

## The Early History of the International Plant Propagators' Society<sup>©</sup>

### Philip A. Barker

Research Horticulturist (retired), Center for Urban Forest Research, USDA Forest Service, c/o University of California, Davis, California U.S.A.

Email: Philip A. Barker <trees@dcn.davis.ca.us>

Creation of the International Plant Propagators' Society can be credited to the vision and commitment of numerous people, especially Edward H. Scanlon (1903–1976), and to Scanlon's *Trees Magazine*, which routinely announced happenings about the Society and its members. Summarized here are some of the events and personalities that led to the Society we know today.

Edward H. Scanlon started several professional organizations devoted to trees and especially to people who worked with trees. He capitalized upon his position as editor/publisher of *Trees Magazine* to promote the need for the new organizations and their various events. Unfortunately, this widely read magazine was no longer published after his death in 1976.

"It is the belief of *Trees Magazine*," Scanlon wrote, "that a new organization is badly needed and would be enthusiastically supported by progressive nurserymen, scientists, and arborists" (Scanlon, 1951a). He proposed to name the new group the Plant Propagators Society and invited all persons interested in this new organization to contact him. (Many years later an apostrophe was added to "Propagators" in the Society's name, hence it is used accordingly throughout this article.)

"Arrangements are proceeding," he later wrote, "for the organizational meeting of the Plant Propagators Society to be held in Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 8th and 9th, 1951" (Scanlon, 1951b). He thought such an organization would provide critically needed information on plant propagation "about which so little is known and is beset with so many vagaries." Nonetheless, Scanlon must have worried about the success of this first meeting, because he also announced it on two other pages in the same September-October, 1951, issue of *Trees Magazine* (Scanlon, 1951c, 1951d).

As it turned out, this organizational meeting in 1951 was successful beyond hope. Spirited discussion set the tone for very healthy and protracted questioning by a large majority of the 75 nurserymen, scientists, arborists, and public officials who attended the meeting. An Organizational Committee was set up, with Scanlon as temporary chairman (Anonymous, 1951a). At its continued deliberations the following July, this Committee and others in attendance, all functioning as charter members, adopted a constitution and elected the following officers: James S. Wells, president; Dr. L. C. Chadwick, vice president; and Edward H. Scanlon, secretary-treasurer (Anonymous, 1952a; Scanlon, 1952).

Both Wells and Chadwick continued in their offices a second year (Anonymous, 1952b). Chadwick was president the third year (Anonymous, 1953), and member of the executive committee the fourth year (Anonymous, 1954).

Scanlon was Secretary-Treasurer of the Society during its first 3 years (Anonymous, 1951b, 1952b, 1953), and vice president and president in the fourth and fifth years, respectively (Anonymous, 1954, 1956). He might have edited the Proceedings of the first and possibly the second annual meetings, neither of which has an editor identified.

This inference is supported by two observations. He is the author in the first Proceedings of promising tree species and selections. As Commissioner, Division of Shade Trees, Cleveland, Ohio, at the time, he knew the need for trees of consistent form instead of the usual variability among seedling trees. He also hoped propagators would produce more of such trees. Thus, the article features twelve full-page photographs of tree species and selections of globular, pyramidal, and fastigate forms, including the pyramidal *Acer rubrum* 'Bowhall' red maple and the fastigate *A. rubrum* 'Armstrong' maple (Scanlon, 1951e).

Another reason to infer that Scanlon had been the first editor is the core of the Society's logo (Fig. 1), which is "two hands cutting a bud from a stem with a budding knife." It is featured on the front cover of all of the Proceedings, beginning with the first one. Scanlon had found this logo in a 1920 edition of *The Nursery Manual*, authored by the eminent horticulturist, Liberty Hyde Bailey (Scanlon, 1976). Pre-dating this publication was an earlier edition, titled, *The Nursery Book*, by the same author, published as early as 1906 (Keen, 1954), which suggests the logo alone may be at least 100 years old. It was first associated with the Plant Propagators Society in *Trees Magazine* with an announcement that the Proceedings of the Society's initial meeting had been published (Anonymous, 1952c).

