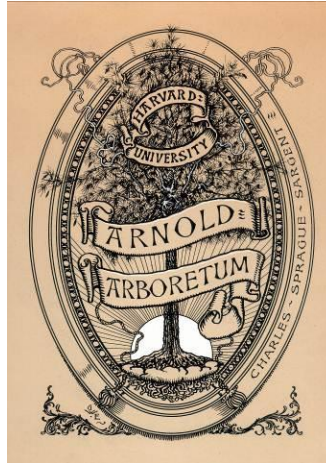


Archives VI-BI

Bussey Institution collection, 1872-2007: Guide.



The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University

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VI-BI

Bussey Institution collection, 1872-2007: Guide.
Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University
125 Arborway, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

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Descriptive Summary

Repository: Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

Call No.: VI-BI

Location: Archives.

Title: Bussey Institution collection, 1872-2007.

Date(s): 1872-2007

Creator: Bussey Institution

Quantity: 6 linear inches

Language of material: English

Abstract: Benjamin Bussey created an endowment at Harvard for the establishment of an undergraduate school of agriculture and horticulture to be called the Bussey Institution. The Arboretum was established on what had been Bussey Institution land, and at different periods, the two institutions shared staff, including administrators, and facilities. This collection consists of correspondence (both original and photocopies), university reports about the institution (both original and photocopies), photographs of the buildings and grounds, articles about the institution, and architectural plans.

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

Preferred Citation: Bussey Institution records. Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University.

Additional Material: Archives I B-1 BB Benjamin Bussey (1757-1842) papers, 1832-2001.

Processing Information

Processed: 2001, Lisa Pearson. 2012: 2006, K. Hinckley, S. Connor. Revised 2023, Larissa Glasser.

Acquisition Information

Provenance: The original correspondence was acquired during the years of affiliation with the Arnold Arboretum and added to the Archives in 1984 when the Archive was established. Additional correspondence, primarily copies, and additional materials were added to the collection by Ida Hay while researching her book *Science in the Pleasure Ground*. The draft manuscript "Harvard, Agriculture, and the Bussey Institution" by Jack Weir [John Arnold Weir] (1916-1997) was submitted to the Arnold Arboretum in for review in the 1990s, Weir's manuscript draft of "The Bussey Institution of Harvard University: a Case Study in the History of Agriculture and Genetics" was submitted to the Arnold Arboretum in 1993 for review. The

architectural drawings were transferred June 2007 to the Arnold Arboretum Archives from the Botany Library, Cambridge.

Terms of Access

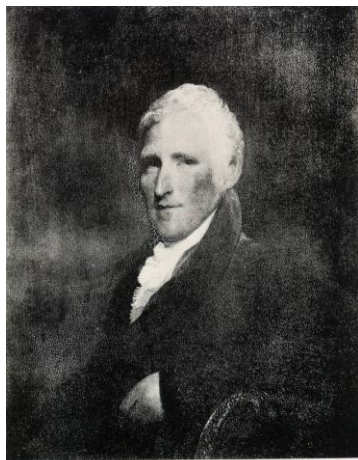
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Historical Note



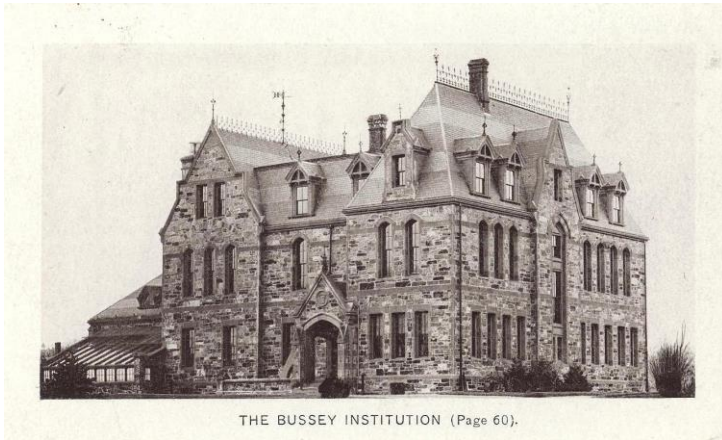
Benjamin Bussey

[Benjamin Bussey \(1759-1842\)](#) created an endowment at Harvard for the establishment of an undergraduate school of agriculture and horticulture to be called the Bussey Institution. Also included in his 1835 will was the grant of his estate "Woodland Hill" in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts to the President and Fellows of Harvard College which would be the site of the school. One of the provisions of the will allowed Bussey's granddaughter, Mrs. Maria Bussey Motley, a life tenancy on the property. The [portrait](#) at left, painted in 1809 by Gilbert Stuart is a part of the Harvard University Portrait Collection at the Harvard Art Museums.

