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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

ALBERTO E. BIANCHI
7a. Calle 2-58, Zona 1,
Guatemala.

Guatemala, June 16, 1964

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
Casa Popenoe,
Antigua G.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

I have not had the pleasure of seeing you lately. You stay in Antigua most of the time and my job in INCASA keeps me very close to the grindstone here at Kilometro 6 de la Carretera al Atlántico.

However my intense interest in agriculture and my hobby of working with difficult plants to grow, seems to increase with the years. I have a property on Lake Izabal where I go once in a while and there I have been trying to introduce new crops which some day might be of value to Guatemala.

Among my trials there were: Pepper. I obtained some rooted cuttings from Puerto Rico some three years ago. These grew beautifully for about six months, producing vines six to ten feet. All of a sudden, some disease infected them and they all died. Now I am working with vanilla from native stock of the region and have some 400 vines growing very successfully up to now. No crop yet, but indications are that it will do well.

Cinnamon was another experiment which has done extremely well. I obtained seed from a few trees that do not seem to do too well in finca "El Egén" near San Antonio Such. These seeds germinated well and I planted the seedlings under varying conditions; half-shade and half-sun, three quarters sun and one quarter shade and full sun. The trees out in the full sun are doing remarkably well and at three years of age are six to seven feet tall, look very healthy and appear to be very happy.

Another of my propagating experiments has been with Mangosteen. As you recall, there were three original trees in the town of Izabal on the shores of the lake. From these trees I have obtained seed (which is very difficult to grow) and now have several trees of ages one to three years.

I would very much like to try good varieties of cinnamon. Nutmeg, Litchee nut, Rambostan and Pulustan. I understand that Lancetilla has a few trees of the Litchee and its close relatives. Could you tell me to whom I could write in Lancetilla to obtain a few seeds or propagating material of these and/or other tropical fruits that we could grow at the Izabal Lake area?

Jorge Benitez at one time told me that there were a few Litchee trees growing somewhere in Guatemala, but that they had not produces fruit so far. I wonder if Izabal climate would not be better for them.

As far as I know and your books state, the climate ideal for nutmeg seems to be the same climate as for Cinnamon. In that case nutmeg would then grow in Izabal. Do you think Litchee, Rambostan and Oulustan would also grow there? Thank you in advance for your valued information.

Best wishes Cordially yours,
Alberto

ALBERTO E. BIANCHI
7^a Calle 2-58, Zona 1,
GUATEMALA.

Guatemala, May 12, 1967

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
Casa Popenoe,
Antigua G.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Probably Art Falla has spoken to you about my farm in San José Pinula where I am growing various fruit trees, particularly peaches which I want to cultivate both for the fresh fruit market as well as for the canning factories here.

Early last year I brought in from California an assortment of Peaches, Pears, Apples, Plums, Quince, Persimmon and Cherries and Apricots. The trees have grown well and although some are still dormant at this time, particularly the peaches, many are already bringing forth a new set of leaves.

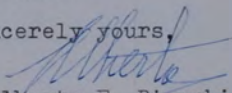
Beside the introductions from California I have also obtained in and around San Lucas and Quezaltenango young grafted trees of what appear to be good varieties; also some of the Florida Peaches that Art Falla brought in and grafted on native rootstock. I understand he brought in on your recommendation the Florida Won, Florida Home and the Okinawa varieties.

It would be extremely gratifying for me to receive your visit and to have the opportunity of discussing many problems and ideas relative to fruit culture under our conditions. We are situated at 5,860 feet elevation and have good soils and an abundance of water.

If you could, in the near future, visit my property preferably one morning now that rains have started, I would be very grateful and would pick you up at whatever time and place is convenient to you.

With kindest regards and best wishes.

Sincerely yours,


Alberto E. Bianchi

ALBERTO E. BIANCHI
7a Calle 2-58, Zona 1,
GUATEMALA.

Guatemala, June 10, 1967

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Thank you for your letter of June 1st. in which you say that you hope to be able to visit our farm "Las Vertientes" in San José Pinula on your return from Boston. I very much look forward to your visit and I hope that it could be with Arturo Falla since we have parallel interests and I feel that getting the three of us together, we can accomplish a great deal. I am sending a copy of this letter to Arturo so that he will know about this.

This is intended to be a sort of agenda of what I would like to discuss with you and Arturo on our meeting. First I want to express my plans as to what I want to ultimately aim at:

a) Peaches: I feel that the climate and soils of San José Pinula are well adapted to this crop. Furthermore, the market for good, firm peaches is almost unlimited if we consider the demand from the canneries for nectars, canned peaches and for fresh markets both in Guatemala as well as the rest of Central America.

What has been done so far: I imported 33 varieties of peaches from California to select from these the ones that will better adapt to our climate. So far a few have shown good promise; however I am worried over the fact that many of the varieties are still dormant at this writing. They dropped their leaves completely from February to April and although the branches are green, alive and full of buds, many of them have not produced leaves yet. It is true that we have had cold, cludy weather with hail and north winds until recently that it began to rain.

