

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION  
UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 1, 1923.

Mr. Oakes Ames,  
355 Commonwealth Avenue,  
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Mr. Ames:

Today I had a letter from Dr. van Severén in Tela in which he mentioned having visited you while you were in that town recently. He also stated that he was sending me some plants that he had collected. I presume he does not have much time to devote to such matters, but I hope that he may be able to make a small collection there, for we need the specimens so badly. I was entertained by Dr. van Severén at various times while I was in San Salvador, and enjoyed the visits very much. He has a charming family and two attractive daughters, one of whom has published various volumes of poems. I suppose that his family is not in Tela.

Mr. Maxon seems to have found your Honduran ferns decidedly interesting, and I only wish that we had a proportionate representation of the flowering plants of the Honduran coast. When getting together the data concerning the collectors, I was really surprised to find that so little had been done there, although I knew that in our herbarium we had little from Honduras.

Both Doctor Robinson and Doctor Britton were in Washington last week and I had an opportunity of speaking to them about my plans for the coming winter. Of course, to Doctor Britton it is immaterial where I go, and as usual he will contribute to the trip. Doctor Robinson also is favorably inclined, and stated that he hoped to be able to give financial aid. He does not look with so much favor, however, upon a trip to Costa Rica, and said that he would much prefer to have me go to western Honduras, where no collecting whatever has ever been done. I told him that I should ask your views upon the matter before proceeding further.

We know definitely that there are a great many orchids in Costa Rica, and it is certain that there are not nearly so many in western Honduras, for there are no very high mountains there. I should like to do some



Mr. Oakes Ames-2.

collecting in a good orchid country where I might atone for my very poor record of last year. I do not have much information about the Tegucigalpa region, but it should be much better than Salvador, and I suspect that the flora is very different. The central plateau is over 3,000 feet high, and the mountains everywhere rise much higher. The region has been described to me by Central Americans as abounding in great canyons, and since little of the land is under cultivation there ought to be plenty of virgin forest. There are many pine forests in the country, and I suspect that the vegetation is much like that about Guatemala City. It can not be very moist but must be much less arid than Salvador.

I have been rather favorably inclined toward Costa Rica because the work there would be much easier than anywhere else, since transportation is comparatively easy, and the country is the most advanced of all Central America. Honduras, on the other hand, is the most backward country, and the facilities for travel are exceedingly poor. It is easy to get from Amapala, where I was last year, up to Tegucigalpa, for there is a fine automobile road. The trip to Amapala is a tedious one, and I estimated the other day that in going there it is necessary to have your baggage handled thirteen times! The only practicable route, with a large collecting outfit, is across Guatemala, then taking the steamer down to Amapala. I should much like to make the trip from Tela to Tegucigalpa, collecting along the way, for then I believe it would be possible to get more interesting material, and at least to cross a region wholly unknown botanically. That would be quite feasible if I had to make only one set of plants, but when making three sets of specimens, one for the Gray Herbarium and one for New York, it is necessary to take such a large quantity of driers and other material that it can not well be transported on muleback.

I should much like to hear what your views are with regard to the respective merits of Costa Rica and Honduras, since you were so kind as to offer to assist in work in the former country. I know that I should enjoy the work in Costa Rica more, since I have various friends there who would facilitate it in every way possible, but there is always a peculiar attraction about work in an unknown region like Honduras.



Mr. Oakes Ames-3.

Mr. Maxon's plans for his visit to Nicaragua seem to be settled now, and I expect that we are going to obtain a large amount of valuable material from that country, from which there is practically nothing in American herbaria.

Sincerely yours,

*Paul C. Standley*

Paul C. Standley  
Assistant Curator,  
Division of Plants.





Standley, Paul Carpenter. 1923. "Standley, Paul Carpenter May 1, 1923 [to O. Ames]." *Oakes Ames Orchid Herbarium correspondence files*

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