



Newsletter of the **FRIENDS**
OF THE
FARLOW

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L.B. Berard, editor

The William A. Terry Diatom Collection

Robert K. Edgar

William Almeron Terry (1828-1917) was a life-long resident of Bristol, the Connecticut city well-known in the nineteenth century as the American center of mass produced clocks. For his first four working decades Terry had been a clockmaker with two patents in calendar clock mechanisms. He was age 58 (in 1887) before he began to publish about diatoms, an activity which endured for the next two decades and yielded 27 scientific papers.

By the end of his career as diatomist, conducted independently of any association with scientific institutions and their resources, Terry had accumulated nearly 5,000 slides and 2,000 vials of diatoms. His collections have huddled unused, disheveled, and virtually unknown to the scientific community in the Farlow for the last half-century.

As part of my bringing the Farlow diatom collections on-line, the Terry Collection came to the fore in my queue about a year-and-a-half ago. My immediate task was to assess whether it merited resurrection. If the collection were simply a nice example of a Victorian natural history cabinet – the product of a diatomist-as-postage-

stamp-collector, displaying the pretty and the rare – my interest was going to fade fast.

Terry had shown little interest in organizing his collection and left no instructions for its disposition upon his death. In 1918 his diatoms were sold to George A. Fisher of Reading, Massachusetts, an amateur collector who had purchased the personal collections of other American diatomists. He made hundreds of slides from Terry's samples, cleaned and re-cleaned samples for his personal collection, but put them to no scientific use. In the 1930s Fisher sold all of his collections to Clarence A. Cheever of Milton, Massachusetts, another amateur collector. In 1941 Cheever donated his huge collection, encompassing Terry's, to the Farlow.

The early uses of Terry's collection at the Farlow unfortunately led to its further disorganization. When I first encountered the collection, Terry's slides were mixed with other collections. Slides made from his raw materials were poorly labeled, if at all. Vials of original samples had been re-cleaned, re-bottled, and re-numbered, but with no clear correspondence of the new numbers and Terry's original ones. The

Clara Cummings Walk
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most recent index of the collection made in the late 1940s was severely wanting. Was a resurrection worth attempting?

Terry's scientific studies resulted in his describing and naming very few new species and genera. As a consequence, his collections contain very few types – those nomenclaturally important specimens which define ostensibly

what we mean when we apply a name to a group. However, like many other American diatomists before 1900, Terry sent many of his samples to major European diatomists for determinations. He noted that "I would have been glad to have [provided complete lists of taxa in samples], but, unfortunately, the complete literature of this subject

was not accessible to me; and as many of the forms were unfamiliar, and the reports of many experts to whom they were submitted were so incompatible, I did not like to pronounce upon them myself. I found what appeared to be an obstinate determination ... of some not to admit the possibility of any new discovery, and an equally determined opposition to any revision of existing genera. This seems to me as unreasonable as it will be futile"¹

Terry's European correspondents had less reservation. Consequently, when we peruse several major works around the turn of century, new taxa based on Terry's samples are evident: in Joannes Tempère & Hippolyte Peragallo's extensively used *Diatomées du Monde Entier* (1888-1895 & 1907-1915), in Prof. Per T. Cleve's (Upsala) monumental *Synopsis of the Naviculoid Diatoms* (1894-1896), in the gigantic iconographic bible of diatoms known as Schmidt's *Atlas der Diatomaceenkunde*

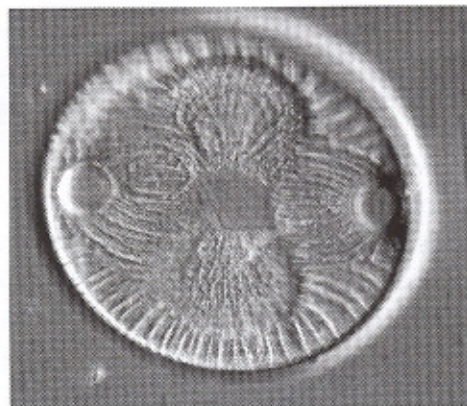
(1874-1959), and in Prof. Jacques Brun's (Geneva) articles on new and poorly known diatoms in *Le Diatomiste* (1890-1896).

The Terry Collection at the Farlow contains the original gatherings of the diatoms on which the names of many new taxa in these works were based. Much of this replicate material is fortunately still in vials and thus available for examination by transmission and scanning electron microscopy, tools routinely employed in contemporary diatom systematics.

However, the collection possesses a more fundamental value. Between 1892 and 1895 Terry published an eight-part series in the *American Monthly Microscopical Journal* on the "Diatoms of the Connecticut shore" and in

1907 and 1908 two papers in *Rhodora* on lists of Connecticut diatoms. Terry's focus in these papers was not so much the lists as the distribution in space and time of a score or so of relatively large diatoms, ones he was confident he could recognize. In particular, he described the distributions of both living and fossil diatoms (1) across many small freshwater ponds around Bristol, (2) along the Connecticut coast from Milford to New Haven to Branford, especially their zonation in submarine sediments and on the surface and down into the peat deposits of salt marshes, and (3) in the freshwater, brackish and marine layered deposits of the Quinnipiac marshes just north of New Haven.

