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## Origins of the Caribbean Division of the American Phytopathological Society and the Current Status of the APS

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President Romero, honored guests, colleagues and special friends, being here at the 37th meeting of the Caribbean Division of the American Phytopathological Society is a special pleasure. It is an honor to serve as your 90th president of the American Phytopathological Society and a particular honor to be invited to speak here today. I see many familiar faces in the audience and, as a member of the faculty at North Carolina State University, am pleased to see a number of alumni of our department in attendance. There is a strong connection between your division and our department and university - in addition to having had a number of current leaders in plant pathology from the Caribbean division as students and visiting scientists in Raleigh, we also both share the fond memory and had the privilege of working with and benefitting from the work of Dr. Frederick Lovejoy Wellman - a founder of this division and a former emeritus faculty member at NC State. But I am getting ahead of myself in the story.

My goal today is to highlight some of the events leading to the formation of the American Phytopathological Society and its current divisions. I want to highlight the events leading to the establishment of the Caribbean Division of the APS and discuss the career of one of the founders of the Division, Dr. Frederick L. Wellman. Also, as a final note, I would like to present a few remarks on the current status of the APS and the benefits available to you, the members of the Caribbean Division of the APS, from their parent society.

The formation of a scientific society signals the recognition among a group of scientists that a discipline has become different enough from its parent discipline to warrant a forum for communication among scientists more specialized than their predecessors. Inevitably as science progresses and knowledge in a discipline increases, there is a need for further division of that discipline into subdisciplines. Also, there may be environmental and ecological reasons for the division of disciplinary workers into subgroups based upon geographic location. Both types of divisions are healthy for a society or discipline because they serve to improve communication among scientists interested in particular subjects or in specific topics relevant to a specific geographic region.

These trends of societal formation and division have certainly held among plant pathologists who formed a scientific society, then formed geographic divisions and subject matter committees.

A group of scientists from the Bureau of Plant Industry of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and, Donald Reddick, a visiting scientist from Cornell University, met under the leadership of Cornelius L. Shear in mid-December 1908 to discuss the possibilities of

organizing a society for plant pathologists separate from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and from the existing botanical and mycological societies. AAAS had been the most common, scientific forum for the presentation of papers dealing with plant diseases in the later half of the 19th century during the early formative years of the discipline of plant pathology. The topic to be discussed was whether it was time for plant pathologists to have their own, separate society to serve as a forum for presentation of scientific work on plant pathogens and plant diseases and for communication among those who worked on plant diseases in the USDA and at the many state agricultural experiment stations. The sentiment was that plant pathology had indeed matured sufficiently as a discipline that the formation of a phytopathological society would be beneficial to its members and would serve to promote the continued growth and development of the discipline. Thus, an organizing committee of C.L. Shear, William A. Orton and Donald Reddick was formed and charged with soliciting input from pathologists working outside of Washington, D.C. and with convening a meeting of all persons interested in such a new society at the meeting of the AAAS in late December 1908 in Baltimore, Maryland. After a somewhat rancorous discussion, with a vote of 32 in favor and 12 opposed, the American Phytopathological Society was formed on December 30, 1908 (Campbell et al, 1998).

The first annual meeting of the APS as held in Boston, Massachusetts in conjunction with the AAAS on December 30-31, 1909 under the leadership of President L.R. Jones of Vermont. From the beginning, the members expressed a strong desire to have a journal dedicated to the publication of contributions to plant pathology and that desire would be fulfilled with the publication of the first issue of *Phytopathology* in February 1911. Also, from the beginning, another provision was for the inclusion of geographic divisions within the Society.

Over time a number of divisions of the APS would be formed. In June 1914 in Davis, California the first division of APS, the Western American Phytopathological Society, was formed. Its name was changed in 1915 to the Pacific Division. Southern plant pathologists organized the southern Division in 1918. The Canadian Division was created in 1918 and remained a part of the APS until its dissolution in 1930 upon the formation of the Canadian Phytopathological Society. In 1941 the New England Division was formed from an earlier group of "New England Plant Pathologists." This division expanded and became the Northeastern Division in 1946. The Potomac Division held its first meeting in 1944 and the North Central Division was established three years later in 1947 (McCallan, 1959). The Caribbean Division would be organized in 1960.

At the first organized meeting of plant pathologists in Central America in Guatemala City and Chocó from January 17-20, 1949, scientists from Costa Rica, Guatemala and the U.S. decided "For purposes of organization and of indicating the fields of study to be presented at future meetings, it was decided to petition the Council of the American Phytopathological Society to allow us to form a Tropical American section of the Society to include all pathologists of tropical America." Dr. Frederick L. Wellman volunteered to write up a set of objectives for such a section and to circulate it among pathologists in the area to gain support for a petition to present to the council. However, the time was apparently not right for the formation of such a section of APS.

