

Old Port au Choix,
Newfoundland,
July 28, 1929

Dear Weatherby:

Our beautiful schedule, worked out from the map and advertised sailings of the "Safona", the "mucky" boat on this coast, is all knocked to pieces. When we reached the Bay of Islands we found that the "Safona" was so off schedule that she dropped out one trip & we were hung up for exactly a week at the Bay which every botanist has visited & which we considered worked out. However, to make the best of it, we secured a good man and his motorboat & spent the week doing fairs and mountains I had never been on. The most obvious place was a white-topped small mountain, probably 1500 ft. lying up the Harbour a few miles above the settlements. I had always taken it to be a hopeless granite hill & had never

considered looking at it; but far want
of something better and not daring to get too
far out of sight of the wharf, we got landed
there for a day. It is called Hammah's Head
by the natives (Mt. Patricia on modern maps
published in England) & it proved to be
white limestone & enough to occupy several
days. The glades in the woods at the base
are, of course, full of ordinary spruce-
wood things but with them and just as
indigenous a beautiful Birsenum (a stranger)
a Linum with white corolla with yellow
eye, Lathyrus spratensis, a strange Scrophularia,
a strange repent Cardamine, Thimulus
macrochatus, etc. As soon as we got above
the woods we found the whole slope
and crest of bare limestone shingle a solid
carpet of three dominant species - literally
by the hundreds of thousands & so abundant
as to make the turf: Batrachium Linaria,
growing 20-30 to a turf 6 inches across, the
plants 6-8 inches high, with sterile fronds
mostly 3-5 inches long!; Anemone
multifida (previously rare & scarce), with

10-60 scapes to a plant; and a Festuca which I take to be the Rocky Mt. F. sciaphila. Of course other things were there, but less dominant: Cryptogramma stellata making turf!; Thelypteris rotundifolia (which we have found subsequently on moist Turfy bases of limestone headlands); a strange Antennaria; a strange Araba, &c.

Then, learning positively that the steamer would not be in and ready to sail for several days (bringing in 1600 iced boxes of Halibut and salmon from Battle Harbour, Labrador, each box 200 lbs., to be iced at Curling, Bay of Ids., shipped to North Sydney, there iced, shipped by train to Boston, New York, Buffalo and Detroit to be sold as "fresh" fish), we spent a long day - 18 hours - visiting by motor boat the taluses of several mountains in the Middle Arm of the bay, where our chaperon but the invalid Waghorne had ever been. We did not have time to ascend the mountains, merely to hurry over the taluses.

of Penguin Head, Auld's Head,
Butterwater Head and three others - but,
Oxytropis foliolosa (very rare anywhere), two
new Taraxacums (one of them new - "seeds"),
a beautiful new white-headed "Anty" [name],
Arnicas, Festuca arenaria (arctic),
Gentiana, etc., and many plants indicating rich
floras on the crests.

Finally, the Sabona sailed on the 17th - on
board were Mr. & Mrs. Morris, en route to
Homer's Cove, then 48 miles by motorboat to
Photograph Habenaria straminea! They had
been waiting 10 days at a neighboring village,
without knowing where to contact & were
naturally broken up that they had missed
joining us on real botanizing. However,
Morris is an intensely literal Scotchman, with
about the same amount of humor as K.K. Maule,
and perhaps 10 days would have been too much!

We had selected Old Port au Choix
because the horizontal limestones of
western Newfoundland here come to the

surface along every cone, forming extensive gravel (angular & very sharp) - covered barrens for miles around. Looking out our windows we see bare crests in all directions, interspersed with impossible spruce thickets, and on the points high cliffs with very high talus. The village occupies a narrow isthmus (perhaps $\frac{1}{4}$ mile across) between St John Bay at the north and Ingamachois Bay at the south, so that malar-boats can be taken in either direction, without having to go many miles around Pointe Riche. Back of us to the north, with its southern edge about 10 miles away lies the Range called The Hector Mts and beyond that to the north Barrow Harbor Hill, where we got so many fine things four years ago.

The people of Port au Choix (two miles away) and Old Port au Choix are the most intelligent and modern of any we have seen thrown with in the "outposts". The "agent" (manager of fishery etc.) is a Toronto born man, and one boat, Stanley Lavers and his wife (née Aliée Breton)

are of the old French stock of early
Newfoundland days and a splendid
pair. They have a big house, with
three large spare rooms, fine garden,
cream-frying corns, plenty of eggs &
poultry & one line high - salmon,
cod, halibut, lobster, rabbit, fowl,
cream that stands up in mounds
(half a pint a meal per man on
everything!); lettuce, carrots & greens.
They quickly recognized our dislike of
fry & boil, bake or broil everything
& we are so satisfied with our home
& our splendid food that we have elimin-
ated some other projected areas &
are prolonging the stay. This, however,
is not disadvantageous, for everyday
we bring in one or more "or. spp." or species
"new to Newfoundland". Our "laboratory"
is the adjacent store of Narcisse Breton,
a general store, now giving up business,
so that there is only a meagre remnant of

stock on the shelves & we have only 1-5 purchasers visit us daily! Instead, the shelves are stacked with driers, ventilators, etc., & we put up our specimens on the counters. The visitors come for impossible purchases & linger to comment on the beauty of our "flowers" & gladly give us the local names for the showy ones.

