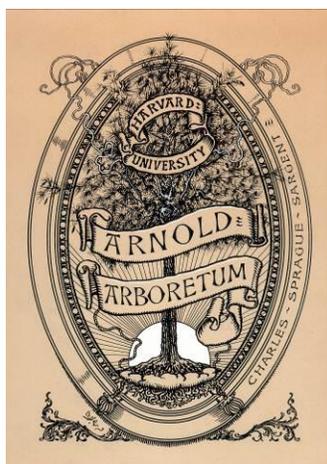


Archives I G 9.1 WUS

“Woods of the United States” exhibit, 1902-1938: Guide.



The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University

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I G 9.1 WUS

"Woods of the United States" exhibit, 1902-1938: Guide.
Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University
125 Arborway, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

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Descriptive Summary

Repository: Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Jamaica Plain, MA

Call No.: I G 9.1 WUS

Location: Archives

Title: "Woods of the United States" exhibit, 1902-1938.

Date(s): 1902-1938

Creator: Arnold Arboretum

Quantity: 1 linear foot (4 boxes)

Language of material: English

Abstract: The collection consists of correspondence, photographs, display labels, and publications pertaining to the "Woods of the United States" exhibit, which was on display from 1902 until 1938 in the Arboretum's Hunnewell Building. The collection also contains information on the Jesup Collection of American Woods which was displayed at the American Museum of Natural History in New York upon which the Arboretum's exhibit was based.

Note: Access to Finding Aid record in [HOLLIS](#).

Preferred Citation: "Woods of the United States" Exhibit records. Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

Additional Material: See Archives II A-5 Papers of Stephanie (Silvia) Barry Sutton (1940-1997), 1965-1994: Box 3, Folder 13. Chapter V Jesup Collection. There is one copy of a letter from Sargent to Jesup: see [Arnold Arboretum Correspondence Database](#).

Processing Information

Processed by Rebecca Anderson, Revised by Sheila Connor, 2012. Revised by Larissa Glasser, 2023.

Acquisition Information

Provenance: In 1938 the wood specimens associated with this exhibit were transferred from the Arnold Arboretum to the Biological Laboratories in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the Harvard University campus. Two boxes of display labels and four large wooden display signs associated with the exhibit were discovered in the attic of the Hunnewell Building in 1953. The display labels were boxed and relocated to the library and the signs were stored in the basement. In 1980, in response to a research inquiry, Edward Bemis, a horticultural intern working in the library assembled images from the Arboretum's historical photographic collection and notes made by S.B. Sutton about the collection. These materials were transferred from the Arboretum's library to its Archives in 1984 when the Archive was established. The wooden display signs were relocated to the Archives in 1993 when the Hunnewell Building was renovated and one was hung in the 3d floor corridor.

Terms of Access

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Historical Note:

The collection documents the Arnold Arboretum's exhibit "The Woods of the United States" which was based on, and actually created by acquiring portions of the Jesup Collection of American Woods at the [American Museum of Natural History](#) (AMNH) in New York which was named for Morris Ketchum Jesup (1830-1908) who led the Natural History Museum from 1881 until his death in 1908. The collection also contains information on the creation and subsequent disposition of the American Museum of Natural History's exhibit.

In 1880, Morris K. Jesup sought to develop a popular, eye-catching exhibit of Economic Botany for the AMNH and contacted Charles Sprague Sargent (1841-1927), the Arnold Arboretum's first director, who was at that time engaged in producing an enumeration of the species in the forests of North America for the U.S. Census Bureau as part of the nation's 10th census. Sargent and Jesup collaborated on plans to collect and display specimens of all tree species growing naturally in the United States, as well as imported species of important economic value. They agreed that the collecting process would be coordinated with Sargent's survey of the nation's forest for the census and would employ the same botanist-collectors. Although most of the collection and preparation of specimens took place throughout the 1880s, the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History first opened to the public in 1883. In his annual report for 1884-1885 Sargent reported on publication of two titles: his 612 page [Report upon the Forests of North America](#) and [The woods of the United States : with an account of their structure, qualities, and uses : with geographical and other notes upon the trees which produce them](#) which he described as "A manual intended to serve as a guide to the Jesup Collection of American Woods in the American Museum of Natural History in New York."

