

Botanists of the Butler University Faculty (1920-1955)

FAY KENOYER DAILY, Butler University

When Dr. Ray C. Friesner came to teach at Butler University in 1919, botany received only minor attention in the curriculum. However, his dream of a Department of Botany materialized the next year and under his many years of direction flourished and bore fruit.

This history would not be complete without including the lives and works of the alumni, but the enormity of this task is evident by glancing through a bibliography of alumni and staff publications up to 1950. Eighty-one authors are recorded.

The large number of graduates listed in American Men of Science (3) received notice by Victor A. Greulach in 1956 (9). The Butler University Botany Department was mentioned as a part of a small group having outstanding productivity worthy of particular note. He concluded, "There is little doubt but that productivity of this small group of liberal arts colleges as contrasted with the lack of productivity of most other colleges of this type is due to outstanding and inspiring teachers of botany. However, there also seems to be a regional milieu favoring strong undergraduate botany departments and attracting and holding superior teachers."

A discussion of short-term members of the staff including summer and evening class teachers would add a prohibitive length, too; for the department have served the department: Rousseau McClellan, Ferdinand Mehrlich, George Fisher, R. F. Daubenmire, Scott McCoy, Charlotte Grant, Noe Higinbotham, Charlene Coffing, Ina Stanley Fitzgerald, Marjorie McConaha Andrews, Charles Hill, Charles Reimer, Florence Geisler and the author.

It is, therefore, to the members of the regular staff serving between 1920 and 1955 that this account is confined. They are presented chronologically as they joined the department.

Dr. Ray C. Friesner was born in Bremen, Ohio, 1894, to parents of modest means. He was to enjoy his mother only a few short years since she died when he was only six years old. His education was extended to college training even though he found it necessary to help finance it. Not only did he accomplish this, but became an honor student at Ohio Wesleyan University. He was stimulated in botanical study there by Dr. Claude O'Neal. Graduate study was done at the University of Michigan under the direction of Dr. F. C. Newcombe, where a Ph. D. degree was obtained.

The personality and excellent training of this man had been such that the Butler Botany Department soon expanded under his direction after its founding in 1920. Dr. Friesner was thorough with attention to detail whether preparing class notes, teaching, advising or doing research. He was a gentleman, scholar and kind friend. His early interest in research and state academies is seen from the paper appearing in the Proceedings of the Michigan Academy of Science in 1919 (6) and the title of a paper presented at the Indiana Academy of Science in 1920 (7). He joined six state academies.

He became widely known internationally as curator of the herbarium at Butler which now contains around 100,000 specimens and has been named in his honor. Collecting frequently, he added a great many specimens to the collection. His association with a group of plant taxonomists affiliated with the Indiana Academy of Science was especially rewarding and stimulating to him. The John B. Coulter award was presented to him in 1947 for his work as secretary of the State Flora Committee. He served the Academy in numerous ways and was chairman of the Index Committee when the Index of the Proceedings Volumes 1-50 (8) was published in 1948. He made an efficient secretary of the Academy and served as president in 1936. He was made fellow of the A. A. A. S., Indiana Academy of Science and Ohio Academy of Science, and was a member of a number of scientific and honor societies (15).

Many former students will recall with pleasure the field trips taken with him—the dew-washed mornings (for he started early) and the diligent work in the field. Some of these were class excursions, but other trips were taken with associates, staff or graduate students for research purposes. His published works considered cytology, ecology and taxonomy with his work on fern and fern allies and *Solidago* of Northeastern America probably being the best known. A bibliography is given in a memorial issue of the *Butler Studies* (14).

Upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Botany Department at Butler, a dinner and program were held in Dr. Friesner's honor and an anniversary issue of the *Butler University Botanical Studies* appeared containing papers contributed by the staff and alumni and an historical account of the botany department by Dr. Potzger (13).

In 1947, Dr. Friesner was appointed Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler. Other recognitions of ability were the James Irving Holcomb Award from Butler University in 1948 and an honorary Doctor of Science degree conferred upon him by the Ohio Wesleyan University in 1951.

Although his administrative duties were heavy as Dean and chairman of the Botany Department, he was still vigorous in his teaching, research and field work. However, his health began to fail and a heart attack brought an early end to a brilliant career on December 1, 1952.

