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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.

POLONIN, N.

Gray Herbarium



Harvard University

REED C. ROLLINS, DIRECTOR
ROBERT C. FOSTER, ACTING CURATOR
FRANCIS WELLES HUNNEWELL, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
EDITH SCAMMAN, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

NICHOLAS POLONIN, RESEARCH FELLOW
MARJORIE W. STONE, LIBRARIAN AND BIBLIOPHAGER
JANE HERSEY, ASSISTANT BIBLIOPHAGER

79 GARDEN STREET
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS, U.S.A.

Professor John Milton Fogg, Jr.
Department of Botany,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia 4, Pa.

2 January 1952.

Dear John,

Now that we are safely returned from a memorable visit to your fine City I would like to thank you for your many kindnesses to me during the meetings, which I thought went off excellently and for me were rendered much the more delightful by the opportunity they afforded of getting to know you at long last. My earliest recollection of you is as a stalwart figure standing on a snowbank somewhere in the wilds -- of Rhodora! We look forward to a reunion here soon, when my wife and I very much hope that you will be our guest at our abode at the top of Highland Street a few minutes from the Gray. We have the middle of Organist Biggs' house, but are in the new telephone book. In view of your anticipated visit I will not burden you with a host of unwanted reprints -- you can choose when you come -- but am sending under separate cover the aerobiological ones for which you asked, and also the chit on decapitalization and a few other recent items. The North Pole cf. Ambrosia pollen grain is mentioned (and marked) on p. 346 of the grey-covered Swedish reprint, and you may be interested in the "absent-treatment hybridization" possibilities suggested in the final paragraph of the same paper.

I have been thinking about the job situation concerning which we ought to do something in the fairly near future, and especially about your mention of Virginia since meeting the present incumbent and finding with him so very much in common that I am wondering whether, coming as I do from England, I might not still fall within the category of what they want. If you happen to think this a possibility, I wonder if you could write to them again? If not, or you feel committed already, I shall quite understand -- and anyway not expect a reply. Most of my academic life has been spent in Oxford where I was a Don for rather many years, and the rest conducting arctic and other expeditions apart from sojourns especially at Harvard (and in the Macdonald Chair of Botany at McGill to which we shall definitely not be returning); but if anyone wants details they may find them in the usual works of reference such as "Who's Who", or, latterly, "Who's Who in America".

Best wishes for 1952 and beyond -- and to the Flora of Pennsylvania.

Sincerely yours,

Nicholas Polonin

Encl.
reprints separately.
NPcc.

Miss Eleanor E. Campion,
Philadelphia Bibliographical Center and Union Library Catalog,
Engineering Building,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia 4, Pa.

3 January 1952.

Dear Miss Campion,

I was sorry to miss you last Saturday when I returned to your office to pick up my reference cards but write to say how deeply appreciative I am of your help. Your service is certainly impressive, and in this instance it looks as though your 'leads' will help our library authorities at Harvard to track down for me a considerable proportion of the eighteen nuisances that remain from what were originally over three thousand references in the five chapters concerned. That is already not a bad record, but it looks as though with your good help we are going to improve upon it!

Best wishes for 1952.

Yours sincerely,

Cc. to Professor J. M. Fogg, Jr.

Nicholas Polunin

from Fagg

January 11, 1952

Dr. Nicholas Polunin,
The Gray Herbarium,
Harvard University,
79 Garden Street,
Cambridge 38, Mass.

Dear Nick:

Thanks so much for your gracious letter of January 2nd and for the interesting batch of reprints which reached me in today's mail. I enjoyed reading the former and shall look forward to a quiet evening when I can sit down with the latter, for the titles of all of them intrigue me greatly. Although I have read several of them when they came out in journals, I am delighted to have this opportunity of rereading them and having the entire lot for my files.

It was a very great pleasure to get to know you on the occasion of the recent meetings here and I can only hope that the future will provide ample opportunities of seeing you and getting to know you better. My plans for the Spring Term are far from clear, but I earnestly hope that they will include a visit to the Gray Herbarium and I deeply appreciate your kind offer of hospitality. I shall let you know later how my schedule works out.

