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Early Herbals at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln

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The essence of an herbal, one author has written, is the combination of the botanical classification of the plants, a description of their medicinal properties, and traditional plant lore. Since the books were meant to be used, illustrations and physical descriptions played an important role in helping the reader identify the plants included.

The great period for printed herbals was the late fifteenth to the seventeenth century. As medicine and botany developed in the early modern period, herbals were supplanted by more specialized books emphasizing medical uses of plants or botanical classification.

The herbals listed here include some of the most important works, and they are interesting for their roles in the development of botanical classification, for their illustrations, and for the light they shed on beliefs and practices of earlier times.

These herbals are listed under the dates they first appeared, with parentheses in case we own only a later edition. They are housed in Special Collections. Love Library (South) Room 29. The University Libraries also own reprints or microfilm copies of a

number of other herbals not listed here. For more information, see the following books. Lists of herbals are included in these books.

Arber, Agnes. *Herbals, their Origin and Evolution; a Chapter on the History of Botany, 1470-1670*. 1938. Cambridge, The University Press, 1912, 1938.

LDRF 580.9 Ar1h ed. 2

Rohde, Eleanor Sinclair. *The Old English Herbals*. London, New York; Longmans, Green and Co., 1922

SPEC QK21 G7R6

ANCIENT PERIOD

Third Century BCE – Theophrastus. *De Historia Plantarum*.

Theophrastus (c. 372-287 BCE) was a student of Plato and Aristotle at the Lyceum in Athens. Although he wrote on many subjects, many of his works have been lost. *De Historia Plantarum* and *De Causae Plantarum* have survived intact to modern times. Our edition of this work was printed in 1613.

SPEC Folio 580 T34t

First Century CE – Pliny the Elder. *History of the World, or Natural History*.

Gaius Plinius Secundus, Pliny the Elder (c. 23-79 CE) was a wealthy citizen-soldier who wrote several treatises on military strategy and tactics during an active career in several parts of the Empire. He compiled the 37-volume *Naturel History* in 77 CE,

near the end of an eventful life. He treats about 1,000 plants in this work. Our edition was printed in 1633.

SPEC Folio 574.9 fP719nEh

SIXTEENTH CENTURY

(1542) – Leonhardt Fuchs. *De Historia Stirpium*.

Leonhardt Fuchs (1501-1566) created his innovative herbal to assist medical students in identifying plants which were sources of drugs. Fuchs, along with Jerome Bock and Otto Brunfels, developed modern methods of observing and comparing plants with those of ancient authors (Theophrastus, Hippocrates, and Galen). The woodcuts are painstakingly executed to show the characteristics of each plant. Five hundred plants are included (400 wild and 100 cultivated). Several New World plants (Indian corn and chili peppers) appeared in the herbal. Our edition was published in 1551. The herbal was subsequently published in English, French, and Dutch editions. Fuchs was memorialized in creation of the genus *Fuchsia* (family Onagraceae) in the seventeenth century.

SPEC Dep. 580 F951h

1576 – Matthias de L'Obel. *Plantarum seu Stirpium Icones*.

L'Obel (1538-1616) produced two books marking the transition from purely medical treatises to botanical works: *Stirpium Adversaria Nova* (1570) and its companion volume, *Plantarum seu Stirpium Icones* (1576). In these works, L'Obel created a classification system based upon leaves of the plants. He collected extensively in France and England, while serving as physician to William, the Silent, in Belgium and James 1 in England. The genus *Lobelia* (family Campanulaceae) memorializes L'Obel's name.

SPEC Depository QK41 L55 1576

1597 – John Gerard. *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plants*

This is the most famous of the English herbals. John Gerard (1545-1612) served as keeper of the gardens of William Cecil Lord Burghley and was a Master of the College of Barber Surgeons in London. His *Herball* is based on Dr. Robert Priest's translation of Rembert Dodoens' *Historia Stirpium Pemptades Sex*. He changed the arrangement of the descriptions, added more than 180 plants, and appended his own observations to the descriptions. An avid gardener, Gerard maintained his own garden in London. A catalog of the plants in his garden is included in the *Herball*. He is memorialized by Linnaeus in the genus *Gerardia* (family Acanthaceae).

SPEC QK41 G3 1597

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

(1620) – Gaspard Bauhin. *Prodromos Theatri Botanici . . .* bound with his *Pinax Theatri Botanici . . .*

Gaspard Bauhin (1560-1624) was a Swiss physician, botanist, and anatomist. Born in Basel, he studied at various universities (Padua, Montpellier, and in Germany). He returned in 1580 to assume a doctoral appointment at the University of Basel. In 1582, he became a professor of Greek and later (1588) chair of the department of anatomy and botany. His botanical works pioneered the nomenclatural distinction of genera and species later adopted in Linnaeus' *Species Plantarum* (1753). This innovation allowed more systematic arrangement of plants into groups having similar characteristics. The genus *Bauhinia* (family Fabaceae, subfamily Caesalpinioideae) memorializes the Bauhin brothers, Gaspard and

Jean. Our edition of the *Prodromos* is the second (1671).

SPEC 580 B326p

1631 – Antonio Donati. *Trattato de Semplici, Pietri, et Pesci Marini che Nascono nel Lito di Venetia.*

Antonio Donati (1606-1659) was an Italian pharmacist. This work describes the plants, animals, and minerals of the Adriatic coast. The engravings in this work are of high quality.

