

# DR. ABRAM P. GARBER:

## A Biographical Sketch.

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### Family History.

Religious persecution in Europe during the seventeenth century caused many thousands of families to flee from their homes, and among them were large numbers of a sect called Mennonites, who migrated soon after to the new province of Pennsylvania, and who have since that date formed a large portion of the Pennsylvania Germans.

Among these followers of Menno Simons was the Garber family, whose earliest traditional residence seems to have been near Basel, in Switzerland (1), from which they are said to have fled about the middle of the seventeenth century to a point on the upper Rhine known by the name of "Three Brides." (2)

Their stay here was, however, of comparatively short duration, as we find them making their way a little later to Holland, whence they were transported to the newly-founded Germantown in William Penn's colonizing venture in the New World. The exact date of their arrival in this country is not known, but it is thought to have been about the year 1695.

The given name of the head of the

1. For a brief account of the persecution of the Mennonites in Switzerland, see: Tileman Jansz. van Bragt, 'T Merg van de Historien der Martelaren, 3d ed. Amsterdam: P. J. Entrop, 1769. Esp. pp. 347-376.

2. This is possibly a corruption of the name of the well-known town in Alsace called Neubreisach.

family at this time of migration has not come down to us, but for the sake of convenience we may (as is customary with American genealogists) call him the Emigrant. The name of his wife is also unknown, but it seems likely that he had at least two sons, Nicholas and John. This surmise is based on the fact that there are on record in the Lancaster County Court House two wills in the German language drawn up by them on February 24, 1748, and March 5, 1748, respectively. Both of these wills were proved on June 6, 1748, and from this we may infer that they were brothers, living perhaps on adjacent farms and dying only a few days or weeks apart.

However this may be, it seems fairly certain from the evidence afforded by later records that the subject of our sketch was not descended from Nicholas Gerber (as the name was then spelled).

John Gerber at the time of making his will was a resident of Lancaster County, and he mentions both wife and children, as well as his "eldest son," though none of them by name. Perhaps this "eldest son" was the Christian Gerber who made his will on November 5, 1768, and who is pretty definitely established to have been the great-great-grandfather of the subject of the present sketch. (3) This last-mentioned will is on record at Lancaster, and an abstract of it is also to be found in the Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. (4)

This Christian Gerber, the first of

3. Alex. Harris, in his work called "A Biographical History of Lancaster County," Lancaster, 1872, p. 230, states that it was this Christian Garber (Carver) who "emigrated from Germany sometime between the years 1700 and 1720, and settled in West Hempfield township." But this can hardly be correct.

4. Collections, Vol. 24, page 334.

Hempfield township (5), left to his son Christian his land and plantation in that township, to his wife Catherine certain bequests, and to his son Michael a plantation in Donegal township. There are also mentioned his eldest son Jacob, his son-in-law Jacob Kehr, and two grandchildren, Magdalena Neff and John Neff. The will was proved January 11, 1769.

Christian Gerber, the second of that name, made his will in turn on December 31, 1803, while a resident of Hempfield township. He, too, had a wife Catherine and a son Christian, to whom he left the home plantation. He furthermore mentions his granddaughter Mary, the only child of his deceased daughter, Mary, and two other sons. To John he bequeaths the land he had sold him in Virginia, and to Abraham the land he had sold him in York County nearby. Finally, he mentions his daughter Ann, the wife of Michael Segrist, and his deceased daughter Catherine, formerly the wife of John Stouffer. This will was proved on November 25, 1806.

Christian Gerber (the second) likewise had a son Christian, who married a Miss Segrist, and settled down upon his father's farm. This third Christian in direct line of descent had one son Jacob B. Garber, who was born in the year 1800, and who became quite a well-known character in Lancaster County before he died, at a ripe old age, in 1886. Many years ago he said: "The house I live in was built by my father in 1812, and is the third dwelling house erected on this farm, besides the squatter's cabin first put up in the wilderness." (6)

5. It was, of course, not until a later time that the original township was divided into East and West Hempfield townships.

6. Alex. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

Jacob B. Garber was educated at the common school of the neighborhood, and even before attaining his majority displayed a marked taste for the study of botany. In 1832 he erected a greenhouse, said to be the first established in the State west of Philadelphia. Here he daily spent several hours in his favorite pursuit, and by degrees he was able to gather together many rare exotics. It was in this atmosphere that his son Abram P. Garber grew up, and it was undoubtedly the father's example and counsel that urged on the son to become the famous botanical explorer that he was.