In 1870, Mrs. Motley released seven acres of the property for the establishment of the school and work began on the Peabody and Stearns designed Bussey Institution building. At the same time her husband, Thomas Motley, Jr., was appointed instructor of farming, a post he held until his death in 1895, Francis Storer was named professor of agricultural chemistry, and in 1871 Francis Parkman was named professor of horticulture. Charles S. Sargent succeeded him in that position in 1872.

Enrollment in the program was never very large, averaging about eight students during the years 1880-1895, and only ten undergraduate degrees were ever granted. Francis Storer felt that growth was hampered by free tuition offered by the Massachusetts Agricultural College in Amherst and by the founding of the Harvard Veterinary School. Several of the

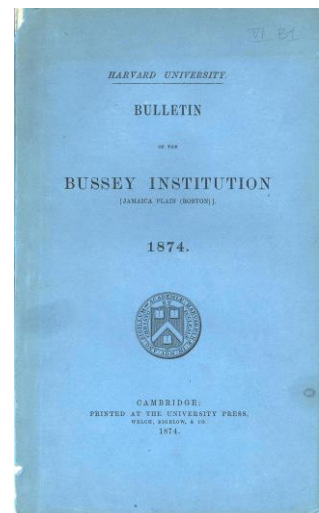
instructors donated their services and the salaries of the others were paid through private subscriptions. Additional funds were raised by boarding livestock and by raising vegetables for the Harvard College food services. Enrollment improved during the period 1896-1907 and new instructors were appointed, including Arnold Arboretum staff member John G. Jack.



At least two future landscape architects were enrolled in the program at the Bussey Institution. [Charles Eliot](#) (1859-1897), son of Harvard President Charles Eliot, who was later employed by [Frederick Law Olmsted](#) (1822-1903) and [Arthur A. Shurcliff](#) (1862-1957), who later co-founded at Harvard with [Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.](#) (1870-1957) the first school of [Landscape Architecture](#).

The Bussey Institution remained as an undergraduate school until 1908 when it was reorganized into the Graduate School of Applied Science (after 1915 Applied Biology). That year Professor William E. Castle moved his laboratory to the Bussey. In 1909 Dr. Edward M. East was appointed chair of Experimental Plant Morphology. The program was expanded to include plant anatomy in 1914 with the appointment of Professor Irving W. Bailey. Professor Oakes Ames followed in 1915 and maintained a laboratory there until 1926.

In 1930, the Bussey faculty was merged with the faculty of Arts and Sciences and in 1936 the Bussey staff was transferred to the Biological Laboratories in Cambridge. The Bussey Institution remained as a holding agency and its funds were used to support the Arnold Arboretum. In the late 1940s botanical activities were reorganized at Harvard University and the Bussey Institution was folded into the Institute for Research in Experimental and Applied Botany. During World War II the Bussey Institution buildings in Jamaica Plain were renovated and used by the U.S. Army Medical Corps.



The Bussey Institution began an ongoing relationship with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in 1894 when the department began to produce diphtheria antitoxin at the Bussey facility. In 1904 a new Antitoxin and Vaccine Laboratory was built on adjacent land and in 1947 the Bussey buildings became the home of the Commonwealth's Diagnostic Laboratories. By the early 1960s more room was needed, and the state arranged the purchase, by eminent domain, of the former Bussey Institution grounds and buildings from Harvard University. Prior to the construction of the new state laboratory building which began in 1969, minor, but gallant efforts were made by some of the State laboratory staff



Boston firefighters battle four-alarm blaze which destroyed vacant building at South street and Asticou road in Jamaica Plain last night. Four-story structure once occupied by biological laboratories of the Harvard School of Public Health, was more than 150 years old and was slated for demolition. Fire was spotted by Fire Comr. James Kelly who lives nearby on the Arborway and who sounded first alarm. Damage was estimated at \$50,000. (Globe photo by Don Preston)

Newspaper clipping May 1, 1974 *Boston Globe*, contributed by Richard Heath, 2012

to preserve the old gothic Peabody and Stearns designed Bussey Institution building. However, at that time the concept of historic preservation of buildings such as the Bussey was in its infancy and funding was not available for preservation and restoration of the structure. Although slated for demolition the building caught fire in 1970 which hastened its demise. The new building was named the Dr. [Theobald Smith](#) Health Services Laboratory in 1975 by [Chapter 0272](#) of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Acts and Resolves, however it is now known as the William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute.

