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Three and a half years after the end of the US occupation of Haiti (1915–34), Brother Marie-Victorin (Dr. Conrad Kirouac, 1885–1944), founder of the Jardin Botanique de Montréal and one of the most important figures in the botanical history of Canada, made a twelve-day visit to Quisqueya (island home to Haiti and the Dominican Republic) between December 27, 1937, and January 7, 1938 (Figure 1), of which ten days were spent in Haiti and two days in the Dominican Republic. The trip was organized by Mr. Louis-Philippe Langlois (director of the Canada-Voyage travel agency, Figure 2) and was officially called the Deuxième Croisière Annuelle Canadienne-Française à la République d’Haiti (Second Annual French
Canadian Journey to the Republic of Haiti. At least twelve distinguished personages from Quebec, including Langlois, traveled to the island with the intention of enhancing cultural and professional links between Canada and Haiti (VVH 25). There were plans to establish new collaborations between the Université de Montréal and the Université d’Haiti as well as the Jardin Botanique de Montréal and the Institut d’Agriculture de Damien in Port-au-Prince. This voyage was to follow up on a previous Croisière that took place in 1937 and was led by the president of Université Laval in Quebec, Monsignor Cyrille Gagnon, and the president of the Société du Bon Parler Français (Society for Good French Speaking), Jules Massé (IN). Archival sources indicate that there were plans for a third trip in January 1939; however, more information related to this third trip has yet to be uncovered (IN 33).

This second trip received relatively wide coverage by both Haitian and Montrealer newspapers (Figures 1A, 1B, 1D). Brother Marie-Victorin, who was also a member of the La Salle Catholic Congregation, was appointed as its leader. We identified a few of the prominent Canadian participants who were part of this mission in newspaper notes (Figure 1A) and in Brother Marie-Victorin’s records (Figure 2). Among them there were Armand Zappa, a notary; stenographer Juliette Côté; manufacturer Michel Chouinard; French linguist Augustine Geoffrion; Georges Gauthier, a civil servant with Canadian Customs (Section des Douanes); Berthe Gagnon, the president of the Société du Bon Parler Français; the president of Généraux Motors, Mr. Trempe and his family; Ms. Jeanne Gauthier; Ms. Chouinar; the Quebecois poet Medjé Vézina (1896–1981); and Abbot Jules-Bernard Gingras (Figure 2). The last, the Aumônier diocésain de la Jeunesse Technique Catholique (Diocesan Chaplain of Catholic Technical Youth; VVH 25), served as the chaplain for the expedition. We are certain that Philippe Cantave also joined the delegation and played a key role in the organization and design of the various trips to Haiti. Cantave, who later served as Haiti’s ambassador to Canada, was a native of Haiti who lived in Canada and was a strong advocate for the preservation of French heritage in the New World.

Through archival research at the Université de Montréal we have located Brother Marie-Victorin’s unpublished travelogue, as well as a collection of 305 photographs he took during his 1937–38 visit to Quisqueya. His travelogue and photographs provide unique perspectives on Haiti, particularly because they were created through the literal and figurative lens of a distinguished scholar in the service of the Catholic Church who also had a solid foundation in the natural sciences. Evidenced by our previous research and as shown in his writings from Puerto Rico,
FIGURE 1. DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO THE TRIP MADE BY BROTHER MARIE-VICTORIN AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED CANADIANS TO QUISEY A BETWEEN DECEMBER 27, 1937, AND JANUARY 6, 1938.

A AND B: DEPARTURE OF PARTY TO HAITI AS COVERED BY THE NEWSPAPER LE CANADIAN (MONTREAL, DECEMBER 23, 1937).


D: FRONT PAGE OF THE NEWSPAPER LE TEMPS (PORT-AU-PRINCE, JANUARY 5, 1938) WITH DETAILS OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE CANADIAN DELEGATION TO HAITI.

E AND F: NEWSPAPER COVERAGE (LE DEVOIR, MONTREAL, DECEMBER 2, 1938) OF DECORATIONS AWARDED BY THE HAITIAN GOVERNMENT TO BROTHER MARIE-VICTORIN AND THREE OTHERS.
LE TEMPS

NINIÈME ANNÉE, No 497
PORT-AU-PRINCE,
MERCREDI 5 JANVIER 1928

REVUE SEMI-HERDOMAIDAIRE
REDACTION & ADMINISTRATION:
 Rue du Magasin de l'Est No. 94,
Téléphone: 2377

DIRECION: CHARLES MOHAVA
Directeur: Charles Mohavia

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Memorien du Dr Jean-Marianneau.— Henri Mira-rambeau.

LE SALUT DE LA CROISIERE CANADIENNE

C'est un grand honneur pour les membres de la croisiere d'artillerie canadienne française d'être appelés à agirzez à leurs fères bannières, par les meilleurs traits de la radio, leurs sentiments d'adapter ou nos besoins particuliers, les éléments d'une vie nationale qui fait l'admiration de ceux qui ont l'avantage de voir en contact avec elle.

Mesdames et Messieurs,

Notre avenir reçoit du Canada, pays des grands actes, des esprits grands, de l'electricité et de la grande industrie — comme sous les palmes

LE DEVOIR

Un lievre qu'il faut rapidement abattre. Plusieurs grèves déclenchées en France

Canadiens décorés par Haïti

Le consul d'Haïti à Montréal, M. Gérard Hébert, a remis, au nom du président de la République d'Haïti, M. Sténo Vincent, des décorations de l'Ordre national haïtien "Honneur et Mérite" à quatre Canadiens de Montréal, pour services exceptionnels et en signe de la haute considération du gouvernement.

Les Canadiens décorés sont: Mgr Olivier Maurault, recteur de l'Université de Montréal, commandeur; M. l'abbé Bernard Gingras, aumônier de la J. T. C., officier; le Rév. Frère Marie-Victorin, de l'Université de Montréal, officier; M. Ernest Têteau, président de l'Alliance française, officier.
the Canary Islands, and Haiti (1942 trip), Brother Marie-Victorin’s field notes and journals were rich in personal observations he made about the countries he visited. Supplementary documents are available on the Internet Archive. They include a facsimile of the original travelogue and an annotated English translation (Appendices 1-1 and 1-2), detailed descriptions of the 305 photos taken during the trip (Appendices 2-1 through 2-3), and inventories of plants and localities visited during his first trip (Appendices 3-1 and 3-2).

