



Newsletter of the **FRIENDS**
OF THE
FARLOW

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Among the Farlow's rich collections of botanical illustrations there is a sizable group of watercolors - 100 of vascular plants and 605 of fungi - by Eliza Beulah Blackford. These were given to the Farlow Herbarium in 1933 by Mrs. Blackford, along with her correspondence, her spore prints, and her specimens. Together they constitute the work of an estimable woman and demonstrate how, as an amateur, she was able to contribute to mycology during the early part of the twentieth century.

Eliza Beulah Blackford was born in Easton, Ohio sometime around 1849 and moved to the Boston area with her husband in the early 1890s. She enrolled in The School of the Museum of Fine Arts in 1895 for what she described as a "busy five year course."¹ After her graduation she joined the Museum of Fine Arts staff as assistant in the ticket office. Though the museum stopped charging admission after 1918, her job title remained the same until she retired, some twenty-five years later.

Blackford's interest in natural history, particularly mycology, became an avocation in Boston, in spite of her lack of formal training. She collected fungi while walking the route between her home and her job at the museum. In addition, she spent much of her leisure time looking all over New England, particularly Massachusetts, for specimens.



Blackford's painting of *Urnula craterium* Fr., collected in Ellis, Massachusetts, on May 25, 1907. In her notebook she wrote that this specimen was the only *U. craterium* she ever saw.

She read what she could find about fungi and spent her evenings after work painting what she had collected, writing, "This is the way I learned the mushrooms."²

Clara Cummings Walk

Saturday, May 14. See Page 6.

She not only painted her collections, she made spore prints, dried her specimens, and wrote extensive notes, keeping a detailed record of what she found. There was no reputable guide to New England fungi in the late 1800s and early 1900s. W. G. Farlow's *Icones Farlowianae: Illustrations of the Larger Fungi of Eastern North America* would not appear until 1929. In order to continue learning she began corresponding with many important botanists of her day, among whom were George Francis Atkinson (1854-1918), Edward Angus Burt (1859-1939), Curtis Gates Lloyd (1859-1926), and Charles Horton Peck (1833-1917) - a veritable Who's Who of mycology back then. She filled an important role by providing specimens to these mycologists.

She regularly collected specimens for Ohio mycologist C. G. Lloyd, who sent out form letters to his collectors beginning "Dear Sir." (Clearly he didn't have many women collecting for him.) For many years Lloyd asked her to keep an eye out for any puffballs or any Hydnums. He was especially interested in *Hydnum ferrugineum* and *Hydnum scrobiculatum*. She must have found some, for in 1913 Lloyd wrote that "The receipt of fresh specimens of these two species from Mrs. E. B. Blackford, Boston, Mass. and a study of the European figures that are cited clears up to my mind a subject concerning which I have never before had a clear idea."³



Amanitopsis volvata, Pk., collected by "Genl. Bisbee" on September 9, 1914. Blackford's notes say "stem stuffed but very tough, flesh slightly tinged with salmon, brownish when cut. Spores difficult to get. Pellicle very tough."



Corycyces ophioglossoides Fr., collected at Pequawket, New Hampshire, in August, 1915.

As well as providing duplicate specimens to the New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station, Blackford also worked with local botanists, including the Farlow Herbarium's David Hunt Linder (1899-1946) and Carroll William Dodge (1895-1988). There are letters among her papers from both men complimenting her on the interesting specimens that she had sent them and often requesting additional information or specimens. In her fungi notebook she wrote in 1898 of an opportunity to collect with W. G. Farlow himself: "Trip to Weston Woods. Small *Mirasmius oreades* from Chestnut Hill. Dr. Farlow at once told his man to bring a bottle of alcohol to place it in."⁴



Hypholoma lachrymabundum Fr., collected on the lawn of the Museum of Fine Arts on Sept. 23, 1924.

Charles H. Peck, mycologist and New York's State Botanist, was her most important collaborator. They corresponded for 16 years, during which time she provided him with hundreds of specimens. He described at least ten species based on her findings. These included: *Amanita crenulata* (from Chestnut Hill, MA), *Cortinarius acutooides* (from Ellis, MA), *Flammula graveolens* (from Magnolia, MA), *Russula serissima* (from Ellis, MA), *Hygrophorus serotinus* (from Chestnut Hill, MA), *Russula blackfordiae* (from Ellis, MA), and *Hydnum blackfordiae* (from Ellis, MA). Mr. Peck could not have tipped his hat toward Eliza Blackford with any more sincerity and gratitude than he did by naming certain species in her honor.



