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Index to Thomas Walter's *Flora Caroliniana* (1788)

David H. Rembert, Jr.

The flora written by Thomas Walter while he lived in South Carolina, during a period that included the American Revolution, is a brilliant work undertaken in what were, at best, difficult circumstances. Walter had arrived there circa 1768, and in the ensuing relatively short period of 20 years was married three times (into prominent families), father to five children, a patriot in the Revolution, a man of affairs, merchant, planter, community leader and politician, and last, but surely not least, a botanist (Rembert, 1980).

John Fraser met Thomas Walter in the fall of 1786 at Walter's home along the banks of the Santee River about 50 miles north of Charleston. Fraser had sailed from England, landing in Charleston on 20 September 1786. On his arrival he met with the French botanist André Michaux, then made his way up from Charleston to meet Walter. He reported (Fraser, 1789) that Walter had then completed the descriptions of 640 plants and that his (Fraser's) subsequent collections increased that number to 1,060, among which were 200 new species and 30 new genera. Fraser then proceeded westward to Augusta to meet again with Michaux and begin a joint collecting trip into the Cherokee lands to the north. But this trip together did not materialize, and in the winter of 1787 Fraser proceeded alone into the northern part of South Carolina, where he continued collecting through the spring and summer. When he returned to the Santee in the fall of 1787 he found Walter very busy with his many activities as a late-18th-century planter and politician. Walter must have dropped everything to resume work on his flora, for by the end of December he had completed the descriptions of the additional species

that Fraser had collected in a part of the state that Walter had never travelled.

Fraser left South Carolina with the manuscript of the flora and the specimens that he and Walter had collected, and returned to London in the winter of 1788. There, at his own expense, he had Walter's *Flora Caroliniana* published by July 1788. There is no record that Walter ever saw a copy of his *Flora* before he died in January 1789, just six months later, but we can assume that he did receive one from Fraser. The first copy must have been shipped to America by August, only a month after publication. In a letter dated 4 November 1788 to Dr. Lettsom in England, Humphry Marshall wrote from Philadelphia that he had received several books that were included in a package dated 10 August, and that among them he was pleased to find a copy of Walter's *Flora* (Darlington, 1849, p. 549). In a letter of 10 October that year, Dr. Thomas Parke reported to Humphry Marshall (both living in Philadelphia) that he had a copy of the *Flora* and he was glad to know that Marshall also had one (Darlington, 1849, p. 530). With this evidence of the volume's prompt availability in America, we can surmise that Walter himself must have received a copy before his death.

Walter's work is historically very important, as it was the first flora of a region of North America to follow the Linnaean system. Walter used the second edition of the *Species plantarum*, or else the 12th edition of the *Systema naturae*, as Hitchcock (1905) pointed out. The *Flora Caroliniana* is invaluable as the primary source for descriptions of the original flora of the southeastern United States, with particular reference to the Car-

olinas. Even today, some 90 or so species are correctly known by the names that Walter gave them (Rembert, 1980). Many of their types are located in the Walter Herbarium at the British Museum (Natural History). With renewed interest in the importance of Walter's collection and his *Flora*, the Museum has recently (1984) microfilmed the entire Walter Herbarium to make it available to other institutions.

The species that Walter described have drawn the attention of many botanists in the past. It is instructive to review the history of his collection, since it represents in part the plants described in the *Flora*. John Fraser kept the herbarium in his possession until his death in 1811, when it passed into the hands of the younger Fraser. Asa Gray consulted the collection in 1839 during his trip to Europe and reported (1840) that it was then still in the possession of the Frasers and in the same condition as when Frederick Pursh visited it. He then observed that "The specimens, which are commonly mere fragments, often serve to identify the species of the *Flora Caroliniana*, although they are not always labelled in accordance with that work." Gray, and possibly others, removed plants from the collection during visits to London (Fernald and Schubert, 1948). The Frasers were in the business of selling plants, so it is not surprising that only 686 plant specimens (plus one coral) are found today in the Walter Herbarium, several of which are not described in the *Flora*.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, several botanists consulted the Walter Herbarium at the British Museum (Natural History). On the first page of the folio there is a note stating that the collection passed from the Frasers to the Linnean Society on 23 May 1849. There it remained until 1863, when it was sold to the British Museum (Natural History) for 15 shillings. Those listed as visiting the collection include: A. A. Eaton, L. H. Bailey, N. L. Britton, C. S. Sargent, Oakes Ames,

S. F. Blake, Miss A. M. Vail and A. S. Hitchcock. Several of these botanists annotated various specimens in the collection, and several published reports of their observations. In 1905, Hitchcock published a paper on Walter's grasses. Walter described 74 species of grasses in his *Flora* but only 19 related specimens (Hitchcock reported on 18) are found in the collection today. Blake (1915) reported on "Some neglected names in Walter's *Flora Caroliniana*," and James Britten (1921) wrote a paper on Walter's Grass, *Cornucopiae perennans*. In 1948, Fernald and Schubert, stimulated by their visit to the Walter collection, published a paper discussing 32 of his species in detail. Dayton (1952), in a paper on American trees, considered Walter's pines. There are four pine specimens in the Walter Herbarium (p. 83), representing two species (*Pinus glabra* Walter and *P. echinata* Miller). In 1962, both D. B. Ward and R. L. Wilbur, in separate papers, discussed the many species that Walter had described under "*Anonymos*" (which is nomenclaturally invalid as a generic name).

Several institutions and a few individuals have copies of Walter's original volume, and many more have the photolithographed facsimile edition produced by the Arnold Arboretum in 1946. The *Flora Caroliniana* contains descriptions of 1,049 species, to which no index was provided in either edition. The following alphabetical index gives page citations for all those binomials, as well as for the generic descriptions that occupy the first portion of the work.

Acknowledgments

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