



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

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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.

A PACIFIC ISLANDS
COLLECTION



SEAWEEDS AND CONSTRUCTIONS
Hunt Institute for Botanical DocumentationTM

DRS. OTTO & ISA DEGENER
P.O. Box 154
Volcano, Hawaii
96785 U.S.A.
April 24, 1983.

Dear Mr. Westlake:

Mrs. Degener & I wish to thank you for the copy of No. 7 of "A Pacific Islands Collection". We read it with interest, and enjoyed the illustrations. But the almost hundred pages are mostly pessimistic. Even if mostly justifiable, at my advanced age I wish to be surrounded by hoomalimali cheerfulness. Also, at our ages, we childless couple are trying to reduce our possessions and subscriptions as much as possible. Some practical lawyer executor would probably burn up our treasures as "rubbish" on the death of the last Degener survivor. We two don't expect to live to 100.

My father, born in 1844 in Germany, was not a Missionary, but lived in the early 1860 as a businessman for three years in Singapore and Japan before emigrating to New York via sailboat to Panama, crossing the Isthmus on muleback and, on the Atlantic side taking another sailboat to New York. Cotton plantations and textile mills had been wrecked during the Civil War in the Southern States, so he had a lucrative business importing bales of woolen cloth from Europe. He detested most European missionaries in the Orient, recalling how some would write pathetic letters for cash from Germany for the starving heathen and then use it to live in the greatest luxury with plenty of servants. Having friends of all races, my father was an atheist as was also my Viennese mother.

My mother had somewhat prominent cheekbones. They probably originated when the Mongols such as Huns, Vandals and Wends invaded Austria. Remember, also, the "terrible Turks" surrounded the entire city of Vienna one time. The native Viennese of course mixed genetically with the conquerors and lost everything. Can my mother, mostly Viennese, blame the conquerors for robbing most of her ancestors years ago when some of her (& of course my) ancestors actually were these same conquerors? I hear some part-Melanesians and part-Polynesians complain how haoles during the last couple of hundred years have robbed them of land (I don't mean honest barter). Then I learn that the grandfather or greatgrandfather of the complainant was just the kind of man who would have robbed a native. Such present people are unwittingly to blame, having that haole's blood flowing in their veins.

I was born in 1899 of Naturalized US citizens who, unfortunately, gave me the Teutonic name "Otto". As a result, I was somewhat ostracized during and a bit after World War I and again in and after WW II. So twice I have experienced the feelings to which Jews and races which are neither Caucasian nor Mediterranean can be exposed.

I have employed people of all races, treating them all equally without thinking about it. During my botanical work I, without changing my habits, treated my Fijian assistants during my eight months on Vanua and Viti Lavus similarly. I rode in cars next to them, induced them to eat at table with me, etc., etc. Treating them as equals, I became unpopular among the Caucasian Colonials, many of whom had come from the worst slums of England! The former custom of cannibalism BY THE CHIEFS did not disgust me particularly. I thought it something of a blessing in disguise as it removed the antisocial & criminal element out of the breeding population. No wonder these Oceanic Negroes are so far superior in social intelligence than other Races of Man-kind. Anyway, are we not practicing a form of cannibalism, rather refined, every time we get a blood transfusion in a hospital?

I am so long winded as I am listening to Keaua Chandler's beautiful, two hour concert while typing.

Now to business: Disgusted with the Colonials' treatment of the Fijians (and Indians), I let off steam in my book "Naturalist's South Pacific Expedition: Fiji." The book sold very slowly especially because of British antagonism against my attitude. In fact, had I not left the Islands, I believe the Police Chief, a rather fine man, would have deported me. I took the hint.

With the Fijians now boss of their own archipelago and tourists flocking there, please read my Fiji book and let me know if, after the more technical bot. parts have been deleted, whether your company cannot publish the new edition as a paperback in Fiji that would no longer censor anticolonialism of the past. I would want to retain ownership of the copyright and get a royalty for each book sold.

Also, can your concern purchase my Hawaiian books wholesale very cheaply? I have good and some shopworn copies. I want to clear my shelves.. If you go from curio and other book dealing outfits (what about Smith's pharmacy at Kamuela, ETC.) with your car anyway, hauling my books would be no inconvenience. I sell mostly to National Parks and foreign outfits, some of which get my dried Hawaiian plants (museum herbarium specimens).

I herewith enclose ON APPROVAL a copy each of:

Flora Hawaiensis (Vols 1-4). \$ 15.00. This is a handful of 1192 pages on inferior paper in an inferior binding printed during World War II. The first edition had been sold out.

Flora Haw., Vol. 5 is practically sold out.

Flora Haw., Vol. 6 sells for \$ 15.00

Flora Haw., Vol 7 is almost complete and lacks a cover. If botanists insist on wanting it, they can have it from me (or you?) for \$15 wholesale. Retail it would be \$ 22.50

Plants Haw. Nat. Parks I would sell you for \$5.

If you want the lot you can have it for \$35 plus the ^{.005%}~~1%~~ tax. The Fiji copy is of course free.

The paperback has great potential, but an author can't go around and sell his own books. The Fl. Haw., can sell in "bunches" to schools. Remember that everything is loose-leaf and so ideal to illustrate biology lectures on the screen.

Aloha,

Dr. Otto Degener