residential and commercial development on the Everglades remains an issue of great contemporary concern. Developers, twentieth century adventurers, rarely consider the necessity of saving Florida's wetlands. The state and federal governments have had to purchase great areas of land to try to save this ecosystem. The manmade canals and waterways which crisscross the Everglades have not provided the solution for which water managers had hoped. The land becomes inhospitable as a result of extreme wetness or dryness, wildlife disappears, and small animals face extinction. Marjory Stoneman Douglas, renowned Everglades preservationist, wrote:
Aerial photos of the Bartlett property from ca. 1940 (above) and 1988 (below) emphasize the dramatic development of the surrounding area (photos courtesy of Bonnet House).
There are no other Everglades in the world.
They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth, remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them: their vast glittering openness, wider than the enormous visible round of the horizon, the racing free saltiness and sweetness of their massive winds, under the dazzling blue heights of space. They are unique also in the simplicity, the diversity, the related harmony of the forms of life they enclose. The miracle of the light pours over the green and brown expanse of sawgrass and of water, shining and slow-moving below, the grass and water that is the meaning and the central fact of the Everglades of Florida. It is a river of grass.14

Of the many unique features at the Bonnet House site, the existence of fresh water is certainly significant. This water, some of which is on the surface and easily retrievable, contributes to the flourishing plant and animal life at the site and the surrounding area. The New River, running through Fort Lauderdale, and the Middle River to the north are both natural freshwater streams. Before they were drained, numerous marshes between the Everglades and the coastal ridge provided a rich freshwater environment, especially during the rainy season. However, freshwater sloughs close to the beach, like the one on the east side of the Bonnet House, provide fascinating and unexpected additions to the landscape. This slough runs north into Birch State Park, where it forms a lake now used for recreation.

At Bonnet House the slough has been dredged to produce a lagoon surrounded by a swampy area where the bonnet lily, a tiny fragile, yellow blossom and a favorite flower of Hugh Taylor Birch, grows. Birch chose the name Bonnet House for the building because of this lily.15 His love for his daughter was immense and his grief at her death deep, although he remained close to Frederic Bartlett after Helen died and developed a friendship with Bartlett's third wife Evelyn. He helped them with the care and landscaping of Bonnet House. Birch later earned a reputation as a recluse, and few residents of Fort Lauderdale ever saw him. When he died in 1944, his property was willed to the State of Florida for preservation and public use.16

WHERE ONCE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG

Today Bonnet House and Birch State Park, in the public trust and once part of Birch's original purchase, are the only spaces along the Fort Lauderdale beach "strip" that are relatively unaffected by dense urban development. Large hotels, high-rises, garages, shopping centers, malls, and restaurants now dominate the area. Tee-shirts advertising Fort Lauderdale indicate that tourism has other goals besides appreciation of natural sites. The culture of luxury and economy hotels, food and drink, the sale of unusual objects as well as trite souvenirs, beach towels, clothing and accessories are all part of the tourist's "treasure hunt" found on the beach strip. Seeking relaxation, recreation, and escape from the routine of their daily lives, most tourists give little thought to the philosophy of hard work and strict moral discipline which characterized Hugh Taylor Birch.17 His virtues of self-reliance and independence, sincerity, sobriety, and appreciation of nature may have derived from the writings of Emerson and Thoreau. Birch's concept of man, morality and the natural world are recalled in Emerson's words:

A man contains all that is needful in his government within himself… all good or evil that can befall him must be from himself… There is a correspondence between the human soul and everything that exists in the world… The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint man with himself… The highest revelation is that God is in every man.18

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

From a well-marked little street off Sunrise Boulevard, the entrance to the Bonnet House is guarded by high metal gates that prohibit access to all who have no reason to be there. Passing through these gates, the visitor enters a world bereft of most of the trappings of modernity. Instead, a habitat for small animals
and birds and yellow ochre-painted buildings with covered walkways allow humans and other living things to share the surrounding nature. Evelyn Bartlett, Frederic's third wife who made Bonnet House her home for sixty-six years, was often photographed there with some of her animal friends.  

The far gate, or regular tourist entrance, offers plentiful parking on land that was formerly a coconut grove. The visitor approaches the buildings through a mangrove swamp near a small house built to shelter the boat that carried guests to Bonnet House. The dog-leg channel behind the house is a cut-off canal connected to the Intracoastal Waterway. When Bonnet House was constructed, the waterway and this canal were necessary to bring building materials to the site as no adequate roads existed. The house was only approached from the south by a small dirt trail which ran along the high ridge. This dry, cactus-covered area gave the house a graceful and commanding elevation overlooking the beach and slough to the east. Today, this impressive view is featured on postcards.