With respect to the job situation at the University of Virginia, I feel, unfortunately, that the limitations which the committee has imposed in making their choice of a successor to Dr. Lewis would not enable them to consider you. The statement, which I have before me, specifically limits the selection to individuals born in either this country or Canada. The further stipulation that the candidate must have "an appreciation of the Southerner's point of view" does not, of course, eliminate those who are residents of other portions of the country but indicates strongly that they are seeking someone who has had at least some close contact with the mode of life which prevails south of the Mason-Dixon Line. I shall, however, explore this matter a little farther and if it seems appropriate to place your name in nomination, shall be pleased to do so.

With best wishes and warm personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

GRAY HERBARIUM OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY
79 GARDEN STREET
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

Dr. John M. Fogg, Jr., Vice-Provost
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia 4, Pa.

19 February 1953.

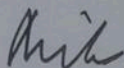
Dear Jack,

During a recent visit to England I arranged with the Oxford University Press to publish there and in this country and Canada my four volumes on arctic plant sciences and ecology on the understanding that I would prepare the material finally for the Clarendon Press. To do this and continue my researches effectively I need a position which could if necessary be a partly teaching and/or administrative one (such as I have long been accustomed to) provided it left a reasonable amount of time free for research etc. What is happening in your part of the world; or have you any other ideas now? And when do we see you here?

I hope the Flora of Pennsylvania is progressing and that we shall meet again before too long.

Warmest wishes meanwhile,

Sincerely,



Nicholas Polunin

P.S. Enclosed are a couple of recent
reprints from journals you may
not always see.

March 5, 1953

Dr. Nicholas Polunin,
The Gray Herbarium
of Harvard University,
79 Garden Street,
Cambridge 38, Mass.

Dear Nick:

Thank you for your recent note with its accompanying reprints on matters of Arctic biology, which are always of interest to me.

I wish that I knew of some opening which would provide an opportunity for you to carry out your program, but none such exists here nor do I at the moment know of anything elsewhere.

Your project for the preparation of your material for the Clarendon Press is an extremely important one and I should certainly like to see you in a situation where you could bring it to completion. You may rely upon me to let you know if I hear of any opportunity that seems to provide a solution.

With respect to the State Flora, I am hoping very much to get a leave of absence in order to concentrate on it because I see no opportunity of attacking the manuscript while I am carrying on other responsibilities here.

With best wishes and warm regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Professor of Botany

Polunin

YALE UNIVERSITY
OSBORN BOTANICAL LABORATORY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Professor J. M. Fogg,
Department of Botany,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia 4, Pa.

24 February 1954.

Dear Jack:

Many thanks for your letter of the eighteenth: I reply from the lion's den. First of all please know how truly sorry Helen and I were to learn of your sad bereavement, family worry, and secretarial indisposition: you have certainly had your share of late, and as these things always seem to go in packets -- or in your case sad loads -- one hopes most sincerely that this will be all for a very long time to come! We ourselves very much enjoyed your visit and only wish it could have been far longer: maybe when we really get settled, wherever it may be, you will honor us with a proper stay which will at least give us an opportunity to discuss some of the botanical points of mutual interest which must be legion.

And now about the question of a permanent job: it is indeed kind, and deeply appreciated, that you should offer to help in any way possible, and I will store that offer among my treasured up-sleeve cards for the future. With regard to Yale, I honestly believe that nobody can yet say anything; and certainly I understand, and respect, Goddard's attitude -- though if he were asked, or even if some less direct opportunity should arise, it would be a great kindness if he could put in an appropriate word. There is a rather general impression here about the greenness of other pastures; and it is only after these many months during which they have failed to yield anything whatsoever that I am beginning to fuss personally so. For the place and environment are very dear to us -- I was here as a student two decades ago and have more friends around than even in Boston I believe -- and within easy striking distance of New York, Philadelphia, Washington. And I could do the job -- though if I had my choice I would rather not head up any department until those books are finally off the press I think. I have had enough such administrative duties on both sides of the Big Water to know what it takes as well as that I like such things provided they do not preclude some original work (you will understand better than most what I mean). Actually, your fine physiological colleague is I rather think the only one who was ever definitely asked to come here: others seem to have spread it around that they were, too, as opposed to being merely looked over, and so the place is getting an unfortunate reputation as being where nobody will stay or, now, even go -- which is not only unfortunate but largely unfair. Incidentally, two other places seem interested in my future; but neither compares with Yale.