Jacob B. Garber married Miss Susan Stauffer and raised a large family of children, among whom was the subject of the present biographical sketch. He also was an editor and author of prominence in the field of horticulture, and during his long life published many important articles on such subjects in Columbia, Lancaster, Philadelphia and Baltimore journals.

(Note—The above account is adapted from a fuller sketch in Ellis and Evans, *Hist. of Lancaster County*, Philadelphia, 1883, p. 890, where a full-page portrait is also given.)

### **Boyhood.**

Abram Paschal Garber was born January 23, 1838, on his father's farm Floral Retreat, about three miles east of Columbia, and a short distance south of Chestnut Hill, near Mountville, West Hempfield township, Lancaster county, Pa. There is an oil painting extant which represents his home at about this time, and which shows it to have been a brick house with a formal garden in front of it.

His early years were spent on the farm in a beautiful agricultural re-

gion only a few miles from the banks of the Susquehanna River. Lancaster County has been the home of many noted botanists, and with such surroundings it is thus easy to understand why the boy's naturally studious bent directed him at a very early age to the subject of botany, to which the greater part of his comparatively short life was so successfully devoted.

### **Millersville Normal School.**

When A. P. Garber was still in his teens there was founded, in 1854, an academy for the education of the young people of the State, which was shortly to develop into a normal school. This was located a few miles from his home, at Millersville, and the growing lad was soon attracted to its atmosphere of study. He entered as a student here, apparently, in the autumn of 1856, and a little later signed the constitution of the Page Literary Society.

He continued at Millersville, with various interruptions, until the summer of 1865, when he graduated with a class of twelve young men and women. It was during this period of nine years that he taught for several winters public schools in various parts of Lancaster county, and then became principal of Catasauqua Seminary near Allentown, where he had four or five other teachers under him. (7)

Of his life at Millersville we have various information in the way of official and semi-official records, as well as in the personal reminiscences of several people still living who knew him at that time. While here he

7. See obituary by S. S. Rathvon before the Linnaean Society of Lancaster, in 1881; and also Mathews and Hungerford, "History of the Counties of Lehigh and Carbon," Philadelphia, 1884, p. 260, where his name is wrongly spelt Garler.

boarded with Mrs. Elizabeth Warfel opposite the school, going home to Mountville at the end of each week. His landlady still (May, 1914) remembers him as a "good boy," who did not give her the trouble that some of her other school boarders did. He took good care of himself, as his health even then was not of the best, and oftentimes when the boys went out on some expedition he would refrain from joining them on that account.

One of his classmates, Mr. John Morrow, late Assistant District Superintendent of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, wrote under date of June 18, 1914, as follows:

"I roomed with Garber for many months.....We were very intimate and always took walks together along the banks and silent waters of the Conestoga. Garber was a great botanist and seemed to be quite familiar with the flora of Lancaster County, as well as that of other sections of the State....."

"A. P. Garber inherited his botanical tendencies from his parents. I had a pleasing visit of several days with him at his home. His father had a greenhouse filled with a great variety of plants. This was the favorite resort of the senior Garber, and no doubt young Garber, in his early childhood, acquired a taste for plants and flowers from his youthful environment and paternal associations....."

It was during the Millersville period also that he became a member of the newly-founded Linnaean Society of Lancaster, and until the time of his death he took great interest in its proceedings and was frequently an enthusiastic participant in its field meetings.

In this period, too, falls A. P. Gar-

ber's brief military experience as a private in Company C of the 195th Pennsylvania Volunteers. During the late summer and early fall of 1864 he saw service in West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania. There is still in the possession of his family a little pocket testament which was given to him in Baltimore soon after he enlisted, and which he carried with him in his campaign.

### **Lafayette College.**

A. P. Garber had early been attracted to the well-known botanist Dr. Thomas C. Porter, then a professor at Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster. So when the time came to select a college in which to pursue his further studies it is not strange that his choice fell upon Lafayette College at Easton, Pa. For by that time his much-admired professor had left Franklin and Marshall for Lafayette. That he was a close student and proficient in his scientific work is evidenced by the fact that he was able to enter the Junior class in the fall of 1865, and to graduate in the scientific department in 1868, with an essay entitled "The Lesser Virtues."