The weather has been perfect, clear & rainless through the day, with showers in the night; consequently, we have been embarrassed by full presses & the Temptation to go daily to a new headland or prairie-like barren, working 3 or 4 hours after supper putting thump into driers. I brought last driers but we need twice as many & have to shift & manipulate to get out enough to put up each days collecting; and, at that, we prepared a "taboo" list of hundreds of species too generally distributed to collect. Antennaria and Arnica occupy much of the time, for Euphrasia, which will soon take their place, is hardly flowering yet.

We have, I suppose, fifteen species of Antennaria collected in large quantity, at least five of them n. sp., and some others previously known only from the type locality, many miles away. Everywhere we go Arnica Fernaldii Rydb. is seen, but always scattered; similarly A. terrae-novae & A. Longii (the handsomest of the group, undescribed) are scattered all about. But on one side of one prairie we came upon a fully stoloniferous little species (A. Foggii, n. sp.) making solid carpets on the fuzzy slopes & looking like and lawns of dandelions. And, speaking of Taraxacum, that genus is in full swing. Here we have put up nine species and every day or two another turns up — needless to say, several n. sp.

We very promptly came upon Habenaria Stammia all about us — the species Morris has gone so far to photograph!

He will be returning south on the "Sagone"
this afternoon or tomorrow morning & I haven't
decided whether to break that news to him.
For as I know whether to disconcert his
plans by showing him another Habenaria,
n. sp. (H. Pylaiana). In 1876 Bachelard
de Pylaie spent ^{eight days} ~~two weeks~~ about Injamaachiz
Bay and in his "Voyage" spoke of getting
Platanthera bifolia of Europe. His record has
always been discounted; but last Sunday,
while Longcoras at home writing the weekly
letters (for the south-bound boat), Jaff and
I took a stroll before supper and in the
heath-barren (Empetrum, Urtica & Juniperus)
found a yellow-flowered Hab. with 2
basal leaves, a new sp. or at least so
recognize American sp. & obviously
what De la Pylaie had seen. Subsequently
we have collected four other nos. of
it and now ignore it as a "weed".

The Cornus "stolonifera" of the limestone
talus and thickets has green bark, satiny
shen to leaves and hemispherical corymbs

only 3 or 4 cm. broad (surely not C. stolonifera). Long sneaked in one of the "Taboo" list, Actaea rubra, and when I came upon it in press I saw that its foliage was white with pilosity, so we have collected some more!

From my place at Table I look out on a fine cliff a mile away, but one has to go there to find that its crest is covered with a turf of the arctic Carex nardina; & so it goes. The Equisetum

"arvense" all over the limy knolls is queer, with black rubbery stem; the Oryzopsis "asperifolia" and Carex pedunculata don't look right, and the Thelypteris spin. of the lime-barrens looks like very small contorted spin with us but with warty, white scales and glandular ridges!

Nineteen years ago Wiegand got a sterile branch of a strange willow at Pointe Riche. It has been recognized by both Schneider & ~~the~~ me

as a very distinct n. sp. but the material was inadequate. It was that which really decided me on coming here — one new boat — and now we have a beautiful series of Salix trifurcata — a very handsome species nearest S. Barclayi of Alaska. Yesterday we saw the spikes of a pondweed in a marsh-pond. I graded in, expecting to get the ubiquitous Pot. alpinus or one of the heterophyllum forms; but it is a stranger, the submerged leaves ending in cusps 5 mm. long! I can't try to list all the hundreds of things of real interest. The following, taken from Fagg's note-book are enough to show that we are getting results — and the amazing thing, as always heretofore, is that each different barren, headland or pond has a novelty: Carex incurva, Primula egalikensis, Carex Hassii, Eriophorum opacum, Carex concinna, Ribes n. sp., Araba?, Bromelica sp., Carex rhombica, Salix

pedunculata (a corker, previously known
only from type on the Straits), Epilobium
davuricum, Vaccinium sp.?

Today, Sunday, following local custom (there
is no church here) we are keeping quiet; but
we have naphthalined four great piles of
specimens already out of press and are
spending the afternoon writing, napping &
perhaps, later, walking (with our eyes shut)
to Pointe Rich, 3 miles away. Tomorrow
we shall rush the presses & get in a run of
hot driers, for Tuesday morning early
we start with guides for the Doctor Mts. &
must have 500 or more driers ready to take
with us. Then a week from tomorrow
(Monday) we shall take the Sagona south to
Bonnie Bay, described by Sir William Logan
as the finest fjord south of northern Labrador.
There we shall stay two weeks or more, doing
the mountains, diorite, serpentine, slate,
quartzite and limestone, which rise 2000-
3000 feet above the Bay and which have

bare ledges coming down to the water's edge, so that we can be landed directly on the alpine areas for the day and picked up at night. It's a vast country & we have to omit 99% of it!

Kindly hand this on to Mr. Robinson & any others who may be interested.

Long & Fugg^{Jain} send regards to you and Mrs. Weatherley & others at the Habaricum. I am trying to take good close-up photos of novelities & Long wants to pay for some in Rhodora!

Very Sincerely Yours,

M. L. Fernald



Fernald, Merritt Lyndon. 1929. "Fernald, Merritt Lyndon July 28, 1929 [Fernald to C.A. Weatherby]." *Merritt Lyndon Fernald correspondence*

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