The swamp area bordering the Intracoastal Waterway at the western boundary of the property contains red, black and white mangroves and buttonwood trees. These densely-rooted, aquatic trees attract small fish, which are in turn eaten by larger fish prized by fishermen. Mangrove swamps also build up the soil, filter the water, and prevent water and wind erosion.  

The mangrove swamp is home to the manatee or sea cow, and provides vegetation, his only food source. The manatee, a migratory animal, comes to Florida in winter for the warm waters which he needs to breed and survive. Hubert Royal, a longtime employee of Birch and the Bartletts, tells a story of finding a manatee in the dog-leg canal by the boathouse. The workers placed him on a large piece of material and carried him to the lagoon, where he ate the vegetation until it was gone. Then he died.  

Another inhabitant of the Bonnet House site as well as Birch State Park is the raccoon. Many visitors gather to feed them while enjoying their antics. These black-masked, striped-tail creatures, dressed like the juvenile delinquents of the animal kingdom, can be very appealing as they beg for bread.

The largest animal population at Bonnet House is probably the Brazilian squirrel monkey, although they are disappearing. It is believed that poachers entice them beyond the walls of the preserve to capture and sell them. The original squirrel monkeys on the property are thought to have escaped from a nearby private club to breed and live at the estate under the protection of Evelyn Bartlett. She enjoyed feeding them from her bedroom window, where she could easily spot them prancing around the top branches of the trees. The monkeys enjoy the plentiful fruit trees on the property, many of them introduced by the Bartletts. These include the calabash, guava, avocado, mastic, and a variety of citrus. Present on the property when the house was constructed were mango, sapodilla and surinam cherry trees planted by Hugh Taylor Birch. The Rangpur lime, which Evelyn Bartlett used in a special cocktail, was imported from India to Florida in 1887, and used as rootstock and as an ornamental. These trees attract many birds. Frogs, turtles, snakes, insects, and a variety of small mammals also make their homes on the property.  

Among the domesticated animals at Bonnet House are a pair of

Aviary in the Bonnet House courtyard (photo by Mary McGreevy).
Central fountain in the courtyard (photo by Mary McGreevey).

Demoiselle cranes with beautiful white feathers. Evelyn Bartlett brought both black and white swans and several exotic parrots to the property. The parrots are kept in cages or on perches around the courtyard, which once hosted a full aviary. The remnants of this aviary serve as an interesting courtyard decoration with a beautiful water fountain in its center. Small plants and other landscaping add to the indoor/outdoor ambiance of this central court, emphasizing the property's theme of living with nature.24

CHICAGO ROOTS

Both the Bartlett and Birch families had been prominent in Chicago circles of culture and affluence. Frederic Bartlett was one of four children, three of whose lives revealed a strong cultural influence. In addition to Frederic, Marie Bartlett Heard was the founder of the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, and Florence Dibell Bartlett founded the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1953.25

Both families were involved with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago Art Institute, which Frederic Bartlett's father had joined as a board member a few years after its founding in 1883. The elder Bartlett, Adolphus, spent thirty-three years as a trustee of the Art Institute. Like his father, Frederic served as a trustee of the Institute, beginning in 1923. He later became a trustee of the new, avant-garde Museum of Modern Art in New York City as well as a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Bartlett's art was featured in five major exhibits in Chicago, the last being a joint showing of his works and Evelyn's, as well as numerous shows. His son, Clay Bartlett (1907-1955) also showed his work numerous times in Art Institute and other exhibitions.26

Frederic's devotion to art was fourfold: as a painter of public and household murals and decor; as a painter of oils and watercolors; as a member of elite art circles and emerging museums; and perhaps most notably as a collector/donor, who, with Helen, presented the most significant collection of Post-Impressionist paintings ever donated to the Chicago Art Institute. He gained his prestige and influence in the art world from a lifetime of both admiring and participating in the fabulous international world of late nineteenth and early twentieth century modern art.27

Frederic Bartlett graduated from the Royal Academy in Munich in 1896. He then moved to Paris for two years with intervals of travel to visit his family and his fiancée, Dora Tripp, whom he had met in Munich. Frederic and Dora were married in New York in 1898 and returned to Paris where he enrolled in James Whistler's art school. Although Whistler's famed school closed shortly thereafter, it was in Paris that Bartlett met Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, a French painter strongly influenced by the English Pre-Raphaelite movement.28