At Lafayette College he became a member of the Washington Literary Society, and immediately upon graduation he was appointed an Assistant in Natural History. This position he held from 1868 to 1870, and during this time began the extensive botanical explorations which were later to bring his name prominently before the scientific world (8). In September, 1868, he visited Erie and explored the Lake Shore and Presque Isle; while

8. Selden J. Coffin, "The Men of Lafayette," Easton, 1891, pp. 91, 131, 188, 299, 304 and 311; John Franklin Stonecipher, "Biographical Catalogue of Lafayette College," Easton, 1913, pp. 18 and 151.

during the months of August and September in the year following he traveled along the whole tier of northern counties from Wayne to Erie, and then southward through the counties west of the Alleghanies as far as the Virginia line. Later in the same service he made an excursion with the late Thomas P. James into the Pocono region of Monroe and Pike counties, and brought back a fine collection of mosses and liverworts. These labors, in the interest of the herbarium of Lafayette College, were made under the direction of Dr. Thomas C. Porter, Professor of Botany, and secured many valuable additions to the flora of the State; and although nothing wholly new to science was at this time discovered by him, at least twenty-seven species were added as found only by him (9).

### **As a Physician.**

Dr. Garber's medical career extended, in all, over a period of about seven years; about half of this time he was a student of medicine, and about half a physician for the insane.

While still at Lafayette College he began the study of medicine under the direction of Dr. Traill Green (10), the professor of chemistry, and when he matriculated on October 14, 1869, in the School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, his residence was given as Easton, Pa.

Of his life here until he graduated in 1872 we know but little except that his essay was entitled "The Medical Plants of Pennsylvania," in which title

9. Ellis & Evans, "History of Lancaster County," Philadelphia, 1883, p. 294 (by Dr. H. B. Stehman).

10. Ellis and Evans, loc. cit.



we can readily discern the botanist combined with the physician (11).

In April, 1872, Dr. Garber became Assistant Resident Physician in the Harrisburg State Lunatic Hospital, living in the building itself and having charge of some two hundred patients. He remained in this position until May, 1875, when ill-health caused him to resign (12).

After leaving Harrisburg Dr. Garber opened an office as a practising physician in Pittsburgh, but the trying climate of this great manufacturing city told further upon his health, and after a few months he was obliged to leave Pennsylvania and to seek a more friendly Southern clime (13).

### Explorations in Florida.

The inroads of consumption had by this time seriously impaired Dr. Garber's health, and from now on it appeared to him to be imperative that he spend his winters in a warmer climate than that of Pennsylvania. Accordingly we find him from this time on making yearly trips to Florida and the West Indies, returning during the summer to his home in Lancaster County.

Strange to say, an indirect result of his ill health was to make his name famous in the scientific world, and to attach his name permanently to quite a number of Florida plants. The defamous in the scientific world, and to botanical explorations in many parts of the peninsula and the adjoining islands are not known to us. Our

11. Letter from Dean William Pepper, May 5, 1914, to G. C. K. (Official communication.)

12. Ellis and Evans, loc. cit.; and official communication from the Hospital, May 15, 1914.

13. Ignatius Urban, *Symbolae Antillanae*, Lipsiae, 1902-1903, Vol. III, p. 51.

scanty information concerning them comes chiefly from Dr. Garber himself, in the form of published articles and in correspondence with scientific friends.

In the archives of the Smithsonian Institution at Washington there is preserved a series of eleven letters which he addressed from time to time to Dr. George Vasey, who was at that time in charge of the botanical work of the Department of Agriculture at Washington. These letters all refer to his trips to Florida, and they throw an interesting light upon his views concerning the flora of the peninsula then so little known.

At the time when Dr. Garber visited Florida its flora was still awaiting investigation to a considerable extent, and it was his good fortune to be able to avail himself fully of this situation, and, hence, we find him making great additions to the world's knowledge of the flora of this part of the United States. By distributing many thousands of specimens to herbaria, both in his own country and in Europe, his discoveries have become widely known among botanists, and his name occurs in almost all books dealing with this field.

