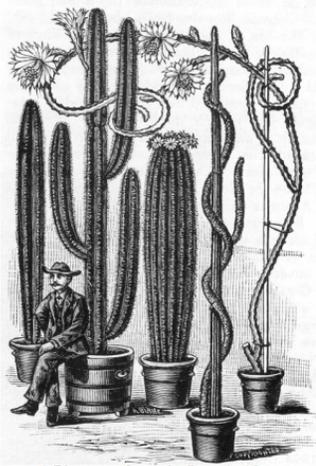


ALBERT BLANC BIOGRAPHY

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Blanc, Albert A (1850–1928)—known primarily as a woodcut engraver, and having published the first cactus trade catalogue in the USA in 1886 and the largest cactus dealership in the world in the 1890s.



A Blanc woodcut of tall cerei with maybe himself sitting on the barrel.

Born in Belgium in 1850, Albert Blanc came to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA in early 1870s. He was an artist and nurseryman; however, Blanc is best remembered as an artistic illustrator producing many fine woodcut and electrotype drawings of new plants and flowers for his cactus catalogues. Early life in Belgium is unknown as is a portrait of him—possibly an image of him in woodcut above. His engraved plates appeared in publications all over the world during and after his lifetime.

As one of America's first cactus collectors Blanc's hobby turned into the largest cactus nursery in the world in Philadelphia by the 1890s -- boasting over 500,000 plants of some 700 species. From a windowsill garden in the beginning the hobby grew into a glasshouse in the attic of his 4-story home in the city -- later to expand at a separate location to 6 large greenhouses to house his nursery business.

Blanc's catalogues featured cultural guides in growing plants illustrated by his woodcuts and electrotype drawings -- which started a cactus craze in the USA and Europe in the 1890s. Editions of his 'Hints on Cacti' (a cultural guide and illustrated catalogue) were produced each year from 1886 to 1898 (average 98 pages with 154 woodcuts each) in addition to another illustrated 'Catalogue of Rare Cacti' from 1889 to 1894 (average 28 pages with 76 woodcuts each). In 1886 he sold only cactus plants; however, in later catalogues he included a few 'other succulents' along with house plants, bulbs and other novelties. Blanc's 1886 "Hints on Cacti" was the first catalogue published in USA.

Blanc's woodcuts were purchased by James Harvey Callander (1867-1933) from Peterboro, Ontario, Canada about 1906 and later by Shiner Cactus Nursery in Laredo, Texas about 1931.

Blanc described *Cereus childsii* in his 1891 5th edition of *Hints on Cacti* naming the cactus plant after a friend, John Lewis Childs (1856–1921) from Floral Park, New York. However, in 1932 Wilhelm Weingart (1856–1936) changed the name to *Cereus huntingtonianus* placing *Cereus childsii* in synonymy.

All images depicting cactus plants and greenhouses are from Blanc's own excellent woodcuts, including the cactus on the front cover of Cactus and Succulent Society of America (CSSA) March 1941 issue of the Journal.

Albert Blanc died in his 77th year on 21 December 1928.

References:

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