
THANK GOD FOR THE JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY! SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS DURING WORLD WAR II

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WHILE IMMERSSED IN THE READING of the autobiography of anthropologist William N. Fenton – the quintessence of the Iroquoianist, as he committed his life to study all possible aspects of one culture, the Indian Iroquois – I was struck by the following passage:

Although SI had shut down scientific publication for the duration of the war, the Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences (JWAS), of which I was now a coeditor, afforded an outlet. I could now welcome other anthropologists who were engaged in war work to submit articles [1].

Being myself currently at the SI (Smithsonian Institution) and a co-editor of this Journal just like him, I was intrigued by this comment and I decided to investigate a bit (Figure 1).

During World War II, scientific publications by the US Government were suspended, allowing only the official reports (the *War Background Studies*) to come out. The *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* was among the very few journals that continued to publish uninterruptedly and became, in this period of uncertainty, a repository where local scientists and scholars could entrust their articles; the circulation of which was in this way assured [2].

Browsing the issues of those years, it appears clear that not only anthropologists, but also botanists, ornithologists, entomologists, and scientists from all fields took advantage of our Journal to present their discoveries. The vast majority worked at the US National Museum (as the National Museum of Natural History was called at that time), but other authors from different government agencies who were in the same situation greatly benefited from the Journal.

The footnote at the end of the article by Horton H. Hobbs Jr., “The subspecies and intergrades of the Florida burrowing crayfish, *Procambarus rogersi* (Hobbs),” clearly shows the firmness to pursue his path, notwithstanding:

This paper was originally accepted for publication in the Proceedings of the United States National Museum, and it was cited as ‘in press’ in my *Crayfishes of Florida* (Hobbs, 1942). Wartime restrictions, however, so delayed publication by the Museum that the manuscript was withdrawn and submitted to this JOURNAL in order that the full descriptions of the two new subspecies of *Procambarus rogersi* might appear more promptly [3].

We can also mention John F. Embree, an anthropologist who specialized in rural Japan and was strongly influenced by the theories of the British social anthropologist Alfred R. Radcliffe Brown (whom he met while studying for his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago). During his short but intense life, Embree moved several times. In addition to his trips to Japan to do fieldwork: he was a professor in Hawaii, worked for a short time in Toronto, was called up to Chicago for national service during World War II, returned to Hawaii after the war, and left again to go to Yale, where in 1948 was appointed as associate professor of Sociology, a position that he held until his premature death.

During the period 1943-1945, Embree was associate professor of Anthropology at the Civil Affairs Training School for the Far East, at the University of Chicago. This School had just been created by the War Department for the training of military government officers in Japan. Embree’s deep knowledge of Japanese culture certainly made him a key figure in the training programs for the officers. For the *War Background Studies* of the Smithsonian, he produced one detailed report unpretentiously entitled “The Japanese,” published in 1943 (Figure 2). It is worthy to mention here that, even though he did not work or live in Washington DC area – as it was the case for most of the authors of our Journal – only one year after the report for the government, in 1944, he published an article in the JWAS. And a second one in 1949 [4]! Was he invited to publish in the Journal by William Fenton? We know through the short quote at the beginning of this article that he was eager to invite other anthropologists to submit their articles to the Journal, but in this specific case we have no evidence (so far); on this point we can only speculate. Whatever the case, this is an excellent example of the open forum that the Journal of the Academy used to be, and still is nowadays [5].

The issues of the Journal published during wartime are now an invaluable tool to those interested in the 20th century history and development of the many disciplines that were covered by the Journal at

that time, as they contain the results of the research carried on by the then local scientists, of which there would be little or no trace otherwise.

Likewise, the obituaries published in those years give us precious information on all these specialists, who dedicated their life to science. Merton Bentway Wait (1865-1945, who worked at the US Department of Agriculture and was President of the Botanical Society of Washington in 1906), the anthropologist Ales Hrdlička (1869-1943, the first curator of Physical Anthropology at the US National Museum), Allen Culling Clark (1858-1943, an insurance executive of Washington DC and historian, who was for many years the President of the Columbia Historical Society), the Canadian geologist Thomas Leonard Walker (1867-1942, he himself a member of the Academy), and many, many others are there, their achievements recorded forever.

The titles of the articles are sometimes difficult to decrypt to the non-specialist, but they all reflect the passion of these scientists and their determination to achieve their goal, as the word “new” occurs again and again, and since the very first issue (the *Proceedings* of 1900), where we find an article by Lester F. Ward entitled: “Description of a new genus and twenty new species of fossil Cycadean Trunks from the Jurassic of Wyoming” [6].