A more personal note may well be added at this point by quoting from a letter written by Dr. Garber from Miama, Fla., May 16, 1877, to Dr. George Vasey:

"I shall keep a sharp lookout for the *Ulmus* and *Taxus* you mention, but think they do not grow so far south. The vegetation is markedly different here from that of Middle North and West Florida, especially so in the woody growths. Then, too, a greater variation in size—*Erythrina*, which I have met in the latitude of Cedar Keys and Mellonville, was always a

shrub four to five feet high—here it is common and generally of the same size, but also not uncommonly assumes the tree form and attains a height of twenty to thirty feet. I measured the trunk of one and found it seventeen inches in circumference, and guessed the height to be about thirty feet. The Mangrove I meet here as a shrub and.....sometimes a tree fully one hundred feet high—taller than any other tree. Black mangrove (*Avicennia tomentosa*), which at Cedar Keys is a shrub six to eight feet high, appears here always as a tree from thirty—fully sixty feet in height. Hummocks here are dense jungles of woody growth, very difficult to penetrate. The live oak is less plenty than farther north, but always occurs on the edges along the pines and is in many places literally covered with *Tillandsia* and *Epidendron*.....

“I encounter a good many disadvantages in exploring and drying here, but altogether my success was good and I am very well satisfied with the progress. I think I will have some new to our flora and possibly to science. I should like to delay longer in order to collect some plants in better stages, but it is not unlikely that I will meet many of the same plants at Ft. Myers and Peas Creek where I now propose to go. The Mail facilities there are not good and probably a month will enable me collect all there, and thence to Manatee and Tampa. To the last named place I will have my mail sent now.

Very truly,

A. P. GARBER.”

### **St. Thomas and Porto Rico.**

A Danish botanist, Baron Eggers, was at this time exploring the West

Indies, and at his suggestion Dr. Garber made a trip to the Island of St. Thomas, one of the British West Indies. What the results of this trip may have been have not been ascertained, but it seems likely that many of the plants then obtained were incorporated in the collection which Baron Eggers himself was making at that time.

At the same botanist's suggestion Dr. Garber also made a trip to Porto Rico, in the early part of the year 1881, and succeeded in making a small collection of plants. Among the published letters of Professor Asa Gray, of Harvard University, there is one which refers to the proposed sale of Dr. Garber's small Porto Rican collection. Yauco was his headquarters here; but the expected benefit to his health from his stay on the island did not materialize (14).

### **Last Illness and Death.**

Returning to his home in Lancaster County in the month of June, 1881, Dr. Garber settled down for the summer as usual on his father's farm, but the extremely hot weather soon affected him in his depleted condition so greatly that he was fain to seek relief in the mountains of North Central Pennsylvania. Here towards the end of August his condition became so alarming that he determined to return to his home. But he was only able to reach the summer resort of Renova, in Clinton county, before his strength gave out. He, therefore, sent word to his younger brother, Hiram L. Garber, to come to his assistance; but before his brother was able to reach him Dr. Garber passed away on August 25, 1881.

His remains were brought back to

14. Ignatius Urban, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 51, and Vol. IV (1903-1911), p. 670.

his old home by his brother, and there they were buried in the family graveyard on the adjacent farm by the side of his ancestors and relatives of many generations. (15)

This old burying ground has now been neglected for many years, and at the present time no trace of Dr. Garber's grave can be found. The spot is so thickly covered with high weeds, locust and blackberry bushes that it can only be penetrated with difficulty. Many of the graves and tombstones have sunken so far into the ground that it is impossible to read the inscriptions. The immediate family have all either died or removed to other parts of the country, and, hence, his grave is thus neglected (16).

### **The A. P. Garber Herbarium.**

It is not definitely known when Dr. Garber began the formation of a herbarium of his own, but this probably occurred some time during his Millersville period. From remarks here and there in his correspondence with Dr. Vasey, and from other sources of information, we become aware of his interest in collecting plants of all sorts. His own personal efforts in this direction were largely supplemented by exchanges with various correspondents, until at length his private collections came to assume considerable proportions.

In February, 1885, his brother Hiram L. Garber sold the herbarium for a nominal sum to Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster, with the stipulation that it should be known by the name of The A. P. Garber Herbarium, and this has been its name down to the present time.

15. Letter from Hiram L. Garber, May 31, 1914, to G. C. K.

16. Letter from Miss Ida M. Kimmich, Mountville, Pa., Aug. 3, 1914, to G. C. K.

In the *College Student* for February, 1886, Professor John S. Stahr published a general account of the herbarium, which still remains the best and fullest description of its varied contents (17). Since that time the collection has been twice rearranged, and portions of it have been transferred to the herbaria of Columbia University and the Botanical Garden in New York in exchange for other specimens (18).

