

Fading from view: Mr. and Mrs. Pool and their (mostly her) Malagasy lichen and plant collections

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ABSTRACT: William and Mary (née Crage) Pool spent the decade from 1865 to 1875 in Madagascar as missionaries employed by the London Missionary Society. For amusement, Mrs. Pool collected lichen and plant specimens, which her husband eventually donated to Kew. Even though Mrs. Pool collected most of these specimens, her husband invariably receives credit: his name appears on the labels of plants collected by her and her collections are attributed to him in a number of contemporary publications. Biographical information is provided for both Mr. and Mrs. Pool, and their respective roles as plant collectors are clarified.

KEYWORDS: Madagascar – herbarium specimens – London Missionary Society – nineteenth century – women botanists.

The London Missionary Society first began proselytizing in Madagascar in 1818 (Brown 1978). While their religious goals were paramount, they nonetheless sent missionaries with other skills, including linguistic (to translate the Bible), industrial (to establish printing presses and other useful trades), and educational (to found and run schools). Internal political tensions caused the Malagasy government to expel the London Missionary Society and other foreigners from the

island in 1835, but these tensions had abated sufficiently by 1862 such that foreigners were once again permitted to visit and eventually reside in Madagascar (Oliver 1886; Mutibwa 1974; Brown 1978; Ellis 1985). In the mid- to late-nineteenth century before France colonized Madagascar, a good number of British missionaries collected natural history objects while stationed there and sent or brought these specimens back to England.

On 22 February 1865, Mr. and Mrs. William Pool¹ embarked at Gravesend for Mauritius en route to Madagascar (Anonymous 1865) where they then spent the next decade. William had been recruited by the directors of the London Missionary Society to assist James Sibree² with the construction of churches and memorial chapels, the latter intended to commemorate the native Christians persecuted during the thirty years the island was closed to foreigners. Their overlapping responsibilities led to conflict or as more delicately phrased by Lovett (1899: 719) “lack of harmony between the agents entrusted with the work.” Despite this conflict, which was mostly resolved when Sibree departed Madagascar in 1867, William continued to design and build while his wife Mary focused on “Girls’ Education” (Sibree 1923) and for amusement collected lichens and plants.³

British missionaries who resided in Antananarivo would go on holiday to Ankeramadinika⁴ a day’s travel east of the capital where there was a sanatorium run by the Friends’ Foreign Missionary Association. “Botanising” was one of the forms of recreation there⁵ and although we have no concrete evidence that the Pools participated, it is difficult to imagine that they did not especially as we know other missionaries in their social circle including Helen Gilpin⁶ collected plants in Ankeramadinika (Baker 1877a; Dorr 1997).

The Pools left Antananarivo on 10 August 1875 because of Mary’s poor health and arrived in England on 16 October. Regrettably, their return home did not benefit her and she died on 4

November 1875 in Lee, near London and was buried two days later in Norwood Cemetery in Lambeth.⁷ Prior to their return, there appears to only have been incidental contact between the Pools and Kew with William⁸ writing from Madagascar in July 1871 to inquire about the identity of a plant growing in their garden. It proved to be the showy Cape honeysuckle or *Tecomaria capensis* (Thunb.) Spach. (Bignoniaceae), which is still seen today in gardens in and around Antananarivo. More substantial contact developed between William and Kew following his wife's death.

In April 1876, William wrote J. D. Hooker⁹ that he wished to show him “a large Book of Ferns mounted, which my late wife selected when in Madagascar....” This album was directed to J. G. Baker¹⁰ who not only was interested in the flora of Madagascar and neighboring islands but also was keen on ferns and fern allies. Baker immediately described the novelties and presented a paper at the 1 June 1876 session of the Linnean Society that William attended.¹¹ Curiously, when the paper by Baker (1876) was published in late October, the fern collection was attributed to “Mr. Pool” alone. Was Baker not told that the late Mrs. Pool had collected the specimens? Alternatively, did he merely assume that material conveyed to him by Mr. Pool had been collected by Mr. Pool? Parallel confusion or misinformation surrounds the Malagasy lichen collection made by Mary. When the Rev. Crombie¹² published an account of her collection (Crombie 1876) this material too was attributed solely to “Mr. W. Pool, Esq.”