**Figure 2. Members of the Canadian delegation that traveled to Quisqueya between December 27, 1937, and January 6, 1938. Picture taken at the Haitian–Dominican Republic border. Identified individuals in front row include Brother Marie-Victorin (second from the left); Abbot Gingras (third from the left); Louis-Philippe Langlois (fifth from the left); and Armand Zappa (sixth from the left). Notice the flag of Quebec draped over the car on the left and the flag of Britain on the car on the right. The car on right also displays an “Edilite” sign in its windshield identifying it as an official car provided by the Haitian government. Picture (photo 263) printed on glass plate and hand painted (plate 10659). Courtesy of the Division de la Gestion de Documents et des Archives at the Université de Montréal.**
This paper presents an overview of the content of his records and discusses the historical setting of Haiti and Quebec during the time of his visit. Given that Brother Marie-Victorin’s travel accounts primarily concerned Haiti, that will be the focus of this paper.

**The Travelogue and Itinerary**

A copy of the travelogue that Brother Marie-Victorin kept during his stay in Haiti and the Dominican Republic is available on microfilm (Reference: E118 E 1,7, titled *Voyage en Haiti*) in the Division de la Gestion de Documents et des Archives, Université de Montréal. The microfilm records a forty-five-page document that includes a twelve-page botanical description of breadfruit, a twenty-eight-page typed version of the travelogue, two handwritten pages of brief travel notes related to December 22–26, 1937, that were also copied into the typed journal, and five typed pages of a speech to be delivered to an unknown audience by Brother Marie-Victorin in which he calls for deeper ties between Quebec and Haiti. These archives also house a hard copy of the travelogue with handwritten edits and notes by Brother Marie-Victorin. Our translated version of the travelogue is based on the annotated hard copy (*BMVHB* 1-1 and 1-2).

In the interest of providing a clear and concise translation that reflects the most accurate final version of the travelogue with Brother Marie-Victorin’s edits and intentions, we omitted the text that he too redacted and avoided literal translation. For example, a few scientific names for plants were misspelled in his journal, but the translation reflects the correct spelling. Footnotes provide details on how the names were originally typed and their current accepted taxonomy.

On December 23, 1937, the Canadian delegation departed New York for Haiti aboard the steamer *S.S. Haiti* (*BMVHB* 1-1, 1). They arrived in Port-au-Prince four days later, on December 27, 1937, and checked into the Hotel Excelsior (*BMVHB* 1-1, 4). The first portion of their journey (December 27–January 1, 1938) focused on Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas, including the pine forest of Morne des Commissaires (*BMVHB* 1-1, 10–14), the mountain areas of Kenskoff (*BMVHB* 1-1, 14), and the coastal village of Léogâne (*BMVHB* 1-1, 17–18). From the Haitian capital they drove to Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, through the Chaîne du Trou d’Eau. They remained in the Dominican Republic from January 2 to January 4, 1938 (*BMVHB* 1-1, 18–22). After they returned to Port-au-Prince on January 4, 1938, the group traveled on to the area around Cap-Haïtien in northern Haiti and visited the ruins of the Sans Souci Palace and the Citadelle Laferrière on January 5–6, 1938 (*BMVHB* 1-1, 23–28). Brother Marie-Victorin and his colleagues left Cap-Haïtien on January 6, 1938, again aboard the *S.S. Haiti*, arriving in New York on January 10, 1938 (*BMVHB* 1-1, 28). A map of the delegation’s itinerary is shown in Figure 3.
The Photographic Record

The 305 photographs located in the Université de Montréal archives are arranged into three different sets. For the purpose of this research and because none of the photos (except those printed on glass plates) have unique identifiers, we assigned unique numbers to the photos.
FiguRE 4. Folio 37 of album (photo 152) of photos taken by Brother Marie-Victorin during his first trip to Quisqueya, showing a girl standing close to a ceiba tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), also known as mapou, one of the most emblematic trees in Vodou tradition. Courtesy of the Division de la Gestion de Documents et des Archives at the Université de Montréal.

The first set of pictures are from an album (Figures 1C and 4) of photos taken during the two visits that Brother Marie-Victorin made to Quisqueya (1937–38 and 1942, respectively). The first seventy-two folios of the album are devoted to the first trip in 1937–38. The rest of the album includes photos taken during his 1942 trip (*BMAH*). Photos are mounted on the front side of the folios, but ten of the folios (4, 10, 15, 21, 23, 31, 33, 41, 43, and 47) have blank pages with neither photos nor text (*BMVHB* 2-1).11 Four folios have postcards; the folio 48 postcard depicts peasants with calabash fruits (*Crescentia cujete*); folio 52 includes a postcard of the ruins of the palace of Sans Souci; folio 53 has a postcard of La Citadelle Laferrière;
and folio 72 shows a postcard of the tomb of Christopher Columbus in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. A copy of a photographic portrait of Édouard Woolley (1916–1991) that was not apparently taken by Brother Marie-Victorin is also found in folio 72. Woolley was a Haitian-born tenor and music composer who moved to Montreal in 1938; one of his achievements was to found the Opéra National du Québec in 1948. It appears that Woolley joined Brother Marie-Victorin and other members of the French Canadian party when they drove to the north of the country (VH 23). All but seventeen of the 305 photographs (photos 289–305) are found in the album; these are made available on glass plates and/or cardboard. The album includes duplicates of eight photographs (photos 38, 138, 151–154, 241, 245; BMVHB 2-1).

**Figure 5.** Cardboard 4182 with photos of the well-known Marché de Fer (Iron Market) in Port-au-Prince, taken by Brother Marie-Victorin during his first trip to Quisqueya. Courtesy of the Division de la Gestion des Documents et des Archives at the Université de Montréal.
The second set of photos, taken during his 1937–38 trip, are mounted on thirty-eight sheets of cardboard (BMVHB 2-2) labeled with consecutive numbers (4162 through 4199) by Brother Marie-Victorin (Figure 5). A total of 268 photos are attached to the cardboard sheets, and they also appear in the photographic album or glass slide collection. One picture (photo 144) is mounted twice on cardboard.

