Archives II A-3 JGJ

Papers of John George Jack (1861-1949), 1887-1990: Guide

Harvard University

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Papers of John George Jack (1861-1949), 1887-1990: Guide

Archives of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University

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Descriptive Summary

Repository: Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.
Call No.: II A-3 JGJ.
Location: Archives.
Title: Papers of John George Jack (1861-1949), 1887-1990: Guide
Date(s): 1887-1990.
Quantity: 10 linear inches.
Abstract: Compiled by J. G. Jack, primarily during his tenure at the Arnold arboretum, this collection consists of biographical information and correspondence, as well as publications, images, and research notes. J. G. Jack worked as a lecturer at the Arnold arboretum and was the first staff member, after Sargent, to visit Asia. The collection covers the time period from 1887-1949, with most materials coming from the 1930’s.
Note: Access to Finding Aid record in Hollis Classic or Hollis.
Other descriptions of this material: Additional John G. Jack correspondence can be found by searching the Arnold Arboretum Correspondence Index.

Acquisition Information

Provenance: These papers were created by John George Jack and most were acquired during Jack's Arboretum career. This collection was transferred from the Arnold Arboretum's departmental holdings to the Arboretum’s Archives in 1984.

Processing Information


Terms of Access

Researchers seeking to examine archival materials are strongly encouraged to make an appointment. The Director, or an office of origin, may place restrictions on the use of some or all of its records. The extent and length of the restriction will be determined by the Director, office of origin, and the Archivist and will be enforced equally for all researchers.

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**Biographical Note**

Born in Chateauguay, Quebec, Canada on April 15, 1861, John George Jack was one of twelve children of Robert and Annie Jack. Robert Jack (1821-1900) was a farmer and fruit grower who, for over 40 years, introduced and experimented with varieties of fruit new to the Province of Quebec. Annie Linda Jack (1839-1912), a poet, author and a noted horticulturist wrote a series of newspaper articles entitled “Garden Talks” and authored “The Canadian Garden; a Pocket Help for the Amateur” (1903).

As a boy J. G. Jack was interested in natural history with a special attraction to insects. Basically self taught with a minimum of private instruction, J. G. Jack's formal education included only approximately 6 months of high school. Through his observations and collections, he was introduced to a variety of correspondents including Sir John William Dawson, the Principal of McGill University (1855-1893) who helped establish the Peter Redpath Museum of Natural History and who became Jack’s friend and mentor. Jack became a member of the American Association for the advancement of Science in 1882, where he made contacts that eventually led to employment at the Arnold Arboretum. Beginning in 1882 and continuing for the next three years, Jack spent the winter months in Boston, Massachusetts attending lectures given by Harvard professors, including Dr. Hermann August Hagen (1817-1893) a Professor of Entomology and author of “Bibliotheca Entomologia,” published in 1862-63. He also studied zoology with Professor Alpheus Hyatt and attended lectures on botany given by Professor by George Goodale. In 1883, Jack spent the summer working at River Edge, New Jersey, on the 80 acre farm of Elbert Sillick Carman (1836- ), editor-in-chief of The Rural New Yorker (1878-1964), where Carmen had been conducting experiments on economic plants as well as woody plants since 1877.

In April 1886, Jack visited the director of the Arboretum – Charles Sprague Sargent (1841-1927) – at his Brookline estate, Holm Lea. Promised only manual labor at small compensation, he began working at the Arnold Arboretum, but within a short time his botanical knowledge became apparent, earning Sargent’s confidence and an increase in his pay to a dollar a day. Jack continued his education by taking the
Harvard Summer Course in Botany and attending various lectures. By the terms of the Arboretum’s original indenture, the director, as the Arnold Professor of Botany, was to teach the knowledge of trees at the College. Sargent delegated this function, with the approval of the trustees, to Jack who became Lecturer in Arboriculture in 1890 (the title was later changed to Lecturer in Forestry). Jack taught forestry both at Harvard, often with Richard T. Fisher (1876-1934), the first director of the Harvard Forest, and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he also held a lectureship from 1899 to 1908. In 1907, Jack married Cerise Emily Agnes Carmen (1879-1935), daughter of his former employer, E. S. Carmen, and in 1908 he was made an Assistant Professor of Dendrology at the Arnold Arboretum.