Puvis de Chavannes' Paris art school gained renown as a gathering place for many of the era's leading artists. Bartlett was often there, studying the works of the master. Chavannes' medieval-themed murals had an extremely significant impact on the young American, who never lost his taste for the Middle Ages. Decades later, he erected little tents serving as gazebos on the southeastern part of his Fort Lauderdale property. There guests enjoyed refreshments and the view of the slough and the bonnet lilies growing there. These tents resembled those used by knights at medieval jousting tournaments. A depiction of this type of tent can be seen in one of the murals for the Frank Dickinson Memorial Gymnasium at the University of Chicago. In 1904, Bartlett painted this mural as part of a frieze showing a medieval tournament in memory of his younger brother, who had died four years earlier.29 Another example of Bartlett's taste for the medieval is the series of over fifty panels depicting a Gothic hunt and feast which he painted for the ceiling of the Michigan Room at the University Club of Chicago. He also designed fourteen stained glass windows for the University Club's Cathedral Hall in 1908.30

Dorfred House in Chicago, which Bartlett shared with Dora and Clay, contained many of the objects of art and architectural ornamentation they had collected in Europe.31 Frederic always integrated murals, decorations, and real or painted architectural motifs into his work, which, though individualistic, remained strongly influenced by the Puvis de Chavannes murals that had engrossed the artist in Paris. Collecting and creating art, Frederic lived happily in Chicago with his
wife, Dora, until she died in 1917, leaving him alone with ten-year-old Clay.\footnote{32}

**CAPRICIOUS WINDS**

If anyone ever feels something haunting about Bonnet House, he or she may have sensed the sad spirit of Helen Birch Bartlett, lingering in this area of which she was so fond. As a young girl, visiting with her father before Bonnet House was constructed, she often canoed in the lagoon. In Chicago she had studied music, and in the 1910s, she wrote songs, several of which were published. Suddenly, "life flowered for her."\footnote{33} Her love for Frederic Bartlett, whom she married in 1919, awoke a new sense of beauty in her, a "resplendent happiness," which called for a new form of expression.\footnote{34} She began to write poetry, describing the sensuous qualities of nature and human emotions. She often compared the two in her poetry, a testament to the poignancy she felt in both the positive and negative aspects of nature — even suspecting, it seems, her own early end:

*Leaves whirl about my feet;*
*Leaves, leaves dance over my head*
*Brown leaves.*
*And their madness and love of death*  
*blow through my heart.*\footnote{35}

In another poem she asked her friends to remember her in hazy quiet afternoons, which she had known at Bonnet House.\footnote{36} Like Emily Dickinson, Helen Bartlett understood that life can be appreciated in its absence.

Harriet Monroe, a friend and editor of the famous Chicago journal, *Poetry,* wrote an introduction to *Capricious Winds,* the slim volume of poems published after Helen's death. In it, she commented:

"The time granted her was short; in her few years she lived with a fullness of delight and power beyond the reach of most of us. If these poems tell but a little of her joyous story, they will fulfill their function."\footnote{37}

Helen seemed not to want to live long. She wrote:

*Autumn, Autumn!*
*I will not live!*
*I'll go now, now with all my memories and my joys.*
*I will not live*
*To have them blown,*
*Like ashes from an altar by capricious winds.*\footnote{38}

It seemed destiny that Helen Birch had met and married Frederic Bartlett. They had much in common, as did their Chicago families. Accompanied by two cousins, Mrs. Marshall Field, Sr., and Mrs. Albert J. Beveridge, Helen journeyed to Boston in January 1919, and there quietly married Bartlett. For seven years they shared interesting lives, created Bonnet House and involved themselves in American cultural circles with intermittent returns to Europe to collect paintings.\footnote{39}

**A SIGNIFICANT EVENT**

Helen's marriage to Bartlett was her first; he was forty-five, she thirty-six. They shared the same tastes in music and art, but each expanded the other's awareness with their personal predilections.\footnote{40} Helen's romanticism and creativity led her to appreciate new innovations of art in Europe, whereas Bartlett's career as an academic painter and decorator helped him master composition and the underlying forms and structures of art. Together, the Bartletts' taste in art was superb, and their insight into the avant-garde of their time incredible. They recognized that the Post-Impressionists were as much concerned with eternal values as were the older, academically-sanctioned great masters, whose works

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**CAPRICIOUS WINDS**

BY

HELEN BIRCH BARTLETT

WITH A

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE BY

JANET A. FAIRBANK

AND

AN APPRECIATION BY

HARRIET MONROE

Boston and New York
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1927
hung in long-established museums such as the Louvre in Paris and the Metropolitan in New York. Slowly the public came to appreciate the Bartletts’ insight after Frederic donated the Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection of twenty-four “modern” paintings to the Chicago Art Institute in 1926.41

