



## by Jenny Rose Carey, The Garden Club of Philadelphia, Zone V

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A story from the 1800s was made famous in thousands of speeches delivered by its author, Russell Conwell, the founder of Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. The moral of the tale was that we should look for the “Acres of Diamonds” in our own backyards before searching the world for them.

A few years ago a chance conversation, after a lecture I had given to the New Canaan Garden Club, reminded me of that tale. It led me to suggest the documenting of one of the club’s own “diamonds” for GCA’s Slide Library of Notable American Parks and Gardens, since 1992 the core collection of the Archives of American Gardens (AAG) at the Smithsonian Institution. My lecture had been about women of the 1920s, and Laura Case, then Chair of the club’s Garden History and Design Committee, let it slip that her own house and garden had belonged to the longtime editor of *House and Garden* magazine. That editor, Richardson Wright, was a prolific garden writer in the 1920s and ‘30s. I could hardly contain my excitement and invited myself for a visit. It was winter, and as we wandered her gardens in the snow Laura told me about the hard time she was having securing access to a garden she was attempting to document. I looked at her and said, “Why don’t you document your own garden?” What a fascinating project—Laura just hadn’t seen it.

I went home and re-read all of Richardson Wright’s books, with Laura’s property in Silvermine, CT, foremost in my mind. Some years passed before I received an email from Laura telling me that she had in fact documented her garden for the Smithsonian archives. She has also, she

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added, given talks about it and the process of documentation.

Laura’s success story can inspire all GCA Garden History and Design committees to look for their own overlooked “Acres of Diamonds.” Choose a garden that is easy to document and you will get it done. Every garden has its unique story; make sure that you tell your own.



Illustration: Richardson Wright’s country house, by David Mode Payne. Photos: “Sun House” Garden as submitted to Smithsonian Institution, AAG



# “Acres of Diamonds,”

or the case for  
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garden

