

# **Rhodora**

JOURNAL OF THE  
NEW ENGLAND BOTANICAL CLUB

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Vol. 66

April-June, 1964

No. 766

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## FRANCIS WELLES HUNNEWELL 1880-1964

Botany was definitely an avocation for Francis Hunnewell and he was always careful to let it be known that he was not a trained botanist. In a way, this was pure modesty, the kind that characterized the man, for he not only knew a lot about plants but he worked with them intelligently for nearly sixty years. It was in 1913 that he became Phanerogamic Curator of the New England Botanical Club, a title he held until 1958. He had been elected to membership in the Club in 1912. This was a period when many Club members were assembling herbaria of their own. The stimulation provided by such men as M. L. Fernald, J. R. Churchill, C. F. Batchelder, S. N. F. Sanford, Ludlow Griscom and C. H. Knowlton produced a concerted and sometimes competitive effort in the collecting of specimens and the building of private herbaria. Hunnewell shared in this enthusiasm and before his collecting activities subsided, he had assembled an herbarium in excess of 20,000 sheets. Most of these were not local gatherings in New England, as were some of his friends' collections. He often went far away to do his botanizing. Notable collections were made in Chile, Argentina, Peru, Panama and several of the islands of the Caribbean area. His most intensive collecting was done in Virginia, where he spent several months in residence nearly every year, but he also collected extensively in West Virginia, Colorado, Yellowstone Park, and in the Rocky Mountains of Canada.

Nearly all of Francis Hunnewell's botanical activities had to do with field botany in one way or another. The building



of a private herbarium was one way of savoring again the pleasure he derived from getting the specimens in the first place. However, it was no joy to him to put someone else's specimens into his collection, for no image of the living plant or of its haunts was provided by the gatherings of others. As a result, his private herbarium held specimens collected only by himself. Even the fourteen short papers, mostly published in *Rhodora*, authored by Mr. Hunnewell, dealt with the geographical ranges and other field aspects of plants. Again a devotion to plants in the field is illustrated by his establishment of a permanent fund at Harvard to be used only for field work in systematic botany. His admiration of Professor Fernald was shown by his having asked that this fund be designated as the Fernald Fund.

Although he was devoted to Fernald and looked upon him with approval as a combined field naturalist and professional botanist, Mr. Hunnewell knew Professor Fernald well from other points of view. It is remembered how on one of several such occasions Mr. Hunnewell, with a wry and quiet sense of humor, kept Fernald from an inevitable attack on a certain author of whom he had frequently been critical. The incident involved a new book just off the press. Mr. Hunnewell's approach to Fernald was, "I've just read so and so's book and found it to be excellent and very informative. How do you like it?" Fernald's response is said to have been muffled and restrained. Later, out of Fernald's view and hearing, Mr. Hunnewell was observed to have derived some pleasure at having curbed somewhat the voluble expression Fernald was sure to have given had a less muzzling approach to the subject been made.

Around the Gray Herbarium, we were often to pick up the quiet humor Mr. Hunnewell possessed. He worked in the New England Botanical Club many, many hours over the years. From the time of his retirement as Club Curator to within a few months of his death, Mr. Hunnewell spent much time checking the specimens of his personal herbarium against those in the Gray Herbarium to see whether they were needed. He often turned over, usually in small lots,



those he judged to be significant additions to the Gray collections. Those he felt were not required were sent to other institutions as gifts or in exchange. The primary recipients were the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (specimens from Virginia) and the University of Minnesota.

Francis Hunnewell was associated with Harvard University in one way or another from the beginning of his student days in 1899 until his death on January 15, 1964. He was retired from being a Research Associate of the Gray Herbarium in 1959, at his own request and insistence, but this made little difference in the frequency of his trips to the herbarium. Following graduation from Harvard College in 1902, Mr. Hunnewell took an advanced degree in the Law School. He practiced law for a number of years but in 1912 he became Comptroller of Harvard and then served as Secretary to the Corporation of the University until 1933. A thank you for devoted service came upon his retirement from that post in the form of an honorary masters degree from Harvard given from the hand of President Lowell. From then on, Mr. Hunnewell began to devote more of his time to botany and, as a Research Associate of the Gray Herbarium, maintained his connection with the University.

Mr. Hunnewell would have been the last person to claim a place of recognition in botany yet he very definitely made a contribution of significance. His efforts supported others mainly, but his activities in the New England Botanical Club Herbarium were sustained and productive. The Club owes much to his diligence.

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Rollins, Reed C. 1964. "FRANCIS WELLES HUNNEWELL 1880-1964." *Rhodora* 66, 97-99.

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