The Jesup collection at the AMNH would take 22 years to complete eventually consisted of 505 specimens of whole tree trunks, measuring up to five feet in diameter, cut in steps to show the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal grain of the wood. In 1895, with the completion of an addition to the AMNH the "Collection of North American Woods" was installed in the east wing on the Museum's ground floor. While there are archival records and newspaper accounts of a series of over two hundred watercolors by Mrs. Charles Sprague Sargent (Mary Robeson Sargent) of leaves, flowers, and fruits that illustrated the individual species in the exhibit this collection of watercolors appears to have been lost.

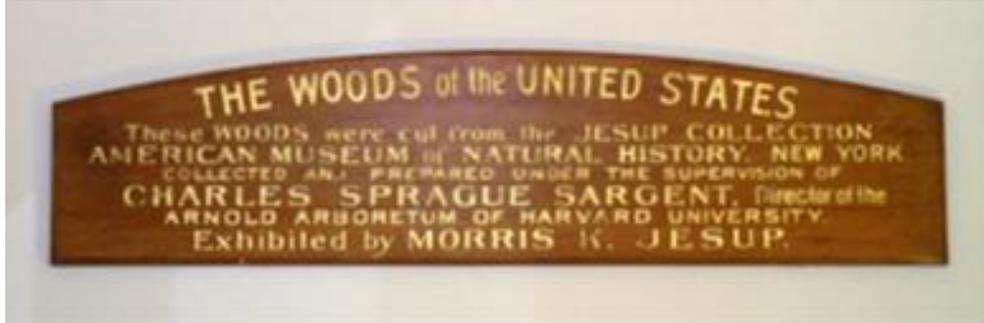
In the 1890s, the Arboretum was given a collection of smaller specimens cut from the Jesup collection and from 1902 to 1938 "The Woods of the United States" was exhibited in the Hunnewell Building.

Charles Sprague Sargent described the exhibition and his collaboration with Morris K. Jesup in the [Annual reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College. 1901-1902.](#)

"Several years ago Mr. Morris K. Jesup, the President of the American Museum of Natural History, presented to the Arboretum wood specimens of nearly every North American tree. These specimens, which are half sections of trunks and fourteen inches long, show the bark and on a horizontal plane the polished and the natural wood. These specimens were cut from the larger specimens which form the Jesup Collection of North American Woods, the gift of Mr. Jesup to the American Museum of Natural History and brought together and arranged by me during the last twenty-two years. Want of sufficient means to display properly Mr. Jesup's gift made it necessary to store temporarily this collection, but during the past year Mr. Jesup has furnished, at a cost of \$2800, one of the exhibition halls in the Museum Building with glass cases, and this hall is now devoted to the display of this important collection. Each specimen is accompanied by a label 12 inches long and 7 inches high. One half of this label consists of a map of North America; on this the area over which the particular tree grows spontaneously is colored green; on the other half of the label is printed a popular description of the tree, with the strength, weight and uses of its wood. These labels are duplicates of the labels made originally for the Jesup Collection and give in a condensed form much useful information."



The collection was displayed in the west hall on the first floor of the Hunnewell Building then called the "Jesup Room in the Museum Building" in a series of glass cases (Note the solid wall at the back of the room; the two windows that presently occupy this space were installed in 1993 when the building was renovated) and four large wooden signs, as shown below, complemented and described the collection.



In 1938, the Arboretum's wood collection was transferred to the Biological Laboratories on the Harvard University campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts and integrated into the similar collections belonging to the Bussey Institution and the Laboratory.

The Museum of Natural History in New York put The Jesup Wood Collection into storage when the museum was reorganized in the 1920s. In 1964, the collection moved from New York City to Portland, Oregon for display at the old Forestry Building and had just arrived and was still in two boxcars when the Forestry Building burned down. It remained in storage until 1971 when the Western Forestry Center, now the [World Forestry Center](#), opened with the Jesup collection as one of the Center's main exhibits.



Jesup Collection on display at Western Forestry Center c1971

© World Forestry Center

In the early 1980s the Jesup collection moved again. The World Forestry Center donated it to the Lumberman's Club of Memphis, Tennessee who, in turn, donated it to the newly established International Agricenter in 1981.