Nearly 10 years later, the need to create the Caribbean Division was still evident to some. Nolla (1961) notes that a letter dated July 14, 1959 from Dr. B.H. Waite to Dr. D.H. Raddler, United Fruit Company was a key piece of correspondence leading to the creation of the Division. The letter which gave "details on the part of a number of Central American plant pathologists towards the establishment of a Section of the American Phytopathological Society for the Caribbean area," was sent to Dr. F.L. Wellman, who was at the time Chair of the APS Committee on International Cooperation. Largely through his good efforts, the creation of the Caribbean Division was approved at the annual meeting of APS in Madison, Wisconsin in 1960.

The first meeting of the Caribbean Division was held in Miami, Florida in conjunction with the meeting of the American Horticultural Society in March 1961. The constitution of the Division was approved and Dr. F.L. Wellman was elected its first president. His vision of the Division was that "... it will be a highly interesting, stimulating part of the parent society. It will be made of the important core of the most active workers in plant pathology in the Caribbean and contiguous [sic] areas. It is here where the challenge is. It is here where the future of our science is unfolding" (Wellman, 1961).

At the annual meeting of APS in December 1961, in Biloxi, Mississippi, Theodore J. Grant of the USDA-ARS in Orlando, Florida commented on the significance of the formation of the Caribbean Division in his presentation during the Symposium on Tropical Plant Pathology. In the proceedings of the symposium published in 1962 in *Phytopathology*, he wrote: "The recent formation of a Caribbean Division of The American Phytopathological Society recognizes the need for increase in exchange of information and ideas. A "pathologist-to-pathologist" program of personal contact can do much to strengthen the attack on man's common problem and his mastery of plant diseases. There is much to be done in the study of old and new diseases under tropical conditions."

Since that first meeting the Caribbean Division has continued to grow and serve plant pathologists from a large geographic region that encompasses a large, geographic area. The success of the Division is due, in part, to the many individuals who have volunteered to be officers of the Division and the many additional members who have organized meetings to provide a forum for the presentation of research findings and to facilitate communication among the pathologists of the Division. The first 9 Presidents of the division are listed here and during the time they served I should also note that E.H. Schieber, I.W. Budenhagen, Eddie Ehandi and Frederick Wellman served as Councilors of the Division and thus as representatives on the governing Council of APS. In the audience today, I also see that we have three individuals who have or are representing you Division Councilors - Jose Amador, Ben Villalon and Jane Poulston. Also, with us are a number of former division presidents. Would also those who have been or are Division officers please stand? Let's recognize these individuals for their efforts and contributions to the success of this Division. Thanks you.

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At this time, I would like to turn my attention to a person who was quite influential in the

establishment and early affairs of the Division - Dr. Frederick Lovejoy Wellman. I met Dr. Wellman in 1979 and had the privilege of knowing him during the later days of his career in plant pathology. I do not say retirement, because I do not think that he ever really retired and he certainly never lost his passion and sense of excitement about plant diseases of the tropics.

Frederick Lovejoy Wellman was born in 1897 while his parents lived in the village of Kamundongo, Angola (formerly Portuguese West Africa). Perhaps it was spending part of his boyhood years in Angola that gave him his passion for work in the tropical regions of the world, especially in the Americas. During his youth the family moved to Wichita, Kansas where he completed his secondary education. He received a B.A. degree with honors from Fairmount College (now Wichita State University in Kansas). His graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison culminated in his receiving the Ph.D. degree in plant pathology in 1928 under the mentorship of a young J.C. Walker. The first graduate student of Dr. Walker, Wellman also served as an assistant and associate agent of the USDA Bureau of Plant Industry during his tenure at Wisconsin.

His first assignment after leaving Wisconsin was as principal plant pathologist for the United Fruit Company at La Lima, Honduras. There he carried out research on the penetration and histology of *Fusarium oxysporum* f.sp. *cubense* in banana. His work on the Panama disease of bananas was of the highest quality and, although he contributed significant new knowledge concerning the disease, he would best be known for his extensive research on coffee diseases.

Aside from several short assignments as a plant explorer for the USDA in the Middle East and Northern Africa, Dr. F.L. Wellman devoted his career and his energy to the diseases of the American tropics. He recognized the challenges of controlling plant diseases in the tropics and often noted to colleagues around the world, as shown in this slide, that plant pathologists of the tropical regions had more important diseases to contend with than colleagues of the temperate zone.