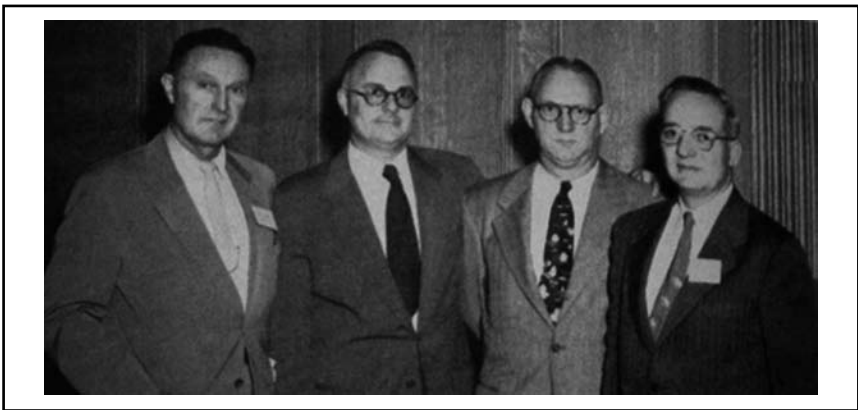
Annual meetings and events of the Plant Propagators Society were regularly publicized in *Trees Magazine*. New officers elected at the fourth annual meeting, for instance, were shown in a group photograph (Fig. 2) in *Trees Magazine*. Dr. L.C. Chadwick was the retiring president, Scanlon, the new vice president, and Dr. William Snyder, the new secretary-treasurer. Richard H. Fillmore, the new president, could not attend the meeting due to illness (Fig. 3) (Anonymous, 1956).



**Figure 1.** This core of the IPPS logo first appeared in the March-April 1952 issue of *Trees Magazine* in an announcement of the availability of the Proceedings of the first annual meeting of what is now the International Plant Propagators' Society. The logo had first been published in various editions of *The Nursery Manual* and its predecessor, *The Nursery Book*, by Liberty Hyde Bailey, prolific author of numerous books on horticulture and related subjects.



**Figure 2.** “New and retiring officers of the Plant Propagators Society are shown at the Society’s fourth annual meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, in December 1954. Left to right: Edward H. Scanlon, newly elected vice president and retiring secretary-treasurer; Dr. William E. Snyder, Cornell University, new secretary-treasurer; and retiring president, Dr. L. C. Chadwick, Ohio State University. New president, Richard H. Fillmore, was unable to be present.” [Anonymous, 1955a]



**Figure 3.** First four presidents of the Plant Propagators Society, left to right: Edward H. Scanlon, 1955-56; James S. Wells, 2 years, 1951-53; Dr. L. C. Chadwick, 1953-54; Richard H. Fillmore, 1954-55. (Photo, exclusive of caption, from *Trees Magazine* 14(2):12, 1954)

When I was a graduate student at Ohio State University and research fellow of the Ohio Nurserymen's Association, I was fortunate to attend the fifth annual meeting (Anonymous, 1955b) with my major professor, Dr. L.C. Chadwick, to report results of my research on growing woody landscape plants in containers under Ohio climatic conditions (Barker, 1955).

Two years later, when I was a lecturer in the Department of Landscape Management at the University of California, Davis, I helped promote the Plant Propagators Society in western North America. One day I called on Dr. Hudson T. Hartmann, who taught plant propagation at the University of California, Davis. Dr. Hartmann and his colleague, Dr. Dale Kester, had just published the first edition (now in the seventh edition) of their universally popular textbook on plant propagation (Hartmann and Kester, 1959).