The third set of images includes 195 photos that were printed on glass plates and hand-painted, serving as color slides (BMVHB 2-3). Seven of the plates are presented in Figures 2 and 6–11. All 195 plates have handwritten labels with details of the items, people, or places that were depicted; and they also bear labels with consecutive numbers (10533 through 10697 and 10700 through 10733). We cannot rule out that additional glass plates may be found in the future, as the numeric sequence reflects a gap (photos 10698 and 10699). All of the photos that were printed on the glass plates are also

Figure 6. Photograph taken during the first visit of Brother Marie-Victorin to Quisqueya, showing the delegation en route to La Citadelle Laferrière (The Citadel), Haiti. Picture (photo 191) printed on glass plate and hand painted (plate 10649). Courtesy of the Division de la Gestion de Documents et des Archives at the Université de Montréal.
included in the album or mounted on cardboard, with the exception of seven. Photos 291, 295, 296, and 302–305 were only reproduced as color slides. Eighteen of the 195 glass plates do not correspond to photos taken by Brother Marie-Victorin, but rather are reproductions of postcards or illustrations from books that he used as supporting resources for a lecture that he delivered upon his return to Montreal.

Most of the black-and-white photos in the collection do not have labels. However, by cross-referencing them with the glass plates, Brother Marie-Victorin’s journal, and other sources (VVH 16, 17), we were able to identify the places, individuals and plants depicted in several of the unlabeled photos. Only eight of the photographs found in these collections were previously published (photos 15, 23, 36, 114, 141, 149, 152 [Figure 4], 154).15

Two hundred and seventy-four of the 305 photos were taken in Haiti, twenty-six in the Dominican Republic, and five at the border between the two countries. One hundred and fifteen of the pictures focus exclusively on plants, the most frequently depicted species being *Artocarpus altilis*, breadfruit; *Ceiba pentandra*, ceiba; *Crescentia cujete*, calabash; *Prosopis juliflora*, bayahonde or mesquite; and *Stenocereus fimbriatus*, chandelier.
Figure 8. Photograph of Haitian peasants taken during the first visit of Brother Marie-Victorin to Quisqueya. The exact location is unknown. Picture (photo 83) printed on glass plate and hand painted (plate 10545). Courtesy of the Division de la Gestion de Documents et des Archives at the Université de Montréal.

We have identified Brother Marie-Victorin in nine pictures (photos 2, 55, 56, 59, 118, 151, 156, 209, 263 [Figure 2]). Unfortunately, we have not located the full list of delegation members, and most of the photos showing trip participants were not labeled. Despite such difficulties, we identified Gingras (photos 3, 22, 55–60, 196, 209, 217, 221–223, 230, 235, 245, 246, 248, 259, 260, 262, 263 [Figure 2], 276, 277, 279, 287), Langlois (photos 196, 262, 263 [Figure 2]), and Zappa (photos 57, 59, 110, 263 [Figure 2], 277, 279, 281, 283, 293) among the Canadian members. Among the Haitian participants, we have recognized ophthalmologists Alix Large (photos 4, 19, 160, 165, 10670) and Dr. Rolland (photo 4), and botanist Frédéric Kébreau (photo 165).

The sites most frequently depicted in the photo collection were Port-au-Prince (fifty-one photos), Sans Souci, and La Citadelle du Roi Christophe (forty-six photos); and more generically referenced countryside pictures categorized as “Mountain Landscapes,” “Rural Scenery,” “In the Mountains,” or “Inland Landscapes” (forty-nine photos). Interestingly,
because of his formal appointment within the Catholic Church, Brother Marie-Victorin also took pictures of the La Salle school in Santo Domingo (photos 269–73), the church of Mirebalais showing congregation members leaving Sunday mass (photos 107–111), and the seminary of Port-au-Prince (photos 1–3).

It is worth mentioning that Marie Victorin’s travelogue made specific references to thirty-five photographs that he took during his stay in Quisqueya (BMVHB 3-1 and 3-2). However, we could locate only twenty-six of them during our archival research. Among the nine “mystery photos,” seven relate to plants (zamorette, Solanum torvum Sw., Solanaceae; the African oil palm, Elaeis guineensis Jacq., Arecaceae; bastard cedar, Guazuma ulmifolia Lam., Malvaceae; star apple, Chrysophyllum cainito, Sapotaceae; Gros-Michel banana trees; a ceiba tree; and a particular specimen of Ficus lucida growing in the agriculture station of Damien), and the others to a cockfight under a ceiba tree and a group photo in front of a hotel.

**Discussion**

**Relevance of Visit**

The 1915–34 US occupation of Haiti fueled nationalism in the Antillean country and incited many intellectuals and politicians to contend with the French and African aspects of Haitian culture, as well as their place within the inter-American region (PS 29). Harmoniously and successfully merging these components of the country’s identity and history was contested terrain that complicated nation building in Haiti. Members of Haiti’s economic and political urban elite operated in a primarily francophone society with an affinity for inherited French cultural values, while members of a laboring class who lived primarily in rural areas retained many African-based traditions as central components of their lives.

Dealing with the legacy left by the US occupation was not the only major collective challenge Haiti encountered in the late 1930s. In October 1937, just a few months before Brother Marie-Victorin’s trip to Quisqueya, Dominican Republic troops under the direct orders of President Trujillo massacred thousands of Haitian civilians, most living near the northern border. This unprovoked tragedy was one of the most notorious cases of ethnic cleansing in Antillean history. When Brother Marie-Victorin arrived in Haiti, the shockwaves of the massacre were still moving through Haitian society. These circumstances probably explain why Brother Marie-Victorin’s short descriptions of the Dominican Republic highlight
its oppressive political environment under President Trujillo and why he defined the country as “le pays des baïonnettes” (the country of the bayonets; *VH* 20–21).

