

More About Our Archives

by Marie Caillet
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I was interested in the article by Dr. Bruce Turner about our Louisiana iris archives at the University in Lafayette (Winter 2002 issue). My 'collection' will eventually go there. It also brought back wonderful memories of the early years of the Society. The show pictured and labeled 1948 had to be before 1946. Not only do I remember this, but it can be found in Scrapbook Number 1. We outgrew our little displays in the old two story house next to the coliseum and moved to the old campus student center in 1946.

Bruce Turner could better tell you why archives are important, but I somehow must have known this over 60 years ago! Some of what I have for the archives will duplicate what others have sent, but much will be different. I hope duplicate material will be offered to the American Iris Society Library. I shall list a few of the items I have collected and saved since 1941.

1. There are 7 scrapbooks full of material, such as articles from newspapers and magazines. Newspaper clippings back to the 1930s when Dr. Small came to New Orleans and a Louisiana iris society was organized there. Unfortunately, it did not survive. One can find such information as officers, show winners, dates of meetings and other historical information.

2. A file containing membership lists, minutes of meetings and various projects the Society has engaged in over the years. Probably everything the Society has published and sent out to members, including all the Newsletters and Special Publications.

3. About 30 or 40 magazines

with articles about Louisiana irises and iris people. Many of these magazines are no longer published and would be hard to locate, even in libraries.

4. One file box is full of information on iris people - letters, articles about them or that they wrote, obituaries and sometimes a picture.

5. Catalogs listing Louisiana irises back to that of J. C. Nicholls of New York State in 1933 and those of early collectors like Percy Viosca and Edmond Riggs of Louisiana. Most of the catalogs from Sidney Conger, W. B. MacMillan, Claude Davis, Charlie Army, Melrose Gardens, Cordon Bleu Farms and some price lists from early collectors and hybridizers.

6. A file on the Louisiana Iris Society of America, which includes our petition to form the organization and all the bulletins that were published. I also

have the American Iris Society Bulletins back to 1940, but doubt this would go in our archives.

7. I have kept some of the working material from our 1988 and 2000 books, such as correspondence, contracts, outlines and letters or articles from those working on the books. Not every thing was kept here and much was discarded, but there is enough to fill a file box!

Where did all this material come from and why have I saved it? I hate to admit I am a pack-rat, but perhaps I am! I think it all started in the mid-1940s when I took the job of Publication Chairman and then that of Secretary-Treasurer. These jobs both required keeping things. I am sure I threw away things I should have kept, but much remained. In 1953 I helped with the publishing of a handbook and a bib-



Marie Caillet and Tom Dillard load boxes of SLI archives she saved through the years. Tom delivered the boxes to Dr. Bruce Turner at the University of Louisiana--Lafayette

liography that required digging for material and collecting any information we could find. This gave me the idea of starting the scrapbooks to keep things in chronological order. These early scrapbooks are falling apart, but are still here. There are also four photo albums and hundreds of slides. I duplicated about 400 slides to help start our Slide Archives since many were of the very early cultivars.

Society publications were automatic, as I was a Charter Member. Many articles were sent to me by our members - Some as far away as Australia, Germany and Japan. Magazines were not always as easy to collect and I am sure I missed some about the irises or iris people. I either wrote articles or helped with many in magazines during the past 25 years, so have copies of those.

A close connection with the American Iris Society brought in articles from regional bulletins and several pamphlets were sent when the AIS central office in St. Louis was closed out. Early members like Hattie Clark and Minnie Colquitt gave me material they had hoarded. A prime example is the book, *The Genus Iris* by W. R. Dykes, published in 1913 and now considered a rare book. I have corresponded with iris people for over 60 years and

worked with our publications. Editing our newsletters for 14 years was a great way to contact people and acquire material.

This material has been invaluable when we needed to check a date, a name or information about an activity. The catalogs were used for the 1982 and 1990 Check Lists to check descriptions and parentage. I often refer to the scrapbooks and files when writing an obituary or recommendations for awards. We have used the information when preparing publications and for editing articles for the two books. I have just used the files for writing about some of the early hybridizers for our next Special Publication. A lady in California is using letters and catalog listings for an article she is writing about her grandfather, Eric Nies, one of the very early hybridizers. A garden writer has recently copied letters, articles and newspaper clippings about Caroline Dormon for a possible book she is writing. I sent a copy of a Christmas letter by Percy Viosca in 1952 to his son, who doesn't remember seeing it and was delighted to have a copy.

I will end this by saying that I live alone and have more storage space than I need, otherwise I doubt I would still have so much. Things do accumulate and I guess I AM A PACK RAT!

Minnie Colquitt Celebrates 100 Years

Mrs. Minnie Colquitt, one of the three surviving charter members of the Society for Louisiana Irises, celebrated her 100th birthday on July 12th. Mrs. Colquitt served as president of SLI during its early years. She was also active in the American Iris Society. In 1951, when AIS held its national convention in Shreveport, Louisiana., she served as convention chairman. AIS later awarded her the Distinguished Service Medal.

A photograph of Minnie Colquitt on a collecting trip to a swamp in 1948 is reproduced below.

Mrs. Colquitt would love to hear from SLI members.

Minnie in a Swamp

The photograph to the right serves two purposes: 1) to celebrate the 100th birthday of SLI charter member Minnie Colquitt (shown here in 1948); and, 2) to show the type of materials Marie Caillet, another SLI stalwart, collected through the years in her association with the Society.

Congratulations to both Minnie Colquitt and Marie Caillet!

