

Congress of the United States

At the second Session

BEGUN AND HELD AT THE CITY OF WASHINGTON

in the District of Columbia

on Monday the second day of December one thousand eight hundred and sixty one.

AN ACT to establish a Department of Agriculture.

Be It Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

That there is hereby established at the seat of government of the United States a Department of Agriculture, the general design and duties of which shall be to acquire, and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants.

Sec. 1. And be it further enacted, That there shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, a "Commissioner of Agriculture," who shall hold his office by a tenure similar to that of other civil officers appointed by the President, and who shall receive for his compensation a salary of three thousand dollars per annum.

Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That it shall be the duty of the Commissioner of Agriculture to inquire and procure in his department all information concerning agriculture which he can obtain by means of books and correspondence and by practical and scientific experiments, accurate records of which experiments shall be kept in his office, by the collection of statistics, and by any other appropriate means within his power, to collect as he may be able new and valuable seeds and plants; to test, by cultivation, the value of seeds of them as may require such tests, to propagate such as may be worthy of propagation, and to distribute them among agriculturists. He shall annually make a general report on

1862

U. S. Department of Agriculture established

"Commissioner shall receive & have charge of all property of the Agricultural Division of the Patent Office including fixtures & property of Propagating Garden"

**In House of Representatives Bill 734.4,
Commissioner of Agriculture was to:**

**acquire and to diffuse among the people of
the United States useful information on
subjects connected with agriculture in the
most general and comprehensive sense of
the word, and to procure, propagate, and
distribute among the people new and
valuable seeds and plants**

Commissioner of Agriculture was to appoint a:

- **Chemist** Charles Wetherill
- **Entomologist** Townend Glover
- **Botanist** William Saunders
- **Statistician** Lewis Bollman