At the time of Brother Marie-Victorin’s visit to Quisqueya, Haiti and French Canada shared historical and sociological similarities. The Quebecois were trying to retain their French heritage in a country with a single common terrestrial border with the United States—Canada was a country with a prevailing Anglo-Saxon influence, in which the English language and the Anglican Church were dominant. By 1938 members of Haitian and Quebecois societies voiced their concerns about the importance of preserving French culture and traditions. Such common concerns motivated French Canadian and Haitian communities to explore ways to celebrate and contribute jointly to the development of a “broader family of French civilization” (*PS* 32). The three Croisières Annuelles Canadiennes-Françaises à la République d’Haïti that took place between 1937 and 1939 were the first initiatives to establish links between the two communities and develop sociocultural partnerships. Prior to the trips, hardly any formal cultural or educational exchanges occurred between Quebec and Haiti. However, the Deuxième Congrès de la Langue Française au Canada (Second Conference of the French Language in Canada) that took place at Université Laval in 1937 included Haitian delegates and was an important catalyst for the official visits that distinguished Quebecois later made to the Caribbean nation (*PS* 25).

The significance of the trip led by Brother Marie-Victorin to Haiti is evidenced by the formal reception hosted by Haitian president Sténio J. Vincent (1874–1959) (*VH* 8–9) and the tours of important official sites that his government provided (*VH* 8–9, 15–16). The Canadian party had access to government vehicles (*VH* 3) and met with, among others, prominent Haitians such as Dantès Bellegarde (1877–1966), humanist, politician, and educator; Raphaël Brouard, Port-au-Prince mayor; Roussan Camille (1912–1961), poet, journalist, and editor of the *Haïti Journal* newspaper; Maurice Dartigue (1903–1983), educator and government official; Edouard Estève, businessman and president of the Chambre de Commerce d’Haïti; Luc Grimard (1886–1954), editor of *Le Temps* newspaper (*VVH* 21); Dominique Hyppolite (1889–1967), attorney general and famous writer; Frédéric Kébreau (1903–?), botanist and director of the École Nationale d’Agriculture; Joseph Le Gouaze (1883–1964), archbishop of Port-au-Prince; Camille Lhérisson (1901–1965), a medical doctor who was president of the Medical Society of Haiti and a faculty member at the National Medical School of Port-au-Prince; Louis Mercier (1893–1946), distinguished educator; Charles Fernand Pressoir (1910–1973), well-known
specialist in Haitian Creole linguistics; Jules Thébaud, prominent dentist and later minister of public health; poet Christian Werleigh; and music composer Édouard Woolley.22

One year after the trip, President Vincent also awarded L’Ordre National Haïtien Honneur et Mérite (Figures 1E, 1F) to the president of the Université de Montréal, Monsignor Olivier Maurault (as Commandeur); to the president of the Alliance Française, Ernest Tétreau (as Officier); and to two members of the delegation, Brother Marie-Victorin and Abbot Jules-Bernard Gingras (both as Officiers).23

The French Canadian delegation’s commitment to the effort mirrored that of Haiti’s officials and was reinforced upon their return to Canada. Subsequent to the trip, Chaplain Gingras published two works advocating for a strengthening of ties between Haiti and Canada, particularly through the common ground of the Catholic Church (TRH).24 Once he returned from Haiti, Gingras founded the Comité Général Canada-Haïti (VVH 25), whose mission was to “resserrer les liens intellectuels et spirituels entre les deux pays” (tighten the intellectual and spiritual bonds between the two countries; VVH 25). Additionally, Cantave continued with his pioneering initiatives to build new bridges between two of the largest New World communities that share a common French culture (VVH).25

Regarding Brother Marie-Victorin, upon his return to Montreal he delivered an extensive lecture on his impressions from this trip. Glass slides 10533 through 10658 were used for the lecture; and the text of his presentation, a forty-nine-page document titled Croquis haïtiens, is also housed in the Université de Montréal archives (microfilm reference: E 118 E 1, 6). The content of his talk is the subject of future work. We have not located details on when this talk was given, but from the archive documents (microfilm Reference: E 118 E 1, 6) we know that it was addressed to the Société d’Études et de Conférences, an academic society established in 1933 that was linked to the Faculté de Philosophie, Université de Montréal.26 The mission of the group was to provide women with opportunities to pursue studies at the graduate level.27

After his two visits to Quisqueya, Brother Marie-Victorin did not continue botanical research activities in Haiti or the Dominican Republic. In December 1938, one year after his voyage to Quisqueya and after considering the idea of botanical studies in Florida (FMT 21), he made his first plant-hunting expedition to Cuba, where he was hosted by Brother León (Dr. Joseph S. Sauget, 1871–1955), a French botanist in Cuba who also belonged to the Brothers of La Salle Congregation.28 Brother León was already considered to be one of the most important plant taxonomists of
Clearly, Brother Marie-Victorin’s initial trip to Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1937–38 provided him with new perspectives critical to his journey to Cuba in late 1938. His botanical experiences in Cuba led him to make that island the focal point of his career as a tropical botanist rather than Quisqueya. In Cuba he also benefited from an existing and outstanding research framework thanks to the highly regarded plant taxonomy program that the La Salle Brothers had already established on this island. Brother Marie-Victorin made his second and final visit to Haiti in 1942 at the end of his fifth expedition to Cuba (BMAH).

**Botanical Framework**

By the first third of the twentieth century, evolutionary biology as a paradigm was already starting to have an impact in new approaches to classify organisms. By the 1940s and 1950s these new trends to interpret the natural world resulted in “the modern evolutionary synthesis.” This was a scientific movement that bridged Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution with Gregor Mendel’s contributions on genetic inheritance and population genetic theory. This synthesis provided a link between microevolutionary and macroevolutionary mechanisms to address biological classification protocols. Eventually, the discovery of DNA and the implementation of phylogenetic methods gave a new dimension to plant taxonomy and to the original Linnean system of biological classifications. These thoughts had an impact on theologists, who proposed “theistic evolution” as a way to reconcile biological evolution processes with religious beliefs. Interestingly, Brother Marie-Victorin was an advocate of evolutionary biology (FMT 111–113), and he was clearly a follower of these theological ideas.

