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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.

Keep this copy

8th February 1955

Dr. Donald Wyman
Arnold Arboretum
Jamaica Plain, 30
Massachusetts.

Dear Don:

Your letter of February 4th has remained unanswered as I wished to think about it for awhile.

First, I should say that the group which is opposing Harvard's action in the matter of the Arboretum is motivated by a keen interest in the welfare and future development of the Arboretum. It was recognized several years ago by the Visiting Committee that not all was well with the Arboretum. Eventually after futile attempts to improve the situation legal advice was sought and very good lawyers were definitely of the opinion that a breach of trust was involved. Harvard refused to submit the question of a breach of trust to the courts. This Association was formed as a last resort to see what could be done to restore the Arboretum to its previous greatness.

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If you will read the obituaries of Sargent, Wilson and Rehder you will get an idea of the great and very useful contributions that they made to botany and horticulture. Rehder's Manual is a great contribution of tremenduous value to all persons interested in woody plants whether they own a copy or not. Every working plantsman in the north temperate zone must have it. Its influence, either directly or indirectly, extends far beyond those who possess copies. You recognize all that made this Manual possible. It took the library, herbarium, living collections and the plant explorations of many trained botanists to produce this book. You know the other contributions.

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Your letter and the accompanying leaflets mention classes, talks and educational displays. Courses are described which will of necessity have to be taught at or near the high school level. Attendance will be limited to a few local women of the garden club type. Another activity is the exhibit of flower paintings and Christmas decorations.

Now contrast these horticultural activities and their

complete uselessness, except to a handful of persons, with the major scientific contributions made by the Arboretum under Sargent's direction and before it had lost the momentum that he gave it.

Sargent stated that the purpose of the Arboretum was to increase the knowledge of trees and other woody plants. L.H. Bailey has said that we cannot dispense knowledge until we have it. Increasing the knowledge of woody plants as Sargent conceived it is still the Arboretum's job, not education at the high school level.

Do not get the idea that I think that the Arboretum should not engage in public education. The Arboretum has done it from the beginning. My objection is that undue emphasis is being placed on these horticultural activities, which can be done very cheaply, to distract the attention of the less discerning horticultural persons from the very real disintegration of the Arboretum's research in the taxonomy of woody plants.

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Sincerely yours

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Please return to Slate

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
Department of Horticulture

March 3, 1955

Mr. George L. Slate
37 Highland Avenue
Geneva, New York

Dear George:

I appreciate your taking the time and trouble necessary to write me concerning the situation at Arnold Arboretum. Probably I should not have written the Executive Secretary anything but have kept still as undoubtedly most horticulturists in the Country have been doing. It still looks like, to me, a family squabble so far as I have been able to determine. If we can get everything from the Arnold Arboretum that we ever did in the way of information, facilities and material and I feel no more justified in joining a group which sends speakers out to talk at garden club meetings and explain that the Arnold Arboretum is going on the rocks, then I would think of doing the same thing if an organization were built up to show that the Geneva Experiment Station was no longer the same thing as it used to be, which it probably is not, in some directions.

Digitized by Harvard University for Library Preservation and Documentation

Please consider that this letter is not an invitation for a controversy but more of an apology for saying anything to anyone about a situation concerning which I cannot be familiar without spending much more time than I am able to do.

Very truly yours,

A. F. Yeager

A. F. Yeager, Head
Department of Horticulture

AFY:jb

Please return to Slate

C
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P
Y

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Durham, New Hampshire

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
Department of Horticulture

January 10, 1955

Mr. Thomas V. Rankin, Executive Secretary
Association for the Arnold Arboretum, Inc.
50 State Street
Boston 9, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Rankin:

During the past year or so I have received many letters and much literature from your association. I have also taken the trouble to check up a bit on the Arnold Arboretum, its management and its present and future policies. I also note that a large number of names which are absent from your membership list whose judgement I respect. Of course, there are also some who are tops in the field who do belong to your association.

Digitized by the Harvard University Herbaria & Libraries for Botanical Documentation

My honest opinion, however, is that your association is doing the Arnold Arboretum a disservice and creating the impression that the Arboretum is being wrecked and is no longer an institution which deserves any friends. I doubt very much whether that is the impression you want to leave but I am sure that scientists the world over are being informed that the Arnold Arboretum is no longer a great institution and has no future unless your association directs its management. Of course, if that is actually what you believe, then you have the right to tell folks about it but as an outsider it would appear to me to be a dubious procedure as a way to build up an institution.

Very truly yours,

/s/ A. F. Yeager, Head
Department of Horticulture

AFY:jb

Keep this copy

37 Highland Avenue

Geneva, N.Y.

26th January 1955

Dr. A.F. Yeager
Dept. of Horticulture
Univ. of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

Dear Dr. Yeager:

A copy of your letter to Thomas Rankin, Executive Secretary of the Association for the Arnold Arboretum, has been sent to me. I hope that I can offer something more for your consideration than was in my letter of December 1st which necessarily had to be brief.

