

## Fort Lauderdale's Bartlett Estate/Bonnet House & Gardens

Fort Lauderdale, Florida is site of the Bartlett Estate/Bonnet House. The land was once part of the Tequesta people, dating back to 2,000 BC, one of the first tribes in South Florida. The property was a gift from Hugh Taylor Birch, a wealthy lawyer and real estate investor from Chicago, IL. He purchased the land in 1895. In 1919, Birch gave the property to his daughter Helen and her husband Frederic Clay Bartlett, a graduate of Munich's prestigious Royal Academy. Bartlett designed the house and began construction on the Bonnet House in 1920. It became an occasional winter retreat over the next decade. The name Bonnet House came from the Bonnet Lily.

In 1931, Helen died of breast cancer. Fredric later married Evelyn Fortune Lilly. In the coming years, the couple began to frequent the Bonnet House during the winter months and began adding decorative art and other elements. In 1953, Fredric died. Evelyn, a "prolific painter," continued to use the Bonnet House as her winter refuge.

In 1983, she turned the house over to the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. It was the largest charitable gift in the state at that time. In 1984, the house and its gardens were listed on the National Register of Historic places and in 2002, the city of Fort Lauderdale declared it a historic landmark.

The Bonnet House includes 35 acres. It is one of the last places to view "native barrier island habitat," with wetlands, migratory birds and even manatees. Being next to the Atlantic Ocean, the property has many examples of dunes, vegetation and even a maritime forest. Evelyn Bartlett's interest in orchids can be seen today in the estate's Orchid Display House. Since 1983, hurricanes have caused significant damage to the property. Major restoration has been necessary.

This photo program shares the beautiful grounds, house and gardens at the Bonnet House.















acuri.net John R. Vincenti Fort Lauderdale's Bonnet House & Gardens

Sources: Guides at the Bartlett Estate/Bonnet House. <http://www.bonnethouse.org/>,  
<https://fcit.usf.edu/florida/lessons/tequest/tequest1.htm>, <https://www.sunny.org/listings/bonnet-house-museum-%26-gardens/1833/.>, and <http://myfortlauderdalebeach.com/portfolio-view/bonnet-house-museum-and-gardens/>.