



Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
5th Floor, Hunt Library
Carnegie Mellon University
4909 Frew Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890
Telephone: 412-268-2434
Email: huntinst@andrew.cmu.edu
Web site: www.huntbotanical.org

The Hunt Institute is committed to making its collections accessible for research. We are pleased to offer this digitized item.

Usage guidelines

We have provided this low-resolution, digitized version for research purposes. To inquire about publishing any images from this item, please contact the Institute.

Statement on harmful and offensive content

The Hunt Institute Archives contains hundreds of thousands of pages of historical content, writing and images, created by thousands of individuals connected to the botanical sciences. Due to the wide range of time and social context in which these materials were created, some of the collections contain material that reflect outdated, biased, offensive and possibly violent views, opinions and actions. The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation does not endorse the views expressed in these materials, which are inconsistent with our dedication to creating an inclusive, accessible and anti-discriminatory research environment. Archival records are historical documents, and the Hunt Institute keeps such records unaltered to maintain their integrity and to foster accountability for the actions and views of the collections' creators.

Many of the historical collections in the Hunt Institute Archives contain personal correspondence, notes, recollections and opinions, which may contain language, ideas or stereotypes that are offensive or harmful to others. These collections are maintained as records of the individuals involved and do not reflect the views or values of the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation or those of Carnegie Mellon University.

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.

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA 91711

TELEPHONE (714) 826-3922



8 Feb. 1971

Digitized by the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation

Miss B. June McCaskill, Treasurer
California Botanical Society
Box 23
Davis, California 95616

Dear Miss McCaskill:

Scrawling all over your envelope has warmed me up to my topic, and anyway you perhaps can't read my sloppy handwriting. Hence, I had better put some of my ideas on this paper for the edification of the officers of our society. I don't mean to give anyone in particular a bad time, but I think I had better alert the society to a brewing rebellion of the southern natives.

We get down here damned little from the Society except Madroño. As a relative newcomer to the state I must presume that the society was originally founded to serve the botanical coterie in the Bay Area. If the Society intends to continue in that parochial vein, it should honestly change its name to the Bay Area Botanical Society and admit that we southerners are permitted to remain only if we behave ourselves and come up to the Bay Area more frequently to attend the meetings. It may be news to the 'Friscoans et al but it is somewhat like 450 miles from L. A. to there and considerably farther from San Diego. Believe it or not, there is a certain amount of botanical and other culture in the Southland and we southerners resent being excluded almost entirely by our unfortunate location from the botanical activities of the Society. Why can't some meetings we held down here, or would that be unconstitutional? Since we're not invited to speak to our fellow club-members up there (the society hardly seems to be so poverty-stricken that it can't afford to pay the travel expenses of southern speakers), why can't some meetings be called down here so that we can speak to each other at least. We should be more than happy on the wild Hollywood frontier to invite the more cultured northern botanists to speak to us down here. Have the society officers no missionary spirit? Do they want us down here to exist permanently in botanical ignorance? Surely, you all should want to bring cultural enlightenment and the latest word from the Bay (including Davis, of course) to us benighted botanists. In our southern rural setting we have little enough excitement and hardly any juicy botanical scandal to titillate us.

What I am trying to say is that we have a heck of a lot of money in the treasury. Since you northerners seem to have so little imagination as to how to spend it, I shall be happy to suggest all sorts of ways by which you can divest yourselves of all that excess wealth. I can repeat some of the ways hinted at on the envelope. First, you could use a little of that money to cross-fertilize the northern and southern botanists, by sending northern botanists to speak in the south to the southern members and southern botanists to speak in the north to you northerners. Round-trip airline tickets between the southland and San Francisco are rather inexpensive. Even if you think we have nothing to offer the north, we down here do think you people have something to offer us. Don't you all sometimes get a little tired of listening only to each other all the time? You would be surprised at some of the wild ideas we have down here.

8 Feb 1971

There is much concern nowadays about our environment and the rapid disappearance of botanically valuable habitats. For example, there are hardly any salt marshes left in southern California (and damned few have I been able to find up north, for that matter). The fabulous vernal pools are all but gone from the Southland, and I'll bet they are rapidly vanishing farther north in the Big Valley as well. Some of our money could very well be used to help Nature Conservancy or other worthy organizations to buy up such valuable tracts. A few dollars can go a long way with Nature Conservancy.

Moderate sums could be presented each year to worthy students in the state, including the Southland, as botanical research grants or prizes for excellent projects or talks. Our highly impecunious and informal Southern California Botanists, which I am sure you sophisticates have never heard of, aside from having lots of enjoyable field trips about the South and travelling meetings at various botanical institutions (the last one at La Jolla), presents each year one or two \$25 prizes for the best student papers presented at the spring meetings held jointly at the S. Calif. Acad. Sci. meetings. That usually exhausts our annual treasury but we like to live dangerously down here. Of course, we don't publish a journal but we do get out a new directory each year. When did Cal. Bot. Soc. last publish a directory?