**William
Saunders**
Botany

**Isaac
Newton**
Commissioner

**Jacob
Dodge**
Statistics

**Thomas
Antisell**
Chemistry

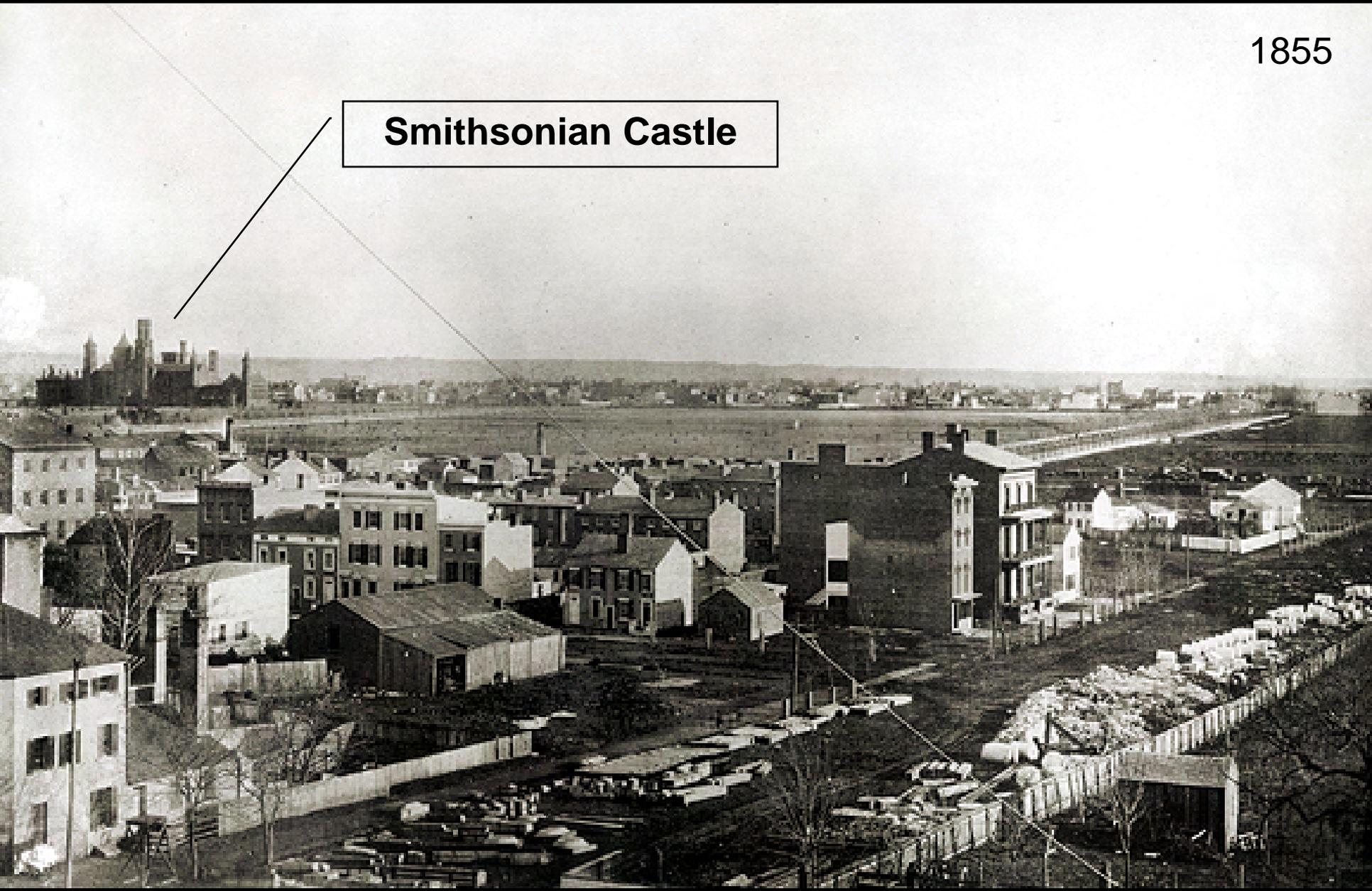
**Townsend
Glover**
Entomology

**In 1864, Congress
appropriate more land,
Reservation #2,
to USDA for expanding
US Plant Propagation
Garden.**

Government Reservation #2

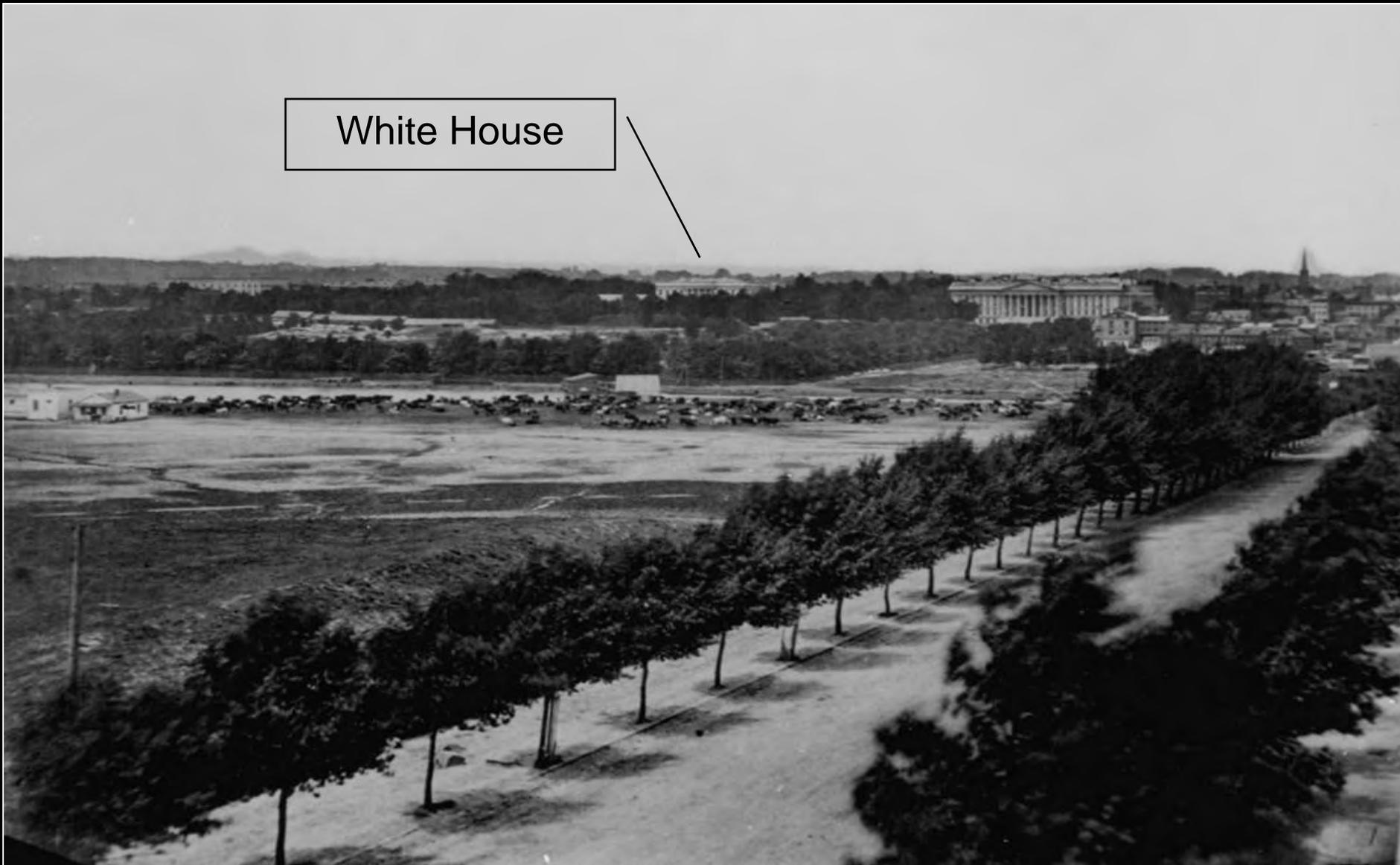
1855

Smithsonian Castle



Civil War military cattle yard precludes USDA from occupying site

White House



I had designed during the past summer to cultivate on Government reservation no 2 between 12th and 14th streets, the use of which has been granted me by the Commissioned of Public Building but I have been obliged to suspend my operations there, as the Government still uses it for a Cattle yard.

