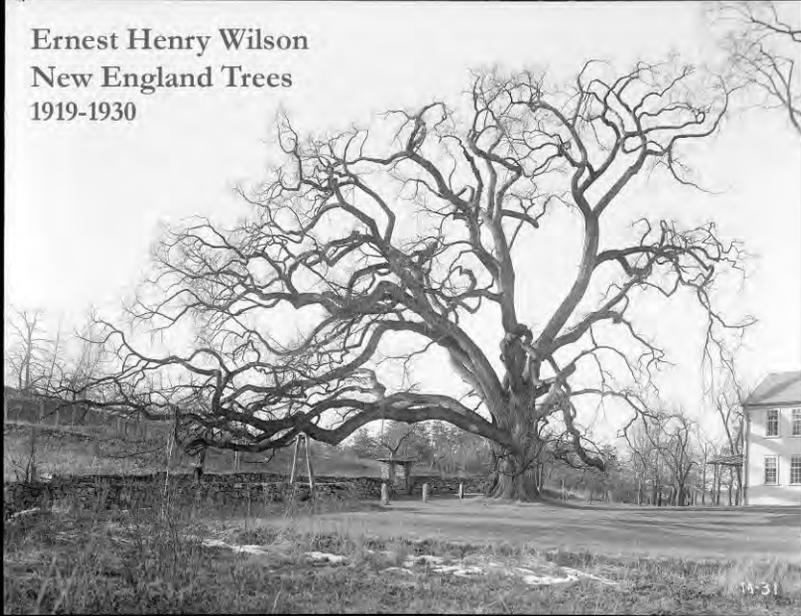


Ernest Henry Wilson
New England Trees
1919-1930



Ulmus americana "The Rugg Elm" Framingham Massachusetts
January 9, 1924

Hello, I'm Larissa Glasser from The Arnold Arboretum Horticultural Library of Harvard University in Jamaica Plain, a neighborhood of Boston. I'll provide a quick overview of our imaging project with the Digital Commonwealth, for which we digitized over 550 images of historic trees and landscapes of New England, photographed by Ernest Henry Wilson.

Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930)

- Plant explorer for Arnold Arboretum
- Five expeditions 1907-1922, primarily to Asia



Sanderson Popular
[1902 Model]
earlyphotography.co.uk

- During career, 7,700 images taken at the Arnold Arboretum, throughout New England, in Eastern Asia, and around the world
- Although Wilson is best known for his travels, writings, and plant collecting, his photographs of New England Trees had not been widely seen



Ernest Henry Wilson sitting on the steps of the Hunnewell administration building at the Arnold Arboretum. Photograph by Charles Darling. September 25, 1922. Gelatin silver process on paper.

[CLICK] Wilson was one of the foremost plant explorers of the twentieth century. [CLICK] Starting in the 1900s, he conducted many expeditions to eastern Asia and collected thousands of plant specimens for the Arnold Arboretum, many of which were non-native species. He is also recognized as a great photographer. [CLICK] Arboretum Director Charles Sprague Sargent provided Wilson with a large format Sanderson whole-plate field camera for Wilson's expeditions. This model camera was highly regarded for its ability to capture broad perspectives with great detail. [CLICK] Wilson returned with thousands of images which can be viewed on our website. [CLICK] Although he perhaps is best known for his expeditions and writing, Wilson's photograph collection of New England Trees had not been widely seen, nor even known of.



