

## *The Meteoric Career of William Young, Jr. (1742-1785), Pennsylvania Botanist to the Queen*

**A**MERICA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY was a botanical Eden for those naturalists who explored and collected plants for the gardens, cabinets, and herbaria of Europe. Royalty and other wealthy patrons eager for new and exotic specimens dispatched collectors, many of whom were European professionals.<sup>1</sup> But European patrons also recognized and valued the abilities of American collector-naturalists and hired them to seek out and procure new discoveries of native flora and fauna.

By the mid-eighteenth century, several American collector-naturalists might well have been dignified with the title "botanist." Although they might have lacked the credentials and facilities to name properly their newly discovered taxa, their enthusiasm and experience allowed some of them to gain the attention of well-known European naturalists. The most significant American figure in this category was John Bartram (1699-1777). A Pennsylvania farmer, Bartram took up the quest for plants in the 1730s, eventually becoming internationally recognized for his discoveries.<sup>2</sup> He was a correspondent of Linnaeus as well as of nearly every major naturalist of his day. Bartram

I wish to thank Oregon State University for making this research possible. Thanks also to Joseph Ewan for his advice and thoughtful criticism, and to the helpful staff of the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>1</sup> Two useful sources on early botanical exploration in America are Joseph Ewan, "Early History," in *A Short History of Botany in the United States* (New York, 1969), 26-48, and Alice M. Coats, *The Plant Hunters: Being a History of the Horticultural Pioneers, Their Quests and Their Discoveries from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1969), 266-327.

<sup>2</sup> Of the many discussions of Bartram, the most recent and thorough is Edmund and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *The Life and Travels of John Bartram: From Lake Ontario to the River St. John* (Tallahassee, 1982). Despite overzealous editing, one of the most valuable sources of Bartram's correspondence is William Darlington, ed., *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall, with Notices of their Botanical Contemporaries* (Philadelphia, 1849; reprinted, New York, 1967), 17-33.

toiled in the field of botany for nearly thirty years with little acknowledgment from those in high places at the British Court.

When royal notice and monetary preferment finally did come to an American naturalist, it was not to the venerable Bartram, but to a nearly unknown Pennsylvania-German collector-naturalist, one William Young, Jr. Neither the circumstances surrounding Young's meteoric rise and fall from botanical fame, nor his successive career, have been fully treated by historians of science.<sup>3</sup> This paper—based largely upon letters and other unpublished documents—is an attempt to reconstruct more thoroughly the life of this controversial German-American naturalist.

During the brief restoration of Catholicism in mid-sixteenth-century England, many Protestants were severely persecuted. Among those fleeing to Germany in search of safety and religious freedom were Robert and Elizabeth Young, the great-great grandparents of William Young, Jr.<sup>4</sup> The couple settled in the Constate of Hesse, near Kassel, where their descendants were to live for nearly two-hundred years.

Protracted warfare brought political and economic chaos to Germany in the early eighteenth century. Thousands fled their homelands to escape the pillaging and famine accompanying the armies of Europe. On December 11, 1744, "Wilhelm Jungck" [Sr.] signed the emigration register at the port of Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup> Young had emigrated from Germany with his mother, a sister, his wife, and their three small children, one of whom died during the voyage and was buried at sea. One of the surviving children, William Young, Jr., was two years old when their ship docked in Philadelphia.

<sup>3</sup> The few treatments of Young are fragmentary and/or inaccurate. See James Britten, "William Young and His Work," *Journal of Botany, British and Foreign* 32 (1894): 332-337; John W. Harshberger, "William Young, Jr., of Philadelphia, Queen's Botanist," *Torreya* 17 (1917): 91-99; Samuel N. Rhoads, *Botanica Neglecta: William Young, Jr (of Philadelphia) "Botaniste de Pensylvanie" and his Long-Forgotten Book . . .* (Philadelphia, 1916); and, Anon., "William Young Burying-Ground," *Publications of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania* 15 (October 1945): 9-34.

<sup>4</sup> Young's family background is taken from Harshberger, 93-94. Harshberger had access to the original Young family records.

<sup>5</sup> William J. Hinke and R. B. Strassburger, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers: A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808* (Norristown, 1934), 1:358.

The family lived for a time near Philadelphia, and, after a brief residence in Virginia in 1751, returned to the city until 1753. In that year the Young family settled in Kingessing, then on the city's southern fringe, becoming neighbors of John Bartram. When the family moved to Kingessing, John Bartram was a fifty-four-year-old experienced botanist, while William Young, Jr. was an eleven-year-old boy.

While William Young, Sr. lived "by what he could make on his bit of land; [his] son was frequently in Bartram's garden, and found amusement in the variegated blossoms."<sup>6</sup> The boy was bright, quick to learn, and intensely interested in plants. Bartram apparently took to Young and encouraged his curiosity. Bartram enjoyed companionship on his collecting trips, and it is likely that the youthful but eager William Young, Jr. occasionally accompanied him on some of these expeditions.<sup>7</sup> By 1761 Young had begun to travel on his own, venturing as far as Charleston to the nursery of Dr. Alexander Garden, a well-known botanist of the Carolinas.<sup>8</sup> It was not long after their meeting that Garden enthusiastically wrote to John Ellis in London of his discovery of the nineteen-year-old collector.

I have at last met with a man who is to commence [business as a] nurseryman and gardener, and to collect seeds, plants, &c. for the London market. He is a sensible, careful man, and has a turn for that business. He shall receive all the advice and assistance that I can give him.<sup>9</sup>

Young's fortuitous contact with Garden brought him London clients eager to receive American plants. Young's prices, "much lower" than his competitors', undoubtedly initiated many sales.<sup>10</sup> Although little is known of Young's activities for the three years

<sup>6</sup> Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783-1784* (Philadelphia, 1911), 1:92.

<sup>7</sup> The Berkeleys note that Bartram was probably eager for companionship on his collecting journeys. See their *The Life and Travels of John Bartram*, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Garden's life is well documented in Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *Dr. Alexander Garden of Charles Town* (Chapel Hill, 1969).

<sup>9</sup> James Edward Smith, *A Selection of the Correspondence of Linnaeus, and other Naturalists, from the Original Manuscripts* (London, 1821), 1:512.

<sup>10</sup> Garden to Ellis, November 19, 1764, *Ibid.*, 1:522.

following his introduction to Garden, he presumably was busy collecting and shipping plants to Britain for a growing clientele. But Young was not content merely to pursue a modest business supplying seeds and plants to London dealers. He aspired to rise above his undistinguished station, and, at the age of twenty-one, decided to capture the attention of Queen Charlotte, the young bride of George III.

Young seems not to have been intimidated by the vast class differences separating him from those at the Royal Court, for he devised a scheme to reach the Queen directly. While the exact details of this feat are hazy, the essentials were related years later in a book of travels by Johann David Schoepf, a German physician who called upon Young in 1783.

One day (so I was told in Philadelphia), he sent to London a paquet of plants which he had collected in the garden with a letter addressed to the Queen. He had placed the paquet of plants which he had collected unobserved in the bag which is usually kept open at the Coffee-house by ships shortly to clear. Arrived at London the skipper was in a quandary whether to deliver the paquet, of which he knew nothing, what it contained or who had sent it; but after consultation with his friends despatched [*sic*] it as directed.<sup>11</sup>

The Queen, who had a keen interest in botany and the royal gardens, was delighted by the gift and apparently was charmed by the boldness of the young American.<sup>12</sup> The contents of Young's letter enclosed with his gift are unknown, but it was effective enough that the Queen ordered the London-based Proprietor of Pennsylvania, Thomas Penn, to summon the young man to England.<sup>13</sup> Penn directed his nephew, John Penn, the recently appointed Governor of Pennsylvania, to contact Young and arrange for his passage to London. An undated (probably mid-1764) fragment of a letter from Thomas to John Penn substantiates much of Schoepf's story.