Russula blackfordiae Pk., collected in Natick, Massachusetts, on October 18, 1924.

Eliza Blackford was generous with her time, sharing her knowledge with amateurs and the general public. She gave lectures to area garden clubs, wrote articles for local newspapers, and took children and adults on mushroom walks. She was active in the Boston Mycological Club until her death, serving at one point as the club's president. But it is mostly by her paintings that she is remembered today. According to her own reckoning she produced approximately one thousand watercolors of fungi alone.⁵ Some of her colleagues at the Museum of Fine Arts said "her want of initiative was all that prevented her from making a name for herself."⁶



Coprinus comatus, Fr., collected in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts in September 1933.

References

- ¹ Blackford, Eliza to H. Fitzpatrick, draft of a letter, Nov. 10, 1934, (Blackford Papers).
- ² Blackford, Eliza to William Weston, letter dated 1913, (Blackford Papers).
- ³ Lloyd, D. G. to Eliza Blackford, letter dated 1913, (Blackford Papers).
- ⁴ Blackford, Eliza, Fungi Notebook, (Blackford Papers).
- ⁵ Pierce, Sarah, letter, (Farlow Library B B628p).



Craterellus cornucopioides Fr., collected at Stony Brook Reservation, Massachusetts on August 7, 1907.

Group Visits to the Farlow

Lisa DeCesare

On Tuesday, March 8th **Janet Browne, the Aramont Professor of the History of Science**, brought her graduate class to the Farlow Library. Her course, "Lives and Letters," centers on biographies related to the public image or "identity" of a scientist. The Botany Libraries staff pulled together an exhibit of materials chronicling the life of Asa Gray and touching on his connection to Charles Darwin, Louis Agassiz, and William Gilson Farlow. The discussion was a lively one and Prof. Browne commented on what a fitting place the Farlow was to talk about history: not only does the building have a rich Harvard history but it feels very much like old Harvard.



Gray and Darwin items on display from the Gray Archives.
Photo by Lisa DeCesare.

On March 16th the **New England Wildflower Society** toured the Harvard Herbaria and came to the Farlow. Their focus was on botanist Walter Deane and his work on the flora of the Blue Hills. Genevieve Lewis-Gentry chose some cryptogamic specimens from that area and the library displayed books and archival materials

donated to Harvard by Walter Deane. Deane enjoyed a close relationship with Farlow. He was one of the 16 men who, with Farlow, formed the New England Botanical Club.

On March 22nd members of the **Ames Free Library** in North Easton visited HUH. The 30 or so attendees were interested in Oakes Ames. An exhibit of material connected to Ames was displayed in the Farlow Reading Room.

The group learned that Oakes Ames had met Farlow when he was an undergraduate at Harvard. In 1898, as a second semester senior, Ames registered for a course called Latin 10. Rumors of it being an easy class spread. When Ames arrived the classroom was full to overflowing and the professor was not happy. In an effort to cull some students he quickly gave them a very difficult hour long exam and told them that whoever failed would be dropped from the course.

Ames failed the test, which put his spring graduation date in jeopardy. When he went to see his dean about this he was told that it was too late to sign up for another course. He then asked if he could possibly take an independent study with Farlow. The Dean said that would be acceptable as long as Farlow agreed. Ames, a very tall and lanky young man, rushed to the cryptogamic lab where he found Farlow peering through a microscope. (Farlow was a small man and, in order to see into his microscope he had to sit on his leg on the chair to achieve the necessary height.) Ames told him his sad tale and Farlow, after thinking things over, agreed to offer him a half-course in research studying the fleshy fungi. Ames later wrote that thanks to Farlow he was able to graduate with his class of 1898.

As is usually the case, members of these tour groups admired the beauty of the Farlow building as much as they did the materials we showed them!

