



Pioneer of Tropical Landscape Architecture: William Lyman Phillips in Florida

Faith Reyher Jackson

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"The first comprehensive study of Phillips, by someone who knew him. . . . A significant, in-depth, and highly entertaining biography of [the man who] was one of the first to develop landscaping with tropical and subtropical plants [and who]. . . left us with one great masterpiece--the Fairchild Tropical Garden."--R. Brinsley Burbidge, director, Fairchild Tropical Garden, Miami

"This biography provides a long-needed history of the early days of tropical landscape architecture. . . . Mrs. Jackson's investigation and research are extraordinary. "--Jonathan G. Seymour, landscape architect

William Lyman Phillips (1885-1966) played a seminal role in the landscaping of Florida and in the history of landscape architecture, designing the world-famous Fairchild Tropical Garden in Miami (begun in 1938) as well as hundreds of other sites, four of them on the National Register. This biography, written by a woman who knew Phillips and who shared his northeastern upbringing, education, taste, and childlike apprehension of the exotic, brings to life the story of the quiet, self-effacing man whose love of Florida's tropical and subtropical botany has had such a profound influence on the way Florida looks today.

Jackson's biography of Phillips is also the story of a fascinating life. A student of Frederick Law Olmsted at Harvard in landscape architecture and engineering, Phillips later became a representative of the Olmsted firm. He spent the next 45 years pioneering the use of palms and tropical plants, which had been largely ignored or treated with contempt. His Olmsted commissions took him to places as far-flung as Panama, Camp Jackson in South Carolina, and France. In 1924 he married and moved to Florida. From that point forward, Phillips's story coincides with that of Florida in its boom years, from the 1930s through the 1960s. As project superintendent of the first wave of Florida's Civilian Conservation Corps and later as consultant to the national and county park services, Phillips built all of south Florida's public parks as well as a large number of its private ones and designed dozens of public housing sites, hospitals, cemeteries, airports, roads, highways, private gardens, and college campuses. And he completed his masterpiece, the Fairchild Tropical Garden. Including 170 photographs, extensive plant lists, and many of Phillips's most famous plans, Jackson's biography is an intimate look at the pioneering vision of the man largely responsible for popularizing Florida's exotic landscape.

Faith Jackson, educator, writer, former book editor of the *Miami Herald*, avid master gardener, and sometime garden designer, had the good fortune to learn from William Lyman Phillips while he designed her south Florida garden. Her reviews and articles have appeared in *American Horticulturist* and *Mid-Atlantic Monthly*, among others. She lives in Washington, D.C.

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