<sup>11</sup> Schoepf, *Travels*, 1:92-93.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Abbot, in the dedication to his *Flora Bedfordiensis* (1798), called the Queen the "first female botanist in the wide circle of the British Dominions." Cited in Olwen Hedley, *Queen Charlotte* (London, 1975), 309.

<sup>13</sup> With the exception of the years from 1732 to 1741, Thomas Penn (1702-1775) dealt with Pennsylvania affairs by correspondence from London. The Penn family is well discussed in Arthur Pound, *The Penns of Pennsylvania and England* (New York, 1932).

I have it in command from the Queen to desire you will enquire for one William Young jun'. a young Man a German, who sent to the Queen by Capt. Budden, a large Collection of Seeds: and to inform him that her Majesty and the Royal Family are much pleased with his Present, and desire to see him in England, where they would keep him a year then employ him to make further Collections in America.<sup>14</sup>

Israel Pemberton, an influential Philadelphia Quaker, wrote to a fellow Quaker in London, Dr. John Fothergill, asking the physician to "extend some friendly regard" to the young botanist.<sup>15</sup> Pemberton noted that Young had frequented the meetings of the Friends and that Young's parents were "desirous the care of solid Friends should be manifested towards him & their Advice administered" during his stay in London.

Pemberton then warned Fothergill, an excellent botanist, not to expect the newly appointed Botanist to the Queen to be thoroughly proficient in the field of botany. But even though Pemberton realized Young had a great deal to learn, he was optimistic regarding the young man's potential. "From his years & the disadvantages he has laboured under, it cannot be expected that his knowledge in Botany is very extensive, but his Inclination thereto is strong & so implanted that there is reason to hope he will be industrious in the improvement of the Opportunity which may now be offered him."

Pemberton further mentioned that Young would stay in England for a year or two to receive "the Instruction which he is told is proposed for him." This suggests that even though the Queen may

<sup>14</sup> This "Extract of T Penn's Letter to Jno Penn" is appended to a letter from Israel Pemberton to John Fothergill, September 22, 1764, Pemberton Papers, XVII, 89, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, HSP). Exactly when Young sent his packet to the Queen is uncertain. The orders requesting him to come to England were not received in Pennsylvania until August, 1764, implying that Young may have sent his gift earlier that year. However, in 1770, and in later years, he mentioned in several newspaper advertisements (e.g., *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 11, 1770) that his botanical shipment had been sent to the Queen in 1763. Since most, or all, of the packet seems to have been seeds, the resulting mature plants may not have been available for Her Majesty's examination until early 1764.

<sup>15</sup> [Israel Pemberton] to John Fothergill, September 22, 1764, Pemberton Papers, XVII, 89, HSP. Although this letter is unsigned, the fact that Israel Pemberton, Jr. (1715-1779) was the writer is confirmed by Fothergill's reply, printed in Betsy C. Corner and Christopher C. Booth, eds., *Chain of Friendship: Selected Letters of Dr. John Fothergill of London, 1735-1780* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 239.

have also had high hopes for her Botanist, she must also have realized that Young was a diamond in the rough. His extant letters clearly exhibit a lack of education, and the Queen—who had received a letter with Young's gift—most certainly would have been alerted to his educational shortcomings. While Pemberton was cautious in his appraisal of the inexperienced botanist, John Penn saw to it that Young was advanced fifty pounds, sterling, on Thomas Penn's account, to "prepare himself" for the voyage to England.<sup>16</sup>

John Bartram was stunned by the news of Young's preferment. Bartram had been collecting in the American wilderness for three decades, quietly building a solid foundation for succeeding naturalists. Yet during his many years of botanizing, he had been ignored by the Royal Family. That a relatively unknown youth should suddenly receive royal preferment and a large salary was difficult for Bartram to accept—particularly since Young had gleaned virtually all his botanical knowledge from the older naturalist.

Bartram vented some of his frustration and anger to his friend in London, Peter Collinson.

my neibour yongs sudden preferment has astonished [a] great part of our inhabitants. thay are daly talking to me about him that he has got more honour by A few miles traveling to pick up A few common plants then I hav by near 30 years travail with great danger & peril. it is shocking y<sup>e</sup> plants that you have had many of them 100 years & most 20 or 30 should be esteemed at court as new discoveries.<sup>17</sup>

The venerable Pennsylvania botanist was angered and humiliated by Young's success. He quickly set about to seize some sort of royal preferment for himself.

Young sailed at the end of September, 1764, on the *Philadelphia Packet*,<sup>18</sup> and presented his letter of introduction from Pemberton to Dr. John Fothergill in February, 1765. Those in England were prepared for Young's lack of botanical training and had arranged for

<sup>16</sup> John Penn to Richard Hockley, August 25, 1764, Penn-Bailey Collection, John Penn Folder, HSP.

<sup>17</sup> Bartram to Collinson, September 23, 1764, Bartram Papers (hereafter as BP), I, 53, HSP.

<sup>18</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 20, 1764.

Young to receive a year or two of "Instruction" in the finer points of the science.<sup>19</sup> Bartram mentioned to Collinson that Young was to be placed in the care of Dr. John Hill (1714-1785) who, Bartram conceded, could indeed make a botanist of the youth.<sup>20</sup> John Hill most likely was selected to be Young's tutor by the man closest to the King and Queen, John Stuart, Third Earl of Bute (1713-1792). Lord Bute's involvement with the royal family dated to the late 1740s; he had been placed in charge of the planning of the Royal Gardens at Kew in the 1750s.<sup>21</sup>

During the early years of Kew's existence, Hill was made a gardener, probably in a position of some authority. Although Hill was a correspondent of Linnaeus and had introduced the Linnean system to the English-speaking world in his *History of Plants* (1751), his scientific reputation was secondary to his extensive dealings in patent medicines, questionable potions, and herbal concoctions. Hill's preparations and his unabashed vanity took the brunt of many literary attacks, and he was known to many as the "Drug King" of his day.<sup>22</sup>

A lack of correspondence between Young and Hill, and the fact that neither even mentioned the other in correspondence, makes it difficult to reconstruct their relationship.<sup>23</sup> In many respects these botanists shared much. Both were vain and pompous, and both managed to reap seemingly undeserved successes which made them targets of criticism by their contemporaries.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to imagine a

<sup>19</sup> See note 15.

<sup>20</sup> Bartram to Collinson, October 15, 1764, BP, I, 53, HSP.

<sup>21</sup> Until his political demise, Bute was one of the most powerful of those at the Court of George III. Bute's interest in botany is sketched in Alice M. Coats, *Lord Bute: an Illustrated Life of John Stuart, Third Earl of Bute, 1713-1792* (Aylesbury, 1975).

<sup>22</sup> G. S. Rousseau, "John Hill, Universal *Manque*: Remarks on His Life and Times, with a Checklist of His Works," in *The Renaissance Man in the Eighteenth Century* (Los Angeles, 1978), 71. See also George S. Rousseau, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Sir John Hill (1714-1775)* (New York, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> Hill's biographer, George Rousseau, has discovered no correspondence between William Young, Jr., and John Hill (Personal communication, October 23, 1979). Hill's only mention of Young seems to have been in a book written in 1773, in which Hill made a passing reference to his "pupil, William Young, to whom the King is pleased to allow a pension, for his Botanical researches in America. . . ." John Hill, *Decade of Curious and Elegant Trees and Plants* (London, 1773), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Walpole, for example, in a letter of 1761 commented on Hill's appointment as a royal gardener: "I am sorry to say, this journeyman is one of the first men preferred in the new

comfortable working relationship between two such personalities. How long the two men actually worked together is unknown, but the Queen's Botanist was reported to have been "prosecuting his botanic studies" in May, 1765.<sup>25</sup>

There was speculation in Philadelphia that Young's lack of botanical expertise and courtly experience would not allow him to survive the rigors of the royal court. Bartram told Collinson that "various are y<sup>e</sup> opinions of his success. some thinks he will make such an awkward appearance at Court that he will soon come back again. others that y<sup>e</sup> Queen will take care of the germain Gentleman."<sup>26</sup>

His appointment by the Queen, and the reason he managed to survive as long as he did in the service of Her Majesty, may have been due to the fact that he was in fact a "germain Gentleman." Young must have realized that Queen Charlotte was German, having arrived in England from Mecklenburg-Strelitz only as recently as 1761. Being unfamiliar with English, she surrounded herself with an entourage of German-speaking attendants. Young, it seems, had made a point of his German background in his introduction to the Queen. Had he not, his letter and packet of plants may well have been ignored.<sup>27</sup>

Young's ingenuity prevailed during his first months as the Queen's Botanist. His sister in Pennsylvania, Christina Leech, noted in her diary for early 1765, that she had "Received the first letter from [her] brother in England, stating that he was well received by the

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reign: he is made gardener of Kensington, a place worth two thousand pounds a year. The King and Lord Bute have certainly both of them great propensity to the arts; but Dr. Hill, though undoubtedly not deficient in parts, has a little claim to favour in this reign, as Gideon, the stock-jobber, in the last; both engrossers without merit." Paget Toynbee, ed., *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Oxford* (Oxford, 1904), 5:16.