The histories of the Bussey Institution and the Arnold Arboretum are often intertwined. The Arboretum was established on what had been Bussey Institution land, and at different periods the two institutions shared staff, including administrators, and facilities. Theobald Smith (1859-1934) and his assistants used laboratories located in the original Bussey Institution, the State Board of Health stabled horses used in the preparation of diphtheria anti-toxin under his direction one of the Bussey barns, and Dr. Smith lived in Benjamin Bussey' home " ... The Corporation took possession of the Bussey Mansion House on the 1st of July, 1896, and after making needed repairs assigned it to Professor Theobald Smith. The whole of the Woodland Hill estate is now devoted to University uses, -the larger part of it to the Arnold Arboretum." Harvard University, *Annual reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College 1895-1896*. Additional material on the Bussey Institution can be found in [The Development of Harvard University since the inauguration of President Eliot, 1869-1929](#), edited by Samuel Eliot Morison. [The Harvard book: selections from three centuries](#), edited by William Bentinck-Smith also contains information on the Bussey Institution. Additional information on Peabody and Stearns can be found [in Peabody & Stearns: country houses and seaside cottages](#), by Annie Robinson.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of correspondence (both original and photocopies), university reports about the institution (both original and photocopies), photographs of the buildings and grounds, articles about the institution, architectural plans and other materials.

Arrangement

The Bussey Institution collection is arranged in 5 series:

- Series I:** Correspondence
- Series II:** Publications
- Series III:** Photographs
- Series IV:** Journals
- Series V:** Architecture

Container List

Box 1

Series I: Correspondence

Folder

- 1: Charles W. Eliot to Frank H. Storer, 46 letters, 1887-1904 (photocopies)
- 2: Buildings, maintenance, and renovations 1887-1983
 - Benjamin Dean to C.W. Eliot, November 29, 1887, photocopy
 - Benjamin White (includes ground and first floor plans plans) to W.M. Wheeler, August 22, 1922
 - Keeper [E.H. Wilson] to Benjamin White, August 11, 1928
 - R.B. Johnson to Elmer D. Merrill, February 15, 1937
 - Dorothy Silverman to Mrs. C.M. Gilman, January 7, 1938 attached to:
 - J.W. Schereschewsky to J.W. Lowe, June 6, 1937
 - [E.D. Merrill] to F. Warren Clark, September 26, 1936 attached to:
 - Decision of Board of Appeal, Harvard University, September 16, 1938 legal document
 - "Memorandum on Bussey Institution building" from EDM [Elmer Drew Merrill] January 30, 1941
 - James Stevens Simmons to Cecil K. Drinker, January 22, 1941, copy
 - Cecil K. Drinker to E.D. Merrill, January 28, 1941
 - Donald Wyman to Lawrence W. Carr, October 28, 1941
 - E.D. Merrill to Major Moore, November 3, 1941
 - E.D. Merrill to J. Katz Sos, Inc. November 3, 1941
 - E.D. Merrill to G.K. Saurwein November 7, 1941, includes 2 copies
 - E.D. Merrill to Constructing Quartermaster, November 7, 1941, (includes copy and draft
 - James G. Hattox to E.D. Merrill, November 10, 1941
 - E.D. Merrill to Mr. Sullivan November 12, 1941 attached to:
 - Karl Sax to Ropes, gray, Best, Coolidge and Rugg: Mr. Perkins, March 16, 1951
 - W.P. Hooper to Edwards Reynolds, April 20, 1951, copy
 - Karl Sax to Paul C. Manglesdorft, August 30, 1946, photocopy, attached to:
 - Karl Sax to Mr. Cutler, September 26, 1952, photocopy
 - Anne E. Melina to Ida Hay, June 7, 1983, attached to:

