



THE MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF N. I. VAVILOV





The Memorial Museum of Nikolay Vavilov was opened on November 25th, 1980 at the All-Russian Institute of Plant Genetic Resources (VIR), which has been bearing Vavilov's name since 1967.

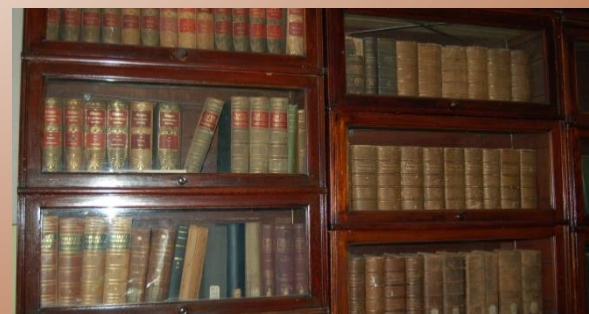
Originally, it was N. I. Vavilov's office where he worked as the Institute's director for almost 20 years - from December 1920 to August 1940.

The museum's exposition comprises several sections. The exhibition in the former anteroom includes documentary photos, personal possessions, scientific equipment, books written or edited by N. I. Vavilov as well as publications dedicated to his life and scientific career.



The memorial museum itself presents the authentic interior of Vavilov's office - a big desk with an ink-stand, a lamp, an old-fashioned telephone, a bulky old armchair, an original decorative screen used to hide a sink and preserved since the middle of the 19th century.

Displayed on the walls under glass are the ears of various wheat species and cultivars; they were the main object of Vavilov's research since his student years. In the centre, there is an old-time portrait of Charles Darwin brought by Vavilov from his trip to England. In his works Vavilov often argued with the father of the evolution theory, yet he identified himself as Darwin's follower. On the top of the fireplace, varied in shape and size, numerous gourds of the Cucurbitaceae family are displayed, which used to arouse curiosity of Vavilov's visitors. The bookcases contain the first volumes of the Proceedings of the Bureau of Applied Botany (first published in 1908), foreign books in different languages collected and deliberately studied by Vavilov, and numerous publications by the Institute's researchers.

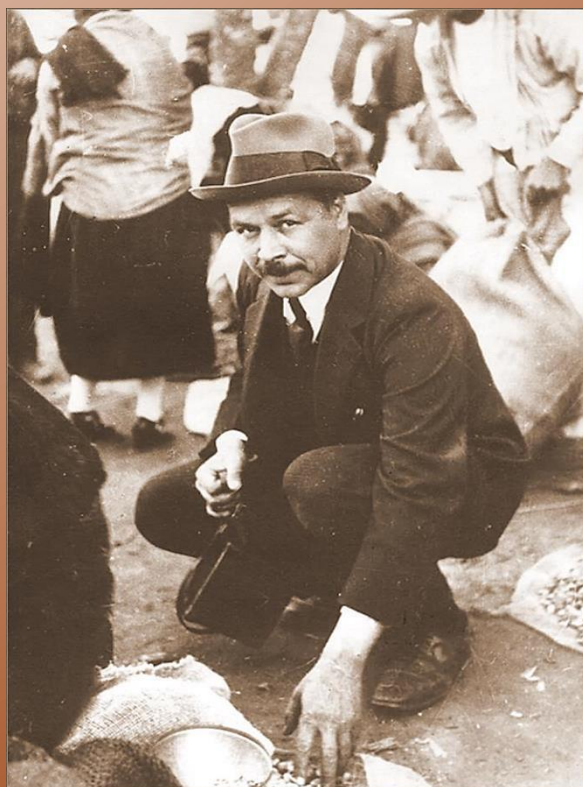


The collecting missions of the Institute are on display in the hall, on the way to the museum. There are four sections in the exhibition.

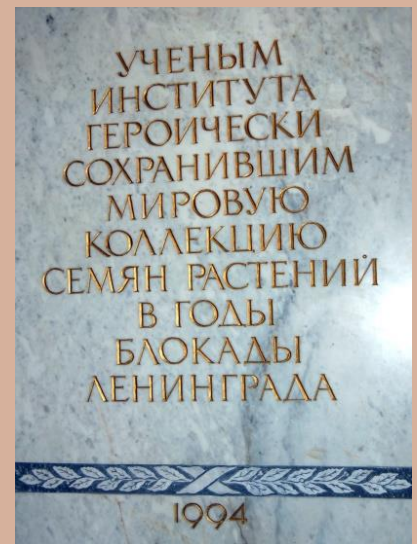
The first section presents in the chronological order Vavilov's business trips and scientific expeditions to the American continent. There are maps of Vavilov's routes, a photo of the American branch of VIR, portraits of G. D. Karpechenko and F. G. Dobzhansky whom Vavilov met in the USA, and other documentary photo materials of his trips.

The next stand displays the collecting missions in Asia. Vavilov travelled to the Asian continent more than once - he visited Iran, Afghanistan, Khorezm, China, Japan and Korea. The detailed map of his collecting missions as well as related photo documents and reports are presented here.

Beginning from 1913, Vavilov regularly travelled to Europe - on the one hand, to launch expeditions and establish scientific contacts, on the other hand, to get visas and permissions to visit Asian and African countries, many of which were European colonies at that time. Vavilov's itinerary in Africa included Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and mysterious Abyssinia.



A special section of the exhibition is dedicated to VIR's activities during the siege of Leningrad in World War II. It reveals the heroism of VIR's staff who, at the cost of their lives, managed to defend and preserve the world heritage of plant genetic resources for future generations. There are the pictures of the scientists who died at their workplace, and of those who survived the hard times.



In addition to the mentioned museum expositions, VIR's world collection of cultivated plants and their wild relatives is in itself a priceless museum exhibit. It reflects the two-century-long history of plant breeding trends and developments on a global scale, while in summer visitors are able to take a look at the live plant diversity in the fields at VIR's branches and here in St. Petersburg.

The Memorial Museum of N. I. Vavilov and the premises where the collection accessions are preserved are frequented by students of various academic institutions of Russia and foreign countries as well as by the groups of domestic and foreign researchers eager to get acquainted with the life and scientific career of N. I. Vavilov and with VIR's accomplishments in the collecting, conservation and study of worldwide plant genetic resources.

Additional information about the museum can be found on the website:

www.vir.nw.ru

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