

## CHARLES F. MILLSPAUGH HALL OF NORTH AMERICAN WOODS

BY B. E. DAHLGREN  
Acting Curator, Department of Botany

Few items of the natural wealth of the North American continent are of greater value than its forest resources. It is true that iron in various forms has taken the place of wood for many purposes, but nevertheless the use of wood is not diminishing in quantity. Acres of it are now required for one edition of a metropolitan daily paper.

A large part of America's original forest wealth has disappeared, but enough remains, at least potentially, to make possible its partial restoration. This very important work is receiving attention from the federal government as well as from many states.

Both for its special educational value and as a perpetual reminder of the trees and their products as a factor in the economic life of the nation, the Hall of North American Woods will always be one of the most important in Field Museum. Early in the history of the Museum plans were made for the display of all species of trees known to exist in the United States. At intervals from 1902 till 1912 intensive field work was conducted under the direction of the late Curator of the Department of Botany, Dr. Charles F. Millspaugh. Dr. Millspaugh was thus responsible for the inception and the gathering of much of the splendid collection of American woods to be seen in the hall now named in his honor (Hall 26).

After it became evident that space for only one hall in the present building could be devoted to North American trees it was decided that the exhibit would have to be confined chiefly to those which must be considered to be of greatest value by reason of abundance or of utility as a source of lumber. Many of the more than seven hundred species of trees found north of the Rio Grande enter only as a minor element into the various types of mixed forest formations and are of relatively little importance in comparison with such well-known and outstanding species as oaks, elms, chestnuts, and hickories, or the many conifers that form extensive, practically pure stands.

No one familiar with the lumber industry of the country would have difficulty in choosing the first few dozen of the most important North American trees, but after such a beginning the choice of the remainder requires an intimate knowledge of forestry and forest products. It was felt that such knowledge should be brought to bear on the organization of the display of the native trees as well as on that of the collection of foreign woods in Hall 27. For this purpose the Museum was fortunate in obtaining the cooperation of Professor Samuel J. Record, Professor of Forest Products at Yale University, and undoubtedly the foremost authority on the woods of this continent. Professor Record accepted an appointment as Research Associate in Wood Technology at Field Museum, and the selection of the eighty-four North American species now forming the magnificent display in Charles F. Millspaugh Hall is based on his judgment. It is believed that this collection represents what is most worth showing among North American trees and their woods. It includes the principal species which are an important source of lumber, as well as some that serve for a limited particular use such as, for instance, dogwood, which is employed mainly for weavers' shuttles. It also includes a few selected for some special reason, such as scarcity or picturesque quality, e.g. Monterey cypress.

The visitor to the hall will note that more than a quarter of the space is occupied by conifers, cypresses, redwoods, pines, spruces, and hemlocks. The rest of the collection consists of deciduous trees, of which the greater number belong to north temperate families of flowering trees, including such common and well-known ones as poplars, birches, chestnuts, oaks, hickories, elms, and magnolias. There are also exhibited a few members of the rose, the bean and other families.

Various associations of lumbermen, and numerous firms and individuals have cooperated with the Museum by making generous gifts of material. The specimens thus obtained were secured by the donors often at considerable expense and effort. All of them may be assured of the Museum's



Pignut Hickory

An exhibit showing the wood and a fruiting branch. Typical of the latest installations in Charles F. Millspaugh Hall of North American Woods.

cordial appreciation of the assistance they have rendered. There should be mentioned especially Professor Emanuel Fritz, Associate Professor of Wood Technology and Lumbering at the University of California, to whose interest and generosity the Museum owes the acquisition of some of the specimens most difficult to secure.

Each exhibit in this hall includes a section of the trunk of the tree showing the bark; a cross section of the trunk; and selected boards which show the appearance of the wood and varieties of grains. In most of the cases these specimens are supplemented by photographs showing foliage, flowers or fruit; photographs showing the trees growing under both summer and winter conditions; and maps indicating the distribution. In the labels information is given as to the principal characteristics and physical properties, and the chief uses for which each wood is suitable.

The accompanying illustration shows a recent installation in Millspaugh Hall. In this exhibit the photograph which is usually included to indicate the nature of the foliage has been replaced by a reproduction of a branch. The foliage and fruit serve to identify the tree displayed. They also add color, a suggestion of life, and some of the beauty which we associate with living trees, but usually find lacking in a museum specimen. The branches are reproduced in the Stanley Field Plant Reproduction

Laboratories of the Museum, and indicate what can be done in this way for improvement of the display of North American trees.

An inspection of these exhibits would suggest that the addition to each case of a reproduction of a branch of the respective species shown would add immeasurably to the interest of the woods, and convert the already excellent exhibits of Millspaugh Hall into one of the most handsome displays in the Museum and the finest of their kind in the world.

### REINSTALLING CHINESE EXHIBITS

The Chinese collections in George T. and Frances Gaylord Smith Hall (East Gallery), obtained by the Blackstone Expedition (1908-10) and the Marshall Field Expedition (1923) under the leadership of Curator Berthold Laufer, are in process of being reorganized and reinstalled in a new type of case with indirect lighting. About one-third of the hall is at present completed.

The newly installed cases, comprising much material heretofore not shown, contain archaic bronzes, prehistoric and early archaic pottery, and bronzes and pottery of the Han period, with special exhibits devoted to farm life, architecture and kitchen paraphernalia of that classical epoch of Chinese art. There is also a display of painted and porcelaneous pottery, the latter illustrating the incipient stages on the long road leading to the production of true porcelain.

Ancient bronze drums testify to a perfect technique of bronze casting, and a group of ancient iron objects represents the earliest extant examples of cast iron in the world. The exhibits are attractively arranged after a selection of the best material from many hundreds of objects. Each case is provided with a general descriptive label setting forth the essential characteristics of the period in question and its tendencies. In addition, each object is interpreted by an individual label. The labels embody the latest results of research.

### Large Tropical Eel Received

A specimen of the West Indian moray, a heavy-bodied species of eel, was presented to Field Museum last month by Captain F. G. Saeger of Miami, Florida, who caught it off the Florida coast. The specimen is four feet seven inches long, and weighs about fifteen pounds. The maximum length attained by the moray is about seven feet, according to Alfred C. Weed, Assistant Curator of Fishes. Morays have a greater girth than most eels of more northern waters. They live among coral reefs, their bodies being adapted to sliding in and out of crevices in the rocks. They have strong sharp teeth, and have been known to bite fishermen ferociously.

### Peruvian Air Plants Studied

Dr. Lyman B. Smith of the Gray Herbarium of Harvard University has prepared for the Museum's forthcoming *Flora of Peru* an account of the Bromeliaceae or pineapple family. This group, confined to the American tropics, consists chiefly of epiphytic plants that grow upon the branches of trees. Dr. Smith has found that in Peru there are about 175 species of bromeliads. He describes ten new Peruvian species from material in the Museum Herbarium, nine of these having been collected by the several Marshall Field Expeditions to Peru.

A habitat group of American crocodiles is a noteworthy exhibit in the Department of Zoology.



Dahlgren, B. E. 1932. "Charles P. Millspaugh Hall of North American Woods." *Field Museum news* 3(8), 3-3.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25722>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/350724>

**Holding Institution**

Field Museum of Natural History Library

**Sponsored by**

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the Chicago Field Museum.

For information contact [dcc@library.uiuc.edu](mailto:dcc@library.uiuc.edu).

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.