SPEC QH152 D652x

1640 – John Parkinson. *Theatrum Botanicum; the Theatre of Plants or a Herbal of a Large Extent. . .*

John Parkinson (1567-1650) pursued several occupations during a long and productive life. He was an apothecary, horticulturist, and botanist. He wrote *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* (1629) to present horticultural practice and thought of the day. The *Theatrum Botanicum* is the largest compilation of plant descriptions and illustrations (1,688 pages and 3,800 plants) of the time. Thirty-three of these plants were native to the London area. Parkinson maintained a garden at Long Acre in Covent Garden. It was approximately two acres in area and contained about 480 kinds of plants. He served as apothecary to James I and as Royal Botanist to Charles I. He died in 1650 and was buried on August 6 of that year.

SPEC Depository QK41 P2 1640

(1662)—Joannes Jonstonus. *Historiae Naturalis de Arboribus et Plantis.*

Joannes Jonstonus (1603-1675) was a Polish doctor who wrote

extensively on natural history of plants and animals. He travelled widely in Europe and England, attending many universities and serving as a tutor to a wealthy Polish family. The descriptions in this book include medical information, and they are well illustrated. Our edition is 1786, considerably later than the first.

SPEC Folio 580 J73 v.1, v.2

(1694)—Joseph Pitton de Tournefort. (*Elements de Botanique*)

Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708) developed the modern concept of the genus and clearly distinguished between genus and species in a systematic classification of plants. Educated in a Jesuit convent at Aix-en-Provence in France, he subsequently pursued a medical education at Montpellier and in Barcelona. His interest in botany led him to explore western Europe, particularly the Pyrenees, where he collected extensively. He was appointed professor of botany at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris in 1683. In 1700-1702, he explored the Levant (Constantinople, the Greek isles, Black Sea, Anatolia, and Georgia). His *Elements* was translated into Latin (*Institutiones Rei Herbaricae*) and published in 1700 and again in 1719. Our three-volume set of the *Institutiones* is the 1719 edition. Although Tournefort's artificial classification was superseded by Linnaeus' work in *Species Plantarum* (1753), Linnaeus used Tournefort's concept of genus to group plants in the new classification. Tournefort is memorialized in the genus *Tournefortia* (ca. 120 species in the family Boraginaceae).

SPEC QK41 T6 1719

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

1744—Giambattista Morandi. *Historia Botanica Practica, seu Plantarum, quae ad Usum Medicinae Pertinent.*

Morandi was a botanical artist at the Castello Valentino under Victor Emanuel II of Savoy. The *Historia* contains 68 etched and engraved plates on which 554 plants are figured.

SPEC Oversize 581.63 M794h

1754—John Hill. *The British Herball; an History of Plants and Trees, Natives of Britain, Cultivated for Use or Raised for Beauty.*

John Hill (ca. 1716-1775) was the first botanist to adopt the Linnaean system of classification to organize his *British Herball* in 1754. Linnaeus' *Species Plantarum*, published in 1753, serves as the foundation of modern botanical nomenclature. Nevertheless, Hill used some pre-Linnaean names in the *British Herball*, since he believed them to be more appropriate. Hill admired Linnaeus, but he differed with him on several points of classification of the plants in the herball. The book stands as a major contribution to 18th-century botany.

SPEC Dep. QK41 H6

1790—William Woodville. *Medical Botany; containing systematic and general descriptions, with plates of all the medicinal plants,*

indigenous and exotic, comprehended in the catalogues of the materia medica as published by the Royal Colleges of Physicians, together with most of the principal medicinal plants not included in those pharmacopoeias, accompanied with a circumstantial detail of their medicinal effects and of the diseases in which they have been most successfully employed.

William Woodville (1752-1805) was a physician and botanist who practiced in London. His classic work in materia medica was published in four volumes (three volumes and supplement) during 1790-1794. In recognition of his botanical work, he was admitted as a Fellow of the Linnaean Society in 1791. Second and third editions of *Medical Botany* were published in 1810 and 1832. This work remained a reference for physicians into the final quarter of the nineteenth century, when it was replaced by Bentley and Trimen's *Medicinal Plants*.

SPEC QK99 W9 1790 v. 1, v. 2, and v.4

NINETEENTH CENTURY

1810—Robert Thornton. *A New Family Herbal, or Popular Account of the Medical Properties of British and Foreign Plants, and Their Uses in Dying, and the Various Arts, Arranged According to the Linnaean System, and Illustrated by Two Hundred and Fifty-Eight Engravings from Plants Drawn from Nature by Henderson, and Engraved by Bewick of Newcastle.*

Robert John Thornton (ca. 1768-1837) published several influential botanical and medical works. His *Family Herbal* provided practical information on plants and their uses in everyday life. The illustrations were a collaborative effort of Thornton, Henderson, and Bewick. The Libraries own both (1810 and 1814) editions of this work.

SPEC QK99 A1 T56x and QK99 A1 T56 1814x

1823-1830—C. S. Rafinesque. *Medical Flora. or Manual of the Medical Botany of the United States. of North America.* 2 volumes.

Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840) was a brilliant and eccentric naturalist, who was widely ignored and criticized during his lifetime. He was born in Galata, near Constantinople. He migrated to America in 1802 and met most of the botanists of the time. In 1805, he went to Sicily to make a fortune in trade there. He subsequently returned to America in 1815. In 1819, he accepted a position as professor of botany at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. After his dismissal from the university in 1826, he moved to Philadelphia where he spent the rest of his life, collecting and naming plants and animals. He died in poverty in Philadelphia. His remains were moved to a tomb in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1924. The genus *Rafinesquia* (family Asteraceae) was created to honor Rafinesque. Of his publications, the *Medical Flora* was the most successful. The illustrations, plant lore, and classification indicate an excellent knowledge of plants and their uses.

SPEC QK99 R13 v. 1, v. 2