[CLICK] During the mid-1920s, Wilson began to photograph what he considered to be noteworthy trees throughout New England. Again using his Sanderson camera, he captured hundreds of images of various tree species in their natural habitat. [CLICK-CLICK] These digital images are reproduced from the original glass plate negatives, [CLICK] which though fragile, retain a stunning amount of detail and contrast after nearly a century. [CLICK-CLICK] Available for the first time, the photographs provide literal snapshots of early 20th century New England landscapes and architecture. [CLICK]



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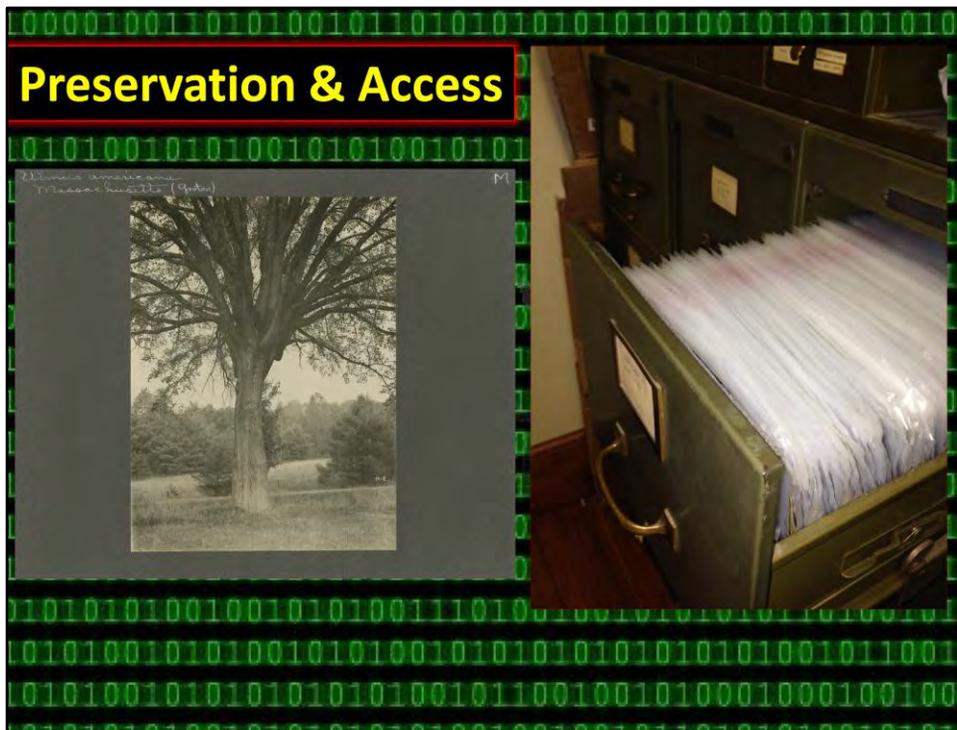
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[CLICK] The advantages to digitization are obvious: [CLICK] ongoing preservation and universal access. Until last year, access to Wilson’s footage of New England trees was limited to viewing [CLICK] prints mounted on acidic board. [CLICK] The original glass plate negatives were housed in filing cabinets, and not so browser-friendly. Now not only have we digitized the photographs from the original glass negatives, we can also offer access to them online.



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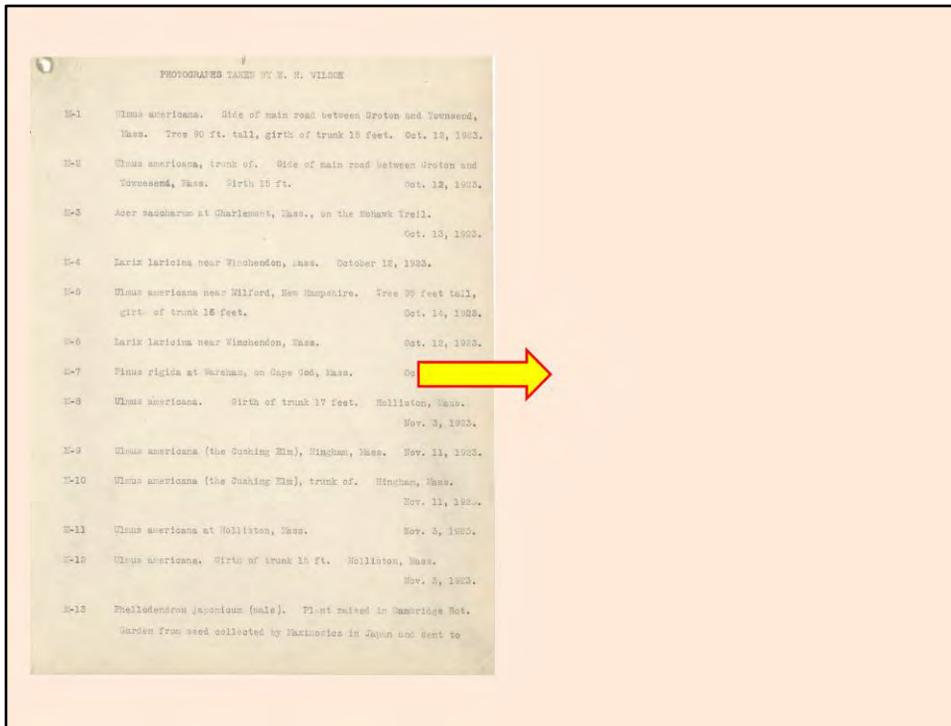
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Also consider the improvement in image quality. Here is a before and after comparison.