Both Cezanne and Matisse paintings were among the collection.42 Matisse’s unusual color and space, more decorative than traditional painting, appealed to Helen, while Cezanne’s landscapes, which were classical in composition and based on geometrical forms and parallel spaces, would have suited Bartlett’s more conservative taste. The collection also included works by Picasso, Gaugin, Toulouse-Lautrec, and by Seurat.43

Hugh Taylor Birch gave the newlyweds a parcel of his original beachfront purchase—700 feet along the ocean and thirty-five acres inland on which to build a home. Helen’s personality and preferences inspired her husband to build Bonnet House; it was the love of nature instilled in her by her father that led them always to take the environment into account when planning the architecture of the house.44

A SOUTH FLORIDA PLANTATION HOUSE

In spite of his knowledge of Europe and his financial acumen, Bartlett, under the tutelage of Birch, did not build as elaborate a house as many constructed in south Florida during the first decades of the twentieth century. He clearly had no intentions of building an ornate, monumental mansion like Palm Beach’s Whitehall, home of railroad magnate Henry M. Flagler. Although familiar with the gardens of Europe, Bartlett did not copy their formal geometric designs, nor did he seek out mythic statues to complete a fanciful atmosphere, as did James Deering at Vizcaya. Bartlett, however, understood European art better than either of these men because of his years of training and experience. His own familiarity with European artistic design allowed him to incorporate it into his house without copying it. At Bonnet House he seems to have adapted features of European art to better suit the tropical climate of south Florida and a smaller scale practical for human dwellings.

Not that every feature of Bonnet House was useful—for example, the principal door leading from the living room is complimented with a split ornate baroque column, each side of the door bearing half of the gilded column. The door is topped by an escutcheon resembling an ornate version of a knight’s shield, decorated with a wavy design repeated on the trim above adjacent windows. The whole effect is one of fantasy, not surprising when one considers that Bartlett’s artistic endeavors at the house sometimes represent illusion more than architecture. None of his murals function as parts of the building, but appear to be afterthoughts.

Near the south entrance, a dry area, which is never watered, presents a clean, cactus-bearing landscape which abuts the house, plays against the building materials, and makes the entryway to the interior of the shaded courtyard a welcome sight. On top of the gate is a large cowfish, that appears to be floating on its concrete perch. Silhouetted against the bright, blue skies, this whimsical sculpture offers the visitor the first glimpse of the fantasy and imagination which pervades the atmosphere. The owners of Bonnet House never restricted themselves to depicting nature as it appears in reality, instead weaving it into an imaginary, fairy tale world.
From the south courtyard gate, Frederic Bartlett's studio is visible, complete with his easel set and palette. Many of his paintings, the paintings of others, and the objects he collected are on display. On the wall overlooking the room he painted a tromp d'oeil balustrade that fooled the famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright when he visited Bartlett.\(^\text{45}\)

If the decorative elements at Bonnet House suggest a reflection of nature, a playful rendering of grand European themes, or a romantic, fairy tale setting, the structure itself is a plantation-style residence. The purpose of its construction, despite its decorative fancy, was pragmatic, designed to weather successfully severe tropical storms and hurricanes and to allow as much graciousness of living as possible in the existing environment.\(^\text{46}\)

The kitchen, pantry and dining room are located at the north end of the courtyard. The dining room displays splendid examples of china — notably Spode and Wedgewood — collected by Evelyn Bartlett. Three china pieces depict the nautilus shell. The veranda to the north was often used to serve elegant dinners. The table settings were often ornamented and placed on white tablecloths. A piece of Italian pottery and a nautilus centerpiece added to the effect. Place settings were sometimes bamboo and the side chairs rattan. The green glassware reflected the light that broke through the nearby trees. While the utensils and furniture reinforced concepts of nature, the table ornam-

\[\text{Portion of Frederic Bartlett's art studio, showing (top left) the painted ballustrade that fooled many guests, including Frank Lloyd Wright (courtesy of Bonnet House).}\]

ments, silver salt and pepper shakers and elegant white linen napkins spoke of another kind of life well known to the Birch/Bartlett family. The ambiance typified the contrasting themes of Bonnet House, representing a concern for art, nature, and elegance.\(^\text{47}\)

The back porch was used for preparing meals, washing and ironing. Cooking took place in a separate building from the main house, which was common in the days before gas and electricity. Typical of plantation-style houses, the long overhanging roof, both air-conditioning inside rooms and creates large, useful verandas. In the tropics, these verandas provided shade, breezeways, and a suitable space for outdoor gatherings. Bonnet House, open to the beach, is situated to take advantage of the cool breezes from the easterly "trades."