Respectfully
Isaac Newton
Commissioner

**After Civil War - expand
seed propagation &
distribution of crops**

1865-1867

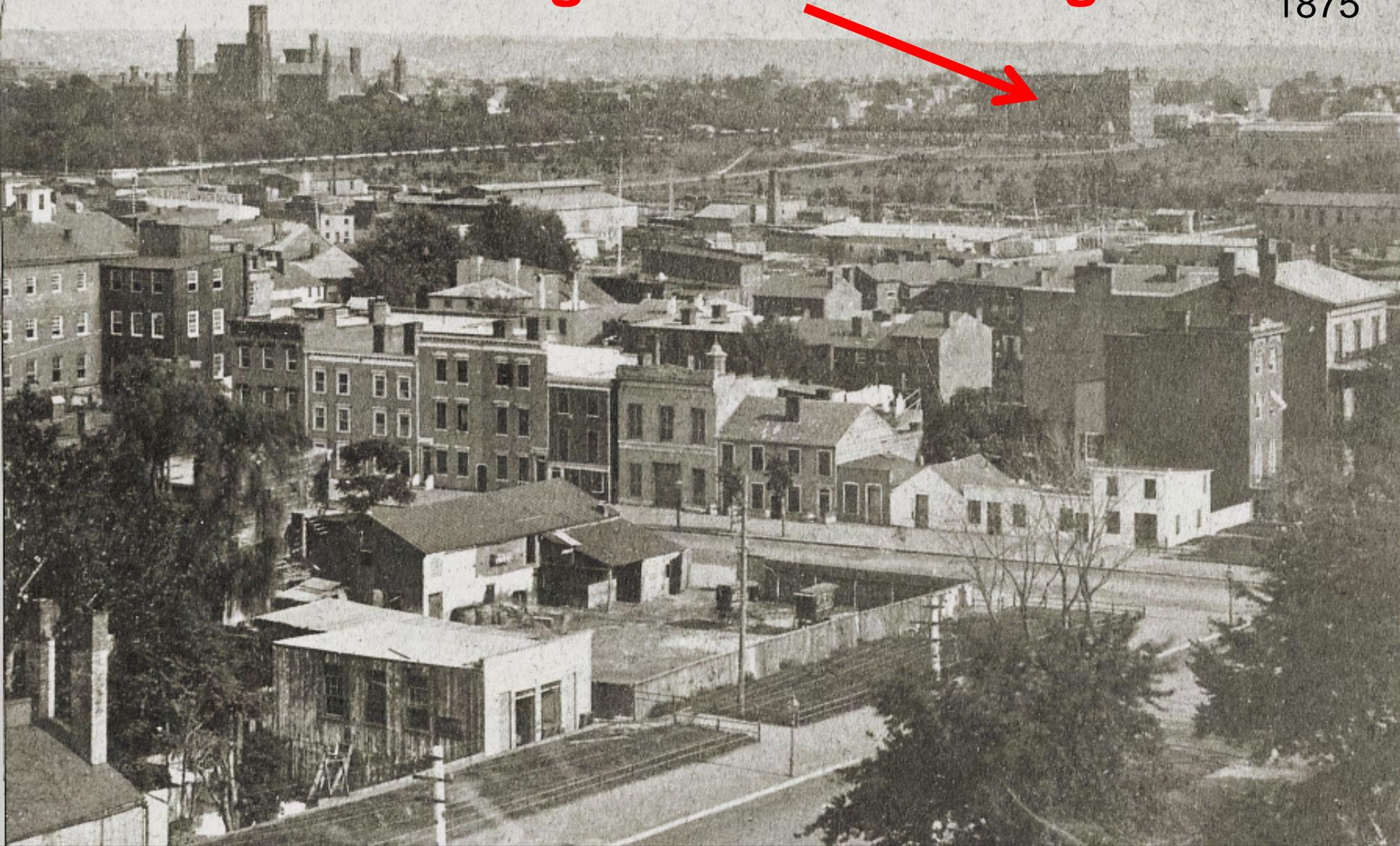
Number of cultivars evaluated

>500	fruit	32	sorghum
230	melon	30	bean
120	wheat	18	cabbage
167	rye	17	oat
70	pea	17	hedge
50	grass	14	lettuce
43	potato	13	onion