Sibree, who had switched from building to teaching and writing, assiduously corrected misstatements regarding which one of the two Pools collected botanical specimens. His notices (Sibree 1878, 1880) of Crombie's paper attributed the 15 lichens to the “late Mrs. Pool.” Similarly, Sibree (1881) wrote that the “late Mrs. Pool” had made a collection of 114 species of fern, including 28 novelties, which were taken to England by her husband and presented to Kew.

Baker (1886), at least, may have come to appreciate that it was Mary and not William who made most if not all of the fern collection because he wrote that “the first large collection of ferns which we [Kew] have received of late years from Central Madagascar” was formed by her. Ironically, Baker wrote this while illustrating *Hymenophyllum poolii* Baker (Hymenophyllaceae), a species that he had described earlier from Mary’s collection but dedicated to her husband! Nonetheless, Baker (1887: 442) later equivocated about who was responsible for the collection and wrote that “Mr. and Mrs. William Pool” had collected the ferns.

The widowed William returned to Madagascar in July 1876 (Sibree 1923). The following spring after receiving a letter from J. D. Hooker containing a copy of the paper that Baker (1876) had published in the “Linnean Society” William replied¹³ that he hoped to collect plants for Kew during his second posting to the island. There is no record that he did. In 1880 when he left Madagascar for the final time he carried back to England a parcel containing plant collections made by his fellow missionary the Rev. Richard Baron.¹⁴ Delivering this parcel may have been his last contact with Kew.¹⁵

Thus while certain lichen and plant collections made in Madagascar are generally attributed to William, the evidence suggests as has been argued before (Sibree 1878, 1880, 1881, 1885; Dorr 1997) that most of them were in fact collected by his wife Mary. The majority of the ferns, at least, are labeled simply “Antananarivo” and dated “4/76” but they were not necessarily collected in Antananarivo and they unquestionably were collected before April 1876.¹⁶ We know that neither Pool traveled extensively within Madagascar. The collections labeled Antananarivo therefore must be from the capital and vicinity or as suggested above from Ankeramadinika. Some collections might be from the forest between Antananarivo and the East Coast because William also wrote Baker¹⁷ that both he and his wife collected as they departed Madagascar in

1875. Precisely what they collected along their route to the port of Tamatave is unclear.¹⁸ Only the fragments of Cape honeysuckle collected by William and mailed to Kew prior to their furlough to England and four timber samples given to Kew in 1876 (Baker 1887: 466) can be attributed unequivocally to him as collector.¹⁹ The spouse responsible for collecting mosses that were acquired by Kew²⁰ is not known (Dorr 1997), but given their respective interests the mosses probably also were collected by Mary.

Before the only known photograph of William and Mary Pool completely fades from view, it seems fitting to reproduce the image (Figure 1).²¹ Mary was not the first woman to collect plants in Madagascar, but she was among the first. Having accompanied her husband to this remote, poorly explored island it should not surprise us that her “large Book of Ferns” assembled for amusement proved to be useful to science.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The late James T. Hardyman, “honorary curator” of the Council for World Mission archive, told me about the existence of the photograph reproduced here and the Rév. Edmond Razafimahefa, former president of the Fiangonan’i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara, granted permission for it to be reproduced. Prof. Peter Davis and Dr. Peter C. Barnard, former editors of the *Archives of Natural History*, pointed me toward additional biographical information on the Pools.

NOTES

¹ William Pool was born on 30 December 1815 in Andover, England and died on 10 June 1896 in Thornton Heath, Croydon, England. His parents were William and Olivia (née Gale) Pool: his father either a “coachman” or more likely “coal merchant” or “coal dealer” (URL,