- Note from Ida Hay to Richard A. Howard, June 8, 1983 and includes copy of part of an undated, unnamed publication entitled "The Bussey Building"
- 3: Administration, personnel, and budgets, letters/reports, 1935?-1944**
- Report of the Bussey Institution, undated [1935/]
 - E.D. Merrill to James Conant, January 9, 1938
 - "Bussey Institution 1935-36" and draft , attached to:
 - Unsigned, undated document, "Questions which Dr. Merrill can probably answer and which counsel will wish to know about"
 - E.D. Merrill to Dr. Redfield, January 9, 1956, attached to:
 - Memorandum to Dr. Merrill and Dr. Redfield regarding Biology Budget and the Bussey Institution [Dr. Conant in pencil]
 - "Memorandum regarding proposed changes in the Bussey Institution" undated
 - "Bussey Institution officers" undated
 - Memorandum for J.B.C (Sgd.) J.W.L, December 6, 1939, copy
 - J.B. Conant to J.W. Lowes, November 22, 1939 Copy for Dr. Merrill
 - Howard W. Smith to E.D. Merrill, September 1, 1943, attached with handwritten notes
 - "Present and anticipated Corporation (and non-Corporation) salaries in the Arnold Arboretum without recourse to Bussey Institution or Division of Biology funds for new appointments or for increase in salaries of the present staff" undated
 - "Memorandum to: [staff?] from E.D. Merrill, January 3, 1943
 - E.D. Merrill, "Supplementary memorandum on the Bussey Institution"
 - "Memorandum for Mr. Lowe" unsigned, January 20, 1936 in pencil
 - No title, begins "Memorandum for Dean Buck regarding the present situation in reference to employees of the separately endowed botanical establishments....." September 8, 1843, E.D.M. (carbon copy)
 - Robert B. Stone to E.D. Merrill, November 13, 1943, copy [original in I B-1 BB [Benjamin Bussey collection regards Bussey tomb]
 - Margaret F. Motley (Mrs. Thomas Motley) to Dr. Sax, undated, handwritten [1952?]
 - Karl Sax to Mrs. Thomas Motley, July 22, 1952
 - [Harvard] Treasurer to Cecil K. Drinker, March 9, 1944, copy
 - [Harvard] Treasurer [undecipherable signature] to E.D. Merrill, March 9, 1944
 - Karl Sax to David Bailey, January 19, 1949
 - Memorandum to Fran Beane from Ida Hay, January 13, 1988 "not sent in Hay's hand)
- 4: Research, 8 letters, 1894-1953 (originals and photocopies) principally from to and from the United States Department of Agriculture, 1 letter N. Shaler to Dean Storer, September 19, 1894, copy and 1 letter from W.M. Wheeler to Eliot Wadsworth, September 29, 1919, copy**

- 5: Weir, J.A., to Arboretum staff (1968-1992), principally Phyllis Anderson, Includes letter from Irwin Goldman, July 12, 2002 regarding J. A. Weir, also email (2003)
- 6: Conservation correspondence for Architectural Plans. Weissman Preservation Center, Harvard University to Beth Bayley, Arnold Arboretum, May 2007

Series II: Publications

Folder

- 1: Anon. "The Bussey Institution of Harvard University. Founded 1872 (sic) –Closed June 30, 1936." *Genetics* 21: 295, July 1936
- 2: Anon. The Passing of Bussey [Institution] newspaper clipping, *Boston*, June 17, 1952.
- 3: Bussey, Benjamin, Extract from the Will of
- 4: Bussey Institution, Course Descriptions 1872-1880.
- 5: Elliot, Clark A. ed. *Science at Harvard University*, selected photocopies with references to the Bussey Institution
- 6: *Kings Dictionary of Boston*, 1883, photocopy of Bussey Institution entry
- 7: Lord, Caroline Morse, "Bussey Brook and Beyond" manuscript
- 8: Rader, Karen A. "The Mouse People": Murine Genetics Work at the Bussey Institution, 1909-1936, *Journal of the History of Biology* 31: 327-354. 1998
- 9: "Report of the President of Harvard College" Reprints and photocopies pertaining to the Bussey Institution from 1895/96 – 1897/98, 1948/49 – 1951/52
- 10: Sax, Karl. 1947. "[The Bussey Institution.](#)" *Arnoldia* 7, (3) 13-16. 1947
- 11: Sax, Karl. 1966. "[The Bussey Institution: Harvard University Graduate School of Applied Biology. 1908-1936.](#)" *Journal of Heredity*... 175-179
- 12: Wheeler, William Morton.. 1930. "[The Bussey Institution](#)" from *The Development of Harvard University*. Ed by S.E. Morrison, 508- 517, 2 copies, one annotated by Ida Hay
- 13: Weir, J. A., "Harvard, Agriculture, and the Bussey Institution." *Genetics* 136: 1227-1231 (April 1994). Weir, J. A., "Harvard, Agriculture, and the Bussey Institution." Manuscript, n.d. [copy of finding aid to the Jack Weir papers at the American Philosophical Society]
- 14: Goldman, I.L., "Anecdotal, Historical, and Critical Commentaries on Genetics" *Genetics* 162: 997-1001 (2002) photocopy
- 15: American Philosophical Society. Finding aid to APS [J.A. Weir papers](#)
- 16: Weir, J. A., "The Bussey Institution of Harvard University: a Case Study in the History of Agriculture and Genetics" manuscript, bound, n.d. received Arboretum 1993. Includes photocopies describing grants received by J.A. Weir for research on the Bussey Institution
- 17: "Harvard Making Farmers," *Boston Dailey Globe*, September 17, 1899, print-out of webpage