<sup>25</sup> Collinson to Bartram, May, 1765, BP, III, 55, HSP.

<sup>26</sup> Bartram to Collinson, October 15, 1764, BP, I, 53, HSP.

<sup>27</sup> The first correspondence from London relating to Young referred to him as a "young Man, a German." (Thomas Penn to John Penn, 1764. See note 13.) It has been speculated that Hill was responsible for the appointment of Young to his prestigious post as a favor to Young's father who became an American agent for Hill's medicines. But as will be seen later in this paper, the father's dealings with Hill did not begin until well after the son's association with Hill. Thus, the son was responsible for the appointment of the father, not the converse, as suggested by Alice M. Coats, *The Plant Hunters*, 279-280.



King and Queen and sometimes conversed with them for two hours about all kinds of curiosities."<sup>28</sup> Young's lack of courtly grace and botanical expertise were likely overlooked by the Queen. For her Botanist could at least converse in German—even if it would have been in the Pennsylvania-German dialect—and his rude American ways and unabashed enthusiasm may have charmed the Queen.

Thomas Penn was pleased to report to Young's father that "the King enquired of your Son the Character of John Bartram, who having a very great regard for him, gave an account of his long labour in botanical matters, and said he much deserved regard. John Bartram ought to know this."<sup>29</sup> Penn also mentioned that Young had stayed with him for several days, assuring the father that his son's "conduct is very proper."

But if Young's conduct was thought "proper" in late 1765, it took only a few months until this opinion was reversed. The twenty-three-year-old American became enamored of court life and the temptations of urbane society. The unrefined Queen's Botanist rapidly took advantage of his £300 salary to transform himself into a proper dandy. Collinson wrote in disgust to Bartram that Young "is now so new Modeled, & grown so fine & fashionable with his Hair Curled & tied in a Black bag, that my People that have seen him often did not know Him."<sup>30</sup>

By mid-1766, Young's generous income was unable to keep pace with his newly acquired tastes. In need of money, Young approached Thomas Penn for the loan of one hundred guineas, ostensibly for the purchase of books. Since the young American seemed to have been in the pursuit of botanical knowledge under the guidance of Dr. Hill, Penn was convinced of the necessity for the money.<sup>31</sup> But Young's thirst for botanical knowledge had become secondary to his appetite for some of the women who were attracted to the salary and

<sup>28</sup> Christiana Leech, "Selections from the Diary of Christiana Leach [i.e., Leech], of Kingsessing, 1765-1796," ed. by R. H. Hinckley, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 35 (1911), 343. The original diary, which I have been unable to locate, was in German.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Penn to William Young [Sr.], September 28, 1765, Penn Letter Book (hereafter as PLB), VIII, 315-316, HSP.

<sup>30</sup> Collinson to Bartram, May 28, 1766, BP, III, 64, HSP.

<sup>31</sup> Penn to Young [Sr.], June 14, 1766, PLB, IX, 20, HSP.

naïveté of the Queen's Botanist. Young quickly squandered the money advanced him and resorted to subterfuges to obtain funds for his non-academic pursuits. His activities were finally revealed to Penn and the Queen when he had the audacity to flaunt the company of some of his undesirable followers at court. This was his undoing. The Queen was embarrassed; Penn, outraged. Penn communicated the sordid details to Young's father.

Your son had for some time . . . been drawn into very bad Company of women, who had put him to a great expense, this I was quite ignorant of, but about a year ago he came to me, and under the pretence of buying several things . . . requested that I would advance him some money . . . which I did, he said he was to buy a Horse, to go a Journey into the West of England, & Several other things; soon after I was desired from Court not to let him have any more money, the reason of which, I afterwards found, was that he had brought bad Company to Richmond, which was known to the Court, and he much disliked for doing it.<sup>32</sup>

Young was finally arrested in August, 1766, and imprisoned for debts amounting to approximately £100. In a letter to Penn, Young asked for the £15 bail required for release. Penn, however, refused to rescue Young unless he separated from the "bad People" with whom he had been associating and returned to Pennsylvania. The defiant Young told Penn that prison was preferable to leaving his companions, relenting only when he realized that Penn would not release more money unless Young sailed immediately.<sup>33</sup>

The Queen was willing to settle Young's debts of £370 "provided that he was sent instantly abroad, and never appeared at Richmond again." Young, however, was incorrigible to the end. Penn noted that he "was so obstinate, he would not go without money, certain clothes, his gold watch, that I took out of pawn, and other things which added greatly to the expense."<sup>34</sup>

Even though the Queen had been greatly embarrassed by Young, she did not entirely dismiss him from her service; she retained him as her Botanist at the reduced salary of £50—the same Bartram had

<sup>32</sup> Penn to Young [Sr.], February 28, 1767, PLB, IX, 97, HSP.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>34</sup> Penn to Young [Sr.], May 21, 1767, PLB, IX, 124, HSP.

been receiving as the King's Botanist. The Queen further promised Bartram's salary to Young upon the death of the older botanist.<sup>35</sup>

Rather than being humbled by his humiliating departure, Young made a triumphal return to Philadelphia on November 3, 1766. His sister, Christiana, noted in her diary that "William returned from London . . . happy with the title of Botanist to the King and Queen, to our great joy."<sup>36</sup> As in London, Young continued to flaunt his titled and presumed wealth. Bartram bitterly reported the behavior of his young neighbor to Collinson. "I am surprised that Young is come back so soon he cuts y<sup>e</sup> greatest figure in town [and] struts along y<sup>e</sup> streets whistling with his sword & gold lace &c he hath been 3 times to visit me pretend[ing] a great respect for me . . . Sayeth there is 300 pound sterling anually setled upon him." But dark rumors about Young's departure from England overshadowed his cavalier attitude and display of finery. Bartram continued in his letter to Collinson, "But Captain chancelor tels odd stories of him that he was put in prison from whence he was taken by two oficers & put on board but his friends utterly denieth it its [a] petty [pity] but y<sup>e</sup> truth was known & y<sup>e</sup> lying party snubed."<sup>37</sup>

Collinson was quick to verify the rumors. In a letter of February 10, 1767, he replied to his friend Bartram.

I Believe there is too Much in What the Capt Sayes about Young—He may Live to repent His Folly & Extravagance—Such an opportunity Lost, is never to be regained unless He has better Fortune than he Deserves as a Friend I advised Him often to Oeconomy & Industry & not Sacrifice every thing to his Pleasures for I foresaw by his Way of going on, How it must End for I knew his Salary could by no Means Support His Expensive Way of Liveing—<sup>38</sup>

Young shrugged off the gossip, and within a month was off to the

<sup>35</sup> Letters of Penn to Young [Sr.], see notes 32 and 34.

