



Group of delegates and guests at the Chestnut Bark Disease Conference, Harrisburg, Penna.,  
February 20-21, 1912.

*Plant path.*

# THE CONFERENCE

Called by the Governor of Pennsylvania to Consider  
Ways and Means for Preventing the Spread  
of the Chestnut Tree Bark Disease

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THE CAPITOL

Chamber of the House of Representatives

HARRISBURG - PENNSYLVANIA

FEBRUARY 20 and 21, 1912

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## THE CHESTNUT BLIGHT AND CONSTRUCTIVE CONSERVATION.

By DR. RUSSELL SMITH, OF THE WHARTON SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" In these words Shakespeare makes the defeated King Richard III express the value of a certain piece of property, as he paced the field of defeat, seeking flight,—not what the horse would actually cost in the horse market; not what he would bring in the horse market, was the basis of valuation, but what was going to happen to Richard III if he had to go without him.

On that basis I question if the estimates of the value of the chestnut species have been placed anywhere near high enough. The United States, with a big timber cut, is within from one to three decades of an era of timber scarcity which will put us in the position of having to go *raise* timber, rather than go *find* timber. In the timber-raising epoch the chestnut comes to the front. Taken altogether it is for the next sixty years of this nation **a tree without a peer**, for no other tree can touch it for all-around efficiency.

1. **It grows rapidly.** No other good tree of the forest can equal it in the speed with which it makes wood. By the time the white oak acorn makes a baseball bat the chestnut stump has made a railroad tie. Cut it down and it throws its shoots up six feet the first year and keeps them going. This **astoundingly fast start**, in connection with its record fast growth, makes it a forest marvel.

2. **The wood of no other tree is so generally useful.** It is durable in the ground as posts, a quality which makes it a standard telegraph and telephone pole, and a good railroad tie or mine prop. It is **durable** above ground, giving it many virtues as lumber. It is also a **beautiful**, prized, and much used wood for interior finish. Lastly, it is full of **tannin**, so that any chip, top, slab or scrap can be digested for this valuable manufacture.

## *The Blight Threatens a National Loss. Who Loses?*

If anybody thinks he is not a loser because he has not a chestnut forest all his own, he has another think coming.

(a) Do you wear shoes? If so, the chestnut interests you, because we are just beginning to make tannin for leather from the wood of the chestnut.

(b) Do you read? The pulp that remains after the tannin is gone makes paper; also a new industry just starting.

(c) Do you rent a house? Chestnut wood is one of the most satisfactory woods for finishing the plain man's house.

(d) Do you use the telephone or telegraph? Chestnut makes one of the best telegraph and telephone poles.

(e) Do you go a-trolleying? The chestnut is the tie-producing tree of the future, if we do not let the blight kill the species.

(f) Do you own a farm or a town lot? Chestnut is one of the great fence post trees of America.

Lastly in its list of virtues we should not forget its value, and especially its possibility as a **producer of food for man**, and sheep, goats, hogs, and possibly other livestock. Already the chestnut orchards of Europe make rough mountain sides worth one hundred and fifty dollars per acre. Compare that to American farm lands. The chestnut forests of Italy are reported to make more bushels of nuts year after year than the continuously cropped lands of Dakota and Minnesota yield in wheat. Fully one-fourth of the State of Pennsylvania, which is worthless for wheat or corn, is better fitted for chestnut culture than any other use now in sight. If we make them yield no better than the Italians do, that would give us ninety million bushels of nuts, an amount 50 per cent. greater than our wheat and corn crops combined. It would make this one of the greatest sheep and pig fattening states of the country.

The stake in maintaining the chestnut species from destruction is large. The estimate of three hundred million dollars is probably under, rather than over, the proper figure. In the absence of definite knowledge of the cure, how much are we justified in spending in uncertain efforts? The problem is one of insurance. Forty billion dollars' worth of property in the