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THE ONE-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF CHARLES SPRAGUE SARGENT

CHARLES Sprague Sargent, first Director of the Arnold Arboretum, had an insatiable interest in trees. Even before his association with the institution, he was interested in botany and in horticulture, his first appointment at Harvard University being as Director of the Botanic Garden in Cambridge. On assuming the directorship of the Arnold Arboretum in 1873, he already appreciated the tremendous value of collections of living plants as a means of promoting public interest in horticulture. His desire for study and for research, combined with his deep love of plants and a thorough appreciation of landscape design, eminently fitted him for the adoption of an unusually farsighted policy in reference to the development of the Arnold Arboretum; and the policies that he developed and maintained throughout his productive life insured the future of the institution and its present pre-eminent position. The Arnold Arboretum is the oldest institution of its kind in America, remarkable among its other accomplishments for the extraordinarily large number of species that it has introduced into cultivation both in America and in Europe.

To Charles Sprague Sargent horticulture and botany owe a great debt, a fact that is fully appreciated by those who knew him and his work during his fifty-three years of service as Director of the Arnold Arboretum. However, time frequently dims individual accomplishments, and so it seems fitting on this, the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth, briefly to review the conditions under which he commenced his pioneer work in the early days of the institution, together with some data appertaining to its present scope and resources; for what the institution is today is due to the long-continued, consistent, and highly intelligent guidance initiated by its first Director.

Charles Sprague Sargent was born April 24, 1841, he being the third child of Ignatius and Henrietta (Gray) Sargent. His father was a well known merchant of Boston and a direct descendant in the fourth generation of William Sargent, who probably came from England before 1678. Professor Sargent was graduated from Harvard University in

1862, and in the following year joined the United States Army, in which he served during the remainder of the Civil War, attaining the rank of brevet-major. After leaving the army he spent three years in European travel and on his return continued his interest in horticulture by managing his father's beautiful estate in Brookline. In 1872 he was appointed Director of the Harvard Botanic Garden, and served as professor of horticulture in 1872 and 1873. On November 24, 1873, he was appointed to direct the newly created Arnold Arboretum, and two days later married Mary Allen Robeson, a talented and charming woman, daughter of Andrew Robeson of Boston. Their life together covered nearly half a century, and it is difficult to disassociate the aims and activities of the one from the other. Briefly then, this is the story of Sargent's life up to the time that he became associated with the Arnold Arboretum. He was endowed with an excellent background, a splendid ancestry, and, fortunately for what he wished to accomplish, was financially independent. He was intimately associated with the prominent men and women of Boston, from many of whom he obtained liberal financial contributions for the development and support of the new institution which he had been selected to direct, and this long-continued support aided him materially in developing the institution that he loved so dearly. (For a more detailed account Rehder, Alfred; Charles Sprague Sargent, *Jour. Arnold Arb.* 8:69-86. 1927).

What he accomplished after 1873 was due largely to his increasing desire to make the Arnold Arboretum a garden of trees unsurpassed in America, and to this purpose he devoted all his energies, working early and late, day after day, month after month, year after year. The straightforward, impersonal account of the first fifty years of the Arnold Arboretum (*Jour. Arnold Arb.* 3: 127-171. 1922) is his own modest account of the greater part of his own productive life. It is familiar knowledge that in 1873 he took charge of approximately 125 acres of very poor land, and with an annual assured income of only about \$3,000 with which to establish and develop an institution (for further information see Raup, H.M. *The Genesis of the Arnold Arboretum. Bull. Pop. Inf. Series 4, Vol. 8: 1-11. 1940*). No one, least of all Sargent, realized what was ahead, yet he and his associates immediately commenced the development of the plantings, and in the first decade of his directorship, worked out the famous agreement between the City of Boston and Harvard University in such an ideal way that this arrangement is still a model for newly established arboreta. The acreage has been increased by gift and by purchase, until today the Arboretum covers approximately 265 acres.

Professor Sargent's greatest interest was in the living collections at the Arboretum. Everything that he did was planned to increase the number of plant species actually growing on the grounds and to disseminate knowledge appertaining to them. This is why he himself traveled extensively in Europe and in Japan; this is why he developed relationships with individuals in foreign countries, such as Bretschneider in Peking; this is why he employed E.H. Wilson; this is why he constantly fostered plant exploration in distant lands where climatic conditions were somewhat similar to those in Boston; and this is why



PLATE I

Professor Charles Sprague Sargent in the Arnold Arboretum Library—1904.



he bequeathed to the Arboretum the capital sum of \$10,000 under the condition that income be added to capital for one hundred years, at which time, one-half of the accumulated sum is to be made available for Arboretum maintenance and development and the remaining half is to be left to accumulate interest for a second hundred years, when this amount, also, may be used for Arboretum purposes. Truly an expression of faith in what had been his life work!

