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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.

June 27, 1942

Dr. S. F. Trelease,  
Laboratory of Plant Physiology,  
Columbia University,  
New York, New York.

Dear Dr. Trelease:

I have just noted with interest your paper on selenium indicator species of *Astragalus*. Therein I note your mention of the groups in which this genus was divided by Jones.

I do not know anything about the genus *Astragalus*, nor about Jones' paper thereon, but I am familiar with his work on willows. Because of that fact I suspect that his groupings of *Astragalus* species need not be taken too seriously. My reasons for this belief are as follows:

1. Jones was a mining engineer and plant collecting was a hobby and not a profession.
2. He was very careless either in collecting or in assembling and distributing his collected material, so far as willows are concerned. I have determined his collections in about twenty different herbariums of this country. Frequently two species are found on a sheet and occasionally as many as three species occur on a single sheet.
3. His attempt to write up the willows of the Great Plateau is an amazing exposition of what he did not know about the genus. It is practically impossible to use his keys because he could not distinguish the species involved and, therefore, did not know the separating characters.

Cordially yours,

Carleton R. Ball,  
Executive Secretary

*Reply recd. probably from*

Columbia University  
in the City of New York

DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY

July 15, 1942

Dr. Carleton R. Ball  
Extension Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Ball:

I am glad to have your letter of June 27 containing comments on Jones's work on willows. Jones seems to have done much better with Astragalus. In most respects his monograph on that genus is excellent. He had the advantage of knowing the plants in the field as well as in the herbaria, and spent twenty-five years in preparing the monograph. In my opinion, shared with Professor Aven Nelson and Professor O.A. Beath, Jones's treatment is better than Rydberg's. And in the main there is a very good correlation between Jones's groups and the selenium absorption story. All the selenium absorbers (known at present) fall into 6 of the 29 groups into which Jones divided the genus. And these 6 groups make up two of the ten branches of the evolutionary tree which he made to represent supposed genetic relationships. His principal error was to include some non-seleniferous species in the 6 groups. But Rydberg and the others who attempted to handle the genus made many of the same mistakes.

It is remarkable to me that a man as eccentric as Jones seems to have been could have done such an excellent job in monographing this difficult group of plants.

Yours sincerely,

Sam F. Trelease

Sam F. Trelease.

August 21, 1942

Dr. Sam F. Trelease,  
Columbia University,  
New York, New York.

Dear Dr. Trelease:

Your letter of July 15 has been neglected because for a month I have been driving hard on a manuscript which I finished only yesterday.

I am very glad to have your appraisal of the work done by Jones on the *Astragalus*. I am sure that it was difficult because there are so many species. Probably the chief difference between his treatment of *Astragalus* and his treatment of *Salix* is named in your letter when you say that he spent twenty-five years in preparing the monograph. He certainly spent no such time on the group of willows which he covered.

We know that we all make mistakes. Sometimes they represent things which we acknowledge later as being mistakes and sometimes they are so classified by our competitors. I will be beginning a monograph on the genus *Salix* next year on retirement from Federal service. It will have errors. Some may be errors of fact and some may be errors of judgment. In either case they will be pointed out by my successors.

By the way, I have been accustomed to run up and see Dr. William Trelease whenever I pass through the University of Illinois. I have not seen him, however, for at least three years now. I hope he is still keeping well.

Cordially yours,

Carleton R. Ball,  
Executive Secretary

P.S. The one willow species by Jones (*S. jaliscana*), based on a single collection, still is maintained but may become a variety. It is from west-central Mexico.