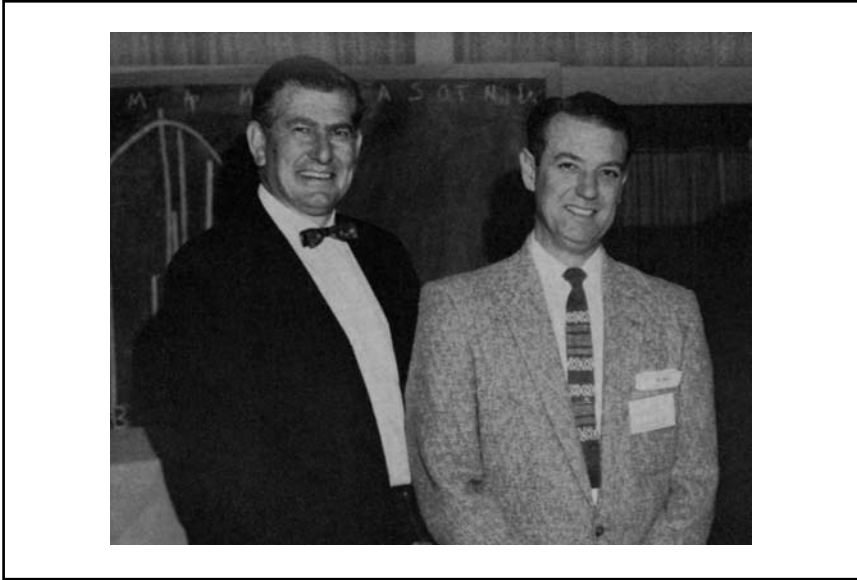
I told Hartmann about the enthusiasm among plant propagators at the December 1955 meeting of the Plant Propagators Society in Cleveland. "Many of them," I said, "vigorously expressed bold opinions." In the membership roster in the Society's latest proceedings, I had noted that very few members lived west of the Mississippi River. I told Hartmann that the lively discussion on plant propagation topics I had witnessed in Cleveland, Ohio, likely would prevail at a similar meeting of plant propagators on the West Coast. Hartmann concurred (Fig. 4).

In 1960, after receiving very positive responses from our widespread survey of plant propagators and other interested parties in western North America, we held an exploratory meeting in Davis, California. Twenty-two people attended. Two nurserymen from the San Francisco bay area in California were elected to lead the group: Don Hartman as chairman, and Herman Sandkuhle, Jr. as vice chairman (Fig. 5). (Note the slightly different spelling of the surnames of Don Hartman and Dr. Hudson Hartmann.) Don's father, Ray D. Hartman, of San Jose, California, had participated in the Society's organizational activities about a decade earlier (Anonymous, 1952d; Scanlon, 1952).

Several organizational meetings were held in Davis, California, throughout the summer of 1960, primarily focusing on developing a program for an initial western



**Figure 4.** Phil Barker (left) and Dr. Hudson Hartmann initiated a meeting of western plant propagators in 1960, leading to the Plant Propagators Society (PPS) becoming the International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS), with autonomous regions.



**Figure 5.** Herman Sandkuhle, Jr. (left) and Don Hartman represented the western plant propagators at the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Plant Propagators Society in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1960. By acclamation of the Society officers at this meeting, they became charter vice president and charter president, respectively, of the new Western Region, International Plant Propagators' Society (Anonymous, 1960).

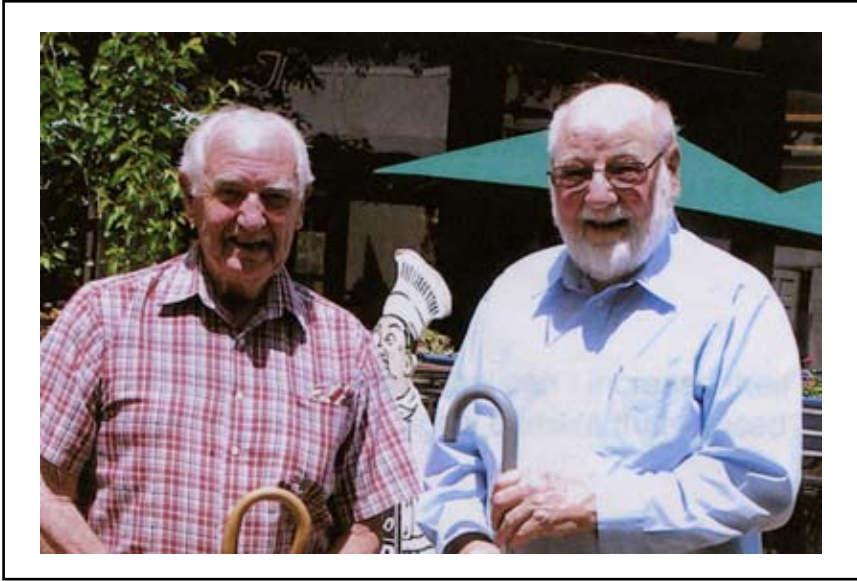
meeting of plant propagators. The meeting was held 14–17 October 1960 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds, beside the sandy beach of the Pacific Coast, approximately 80 miles south of San Francisco, California.