Terry's descriptions provide one of the earliest regionally comprehensive surveys of diatoms in America and the basis for his inferences about the geological and environmental history of central and coastal Connecticut. But all Terry's reports are just



Auliscus caelatus J. W. Bailey from Savin Rock, near New Haven Harbor, Connecticut. Terry Coll. vial #175. Size about 75 μm .

words in the absence of his samples. His samples validate his published claims, not as true, but as scientific, as testable. Without the samples, his claims become reports of the proverbial "solitary birdwatcher."

Terry's collection also provides a rich cross-section of the activity of other American diatomists of the period, many whose original collections are lost or depleted. But the value of the Terry Collection is not wholly intrinsic; there can be value added. The Farlow Library contains all of his literature, his important correspondence, and virtually all the literature of the domestic and foreign diatomists with whom he interacted. The Farlow Herbarium additionally provides a context by housing the major diatom collections of the nineteenth and early 20th century.

My time will be wasted if the collection is not used. So the collection's resources are currently being loaded on-line to enhance their access by the diatomist community. But, again, this step still only positions them for use.

Peter Stevens (Missouri Botanical Garden) has addressed the severe disparity in value accorded contemporary systematics and contemporary genome projects and found that disparity basically rooted in a ready access to growing cumulative banks of basic observational data (e.g., GenBank) facilitating their re-analysis and application to increasingly comprehensive questions.² Images and quantitative data sets linked to specimens in the collection targeting the contemporary diatom systematist with these linked to corresponding data sets in other collections would be a step in the right direction. The Terry Collection is at least now poised to acquire such added value.

The current on-line status of the Terry Collection can be viewed at the Farlow Diatom website: <http://www.huh.harvard.edu/diatom>. From the Home Page choose Her-

barium > Unique Collections > Catalog > William A. Terry.

¹ Terry, W. A. (1892) Diatoms of the Connecticut shore. – I. *American Monthly Microscopical Journal* 13(8):185-189.

² Stevens, P. F. (2002) Money, morphology and molecules. *Edinburgh Journal of Botany* 59(3):451-457.

Clara Cummings Walk Sunday, April 27, 2003 10:00AM – 4:00PM

Doug Greene

The Annual Clara Cummings Walk will be held at World's End in Hingham, MA, a property of the Trustees of Reservations (<http://www.thetrustees.org>).

Meet at 10:00AM in the World's End parking lot. There is a small fee at the gate. Specialists will lead walks and help identify mosses, lichens, fungi, and marine algae. Bring lunch, water, rain gear, insect repellent, and a hand lens. Rain or shine.

Directions: Go south from Boston on I93 (Rte3). Continue south toward Cape Cod on Rte 3 at Quincy where I93 merges with Rte 128. At Exit 14 on Rte 3 take Rte 228 north for 6.5 miles. Turn left onto Rte 3A and go 0.7 miles. Turn right onto Summer St. At the junction of Summer St and Rockland St continue across Rockland St onto Martin's Lane. Follow Martin's Lane for 0.7 miles to the reservation entrance.

We hope to see you there!

Book Sale Coming Soon

Preparations for the 2003 FOF Book Sale are underway. We have had some great donations recently thanks to generous members, but we can always use more. Please send donations to Judy Warnement or contact her if you have questions (warnemen@oeb.harvard.edu or 617-495-2366).

Watch your mailbox in late April for the final list.

News of the Farlow

Don Pfister

Lichen activity has been heated in the last several months at the Farlow. **Scott LaGreca** has put the finishing touches on the report involving the lichens and bryophytes of the Boston Harbor Islands. Many individuals have worked on this project including **Mary Lincoln** (our president), **Ray Abair**, **Elizabeth Kneiper**, **Elisabeth Lay**, and **Doug Greene**. At the same time Scott has been working on the curatorial reorganization of the lichen general herbarium. Part-time curatorial assistant **Brett Huggett** has assisted him in the work.

Don Pfister gave a talk for the Boston Mycological Club in February in which he spoke about the issues of fungal biodiversity and how these topics are approached.

Karen Hansen, post-doctoral fellow, attended a workshop on ascomycete systematics in Costa Rica in the fall.

Monica Hughes, graduate student at College of Environmental and Forest Biology, SUNY, visited the Farlow in March. As our Friends of the Farlow Fellow she is examining the large collection of *Laboulbeniales* assembled by Roland Thaxter. She is using the collections to compare and identify her own finds from New Zealand.