In 1873, Professor Sargent listed 118 different kinds of trees, shrubs, and vines, mostly native, that were already growing on the property when he was appointed Director of the Arboretum. In the first two years, he acquired 274 additional species, and constant annual accessions have been received since that time, until now, instead of the 118 species listed in 1873, there are about 6,500 different species and varieties actually in cultivation within the grounds. During a sixteen year period starting in 1922, 43,000 packages of seeds, 38,000 living plants, and 11,000 lots of cuttings were distributed by the institution. Last year alone, 552 packages of seeds taken from its own plants and 824 packages collected by its cooperative expeditions in China were sent out as well as 4,115 living plants, 946 lots of cuttings and scions, these going to various institutions and individuals.

In 1874, he acquired a few needed publications to guide him in intelligently planning and planting the Arboretum, and from time to time within the next few years secured other reference works. It became increasingly evident, however, that the young Arboretum needed every cent of its limited income for expenditure in acquiring and planting trees and shrubs and in propagating them for distribution. Consequently, Professor Sargent urged many of his friends to donate botanical and horticultural books to the Arboretum, and his reports covering the first decade of its existence show that several hundred volumes were thus received each year. In 1892, when the Administration Building was constructed with funds provided by Horatio Hunnewell, Sargent presented his personal library of some six thousand volumes to the Arboretum, a most important gift, as it contained many rare and highly prized volumes. Later he acquired and presented many more items, and the total was further increased by gifts from his friends. It was Professor Sargent who laid the foundation for the Arnold Arboretum library through his personal gifts, and who provided for its constant increase.

When Mrs. Sargent died in 1919, she bequeathed \$5,000 to the Arboretum, the capital amount in the Mary Robeson Sargent Fund now being \$7,845.75; the income from this fund may be used only for the purchase of books. On Professor Sargent's death in 1927, he bequeathed \$20,000 to the Arboretum, the income from which is also restricted to the purchase of books. Thus today, from these two funds, the Arboretum has an approximate annual income of \$1,150 for the purchase of books, this forming a living memorial to the man who established the library and nursed it from infancy. Today it contains approximately 44,500 bound volumes, 12,800 pamphlets, and 18,700 photographs, being one of the largest, most comprehensive, and most valuable botanical-horticultural libraries in the world.

Another essential part of the Arboretum is the herbarium, which

Professor Sargent himself started by collecting specimens on his earlier trips. Commencing in January, 1880, an assistant (without compensation) gave full time to the building up of the herbarium. At this time there were 848 mounted specimens and 1,073 unmounted ones available, either collected by Professor Sargent or received as gifts. In the following eight months, 1060 species, represented by 2,736 specimens, were added to the collection. Since there was no building within the grounds suitable for herbarium purposes, the collections were housed in a vacant building on the Sargent estate, loaned for the purpose by Ignatius Sargent.

Such were the meagre beginnings of the herbarium. Due to the continued interest of Professor Sargent and his successors, this collection of reference material has become world-famous in its own right. Today approximately 495,000 mounted specimens of woody plants are represented in the organized herbarium, with approximately 100,000 more mounted but not yet distributed, and an equally large number of unmounted specimens. This great reference collection contains material from practically every country in the world. The herbarium is staffed by a number of full-time productive workers. Last year, twenty-six loans, approximating 2,300 specimens were sent to individuals in thirteen other institutions for study purposes. In the same period, about 67,000 specimens were actually received. Due to its vigorous growth, the herbarium was moved from the Sargent estate to the Administration Building, as soon as the latter was completed, in 1892. A large herbarium annex was added in 1905, but the combined herbarium space of these two buildings is now far too small for these tremendously valuable and rapidly expanding collections.

Due to Professor Sargent's efforts, the Arboretum increased from an initial 125 acres of worn-out pasture land to an area of 265 acres, on which is maintained a world-famous collection of living plants, a library unequalled in its field in the world, and an herbarium of woody plants surpassed in extent and value by no similar restricted collection elsewhere. After Professor Sargent's death, his friends subscribed \$1,066,993.90 to form the Charles Sprague Sargent Memorial Fund, this being done in appreciation of his life-long work and his outstanding accomplishments in the general fields of horticulture and botany. The income from this fund made it possible to expand the functions of the Arboretum, particularly in the research field, a development which Professor Sargent had long desired.

Now the Arnold Arboretum is an integral part of Harvard University, several of its staff teaching regular University courses, and others directing graduate students. The grounds, library, and laboratories are used not only by staff members and Harvard University students, but by individuals and scientists from many parts of the world. Many individuals have contributed to make the Arnold Arboretum the institution that it is today, but the outstanding contributor of time, thought, effort, farsighted direction, and funds was Charles Sprague Sargent. Many honors were bestowed upon Professor Sargent during his long and productive career, but the Arboretum itself stands as a living memorial to him, for of him it may most truly be said: *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice.*