Garden of a Bad Boy

Lillian Aldrich created this garden between 1908 and 1913 as a memorial to her late husband, Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Mr. Aldrich was a famous poet, author of The Story of a Bad Boy and the editor of The Atlantic Monthly. Mrs. Aldrich laid out the garden with plants mentioned in his poems as she compiled them into a book titled The Shadow of the Flowers.

This historic landscape features the first house museum in New Hampshire and the oldest continuously planted garden at Strawbery Banke. Originally, visitors entered through the front door from the streets of Portsmouth. In 1979, the house became part of Strawbery Banke and a new entrance through the summerhouse was created. In 2008, the entrance to the garden was made handicapped-accessible and the entire garden was restored and replanted for the 100th anniversary of the Aldrich museum.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich Memorial Garden
A restored Colonial Revival garden dedicated in 1908

What is Colonial Revival?
The Colonial Revival movement was a nostalgic effort to recreate an ideal "shared" American past. Historians identify the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, showcasing a New England "colonial" house, as the inaugural moment for Colonial Revival.

The roots of the movement lay in the reaction to increasing industrialization, the loss of family farms and the influx of millions of immigrants to American shores. Native born Americans responded by attempting to recapture an idealized past. This "colonial" style evoked a simpler and more natural way of life by recreating gardens and landscapes, preserving buildings, fashioning furniture and holding commemorative pageants.

When this garden was planted in 1908, you could look out and see the working waterfront and connected Puddle Dock neighborhood. Within this ornamental fence, you could find the brick paths, a Durham Fag patio, decorative urns and arbores, herbloom plants, and a sundial, which stood in stark contrast to the working class waterfront neighborhood consisting of Yankees and immigrants, new automobile roads and scrap piles.