We anticipate a visit in August by lichenologist **Mark Seaward** and in April by **Rosario Mendel**, a graduate student from Mexico working on the discomycete genus *Gyromitra*.

Two general events might be noted. On April 24th **Tom Bruns**, mycologist at the University of California, Berkeley will be giving an OEB seminar entitled, *Observations on the Natural History of Ectomycorrhizal Fungi: When Do Spores Matter?* In early May **Meredith Blackwell**, Louisiana State University, will be giving an HUH seminar on a mycological topic.

FOF Financial Report

July 1, 2001 - June 30, 2002

Beginning balance	\$13,308.06
Income	
Membership and gifts	2,738.26
Book sale	883.19
Cards	18.50
Total	3,639.95
Expenses	
Library displays	25.31
Library purchase00
Visiting scholar (Ladd)	66.63
FOF Scholarship (Muneton)	2,580.37
Membership letter00
Christmas cards	170.38
Annual Meeting (Thorn)	377.49
Newsletter (print 2/mail 3)	438.42
Book sale 2000	224.49
Book sale 2001	278.74
Book sale 2002	244.01
Clara Cummings Walk00
Misc	65.29
Total	4,471.13
Closing balance	\$ 12,476.88
Pofcher Fund	
Starting balance	\$ 3060.00
Income (contributions)	1,285.00
Visiting Scholar (St.Clair)	1,058.37
Closing balance	\$ 3,286.63
Endowment	
Balance 7/1/01	\$42,028.88
Increase	3,550.81
Balance 6/30/02	\$ 45,579.69

Phil May, Treasurer

Who Was M.A. Robinson?

The last newsletter featured a description of an extraordinary scrapbook that combined lovely watercolors with specimens of New England algae. Mrs. Constance Neelon, who summered on Martha's Vineyard for many years, donated it to the Farlow. She provided what she knew of its history, but was not able to tell us about the compiler, the "M. A. Robinson" whose inscription appears on the first

page. Fortunately, a colleague on the Vineyard, Allan Keith, offered to visit the local historical society and learn what he could about the mysterious "M.A. Robinson." This is her story compiled by Allan Keith of Chilmark, Massachusetts. Judy Warnement

M. A. Robinson was Mary A. Robinson, born in Montreal, Canada in 1826. She later married the younger Samuel D. Robinson who was born in 1836. They were apparently at first seasonal residents of Cottage City. Later it appears that they at least occasionally wintered there. Cottage City was originally part of Edgartown but separated from Edgartown as a municipality in 1880. It was renamed Oak Bluffs in January 1907.

Samuel died in 1885 and by 1897 Mary is listed in the Cottage City Directory as the proprietor of the "Robinson House," a boarding house at the corner of Tuckernuck and Sea View (now Circuit Avenue). She and her husband appear to have had no children. When Mary died in 1898, her estate proved to be insolvent – even after the auction of the boarding house.

Mary's obituary in the *Vineyard Gazette* states: "She was generous in aiding everything that was for the benefit of the town or its people." However, there is no mention of her interest in marine algae or her artistic talents.

There is no way today to be absolutely certain that her seaweed specimens were collected at Martha's Vineyard, though any other possible source seems unlikely, although she and her husband appear to have also lived in Providence. In addition, it is possible that some of the collections were made and some paintings done after 1885, despite the note about the origin of the scrapbook provided by the donor. It is also possible that Mary Robinson was principally an artist and that others identified the seaweeds for her. It is known, for example, that a knowledgeable amateur phycologist

named W. R. Dudley made collections on the island in 1879 and that another named R. A. Esten did so in 1895. In August 1892 and in January 1895 one R. E. Schuh is known to have collected right at Cottage City and may have done so at other times. Some of these visiting collectors may have even stayed in the boarding house.

There were also well-informed local resident algae collectors such as Marcus W. Jernegan, a professor of history at the University of Chicago; Laura Jernegan, Marcus' older sister who later married Herbert W. Spear; Miss Sarah G. Colt, daughter of whaling captain Henry Colt; and Julia A. (Jernegan) King. These four people lived much of their lives in Edgartown and contemporary experts writing in the professional literature accepted their identifications. Any of these persons could have assisted Mary Robinson with the identification of the algae part of her paintings, or even could have collected and/or mounted them for her.

In any event, the notations on the seaweed specimens make it clear that whoever made the identifications had considerable knowledge of marine algae names. Whether or not all the identifications are correct is a matter that needs to be researched by a qualified phycologist.

How the scrapbook came to be in an old house belonging to the Norton family in Lambert's Cove can only be guessed at. The scrapbook is not listed in the extensive inventory prepared by local appraisers in 1898. In the list of claims against her estate dated February 7, 1899, an entry for one James G. Norton appears for medicines in the amount of \$19.45. If this Mr. Norton was a close family friend it may be that he received the scrapbook as a gift or by agreement with Mrs. Robinson prior to her death, but this is clearly a speculation.