As far as we are aware, Brother Marie-Victorin was the first Canadian botanist to make an official visit to Haiti and to write about the flora and society of the country. Although the first comprehensive work on the flora of Haiti was published by William S. Dardeau and US botanist Henry D. Barker (1893–1993) eight years before his 1937–38 trip, there is no mention of this work in Brother Marie-Victorin’s travelogue. His journal indicates that herborisations (botanical observations) were made near Port-au-Prince (VH 16); however, we have not found any Haitian specimens in Brother Marie-Victorin’s herbarium housed at the Institut de Recherche en Biologie Végétale, Université de Montréal. Based on his travelogue, Brother Marie-Victorin met only one person with botanical training: Frédéric Kébreau, a faculty member at the École Nationale d’Agriculture, Université d’Haïti. However, Brother Marie-Victorin’s two references to Kébreau are vague and brief (VH 10, 13). There is a single picture of him with Alix Large near the plant *Chromolaena odorata* (photo 165) and a brief mention that he
joined Brother Marie-Victorin during the trip to Morne des Commissaires. Interestingly, while the travelogue indicates that Kébreau was the only person Brother Marie-Victorin met who had a professional botanical background, it seems that Brother Marie-Victorin acquired many details pertinent to Haitian botany through the conversations that he had with Bruno Simon, his official driver (VH 5, 6, 16). Previous studies based on Brother Marie-Victorin’s accounts for the Canary Islands and Puerto Rico showed that he fully acknowledged botanical insights that were gained from local colleagues and experts during his trips; therefore, it is unclear why Brother Marie-Victorin did not document putative details on Haitian plants that we believe were shared with him by professional botanists such as Frédéric Kébreau, but he recognized ethnobotanical insights provided by Bruno Simon. It is well known that other foreigners advanced their careers based on work conducted in Haiti but neglected to acknowledge the Haitians who shared their knowledge and connections with them.

During his short visit, Brother Marie-Victorin identified the major botanical highlights of Haiti, and his plant observations can be organized into three groups. The first group concerns ethnobotany, and among the plants that he recorded, clearly the ceiba, *Ceiba pentandra* (Figure 4), was the one he found most interesting. The species, known as *mapou* in Creole, is a tree of great symbolism in the African-rooted religions practiced in Cuba (Yoruba or Santería) and Haiti (Vodou). It is native both to the Caribbean Islands and West Africa, and in the latter region is also regarded as a holy tree. Therefore, for Haitians and Cubans of African descent, the ceiba represents one of the strongest connections to the motherland of their ancestors (TRH 8). The calabash, *Crescentia cujete*, was another tree Brother Marie-Victorin highlighted. Its dried fruits serve as containers or bowls (Figure 9), an ethnobotanical use that is widespread in the Neotropics. Furthermore, Brother Marie-Victorin also recorded two other species (bastard cedar, *Guazuma ulmifolia*, and the royal palm, *Roystonea borinquena*) that are considered sacred trees in Afro-Caribbean religions. Another plant with ethnobotanical significance referenced by Brother Marie-Victorin is the legume ouari, *Guilandina cf. ciliata*. Brother Marie-Victorin mistakenly identified this species as *Canavalia obtusifolia*, and it has a label in the photo album (folio 28) stating, without additional explanation, “La plante qui change les nègres en blancs!” (The plant that changes blacks to whites!). What led Brother Marie-Victorin to make such a notation? The absence of further details makes it difficult to know whether this was his own insight or an observation that one of his Haitian guides shared with him. Still, it is striking given the politics of skin color in Haiti, alongside the expansion of eugenics and other forms of scientific racism worldwide.
The glass slide for *Euphorbia lactea* (Figure 10) also provides interesting insights on the omnipresence of religious symbolism in Haiti. This particular glass plate bears the label “EUPHORBES-FÉTICHES. (*Euphorbia lactea*)” and it shows a fence made with plants of this species with clothes hanging on them. Among Vodou practitioners, the presence of clean clothes or cacti outside a house serves as a mechanism to guard the house against bad spirits.

Ethnobotanical accounts of other non-Vodou-related practices reference the placement of rhizomes of vetiver, *Vetiveria zizanioides*, inside drawers because of the plant’s pleasant fragrance (*VH 7*). Haiti remains one of the main producers of this grass worldwide and Haitian vetiver is considered the highest quality. As a member of a Catholic congregation, Brother Marie-Victorin also recorded the use of parts of tropical plants such as
Spanish moss, *Catopsis sessiliflora*; poinsettias, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*; clematis, *Clematis* sp.; sugar cane, oranges, and coconuts in the construction of a traditional Nativity scene inside the church of Fonds Verrettes (*VH* 11). His ethnobotanical observations also included historical information, as shown in his photo and short account of the famous star apple tree, *Chrysophyllum caimito*, at Sans Souci Palace (Figure 11) (*VH* 26). Traditionally, it is believed that it was under that particular tree that King Henri Christophe (1767–1820) administered justice as the ruler of northern Haiti, emulating a tradition established by King Louis IX of France (Saint Louis), who during the thirteen century had a royal court of justice under a great oak in the Bois de Vincennes near Paris.
The second group of recorded plants includes crops. Mainstream staple foods were documented in the countryside and markets (e.g., bananas, breadfruit, mangos, papaya, sorghum, sugar cane) and also in the agricultural research station of Damien (e.g., coffee, coconut, vanilla). Gardening trees and shrubs found growing along roads and streets were listed, as were those found at the Champ de Mars, a park in Port-au-Prince, and on the grounds of the Hotel Excelsior ($VH$ 4–5). Cultivated and semi-cultivated plants of local importance (i.e., pomarrosa, *Syzygium jambos*; star apple, *Chrysophyllum cainito*; pigeon pea, *Cajanus cajan*; cachiman, *Anona* sp.; trois côtes, *Allophylus racemosus*) and land races of particular crops were also reported. Brother Marie-Victorin, mentioned, for instance, two different cultivars for breadfruits, one of them with highly folded pericarp, and others with fruit coats lacking invaginations ($VH$ 6). Likewise, he recorded
the presence of a type of cotton known as coton pays (local cotton, identified as the woody perennial Gossypium hirsutum) that was abundant in Port-au-Prince (VH 6). Surprisingly, there are no reports of latex-producing trees, except for a brief reference to Castilla elastica (VH 6). It is worth mentioning that during the US occupation of Haiti, rubber trees (Hevea brasiliensis [Willd. ex A. Juss] Müll. Arg., Euphorbiaceae) and other latex-producing plants were a major agriculture research priority as potential cash-crops for the country. Unfortunately, the effort resulted in an agriculture development program based on these species that was poorly planned and turned out to be a major failure.