Harvey Pofcher

Donald Pfister



Harvey Pofcher, a Friend of the Farlow from its earliest of days, died April 5, 2010. Harvey was a rare and precious species who found delight in the world around him. I first met Harvey when I came to Harvard in 1974. He had begun something of a second career, having recently retired as an insurance executive

at the age of 55. His retirement was devoted then to natural history study, particular botany. He had taken a course at Harvard with the late Professor Carroll E. Wood and in the fall of 1974 he audited Biology 11b, Diversity of Plants (which included the non-plants as well – fungi in particular). I am not sure if he sat in on the course more than once but I am sure that he audited every plant course we offered in those years.

I would not like to imply when I use the word audit that Harvey was just there for a quick tour through a topic or as a hearer of lectures. He was far too serious for that. He studied, took volumes of notes, and these in the end were augmented by notes from readings, answers to asked questions, and library research.

Somewhere I think I have Harvey's notes from my mycology class. They are more a credit to him than to me because they are so detailed that they stand alone as a reference tool. I could count on him to bring me a clipping from the *New York Times* or the *Brattleboro Reformer* or the *Wall Street Journal* that would fit nicely with a lecture topic covered already or coming up. He demonstrated to all of us a purposefulness that we only hoped to see in our undergraduates.

To several graduate students he became something of a father figure. He let them feel accomplished in their work. He was interested in them and in the way they approached their science. He would take them to the field to see some of his favorite spots, to have them help him understand the plants, and simply to delight in having someone to share a place, a story, or a plant. We have several collections in the Farlow Herbarium that were made by him either in the Boston area or in his beloved Brattleboro. As he learned he also observed. He could tell me where

in Newton or Weston I could find the telial galls of *Gymnosporangium*. From his walks he would bring in finds - fruits, seeds, leaves, or fungi.

Sometime after he learned about myxomycetes, the true slime molds, he was fascinated by a collection he thought might be a slime mold plasmodium. This had been collected on his gravel driveway in Brattleboro. It was rather slimy and it was pinkish. It was configured in a kind of twisted cable. He explained where he had collected it and said, "I can't make anything out of this. What is it?" I looked and thought it was an odd looking fungus and an even odder looking myxomycete. I asked, "Have you had your car greased recently?" Indeed he had and then a look of utter surprise came across his face. "Grease," I said. To him, at that moment, I could have been Sherlock Holmes.

Harvey enjoyed the Farlow and the people there and he appreciated the depth and importance of the collections. An avid book collector, he began to accumulate odds and ends and then began purchasing various editions of Asa Gray's textbooks and *Manual*. I am not sure how many he accumulated but he did read them and study from them. As an independent researcher he tracked down information about the mycologist/cobbler of Brattleboro, Charles C. Frost. Through Harvey's research we learned where he lived and got an impression of Frost's Brattleboro of the mid-19th Century. Roy Halling, a Farlow post doc in those days, cited Harvey in his paper on Frost's boletes. For those of us at the Farlow Harvey was a welcome presence. He served as treasurer for the Friends of the Farlow and encouraged us to find ways in which the collections could be used by all. We celebrated Harvey with the creation of the Harvey Pofcher fellowship, which supports visitors to the herbarium and library.

If we are to be judged by the friends we keep, the Friends of the Farlow should be held in high esteem for having such a caring friend as Harvey Pofcher. Natural history, conservation, friends, and family were his passions. We will miss that fine spirit.



Clara Cummings Walk

Saturday, May 14
9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Walden Pond State Reservation,
Concord, Massachusetts

Shake off the winter blues by joining the 2011 FoF Clara Cummings Walk at Walden Pond State Reservation. There may be a stop at the historic site of Henry David Thoreau's house, an exploration of the Emerson's Cliff, and a walk up Pine Hill. Everyone is welcome, so bring a friend and a bag lunch. The walk will be held rain or shine.

Meeting Place: Walden Pond at the replica of Thoreau's house adjacent to the parking lot at 915 Walden Street (Rte. 126), Concord, MA at 9:30 a.m.

Contact Person: Elizabeth Kneiper (Ekneiper@aol.com or 781-235-8440).

The park welcomes a current checklist of the bryophytes, fungi, and lichens that are confirmed on the walk. However, because Walden Pond State Reservation is under tremendous pressure from the thousands of visitors who visit the park annually, there is a strictly enforced no-collecting policy in the park. But bring your hand lenses and field guides.

After the walk, there is the option of a 3:00 p.m. group tour of the nearby Gropius House in Lincoln (on Baker Bridge Rd.). Reservations are needed for this group tour, and there is a fee of \$8.00/person. Please contact Elizabeth Kneiper (Ekneiper@aol.com or 781-235-8440) before May 11th to confirm your spot.