The soil is good; it has been kept free of weeds and cultivated between the rows; we applied 4 oz. of 14-14-14 to each tree in a large circle around the base and irrigated throughout the dry season.

Among my introductions there are Elberta and Fay Elberta which are two of the favorite varieties for canning peach-halves in California. These two have but a few leaves at the tips of the branches now.

I have obtained grafting material from San Lucas, San Bartolo, Chimaltenango and Quezaltenango of the melocotones considered there as the best yellow, hard either red-pit or yellow pit types. These have been grafted on ordinary white native peach roots and they seem to be doing well. I also took scion material from some of the introductions, grafted on seedling white peaches and they also took well.

At this stage I ran out of peach seedlings large enough to continue grafting. However I am again grafting scions of the introductions on a new crop of seedling peaches planted to field position in November of last year and recently. Just as soon as the peach seedlings are large enough, I graft them using both the scions and the buds for this purpose.

I also brought in from Mexico peach seeds of a melocoton reputed there as producing true to parent and producing a large, firm, hard peach, suitable for canning. These trees are already in field position and some 18" high, growing fast.

I believe that we should continue to bring in material from Georgia, Florida and other Southern states to continue selection of material that will produce well in our climates. Much has been brought into Guatemala in recent years, but it has either been lost through negligence or lost-track-of through lack of interest. However, there must be some good trees somewhere in Guatemala. I constantly look for these, frankly without much success. But if you, Arturo and I continue searching, I am sure we will find it. I would like to bring into our group some other enthusiastic horticulturists that could without secrecy and jealousy, contribute their material and experience with ours.

By the way, I understand that most of the material brought in by AID to Labor Ovalle in Quezaltenango died through lack of care and water.

The Florida and Okinawa varieties that Arturo has in Antigua seem to be promising for the local fresh-fruit market; particularly because of their very early ripening habit. I have five of Okinawa and five of the Florida One at Las Vertientes and are growing well.

b) Pears: Pears also have a large demand from the canneries as well as for the local and export market to the rest of C.A. I do not know how well they will do in S.J.P. So far I have five imported varieties and some ten others from material in Quezaltenango and San Bartolo. They graft well on Manzanilla. The imports are weak but their scions on manzanilla are very vigorous.

I will continue a small program on pears more than anything for observation as I do not at this time intend to go very big on pears unless they prove to be successful. Again there must be some varieties that will adapt to San José Pinula.

c) Berries: All kinds. S.J.P. Valley is certainly well adapted to Strawberries and we are expanding the small, planting we have there. I would very much appreciate your recommendations as to varieties that I want to import and which are free or at least tolerant to virus and fungus plagues. I have been recommended the Florida 90 as a variety to try here. Jorge Benitez recommends the California Fresno and Shasta varieties. However I will do nothing until I can discuss this with you and Arturo.

Blackberries: Are native to our region and among the many varieties I have picked out two. One that is very large, healthy, sweet and prolific. It has no diseases after two years under cultivation. I believe this variety is even better than the Andean Chico de Sola variety. I want you and Arturo to grade it. The other variety is smaller, deep black, but very sweet and most prolific.

The third is the Andean variety on which Arturo and I have a joint venture just now starting.

Raspberries: I brought in Chuthbert and Willamet varieties which I am propagating. However so far we have had only a small production. I am gambling on that they will do well with us. I sure hope so.

Boysenberries and Marion berries: Brought ten plants of each and they are flowering and beginning to produce. The boysen began bearing large, very attractive berries but these have become smaller and

smaller all the time. The Marionberries are just now bgining to ripen for the first time, so we cannot evaluate them as to quality. We can say, however, that they are later ripening, less vigorous and less productive than the Boycen. At least in our conditions.

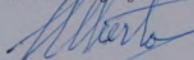
What other kinds of berries can we bring into Guatemala that can become of commercial importance? We frecuently hear from people that have traveled throughout South America, particularly Chile, Argentina and Peru of magnificent berries that are a common staple in the markets there. Do you know of any?

The Ambassador from Argentina who is a great admirer of the fruits we have here, frecuently tells us of the magnificent peaches, pears, apricots, apples, etc. they have there. He told us recently that some of their best fruits in Argentina have developed from material taken there from Australia especially peaches and persimmons.

Speaking of persimmons, I was told that a german in Coban has some 800 persimmon trees bearing good fruit which he sells to the supermarkets here at 10 cents each. He has found that he can graft certain varieties of persimmons on a tree native to Coban and thus gets very vigorous growth and a crop at three years from graft. The persimmon is a Sapotaceous fruit I understand; do you know of a possible tree that we might use as rootstock here? I have two trees of the Hachia variety. Carlos Heineman in Coban cultivates the Fuji variety but will not tell his secret nor sell propagating material.

Well, the above seems to cover at least the major topics of what I would like to talk to you about and discuss with Arturo so that we can unify our efforts.

Cordially yours,



Alberto E. Bianchi

cc: Don Arturo Falla C.,
San Sebastian,
Antigua G.