

**Francis Whittier Pennell biographies
of botanists, circa 1924-1952
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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia

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Summary Information

Repository	Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia
Creator	Pennell, Francis W., (Francis Whittier), 1886-1952
Title	Francis Whittier Pennell biographies of botanists
Date	circa 1924-1952
Extent	2.5 Linear Inches
Language	English
Abstract	Francis Whittier Pennell (1886-1952) was an American botanist and a world authority on the Scrophulariaceae. He served as associate curator of the New York Botanical Garden from 1914 to 1921 and as curator of plants at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia from 1921 until his death. He had an intense interest in the history of botany and collected biographical material on many early botanists. This collection includes Pennell's research notes as well as some finished biographies.

Preferred Citation note

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], Coll.221, Francis Whittier Pennell biographies of botanists, circa 1924-1952, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Biographical/Historical note

Born August 4, 1886 into a Quaker family, Francis Pennell Whittier grew up on a farm outside Philadelphia. Because he was thought to be delicate, he was not expected to work on the farm, and his education took place at the Westtown School. He continued his education at the University of Pennsylvania, earning his B.S. in 1911 and his Ph.D. in 1913. During his doctoral work, Pennell was encouraged by the head of the botany department, John Macfarlane, to pursue the study of Scrophulariaceae. Pennell remained at the University for a year for his post-doctoral fellowship before moving to New York to serve as associate curator of the New York Botanical Garden from 1914 to 1921. In 1921, he moved to Philadelphia to serve as the curator of plants at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

Although he was afraid of water, he was “always a firm believer in the necessity of personal field study, [and] his expeditions took him into Columbia from 1917 to 1918 and 1922; to Peru in 1925 and 1948; to Chile in 1925; [and] to Mexico in 1934, 1935, 1937-1938 and 1940,” (Camp, page 83). He also spent considerable time in the United States, especially in the southeastern mountains or in the west.

Pennell was considered a world authority on Scrophulariaceae and wrote *The Scrophulariaceae of Eastern Temperate North America* in 1935. According to Carol Ann McCormick, he “also wrote prolifically on plants outside his chosen group, on taxonomic problems, and on botanical history, such as his brief lives of C.S. Rafinesque and Thomas Nuttall.” (McCormick). In fact, he was very much interested in the lives of early American botanists, especially those whose names appeared on the Academy’s herbarium sheets as collectors, and he gathered biographical information on many. Much in demand as a lecturer on this subject, he presented biographical sketches which were often published later.

He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The Botanical Society of America, the Torrey Botanical Club, and the Pennsylvania Botanical Society. In 1942, he served as president of the American Society of Plant Taxonomists, and for many years he was president of the Philadelphia Botanical Club and editor of its journal, *Bartonia*. Pennell died of a heart attack on February 3, 1952.

Camp, W.H. “Francis Whittier Pennell.” *Taxon*, Vol. 1, No. 5, May, 1952. Page 83

McCormick, Carol Ann. “Francis Whittier Pennell.” University of North Carolina Herbarium, <http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/Collectors/pennell.htm> (accessed November 29, 2011).

Scope and Contents note

This collection includes Pennell’s research notes as well as some finished biographies. The material is arranged into two series, “General biographies,” and “Biographies of Individuals.” The “General

biographies” are arranged according to subject, such as Quaker botanists. The “Biographies of individuals” series includes Pennell's notes and writings on botanists and is arranged alphabetically by name. Some of the botanists whose biographies are included in this collection are J. A. Allen, Joshua L. Baily, Jr. (1889-1981), John H. Barnhart (1871-1949), Evelyn A. Benson, Mrs. Edward M. Cheston, Peter Collinson (1694-1768), Benjamin Draper, Joseph Ewan (1909-1999), M.S. Fernald (1873-1950), H.W. Fowler, Louella Lippincott Gaskill, R.G. Haas, Thomas Hoopes, Jr., Frank Morton Jones (born 1869), Robert H. Land, Arthur N. Leeds, Henry Leffman, E.D. (Elmer Drew) Merrill (1876-1956), Evelyn J. Schneider, George Stewart, Marie-Laure Tardieu-Blot (1902-1988), G. Taylor, Mrs. Charles Barnes, Jane Wise, and Mrs. Harry J. Wright, Jr.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia 2010.12.07

Conditions Governing Access note

This collection is open for research use.

Conditions Governing Use note

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Processing Information note

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Finding aid entered into the Archivists' Toolkit by Garrett Boos.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia: Francis Whittier Pennell addresses, collection 224; Francis Whittier Pennell correspondence, collection 209; Francis Whittier Pennell field notebooks, collection 208; Francis Whittier Pennell identifications, collection 223; Francis Whittier Pennell itineraries of expeditions, collection 118; Francis Whittier Pennell scientific writings, collection 134; Francis Whittier Pennell Scrophulariaceae studies, collection 672; and Pennell-Pilsbry Expedition to Mexico, collection 903.

Controlled Access Headings

Corporate Name(s)

- Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

Genre(s)

- Biographies
- Manuscripts
- Research notes

Occupation(s)

- Botany

Personal Name(s)

- Baily, Joshua L., (Joshua Longstreth), 1826-1916
- Barnhart, John Hendley, 1871-1949
- Collinson, Peter, 1694-1768
- Merrill, Elmer Drew, 1876-1956
- Tardieu-Blot, Mme, (Laure)

Subject(s)

- Botanists

General biographies

Collection Inventory

General biographies

Biographies of Botanists (general) undated

	Box	Folder
Text	1	1

Individual biographies

Allen - Burk undated

	Box	Folder
Text	1	2

Castle - Greenway undated

	Box	Folder
Text	1	3

Haenke - Lippincott undated

Individual biographies

	Box	Folder
Text	1	4

Martius - Rau undated

	Box	Folder
Text	1	5

Scribner - Williams undated

	Box	Folder
Text	1	6