**In 1869, USDA moves
out of Patent Office
into it own building.**

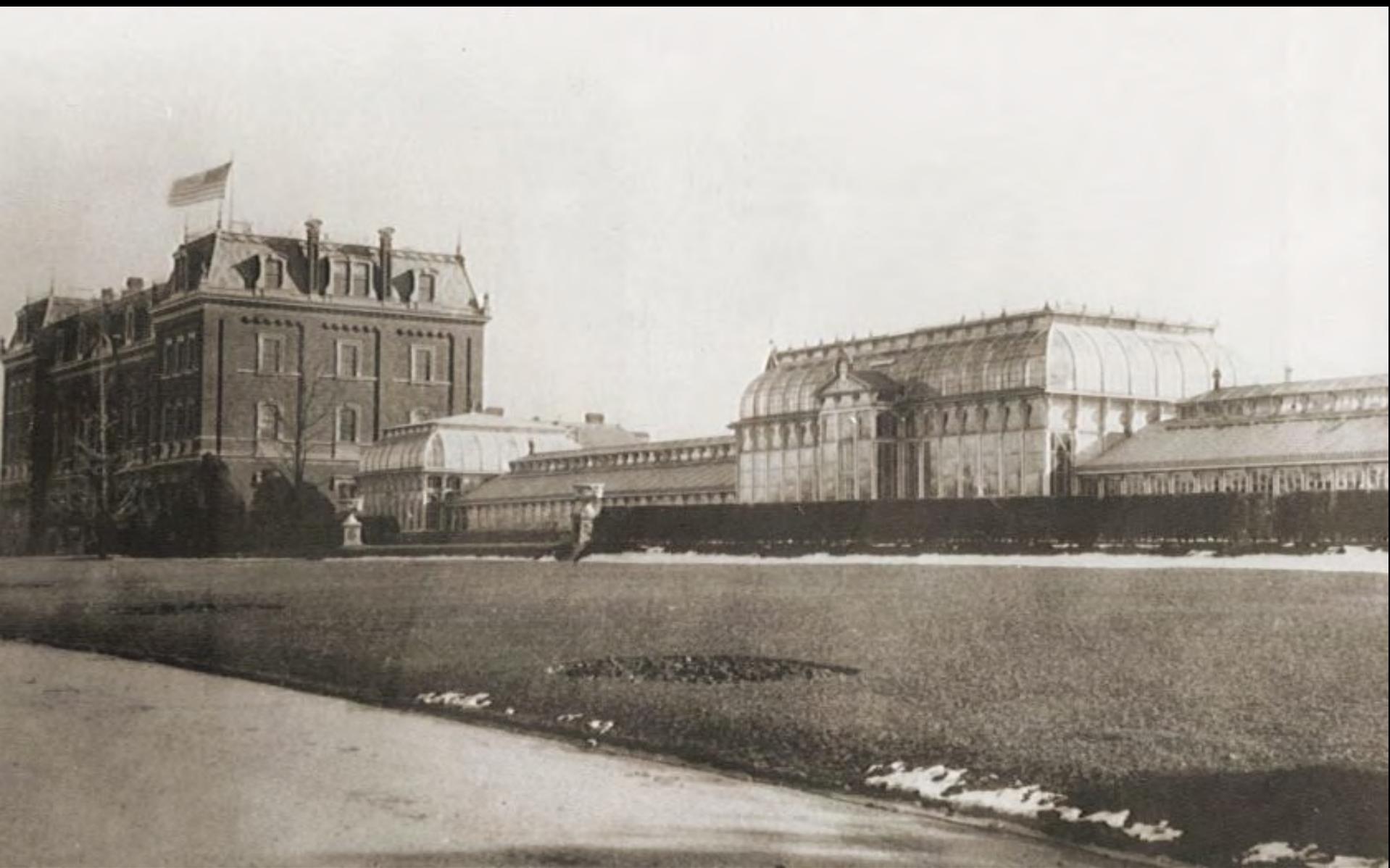
Agriculture Building

1875





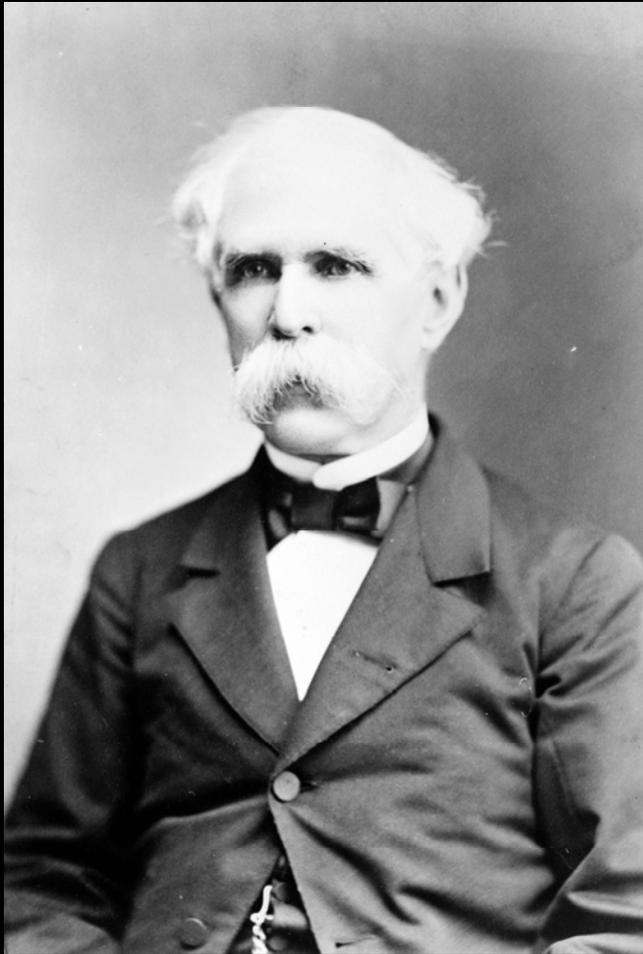
**In 1871, Conservatory
constructed to house
tropical economic plants.**



**Major seed production
not practical on
Reservation #2 due to:**

- 1) Genetic contamination
due to small site size**
- 2) Public access / stealing**

