



Izmir 250 Years Ago: A Famous Botanical Garden

Evelyn Lyle Kalcas

Garden History, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer, 1978), 26-28.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0307-1243%28197822%296%3A2%3C26%3AI2YAAF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>

Garden History is currently published by The Garden History Society.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ghs.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Izmir 250 years ago: a famous botanical garden, by Evelyn Lyle Kalças

One of the visitors to Smyrna during the eighteenth century was the Swedish naturalist Frederik Hasselquist, who had been a student under Linnaeus. He reached Smyrna at the end of 1749 and has left a record of his visit: 'Sedekio, near Smyrna, is a remarkable place in which the great Sherard, who in his day was sovereign in the botanical world, has extended the knowledge of the flora of the area and has established a specimen garden which should be seen by any botanist. I therefore decided on the 20th to pay a visit to such a worthy place. This great patron and lover of botany had a delightful summer dwelling and the most rewarding recreation that any European could have in this place. He spent his time on a large botanical collection which has made him 'immortal'. His garden was planned not for any decorative purpose with imported plants, but simply to grow all plants of the region collected during his many country excursions'. These excursions led him much farther afield than would be expected, considering the difficulties of travel at the time, for, as mentioned by the above writer, Sherard is heard of as studying the classical ruins of Aphrodisias, remote even today.

This botanist, whose fame had spread to Europe, was an Englishman - William Sherard, 1659-1728, who spent the years between 1703 and 1716 at Smyrna as Consul to the English Levant Company. He had been a pupil of the famous French traveller and naturalist, Tournefort, and this doubtless encouraged his interest in the plants of the Near East. His unique botanical garden near Smyrna attracted many visitors from Europe.

In addition to his collection of plants in his garden, William Sherard had a herbarium of 12,000 pressed plants. These latter, together with his library, manuscripts, and large fortune, he left to found a chair of botany at Oxford.

It was through Mr John Harvey, a member of the Garden History Society in England, that I first learned of the existence of a famous botanical garden at Seydeköy, near Izmir. It was said to exist 275 years ago, and when I was asked to locate it the quest seemed an impossible one.

However, fortune favoured me - Kismet - for, by chance I mentioned my search to our good friends Bay Erol Salinci, director of the airport at Cigil, and his wife Sabahat Hanim. Erol Bey immediately realised that most of his airport employees came from the region of Gaziemir and Seydeköy, as the original airport had been in that locality, so he commenced making enquiries. The outcome was a trip to the site of Sherard's famous garden, the fame of which is spoken of locally even to the present day.

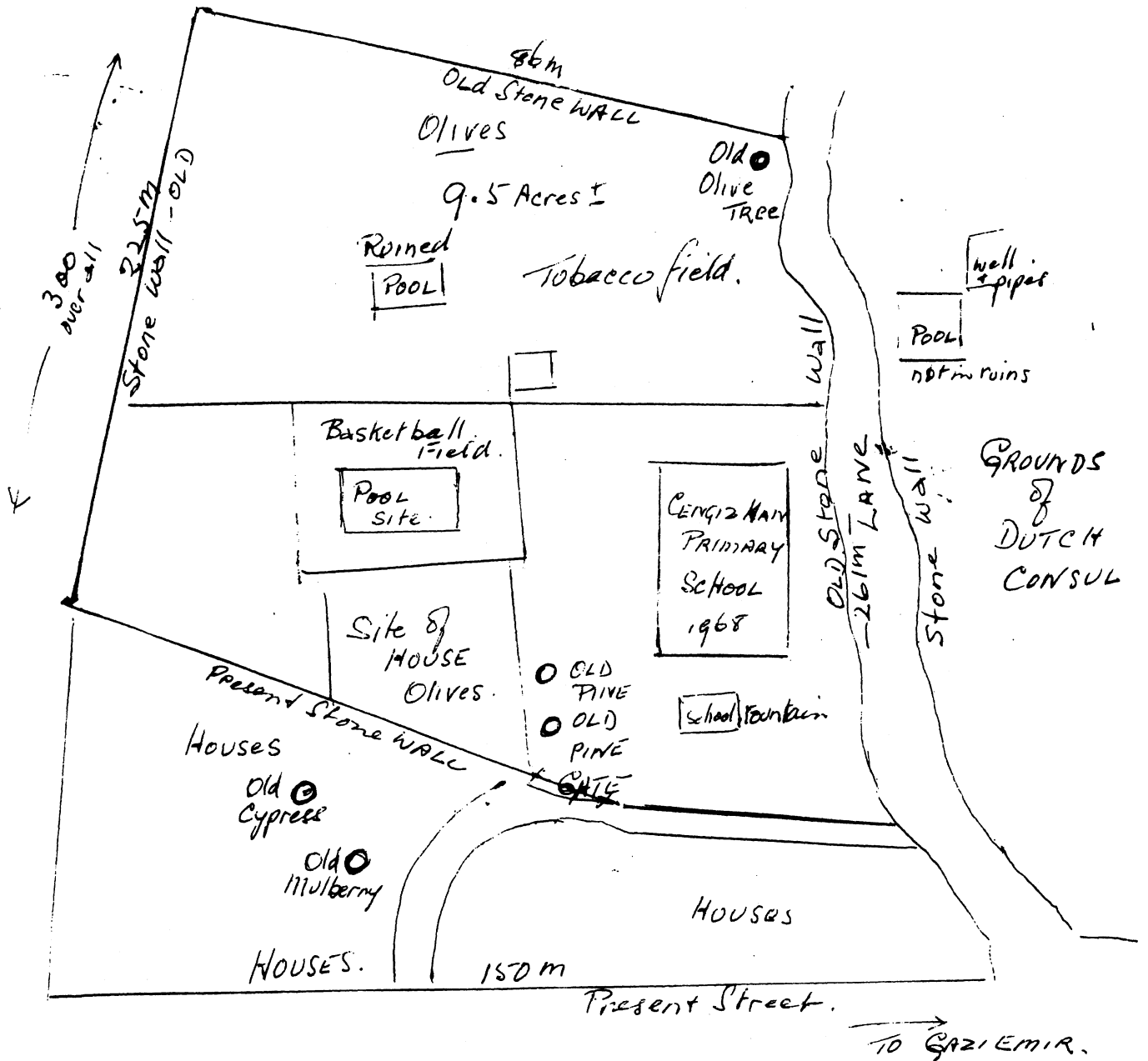
Seydeköy is due south of Izmir and 12 km from the Centrum. It is now encircled by the dwellings of Gaziemir. The area had, and still has a reputation for a perfect climate, possibly because of its proximity to wooded hills. This was perhaps the great attraction that caused William Sherard to build his summer home there when he was Consul at Izmir in 1703-16.