Scope and Content

The collection includes correspondence, photographs, reports, display labels and, publications. Correspondence about American Museum of Natural History's Jesup collection dates from 1966-1984.

Arrangement

Records of the "Woods of the United States" Exhibit, 1902-1938 is arranged in five series:

- Series I:** Correspondence
- Series II:** Reports and Notes
- Series III:** Photographs
- Series IV:** Publications
- Series V:** Display Labels
- Series VI:** Wooden Exhibit Signs

Box 1

Series I: Correspondence [Note: most of the correspondence is in regard to the American Museum of Natural History's Jesup Wood Collection]

Folder

1:

- Eight letters between Richard A. Howard and Stephanie B. Sutton of the Arnold Arboretum and C.W. Stove of the American Museum of Natural History about material held at the Museum pertaining to Morris K. Jesup, Charles S. Sargent and the Jesup Wood Collection and Sutton's plans to visit the Museum. May 24, 1965- January 16, 1966.
- Letter from Stephanie B. Sutton to Oregon Museum of Science and Industry inquiring about the disposition of American Museum of Natural History's Jesup Wood collection and the set of watercolors that was associated with the collection. February 7, 1966.
- Letter from Jane Sansregret to Sheila [Connor] Geary, Arnold Arboretum Librarian regarding the Jesup Wood Collection. January 19, 1980. Envelope, with attached handwritten notes on verso by Edward Bemis dated April 30, 1980
- Letter, and handwritten preparatory notes, from Edward Bemis, Horticultural intern at the Arboretum, in reply to J. Sansregret questions about the Jesup Wood collection. May 1, 1980. Photocopy
- Letter from E. Bemis to Western Forestry Center, Executive Director, John L. Blackwell, Western Forestry Center, Portland, Oregon inquiring about the planned display at the Forestry Center of American Museum of Natural History's Jesup Wood collection and the possibility of the Arboretum donating four wooden display signs. May 14, 1980. Photograph of display signs attached.
- Letter from Linda A. Smeltzer, Information Manager, Western Forestry Center on behalf John L. Blackwell of Western Forestry Center accepting the donation of display signs with attached flyer and describing [the former of American Museum of Natural History's] Jesup Wood Collection on display at the Western Forestry Center. Photocopy. [Sign donation did not occur S. Connor 11.14.2011]
- Letter from E. Bemis to Forest Products Laboratory inquiring about the disposition of Museum of Natural History's Jesup Wood Collection with attached notes. May 23, 1980. Copy

- Handwritten draft of undated letter [likely late May, 1980] and preparatory notes from E. Bemis to William L. Stern, University of Florida asking for information about the disposition of American Museum of Natural History's Jesup Wood collection.
- Letter from Nina J. Root, Chief Librarian, American Museum of Natural History to E. Bemis indicating they have no knowledge of the "Sprague" paintings. [Mrs. Sargent's paintings, S. Connor] May 23, 1980
- Memo from J. Sansregret dated October 17, 1984 inquiring again about Mrs. Mary Sargent's watercolors that also includes Sansregret's two publications about the collection.
 - Sansregret, Jane. "Jesup Wood Collection historic, enduring exhibit." *The Oregonian*. September 28, 1984. newspaper clipping, photocopy
 - Sansregret, Jane. "A History in Wood." *American Forests* September 1984. Photocopy

Series II: Reports and Notes

Folder

1. Eleven pages of notes from the archives of the American Museum of Natural History on the correspondence between Jesup and Sargent from 1880-1913 pertaining to the wood collection made by S.B. Sutton during her research at AMNH in 1966.
2. "Jesup Collection of Trees, Territories Covered by Principal Collectors" listing dates and areas covered. Photocopy
3. Excerpts from annual reports of the AMNH for 1890, 1891, 1895, 1897, 1911, 1901 pertaining to the "Jesup Collection of North American Forestry"
4. One page of excerpts from annual reports of the Arnold Arboretum for the years 1881/82, 1882/83, 1884/85, 1901/1902