Dr. Stanley A. Cain was added to the botany staff at Butler in 1924. He was born in Jefferson County, Indiana in 1902. His education led to a B.S. degree from Butler University and an M.S. and Ph.D. degree from Chicago University. Dr. Cain vigorously launched his scientific career at Butler with several early papers on ecological subjects. The *Butler University Botanical Studies* first appeared in 1929 with Dr. Cain as editor, and was later edited for many years by Dr. Friesner. Students and faculty have been afforded by this periodical a wonderful vehicle for publication of their research. Its circulation reaches many libraries over the world.

From Butler, Dr. Cain went to teach at Indiana University in 1931. Later, he taught at the University of Tennessee, Cranbrook Institute and is now teaching at the University of Michigan. His interests include micropaleontology, plant sociology and plant geography with many publications in these fields, the best known of which is probably *Foundations*

of *Plant Geography* (2). He has received a number of important grants to further his work.

He served the Indiana Academy of Science as editor of the *Proceedings* 1929-1934 and chairman of several committees, and was made a fellow of that society. He has been president of the Tennessee Academy of Science, 1945, and the Ecological Society of America in 1953. He was A. A. A. S. vice-president in 1954 and has held offices in other national societies. Two important honors have recently been accorded Dr. Cain—an award of merit from the Botanical Society of America at the 50th anniversary meeting and an honorary doctorate from the University of Montreal at the IX International Botanical Congress.

His is a truly remarkable career at its prime.

Dr. Charles Mervin Palmer came to Butler in 1925. Born in Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1900, he attended school at Pennsylvania State University for the advanced degrees of B.S. and M.S. He received his Ph.D. degree in 1940 from Indiana University. At Butler University, Dr. Palmer was an excellent teacher and initiated some fine courses in microbiology.

His chief interest is in phycology and his field work has added much to our knowledge of the algae found in Indiana. His field of specialization is in the study of two genera of fresh-water algae—*Lemanea* and *Sacheria*. Many of his papers appear in the *Butler University Botanical Studies* and the *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science*. A very useful file of the algae found in Indiana with references to the authors was initiated by him.

Dr. Palmer's activity in the Indiana Academy of Science, of which he is a fellow, has included service on committees, contribution of numerous papers and the press-secretaryship 1942-1947. He is a member of other Academies and scientific societies in this country and others and served as vice-president of the Phycological Society of America in 1953.

As a member of a Friend's Service Unit, he did important work for UNESCO in India and Pakistan 1947-1948. In 1950, Dr. Palmer left Butler to become Head of the Nuisance Organisms Research Unit, Biology Section, Robert A. Taft Sanitary Engineering Center, U. S. Public Health Service, where he has continued his outstanding work. He received an S.E.C. award for developing a special microscope slide for counting algae in water supplies (10). Recently, he published an excellent manual on identification, significance and control of algae in water supplies including some fine color plates (12). A large measure of success is his.

Willard Nelson Clute came to Butler in 1928. He was born at Painted Post, New York, in 1869. His higher education was taken at Columbia University 1896-1899 and the University of Chicago, 1903. He was head of Botany at Joliet Township High School, 1903-1909; instructor of botany at Curtis High School, Chicago, 1910; teacher at Flower Technical High School, Chicago, 1911-1928; Curator of the Herbarium, Columbia University, 1897-1899; and Curator of the New York Botanical Garden 1898-1899. Several other short-term positions were held before reaching Butler in 1928.

Mr. Clute established the Botanical Garden at Butler University the same year he arrived there and worked diligently to plant and care for many unusual and interesting plants. He spent considerable time working

in the herbarium and directed mounting and filing of specimens. His exasperation with the endless changes in rules of nomenclature and the names of plants was well-known.

He often composed short jingles about the students to their delight and he published a volume of poems, *Off the Record*, in 1935. Poems also appear to color his botanical writings.

