

chance to obtain what seems unobtainable — and there is a feeling of wanting to find the thing by yourself that was gratified in this instance when just off the crest of a ridge I spied a low nearly stemless palm with narrow pinnae and then a couple of others nearby. In a moment the sight of the characteristic inflorescences of *Gigliolia insignis* among the leaves had me shouting to the others. It was not long before we had discovered all stages of flower and fruit on adjacent slopes. An even richer assemblage of plants, some with stems up to eight feet high, was later discovered on slopes just above the catchment basin for the water works. Through one

of those unfortunate accidents, a large series of duplicate collections prepared for distribution was among three parcels of specimens that have strayed on the postal journey between Borneo and Ithaca, but some specimens and jars of air-mailed preserved material are ready for detailed study and an analysis of the relationship of this odd genus to *Areca* with which it seems closely related. The visit to Sarawak was thus concluded successfully and with an overnight stop at Brunei I headed north for three weeks with Dr. Meijer, the forest botanist in Sabah, formerly North Borneo.

The J. Harrison Wright Palm Collection

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Two young Englishmen, J. Harrison Wright and his brother, Ben, came to Riverside, California, in 1873. They developed adjoining orange groves on twenty acres on the outskirts of the town, living in separate homes on the property. J. Harrison Wright, who never married, shared his home with an unmarried sister, Martha, and when he passed away in 1941, I lost a friend and tutor. I remember his funeral service which was held in a small wooden church built years ago. He had been a part of the Riverside scene for many years, and his death was a great loss.

J. Harrison Wright was a charming and cultured man. He was educated in Europe to which he returned from time to time. His friends and contemporaries who were interested in palms included Odoardo Beccari of Florence, the well known Italian taxonomist who died in 1920, and J. Robertson Proschowsky, the palm collector on the French Riviera (see *Principes* 5: 100-103). Wright and Liberty Hyde Bailey were close

friends and Dr. Bailey made the Wright home a port of call when in California.

The Wright home at 2502 Adams Street was about two hundred and fifty feet back from the road. A driveway entered, divided, and encircled the house to join the entranceway. Within and along that encirclement were palms. The rest of the land was in oranges.

The collection of palms was outstanding as one that could endure extremes of temperature from 18° F. to 112° F. or higher. I first saw these palms about thirty-five years ago. Most of the plants had been grown from seed. The glass house that had been used for propagating had disappeared, and no new introductions were being made. I felt that the garden was completed in that Mr. Wright had covered the field in the introduction of palms that could withstand the climate of Riverside with the resources, transportation and knowledge available at the time.

Wright's palms were well grown with the advantage of deep, fertile soil,

months of interior valley heat, and an abundance of water. When the orange grove was flooded by irrigation, so were the palms. The driveway that encircled the house was about a foot higher than the orange grove and where the palms were planted. It served as a dike, and against it Wright flooded the palms as well as his orange trees. This practice may have explained why his arecastrums carried twice the number of fronds generally found on such plants in Southern California.

The collection comprised species of *Phoenix*, *Washingtonia*, *Erythea*, *Sabal*, *Livistona*, *Rhapis*, *Butia*, *Brahea*, *Trachycarpus* and varieties of *Chamaerops* and *Arecastrum*. In addition to *Trithrinax acanthocoma* was *T. campestris* which every few years produced three or four seeds. One clump of *Chamaedorea* named *C. Arenbergiana*, growing in back of the house with considerable protection from nearby trees, endured the winter cold when protected by a tubular frame covered with jute sacking.