Series III: Photographs

Folder

- 1: Various views of the Bussey Institution from the late nineteenth century to the

1940's, some duplication, for digital images of Arnold Arboretum greenhouses at the Bussey Institution see [Via](#), search for Bussey Institution

Series IV: Journals (on shelf)

Bound Volumes

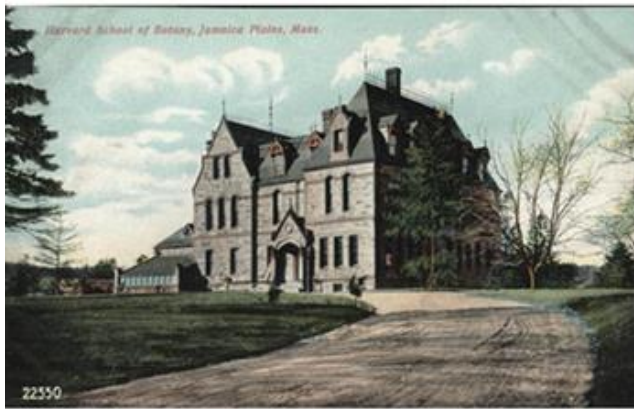
Bulletin of the Bussey Institution.

- Vol. 1 (1874-1876)
- Vol. 2: Pt. 1-3, 5, 7-9 (1877-1900)
- Vol. 3: Pt. 1-2 (1901-1902)

Bussey Institution, Laboratory of Plant Genetics, *Contributions from the Laboratory of Genetics*

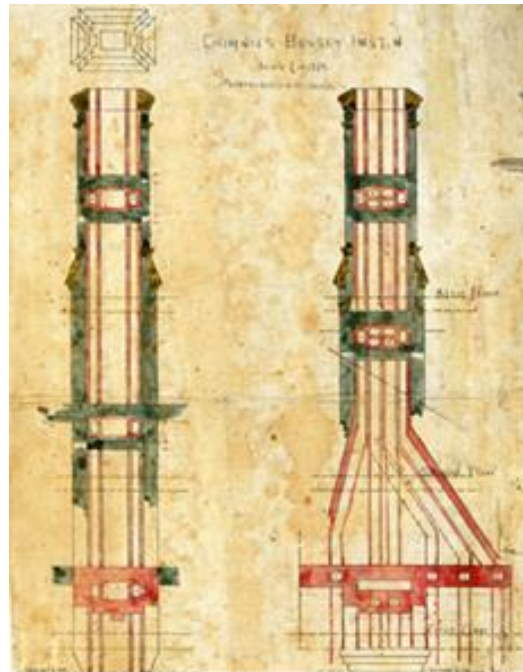
- Vol. 1-3 (1909-1928)

Series V: Architecture



Postcard, date unknown

From the architectural plans
of the Bussey Institution



Folder

1: Holden, Wheaton A. 1973. "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870-1917.

Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians
32 (2) pp. 114-131, printout

Map Case: Drawer 1, Folder 2 and 2A

2: 1901 blueprints for the Head house and Greenhouse, Bussey Institution.

2A: Contains the original architectural plans of the Bussey Institution of Harvard University, Jamaica Plain, MA. C.1870. Drawings produced by the Boston based firm of Peabody and Stearns. Black ink, red ink and watercolor on linen drafting cloth. Conservation work performed June 2007 by Weissman Preservation Center of Harvard University, cleaned and encapsulated the plans in polyester sleeves.