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John Lewis Childs Correspondence

John Lewis Childs 1856-1921

Norma Childs Schwieters

Hilda McLeod
Maine State Library

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CHILDS, JOHN LEWIS

Jay -- 1856 - 1921

John Lewis Childs

The name of John Lewis Childs has been a familiar one in almost every village, hamlet and city in this country, and has stood as a synonym for floriculture. Mr. Childs has been spoken of as "one who has sent more happiness into the homes of this, and other countries,, probably than any other individual in America."

John Lewis Childs, founder of Floral Park and sole proprietor of the great seed and florist business which flourished in the eighties and nineties, was born in Jay, Maine- May 13, 1856. His parents were Steven and Lydia (Chandler) Childs. At the age of seventeen, John Lewis Childs, a poor boy, but fired with a determination to succeed as a floriculturist came to Queens, Long Island and took a position in a large greenhouse establishment. The next year he rented a few acres of ground nearby and began business as a seedsman and florist. It was five years before his business showed rapid growth. Then he purchased the land, added to it, and the Railroad Company established a new station on his premises which, at Mr. Childs' request was called Floral Park. Here he built seed and bulb houses, greenhouses, dwellings and a large store. His mail became so large and important that the government established a post office, and a rapidly growing Floral Park became a village built up entirely by this one industry. Now he also published a magazine, the "Mayflower" of great value to anyone engaged in floral culture. And at this time he established his own printing plant in order to print his seed-catalogue and later a small magazine for school children, called the "School Mate."

His activities branched out, and in 1894-1895 he was made a member of the State Senate. He was a founder and director in the Preferred Accident Insurance Company of New York, and for a long time, its treasurer. He was director of the National Agency Company of New York, the Queens and Suffolk Fire Insurance Company and of the Bank of Jamaica, was treasurer of the State Normal School of Jamaica, and a member of its board of managers, treasurer and trustee of Union Free School at Floral Park, and Chief of Floral Park Fire Company. In the line of his business he was a member of the Society of American Florists, the American Seedsman Association, American Dahlia Society, and the Linnaean Society and Scientific Alliance of New York. He was a close student of natural history and owned a fine collection of natural history specimens, principal among which was one of the largest collections of American birds and birds eggs and nests in the country, also minerals. He likewise owned a most valuable library of books on North American Natural History and kindred subjects. He also wrote books and treatises on a variety of subjects and lectured weekly to school children at schools and institutions on flowers and Natural History subjects. He was on the Board of Managers of the Home for Crippled Children at Brooklyn and at Port Jefferson, Long Island. He devoted a great deal of his time to children and in this connection gave yearly lawn parties for the children of the community with entertainment.

By 1915 he purchased about one thousand acres near Stony Brook, Long Island, which he named Flowerfield, and here he grew extensively gladiolas and dahlias. There was also a tract of land at South Pasadena, California, which he owned and named California Floral Park.

Mr. Childs married in 1886, Caroline Goldsmith of Washingtonville Orange County, New York. There were four children-Vernon G., Norma Dee, J. Lionel and Carlton H. Mr. Childs died March 5, 1921, having earned an enviable reputation for integrity and unselfish loyalty to his business and social obligations. As a business man he was successful and prosperous. In community and public life he was public-spirited and devoted himself to the finest, and in scientific fields he was distinguished for his contributions to the world of flowers.

March 2, 1938

Mrs. Norma Childs Schwieters
Floral Park
New York

Dear Mrs. Schwieters:

Recently we noticed a brief article concerning SHORT STORIES FOR CHILDREN AND OTHERS, by your father, John Lewis Childs.

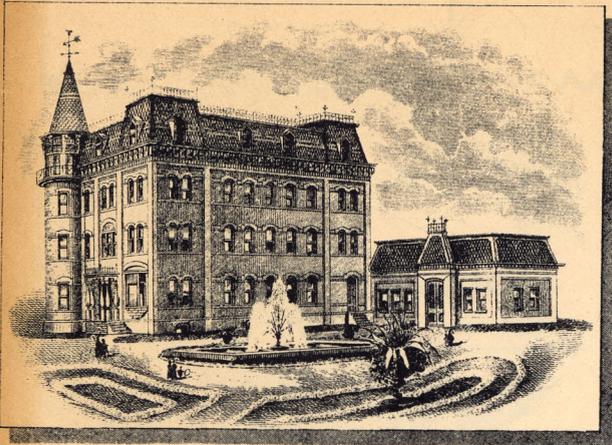
We are immediately interested, for we find no copy of this book in the Maine Author Collection, which numbers several hundred volumes, written by Maine persons, and nearly all presentation copies, inscribed for this purpose. We would certainly wish to include Mr. Childs' book if possible. Perhaps you will wish to present a copy to this exhibit.