<sup>36</sup> Leech, "Diary," 343. The fact that Young continued to address himself as Botanist to both monarchs irritated Bartram, the King's Botanist. Bartram, however, also coveted the favors of both monarchs and evidently had earlier tried to gain the Queen's patronage. Collinson had advised that he forget such an attempt. "My dear John," he wrote Bartram, "I wonder thou Should trouble thy self about the Queen as She has Young & Everything will be shown Him" (May 28, 1766, BP, III, 64, HSP).

<sup>37</sup> December 5, 1766, BP, I, 66, HSP.

<sup>38</sup> BP, III, 66, HSP.

Carolinas. This would prove to be a major collecting effort requiring a full year's time. Young was aware that to heal the wounds he had opened at court several months earlier, he needed to deliver spectacular specimens to England and the royal family.

In the meantime, Penn pressed Young's father for the 100 guineas still owed the Proprietor. At the same time, Penn attempted to pass some fatherly advice on to William Young, Jr.

I shall not say any thing in my Letters to Pensilvania about your mistakes here, but to your Father, who has desired me to tell him, the whole of the Case . . . I think you should give over all thoughts of returning here, and fix yourself in Pensilvania where your Father could assist you in settling some little Farm.<sup>39</sup>

Penn also admonished Young, Jr., saying, "I think you judged very ill to relinquish your Share of your Father's Estate." It seems Young had prematurely secured his future inheritance to fund his travels to the Carolinas in 1767. Young wrote to the Queen from the Carolinas, informing her of plans to return to England with a cargo of plants for Her Majesty. Penn, however, relayed the Queen's command to "not on any account" return to England.<sup>40</sup>

Later in the summer of 1767, Penn received a letter and a box of Carolina specimens from the Youngs, intended for the Queen. Penn replied to Young's father that he had sent the letter on to "Mademoiselle Shullenburg" for delivery to the Queen.<sup>41</sup> Again the Proprietor chastised the Youngs for pressing the Queen further for money or favor, and repeated his warning to William Young, Sr., that his son was not to come to England.

Any apprehensions Young may have had about London evidently did not deter him, and in January, 1768, he "departed from Carolina for London with many barrels filled with plants."<sup>42</sup> Collinson informed Bartram that Young brought with him many "rare plants which he Sett in Eight Hundred Potts, (think on This) for which

<sup>39</sup> Penn to Young [Jr.], March 4, 1767, PLB, IX, 100, HSP.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>41</sup> Penn to Young [Sr.], August 5, 1767, PLB, IX, 167, HSP. Elizabeth Juliana Schwellenberg (ca. 1728-1797), was the Queen's domineering and influential Keeper of the Robes. See *Gentleman's Magazine* 67, pt. 1 (1797): 261-262.

<sup>42</sup> Leech, "Diary," 343.

he asked Six Hundred pounds—Money Enough. . . .”<sup>43</sup> Among the many plants Young gathered to take to England were some 300 specimens with their accompanying colored drawings, all rather crudely executed by Young.<sup>44</sup>

Despite his rare cargo, “neither the King or Queen would See Young or Take any of his plants, for his past bad Conduct.”<sup>45</sup> Likely prepared for an icy reception, Young had brought with him what he rightly considered a botanical triumph which might salvage his tarnished reputation and quiet his detractors in a single stroke. He based his hopes upon live specimens of *Dionaea muscipula*, the Venus’s-flytrap. Bartram had sent specimens of the delicate plant to Collinson in 1762, but no living plants had survived the difficult Atlantic voyage; nor had any seed managed to sprout for English collectors eager to see the living plant.

Young’s arrival with living “Tipitiwichets” produced a sensation. John Ellis in October, 1768, noted to the Duchess of Norfolk that “A few of these plants were brought over from Philadelphia this summer, by one Mr. Young, who sold them to Mr. James Gordon, seedsman, Fenchurchstreet, and Mr. Brooks in Holborn.”<sup>46</sup> Ellis also credited Young with the introduction of the living plant in a letter to Alexander Garden.

You have seen, no doubt, the Fly-trap, or *Dionaea muscipula*, which Mr. Young, the Queen’s botanist, brought over. It grows in North Carolina, and is much esteemed here. I have sent Linnaeus the characters of it,

<sup>43</sup> Collinson to Bartram, July 6, 1768, BP, III, 77, HSP.

<sup>44</sup> These specimens are now in the British Museum (Natural History). The specimens and colored figures were given a title page by Young which reads, “A Natural History of Plants Containing the Production of North and South Carolina of Upwards of Three Hundred Different Species which have been Carefully Collected. Drawn and Coloured from life in the year 1767. to which all be added a Description of the Soil and Nature of their Growth, as likewise remarks of a great many of their Medecinal Qualities with a General Description of the Province, the whole by William Young, Junr. Esque., Botanist to their Majesty’s.” A description of Young’s collection and figures, plus Young’s boastful dedication to the King and Queen, are in James Britten, “William Young and His Work,” *Journal of Botany* 32 (1894): 332-337.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* Even though the King and Queen refused to see Young during this trip, Collinson noted in the same letter that Thomas Penn had recommended the botanist to the Duchess of Portland (Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, 1715-1785) who bought seven guineas’ worth of his seeds.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Correspondence of Linnaeus*, 2:73.

which gave him infinite pleasure, as the manner of its seizing and killing insects, exceeds any thing we know of in the vegetable kingdom.<sup>47</sup>

An article in the *Annual Register* also discussed Young's introduction of *Dionaea*.<sup>48</sup> The article credited the discovery to

Mr. John Bartram, of Philadelphia, Botanist to the King. . . . But we are indebted to Mr. William Young, a native of Philadelphia, (to whom likewise the royal favour has been extended for his encouragement in his botanical researches in America) for the introduction of this curious plant alive, and in considerable quantities.

Young's ability to transport successfully the living specimens of this sensational plant enabled him to restore his reputation. The plant was perhaps the most spectacular botanical introduction from North America to that time. Young's introduction of living specimens of Venus's-flytrap to England brought him to the pinnacle of his shaky botanical career.

He was able to deliver living specimens of *Dionaea* because he had discovered how to pack his specimens to survive the physical rigors of the Atlantic crossing. Fothergill detailed Young's successful methods in a 1771 letter to Humphry Marshall:

William Young sends his plants over very safely, by wrapping them up in moss, and packing them pretty close in a box. They come thus very safe, and we lose very few of them. He ties the moss in a ball about the roots, with a piece of packthread of matting, or hemp strings, and puts them so close as to prevent them from shaking about in the box. It is surprising how well they keep in this manner.<sup>49</sup>

Young returned to America toward the end of 1768, arriving in

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:571.

<sup>48</sup> Anon., "A Description of a Newly Discovered Sensitive Plant, Called *Dionaea Muscipula*, or Venus's Fly-trap," *Annual Register* . . . for the year 1775 18 (1776): 93. Much of this article was taken from John Ellis, *Directions for Bringing Over Seeds and Plants* . . . to which is added, *The Figure and Botanical Description of a new Sensitive Plant, called Dionaea Muscipula* . . . (London, 1770).

<sup>49</sup> Darlington, *Memorials*, 504. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer who has suggested that Young may have learned his method of sending plants from James Alexander, the gardener to Thomas Penn at Spriggettsbury on the Schuylkill. Alexander was sending plants to Penn in England, with their roots wrapped in moss, and packed in a moss-filled box, by 1756 (BP, III, 79, HSP).

Philadelphia on November 6. Within two weeks he again was off to the Carolinas for more specimens. He returned home in March, 1769, "well and hearty, with 19 boxes filled with plants and roots of great variety."<sup>50</sup>

A hastily scrawled letter to Thomas Penn which accompanied the shipment indicates the quantity and destination of Young's specimens. Young gave Penn some instructions for placing the approximately 30 boxes of plants into the hands of his clients. Some of the boxes, and a letter since lost, were intended for the King. John Fothergill received one box, and Penn another.