Painted a bright yellow ochre which seems the perfect contrast to the greenery which surrounds it, Bonnet House features trim, white,
New Orleans-type filigree balconies on the second story, accenting the construction and architecture. The overhangs and shutters keep the interior cool and dark, creating a relaxing contrast to the glare of the sun. In addition to creating a pleasant interior environment, shutters were used to barricade the house from hurricanes. Its position high above the lagoon that dominates its front facade gives the Bonnet House stature, but also opens it to the full force of the east winds.

When Bonnet House was under construction, a Fort Lauderdale newspaperman noticed its uniqueness and wrote a story entitled "Medieval Castle at Las Olas," which appeared in the Fort Lauderdale Sentinel in July 1921. The reporter had noticed an observation tower and was too quick to assume the house would incorporate other features which Bartlett's art reflected. He certainly did not expect a simple, plantation-style house to be built by such notables as Birch and Bartlett.

The only architectural feature that connected Bartlett's design to the Middle Ages was the tower. The interior courtyard around which the house was built was typical of the Renaissance. Like the verandas, the courtyard expanded the living areas of the house into the outdoors. Bartlett elaborated the courtyard area to include extensive landscape architecture, which could be seen from open passages throughout the house.

A JOY FOREVER

Evelyn Fortune Lilly of Indianapolis and Frederic Bartlett met while Helen was still alive, and their paths merged after Frederic was widowed. They renewed their acquaintance in Beverly, Massachusetts, where they both vacationed. In 1931 they were married at the home of the bride's father, William Fortune, an Indiana philanthropist.

The newly-married couple expanded the art and decor of Bonnet House, brightening the living room by adding bay windows and lightening the overall effect of the house by painting the walls and woodwork and adding ceiling murals to three courtyard loggias. They spent most of their waking hours in the living room, chatting with visitors, reading, or working on their accounts, each facing the other at a large desk in a corner of the room. Bartlett's painting of a black swan and a white swan hung over the fireplace, and his paintings of his son Clay and of a longtime employee, adorned each side of the north entry door. The room was—and remains—pleasant and harmonious, representative of the ideals and lives of Frederic and Evelyn Bartlett. Their marriage lasted until Frederic Bartlett's death in 1953. Evelyn survived him by forty-four years, living until the age of 109.

The music room at Bonnet House still recalls the memory of Helen Birch Bartlett. Her restored nineteenth-century Steinway piano stands against the east wall. On the marble fireplace sits a veiled bust of a mysterious woman, sculpted in Italy.
The thin veil carved into the marble disguises her face, making the sculpture forever intriguing. In contrast to the whimsical fantasy atmosphere evident throughout the house, the striped wallpaper adds a severe, "closed-in" quality to the room. Usually shut up, this room is mentioned only as a reminder of Helen Birch Bartlett, her personality, music and poetry, as well as her contributions to the legacy of Bonnet House. What Bonnet House, nature and art meant to Helen cannot be fully understood without understanding her lonely life and the influence of her father, and reading her slim volume of poetry. Visiting the beautiful Bonnet House, and its reminders of the past, calls to mind the vagaries of life — "capricious winds."

NOTES

2. Ibid., 24.
3. Ibid., 23.
4. Ibid., 24.
5. Ibid., 23.
10. The author has made several site visits to Bonnet House and the neighboring area, including Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, through the years, both in researching this article and earlier as a visitor with her children.
11. Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, see picture on page 94.
12. Ibid., 1.
17. A good character sketch of Birch is contained in Bill McGoun, A Biographical History of Broward County (Miami: The Miami Herald, 1972), 36-37.
20. Ibid., 29.
22. Bemiseces of Hubert Royal, Bonnet House, 1996, presentation attended by the author.
25. Ibid., 24; Chicago Tribune, March 12, 1955.
28. Ibid., 16-17; Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, 84.
30. Ibid., 87-88; Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, 55-61.
31. Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, 86.
32. Ibid., 89.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., xvi.
40. Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, 91.
41. Ibid., 85.
42. Ibid., 91-92, 104-05.
43. Ibid., 91-97; Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, 69-75.
44. Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, 9, 26-27;
46. Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, 36.
47. Ibid., 29; Workman, Bonnet House, 2;
48. National Register of Historic Places, Bonnet House Nomination Form, in archives of Broward County Historical Commission, Fort Lauderdale.
50. Fort Lauderdale Sentinel, July 11, 1921.
51. Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies, 96; Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, 77-78.
53. Chicago Daily Tribune, June 26, 1953;
55. Photographs of the music room as it appeared during Helen Bartlett's lifetime, ca. 1924, and in 1989, are published in Rice, Reflections of a Legacy, 40-41.