Sent Botanists

Virtually every major government on earth, including the USA, sent botanists to Avery Island. The man who created it spent some years traveling the earth. Part of this time was in the far northern Eskimos, but he came home to remain, having found nothing, he will tell you, to compare with his ancestral island. The garden itself, hidden from view from outside its enclosures, occupies the oak covered dome itself, the center of that may truly be called a Louisiana domain.

Few fail to feel an air of indescribable mystery about Avery Island. It was once the home of coast Indians, held to be the strongest in America. You still find their stone-work in the soil. It was among the first spots on the long Louisiana coast to be occupied by white men. It has its quota of pirate tales which Jean Lafitte figures. The McIlhenny home itself, standing on a hill, yet almost hidden from view or visitors, is a place of pure charm. In it are the trophies of Mr. McIlhenny's travels.

Mystery of Island

The "mystery" of the island was not lessened a few years ago when a huge wood and gold image of Buddha came to Mr. McIlhenny as a gift and he placed it in his gardens. He created long winding lagoons, built a hill of seven steps all planted in azaleas; and placed the Chinese Buddha in a gorgeous Chinese glass and bamboo pagoda.

Shonfa Temple

The image was made and placed in the Shonfa temple near Peiping some 800 years ago, so the story goes, by the emperor Wi-Tsang. But;ne years ago a Chinese general looted the temple and sent the Buddha to America. It was presented to McIlhenny by several eastern friends who had been his hunting guests on the estate. The figure is nearly six feet in height. It is of wood woven carved. A layer of sheet gold was first applied, then one of lacquer and another of brown gold dust. The patina of gold alone has been appraised at $18,000.

An interesting tale is hung about the Wasi orange tree on the estate. The story is that a Wasi orange tree can only be grown in China. The only person in the world who can claim ownership of such a tree is the mikado. None but the emperor may taste it, though the McIlhennys eat it whenever they like.

Arctic Expedition

It seems that during this Arctic expedition Mr. McIlhenny rescued the crew of several wrecked whaling ships, among whom were three high caste Japanese. The Japanese government offered to reward him and he asked for a Wasi orange for his garden, and got it. It was a prize long sought by botanical gardens all over the world. Another famous feature of the gardens is the heron lake, where thousands of the birds nest every year.