Some others are: “Three new Pemphredonine wasps (Hymenoptera),” “Ten new American Asteraceae,” “A new wood quail...,” “Two new characinid fishes from South America...,” “Two new ostracods of the genus *Entocythere*...”[7]. In fact, I could go on and on, because, for the mental pleasure, I did the search on “NEW:” it took me a good two minutes to get the selected results! We know now that more than 800 articles featuring the word “new” in their title have been published so far in more than 500 issues (I did not include those with “New World,” “New Guinea” or “New Mexico,” of course) (Figure 3). Who knows what else could come out, searching with other keywords...

If you, reader, are enjoying this short notice and feeling as intrigued as I was when I started this research, I encourage you to follow my path and do a little search in the indices of our Journal, which are now all in the Academy website. I am sure, you too will be fascinated by the quantity and variety of the subjects presented.

The articles are available at: <http://www.washacadsci.org>. The search can be done under the author’s name, of course, but also by geographical area, field of specialization, and whatever word you are

interested in: if it is in the contents page, there are good chances that it will be retrieved [8]. Once inside the website, click on “Journal” (in the left side menu): you are now ready to surf the “100+ Years of the Journal.”

Notes

[1] William N. Fenton (1908-2005), *Iroquois Journey. An Anthropologist Remembers*, Edited and introduced by Jack Campisi and William A. Starna, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2007, p. 62. He worked in the *Bureau of American Ethnology* (Smithsonian Institution) from 1939 to 1951, before becoming the director of the New York State Museum. His papers and correspondence (ca. 1933-2000) are deposited at the *American Philosophical Society* in Philadelphia (*Ms. Coll. 20*). Box 37 includes, among others, the correspondence with the Washington Academy of Sciences.

[2] At that time, the Journal was published semi-monthly, thus allowing circulation of information in almost real time. As it was stated in the instructions for the authors, “prompt publication is an essential feature”.

[3] *JWAS*, vol. 35, n. 8, 1945, pp. 247-260. This note is also reported in the *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, 111 (3), 1998, pp. 487. Although Horton H. Hobbs Jr. (1914-1994) became Head Curator of the Department of Zoology of the US National Museum in 1962, his affiliation with this department started in the mid-30s. One of the very few specialists in crayfishes, he started working at the US National Museum when this collection was small, but by the time he passed away it had become the largest freshwater crayfish collection in Northern America, with 280,000 specimens. Hobbs’ correspondence is conserved in the *Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7469 - Horton H. Hobbs Jr., Papers, 1935-1993, with related material from 1900-1906*. An interview of Hobbs by Pamela M. Henson (Director of the Institutional History Division, *Smithsonian Institution Archives*) taken in July 1976, is conserved in the same Archives under *RU 9509*.

[4] John F. Embree (1908-1950), “The Japanese”, *Smithsonian Institution, War Background Studies*, n. 7, Washington DC, January 23, 1943; John F. Embree, “Sanitation and health in a Japanese village”, *JWAS*, vol. 34, n. 4, 1944, pp. 97-108; John F. Embree [wrongly spelt Embers in the Journal], “A visit to Laos, French Indochina”, *JWAS*, vol. 39, n. 5, 1949, pp. 149-157. His papers, correspondence, scrapbooks and notes are conserved in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, *John F. Embree (1932-2001), Collection # 6475*. The dates between brackets refer to the full documentation, which includes also his wife’s papers, Ella Lury Embree, (later Wiswell), 1909-2005.

[5] For completeness’ sake, a search on Fenton’s articles published in the Journal produced the following 3 titles: *The last passenger pigeon hunts of the Cornplanter*

Senecas (written in collaboration with Merle H. Deardorff), *JWAS*, vol. 33, n. 10, 1943, pp. 289-316; *The requickening address of the Iroquois condolence council* (written by John N. B. Hewitt and edited by Fenton), *JWAS*, vol. 34, n. 3, 1944, pp. 65-85; *An Iroquois Condolence Council for installing Cayuga chiefs in 1945*, *JWAS*, vol. 36, n. 4, 1946, pp. 110-127.

[6] Lester F. Ward (1841-1913), mostly known as a paleobotanist and a sociologist, but in fact an all-embracing scientist, was in charge of the Department of Fossil Plants of the US National Museum for the period 1882-1905, and from 1906 until his death was a Professor of Sociology at Brown University. Samuel Chugerman described him “The American Aristotle” in his book *Lester F. Ward, the American Aristotle: A Summary and Interpretation of his Sociology*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1939 (Reprinted in 1965). The article we refer to in this brief note was issued on February 14, 1900. Papers and correspondence related to his paleobotanical research are conserved at the *Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 7321 - Lester Frank Ward Papers, 1882-1913, with related materials to circa 1965*. Readers interested in his research as a sociologist should consult his documents and correspondence written between 1883 and his death (+ 69 articles), currently conserved in the Special Collections of the Gelman Library, The George Washington University, *Collection # MS0247*. Finally, the John Hay Library at Brown University, Providence, R.I., has the Ward’s library and a collection of his papers.