At present the site can clearly be seen enclosed in what appears to be the original stone wall, but it is somewhat reduced in area now by the addition of small houses near the entrance. It has an approximate area of 9.5 acres, or 37 donum, of fine, red, fertile soil, now used for growing tobacco and a few olive trees. There are a few ancient trees such as cypress, mulberry and pine which may have been planted in Sherard's original garden.

Apparently the residence has been but recently demolished for the Cengiz Han primary school built on the site is dated 1968. Beside the School entrance we noted a marble lion and a collection of 'dibekler' or mortars, obviously made of portions of marble columns from some classical site. This is in accord with what

SEYDIKÖY.

— Site of SHERARD'S GARDEN.



we know of William Sherard, who was a noted archaeologist in addition to being a famous botanist. By chance I had come upon a mention of Sherard's classical interest in my Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography which was published in London in 1856:

'Sherard in 1705 or 1716 copies a Greek inscription at Aphrodisias which is a Consultum of the Roman Senate which confirms the privileges granted by the Dictator and the Triumviri to the Aphrodisienses. This gives freedom to the people of Piarasis and Aphrodisias and also declares the temple of Aphrodite there to have the same rights as the temple of the Ephesia at Ephesus, and the temple was also declared to be an asylum.'

The property adjoining that of Sherard was owned by a Dutch Consul of the de Hochepped family, who was a Count of the Holy Roman Empire. Though this residence was probably not built until the 1750's, some time after that of Sherard, it is considered possible that the plan may be almost identical for it conforms to buildings of the period. The property seems about as large as that of Sherard, and the pool is not in ruins, being well constructed with an unusual type of well over 8m deep, complete with pipes. Here too, are some ancient trees, a pine and oriental plane.

An old arched gateway, still intact, led from the street. The old mansion was most attractive when viewed from the front, having a portico supported by four extra large columns flanked by two huge and ancient wistarias with trunks about one foot in diameter. Built partly of stone blocks and partly of kirpiç - a sun-dried brick - it is combined with timber in almost a half-timbered style. There are still solid patches of external plaster lined to simulate stonework, and numerous very long, handmade nails are to be found. The entire building has evidently been extremely strong to withstand the numerous earthquakes, for its deterioration appears to be merely the result of neglect. The spacious entrance hall of black and white tiles has a lovely vaulted ceiling and columns of white marble, the twin staircases ascending just behind the pairs of columns.

Present residents of the ruin, that is complete with TV aerial, state that there are about 30 rooms in all. The owners are descendants of Turkish refugees who came from Kavalla in Greece over 55 years ago in the exchange of population following the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

The most striking feature of this mansion is the coat of arms over the front portico. It is in good condition and bears a heraldic design of crescents and lions surmounted by a delicately carved coronet. This escutcheon I later discovered by chance is reproduced on the marble tablet on the grave of Daniel John de Hochepped, Count of the Holy Roman Empire, who died in 1796 and is buried in the tiny graveyard of the Dutch Chapel of old Smyrna.

It is possible that this property, like that of the neighbouring Sherard's was richly planted, for, when speaking to old residents who were amongst the first refugees to arrive there, I heard many a mention of those gardens as 'Cennet gibi' - 'like Paradise'.

So to the present day the fame of Sherard's botanical garden lives on, a small plant has been named Sherardia arvensis, and the Sherardian Professorship at Oxford still exists, all being reminders of the love of this Englishman for the flora of old Smyrna and the Aegean region.

* * * *