First, your comment as to the absence of a number of names whose judgment you respect. The taxonomists are mostly not there because they fear the pressure that Harvard can and will apply to them of their names appear on the membership list, or if they speak out. The taxonomists as you know borrow herbarium specimens from each other as well as using each others facilities and library. The Harvard facilities are so extensive and so much needed by any good research taxonomist that they cannot risk incurring Harvard's displeasure. Botanists in other fields also have ties with the Harvard botanists and do not wish to offend them. Many in these other fields of botany simply have no interest in taxonomy. I have a reply from one man, not a botanist, who refers to the herbarium specimens as "vegetable garbage."

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There are some who feel that Harvard can do no wrong and that it is a sacrilege to speak out against Harvard in this matter.

I am told that Boston business men prefer not to join because it might injure their chances of doing business with Harvard.

The Arboretum certainly is being wrecked as you note in your second paragraph. If you will read the bibliographies of the writings of Sargent, Wilson and Rehder that are in their obituaries in the Journal of the Arnold Arboretum you will get an idea as to just how great was their work and how much we are indebted to the Arboretum that made their work possible. Their publications and the work of others at the Arboretum are indispensable to all horticulturists although they do not use them directly.

The breaking up of the library and herbarium, the diversion of funds to Cambridge, the absence of taxonists at the Arboretum and the installation of a man with no knowledge of horticulture

and little interest in the taxonomy of woody plants makes it impossible for the Arboretum to do anything of real value in its field. Howard is there to do Harvard's bidding and raise no objections to their moves to get a firm grip on the institution and its funds. They could not possibly get an outstanding taxonomist to go there with the situation as it is now.

I do not mean to belittle the work of Sax and Wyman, but it was the work of Sargent, Wilson and Rehder that made the Arboretum great. The need for that work is not gone. The Arboretum is just about the only place in America that has the resources for doing that work and we need to have those resources used in that field. With the Arboretum's resources properly used at Jamaica Plain and the money that can be raised when prospective donors will know that is to be spent for the Arboretum and not for botany at Cambridge, the horticultural work as well as the botanical work that is allied to it can again be done. There is room and resources for both.

The Arboretum as a great research institution in the field of the taxonomy of woody plants is only a shadow of its former self. The trees and shrubs are there, but the drive is gone. The present director is presiding over a ghost and there is no use kidding ourselves into thinking otherwise.

Digitized by Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation

Three former directors, Ames, Merrill and Sax spoke out against this plan when they realized that it meant the decline of the Arboretum.

All of us are interested in restoring the Arboretum to its former place of eminence in the field of bot ny. This cannot be done until all of its funds are returned to the Arboretum at Jamaica Plain. Harvard has openly referred to the Arboretum as the goose that lays the golden eggs. It is doing everything possible to prevent the issue of the violation of the trust under which the Arboretum was set up from being settled in the courts. The Association is asking only that the courts rule on this question. You may be sure that the Association is working in the best interests of the Arboretum as we know it and opposed to us are the Harvard botanists who want that money for their own research.

I can assure you that no one has a greater interest in seeing the Arboretum again become a great institution doing first class work in the taxonomy of woody plants. My sentimental interest, which you may or may not know about, is not the reason for my activity in this matter. As a pomologist and as one with

Dr. Yeager:

a considerable interest in ornamentals I feel greatly indebted to the Arboretum of the past. I think I know that its publications, plant introductions, and living collections were made possible through the activities of taxonomic botanists working for the Arboretum. This work a lot of us think should be continued. That is why we are in this Association.

I hope that you can see our point of view and send your $2.00 along for a membership.

With best regards

Sincerely

George L. Slate

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There are some who feel that Harvard can do no wrong and that it is a sacrilege to speak out against Harvard in this matter.

I am told that Boston business men prefer not to join because it might injure their chances of doing business with Harvard.

The Arboretum certainly is being wrecked as you note in your second paragraph. If you will read the bibliographies of the writings of Sargent, Wilson and Rehder that are in their obituaries in the Journal of the Arnold Arboretum you will get an idea as to just how great was their work and how much we are indebted to the A rboretum that made their work possible. Their publications and the work of others at the Arboretum are indispensable to all horticulturists although they do not use them directly.

The breaking up of the library and herbarium, the diversion of funds to Cambridge, the absence of taxonomists at the Arboretum and the installation of a man with no knowledge of horticulture and little interest in the taxonomy of woody plants makes it impossible for the Arboretum to do anything of real value in its field. Howard is there to do Harvard's bidding and raise no objections to their moves to get a firm grip on the institution

and its funds. They could not possibly get an outstanding taxonomist to go there with the situation as it is now.

I do not mean to belittle the work of Sax and Wyman, but it was the work of Sargent, Wilson and Rehder that made the Arboretum great. The need for that work is not gone. The Arboretum is just about the only place in America that has the resources for doing that work and we need to have those resources used in that field. With the Arboretum's resources properly used at Jamaica Plain and the money that can be raised when prospective donors will know that is to be spent for the Arboretum and not for botany at Cambridge, the horticultural work as well as the botanical work that is allied to it can be done again. There is room and resources for both.