Jack taught throughout his career. In the fall and spring he conducted courses in dendrology, using the Arboretum’s living collections as his classroom. Jack’s courses were geared toward the layperson and his amicable disposition made his classes popular. According to Sargent’s annual report for 1890/91, Jack “gave twice a week during the months of May and June, instruction to a class of twenty-six men and women who paid a small fee for the privilege. His lessons, which treated of the plants, in their botanical, economic, and ornamental aspects, were practical and interesting.” With well over 100 citations in Garden and Forest he was also regular contributor to the Arboretum’s Bulletin of Popular Information. Jack also published “Trees and other Woody Plants Found in Harvard Forest” (1911), and “Topsfield Arboretum Catalog of Trees and Shrubs” (n.d.).

Soon after Jack joined the Arboretum he began collecting and documenting plants in the United States and abroad. During the summers of 1898 and 1900, Jack was an agent for the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He explored the forests of central Colorado and the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming and produced a detailed documentation and photographs of the forest and soil conditions of the Pikes Peak, Plum Creek and South Platte Forest Reserves. In 1891, he visited botanic gardens in France, Germany, Italy, Denmark, and England and in 1904, he and Arboretum
taxonomist Alfred Rehder collected plant specimens and took photographs in the western United States and in Canada.

Already experienced in plant exploration when he embarked on a year-long trip to the Far East in 1905, Jack became the first staff member after Sargent to visit Asia. He focused his travels on Korea and Japan, as political unrest at the time made travel in mainland China dangerous. Although Sargent's Annual Report for the Year Ending July 31, 1905, states that "Mr. J. G. Jack has started on a journey to the East to obtain material for the Arboretum in Japan, Korea, and northern China,” his year long Asian journey was self-financed. Jack may have planned his trip to spend time with his younger brother, the Reverend Milton Jack of the Presbyterian Foreign Ministry, who had long been stationed in Taiwan. Jack’s introduction to an undated, unpublished manuscript entitled “Notes on Some Recently Introduced Trees and Shrubs” outlined his goals and itinerary for the Asian trip:

On the first of July, 1905, I left Boston for Japan . . . The object of my trip was primarily rest and recreation for three or four months, combined with a desire to observe some of the interesting arborescent flora of central and northeastern Japan . . . A short visit was also made to Korea and to Peking in China.

In addition to collecting seeds and herbarium specimens representing 258 plants, Jack took photographs of individual specimens and of landscape views and returned with 172 images, many of them as lantern slides, a format especially useful for his teaching. Covering some of the ground that Arboretum plant explorer Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930) would later visit, Jack photographed the forest preserves and activities of the lumbering industry around Mt. Fuji and elsewhere in Japan, as well as the forests of Taiwan and Korea. The scenes he captured in Beijing include formal portraits of people in traditional costumes.

Jack retired from full time employment at the Arboretum in September 1935 at age 74. His wife Cerise died later that same year. Jack spent his retirement at his home "Folly Farm," in East Walpole, Massachusetts with his daughter, Betty Jack Wirth and her husband. In 1948, while tending his orchard Jack fell and broke his hip and was confined to bed. The following year on May 20, John George Jack, Arnold Arboretum Assistant Professor of Dendrology, Emeritus, died at age 88.

Figure 1: John G. Jack. Photograph by Hardy. March, 1898.
Figure 2: Pinus Thunbergi. Japan, Shiogama. Jack, John George. 1905.
Figure 3: John G. Jack with Harvard forestry students discussing Hickory trees. Unknown photographer. nd.
Figure 4: *Castanea japonica*. Japan. Photograph by John G. Jack. September 2, 1902.
Figure 5: *Phyllostachys bamausoides*. Japan. Jack, John George. 1905.
Figure 6: John G. Jack. Photograph by Tupper. 1903-04?

Scope and Content
This collection contains biographical information, correspondence, research notes, images, and writings of John George Jack. 172 images of eastern Asia taken in 1905 have been digitized and are available on VIA.

Arrangement
The collection is arranged in 5 series:
- Biographical
- Publications
- Correspondence
- Research
- Images

Container List

Series I: Biographical
- Box 1
- Folder 1: Biographical information 1861-1949.
- Folder 2: Photographs 1898-1935.