The majority of the shipment, however, was destined for the shop of one Mr. Brookes, a "Bird merchant in holborn."<sup>51</sup> It appears that Mr. Brookes was a primary buyer of Young's specimens. The association indicates the expansion of Young's dealings beyond botanical specimens. The young botanist also noted in his letter to Penn that Brookes desired annual shipments of Young's "plants trees & birds and anemals."

The letter to the Proprietor makes clear that Young was still deeply in debt. He asked Penn to be patient for "those hundred gueanis a year or two longer My father is goin to set me In a good an[d] profidiable buisness." This business was not merely a ploy to appease Thomas Penn, but a serious venture in the patent medicine trade.

Even though Young faced unfriendly creditors, he could not resist London and its opportunities. On November 5, 1769, he again sailed from Philadelphia with "many casks and boxes filled with plants."<sup>52</sup> Part of the cargo consisted of the Showy lady's slipper, *Cypridedium reginae*, destined for the Royal Gardens. Although this lovely plant had been cultivated by Phillip Miller at Chelsea prior to Young's introduction, this species—called the "most magnificent" of its genus—must have delighted the Queen.<sup>53</sup>

This trip also gave Young an opportunity to discuss his father's interest in the drug business with John Hill, who had been in the

<sup>50</sup> Leech, "Diary," 343.

<sup>51</sup> Young, Jr., to Thomas Penn, May 5, 1769, Penn Papers, Private Correspondence, V, 105, HSP.

<sup>52</sup> Leech, "Diary," 343.

<sup>53</sup> *The Botanical Magazine* (1793) t. 216. Curtis knew the plant as *C. album*.

patent medicine trade for years, and had sold his products in the Colonies at least since 1762.<sup>54</sup> Like many Pennsylvania Germans of his day, William Young, Sr. placed great stock in the curative powers of herbal remedies and had been investigating the medicines of the American Indians for many years.<sup>55</sup> The elder Young had developed a balsam, whose properties he described in a letter offering the product to Lord Bute in 1765.<sup>56</sup> Young's description of the ingredients for his balsam included the times of the year to harvest the ingredients as well as the correct procedures for preparing them. The main components of the concoction were pine buds mixed with "macknolly" [magnolia] and sassafras bark. He also told Bute that he had hoped to be able to send some of his more difficult-to-obtain buds from "ground pines" collected in the Blue Mountains, but he was only able to procure three boxes which were sent to the royal family. It appears that buds of a lesser quality were sent to Bute and John Hill. He hinted to Lord Bute, however, that more precious buds might be obtained at a price.

The partnership between Hill and William Young, Sr. first became public shortly after William Young, Jr. returned from London in August, 1770. Within two months newspaper advertisements were announcing the availability of "The American Balsam" of Dr. John Hill, "prepared from some new American plants sent to England by

<sup>54</sup> Advertisement in the *American Chronicle*, March 20, 1762. Hill first introduced his medicines to Pennsylvania through David Hall, a Philadelphia printer. See letters from Hall to Hill dated February 6 and October 19, 1767, David Hall Letterbook, 1764-1767, American Philosophical Society.

<sup>55</sup> F. Guerra, "German Medicine in Colonial America," in *Verhandlungen des XX. Internationalen Kongress für Geschichte der Medizin, Berlin, 22.-27. August 1966* (Hildesheim, 1968): 119-122.

<sup>56</sup> William Young, Sr., to John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, May 15, 1765, Society Misc. Collection, HSP. Young included a testimonial from the colorful Germantown physician, Dr. Christopher Witt (1675-1765), noting his confidence in Young's preparation which had the virtue of "breaking, cleaning, and healing all inwardly ulcers, foulness and rottenness, on the lever lung kitny, &c &c." Many eighteenth-century naturalists held similar views of the curative powers thought to be possessed by certain plants. Bartram, for example, was also keenly interested in herbal remedies, and recommended such herbs as "Sarsaparilla" for "cleansing the Blood," curing dropsy, and if "outwardly applied is extoll'd for curing of the Shingles and cleaning and healing of Ulcers." (From Bartram's "Preface" to Thomas Short's *Medicina Britannica* . . . , 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, 1751), reprinted in Ann Leighton, *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century: "For Use or for Delight"* (Boston, 1976), 166.



the ingenious gentleman Mr. William Young, of Pennsylvania, Botanist to their Majesties the King and Queen of Great Britain.”<sup>57</sup> The advertisement contained a brief letter by John Hill, dated June 5, 1770 (during Young’s previous visit to England) giving notice that the medicine was to be sold only “by Mr. *William Young* [ Sr.], at his place in Kingsess, near the Lower Ferry, on Schuylkill, Philadelphia, and no other person, except those he shall appoint.” Much of the lengthy advertisement is devoted to Young Sr.’s extollation of the virtues of the balsam and directions for its use. He also gives his version of his son’s role in the creation of the *American Balsam*.

In the year 1763, Mr. *William Young*, junior, brought over to England the best collection of American plants ever received there, with their names and places, in a manner that shewed him born with a genius for Botany. The King and Queen directed Dr. Hill to improve that genius, by right instructions, and honoured him with a pension. Amongst the plants brought by this gentleman, were those of which this inestimable balsam is prepared, which Dr. Hill now raises in his own garden. The secret of the preparation he has entrusted to no person in the world; but, in gratitude to the young gentleman, has appointed his father, Mr. William Young, senior, of Kingsess, near Philadelphia, the only capital vendor of them in all America, appointing whom he pleases under him.

Young, Sr., also mentioned that he had appointed three agents in Philadelphia to market the balsam—Footman & Foyes, Bayard & Jackson, and William Sitgreaves. He further added that Hill’s medicine would surely sell very quickly at the reasonable price of 3/9 per bottle, Pennsylvania money.

Thus began the successful business for the Youngs. By late 1771, further newspaper advertisements for the American Balsam, now selling at the increased price of 4/3 per bottle, noted that it “is now pretty well known in Pennsylvania, Maryland, &c . . . its fame is spread every where in this country.”<sup>58</sup> By this time the Youngs had agents in Philadelphia, Germantown, Wilmington, and Lancaster.

<sup>57</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 11, 1770.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, August 1, 1771.

The following year additional agents were handling the balsam in Baltimore, North Carolina, and in New York.<sup>59</sup>

The Queen's Botanist was pleased to use his title—which he had extended in the newspapers to include both monarchs—for financial gain. Bartram, who justifiably coveted his hard-earned title of "King's Botanist," was infuriated by Young's claim to both the King and Queen. Soon after the newspaper advertisements appeared, Bartram complained to Franklin that "William Young Blusters stoutly and publishes it in the news and perticular advertisements all over the the countrey that he is Botanist to their Majesties the King and Queen of Great Britain."<sup>60</sup>

The Queen's Botanist, however, was not content merely to promote the sales of his father's product through the use of his name and title. Young was determined to pursue his role as Royal Botanist. In late 1771, Philadelphians read the following item in their newspapers:

Wednesday the 13th Instant, sailed for London, the Ship Britannia, Captain Falconer, with whom went Passenger Mr. William Young, junior, of Pennsylvania, Botanist to their Majesties the KING and QUEEN of Great-Britain. We hear he has made a fresh Collection of curious Plants, and other natural Productions of America, to present to their Majesties.<sup>61</sup>

Young was to remain in England for a year. One of the results of this particular voyage was the introduction of *Nymphaea advena*, the Three-colored water lily, to Kew Gardens.<sup>62</sup> A less fortunate result of Young's 1771-72 visit to England was further damage to his already shaky reputation. Dr. Fothergill noted to Humphry Marshall in 1772 that "W. Young has been very diligent, but has glutted the market with many common things; as the *tulip trees*, Robinias, and the like." And, against the advice of Fothergill, Young sold his seeds to

a person who, to make the most of them, bought up I am told, all the old American seeds, that were in the hands of the seedsmen here, mix'd

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1772.

<sup>60</sup> Bartram to Franklin, November 24, 1770, in William B. Willcox, ed. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, 1973), 17:290.