The National Science Foundation have approved an application for what I need but say they have not the funds for implementation at present: that, we'll have to wait and see about I gather. Meanwhile the little plant geographical reader is in its death throes (last of 18 chapters to be started this weekend if the family allows). It suddenly looks as though I shall be able to attend the Paris Congress through Uncle Sam's Air Force's good offices as I have to do a mission for them about that time in Europe and they like the idea of the Congress too. I hope there may be some chance of your getting over

YALE UNIVERSITY
OSBORN BOTANICAL LABORATORY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Professor J. M. Fogg,
Department of Botany,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, Pa.

4 November 1954.

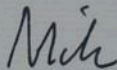
Dear Jack,

How goes the great work, and do you now know of any jobs? I am here for the year, trying to finish off my arctic work for the Oxford University Press, but at present am largely occupied with bread-and-butter things. Passing through Montreal the other day we were reminded of that newspaper report about the Principal of McGill refusing the Presidency of the University of Pennsylvania, and of the sacrifices he implied he had made to stay put. It would be most interesting to hear the story behind this.

We have a small furnished house near the lab here and would much like to see you again -- for example if, as I suspect, there is in the herbarium much material that is pertinent to your present work. You had a narrow squeak recently when Dr. Merrill (who is in fair form in spite of some disturbing reports about his health) suggested you as the best man to read a particular chapter in my forthcoming "Introduction to Plant Geography", but actually I bumped into Hugh Raup and prevailed upon him to bear the brunt instead!

With all best wishes,

Sincerely yours,



Nicholas Polunin

NP/

November 12, 1954

Dr. Nicholas Polunin
Osborn Botanical Laboratory
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.

Dear Nick:

Thanks a lot for your letter of the 4th. It was good to hear from you again, but I am, of course, sorry to learn that you have not yet located anything permanent. It occurs to me to wonder whether you would be interested in the position at Wisconsin created by the recent death of Norman Fassett. I do not, of course, know what the Department has in mind, but if there is a vacancy there and if you are interested in applying, I should be only too happy to write in your behalf. Perhaps this is worth looking into.

I am on the eve of departure for a quick trip to Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras on behalf of the Arboretum, but shall be back early in December and if there is anything which I can do for you at that time, please let me know.

I am grateful for your kind invitation to visit you and may some day take you up on this. Meanwhile, if you ever come to Philadelphia, please let me know for it would be a pleasure to have you stay with us here.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fogg, Jr.
Director

YALE UNIVERSITY
OSBORN BOTANICAL LABORATORY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

November 16, 1954

Dr. John M. Fogg, Jr., Director,
The Morris Arboretum,
Chestnut Hill,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Dear Jack:

Thank you for your letter just received. If you should on your travels run into Dr. F. Popenoe, Director of the Escuela Agricola Americana at Tegucigalpa, and should happen to think of it, I wonder if you could sound him about the possibility of doing a book on Tropical Fruits for a publisher friend of mine who is very anxious to produce such a work if a worthy author can be found and, of course, Dr. Popenoe is the one who immediately comes to mind.

It is extremely kind of you to suggest that approach to the Wisconsin matter, and in view of what you once said about the use of waste paper baskets, ~~by~~ what old Warden Spooner of New College used, according to the wags, to call "dizzy beans," I would indeed like to take you up on it, though pray do not bother until you are settled back in harness after you return.

Have a good trip and be well, and I hope to see something of you before too long again.

Sincerely yours,

Nicholas Polunin

NP/s

P.S. You did not tell us the full story of the
The Sill Principal - U. of Penn. Presidency episode.
Presumably, the job was never offered but the
opportunity was taken of putting out a boosting
newspaper report?