Finally, his third group of botanical observations concerned the actual Haitian flora and plant communities of the island. Most of his records related to this group come from his trip to Morne des Commissaires; however, he also wrote details pertinent to the flora (VH 6) found in the Port-au-Prince area and along his way to Kenskoff, the Dominican Republic, and northern Haiti. From his botanical records and photos it appears that Brother Marie-Victorin was particularly interested in the vegetation occurring in the lowlands, where cacti and mesquites (Prosopis juliflora) were abundant (VH 10, 12). These plant communities thrive in ecosystems with low rainfall and high temperatures throughout the year, and thus are not present in Canada. He referred to these areas as “grande plaine xérophytique, savane désolée, or “plateau désertique” (great xerophytic plain, desolate savannah, or desert plateau; VH 12, 19, 23). As he traveled toward the mountains through areas with a “touche tempérée” (temperate touch; VH 12), he found mountain plant communities. He reported high levels of erosion on the mountains and attributed it to extensive unsustainable farming and failure to implement protective legislation (VH 12). Among the plants reported at higher elevations were the Quisqueyan endemic pine, Pinus occidentalis; the bois trompette, Cecropia schreberiana; zamorette, Solanum torvum; bois chien, Catalpa longissimi; and grand cousin, Urena lobata. He also encountered a species that occurs in Canada as a non-native, introduced plant: the elderberry, Sambucus nigra subsp. canadensis (VH 12).

During Brother Marie-Victorin’s second trip to Haiti in 1942 he visited Morne des Commissaires again; however, the botanical accounts from his second visit were much more extensive than those from the first. In addition, he made insightful comparisons to the Cuban flora, and he offered perspectives on plant conservation challenges of the Haitian forests. Clearly by 1942, after having already completed five field trips to Cuba, he had developed a more comprehensive understanding of Caribbean botany and vegetation (BMAH).
RELIGION, SOCIETY, AND ETHNICITY

The content of Brother Marie-Victorin’s travelogue confirms that this trip was important for him as an avenue to strengthen links between Haiti and Quebec through what he perceived as their common French heritage. Shortly after his arrival in Port-au-Prince, for instance, he wrote in his journal: “La première impression est celle d’un pays entièrement français sans pénétration étrangère, sans atmosphère anglo-saxonne. . . . On sent qu’ici le français n’est aucunement menacé, qu’il n’y a pas de batailles à livrer pour la préservation de la langue” (The first impression is that of an entirely French country without foreign infiltration, without an Anglo-Saxon atmosphere. . . . You feel that here French is not threatened at all, that there are no battles to be fought for the preservation of the language; VH 3). Of course, while this description may have fit the world of the Haitian elite of the time, it was far from accurate for the country as a whole.

During this visit Brother Victorin presented on the radio (VH 15) and gave at least one lecture (VH 15). His lecture created some controversy as an article published in the Haïti-Journal incorrectly reported details of some of his comments, including those related to a Bible passage on the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (VH 15–16). The article was written by Charles Fernand Pressoir, who was also an advocate of encouraging Haiti’s francophone ties as part of the inter-American campaigns that took place during the inter-war period; but unfortunately, we have not located it. Based on the travelogue information, it appears that this article was controversial and resulted in the dismissal of the journalist from the newspaper.

The travelogue makes very few references to the problems associated with the US occupation. On the contrary, when the delegation visited institutions located in Damien, Brother Marie-Victorin made classic and uncritical mention about the importance of US-built infrastructure to the future of the country.

Consistent with the Eurocentric and exoticist lens through which most foreigners viewed Caribbean societies, many of the conclusions Brother Marie-Victorin reached about Haitian and Dominican societies range from naive, superficial, and paternalistic to derogatory. Even his positive depictions are tinged with condescension, as he enjoyed what he perceived as the spontaneity and vitality of Haitian society. While his travelogue conveys his impression that he was visiting a vibrant country that, despite its poverty and social/racial conflicts, was full of energy and had a significant intellectual class that was thriving, his admiration is
mixed with exoticism. He made remarks about the colorful buses locally known as *taptap* (*VH* 5); the *méringue* music and dancing that he defined as having a “tout à fait suggestif” (a quite certain suggestiveness; *VH* 7); and above all, the frantic atmosphere of a cockfight under the shade of a *mapou*, as a rooster’s owner cries: “Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu, faites gagner mon coq!!” (My God, My God, make my rooster win! [*VH* 18]). In his biography of Brother Marie-Victorin, Robert Rumilly also highlighted how the distinguished Canadian botanist found Haiti a charming place with stimulating folklore, traditions, and local politics (*FMT* 305–306).

More revealingly, he racialized the presence of children surrounding the *S.S. Haiti* begging for money by describing the scene as “paupérisme noir” (black poverty; *VH* 2). He failed to appreciate the wisdom conveyed on the *taptap* buses he saw by explaining that the names painted on them reflected “l’enfantine qualité de l’humour noir” (the childish quality of the black humor; *VH* 5). He used “chocolat” and “café” (chocolate and coffee) as metaphors to differentiate the skin color of people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic (*VH* 20). Contrary to Brother Marie-Victorin’s engagement with the advancement of women’s botanical education in Canada (*GH*, unnumbered page), he referred to Haitian women as members of the “beau sexe” (the beautiful sex). Furthermore, he viewed Haitians as a “peuple resté à l’état primitif” (population that has remained in a primitive state; *VH* 5). Such masculine-oriented perspectives were also common in botany. During this time, for instance, male naturalists performed most plant exploration, and women still represented a small fraction of the workforce performing botanical research.

