John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) was one of the most prolific and successful authors of gardening and horticultural books and periodicals in the nineteenth century (Fig. 1). He wrote for the new middle class that had developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution. During the course of the nineteenth century almost all aspects of bookmaking technology became mechanized and cheaper forms of color illustration were developed. Before that time books had been expensive to produce and only the wealthy could afford to buy them. Coinciding with these technological developments was a craze for gardens and floraculture in Great Britain. John Loudon’s publications filled a new niche for middle class gardeners looking for guidance. During his lifetime he published roughly 60 million words about gardening, horticulture, architecture, farming, and rural improvements.¹

Loudon was born in Scotland, the son of a farmer. During his lifetime suburbs came into existence as the new middle class retreated to housing away from the unhealthy, heavily polluted inner cities, an unwelcome by-product of industrialization and progress. He was very liberal minded and promoted the development of public parks and better living conditions for rural workers. He believed that gardening was a form of self-improvement that promoted good morals. Loudon was also very class-conscious. He advocated the acquisition of taste to increase the social standing of the less wealthy, including women. He promoted the education of gardeners and helped elevate their status. His efforts contributed to making possible the likes of a Sir Joseph Paxton. Paxton (1803-1865) made the gardens at Chatsworth the most famous in England and provided the design for the Crystal Palace that housed the Great Exhibition of 1851. Loudon could also be very opinionated and authoritarian, but he was at heart a great humanitarian dedicated to improving the lives of others through his work.

When Loudon was eleven years old he began working in nurseries in Scotland. He became a student at the University of Edinburgh in 1798. In addition to classes in botany and chemistry, he attended lectures on agriculture given by Andrew Coventry (1764-1832). Coventry was the first professor of agriculture at the university. It was Coventry who wrote letters of introduction that Loudon took with him on a visit to London in 1803. Through these letters he was introduced to the natural history artist James Sowerby, Sir Joseph Banks (the naturalist who accompanied Cook on the great voyage of the *Endeavor*), and the philosopher and reformer Jeremy Bentham. Loudon’s career as a landscape gardener also began in 1803 when he submitted proposals for improvements to the grounds at Scotland’s Scone Palace, Perthshire. In 1804 he received more commissions in Scotland and the London vicinity as well as a commission from the duch-

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Oral Histories of DeKalb Podcast series

Sara Finnigan, board member of the Friends of the Libraries, is currently working on her Master of Library Science degree with a focus on rare books and special collections. As part of her coursework, she will be interning with DeKalb Public Library and creating an Oral Histories of DeKalb podcast series in the spring of 2019. Interviews will be conducted March – May, with timeslots available to the general public.

To schedule a time to interview or learn more about the project, please email Sara at saramf2@illinois.edu

Founders’ Type went green with the Fall 2018 issue. Please help us save trees and support campus sustainability initiatives by receiving the newsletter via email. If you wish to receive the print version, and haven’t already done so, contact Angie via the email below or by calling (815) 753-8091.

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professional gardeners and amateurs. Most of the text was written by Loudon himself who promoted and disseminated his ideas and opinions on such matters as the education of gardeners and the benefits of gardening for all people. Digital copies of *The Gardener’s Magazine* can be found in the HathiTrust Digital Library.

One of Loudon’s last projects was to edit a new edition of the works of the noted landscape gardener Humphry Repton (1752–1818). NIU holds a copy of this work. Loudon had hoped the royalties from this work published in 1840 would support his wife and daughter after his death. Loudon had amassed a massive debt producing his monumental work *Arboretum et fruticetum britannicum* (1838). This eight-volume work aimed to categorize all the trees grown in Britain, both native and nonnative. John Loudon died of chronic bronchitis in December 1843. He was survived by his wife Jane Webb Loudon (1807–1858), one of the era’s most successful writers of popular gardening books, and their daughter Agnes. In summary of his character in full Jane wrote “there never lived a more liberal and thoroughly public-spirited man than Mr. Loudon.”

Every December she gathered flowers remaining from their garden and made a wreath to lay on his grave.

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