In short, isn't it about time for Cal. Bot. Soc. to come to life and live it up a bit? Surely there are some youngsters up there with ideas and the drive to bring them to fruition. You can't stay parochial forever and survive. I suspect the proliferation of botanical and conservation societies and clubs and what not up there is due to the stodginess and lack of imagination of Cal. Bot. Soc. We Southerners and other youngsters demand some action soon. Seriously, some of us, particularly Dick Benjamin and myself, are seriously concerned about these matters. Possibly, Dick has already dropped his membership, though I pleaded with him to wait until at least I had written to try to stir up some action.

I have rambled along long enough and had hardly expected to be so verbose. I hope you all will not take offense at my hyperbole for there may be a few grains of truth in what I have said. I haven't a Madrono here at home to see who the other officers are, but I can send copies of this to John Thomas at Stanford and John Strother at Berkeley, so that those institutions will not feel left out.

My best regards to you and all my good (former?) botanical friends at Davis,

Sincerely,

Robert F. Thorne
Robert F. Thorne
Taxonomist

RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA 91711



TELEPHONE (714) 826-3822

15 November 1973

Digitized by the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation

Dr. P. C. Silva
President
California Botanical Society
Dept. of Botany
Univ. of California
Berkeley, Calif. 94720

Dear Paul:

I read your good and long letter with the greatest interest, and I shall try to answer it point by point. I am pleased to think that I might have had a hand in shaking the Cal. Bot. Soc. out of its provincialism and lethargy. It certainly has the potential of being much more than a San Francisco Bay Area Botanical Clique.

My reading of California history, which I did assiduously when I arrived here out of the Midlands, leads me to disagree with you in some points, esp. that California was rather exclusively the area encompassed by Monterey-San Francisco-Sacramento. Perhaps you have forgotten the chain of missions and the importance to Mexican California of such pueblos as San Diego, San Gabriel, Santa Barbara, if not our own local small pueblo. These centers of civilization and Monterey were rather important when S. F. was a series of rather bare hills perhaps harboring a few aborigines. But these are minor points, and I do understand the main thrust of your comments. I just want to remind you that in Japson's time even there was some botanical activity in the Southland. Have you perhaps forgotten such worthies as Parish, W. C. Jones, Penz, the Ocutts, Abrams, Hall, among others? It seems we have done inadequate missionary work in the northern reaches of the state since the good padres were ordered north to found San Francisco to bring a little of our southern enlightenment and culture to the northern frontier. We must step up our efforts.

You're right in that there really is no southern California counterpart to the CAS. Our L. A. Museum of Natural History is, I think, the physical home of the SCAS, but it is a somewhat pallid counterpart of the physical plant of CAS. Our Museum has been weak in botany, weaker than the San Diego Museum. I have never joined SCAS myself, nor, for that matter, am I a fellow of the CAS, presumably because I am not yet important enough on the California botanical scene. Southern Californians are rather notorious as non-joiners. This perhaps also has some historical basis in the rather large distances between the rather numerous botanical schools, gardens, museums, parks, etc. scattered over southern California. We don't form a tight little enclave like the Bay Area. Claremont is rather centrally located here, but even so it takes an hour through heavy traffic to get to UCLA or USC and the Museum and several hours to get to S. Barbara or to San Diego.

The Southern California Botanists are indeed now a chapter of the Calif. Native Plant Society. The club never was, since my arrival here, more than a rather loose assemblage of a few professionals and many amateurs who got together periodically for field trips and meetings at different botanical centers and once

FOUNDED IN 1927 BY SUSANNA BIXBY BRYANT IN MEMORY OF JOHN W. BIXBY

15 Nov. 1973

a year, each spring, for the annual meeting with the SCAB. There we usually expended the balance of our treasury in presenting a prize or two for the students presenting the best papers, such as I hope Cal. Bot. Soc. can do in the future to encourage our younger botanists. We had a lot of fun but I fear we attracted relatively few of the older professional botanists on any regular basis. Since we became a chapter of GBS, our activity seems to have tapered off somewhat. Or perhaps because I am no longer active as an officer or board member, I just don't know what is going on.

Digitized by Google for Botanical Documentation

I must agree with you too that we should not shake up GBS just for the joy of shaking it up, or as you put it, for philosophical or theoretical reasons. Ultimately we must reorganize GBS to encompass the botanists in southern California and to make them active in the society in a meaningful way, for really there is no comparable organization in southern California for the botanists of the area. At present we just are not participating actively in GBS or in any large local botanical unit. And it may not be easy to jar our southern Cal. botanists into such communal activity. We have been doing "our own thing" here so long (long before the hippies discovered the Haight-Ashbury) that it will probably not be easy to push joint botanical activity in this area.

