

## Some brief background on North American Mycoflora

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The idea of a comprehensive mycoflora is not new. After all, Christiaan Hendrik Persoon's Synopsis (1801) and Elias Magnus Fries's several volumes (1821-1832), perhaps considered compendia, were certainly written to summarize the fungi as they knew them, which is pretty close to the definition of a mycoflora. What are we to call Jacob Christian Schaeffer's (1762-1800) "Fungi that grow in Bavaria" (1762-1763), F. X. Wulfen's (1781) "Rare plants of Carinthia" or Johannes Scopoli's (1760-1772) "Flora of Carniolica" [Slovenia; including numerous fungi] if not the first attempts to inform the reader of the mycological wonders of their, admittedly small, universe.

The early American mycological contributions by Lewis David Schweinitz (1822) and Louis Bosc (1811) came after Lewis and Clark, and therefore these workers could imagine something of the extent and even some of the floristic richness of the west, but contented themselves with nibbling away at their corners of the countryside. Once Moses Ashley Curtis sent wholesale batches of Carolina fungi to Miles Joseph Berkeley, with lists of new names returned as a result (Berkeley, 1872-1876), some glimpse at the possibilities of American fungal diversity was possible. As we have come to recognize, however, Charles Horton Peck pried open the macrofungal can of worms in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but never had the temerity to consider his contributions as pertaining to the continent, but only as the "Reports of the (New York) state botanist" (Peck, 1868-1915). Other contemporary localists persisted, perhaps chief among whom were Job Bicknell Ellis and Benjamin Matlack Everhart, whose exsiccati immortalized Newfield, New Jersey (Ellis, 1878-1885; Ellis & Everhart, 1886-1898; 1893-1917).

If one believed, as did the influential Curtis Gates Lloyd in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that the number of worldwide fungal taxa was quite limited, it stood to reason that those in America must be quite manageable. His crucifixion of Lee Oras Overholts' early attempt to summarize the polypores sprung, in part, from this very bias (Lloyd, 1915).

Look at all the publications which purported to be North American in scope and were anything but [i.e. William Alphonso Murrill's series on polypores, 1902-1905; and his (Murrill, 1915-1917) North American Flora series in which he summarized numerous genera of agarics, but which didn't extend past Ohio; William Chambers Coker's (1923) "The Clavarias of the United States and Canada," which really covered only eastern things, usually tagged with European names; and on and on]. Actually, the realistic concept of an actual American mycoflora could be envisioned only after extensive collecting and cataloging of Rocky Mountain, intermountain, boreal, Gulf coastal and west coast fungi, and even more recently only once the tool of computerization could be applied to handle the wealth of anticipated data.

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