Relatedly, Brother Marie-Victorin’s reactions to what he saw reveal his misconceptions of aspects of Haitian society and his tentativeness about Haitian sovereignty. He expressed discomfort at a mass held at the Port-au-Prince cathedral on January 1, 1938, when it referred to the “massacre et le départ des Français” (massacre and the departure of the French) during this celebration of Haiti’s Independence Day (*FTP* 17). Relaying his shock in response to conditions in Haiti’s countryside (photos 72–77), he concluded that the rampant poverty he observed was not easy to confront and overcome due to social disparities found in Haiti’s countryside (*FTP* 2, 5, 13, 24, 28), but he also presented villagers as willfully ignorant and incapable of governing themselves. Describing what he saw in a remote mountain community, Marie-Victorin wrote,

En voyant ces montagnes où se niche dans des cachettes inaccessibles un peuple qui se croit soumis au roi de France, qui ignore complètement le monde extérieur et même le monde haïtien, on comprend ce que pourra représenter
d’effort l’établissement d’un système d’Écoles rurales. On comprend aussi que cette république ne peut reposer sûrement sur le suffrage universel. (FTP 24)

(When seeing these mountains where a people hidden away in inaccessible nooks and crannies still thinks it is obedient to the King of France, and completely ignores the outside world and even the Haitian world, we understand how much effort it could take to establish a system of rural schools. It is also understandable that this republic cannot be based on universal suffrage.)

It is important to note that Brother Marie-Victorin’s travelogue suggests that he also experienced some internal conflict during his stay in Haiti. He clearly felt uneasy, with his religious convictions rooted in the Western Christian tradition, in a country where Vodou was widespread and influential. As expected, Brother Marie-Victorin’s views (*CH*, unnumbered page), like those also found in Abbot Gingras’s works (*TRH* 7–9), are very critical of the religion, and call for the Catholic Church to have a stronger presence in Haiti (*CH* 9). Both fail to acknowledge the importance of Vodou traditions in Haitian culture and society, save for representing it as a negative influence that should be rejected. It is here that he is most explicitly diminishing toward the worldview of Haitians living in the countryside:

La population entière est adonnée au vodooisme. Ignorants, illétrés, seuls comptent pour ces primitifs les êtres rapprochés, les forces de la nature dont ils ressentent les effets immédiats. Le reste du monde leur est inconnu. Ils ignorent tout de leur origine et leur histoire. Nombre de paysans, paraît-il, dans les antres de la montagne, prient encore pour le Roi de France et le Dauphin qu’ils croient toujours règnent sur eux. (*VH* 13)

(The entire population is addicted to Vodou. What only counts for those ignorant, illiterate primitives are those spirits close to them, the forces of nature from which they feel their immediate effects. The rest of the world is unknown to them. They know nothing about their origin and their history. It seems that a number of peasants in mountain recesses still pray for the French King and the Dauphin, whom they believe rule over them.)

Given such approaches, it is not surprising that one of the most immediate results of the Croisière Canadienne-Française en Haïti was the appointment of several Canadian Catholic priests to develop their ministry in Haiti,
and by the 1950s two of five dioceses of Haiti were led by clergymen from Canada.  

Yet, despite their pro-Catholic agenda, we found very interesting and even ironic the extent to which both Brother Marie-Victorin and Abbot Gingras were fascinated by the spiritual symbolism of particular plants in Vodou and how they acknowledged that these traditions helped Haitians maintain links to their African heritage. For instance, Gingras defined the ceiba as “arbre magnifique, bienfaiteur des villages . . . symbole de la patrie lointaine” (magnificent tree, benefactor of the villages . . . symbol of the distant fatherland); likewise, Brother Marie-Victorin indicated that under the shade of ceibas “les âmes pleines d’un obscur passé se reconcilient et se condensent en une âme collective” (souls full of an obscure past reconcile and condensate into a collective soul; TRH 8; CH, unnumbered page).

Spiritual conflicts were also accompanied by cultural conflicts in Haiti, and we found that Brother Marie-Victorin expressed similar conflicts during his 1929 extended voyage to Africa and the Middle East. Coming from a society where well-established basic infrastructure facilitated academic and research activities, Brother Marie-Victorin struggled when faced with a different setting in Haiti, one that required a certain level of improvisation and resulted in delays. His travel writings reflect a degree of sarcasm and frustration, particularly expressed in the sections of the travelogue devoted to his trips to Morne des Commissaires and the Dominican Republic, and even in his writings about his visit to meet President Vincent in the National Palace (VH 8, 10, 18). Regarding his trip to Santo Domingo, for instance, he stated, “Nous partons ce matin pour la Dominicanie. Au lieu de 5.30 h., il est 7.00 quand nous mettons en route. C’est Haiti!” (We travel to the Dominican Republic this morning. We leave at 7:00 instead of 5:30. That’s Haiti!).

Although Brother Marie-Victorin gathered valuable botanical records during his trips to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the general absence of African or Haitian heritage in Quebecois society during the 1930s only reinforced the likelihood that Marie-Victorin and other members of the French Canadian delegation would approach their mission to Haiti in a Eurocentric manner, neglecting consideration of Creole- or African-based paths (as opposed to Franco- or Anglo-based paths) to deeper collaboration with Haiti.

**Conclusions**

The first voyage of renowned botanist Brother Marie-Victorin to Quisqueya was not centered on plant collecting, but rather was part of an official French Canadian effort to build cultural bridges between Quebec
and Haiti. Nevertheless, his visit resulted in significant consequences for the field of botany, as well as for Haitian culture and representations of Haiti beyond its borders. Visiting Haiti, Brother Marie-Victorin had an invaluable opportunity to observe, examine, and record various aspects of the flora, vegetation, and crops of the island. As evidenced by his travelogue, Brother Marie-Victorin’s work in Quisqueya was conducted through the lens of a botanist, with every page referencing plant life or ethnobotanical information. Brother Marie-Victorin’s botanical observations provided him with an introduction to Caribbean botany that proved critical to the seven plant-hunting expeditions that he made to Cuba between 1938 and 1944 and secured his position as one of the most important contributors to Cuban botany in history.

