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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.

New York Botanical Garden

Bronx Park

New York City

January 13th, 1925.

Dr. Carleton R. Ball
Bureau of Plant Industry
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Ball:-

I thank you for your courtesy in sending me copies of four of your recent papers, which I have looked through with much interest.

It appears that you and Professor Wiegand and I are on a committee to investigate the present status of the teaching of systematic botany in the colleges and universities of the United States. It sounds like a big job, but as Professor Wiegand is, I understand, the chairman of the committee, we will let him take the initiative, at least.

I have gathered the idea that your parents came from the town of Athens, which is only five or six miles distant from my town of Newfane, in Vermont. Some flippant wag has remarked that all bright men come from Vermont (or Indiana?) and that "the brighter they are, the sooner they come", all of which may not be quite fair to the men who keep the home fires burning on their native sod!

Yours very sincerely,

Marshall A. Howe

Assistant Director

Jan. 16, 1925.

Dr. Marshall A. Howe,
New York Botanical Garden,
Bronx Park,
New York City.

Dear Doctor Howe:

Your letter of January 13 is received and noted with much interest. I nearly fell out of my chair at the Phytopathologists dinner when Dr. Wiegand told me that I had been made a member of the Committee. I have heard nothing further from him about the matter, but have been doing a little thinking as to how this investigations best can be conducted. I agree that it will be a big job, but I believe it will be one worth while.

You are quite right in thinking that my ancestors came from the town of Athens. There were five generations there and six generations previously near Concord, Mass. My older brother was born at Athens, but I was born in Iowa. I am glad to meet so near a neighbor.

With kind personal regards, I am

Very sincerely yours,

C. R. Ball,
Senior Agronomist in Charge.

CRB/eos



New York Botanical Garden,
Bronx Park,
New York City.

January 23, 1925

Dr. Carleton R. Ball
Bureau of Plant Industry
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Ball:

I thank you very much for the courtesy
of your letter of January 22, enclosing copies of abstracts
of articles in regard to teaching botany, as published in
the last issue of Botanical Abstracts. These will prove
of interest and value to me.

Yours very sincerely

Marshall A. Howe

Acting Director

The New York Botanical Garden

Bronx Park
New York City

April 1, 1927

Dr. Carleton R. Ball
Bureau of Plant Industry
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dr. Ball:

At the suggestion of Professor Karl M. Wiegand of Cornell University, I enclose herewith a paper in two installments written by him, which we think may well be printed in Science. So far as I am concerned personally I should prefer that he sign it as the chairman of the committee rather than have it signed by all of committee, inasmuch as some of the sentiments may represent his individual opinion, rather than that of all members of the committee. Enclosed is also a letter from Professor L. H. Bailey to Professor Wiegand and a statement from Professor J. Arthur Harris of the University of Minnesota.

Yours sincerely

Marshall A. Howe

Marshall A. Howe

Acting Director

MAH:GMS



April 5, 1927.

Dr. Marshall A. Howe, Acting Director,
New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Doctor Howe:

Your letter of April 1 and accompanying papers from Professor Wiegand, representing the work of the committee on the status and future of systematic botany, are received and have been read with much interest.

I agree with you that these papers should be printed in a journal of general science rather than in a botanic journal, in order that they may come to the attention not only of all kinds of botanists, but of scientists in other branches.

I agree, also, that the paper prepared by Professor Wiegand should be published under his name rather than the names of the committee. I think it should carry a footnote stating that these data have been assembled through a questionnaire sent out by the committee.

I am interested in Professor Wiegand's suggestion that the words "taxonomy" and "taxonomist" have fallen into disrepute. There is an open question whether changing the name of the worker and his subject would remove the stigma, though it might help. Personally, I would be more strongly in favor of popularizing the value of taxonomy through the methods used by Science Service. The taxonomists themselves are handicapped because much of the good work done in applying the principles of taxonomy to cultivated plants has not been done by the taxonomists, and naturally it is the cultivated plants that have the most human appeal. There are cases of important discriminations made among wild plants which could be played up. Two that come to my mind at the moment are (1) the differentiation between the wild species yielding chaulmoogra oil and other species confused with it, and (2) determination between wild rubber plants which have proved valuable under certain environmental conditions and other similar ones which have not. Doubtless, these inflexes could be multiplied a hundredfold by persons willing and able to apply their minds to the job.

I hardly would favor an attempt to put the word "stirpitolgy" into use. It is not that I am afraid of new words, because, as Chairman of the Committee on Terminology of the American Society of Agronomy, I have had occasion to invent several and to qualify or introduce the usage of many others. The word in itself is not attractive.

Apr. 5 1927

The first question for consideration, it seems to me, is whether the word "botany" itself has fallen into disfavor. If this is held to be true, and there is a desire to wipe the slate clean and start over, I would suggest the adoption of the word "phytology" in its place. If "taxonomy" and "taxonomist" likewise are in disfavor and it is desired to start with a new word not now stigmatized, why not "phytography" and "phytographer?"

This may not be getting as close to Professor Wiegand's idea of distinguishing between the kinds of plants as would be liked. The meaning of the word, of course, literally is to describe plants. I doubt, however, whether either the scientific public or the general public would worry about that. Much as I admire Dr. Bailey and agree in the main with the points made in his letter, which you forwarded, I do not think that he has helped the cause any by starting his series of papers under the title "Gentes Herbarum." This did not create a new word which people will use, but merely dodged the issue by seeking refuge in straight Latin. Probably several words could be coined which would express the idea in mind along the lines of "phytogenology" or the science of the kinds of plants, or the word which Professor Wiegand suggests, "stirpitolgy."

Very sincerely yours,

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Carleton R. Ball,
Senior Agronomist in Charge.

CRB-BWG

April 6, 1927.

Dr. Marshall A. Howe, Acting Director,
New York Botanical Garden, Bronx Park,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Howe:

In further reference to my letter of yesterday, I am enclosing a copy of the letter I have just written to Dr. Wiegand. I am asking him to send you copy of a manuscript I have prepared on the subject of Latin plurals.

I will be very glad if you can take the time to glance the manuscript over and let me know what you think of the idea contained, especially in view of my suggestion for methods of popularizing the knowledge of taxonomic achievements. The paper is still in the nature of a rough draft. From a scanning of a portion of the dictionary, I am inclined to think there must be some two or three thousand such words.

Very sincerely yours,

Carleton R. Ball,
Senior Agronomist in Charge.

CRB-BWG
Enclosure

Program Planning Division

September 12, 1936

Dr. Marshall A. Howe,
N.Y. Botanic Garden,
Bronx Park, Fordham P.O. Sta.
New York, N.Y.

My dear Dr. Howe:

Recently I mailed to the Garden a small packet of willows. I have not had much chance to collect recently but some of these are from little frequented mountain localities.

The specimen of *Salix petiolaris* from the XXX mountains of North Georgia extends the range considerably. The single plant appeared to be native. The species is common in the glaciated part of North America and has been found in the Black Hills, Central Rockies, and Oklahoma.

Cordially Yours,

Carleton R. Ball

Will send separately some recent separates for the Craden library.