Thus, he worked tirelessly to understand the life and disease cycles of pathogens of many crops, but especially coffee, in the neotropics and to prepare methods for control of such diseases. One of his primary efforts in the 1950s and 1960s was to prepare potential control strategies and methods for coffee rust in the event that it would become established in the Americas. His work at the Interamerican Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA) in Turrialba in teaching and research strengthened the coffee research programs at IICA. His 1961 book "Coffee: Botany, Civilization and Utilization" became the standard text on coffee production for many years. A noted teacher, many of Dr. Wellman's students from IICA went on to successful careers in Latin America and other parts of the world.

In 1957, Dr. Wellman accepted the appointment as Head of the Department of Plant Pathology and Botany at the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Pedras. Upon his retirement from the Headship in Puerto Rico in 1963, he was appointed Visiting Professor of Plant Pathology at North Carolina State University and was named

Professor Emeritus at NC State in 1971.

Dr. Wellman's work with the American Phytopathological Society was of great benefit to the Caribbean Division. He was Chair of the APS Committee on International Cooperation during the year that APS Council approved the formation of the Caribbean Division. He served as the first president of the Division and later as Division Councilor. He received the Award of Merit from the Caribbean Division for distinguished service to tropical plant pathology and in 1974 was named a Fellow of APS.

While in retirement, Dr. Wellman published three books: "Plant Diseases, An Introduction for the Layman" (1971); "Tropical American Plant Diseases" (1972); and "Dictionary of Tropical American Crops and Their Diseases" (1977). Although he lived in Raleigh for the final 23 years of his life, Dr. Wellman's heart never left the tropics. In 1972 in an inscription to Robert Aycock in the front of his book Tropical American Plant Diseases he wrote: "Here, Bob, is my account of how my turgid, bristling, raw and relentless tropics has shown me that all life, and especially parasitic life, arose and evolved to its greatest heights right there --- in the tropics.

When he died at the age of 97 in April 1994, he had completed another book manuscript entitled "Touch of Jungle: Some Adventures of a Professional Plant Pathologist While at Work Alongside and In Wilderness" which remains unpublished.

Let me now turn for just a few minutes to the status of the American Phytopathological Society today. It is exciting to be President of APS in 1997-1998 for many reasons, but let me highlight just a few of them.

The American Phytopathological Society is a scientifically and fiscally sound international society with members in most of the countries of the world. The most significant events in the past several years include the initiation of the international journal Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions (MPMI), the development of APSnet, the founding of the Office of Public Affairs and Education (OPAE) and the Office of Electronic Communications (OEC), and the offering of all three APS journals in 1997 in electronic format and, at the end of 1997, on CD-ROM. APS Press, our other journals, Phytopathology and Plant Disease, the Office of International Programs and the APS Foundation continue to be successful and to provide information, goods and services to APS members, non-member plant pathologists and many scientists in disciplines related to the science and art of plant pathology.

During the year ahead, APS will be establishing a committee to maintain an authoritative, updated list of emerging and re-emerging diseases - first for the United States with a possible future goal of developing such a list for the Americas. We will be conducting a member survey to learn more about the strengths and areas of possible improvement of our three journals. After achieving most of the goals of the previous APS strategic plan, we will be initiating the process to

develop a new strategic plan for our Society. As a precursor to developing the new strategic plan, we will be sending all 5000 members of APS a survey to seek their input on a wide range of professional and societal issues. APS Press plans to introduce between 10 and 12 new titles - bringing our total offering to nearly 150 titles. We will be considering the need and logistics of a new journal project - an on-line journal of integrated pest management in cooperation with several sister societies. The National Plant Pathology Board will continue to evaluate issues of national and international importance to plant pathology and provide information, when appropriate, to policy makers and government agencies. The APS Foundation will be continuing its efforts in fund raising and in providing funds to students and other professional in plant pathology for travel awards, special lectures and research/outreach activities. And for the first time in many years, our annual meeting will be held jointly with the annual meetings of the Entomological Society of America (ESA) (November 8-12, 1998 in Las Vegas, Nevada). The program for the meeting will have a large number of sessions organized jointly by members of APS and ESA as well as a joint plenary session and grand opening reception.

Your comments and suggestions for new projects, for improvement in member benefits and services or for anything that will help APS better serve the science of plant pathology and plant pathologists are always welcome. Comments and suggestions can be sent to me (C. Lee Campbell, Department of Plant Pathology, Box 7616, NC State University, Raleigh, NC 27695; telephone: (919) 515-6816; facsimile: (919) 515-8795; e-mail: lee\_campbell@ncsu.edu) or to our Executive Vice-President Steve Nelson (3340 Pilot Knob Road, St. Paul, MN 55121; telephone: (612) 454-7250; facsimile: (612) 454-0766;

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Directorio de Miembros, Sociedad Americana de Fitopatologia, Division del Caribe. Ministerio de  
Agricultura y Ganaderia, Universidad de Panama, Panama.

--November 10, 1997  
San Jose, Costa Rica

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. L. C. C.", located below the typed text.