As a brother of the La Salle Catholic Congregation, he subscribed to the view that that Vodou, an African-derived religion, had a negative influence on Haitian society; thus one of the main implications of his visit was the subsequent increase in Canadian Catholic ministers in Haiti. The delegation primarily focused on developing Canadian-Haitian collaborations around the French heritage they shared. The opportunity to simultaneously appreciate and reinforce African components of Haitian culture was missed. We argue that Brother Marie-Victorin’s affiliation with the Catholic Church and his acceptance of the superiority of Eurocentric ideas led him to, whether consciously or not, perpetuate damaging stereotypes about Haiti’s African heritage and encourage structures aimed at supplanting Haiti’s rich African legacy.

While many factors likely informed the superficial and misleading perceptions that Brother Marie-Victorin expressed about race, ethnicity and various aspects of Haitian culture in his travelogue, his socialization in Quebec’s overwhelmingly white British and French context is most evident. During the 1930s, a very small minority of Quebec’s population had direct Afro-Canadian or Haitian ancestry. Therefore, the role of African elements on potential Canadian-Haitian cultural partnerships was hardly discussed or considered. This limited exposure to, understanding of, and failure to appreciate the value of Haiti’s African heritage when he was introduced to it meant that Brother Marie-Victorin became one of many during this period who disregarded and actively challenged the importance of African-rooted aspects of Haitian identity.
Notes

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1 Cantave, “Le Vrai visage d’Haïti,” 25. Future citations to “Le Vrai visage d’Haïti” are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as VVH.

2 Le Temps, Port-au-Prince, January 5, 1938; L’Illustration nouvelle, Montreal, December 18, 1937. Future citations to L’Illustration nouvelle are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as IN.

3 IN; Le Canada, Montreal, December 23, 1937; Le Temps, Port-au-Prince, December 29, 1937, January 5, 1938; Haïti-Journal, Port-au-Prince, December 27, 1937; L’Illustration nouvelle, Montreal, January 19, 1938.

4 Le Canada, Montreal, December 23, 1937; Le Temps, Port-au-Prince, December 29, 1937, January 5, 1938; L’Illustration nouvelle, Montreal, January 19, 1938.

5 Gingras, “Trois . . . regards sur Haïti,” cover page. Future citations to “Trois . . . regards sur Haïti” are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as TRH.

6 Marie-Victorin, Voyage en Haïti, 6 (future citations to Voyage en Haïti are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as VH); Icard, “Haïti-en-
Québec: Notes pour une histoire,” 46; “Contributions dans le secteur de la culture,” 346.

7 Mills, *A Place in the Sun*, 38. Future citations to *A Place in the Sun* are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *PS*.

8 Santiago-Valentín et al., “*Images floristiques portoricaines: El diario*”; Francisco-Ortega et al., “*Brother Marie-Victorin in the Canary Islands in 1929*”; Francisco-Ortega et al., “*Brother Marie-Victorin’s Account of His Second Trip to Haiti*.” Future citations to “*Brother Marie-Victorin’s Account . . .*” are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text as *BMAH*.

9 Andre et al., “*Brother Marie Victorin in Haiti Botany*,” Appendices 1-1 and 1-2, 2-1 through 2-3, and 3-1 and 3-2. Future citations will be cited parenthetically in the text as *BMVHB*.


19 Turits, “A World Destroyed.”


21 Voltaire and Péan, “*Contributions dans le secteur de la culture*,” 346.

22 Cook, “Dantès Bellegarde”; *Le Temps*, Port-au-Prince, December 29, 1937; Camille, “Roussan Camille, l’humaniste”; Verna, “Maurice Dartigue and
André et al.


23 Le Devoir, Montreal, December 2, 1938; Rumilly, Le Frère Marie-Victorin et son temps, 432. Future citations to Le Frère Marie-Victorin et son temps are to this edition and will be cited in the text as FMT.

24 Gingras, “Canada—Haïti.”

25 Cantave, “Relations épistolaires entre le Canada et Haïti.”

26 Marie-Victorin, Croquis haïtiens, unnumbered page. Future citations to Croquis haïtiens are to this edition and will be cited in the text as CH.

27 Centre de Recherche en Civilisation Canadienne-Française, “De Montréal (1933) à Ottawa-Hull (1940–1946).”

28 Marie-Victorin and León, “Itinéraires botaniques dans l’île de Cuba.”

29 Álvarez Conde, Historia de la botánica en Cuba, 300–311; Méndez Santos, “El Hno. León (Joseph Silvestre Sauget).”


31 Mayr and Provine, The Evolutionary Synthesis.


33 Barker and Dardeau, Flore d’Haïti.


35 See for example, discussion on Jean Price-Mars’s relationship with Melville Herskovits in Magloire and Yelvington, “Haiti and the Anthropological Imagination.”


37 Kokou et al., “Considering Sacred and Riverside Forests.”

38 Gentry, “A Synopsis of Bignoniaceae Ethnobotany.”

39 Fuentes Elías, “Vudú y rará en Elena Celestien Vidal.”

40 Lobb, “Caste and Class in Haiti.”

41 Lal, “On Genetic Diversity in Germplasm of Vetiver.”

42 Francisco-Ortega et al., “David Fairchild’s Plant Hunting Expeditions,” 21, 32.

43 Smith, Red and Black in Haiti, 44–47.

44 Verna, Haiti and the Uses of America, 111.
Castor, “Veneer of Modernization.”

Voltaire and Péan, “Contributions dans le secteur de la culture,” 346.

Francisco-Ortega et al., “Brother Marie-Victorin in the Canary Islands in 1929.”

Renda, Taking Haiti, chapter 3.

Centre de Recherche en Civilisation Canadienne-Française, “De Montréal (1933) à Ottawa-Hull (1940–1946).”

Lindon et al., “Fewer than Three Percent of Land Plant Species.” Future citations to “Fewer than Three Percent of Land Plant Species” are to this edition and will be cited in the text as FTP.


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