<sup>61</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 21, 1771.

<sup>62</sup> *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* (1803) t. 684.

them with a few of W. Youngs to encrease the quantity. Being old and effete, they did not come up, and have thereby injured his reputation.<sup>63</sup>

The charitable Fothergill had attempted to assist Young during his tenure as Queen's Botanist but had little success. Young's debts mounted as his reputation continued to decline. To Marshall the kindly physician further confided that he was "sorry for him [Young]; have endeavoured to help him, but he is not discreet."

During this period Bartram was anxious about the continuation of his own modest salary from the King, and told Fothergill's nephew of his concern that Young might attempt to adversely influence the King's opinion of Bartram. But Fothergill reassured Bartram that Young had not "endeavoured to raise some prejudice against thee. He has not. he durst not attempt it, as he knew my esteem for thee. He never spoke one word to thy disadvantage."<sup>64</sup> It appears that Young had the grace to refrain from undermining his old mentor's reputation at court. Bartram also queried Franklin concerning Young's activities, apparently concerned that Young might covet the position as the King's botanist. But Franklin reassured his old friend that "Young is in no Esteem here [in London] as far as I can learn."<sup>65</sup> And later when Bartram asked for further reassurance, Franklin again noted that he had "heard nothing lately of Young, and think him not of much Consequence."<sup>66</sup>

In the final days of 1772, Young once again crossed the Atlantic to return to America. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* noted that "Friday last arrived here from London, by Way of New-York, Mr. WILLIAM YOUNG, Botanist to their Britannic Majesties, with his Wife, who, we hear, is a very amiable young Lady."<sup>67</sup> Very little is known of Young's wife, Martha. According to one historian who was able to examine the original journal of Young's sister, the woman he brought from England as his bride caused the Queen's Botanist "to be unhappy the rest of his life."<sup>68</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Fothergill to Marshall, September 1772, Autograph Collection, Case 20, Box 10, HSP.

<sup>64</sup> Fothergill to Bartram, probably 1772, BP, IV, 18, HSP.

<sup>65</sup> Franklin to Bartram, July 17, 1771, in Willcox, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* 18:180.

<sup>66</sup> Franklin to Bartram, August 22, 1772, *Ibid.*, 19:268.

<sup>67</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 6, 1773.

<sup>68</sup> Harshberger, "William Young, Jr.," 96. I have not been able to discover the last name of Young's wife.

Young apparently never left America again. His reputation, already wavering, had been shattered in 1772 by the unscrupulous seedsman who had mixed Young's seeds with useless seeds. With Young now unable to erase his debts, a return to England would have been of little use and might even have led to debtor's prison.

William Young did not, however, cease in his attempts to regain favor with the royal family. In October, 1773, he once again attempted to court the patronage of the Queen. As in 1764, when he first contacted Her Majesty, he again sent a box of seeds and plants to the monarch with an accompanying letter.

May It p[lease] your Most gracious Majesty to permit [me] to send an offering of plants and seeds to your Royal Garden. I have been so happy of Leat to Discover several new specis of plants and as I Belive a quit[e] new genera: of which I send some seed in a letle Box which I have put under the Cear of my good Lady Charlotty Feinch<sup>69</sup> which my Lady will presend to your gracious Majesty with Reverence. I also Inclose two Catalouges of two other Boxes of plants which will Be send to your Majestys garden by my Correspondence in London I also have send in this letle Box: several specis of oaks which I never saw in england. and am of the opinion will t[h]rive in england and It is a tree of a quick groth and may be Cultivated for great servas to mankind—which I am In hopes may be the end of my work. I am and Remain your Majestys most humble and most obedient servant.<sup>70</sup>

There is no evidence that the Queen acknowledged Young's letters. His creditors, including Thomas Penn, were becoming less charitable with each passing month. The Revolution would soon relieve Young of further financial pressures from Britain, and probably terminate his royal salary at the same time. The importation of Hill's *American Balsam*, which had proved to be such a successful source of income for the Youngs, also would have ceased because of British shipping blockades. The last pre-war advertisement for the balsam appeared

<sup>69</sup> Lady Charlotte (Fermore) Finch (1725-1813), governess to the children of George III and Queen Charlotte.

<sup>70</sup> William Young, Jr., to [Queen Charlotte?], October 29, 1773, R. A. 1650, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle. Quoted with the gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Although neither monarch is addressed by Young, it may be inferred that the Queen was the intended recipient since Charlotte Finch was in the Queen's service. This is the only extant letter by Young to either monarch.

in April, 1776. The notice was brief, cautiously omitting any mention of the Queen's Botanist or other phrases that might have associated the medicine with Britain.<sup>71</sup>

Although the activities of William Young, Jr., during the Revolution remain relatively undocumented, the war is known to have cost the Young families much of their property during the devastating British occupation of Philadelphia. On March 28, 1778, Christiana Leech noted in her diary that "a party of rascals came to our house, sent by Galloway, and took our cattle and plundered the house, and also took our father [William Young, Sr.] with them to the old prison. Our loss is at least £400."<sup>72</sup> Those who plundered the Young household and arrested the elder Young identified themselves as "Galloway's Volunteers," calling it their duty to harass "one of the most active Rebels in America."<sup>73</sup> Galloway had long held a grudge against the Youngs, for William Young, Sr., had been an outspoken critic of Galloway, and a leader within the German-American community, actively supporting those opposing Franklin and Galloway in 1764.<sup>74</sup>

While the war raged in Pennsylvania, it appears that William Young, Jr., managed to avoid the fray. He probably remained in Kingessing, where the notebook of another Pennsylvania-German naturalist, Henry Muhlenberg, locates him in 1778. Muhlenberg was just beginning to take an interest in botany in 1778 when he jotted in his "Botanical Tagebuch" for November 20: "How shall I best proceed with the study of plants? . . . A good friend who had knowledge and inclination would certainly be a help (Mr. Young three miles from here)."<sup>75</sup> It is not certain whether Young came to the aid of the recently ordained pastor.

Although the war had inflicted severe damage to the Youngs' properties, and had severed William Young, Jr.'s ties with his botanical clients, the hostilities opened new opportunities for the former Queen's Botanist—the French. The French rulers by the second half of the

<sup>71</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, April 2, 1776.

<sup>72</sup> Leech, "Diary," 345.

<sup>73</sup> "Petition to Wm. Young, &c, in Favor of John Roberts," *Pennsylvania Archives* [1st Ser.] (1853), 7:38-39.

<sup>74</sup> James H. Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746-1770: The Movement for Royal Government and Its Consequences* (Princeton, 1972), 141, 173-174.

<sup>75</sup> Paul A. W. Wallace, *The Muhlenbergs of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1950), 174-175.

eighteenth century had such a compelling interest in foreign plants that the quest for specimens became an integral part of the French King's policy and even occasioned his personal intervention.<sup>76</sup> The American Revolution allowed Louis XVI—as a welcome ally of America—to collect North American plants on a grand new scale. The French ministers sent to America on diplomatic duties were also expected to oversee the collecting of American plants and animals for the royal cabinets and gardens.

The first indication of William Young, Jr.'s involvement with the French is found in his lengthy petition of early 1780 asking the Continental Congress to finance a major collection of natural history specimens for the French royal family.<sup>77</sup> In the petition, Young mentioned that he had “Already Made some Collections By Command of Mr. Gerard The first [French] Ambassador” to America.<sup>78</sup> Young further stated that he was “under promiss to Mr Gerard . . . to Make in the Course of four or five years a Thorough Collection of All The Trees and flowering shrubs and plants in the Different States of America, with seeds and specimens thereof.” Young proposed that this immense and costly undertaking be made a national effort, with the collection to be presented to the French royal family as a gift “In the name of the American Congress, And only Mention Myself As A Collector.” Young insisted that he was not proposing this venture “As A Catch penny, for I shall give An Account of All. My Intention Is not to Lay up Money, But Am Desirous To Live and Become of service to Mankind In My way.”