1868



Commissioner
Horace Capron

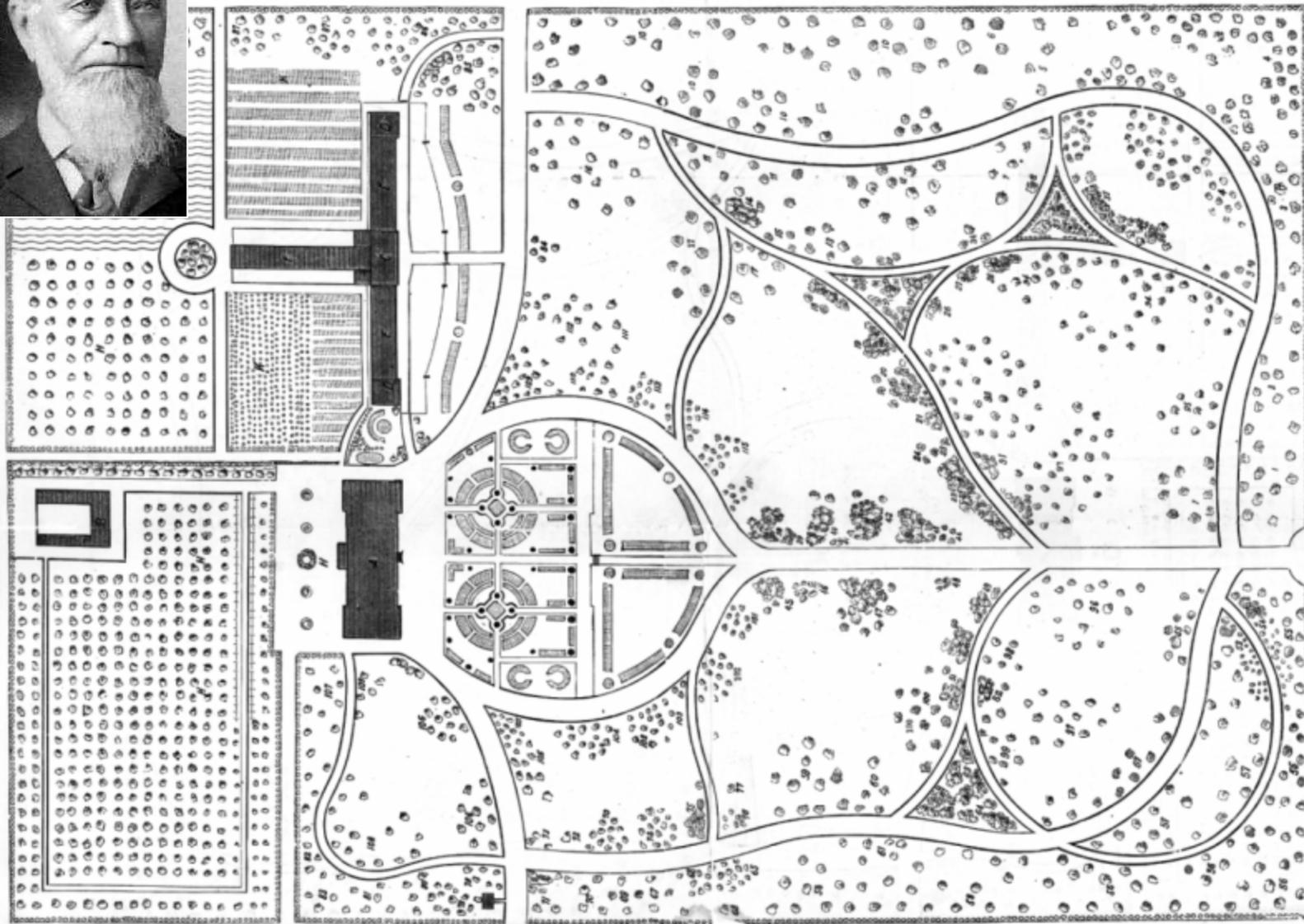
“I would therefore suggest that the reservation be devoted to the purpose of forming an *Arboretum Americanum*, or grand national arboretum. Where the unequalled arboreal wealth of this country may be collected and planted in accordance with a strict botanical system, and at the same time exhibit the highest degree of landscape effect.”

John W. Stokes
Acting Commissioner

1871 William Saunders designs American Arboretum



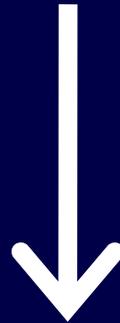
PLATE II.



PLAN OF THE DEPARTMENT GROUNDS

1873

US Propagation Garden



moves

American Arboretum