The meeting was a pinnacle of success, both in terms of hoped-for attendance and the cogent topics presented by knowledgeable and interesting speakers. The fall weather was perfect, and the waves of the Pacific Ocean applauded our camaraderie. Especially noteworthy was the presence of six members of the Plant Propagators Society who lived east of the Mississippi and their optimistic speeches about the inevitable benefits of membership in the Plant Propagators Society. These members were Richard H. Fillmore, John Mahlstedt, Ph.D.; Kenneth Reisch, Ph.D.; Hugh Steavenson, Harvey Templeton, and James S. Wells.

In his provocative keynote address, Wells (1960a) reiterated what he had said in his keynote address at the initial meeting of the Society 10 years earlier, citing the critical value of plant propagators. In his summary statements, he avowed, “the plant propagator is one of the strongholds of the real craftsman.”

Fillmore's (1960) delivered comments were philosophical and convincing: “The Plant Propagators Society has meant a great lessening of professional loneliness. We all need each other, and the place to find each other is in the Plant Propagators Society.”

The tone of the entire meeting was upbeat, with obvious recognition by everyone of its historic significance. Hartman and Sandkuhle were designated to attend the forthcoming tenth annual meeting of the Plant Propagators Society in Cleveland, about 6 weeks later, from 1 to 3 Dec. 1960 (Fig. 5). Their “marching orders” were



**Figure 6.** Don Hartman, 85 (left), and Dr. Phil Barker, 81, reminisced about the formation in 1960 of the Western Region in North America of the International Plant Propagators' Society during their visit together in Davis, California, May 31, 2006. Don lives in Murphys, California, which is in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and Phil lives in Davis, California, in the San Joaquin Valley, 100 miles (160 km) east of San Francisco.

for this western group to become part of the Plant Propagators Society, but with distinct autonomy (politically independent and self-governing) and to publish a combined proceeding with the original group.

Despite the favorable outlook of the six eastern emissaries who had attended the California meeting about 6 weeks earlier, Hartman and Sandkuhle sensed that many attendees at this December meeting in Cleveland were skeptical about reorganizing the Society. Both of them worried that reorganization of the Society as proposed by the western group might not become a reality.

On the last night of the meeting in Cleveland, Hartman awoke Sandkuhle; together, they roused leaders of the Society out of their sleep. In the wee hours of the night, they hammered out details of a logical reorganization plan (personal communication with Don Hartman (Fig. 6). Reorganization of the Society was approved the next morning, following eloquent commentary and an affirmative motion by Wells (1960b). [Recollections of this historic event as well as current photos of many of the early participants were published four decades later in the *Pacific Coast Nurseryman* (Anonymous, 2000)].

Consequently, the Plant Propagators Society, with membership primarily in eastern North America, became the International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS), with autonomous Eastern and Western Regions within North America. A combined proceedings of their annual meetings would henceforth be published under the auspices of International officers. Growth of the organization since then has been remarkable. Presently, there are nine regions throughout the world, with current membership exceeding 2,200.

Two selected articles from the 2004 Proceedings demonstrate the truly international nature of this organization. For example, du Toit traveled from Pretoria, South Africa, to attend the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the IPPS Japan Region in Hamamatsu, Japan. At this meeting, du Toit (2004) reported on leading-edge propagation research on an indigenous shrub used for medicinal purposes in South Africa. Mike Evans from San Juan Capistrano, California, greeted attendees at this same meeting. As incoming president of the International officers of the Society, Evans (2004) invited them to the meeting the following year of the IPPS Western Region in North America, where the International officers, who rotate annually among the various Regions, would be meeting.

The benefits of plant propagators having a mutual professional organization are profound. The meetings and the Combined Proceedings are exemplary vehicles of technology transfer. They foster international dialogue among plant propagators and plant scientists, and have promoted cross-cultural visits and unlimited exchange of information on plant propagation principles and practices. Plant propagators and plant scientists alike share their practices and research results with each other on a myriad of topics. Moreover, information from these sources is routinely used to update plant propagation texts of worldwide distribution.

Through timely intuition, Edward H. Scanlon tossed a pebble in the water, making ripples that have radiated worldwide, resulting in what is now the esteemed International Plant Propagators' Society.