We regret that we do not have the necessary biographical information regarding Mr. Childs. All biographical, critical and photographic material which is available, we file for reference. Together with the collection of books, it will afford in future years a vast and priceless source of information for research workers and students.

SHORT STORIES FOR CHILDREN AND OTHERS certainly appears to be a most interesting little book, and we hope we may be privileged to add a copy, through your kindness, to the Maine Author Collection.

Very truly yours

MAINE STATE LIBRARY
BY



John Lewis Childs, SEEDS, BULBS & PLANTS.

Dictated by

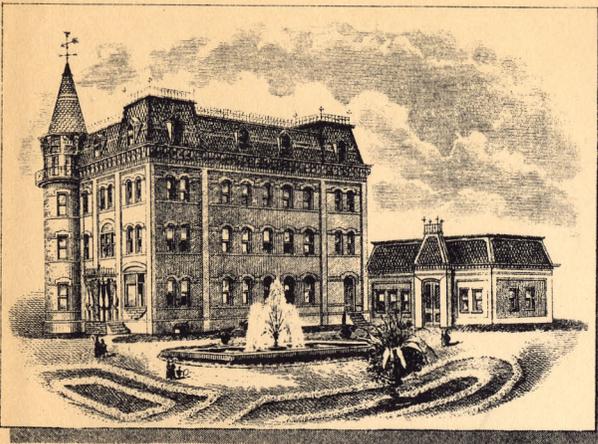
Floral Park, N.Y. August 3rd
1939.

Maine State Library
Augusta - Maine
Hilda M. Lord, Secretary.

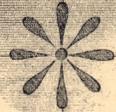
Dear Miss M. Lord, -

On March 2nd - 1938, you
note me inquiring about my father's
John Lewis Childs' book "Short Stories for
Children and Others."

This is an inexcusably late reply - but I
do not wish to have my father's name
un-recorded in the Maine Author Collection
of your Library. Therefore I am sending
you under separate cover, six copies of
the little book and a brief history of
John Lewis Childs' activities and achievements.
This stationery is the same used by my
father - although the business, both retail



John Lewis Childs,
SEEDS, BULBS
& PLANTS.



Floral Park, N.Y.

Dictated by

P.S.

When the books arrive, you will find that I have written upon the fly-leaf of the copy to be kept in the Maine Author Collection. The five others may be placed upon the shelves if you so desire.

I should appreciate your acknowledging their receipt.

Sincerely Yours -

Norma Childs Schwinners

and whole-sale is no longer in existence. Still, although 18 years have passed since his death, we receive, almost daily, requests for his catalogues.

I had planned to answer your inquiry long ago! It is an honor and privilege for me to do my bit toward keeping his memory alive, and I hope the data now sent is still acceptable.

Sincerely Yours, -

Norma Childs Schwinners

(Mrs John Francis)

August 3rd -
1939.

August 15, 1939

Mrs. J. F. Schwieters
91 Tulip Avenue
Floral Park, L. I.
New York

Dear Mrs. Schweiters:

What a delightful response to our inquiry and request! Thank you very much for the splendid biography of your father, and also for the pictures. This is just the sort of material which we desire for our author files, and we are grateful to you for your generous cooperation.

Also, we acknowledge with appreciation the receipt of the books, and we are very glad to be able to place the inscribed volume in the Maine Author Collection. The others are being included in our traveling libraries, which are sent to every corner of the state; and we have no doubt that SHORT STORIES FOR CHILDREN AND OTHERS will please new readers in Maine.

Please accept our sincere thanks for all you have done to make our record on your father, John Lewis Childs, complete. What an interesting gentleman he must have been!

Very truly yours

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BY

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