

A historical collection of *Osmorhiza claytonii* (Apiaceae) from Louisiana

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ABSTRACT

Osmorhiza claytonii is reported for the state of Louisiana based on a specimen collected by Josiah Hale in the 19th century. The locality is vague, but other records from the collector and his contemporaries have been treated as representative of the state's flora. Because no more recent occurrences for this taxon have been reported for the state it should be regarded as historical. *Published online* www.phytologia.org *Phytologia* 105(2): 68-70 (June 21, 2023). ISSN 030319430.

KEYWORDS: Sweet Cicely, Rapides, Josiah Hale.

While comparing digitized herbarium records to various taxa in a checklist of Louisiana's flora prepared by John Leonard Riddell (1852), I stumbled across a specimen of *Osmorhiza* collected by Josiah Hale which is stored at Brown University (BRU) (Fig. 1). Dr. Hale was a prolific collector in central and northern Louisiana in the mid-19th century (Ewan 1977). He lived at different times near both Alexandria and Shreveport, which are respectively in Rapides and Caddo parishes. Innovative, but bound to his era, Hale made only the simplest annotations on his collection labels (pers. obs.). In the case of the *Osmorhiza*, the date is missing, there is no collection number, and the location is given generically on the stationary of the label. The difficulty of assigning a spatial-temporal fix for his specimens is not new; the issue is discussed in depth by Holmes and Singhurst (2012). In general, it is known that Hale, Riddell, and William Marbury Carpenter were acquainted and painstakingly developed a checklist of Louisiana's flora. After it was rejected for publication by the Smithsonian, the paper was condensed into the work I cite for Riddell (Holmes and Singhurst 2012; Michael MacRoberts unpublished report). The rediscovery of this specimen, and others recently digitized by BRU, supports the claim by Riddell (1852) that nearly all of the plants he catalogued were represented by vouchers.

In Riddell's catalog he lists *O. longistylis*, and the Hale specimen is labeled with the disused name *O. brevistylis* D.C., while the pubescence and location suggest the modern identity as *O. claytonii* (Michx.) C.B. Clarke. *Osmorhiza claytonii*, or hairy sweet cicely, reaches 30-100 cm in height, bears cordlike roots, villous stems and leaves, usually 4-7 flowers in each umbellet of its diffuse inflorescence, and has little if any odor of anise (Small 1933; Weakley 2023; pers. obs.). It inhabits rich woods from Arkansas to the Carolinas and northward to Maine and North Dakota (Kartesz 2014; Small 1933; Weakley 2023). Due to the disjunct nature, the occurrence of this species in Louisiana at first seems unlikely. However, there are many other disjunct northern species such as *Heuchera hirsuticaulis* and *Micranthes virginensis* with range extensions into this region (Kartesz 2014; Kelley 2021).

The sheet pictured below is the only specimen and the only record of this genus I found for the state aside from its inclusion in Riddell's checklist; it has been roundly excluded by other works (Kartesz 2014; Small 1933; USDA, NRCS 2023; Weakley 2022). Like Holmes and Singhurst, I have decided to report on this issue in hopes that the taxon might be rediscovered in the state. It should be treated as historical, but a careful eye should be trained on the hardwood slopes of the Kisatchie National Forest in Spring.

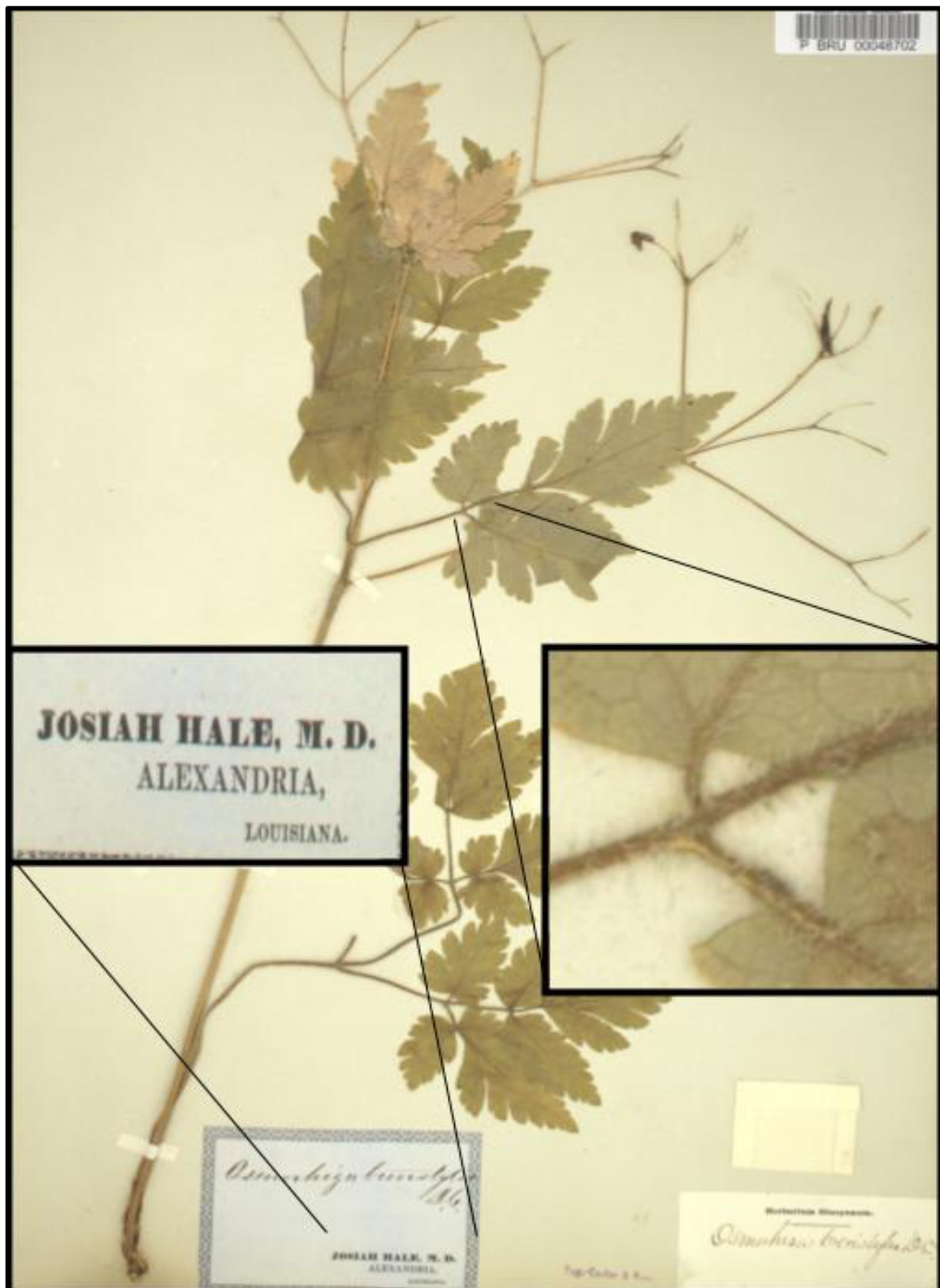


Figure 1. Record specimen. Copyrighted CC-BY from BRU.
<https://www.brown.edu/research/projects/herbarium>

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