Before we move in a large way, we should as you suggest investigate our local climate of botanical interest in organization. I have seen no local or regional chauvinism here beyond the usual good-natured joshing of the Bay Area people. We may suffer from a lot of things here besides smog but certainly not from chauvinism or parochialism. That seems to be a disease of cultural centers like San Francisco, Boston, and NYC and possibly a few non-cultural areas like Texas. Most of us take great pride in our San Francisco as our favorite city to visit and to show off to foreigners from out-of-state. We root for our Bay Area athletic teams except, of course, when they are playing our local teams. It rather amuses us at the strong feeling we detect in San Francisco against Los Angeles and southern California. We don't quite understand it but suspect it must have something to do with the often damp and foggy climate there. We send you our daughters and sons and our McClintocks and John Thomas's for your cultural and botanical edification, and your area sends us the Benson hippies--not really a very fair exchange. You might claim Sherwin C. as Berkeley-trained but remember he was born in Hollywood. (The occasional hyperbole here is for emphasis). If local chauvinism is not a problem, we do have a very real one and that is the lack of organizational interest in southern California. We have not kept our local society healthy. I shall be happy to investigate the potentialities here among our local and regional botanists but I am not overly sanguine about organizational enthusiasm here. Mildred Mathias has had a serious operation, is nearing retirement, and is usually much over-extended. Lee Lenz and Sherwin Carlquist are basically rather shy people and definitely not social animals or joiners. Lyman Benson retires this fiscal year. Dick Benjamin is deeply involved with his editing, Laboulbeniales and Microales. Botanical, at least taxonomic, activity over at UCLA and USC does not seem to be booming these days. And I am deeply engrossed now and for the next year or so with writing my angiosperm phylogeny book. Reid Moran has a girl friend. George Gillett is in England. Marian Lewis, Dick Straw, and Frank Vasek have heavy administrative responsibilities. Jim Hemrickson is engrossed in Mexican floristic work. Ralph Philbrick is to be the new director at the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens. And so it goes. But maybe I am overly pessimistic, and an investigation might turn up a reservoir of enthusiasm overlooked by me.

In short, I do not think this is a good year for a major change. Certainly, regardless of any changes, the health of Bay Area botanical activity must be maintained.

15th Nov, 1973

Digitized by the University of California Botanical Garden

I like the idea of the oscillating presidency and the two regional vice presidents, each being responsible for programs in their respective areas. There could be an annual banquet in each area with the hope that members from the other area could be present at both banquets. It might be desirable, if not requisite, that the principal speaker at each banquet be from the other part of the state or from out of state. And the graduate student meeting should move widely around the state. Meetings of the Council and the Executive Committee frequent or carried out in part by mail. Surely interest from \$3000 should be at least 6 or 7%. Are our funds not in long-term savings-and-loan accounts?

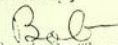
Finally, getting back to me, I would not want to accept the presidency at this time. I discussed the matter with Lee Lenz, and he feels I should stick to my book writing until I finish the project. Because of the time he is allowing me at home to work on this, I do feel obligated to devote the major part of my time, including my vacation this year, to work on the book. A southern President will indeed have his hands full in developing societal activity in the South. He would have to travel around a lot to stimulate our botanists in the many centers of activity at Santa Barbara, UCLA, USC and the Museum, Irvine, Riverside, San Diego, Claremont, etc. Normally I could do that well and would enjoy it, but this year and probably next I cannot do it thoroughly or well, so I would rather not attempt it until I can. It bothers me to say this because I did in a way get this whole thing started by my infamous 1971 letter. He who speaks up, should put up; yet, I am in a position now where I really can't put up much. I would rather we had a year or so, or at least part of a year, to investigate and encourage our organizational climate, while, at least for this year, we follow the traditional course in selecting officers for 1974. I would be willing to chair the committee for the investigation.

In the meantime, why not pick a southern Californian for second vice-president who could and would help in developing or stirring up enthusiasm locally? Our former student at Cal. State L. A., Jim Henrikson, is a gregarious and enthusiastic type. His boss and another Rancho graduate is Dick Straw, who could do a similar job with almost equal zeal. Some others that come to mind are Ted Hanes at Fullerton, Dick Vogt at Cal. State L. A., Dave Walkington at Fullerton, Fred Boutin at the Huntington Bot. Gardens, perhaps Jonathan Gauer at UCLA (assuming all these are Bot. Soc. members). I suggest these names for what they are worth. The Nominations Committee might come up with better suggestions. Ted Hanes is now or has recently been president of Southern California Botanists and might make a specially good choice to bring into line with our society the S.C.B. unit of the C.P.S. and thereby add a good many southern members to C.P.S. I do feel we have a real place in southern California for a professional botanical organization, and that place should be filled by our California Botanical Society.

I hope these suggestions and musings will be of some value--if not taken too seriously. It probably would save you time if I send copies of this letter also to Baki, Elizabeth, and Larry. It was good having all you northerners down for the CRS student meeting in Claremont. The enthusiasm demonstrated there bodes well for the botanical health of California, both north and south. Certainly that meeting is a big step forward, and should be an annual event. I would drive hard to get all our Rancho students north to such a meeting in Davis or elsewhere.

My best regards to you all.

Sincerely,


Robert F. Thorne
Taxonomist