

UNIQUE CHICAGO TROPIC PLANT HAS VANISHED

YOU WON'T believe it, but Chicago (with its climate!) is famed for the possession of a kind of tropical plant that is found nowhere else in the world. You can't show it proudly to your visiting cousins

that year not one other specimen has been found. Just enough had been collected to allow the plant to be classified as belonging to *Thismia americana*, a genus of twenty-three species all found in tropical climates

except Chicago's unique South Sider. There weren't even enough extra specimens to permit further study to find out how it got here, of all the unexpected places in the world. It just disappeared.

The prairie where it was found is a cause of concern to botanists at Chicago Natural History Museum because the city is rapidly biting off chunks of it. Last summer Dr. Theodor Just, Chief Curator of Botany, and Dr. Julian A. Steyermark, Curator of the Herbarium, organized another expedition into the wilds of south Chicago in an anxious attempt to locate *Thismia americana*

once more before the fertile field that yielded it becomes engulfed by the heavy industry surrounding it. No luck this time, either. The only hope of solving the mystery of how *Thismia* got to Chicago and how it survived the winters depends on saving that prairie field.

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PHOTOGRAPHS OF ANGKOR IN SPECIAL EXHIBIT

BY ALEXANDER SPOEHR
CURATOR OF OCEANIC ETHNOLOGY

Today, Indo-China is a major crisis area of the Far East. Though contemporary events in Indo-China receive much attention in the press, not many Americans are aware of the background of history in this far-removed part of the world. During April, the Museum will present a temporary exhibit of photographs documenting the story of Angkor, a spectacular ruined city in the jungles of Cambodia, one of the major provinces of Indo-China.

Angkor was the capitol of the Khmer empire, which was roughly contemporaneous in area with present-day Cambodia. Between the 9th and 14th centuries the Khmer civilization flowered. Angkor became a major metropolis, covering a large area, and embellished by great palaces, monumental walls, and innumerable temples. In the 14th century, the Khmer kings deserted

Angkor, probably because their empire was crumbling under the stress of war with Siam and Annam. Angkor's star set and the city became largely deserted, abandoned to the jungle. The brilliant civilization of the Khmers flourished and fell, unknown to the Western world.

During its day, however, it attracted many from outside its borders. Thus an early Chinese visitor to Angkor wrote of the country of the Khmers: "Rice is easily earned, wives easily found; houses easily furnished; business easy to do. Consequently we find people constantly coming to this country."

The modern Cambodians are the descendants of the Khmers. The Museum exhibition is enhanced by photographs, not only of the splendors of ruined Angkor, but of the modern inhabitants of Cambodia. Thus past and present are combined in a single pictorial exposition centering around Angkor.

The Museum has been able to present this exhibit through the co-operation of Ernest Rathenau of New York. Mr. Rathenau, a fine photographer, took the photographs composing the exhibit himself while on an expedition to Cambodia, and has generously lent them to the Museum for the April exhibit.

Flamingoes in the Bahamas Receive Protection

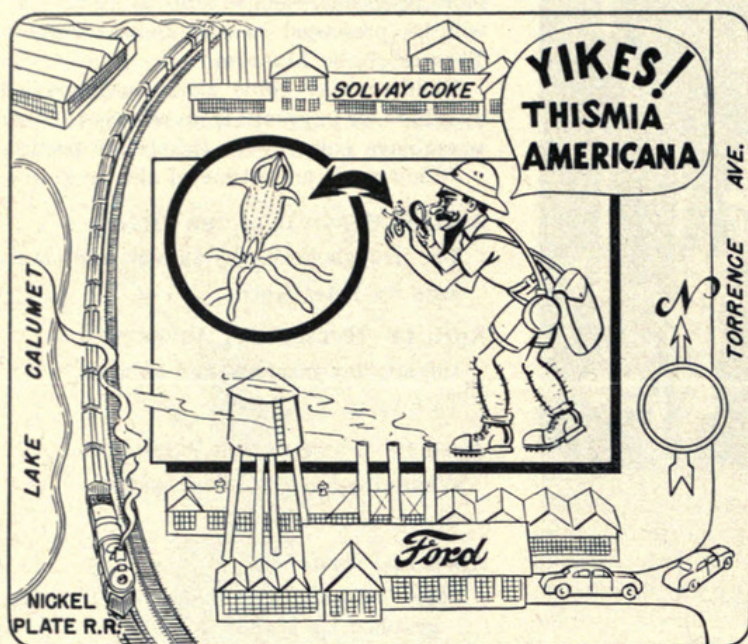
The Society for the Protection of the Flamingo has been formed in the Bahama Islands. Long pink flocks of flamingoes harmonize well with palm trees, and tropical islands. Scenically and aesthetically they grace the Bahamas and the American tropics from Yucatan to the Guianas.

They're large birds, nesting in colonies, and at breeding time are particularly vulnerable to predation by local people who collect them and their eggs for food. The decrease in numbers in the Bahamas has alarmed residents, who are determined that these bizarre and spectacular birds shall continue to ornament their islands. Fortunately the birds are far from extinct, and there seems a large enough stock of them in the Bahamas so that with proper protection, under the eye of the newly formed society, we can expect the flamingoes to multiply and become better known, as one of the charms of the Bahamas.

AUSTIN L. RAND
Curator of Birds

Audubon Lecture April 23 On Nature Near Home

The last of the current season's "screen tours" of the Illinois Audubon Society will be presented in the James Simpson Theatre of the Museum on Wednesday evening, April 23, at 8 o'clock. "Wildlife at Your Doorstep" is the subject of the color films and the lecture which will be given by Howard L. Orians.



LOCALE FOR BOTANICAL TREASURE HUNT

Map showing the suspected location of Chicago's mysterious lost plant-curiosity, for which Museum botanists have been searching. Drawing by Museum Artist Douglas E. Tibbitts.

though, because it can't even be located by the scientists of Chicago Natural History Museum and other institutions interested in botany. They are looking for it, however—and have been ever since 1914.

For some reason unknown to science, this tropical plant chose a remote area of Chicago's South Side as its environment, when by rights it should have preferred a jungle anywhere along the equator, Museum botanists explain. The little mystery plant is less than an inch high at full growth and, since it lives on dead matter instead of manufacturing its own food as most plants do, it is white except for a bluish-green flower.

A University of Chicago botany student, Norma Pfeiffer (now a Ph.D. in botany), discovered this tiny "D.P." (displaced plant) back in 1912 when she wandered to the outskirts of the city in search of plants to take back to class for study. When the botanists in the laboratory had a look at it, it was seen to be something entirely new in plant life, unknown in any other part of the world. Worse than that, its nearest relatives were known only in tropical Asia, Panama, Brazil, New Zealand, and Tasmania.

In 1913 and 1914, Norma Pfeiffer and fellow botanists went back to the swampy prairie field where the curious plant had been found, and they were able to bring back a few more specimens in various stages of its life-cycle. Other search parties went out after 1914, but in all the hunting since



Rand, Austin Loomer. 1952. "Flamingoes in the Bahamas Receive Protection." *Bulletin* 23(4), 6-6.

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