

JUAN TOMAS ROIG MESA
(Pharmacist)

* May 31, 1877 + February 20, 1971

by Marcos A. Iglesias
Mississauga, Canada.

Juan T. Roig Mesa was born in Santiago de las Vegas, Province of Havana, Cuba, the son of P. C. Roig and his wife Manuela Mesa. J. T. Roig's parents had recently settled in Santiago de las Vegas, where his grandfather was a military doctor of the Spanish Army, specializing in yellow fever.

An orphan at the age of five, he had little opportunity to go to school. For this reason, at the age of eleven, he became an apprentice in a tobacco factory, obtaining a mastership in cigar-making three years later.

In 1894 he emigrated to Key West, Fla. to continue working in the tobacco industry. There he contributed financially to the Cuban liberation efforts. Upon the termination of war (1898) he returned to Cuba and continued to work in the tobacco industry for a short period of time.

A self-made man, Dr. Roig became an Elementary School Teacher in 1901. During this period, he expanded his knowledge of the English language by attending a seminar at Harvard University, in Cambridge, for about eight weeks. After Dr. Roig completed his Secondary School studies (1906) he registered at Havana University. In 1910 he graduated as Technician in Agriculture and Doctor in Pharmacy; in 1912 he received a doctorate in Natural Sciences and another doctorate in Physics and Chemistry Sciences.

He became Assistant Professor of Botany at Havana University. At that time he started writing about plants, which became his main activity throughout his life. Dr. Roig was also very active as a professor, including Elementary School and English language (1901-1909), Natural History, Cosmology and Biology (1917-1932) in Pinar del Rio, Cuba and Botany at the Pozos Dulce's Botanical School in Havana.

Dr. Roig joined the Experimental Agriculture Station, in Santiago de las Vegas, Cuba, as Head of the Botanical Department in February, 1913. For more than half a century he developed an intense research activity in that centre. In 1928 he published his Botanical Dictionary of Common Cuban Names. Since 1914 Dr. Roig published several papers in the Memoirs of the Cuban Association of Natural History Felipe Poey under the heading New, or little known plants in Cuba.

As head of the Botanical Department he made many excursions throughout Cuba, discovering and classifying new species of plants.

He represented Cuba in many international congresses in Rio de Janeiro, Washington, Port of Spain, Argentina and Sweden.

For more than thirty years he was an active member of the Commission of Medicinal Plants in Cuba, assessing the feasibility of establishing

in Cuba an industry to extract essential oils from plants.

In 1945 he published a book titled Medicinal, Aromatic or Poisonous Plants of Cuba.

Among many honors received in life, Dr. Roig was awarded an Honorary Degree in Engineering from Havana University (1962) and became a member of the Academy of Science of Cuba (1964). The Director of the Botanical Garden of New York, Dr. N. L. Britton, dedicated a new botanical genus to honor Dr. Roig, with the name 'roigii' within the genus 'phyllanthus'.

A list of plants classified by Dr. J. T. Roig is included at the end of this biography.

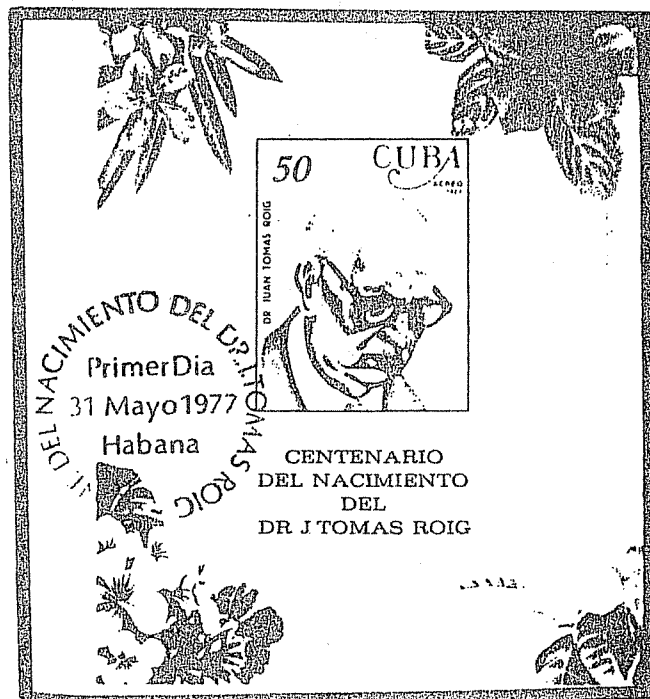
Philatelic Information:

On May 31st., 1977, the Cuban Post Office issued a set of six stamps and a souvenir sheet depicting several flowers and Dr. Roig's picture to commemorate the centenary of his birth. These stamps are listed by Yvert catalogue as numbers 2006/2009, A256/257 and H50.

List of Plants classified by Dr. Juan T. Roig.

<i>Banara brittonii</i> , Roig.	<i>Braxaria sebiflora</i> , Housa.
<i>Banara roigii</i> , P. Wilson.	<i>Zania multiflora</i> , Benth.
<i>Ouatea roigii</i> , P. Wilson.	<i>Teicrium nashii</i> , Kearney.
<i>Peperomia roignana</i> , Trilease.	<i>Ocotea victorinii</i> ,
<i>Dorstenia roigii</i> , Britton.	<i>Ocotea bucherii</i> ,
<i>Phorudendron lapatanum</i> , Trilease.	<i>Castela victorinii</i> ,
<i>Torrubia insularis</i> , Standl.	<i>Castela leonii</i> ,
<i>Xilopia roigii</i> , P. Wilson.	<i>Sprachea martiana</i> ,
<i>Erythroxylon roigii</i> , Britt. & Wilson.	<i>Malphigia wrightiana</i> ,
<i>Notodon roigii</i> , Britt & Wilson.	<i>Malphigia mariana</i> ,
<i>Tounatia cubensis</i> , Britton.	<i>Byrsonima maensis</i> ,
<i>Byrsonima roigii</i> , Ub.	<i>Byrsonima Luacesii</i> ,
<i>Clusia azcuyana</i> , Britton.	<i>Byrsonima martiana</i> ,
<i>Jacquinia roigii</i> , P. Wilson.	<i>Cassia roigii</i> , Britton.
<i>Neobrasia angustifolia</i> , Britton.	<i>Chamaecrista roigii</i> , Britton.
<i>Bumelia roigii</i> , Britt. & Small.	<i>Alophylum roigii</i> , Low.
<i>Callicarpa roigii</i> , Britt & Small.	
<i>Acrocyathus trechyphyllus</i> , Standl.	

Souvenir Sheet



Bibliography: Juan Tomás Roig Mesa - cigar-maker, teacher, scientist.
By Eduardo Salinas Croche.
Yvert catalogue.



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He became Assistant Professor of Botany at the University of Havana. At that time he started writing about plants, which became his main activity throughout his life. Dr. Roig was also very active as a professor, including elementary school and English language (1901 – 1909), Natural History, Cosmology and Biology (1917 – 1932), in Pinar del Rio, Cuba and Botany at the Pozos Dulces' Botanical School, in Havana.

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A list of plants classified by Dr. J. T. Roig is included at the end of this biography.

List of plants classified by Dr. Juan T. Roig.

<i>Banara brittonii</i> , Roig.	<i>Bravaisia tubiflora</i> , House.
<i>Banara roigii</i> , P. Wilson.	<i>Zania multifolista</i> , Bent.
<i>Ouratea roigii</i> , P. Wilson.	<i>Teicrium nashii</i> , Kearney.
<i>Peperomia roignana</i> , Trilease.	<i>Ocotea victorinii</i> ,
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