accessed 11 April 2018: https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/2972/40612_B0147207-00139?pid=1940993&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DfTG478%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DWilliam%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DPool%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1815%26msbpn_ftp%3DAndover,%2520Hampshire,%2520England%26msbpn%3D83969%26msddy%3D1896%26msdpn_ftp%3DCroydon,%2520Surrey,%2520England%26msdpn%3D87719%26msfng%3DWilliam%26msfns%3DPool%26msmng%3DOlivia%26msmns%3DGale%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D9sj%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D1940993%26recoff%3D7%25208%252037%252049%252050%26dbid%3D2972%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D5&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=fTG478&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true (Ancestry.com, 2013 ‘The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; *General Register Office: Birth Certificates from the Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist Registry and from the Wesleyan Methodist Metropolitan Registry*; Class Number RG 5; Piece Number: 125’). The birthdate of Mary (née Crage) Pool is uncertain, but probably 1816 given that her burial record lists her as being 59 years of age in 1875. A Mary Crage baptized on 15 November 1816 in the London Borough of Southwark might be the same person (URL, accessed 11 April 2018: http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Mary&gsln=Crage&MSAV=0&msbdy=1816&catbucket=rstp&uidh=9sj&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=4971996&recoff=9+10+30+42&db=LMAbirths&indiv=1&ml_rpos=5) (Ancestry.com, 2010 ‘London Metropolitan Archives, Bermondsey St

Mary Magdalene, Register of Baptism, p. 71/mmg, Item 012'). If so, then Mary's parents were James and Elizabeth Crage and her father was employed as a "Fish Salesman."

² James Sibree (1836–1929) left Madagascar in 1867 but returned in 1879 after training for the ministry. During his second posting to Madagascar, which lasted until 1915, he focused on secondary education and writing (Dorr 1997).

³ Mary was well-suited to oversee "Girls' Education" as the 1851 English Census lists her as the "Principal of [a] Boarding School" where she and her husband evidently were living along with seven girls, two governesses, a cook, and a housemaid (URL, accessed 11 April 2018:

[https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/8860/HAMHO107_1683_1683-0489?pid=3547838&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/8860/HAMHO107_1683_1683-0489?pid=3547838&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DfTG446%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DMary%2520Crage%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DPool%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1816%26mssng%3DWilliam%26mssns%3DPool%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D9sj%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D3547838%26recoff%3D5%25206%252028%26dbid%3D8860%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D19&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=fTG446&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true)

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⁴ Ankeramadinika (c. 18°55'S, 048°02'E) is c. 25 km east of Antananarivo (Jenkins and Carleton 2005).

⁵ J. T. Hardyman, pers. comm., 16 March 1985.

⁶ Helen Gilpin (1834–1907) of the Friends’ Foreign Missionary Association also taught at a girl’s school in Antananarivo (Dorr 1997).

⁷ URL (accessed 11 April 2018):

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/1559/31547_213735-00682?pid=10341128&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DfTG468%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26gsfn%3DMary%2520%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DPool%26gsln_x%3D0%26msypn_ftp%3DAndover,%2520Hampshire,%2520England%26msypn%3D83969%26msbdy%3D1816%26msddy%3D1875%26msdpn_ftp%3DLondon,%2520London,%2520England%26msdpn%3D85535%26msmns%3DCrage%26mssng%3DWilliam%26mssns%3DPool%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D9sj%26msddy_x%3D1%26msddp%3D1%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D10341128%26dbid%3D1559%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D2&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=fTG468&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true (Ancestry.com, 2010 ‘Call Number: DW/T/0936’).

⁸ William Pool (hereafter WP) to Kew, 5 July 1871: Director’s Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 71.

⁹ WP to J. D. Hooker (hereafter JDH), 16 April 1876: Director’s Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 72. Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911) was Director of Kew from 1865 to 1885 (Dorr 1997).

¹⁰ WP to J. G. Baker (hereafter JGB), 23 May 1876: Director’s Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 75. John Gilbert Baker (1834–1920) was on the cusp of publishing his *Flora of*

Mauritius and the Seychelles (1877b) and clearly interested in all of the Madagascar collections that were then being acquired by Kew, not just the ferns and fern allies.

¹¹ WP to JDH, no date: Director's Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 74.

¹² The Rev. James Morrison Crombie (1830–1906) focused his research on the lichens of Great Britain although he also described novelties from Kerguelen Island, South Africa, Madagascar, and the Mascarene Islands (Anonymous 1906).

¹³ WP to JDH, 17 April 1877: Director's Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 76.

¹⁴ Rev. Richard Baron to JDH, 28 October 1880: Director's Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 5. The Rev. Richard Baron (1847–1907) became arguably the most important of all the British missionary botanists active in Madagascar (Dorr 1997).