Series II: Publications
Jack published prolifically in Arnoldia. To access these articles please visit Arnoldia’s website and search for “J.G. Jack.”
- Box 1
- Folder 1: Jack, John George, "Pike's Peak, Plum Creek, and South Platte Forest Reserves. 1900. http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.FIG:006419328

1 Figure 5: John G. Jack with visiting Chinese students. Photograph by A.A. Greenlaw. 1917.
2 Figure 6: John G. Jack (left) with Alfred Rehder (right) at Jack’s 70th birthday celebration. Photograph by H.M. Raup. September 1, 1933.
• **Folder 2:** "Notes on Recently Introduced Trees and Shrubs." 1906? Manuscript.
  o Photocopy of pamphlet held at Botany Libraries. Hollis Number: 006219585
• **Folder 4:** Jack, John George. “Winter Injuries among Trees and Shrubs.” *Scientific Monthly* [1935]
• **Folder 7:** "Rediscovering the Big Horns; a Pictorial Study of 75 years of Ecological Change" 1990. [Includes Jack’s photographs of the Pike’s Peak, Plum Creek, and South Platte Forest Reserves compared with photographs of the same scene shot in 1975].

**Series III: Correspondence**

NOTE: Additional J. G. Jack correspondence can be found by searching the Arnold Arboretum Correspondence Index at: [http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu/library/lib_search.html](http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu/library/lib_search.html)

• **Box 1**
  • Ames, Oakes: 1931, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1 undated.
  • Anderson, Miss: 1933.
    - "His Royal Highness, Jumbo and me." [Catherine Bangham (?) and her dog]
    - "Plant in foreground #671 (?). Second growth jungle the roadside near the foot of the mountains from [Bierenun?] to Takengon."
    - "Rhododendron, wintergreen, and orchids near the top of the Redelong Volcano near Takengon. This was taken above the belt of more or less permanent fog."
    - "Farmland – Arabica coffee and potatoes were the chief crops near Takengon – three crops of potatoes and then coffee as long as the land is useful when abandoned new jungle is cut for another start. The volcano from which we obtained several specimens is half hidden in the mists in the background."
  • Chen, Y.: 1935.
  • Felt, E. P. 1933, 1 undated.
  • Fors, Alberto J.: 1933.
  • Leon, Brother: 1931, 1932, 1933.
  • Lowell, A. Lawrence: 1932.
  • McKelvey, Susan Delano: 1930, 1931.
  • Merrill, Elmer Drew: 1946.
  • Ptitsin, L: 1934.
  • Rowe, G. C.: 1932.
• Salvoza, Felipe, M.: 1933.
• Shaw, George Russell: 1932.
• Trelease, William: 1928.
• Tryon, H.H.
• Ueki, H.: 1934.
• Walsingham, Frank G.: 1945.
• Whaley, Frank J.: 1936

Series IV: Research

• Box 2
  • Folder 1: Arnold Arboretum Notes by J. G. Jack 1887-1893. Notes on plants growing at the Arnold Arboretum that include flowering and fruiting times, along with descriptions of flowers and colors of fruits. Bound volume, formerly in Library collection with Call Number Cac J12, Accession number 39,420. Bookplate annotated The Gift of “Professor J. G. Jack through Mrs. Susan D. McKelvey, February 3, 1931”
  • Folder 2: Collection Notes of specimens numbers 501-4017, 1918-1926.
  • Folder 3: Collection Notes [numbers] (6101-8800) 1927-1936.
  • Folder 4: Diary 1896 -1935. Brief entries usually only during the flowering season, list first sightings of bird species as well.
  • Folder 6: Miscellaneous notes regarding specimens.

Series V: Genera and Views Collections; Images

The Arnold Arboretum retains J. G. Jack’s images in a variety of formats: black and white photographs mounted on boards, lantern slides, and digital images. Of particular note are Jack’s 172 images of eastern Asia taken in 1905 which have been digitized and are available on VIA.
The Visual Information Access (VIA) system is a union catalog of visual resources at Harvard and Radcliffe that includes information about slides, photographs, objects and artifacts in the university's libraries, museums and archives. To find and display Jack’s photographs of eastern Asia in Harvard’s VIA Catalog go to http://via.harvard.edu and use search term Jack and Eastern Asian Historical Photograph Collections.

The Arnold Arboretum Library web site also has a photograph gallery, “Botanical and Cultural Images of Eastern Asia, 1907-1927,” featuring images of plants, people, and landscapes. For more information about and images of John George Jack’s explorations, please go to: http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_jack.html

Figure 1: Kiyomizu at Kioto. Jack, John George (1861-1949). 1905.  
Figure 2: Populus tomentosa China. Jack, John George (1861-1949). 1905.  
Figure 3: Japan – Lumbering. Jack, John George (1861-1949). 1905.

Subject Headings
Jack, John George (1861-1949)  
Woody plants  
Arborets -- Massachusetts  
Arnold Arboretum