The Arboretum as a great research institution in the field of the taxonomy of woody plants is only a shadow of its former self. The trees and shrubs are there, but the drive is gone. The present director is presiding over a ghost and there is no use kidding ourselves into thinking otherwise.

Three former directors, Ames, Merrill and Sax spoke out against this plan when they realized that it meant the decline of the Arboretum.

All of us are interested in restoring the Arboretum to its former place of eminence in the field of botany. This cannot be done until all of its funds are returned to the Arboretum at Jamaica Plain. Harvard has openly referred to the Arboretum as the goose that lays the golden eggs. It is doing everything possible to prevent the issue of the violation of the trust under which the Arboretum was set up from being settled in the courts. The Association is asking only that the courts rule on this question. You may be sure that the Association is working in the best interests of the Arboretum as we know it and opposed to us are the Harvard botanists who want that money for their own research.

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I can assure you that no one has a greater interest in seeing the Arboretum again become a great institution doing first class work in taxonomy of woody plants. My sentimental interest, which you may or may not know about, is not the reason for my activity in this matter. As a pomologist and as one with a considerable interest in ornamentals I feel greatly indebted to the Arboretum of the past. I think I know that its publications, plent introductions and living collections were made possible through the activities of taxonomid botanists working for the Arboretum. This work a lot of us think shoule be continued. That is why we are in this Association.

I hope that you can see out point of view and send your $2.00 along for a membership.

With best regards,

Dear John:
The arboretum needs help. I hope you can pass the word along to interested persons.
George

GEORGE L. SLATE
37 HIGHLAND AVE.
GENEVA, N.Y.

1

December 1, 1954

To My Horticultural Friends:

The future of the Arnold Arboretum, America's greatest and most useful collection of trees and shrubs, is seriously threatened. Until recently the Arboretum, ever since its founding in 1872, led a virtually independent existence, its endowment administered as a trust by Harvard University, with which the Arboretum is thus affiliated.

An agreement made in 1872 between the trustees under the will of James Arnold and Harvard University provided for the founding of an arboretum. Charles S. Sargent, who soon became one of the great botanists of the world, was its first Director and continued to direct the Arboretum for over 50 years until 1927. During that time he made the Arboretum a great collection of woody plants. A great herbarium and library were assembled. These collections made it possible for Sargent and the excellent staff which he assembled, to produce a series of books and scientific papers of great fundamental importance to the study of the woody plants of North America and the world. Sargent's interest in the horticultural applications of his botanical studies made many friends for the Arboretum, who, because of their interest in the type of work done by Sargent and his colleagues, endowed the Arboretum through the years in the amount of over $4,000,000.

Now Harvard University and its botanists in Cambridge propose to take over and integrate with the University collections in Cambridge all of the Arboretum's library and collections related to research. Thus the work of the Arboretum will be dominated, it is believed, by Harvard botanists whose interest in the type of work which made the Arboretum famous is minor, or non-existent. Unless this plan is checked, the Arboretum may soon become, as Liberty Hyde Bailey, one of America's greatest botanists, has put it "a glorified part of the Boston Park Department."

Several of the Arboretum staff who have disagreed with this move have been ruthlessly disciplined.

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Friends of the Arboretum have rallied to its support and have asked for Court action to determine whether this Harvard plan involves a breach of trust in regard to the Arboretum. Instead of welcoming a judicial test as it should have done, Harvard has made strenuous, and so far successful, efforts to block court action. The fight to restore the Arboretum to its previous greatness in the field of woody plants is being continued. Supporters of the Arboretum are providing funds for the legal aspects of this fight.

The Arboretum, however, needs more than funds. It needs a great body of friends scattered throughout North America, friends who will go to bat for it, who will present its case to all who are interested in woody plants, and who are keenly interested in seeing it restored to its former stature as "America's Greatest Garden."

You realize, no doubt, what the Arboretum has done. It is a place of beauty, a mecca for all who love woody plants. It has combed the world for plants that have enriched our gardens. Its publications have been indispensable. How could we get along for example, without Alfred Rehder's great "Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs," a book that must be within reach of every working plantsman?

The Association for the Arnold Arboretum, Inc. has been organized to fight for the integrity and future of the Arboretum. It now has 650 members from all parts of the country, but needs hundreds more.

I am appealing to my horticultural and botanically minded friends and acquaintances to join this Association, and to put their weight behind this movement to restore the Arboretum to its former position of greatness in the field of woody plants. American gardeners need the Arnold Arboretum. Now the Arboretum needs their support and backing.

I enclose a membership application and hope that you can join in this effort. The dues ($2.00) are small, but your moral support can be great. Please consider also the names of others likely to be interested and send in their names on the enclosed membership card.

Very truly yours,

George L. Slate

I have sent in the $2.00 as you suggested. Kelly Bros. Nurseries