Young might have been quite sincere in his plea, motivated more by the potential challenges and opportunities for discovery than by the possibility of personal gain. William Young, Jr., presented himself

<sup>76</sup> Gilbert Chinard, “André and François-André Michaux and their Predecessors: an Essay on Early Botanical Exchanges Between America and France,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 101 (1957): 349. Several useful essays will be found in *Les Botanistes Français en Amérique du Nord, avant 1850. Colloques Internationaux Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, 63 (Paris, 1957).

<sup>77</sup> “Memorials Addressed to Congress, 1775-1788,” *Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1957), Roll 52, Item 41:711-714.

<sup>78</sup> Conrad Alexandre Gérard (1729-1790) served as the first French minister to the United States, from July, 1778, to October, 1779.

as having been driven to collect plants. His enthusiasm for botany is revealed in an impassioned section of his memorial to Congress.

I Deem Myself An American And think myselfe under necessity to Represent My Intention . . . Which is not for to sway the sword But Is To exercise Botany. I am no Linnaeus—But My flame Towards that science May Be As great As his and [I] have laboured In that Labyrinth from My Infancy under More Difficulty Then ever he has Don[e] . . . I firmly Belief that I Am Designed By nature for to pursue Botany In the wilds of America. Think gentleman, And see Beyond the grave. These My Collections will speak when whe Are In It.

Young must have realized that his chances of success with the Continental Congress were slim indeed. Interest in botany in America was extremely limited, as Young was quite aware. He addressed this dearth of interest in his petition, pressing on with intensity—and no little cynicism.

I would not have you think too Trifling About This matter, for Botaney In America Is But Lettle taken notice of, stil It is the only And greatist Botanic garden In All the world . . . Botany has Til of Late only Been Confined to A few, And those have Been Thought on By the Vulgar As half Mad.

The members of the Continental Congress, however, may have also thought Young was “half Mad,” for his petition was read and promptly dismissed.<sup>79</sup> But even if Young’s idea might have appealed to Congress, the new government had no money in its war-depleted coffers to finance such a venture. Not until Jefferson’s tenure as president would there be national funding for natural history.

Young continued to collect for French clients throughout the next several years. Mention of his service to the French is evident in another petition presented in early 1781 to the Executive Council of Pennsylvania.<sup>80</sup> The botanist was requesting to be deferred from active

<sup>79</sup> “A memorial from William Young was read” on February 3, 1780. No action appears to have been taken. *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington, 1910), 16:122.

<sup>80</sup> William Young, Jr., “To His Excellence The President And the Honourable Supreme Executive Consul of the State of Pennsylvania,” January 29, 1781, Record Group 27, Records of Pennsylvania’s Revolutionary Government (Microfilm roll 17, frame 437), Archives, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg.

service in the militia. He argued that he should be excused from military duty since he was "Employet By his Excellence, His Most Christian Majestys Ambassador [La Luzerne]<sup>81</sup> And Am Dayle In his service, for Makeing Extensive Collections in Botany and natural History, of which Even some Are presendet [presented] for his Majesty and his family By Particular Approbation of Mr gerard The former Ambassador." He indicated in this petition that he had been given a document by La Luzerne stating that Young was in the service of the French minister. It seems, however, that the Executive Council of Pennsylvania was neither impressed with his petition, nor with his document from the French. His petition was promptly tabled.<sup>82</sup>

Although Young did not receive a military deferral, there is no evidence to indicate that he entered any service. Even if he did, his military career would have been brief due to the cessation of hostilities in October, 1781.<sup>83</sup>

Shortly after the Revolution, William Young, Jr., decided to reintroduce "Dr. Hill's American Balsam" to the American market. Hill had died in 1775, leaving Young to manufacture and distribute the balsam on his own. Young advertised the medicine as "an improvement upon all former balsams, possessing their virtues in a higher degree, and freed from their defects."<sup>84</sup> In case the readers of Young's advertisements had any doubts about his patriotism, the botanist concluded with the following reassurance.

The subscriber hereof does confess himself a real friend to his country, because a man who is no friend to his country is a monster in nature, and an enemy to himself and to his posterity. And as he is in service to his Excellency the Chevalier de Luzerne, Minister of France, so he is to make collections of new, beautiful, curious, valuable and useful American plants for France, as he heretofore has done for England.

<sup>81</sup> The Chevalier Anne-César de La Luzerne was Gérard's successor as minister to the U.S., serving from November, 1779 to the summer of 1784.

<sup>82</sup> See note 80.

<sup>83</sup> Young's sister mentioned the military activities of her other relatives, but nothing about Young. A search of the military records for Pennsylvania does not reveal any mention of William Young, Jr.

<sup>84</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 12, 1782.



Later that year a similar advertisement appeared in German, directed at the Pennsylvania-German community, extolling the virtues of "Doctor Hills Americanischer Balsam," prepared and distributed by "William Jungck, Botanist."<sup>85</sup> Young continued to market his successful balsam while supplying plants for his clients in Europe until his death two years later.

It appears that Young's trade with the French was successful, for by 1783 his plants were being distributed in Europe by the well-known Parisian horticultural firm of Vilmorin.<sup>86</sup> During that year Young and Vilmorin collaborated on the production of a catalogue of American plants, available through Young, entitled *Catalogue d'Arbres, Arbustes et Plantes Herbacees d'Amerique*, by "M. Yong, Botaniste de Pensylvanie."<sup>87</sup> This fifty-five-page catalogue was the earliest publication devoted to American plants written by an American, predating Humphry Marshall's *Arbustum Americanum* by two years.<sup>88</sup>

Young attached a scientific name to each plant, shrub, or tree mentioned; gave a description of each item; and discussed the necessary soil and moisture requirements for each plant. Young's lack of formal botanical training is obvious in the scientific names in his *Catalogue*, and the nomenclature has been described as a "sorry mixture of the Brissonian, Catesbian, and Linnaean systems."<sup>89</sup> His publication, however, was not intended to be a scientific treatise but a vehicle for informing prospective buyers of available seeds and plants.

Young divided his listings into two parts—those plants immediately available, and those which could be procured upon receipt of an order. In the latter instance, it is likely that Young did not have the plants in his nursery. When Schoepf visited Young (in 1783 or 1784) and questioned the availability of certain plants in his *Catalogue*, Young

<sup>85</sup> *Gemeinnutzige Philadelphische Correspondenz*, October 8, 1782.

<sup>86</sup> On Vilmorin, see Gustave Heuze, *Les Vilmorin (1746-1899)* (Paris, 1899).

<sup>87</sup> Paris, 1783. Reprinted in Samuel N. Rhoads, ed., *Botanica Neglecta: William Young, Jr. (of Philadelphia) "Botaniste de Pensylvanie" and his Long-Forgotten Book . . .* (Philadelphia, 1916).

<sup>88</sup> E. M. T. [ucker], "Young. Botaniste de Pensylvanie," *Journal of the Arnold Arboretum* 11 (1930): 59-60. This article relates the Arboretum's acquisition of one of the few extant copies of Young's *Catalogue*. Theirs is the copy discovered and reprinted by Rhoads (note 87).

<sup>89</sup> Rhoads, *Botanica Neglecta*, xi.

explained to the German doctor "with his customary bombast that all America, field and forest, is his garden."<sup>90</sup>

Some of the new species ("nova species") indicated in his *Catalogue*, appear to have been fictitious entries, not found even in his extended garden. It has been suggested that Young probably sprinkled his list with a few of these fabricated species in order to generate additional business.<sup>91</sup>

Despite reservations Young's clients may have had about the listings in his catalogue, orders came in for his American plants. One important customer was Chretien de Malesherbes, the eminent French statesman. De Malesherbes was anxious to obtain examples of all of the trees of North America that had not yet been introduced to France. As early as 1780, he had asked Franklin to arrange for La Luzerne to send Bartram's seeds to his French estate.<sup>92</sup> In 1784 de Malesherbes ordered extensively from Young, requesting the plants exactly as listed in the *Catalogue*, even though the statesman recognized that some of the names appeared to be "mutilated."<sup>93</sup> Besides collecting for his French clients and marketing *Hill's American Balsam*, Young also continued to send plants to England. Evidence of this later British trade is seen in such introductions as the Upright hypoxis, or Yellow star-grass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), to Kew Gardens in 1784.<sup>94</sup>

By the winter of 1784, William Young, Jr., felt compelled to draw up his will. He began his document by commenting that his "circumstances Require[d]" him to prepare his will and testament.<sup>95</sup> This may imply that Young might have glimpsed his mortality through a severe illness, either temporary or terminal.

