

 How long has it been since you have taken your family to Shaw's Garden? After enjoying two lovely evenings there with friends—the Koenigs and then the Ritters, I realized how much I had missed the garden. ♦ When the children were younger, we took them to Shaw's Garden quite often, but as time marched on with so much more to accomplish, our visits became infrequent. Sadly, they are generally limited to just one or two trips a year now. Yet each time we return, we are joyfully reminded of all the lovely days and evenings spent meandering through the garden. Even now as we step into the garden, it is as if we are on vacation, roaming the private grounds of some notable family. And in fact that is what we do when we visit Shaw's Garden because the grounds had once been the private estate of Henry Shaw.

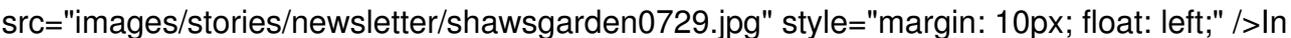
Born in Sheffield England in the year 1800, Henry Shaw acquired his business acumen and entrepreneurial spirit from his father whom he assisted in the family's iron factory until he took the family's interests into the interior of the vast territories acquired by the Louisiana Purchase.

 Seeking a market for his father's products, Henry traveled on a steam powered paddlewheel boat for 40 days up the Mississippi River from the port of New Orleans to a small French village just three blocks deep and one mile long. It was here in this small village that Henry began his hardware business. And as St. Louis grew in prominence and became the "Gateway to the West," so did Henry's business. Shaw found a ready market in outfitting pioneers with the necessary hardware, tools, and cutlery for starting homesteads west of the Mississippi. His business grew so profitable that by age forty, Shaw was able to retire as one of the largest landholders in St. Louis.

After disposing of his business, Shaw traveled extensively throughout Europe. Shortly after his return to St. Louis, Shaw hired architect George Barnett to design and construct his Tower Grove home on his grounds recognized today as the Missouri Botanical Gardens. With more time to pursue his love for botany, he began planning the gardens around his home, which he eventually opened to the public in 1859.

One of the oldest botanical institutions in America and a National Historic Landmark of great renown, this garden that so clearly reflected Henry's English upbringing is still affectionately referred to as Shaw's Garden by many such as ourselves, who give honor to the man who made possible this urban oasis.

Showcased within this exquisitely designed garden is a multitude of distinct gardens like the oldest greenhouse west of the Mississippi where camellias happily bloom during the worst of St. Louis winters, summer lily ponds, a circular rose garden, a geometric domed greenhouse with 1500 tropical plants, a garden filled with fragrant plants for the blind, a Mediterranean tiled garden, a Victorian maze, a Victorian garden, an herb garden, an English woodland garden, a walled English boxwood garden, a garden devoted to George Washington Carver, a vegetable garden, a children's garden, and fourteen acres devoted to Japanese gardening where lotus pads sway and koi play, waterfalls gush, and bridges lead to more beautiful vistas.

 In 1868, Shaw donated land adjacent to his Tower Grove home to the city for the "health and happiness of its inhabitants and to the advancement of refinement and culture." Aptly named Tower Grove

Park, it stands today as a testament to Henry Shaw's Victorian upbringing and the knowledge he gleaned from his visits to public grounds while traveling throughout Europe following his retirement.

 Lined with magnificent trees, dotted with eleven gorgeous pavilions, a beautiful bandstand and lifelike statues of the great composers, the stonework, ironwork, towers, curving walls, sculptures, fountains, pillars, bridges, the Villa, Palm and Plant Houses, the lions and the stags all work together to make this 289 acres an oasis for both city and suburban dwellers.

 Surrounded by groves of trees in a shaded garden just outside his Tower Grove home, Shaw's marble effigy stands as a tribute to this philanthropist's lifelong work in making beautiful, restful grounds for all to enjoy.</p>