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Annual report of the Director to the Board of Trustees for the year ...

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in the Museum's Department of Botany, the co-operation afforded through the courtesy of Mr. Koch has been particularly valuable. Important loans were received, from the United States Department of Agriculture, of photographs of American forest types made by the Forest Service, and of a microfilm of the botany catalogue of the Department of Agriculture Library, from which its extensive subject catalogue may be duplicated here.

CATALOGUING, INVENTORING, AND LABELING—BOTANY

During 1939 there were distributed in exchange to institutions and individuals in North and South America, and Europe, 70 lots of material, amounting to 8,666 items, including herbarium specimens, wood specimens, photographs, and typed descriptions of plants. One item sent was a botanical index, consisting of about 100,000 separate cards. Sixty-six lots of material, comprising almost 8,000 separate items, were received on loan for study or determination, and 85 lots, including 11,627 specimens, were lent for determination or for use in monographic studies.

Records of botanical accessions, loans, and exchanges have been kept by Miss Edith M. Vincent, Librarian of the Department. Geographical and collectors' indexes of material in the study series have been kept up to date, as has also the card catalogue of the economic collections (including a new systematic index of the study collection of woods), with the aid of workers from the Works Progress Administration. Many of these workers gave a large amount of assistance in arrangement and reorganization of reference and exchange material, herbarium and economic specimens, and woods. They wrote more than 165,700 catalogue cards for permanent and temporary files, besides many thousands of herbarium and wood collection labels.

Labels have been prepared, printed, and installed for all current additions to the exhibits, and many old ones have been revised. The last of the few remaining black exhibition labels have finally been eliminated.

INSTALLATIONS AND REARRANGEMENTS—BOTANY

In the Hall of Food Plants (Hall 25) the series of murals begun last year was carried forward during the year by Mr. Julius Moessel, and is approaching completion. These murals all have reference to the subject matter of the exhibits which they supplement. They consist of a series of scenes portraying the principal

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human activities growing out of man's quest of vegetable food, viz., the gathering, cultivation, and harvesting of food plants, and the preparation and distribution of their products. The series begins with scenes of simple food-gathering and a primitive type of planting, followed by hoe-cultivation, rice-growing under irrigation, plowing and broadcast sowing of grain, threshing and milling, sugar and edible oil production, transportation and trade in exotic products, water-borne commerce with foreign countries, a tropical market scene, and a present day wholesale vegetable market.

In general, the murals parallel the arrangement of the exhibits in the hall. The scenes showing planting and preparation of the soil for crops represent various types of cultivation of food plants in different parts of the world.

Some form of cultivation of grain having been the basis of civilization everywhere, several murals are devoted to this important subject. Sugar production is portrayed in a scene showing a colonial sugar plantation in Brazil where sugar cane was first grown on the American continent. The one picture showing vegetable oils is based on the recent discovery of ancient remains of a primitive type of olive oil press on the north coast of Africa. The spice trade is represented by a caravan scene from the region north of the Persian Gulf. The beginning of water-borne commerce in foreign food products is depicted in the mural showing French coffee buyers in Arabia. This was reproduced in last year's Report. A mural depicting a market scene in southern Mexico is followed by a picture of a present-day wholesale vegetable market, such as may be found in any large northern city of the United States. The series will be closed with two maps. One will show the ancient trade-routes over which contact was maintained between the East and West up to the time of the discovery of the sea routes and the resultant general interchange of cultures and products which profoundly changed the food plant situation everywhere. The second map will show the main centers of origin of food plants and of the beginnings of their cultivation.

The artist, Mr. Moessel, is a well-known mural painter of large experience and ability. The pictorial excellence of the pictures and their artistic qualities are evident to all who have seen them. They are not only highly decorative, forming an interesting and instructive feature of the hall which they embellish, but they contribute effectively to an appreciation of the exhibits to which they relate. It may be said that with the completion of this series of murals, the

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food plant exhibit as a whole becomes more distinctly a unit, rather than merely a collection of classified and labeled items. The presence in the hall of a collection of palms interferes little, if at all, with the total result achieved.

The principal addition to the exhibits in the Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29) was a large diorama, or so-called background group, showing the vegetation of a characteristic Illinois woodland (Plate 5). This group, which should please all those interested in the beauties of the local flora as it still exists in the environs of the city, is placed in the northwest corner of the main botanical hall where it adjoins