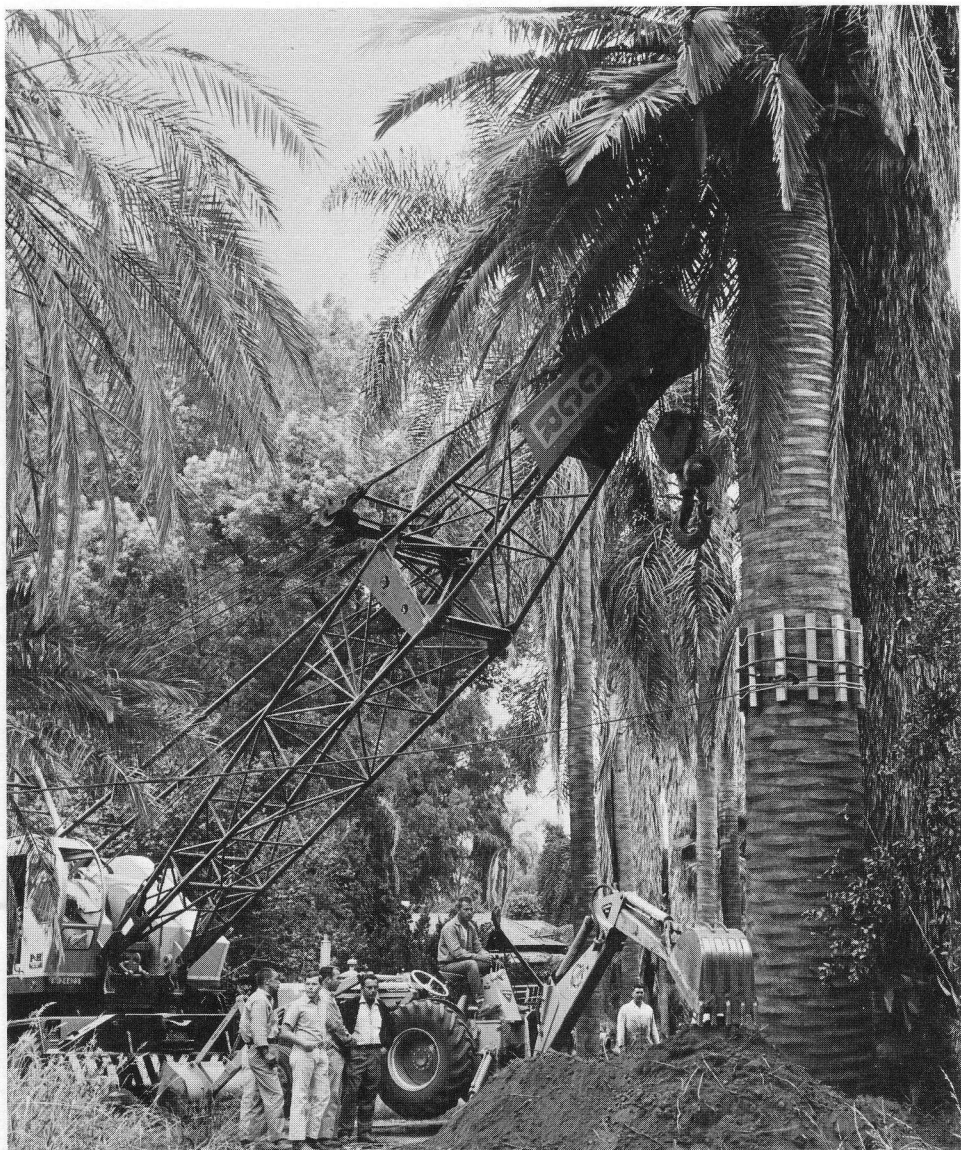
Wright believed that palms could be grown close to each other without stunting. As long as he was able to care for his palms, and to give them ample water, no evidence of deterioration of the plants by reason of age was apparent. As an example, the crowns of sixty-year-old *Phoenix Roebelenii* were abundantly full with many long fronds. In general the collection served to refute any contention that palms have life spans that can be specified, or predetermined, and that after reaching a certain maturity, they decline and die. What is the life span of a palm? In the Jardim Botânico in Rio de Janeiro is the "palma mater," planted in 1806 by the Emperor of Brazil, remaining today in healthy condition and producing seed regularly. The soil there is like Wright's, deep and fertile.

The deterioration in the appearance of palms, sometimes attributed to age, may be due to the roots reaching a hard substratum, or to general neglect, including so often lack of sufficient water. Also, the erroneous contention that after a palm is established it requires little attention may be blamed for a decline in the appearance of a palm that is not due to age.

It should be kept in mind that the Wright collection was assembled in the horse and buggy days, mostly before the turn of the century. Certain palms were obtained from the Southern California Acclimatization Society of Santa Barbara of which Francesco Franceschi was the proprietor. Included were the first plants of *Phoenix Roebelenii* grown in California. Two of these palms dug from Ben Wright's adjoining property were brought to me a few years ago by a plant peddler. They must be seventy years old and the bare trunks are twelve feet tall.

Miss Wright outlived her brother by twenty years. During this time the palms were maintained and the collection kept intact. After she died in 1961 the property was sold to Mr. Hy Rose, a real estate developer. Fortunately, he appreciated the value and the importance of the palms and gave many of them to the City of Riverside for use in public parks. Several of the tall *Washingtonia* have been removed for such purpose. As the preservation of the entire collection did not fit into the plan for the subdivision of the property, the Wright garden is being broken up and is passing from the scene.

In *Principes* 1: 57, a giant specimen of *Jubea chilensis* is illustrated. Wright grew it from seed and waited forty-six years for it to produce its own seed. This venerable palm was donated by the new owner, Hy Rose, to the City of



108. *Jubaea chilensis* is made ready for removal. Photo courtesy Tetley Nurseries.

Riverside. The Park Department wanted to plant it in Newman Park, a small triangular plot at the head of Magnolia Avenue, already planted to a variety of palms that Wright had given to the city many years ago. Mr. Charles A. Hallberg, a Palm Society member, when in charge of the palm collection at the Los

Angeles State and County Arboretum, appraised the value of the palm at \$2,500.00. The cost of moving the palm was placed at \$1,000.00 by F. A. Tetley III, head of Tetley Nurseries, of Corona, California, and another Palm Society member. In addition to the great physical problem of moving such a large and



109. Trimmed, loaded, and on the move. Photo courtesy Tetley Nurseries.

heavy plant, no funds were available to pay the cost. Fortunately, the public interest in preserving for posterity this plant, the largest Chilean wine palm in the United States, was such that the Riverside High-Twelve Club solved the problem by raising the money.

The palm was expertly dug, removed and replaced in one day by the Tetley nurseries. As illustrated, sections of posts were used to prevent the marring of the silver-grey trunk by the cables.

The palm is now in its new location joining there the other Wright palms planted years ago. The plant was moved at the beginning of September, 1964. It would have been better to do so at the beginning rather than at the end of summer, but the circumstances did not make such a choice possible. At this writing, in the summer of 1965, the palm is reported to be in good appearance.

The Los Angeles State and County Arboretum is indebted to Mr. Rose for

the gift of other significant palms, including *Trithrinax campestris* and *Erythea Brandegeei* var. *spiralis*, the latter illustrated in *Gentes Herbarum* 4: 103. 1937. It is fortunate that in this way a number of J. Harrison Wright's fine palms are being preserved.



110. The giant is raised in its new location. Photo courtesy Tetley Nurseries.