YALE UNIVERSITY
OSBORN BOTANICAL LABORATORY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

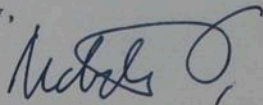
Professor J. M. FOGG,
Department of Botany,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, Pa.

10 January 1955.

Dear Jack,

Now back from California (where I heard of not a single worthy opening) I am wondering rather anxiously whether you heard anything from Wisconsin -- or know of anything elsewhere for which one might try? You yourself told me that these things cannot be done by a person himself, yet I do not know where on earth to turn. Nor can I give up botany (after nearly 30 years) without bringing out those four arctic etc. volumes to which the Oxford University Press and I are committed. Warmest wishes for 1955 and the future.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Polunin

NP/

January 12, 1955

Dr. Nicholas Polunin
Osborn Botanical Laboratory
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.

Dear Dr. Polunin:

Yours of the 10th is before me and I am writing to say that all I can tell you about the Wisconsin situation is that they are looking for a young Ph.D. for an assistant professorship. Curtis wrote me to this effect and I told him that at present there was no one I could recommend who would be willing to come at this rank. He did not mention salary but I heard by the grapevine that it is in the \$4,000 category. Since I was morally certain that you would not be interested in such an opportunity, I did not mention your name. If I was mistaken in this assumption, let me know and I shall be glad to write telling him about you.

The only other position which has come to my notice recently is the need for a young taxonomist at the University of Vermont. Here again the desire is for a student who has just recently secured his Ph.D. and is willing to start at the bottom.

I am off next week again for a little stay in Mexico and shall be back here about February 10th.

Reciprocating your good wishes for the coming year,
I am

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fogg, Jr.,
Director

YALE UNIVERSITY
OSBORN BOTANICAL LABORATORY
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

Professor J. M. Fogg, Jr., Director,
Morris Arboretum,
Chestnut Hill,
Philadelphia, Pa.

14 January 1955.

Dear Jack,

Many thanks for your kindness of the 12th just received. Whether or not we ought to be interested in those microjobs, I doubt whether they would consider for them an author of some 150 papers and quite a lot of books. Why is the time-tested Old World system of not keeping a man through from the beginning to the end apparently ignored in this great land; would it not be worth while suggesting somebody more mature and proven? Or is it that some others cannot bear having such people around!. In any case, what on earth do we do.

Enjoy yourself in Mexico, and be well.

Sincerely yours,



Nicholas Polunin

PS. I was over in California myself the other day, without hearing of any worthy opening (*though largely otherwise engaged*).

51 Highland Street
Cambridge 38,
Mass.

30 January 1954.

Dear Jack,

It was mighty nice having you and your
lucky colleague in the other evening and we enjoyed
your visit immensely. Now several more visit ~~last~~
Yale have indicated their continued uncertainty, and
apparent inability to persuade a worthy physiologist
to go there. Consequently they have widened their target
and so lowered their sights that I feel it is fair to
speak out on my own behalf. Your colleague Soddard
appears to have been a leading horse to them early on and
so I am wondering whether he might feel like putting in
a word as an afterthought. Otherwise I do not know
who could write and suggest that I be considered
without it appearing too pointed — one does not want to
let other people with obviously "inspired" letters!

Sood luck to the program you,

As ever yours,

Nicholas Polunin

P.S. If Cook or Hough I shall be able to go to the Paris congress after
all — how about you?

I think you mentioned that your proposal was supported by the National Science Foundation. I have received notice that they have approved a proposal of mine "on the basis of scientific merit, subject to the availability of sufficient funds for activation" (or words to that effect) and wonder if you have any idea as to what ~~extent~~, if at all, I can count on the much-needed money? They go on in the letter to say that I may care to apply elsewhere - that that would not prejudice their grant - and ask if I want them to keep my file open. All this sounds to me a little as though the money is not at all "on the way": but perhaps from your present experience or recent administrative know-how you will have some idea of how the land lies?

Yours
Nick