Eagle Hill Lichen Seminar



Judy Jacob

Judy Jacob, daughter of FoF member Marcia Jacob as well as Senior Conservator, National Parks Service (NY), and **Michaela Schmull**, Research and

Curatorial Associate, Farlow Herbarium, will teach the seminar "Lichens and Gravestones" at Eagle Hill, the Humboldt Field Research Institute, in Steuben, Maine (<http://www.eaglehill.us/programs/nhs/seminar-flyer-pdfs/Jacob&Schmull.pdf>) from July 17 - 23, 2011.



Michaela Schmull looking for lichens.

The seminar will include lectures, field trips, microscopy sessions, and experiments. Introductions to lichen morphology, their ecology, and identification as well as to stone types, their deterioration, and maintenance and conservation treatments will lay the groundwork for observations in the field and in the laboratory. Discussions will include habitats of lichens and the growth of different species on different stone types, the role of lichens in stone protection or deterioration, and issues of cultural landscape preservation and ecological diversity.

Prior knowledge of lichens or gravestones will be useful for this seminar, but is not necessary.

News from the Farlow

New Books at the Farlow

Gretchen Wade

Professor Donald Pfister was the New England Botanical Club 2011 Distinguished Speaker at their meeting on Friday, April 1st. The title of his talk was "William G. Farlow and his influences on Botany, Academics and Amateurs."

Bin Liu, Professor of Microbiology at Guangxi University in Nanning, China, is with us for 6 months. He is studying techniques for working with Orbiliaceae.

Michaela Schnull is now Interim Collections Manager for the Harvard University Herbaria. On April 8th she gave a talk at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, South Dakota entitled: "Lichens - What are they; what are their relatives and what are they good for?"

Genevieve Lewis-Gentry attended the Integrated Pest Management Working Group meeting in New York City March 3-4.

In January, Kevin Vega and Michael Hood from Amherst College came to work on Microbotrym.

FoF Book Sale

We were sad to hear of the death of FoF member Dr. Roger Goos, a mycologist at the University of Rhode Island. He generously donated many books for our annual sale.

The FoF Book Sale list will be mailed out to all current members by June. Judy Warnement is compiling another excellent selection. If you intend to bid on any of these books, be sure your dues are up to date.

A field guide to Australian fungi.

Führer, Bruce Alexander. Melbourne : Blooming's Books, 2009.

Field guide to seaweeds of Alaska.

Lindeberg, Mandy R. and Sandra C. Lindstrom. Fairbanks : University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska Sea Grant College Program, 2010.

Red algae in the genomic age.

Seckbach, Joseph and David J. Chapman. Dordrecht : New York : Springer, c2010.

Illustrated flora of Nordic liverworts and hornworts.

Damsholt, Kell. Lund, Sweden : Nordic Bryological Society, c2009.

Diatoms of North America : the Pliocene-Pleistocene freshwater flora of Bylot Island, Nunavut, Canadian high Arctic.

Zimmermann, Claudia, Michel Poulin, and Reinhard Pienitz. Ruggell [Liechtenstein] : A.R.G. Gantner ; Königstein, Germany : Distributed by Koeltz Scientific Books, 2010.

Flechten erkennen : Umwelt bewerten. [3rd edition]

Kirschbaum, Ulrich and Volkmar Wirth. Weisbaden : Hessisches Landesamt für Umwelt und Geologie, 2010.

Biology of polar benthic algae.

Wiencke, Christian. New York : De Gruyter, c2011.

Indian lichens : an annotated checklist.

Singh, K. P. and G. P. Sinha. Kolkata : Botanical Survey of India, 2010.

Phytoplankton of Andean lakes in northern Southamerica (Colombia) : composition and environment distribution factors.

Donato Rondón, John Charles. Ruggell, Liechtenstein : A.R.G. Gantner, 2010.

From another kingdom : the amazing world of fungi.

Ainsworth, Martyn, Lynne Boddy, and Max Coleman. Edinburgh : Royal Botanic Garden, c2010.

Join us !

Receive the FoF Newsletter, notification of the annual book sale, discount on Farlow publications and services, invitations to the annual meeting and other events, and a special welcome when visiting the Farlow.

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