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[CLICK] Our inventory and metadata of the glass plates was not born-digital. [CLICK] Typewritten sheets were [CLICK] transcribed into a spreadsheet by library interns. This preparatory phase allowed us the flexibility of treating each plate as a unique item: recording taxonomy, dates, locations, condition of each plate, and even recording historical metadata from library resources.



[CLICK] Our dataset begun, it was time to prepare plates for transfer to Digital Commonwealth. Our facilities manager, who happens to be a remarkably skilled carpenter, constructed reinforced boxes which offered easy handling, [CLICK] and a degree of protection for negatives during transport.



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Library Leaves
Blog of the Arnold Arboretum Horticultural Library

Library Leaves is published online by the staff of the Arnold Arboretum Horticultural Library. In keeping with our mission to educate, support the study of the Arboretum and living collections, and share botanical knowledge, this blog will offer a closer look at our unique collections, upcoming events, and ongoing projects. Keep reading and continue to visit us online and [in person!](#) Follow us on Twitter, [@AAhortlib](#).

“Trees and their Biographies”

[CLICK] To generate buzz about the project, we were able to repurpose some of our metadata, research, and images into our “Library Leaves” blog. [CLICK] In a series of posts titled, “Trees and their Biographies” we include historical information about [CLICK] noteworthy pines, [CLICK] elms, and [CLICK] oak trees.



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Ernest Wilson's New England Trees

During the mid 1920s, renowned plant explorer, author, and educator [Ernest Henry Wilson](#) began to photograph what he considered to be noteworthy trees in the Boston area, central Massachusetts, the Mohawk Trail, southern New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island. Again making use of his [Sanderson](#) camera, he captured nearly one hundred photographs of elms, more than fifty of various oak species, and numerous genera of conifers. These digital images have been reproduced from the original glass plate negatives, which though fragile, retain a stunning amount of detail and contrast after nearly a century. Available for the first time, the photographs provide literal snapshots of early twentieth century New England landscapes and architecture.

You may click the tabs below for a detailed background and view of each image.

Please keep checking this page and our [Library Leaves](#) blog as we continue to build this online collection.

Special thanks to Donna Tremonte, William Buchanan, Miranda Mollendorf, and [The Digital Commonwealth](#) for making this project possible.



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M-1. *Ulmus Americana* Massachusetts. Side of main road between Groton and Townsend. Tree 90 ft. tall, girth of trunk 15 ft. Photo. by E.H. Wilson, Oct. 12, 1923.

Currently we are working with various technologies in Wordpress which allow us to display digitized images and their historical information simultaneously.



Our website is easy to find. We are at arboretum.harvard.edu, but if you google “Arnold Arboretum” you can find the Library at the top navigation. You can also follow us on Twitter [@AAhortlib](https://twitter.com/AAhortlib), for updates in real time. Thank you for listening.