### **Contributions to Other Herbaria.**

At the present time it is quite impossible to enumerate all the herbaria, both large and small, which contain dried plants collected by Dr. Garber. The best list so far published seems to be that given by Professor Urban, but even this is extremely incomplete (19). Besides those already mentioned we may note the United States National Herbarium in the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, the Herbarium at Kew Gardens in London, where there are 142 Porto Rican plants, the Gray Herbarium at Harvard University, the Canby Herbarium now in the College of Pharmacy of New York, the Herbarium of Lafayette College at Easton, Pa., and the Academy of Natural Sciences Herbarium in Philadelphia.

The specimens preserved in these form the basis of much of the advanced work of botanists who devote their attention to the peninsula of Florida with its many interesting vegetable forms.

17. *College Student*, Lancaster, Pa., Vol. VI, No. 5, pp. 81-83.

18. Letter from Professor R. C. Schiedt, May 24, 1914, to G. C. K., supplemented by two personal visits of the latter.

19. Ignatius Urban, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 51.

## Plants Named After Dr. Garber.

Even before his death his fellow botanists began naming Florida plants after Dr. Garber, and this process is still going on. Every year or two another plant is added to the list until it has become quite a long one.

These plants have been described in a great variety of books and periodicals which cannot, of course, be enumerated here. Suffice it to name the following:

*Coccothrinax Garberi*, a species of palm; *Convolvulus Garberi*, a species of morning glory; *Eugenia Garberi*, a species of myrtle (called also Garber's Stopper); *Euphorbia Garberi*, a species of spurge; *Fissidens Garberi*, a species of moss; *Habenella Garberi*, a species of orchid (called also *Habenaria Garberi*); *Laciniaria Garberi*, a species of snakeroot; *Salvia occidentalis Garberi*, a species of sage; *Sphagnum Garberi*, a species of moss; and *Thrinax Garberi*, a species of palm.

Professor Asa Gray also named the *Garberia*, a genus of the thistles, after him, and this distinction gave the discoverer a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction during the last years of his life.

## Character and Appreciations.

We may perhaps most fittingly close this brief sketch of the life of an earnest student of nature by citing the estimates of his character and attainments given after his death by various people who knew him well many years ago.

His roommate at Millersville, Mr. John Morrow, said: "He was a young man of very pleasing disposition. I never saw him in the least ruffled or out of humor with any one.....I would be glad if it could be truthfully

said of every young man that he had such a galaxy of admirable qualities as A. P. Garber. After a lapse of nearly fifty years, I have the most pleasant recollections of all my associations with him." (20)

Dr. J. T. Rothrock, a fellow botanist of his own day, states that he knew him quite well. "He was very successful, careful and reliable, not only as a collector, but as an observer. The beautiful collections that he made in Florida were very highly esteemed by those who were fortunate enough to secure a share of them. Dr. Gray thought very highly of Dr. Garber. I often heard him speak of Dr. Garber most kindly" (21).

And finally Dr. Thomas C. Porter, his most intimate scientific friend, in speaking of him, once said: "From my long and pleasant association with him I am able to say that he was a most patient, thorough and accurate student, skilled in the use of the microscope and an accomplished naturalist. His powers of observation were very acute, as shown by his letters and notes, and the specimens prepared by him excelled in every way. Quiet, modest, faithful, an agreeable companion, and an earnest Christian, the tidings of his early death caused profound sorrow and regret to his scientific friends and associates." (22)

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38. Charles S. Sargent, Silva of North America, Vol. XIV (1902), p. 85, note 1 (*Coccothrinax Garberi* and *Thrinax Argentea*, var. *Garberi*).
39. Joseph Henry Dubbs, History of Franklin and Marshall College. Lancaster: 1903. See pp. 343, 368 (both *Garber Herbarium*).
40. Thomas Conrad Porter, Catalogue of the Bryophyta.....and Pteridophyta.....found in Pennsylvania. Boston: Ginn & Company, 1904. See preface and pp. 3, 6, 9, 11, 12, 54, etc.
41. Charles Sprague Sargent, Manual of the Trees of North America, 1905. See p. 697 (*Eugenia Garberi*, with illus.).
42. Nathaniel Lord Britton, North American trees, 1908, See pp. 726-727 (*Eugenia Garberi*, with illus.—*Garber's Stopper*).
43. John Kunkel Small, Flora of Miami, New York 1913. See pp. 51-52 (*Habenella Garberi*); p. 104 (*Phyllanthus Garberi*); p. 109 (*Chamaesyce Garberi*); p. 132 (*Eugenia Garberi*).
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Author: Keidel, George C. (George Charles), 1868-1942.

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