**Acknowledgements.** Appreciation is expressed to the following reviewers: Tamra Barker, Don Dillon, Don Hartman, Greg McPherson, Kenneth Reisch, and Alan Wagar.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Anonymous.** 1951a. Plant propagators guild is formed. *Trees Mag.* 12(1):9.
- Anonymous.** 1951b. Officers plant propagators society, 1951–1952. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.*, 1:5.
- Anonymous.** 1952a. Plant propagators society begins. *Trees Mag.* 12(5):5.
- Anonymous.** 1952b. Officers plant propagators society, 1952–1953. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.*, 2:6.
- Anonymous.** 1952c. Propagator proceedings available. *Trees Mag.* 12(3):5.
- Anonymous.** 1952d. Membership committee. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.*, 2:7.
- Anonymous.** 1953. Officers of the Plant Propagators Society 1953–54. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.*, 3:7.
- Anonymous.** 1954. Officers of plant propagators' society. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.*, 4:7.
- Anonymous.** 1955a. Officers Plant Propagators Society. *Trees Mag.* 15(2):18.
- Anonymous.** 1955b. Coming events—The Plant Propagator's (sic) Society, Cleveland, Ohio, Wade Park Manor Hotel. December 15–17, 1955. *Trees Mag.* 16(1):17.
- Anonymous.** 1956. Plant propagators officers. *Trees Mag.* 16(2):5.
- Anonymous.** 1960. Acting Board of Directors, International Plant Propagators Society. Adapted photo, p. 11. [In] Mahlstedt, J.P., and R.W. Harris (eds), *Combined Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting, Plant Propagators Society, December 1–3, 1960, Cleveland, Ohio, and First Annual Meeting, Western Plant Propagators Conference, October 14–16, 1960, Asilomar, California*, 311 pp.
- Anonymous.** 2000. Western plant propagators' meeting in Modesto on target with “2000 and beyond” theme; new executive secretary hired. *Pacific Coast Nurseryman* 59(12):24–27.
- Barker, P.A.** 1955. The production of nursery stock in containers. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.* 5:113–117.
- du Toit, E.S.** 2004. Commercialization of the South African bush tea, *Athrixia phylicoides*. *Comb. Proc. Intl. Plant Prop. Soc.* 54:283–287.
- Evans, M.** 2004. Opening remarks from incoming International president Mike Evans upon commencement of the 2004 annual conference. *Comb. Proc. Intl. Plant Prop. Soc.*, 54:261.

- Fillmore, R.** 1960. Presentation of officers and committee members of the Plant Propagators Society. p. 237. [In] Mahlstedt, J.P. and R.W. Harris (eds), Combined Proceedings of Tenth Annual Meeting, Plant Propagators Society, December 1–3, 1960, Cleveland, Ohio, and First Annual Meeting, Western Plant Propagators Conference, October 14–16, 1960, Asilomar, California.
- Keen, R.** 1954. The propagation of Taxus—A review. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.* 4:63–69.
- Hartmann, H.T., and D.E. Kester.** 1959. *Plant Propagation—Principles and Practices*, 1st Ed. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Scanlon, E. H.** 1951a. Out on a limb—plant propagators society proposed. *Trees Mag.* 11(4):4.
- Scanlon, E.H.** 1951b. Plant propagators society. Hotel Statler, Cleveland, Ohio, Nov. 8–9. *Trees Mag.* 11(6):14.
- Scanlon, E.H.** 1951c. Along the way with...Edw. Scanlon. *Trees Mag.* 11(6):3.
- Scanlon, E.H.** 1951d. Plant propagators meet in Cleveland. *Trees Mag.* 11(6): 4.
- Scanlon, E.H.** 1951e. Some tree selections for street and ornamental purposes. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.* 1:20-32.
- Scanlon, E.H.** 1952. Minutes, Detroit meeting organizational committee, Plant Propagators Society, July 16, 1952, Hotel Statler, Detroit, Mich. *Proc. Plant Prop. Soc.* 2:108.
- Scanlon, E.H.** 1976. Along the way with...Edw. Scanlon [re Bailey, L. H. (Liberty Hyde), 1858-1954. *The nursery manual: A complete guide to the multiplication of plants*, p. 125. New York, Macmillan (1920)]. *Trees Mag.* 35(1):3.
- Wells, J.S.** 1960a. The plant propagator — The basis of our industry (keynote address). p. 229. [In] Mahlstedt, J.P., and R.W. Harris (eds), Combined Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting, Plant Propagators Society, December 1–3, 1960, Cleveland, Ohio, and First Annual Meeting, Western Plant Propagators Conference, October 14–16, 1960, Asilomar, California, 311 pp.
- Wells, J. S.** 1960b. Business session. pp. 21–22. op cit.