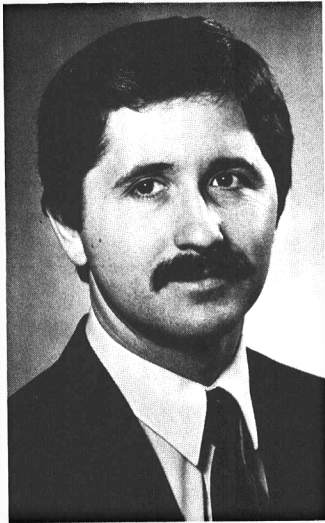


## A Plea for Help from the Archives Committee

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In his excellent editorial, "The History of Phytopathology: Current Needs and Future Directions," in the February 1987 issue of *PLANT DISEASE* (page 111), C. Lee Campbell observes that: "If we are to understand the relevance of current—and future—accomplishments in plant pathology, we must have a perspective on which to base our judgments." He goes on to state a case for the publication of a history of the American Phytopathological Society and/or a comprehensive history of plant pathology in the United States.

Where would an author go to research the needed information? To communicate personally with the scientists and descendants of scientists who have helped shape plant pathology in this country would be very time-consuming and expensive. Wouldn't it be great if most, if not all, of this information were stored at one location and accessible to historians? Such a place does exist, and it is known as the APS archives. The problem, however, is that much of the needed type of information is not on deposit there. This fact became distressingly clear when the APS Archives Committee began to prepare an exhibit for the 1987 annual meeting in Cincinnati.

During 1987, we celebrated the centennial of the Hatch Act creating the agricultural experiment station. In honor of this historic legislation, the Archives Committee was asked to create a commemorative display for the annual meeting. The committee became acutely aware of the significant lack of historical materials on deposit in the archives. Why is this? Perhaps many members of our Society do not even know we have an official archives.

The Society's archives are housed in the Parks Library at Iowa State University. The purpose of the archives is to collect, preserve, and make available for reference use documents, photographs, letters, etc., with historical value to the Society and plant pathology. We have the assistance of a professional archivist to assure that all items are properly preserved and cataloged for future use.

Unfortunately, valuable historical items are frequently relegated to some musty cabinet or closet in the department, then forgotten. Oftentimes, when space is needed, these items are disposed of because their historical significance is not recognized or has been forgotten. As an example, in a department I was formerly associated with, I found several

boxes of reel-to-reel recording tapes that were about to be discarded. I had a use for them, so I took them home. Before erasing them, I was curious as to what they contained. I discovered they were the classroom lectures of a former longtime department chairperson. I returned the tapes to the department and suggested they probably should be saved. The department head agreed and was glad to have the tapes back. As so often happens, these items were found during a "housecleaning" project; the people doing the cleaning did not recognize the value of the tapes, and so they were nearly lost forever. The point is, for every item saved from such a loss, many more are not. So, what types of items are suitable for collection in the archives? Some that might be useful to future historians are:

**Records of the Society.** These include correspondence, reports, minutes, financial and legal documents, memoranda, personnel files, and research files. These items make up the bulk of what is currently housed in the archives.

**Departmental histories.** Many departments have written such histories or at least have records of former faculty and their tenures.

**Photographic records.** These include pictures or slides of plant pathologists, plant disease specimens, buildings, facilities, and research and extension activities. Suggestions for submission might include photographs of the original diseased specimens of chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease, photographs showing progress in plant pathology such as the elimination of citrus canker in the Southeast (and its reintroduction), and photographs of early plant pathologists. The archives lack photographs of even such eminent plant pathologists as L. R. Jones and J. C. Walker.

**Tape recordings.** These would include both audio and video recordings of classes, seminars, field days, etc.

**Papers of faculty.** Such items as letters, photographs, scrapbooks, textbooks, lecture outlines, and non-APS publications accumulated by faculty during their days in a department are often thrown away when a member leaves or retires.

This, then, is a plea to departments and individual members of the Society to consider the APS archives as the repository for historical items. By placing them in the archives, you can be assured that such items are properly preserved and stored for use by future generations of plant pathologists. Keep in mind, though, that not only the old and dusty things in the closet are of interest. We must be cognizant of the fact that what we are doing today will ultimately be history.

Inquiries and deposition of items with the archives can be made by contacting Stanley Yates, Department of Special Collections, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames 50011. Items being sent should be clearly labeled as a deposit for the APS collection, as the Parks Library holds more than one archive.