Series III: Photographs

Folder

1. Arnold Arboretum "Woods of the United States"

- "Jesup collection of the woods of North America, in the Administration Building." Photograph by A. Rehder. July, 1902. (A-1179) On recto: Arnold Arboretum - Views Jesup Collection. 1, 8x10 print mounted on board.
- [Jesup Wood Collection]. Photographed by T.E. Marr. 1, 8x10 print, 2 copies 1 mounted, 1 transparency
- "Arnold Arboretum Views- The Conifer Room before it was remodeled in February, 1927" (From recto of board) Photographs by Mr. Palmer, January 28?, 1927., by E.J. Palmer. Jan., 1927.(consists of 3 images (1-3) of the conifer room and one, no. 4, of the Jesup Collection of Woods of North America. Mounted on board

2. Western Forestry Center, Oregon

- Photograph of the Jesup Wood Collection at the Western Forestry Center 1, 8x10 b&w print, one negative of the same size
- *Western Forestry Center*. Pamphlet, unpagged, no date
- One paged description of the Jesup Wood Collection at the Western Forestry Center published by Western Forestry Center

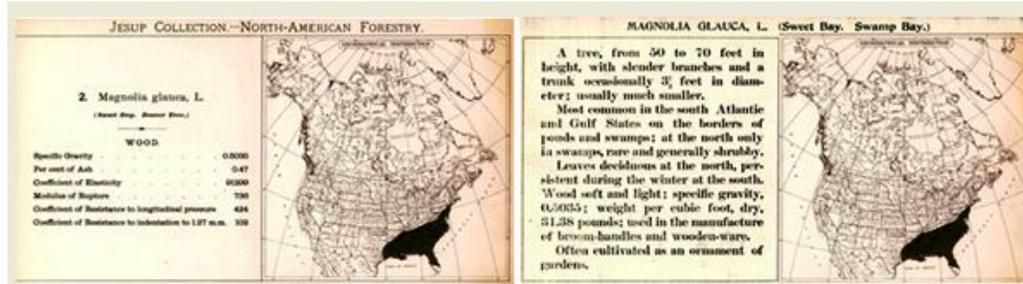
Series IV: Publications

Sargent, Charles Sprague. *The Woods of the United States: with an account of Their Structure, Qualities, and Uses; with Geographical and Other Notes upon the Trees Which Produce Them*. New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1885. 2 copies

Box 2-4

Series V: Display Labels

Each specimen had two 12¾"x7" labels divided into two parts that provided information about each species. (Illustrated below)



Box 2

Consists of the set of strength, weight and uses labels. Original Labels hand numbered in ink 1-267. Some original, many photocopies, incomplete

Box 3

Consists of the set of popular description labels for each species. Original labels hand numbered in ink 1-49, many photocopies, incomplete

Box 4

Consists of the set of popular description labels for each species. Original labels, hand numbered in ink 50-408, many photocopies, incomplete

Series VI: Wooden Exhibit Signs

Three, two small and one large sign are held in the Archives, one of the larger signs is hanging in the elevator hallway to the Library on the 3d floor.

ARNOLD ARBORETUM: Inventory of Cultural Artifacts	
Artifact	The Woods of the United States
Inventory No.	146
 	
Location	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Hunnewell Building <input type="radio"/> Greenhouse <input type="radio"/> Grounds <input type="radio"/> Weld Hill <input type="radio"/> Other
Location Description	3 - Elevator Hallway
Condition	<input type="radio"/> Excellent <input type="radio"/> Fair <input checked="" type="radio"/> Good <input type="radio"/> Needs Attention
How Acquired	Display sign for the collection of wood specimens associated "The Woods of the United States" which was based on, and actually created by acquiring portions of, the Jesup Collection of American Woods at the American Museum of Natural History in New York which was installed in 1902 See Archives RG 9.1 WMS
Notes	There are 2, 47 3/4" x 12" (one of which is displayed in the elevator hallway, and 2, 37 1/2" x 11 3/4" signs held in the Archives
Additional Images	
Creator	
Date	ca1900
Memorial	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Artifact Type	Sign
Medium	Wood
Dimensions	47 3/4" x 12"
Attention Needed	
FMI	
Inscription	These woods were cut from Jesup Collection American Museum of Natural History, New York Collected and Prepared Under the Supervision of Charles
Registrar	Stephen Lappin
Date	5/5/2006