¹⁵ William is listed in the 1881 English Census as a widower and “retired architect” living in Croyden (URL, accessed 11 April 2018:

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/7572/SRYRG11_808_812-0722?pid=21502711&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DfTG447%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DWilliam%2520%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DPool%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1815%26msbpn_ftp%3DAndover,%2520Hampshire,%2520England%26msbpn%3D83969%26msddy%3D1896%26msdpn_ftp%3DCroydon,%2520Surrey,%2520England%26msdpn%3D87719%26msmng%3DOlivia%26catbucket%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D9sj%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D21502711%26dbid%3D7572%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D12&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=fTG447&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true (Ancestry.com, 2004 ‘Class:

RG11; Piece: 811; Folio: 67; Page: 36; GSU roll: 1341191'). Also in 1881, he married Catherine Ord Overall (1824–1910), a “spinster” (URL, accessed 11 April 2018:

https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/interactive/4779/40761_311937-00681?pid=5978089&backurl=https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc%3DfTG462%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource%26usePUBJs%3Dtrue%26gss%3Dangs-g%26new%3D1%26rank%3D1%26msT%3D1%26gsfn%3DCatherine%2520Ord%26gsfn_x%3D0%26gsln%3DOverall%26gsln_x%3D0%26msbdy%3D1824%26msddy%3D1919%26catbuck-et%3Drstp%26MSAV%3D1%26uidh%3D9sj%26pcat%3DROOT_CATEGORY%26h%3D5978089%26dbid%3D4779%26indiv%3D1%26ml_rpos%3D7&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=fTG462&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true (Ancestry.com, 2013 ‘Surrey, England, Church of England Marriages, 1754–1937 [database on-line]’).

¹⁶ A number of the ferns described by Baker (1876) are based on small specimens that look as if they were removed from Mrs. Pool’s “large Book of Ferns mounted.” The specimens are all labeled in Baker’s hand and have the date that they were received, not collected.

¹⁷ WP to JGB, 23 May 1876: Director’s Correspondence, Kew Archives, folio 75.

¹⁸ I suspect that Pool specimens labeled “5/76” or “7/76,” which probably are the dates when specimens were given to Kew, are specimens that were removed from the press by William after he had separately donated his wife’s “large Book of Ferns.” Certainly, the type of *Platyserium madagascariense* Baker (Polypodiaceae) (URL, accessed 11 April 2018:

<http://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.specimen.k000435932>), which is much too large to have been included in an album of fern fragments, is one of the species collected between Antananarivo and the port of Tamatave. Similarly, material at Kew of *Dombeya glechomifolia*

Baker (Malvaceae) (URL, accessed 11 April 2018:

<http://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.specimen.k000241140>) and dated “6/76” must be from their journey home. It is not altogether clear why other *D. glechomifolia* material mounted on the same herbarium sheet is dated “9/86,” a date well after Mr. Pool had returned to England from Madagascar for the second time.

There is a specimen of *Hydrostachys goudotiana* Tul. (= *H. multifida* A. Juss.) in Paris, received from Kew, which is clearly labeled “M^{rs} Pool legit.” Where and when it was collected is uncertain as it is labeled simply “Madagascar” (URL, accessed 11 April 2018:

<http://coldb.mnhn.fr/catalognumber/mnhn/p/p00095095>).

¹⁹ William brought four different kinds of “Voamboana” timber, or *Dalbergia* L. f. (Fabaceae), to Kew.

²⁰ Duplicate moss specimens were sent to Paris by Kew and at least one of these collections (URL, accessed 11 April 2018: <http://coldb.mnhn.fr/catalognumber/mnhn/pc/pc0736185>) is attributed to “Mr. W. Pool.” The William Mitten (1819–1906) collection of the New York Botanical Garden also has at least one moss collected by “Pool” in Madagascar (URL, accessed 11 April 2018: <http://plants.jstor.org/stable/10.5555/al.ap.specimen.ny01179817>).

²¹ An editorial decision was made to omit this photograph from Dorr (1997) because the image of Mrs. Pool, in particular, was faded.

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Received 21 August 2015. Accepted xx Month xxxx.

Figure 1. William and Mary Pool in Antananarivo, Madagascar (reproduced with permission, Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara, Antananarivo).