He is probably best known for his popular approach to botany in teaching and in presentation of his research, such as his books: *Our Ferns in Their Haunts*, 1901, *Swamp and Dune*, 1931, *Fern Allies of North America*, 1905 and revised 1928, and *American Plant Names*, 1923. Most of these as well as the *Fern Bulletin* and *American Botanist* were published by Mr. Clute's own publishing firm. The latter publication was unique, having much of the material contributed by the editor. A list of his publications is given in an excellent article about him written by C. V. Morton (11). Mr. Clute is considered the virtual founder of the American Fern Society and published the *Bryologist*, *Plant World*, *Ornithologist and Botanist*, besides the above-mentioned journals.

Upon his retirement from Butler, Mr. Clute became director of the botanical garden at Holliday Park in 1938. His death at 81 years of age in 1950 followed a long illness. Those who knew him well will long remember this colorful friend and will recall his gay banter, keen mind, and the wealth of his scientific writings.

Mabel Esten (Mrs. Sidney R. Esten) served briefly on the regular staff of the Botany Department 1931-1932 and then became an instructor in the Butler University Evening Division in 1932. In later years she again served several years in the day division of the Botany Department. She was born in 1898 at Anderson, Indiana, where she obtained her early training. She received her B.S. degree at Butler University in 1922 and returned to Anderson to teach at Anderson Junior High School. In 1923, she married, and because of her husband's interest in conservation, was stimulated to return to Butler for an M.S. degree in botany. She was then added to the Butler University Botany Department staff.

Although Mrs. Esten has been, first of all, a homemaker for her husband and daughter who are both public school teachers now, she has been an excellent, popular and devoted teacher for many years and has published papers on plant association (4) and chlorophyll therapy (5). She is a member of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi and editor of the *Hoosier Button Box*.

She retired from teaching at Butler University in 1953, but again took a teaching position at DePauw University recently.

Dr. John Ernest Potzger came to teach at Butler in 1932. The son of a Lutheran minister, he was born 1886 in Presque Isle County, Michigan, a northern woods area. He was truly a child of the wilderness which he loved and studied so well. Early training at the Teacher's Seminary at Addison, Illinois, was followed by more than twenty years of teaching at the Emmaus Lutheran School in Indianapolis. He also studied music and, a true scholar, his interests finally led him to take a bachelor's and master's degree from Butler University and a doctorate at Indiana University in 1932 when he was added to the Butler Botanical staff.

He was a thorough and excellent teacher and his enthusiasm and warm personality attracted many students. His frequent field excursions to Mackinac Island with ecology classes were anticipated and enjoyed by many. Considerable field work was done and his prodigious published research has been recorded in a bibliography in the *Butler University Botanical Studies* (16). He was interested primarily in ecology and paleobotany.

He was a frequent contributor of papers in the *Indiana Academy of Science* of which he was a fellow. Dr. Potzger served numerous times on committees and was chairman of both the Botany and Taxonomy Sections. He was a member of the *Wisconsin Academy of Science*, as well as several other scientific societies. He was editor of *School Science* and *Mathematics*, 1940-1953; *Butler Botanical Studies*, 1953-1955; *Central Association of Science and Mathematics Teachers Yearbook*, 1940-1945. He was president of the *Ecological Society of America*, 1954; vice-president, 1947, and president, 1948, of the *Central Association of Science and Mathematics*.

Several grants-in-aid for his research were received from the *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, *Indiana Academy of Science* and *Eli Lilly and Company*. He was given the *J. I. Holcomb* award by *Butler University* in 1949.

As a member of the *President's Committee*, he studied the *Quetico-Superior Forest* in 1949 and in 1952 was invited by *Dr. Albert Courtemanche* to come to *Mont Tremblant Biological Station* to direct pollen analysis of bogs of that region under the auspices of the *University of Montreal* and the *Quebec provincial government*.

He became head of the *Botany Department of Butler University* in 1953 after *Dr. Friesner's* death, and there followed an extremely busy and crowded two years of service. *Dr. W. D. Billings* (1) summed up this period in his life so well, "He was everywhere and seemingly doing everything . . ." His sudden demise in *September, 1955*, closed an outstanding career.

Dr. Rex Webster who came to teach in the *Butler Botany Department* in 1950 and *Dr. John E. Pelton* who came in 1953 are present members of the staff with *Dr. Marion T. Hall* as chairman. I leave the promising unfolding chapters of this history in their capable hands.

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