[7] The first title appeared in *JWAS*, vol. 13, n. 16, 1923. Curiously enough (and despite the war), the other 4 titles were all published in the same issue: *JWAS*, vol. 33, n. 9, 1943.

[8] I find appropriate to reproduce here the following note, copied from our website. Please, read it carefully and bear it in mind when doing your search.

“A Note on Search Engines and Scanners: The search engines won't find everything. When an article is scanned, some letters, which look perfectly normal to the human eye (which is one heckuvan OCR) flummox the scanner and lead to bizarre results. For instance, the entry "physical quantities. M.D. Hersey" looked like "physics1 quantities. 31.D. Hsnsar" to the Adobe reader. Thus, had you searched for "physical quantities" you wouldn't have found it. The only thing we can do about it is to re-enter the Table of Contents as typed copy. We've done that when we've noticed the discrepancy, but it is beyond our resources to test each word. However, we'll keep plugging. Meanwhile, if you don't find what you want, don't assume that it's not here. Try another word that may point you to the paper. For instance, if the search engine was unable to find "Urey", you might get what you want by trying "Harold", or even "Chemistry". If you are unable to find the author or topic easily, but manage to locate it by means of brilliant detective work, please let us know what you found and we'll re-enter it.”



Figure 1 – Cover in B&W of the book by William N. Fenton

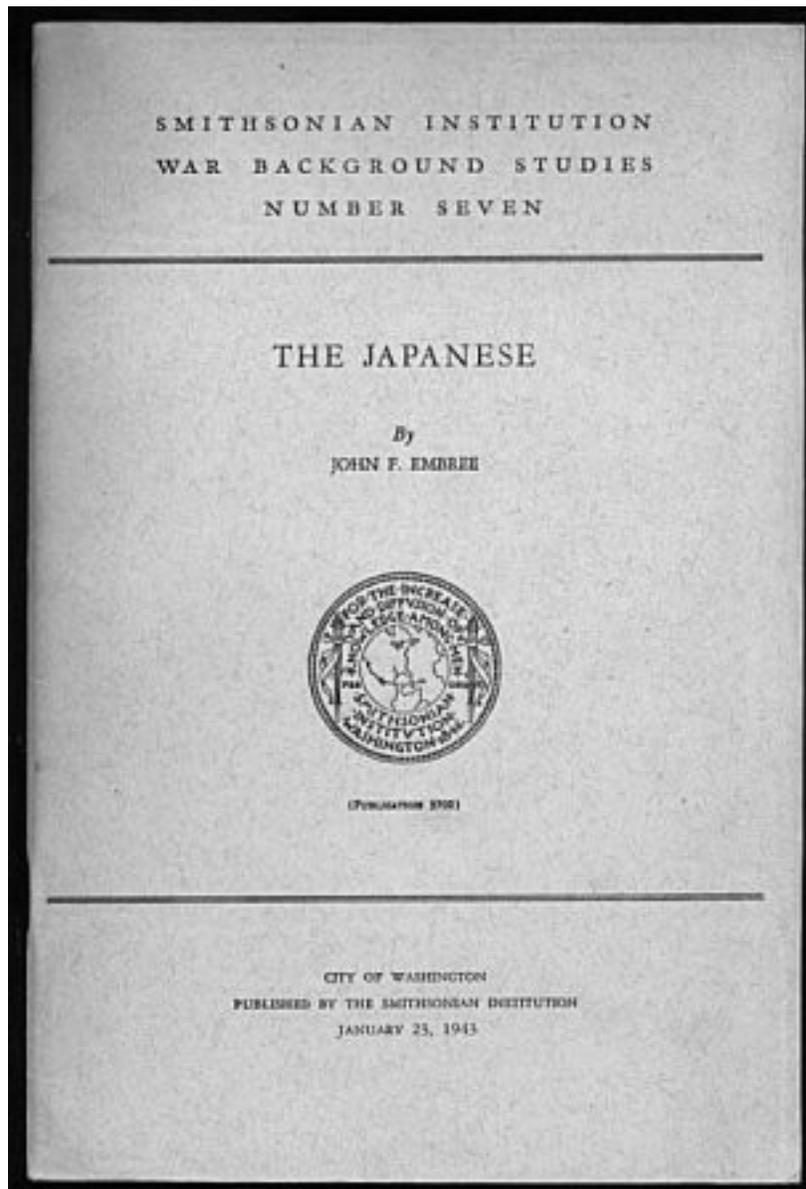


Figure 2 – *The Japanese*, Report by John F. Embree for the US Government (Cover in B&W)

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Figure 3 – Contents of the JWAS vol. 33, n. 9, 1943, as it appears in the Academy website