

ment but so far nothing of an authentic character has been located on the subject.

From my study of the life, work and accomplishments of Dr. Elisha DeButts I feel justified in calling him the first prominent physician-chemist of the State of Maryland.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMERCIAL MEDICINAL PLANT CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES.

At a recent meeting of the City of Washington Branch, A. PH. A., A. F. Sievers, Senior Biochemist, Division of Drugs and Related Plants, Bureau of Plant Industry, Department of Agriculture, read a paper under the above title.

The following is a summary of the paper.

The possibilities of growing medicinal plants for the crude drug market have interested persons in all walks of life and in all parts of the country. It seems to have a special appeal to almost all classes. Few persons are really qualified to undertake such a project because it requires special knowledge of plant culture and the evaluation of the crop in many cases requires technical skill and equipment. Moreover the economic aspects are so frequently not thoroughly understood or given insufficient consideration.

A review of the attempts at commercial drug plant culture in the United States and a study of the factors and circumstances that accounted for their success or failure provides a fairly clear picture of the question as a whole. In fact the prospects of such an industry in the future may well be judged from the records of attempts in the past. Successful competition with foreign sources of supply appears no more likely to-day than formerly and the steady decline in the use of botanical drugs has further reduced the market outlet.

In this country successful commercial drug-plant culture has been limited to two periods. In the colonial days and early part of the past century herb growing as a community industry was quite profitable. Thereafter until the World War there was much experimenting but little more. The high prices during the war of many of the drugs usually imported provided an opportunity for domestic growers for several years but with the restoration of foreign supplies the new enterprises could not survive.

On the whole the situation is unchanged to-day. The same obstacles exist and the same remedies are proposed but there is no real progress toward making medicinal plant growing a staple agricultural industry in this country.