That December the botanist set out on his final journey to the Carolinas to collect plants. When he failed to return to his home in Kingessing the following spring, his sister, Christiana, became concerned for his safety. In hopes of gleaning any word about the

<sup>90</sup> Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation*, 2:93.

<sup>91</sup> Rhoads, *Botanica Neglecta*, ix.

<sup>92</sup> Franklin to La Luzerne, March 5, 1780, in Francis Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States* (Washington, 1889), 3:538.

<sup>93</sup> De Malesherbe's lists are in the Archives de France (Paris), as manuscript AJ15 511.

<sup>94</sup> Curtis's *Botanical Magazine* (1804), t. 710.

<sup>95</sup> Written on December 4, 1784; probated August, 1785. Book 5, p. 162 (1785), Register of Wills, Philadelphia.

circumstances surrounding his alarming delay, in June, 1785, she placed newspaper advertisements requesting information on her brother's whereabouts.

About the 6th of December 1784, WILLIAM YOUNG, jun, Botanist, of the township of Kingessess, near Philadelphia, went from home on a journey to Wilmington, in North Carolina, to make a collection of seed, roots, trees, &c. in the way of his business; and some time about the 12th of April last, sent by the vessel Union, Capt Taylor, a number of boxes with a collection of these things, also a letter to his father or his wife, dated the 19th of February, giving an expectation of his arrival at home the beginning of April, and has not been heard of since which gives his family reason to fear he is deceased on the road, or that some accident has befallen him. Any person or persons that can give certain intelligence of him . . . shall be handsomely rewarded, by CHRISTIANA LEECH.<sup>96</sup>

Not until August of 1785 did those in Kingessess learn of Young's fate. On March 16, 1785, while fording Gunpowder Falls in Maryland, Young was swept away by the current to his death, his body not being found for some seven weeks.<sup>97</sup> Christiana, who lost her father and only sister within the same year, noted in her diary, "And this was my brother's end, he died honorably in pursuit of his botanical business, aged 43 years. God's will be done!"<sup>98</sup>

An inventory of the botanist's estate indicates that Young died a successful man, leaving his "plantation" and over one thousand pounds to his widow. Included in his estate were "Sundry plant[s] brought from Carrolina . . . [and] movable plants in boxes."<sup>99</sup>

Upon word of Young's death, collectors seized upon the opportunity to obtain the plants in his nursery. William Hamilton, a wealthy Philadelphian then seeking exotic plants in Europe to landscape "The

<sup>96</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 22, 1785.

<sup>97</sup> Leech, "Diary," 346-347. The diary notes that Young's body was buried on the river bank after having been discovered. In August, Young's wife and nephew brought the body back by carriage to the Young family burying ground. The graves in that cemetery were removed in 1907 to Arlington Cemetery in Upper Darby Township, Delaware Co., Pennsylvania (Anon., "The William Young Burying-Ground," *Publs. of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania* 15 [1945]:9).

<sup>98</sup> Leech, "Diary," 346.

<sup>99</sup> See note 95.

Woodlands," his elegant estate on the Schuylkill, tried to obtain some of Young's collection before it was dispersed. Hamilton informed his private secretary on September 30, 1785:

I have written to Doctor Parke<sup>100</sup> that if Young's plants are not already disposed of to endeavor to have them preserved entire untill my return & if the wife has possession, she will be easily induced to let it be so. As this may not be the case you will try to secure the double flower'd orange, the *cassine plant* (*Ilex vomitoria*) some of the *dionea muscipula* & all those which he lately sent from Carolina. He had a piece of ground in a kind of nursery of magnolias, andromedas &c &c which would be of material use to me, & I should be well pleased if any method to secure them could be taken but whatever you do let it not be done without advising with the Doctor.<sup>101</sup>

Young's wife, Martha, appears to have been involved in her deceased husband's business to the extent of acquiring the skills necessary for successfully preparing plants for the hazards of eighteenth-century shipping. When Hamilton directed certain plants be shipped to England, he ordered that "The plants must be packed in cases or Boxes with that kind of swamp moss that grows at the Head of the valley about the spot where the dwarf Laurels are (in the manner which Mr Young used to put up his plants of [which] Mrs Young will give you particular information)."<sup>102</sup>

It seems that Young's wife did not wish to remain in Kingsessing with her Pennsylvania-German inlaws. In June, 1786, Martha Young married an Irish sailor, and on July 9, 1786, she and her husband boarded ship, bound for Dublin.<sup>103</sup>

Young's faithful sister, Christiana Leech, attempted to carry on the trade in the *American Balsam*, running the same advertisements as her brother, but noting "the former proprietors are deceased, both William Young junior and senior, therefore the present is a sister to William Young, jun. Botanist."<sup>104</sup> Her vending of the balsam was

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Parke (1749-1835), a well-known Philadelphia physician, was a friend of Humphry Marshall. See Darlington, *Memorials*, 523-524.

<sup>101</sup> Benjamin H. Smith, ed., "Some Letters from William Hamilton, of the Woodlands, to his Private Secretary," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 29 (1905): 77.

<sup>102</sup> Letter of November 2, 1785, *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>103</sup> Leech, "Diary," 347.

<sup>104</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 19, 1785.

short-lived. Within a few months the advertisements ceased and Americans quickly forgot the name of William Young, Jr., Botanist.

In reviewing Young's career, one must conclude that he was a relatively minor figure in eighteenth-century botany. He was not a Bartram who could engage in a lengthy and time-consuming correspondence relating to a piece of Nature's puzzle. Bartram was more the philosophical botanist, one whose many letters reflect his delight and wonder as he made new discoveries and pondered over enigmatic species. Young did not have the temperament to take pen in hand unless there was a practical reason to do so. Like many botanical collectors, Young preferred to express his love for botany by actively searching the fields and forests. Another distinction between the botany of Bartram and Young is the fact that Bartram left short but telling descriptions of carefully prepared specimens. Young's collections, on the other hand, were not comparable, and his use of spurious species clouded his reputation.

As a nurseryman, however, Young was first rate. Although he made only approximately twenty-five first-introductions,<sup>105</sup> he impressed Garden and others with his ability to secure and successfully deliver plants to his overseas customers. Unlike Bartram and other competitors, Young was willing to accompany and personally tend his plants while in transit across the Atlantic. While others lost vast numbers of plants during the difficult crossings, Young was able to enjoy a high rate of success.

Young's contributions to eighteenth-century science were certainly less substantive than Bartram. Nevertheless, Young and his fellow collectors served the important function of supplying a clientele eager for new discoveries of nature. Bartram might excite European naturalists with his descriptions of the carnivorous flytrap, but Young and his kind had the energy and ability to supply living specimens of the plant.

The tragedy of Young's life was that even though he was clever enough to gain the favors of royalty, he could not hold onto that opportunity—one unique in the annals of American botany. Had Young been less bombastic and made the best of his royal appoint-

<sup>105</sup> Coats, *The Plant Hunters* (1969), 281. Few of Young's novelties were important horticultural introductions.

ment, he might have been remembered as an important American botanist. Instead Young was an irreverent rogue and a thorn in the side of John Bartram.

But even though his botanical career may have been unorthodox—and occasionally reckless—his love for botany ran deep. As he firmly declared, he was indeed “Designed By nature for to pursue Botany In the wilds of America.”

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