

1997

Merritt Lyndon Fernald

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UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

See George William Featherstonhaugh and Family, Papers, 1771–1856. Microfilm copy (eleven rolls) is in Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. Originals are owned by James Duane Featherstonhaugh, Duanesburg, N.Y.

William E. Lass

FERNALD, MERRITT LYNDON. Born Orono, Maine, 5 October 1873; died Cambridge, Massachusetts, 22 September 1950. Botanist.

FAMILY AND EDUCATION

Son of Merritt Caldwell Fernald, twice president of Maine State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, and Mary Lovejoy Heywood Fernald. Graduated from Orono High School. B.S., magna cum laude, 1897, Harvard. Honorary D.C.L., 1933, Acadia University, and honorary D.Sc., 1938, University of Montreal. Married Margaret Howard Grant, 1907; three children.

POSITIONS

Assistant, Gray Herbarium, Harvard, 1891–1902, curator, 1935–1937, director, 1937–1947. Instructor of botany, Harvard, 1902–1905, assistant professor, 1905–1915, Fisher Professor of Natural History, 1915–1947, professor emeritus, 1947–1950. A founder of Alstead (New Hampshire) School of Natural History, where he taught summers 1899–1901.

CAREER

Early interest in botany led to correspondence with Sereno Watson, director of Gray Herbarium. After publication of first paper (*Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club* [1890]), invited by Watson to work at the herbarium and continue studies at Harvard; served at herbarium for next fifty-six years.

Specialized in the study of plants of temperate North America (the “Gray’s Manual range”): North America east of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and north of the Carolinas. Majority of work concerned the identification, description, definition, and geographical distribution of plants of this area. Did fieldwork on Gaspé Peninsula in youth and in tidewater regions of Virginia in later years.

Prolific writer of approximately 900 items, spread among forty different periodicals. Author of *Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America* (with B. L. Robinson, 1943), the 7th edition of *Gray’s Manual of Botany* (with B. L. Robinson, 1908), and the 8th (centennial) edition of *Gray’s Manual* (1950), which was called “the most critical and searching study in descriptive botany that has ever appeared on the flora of any part of North America.” His paper “Persis-

tence of Plants in Unglaciaded Areas of Boreal America" (*Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* [1925]) rebutted the prevailing theory that glaciers had obliterated all plant and animal life in their path.

Served as associate editor, 1899–1928, and editor in chief, 1929–1950, of *Rhodora*. Received Leidy Gold Medal, Academy of Natural Sciences, 1940; Gold Medal, Massachusetts Horticultural Society, 1944; and the Marie-Victorin Medal, 1950, for outstanding services to botany in Canada. President, New England Botanical Club, 1911–1914; vice president, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1941; president, American Society of Plant Taxonomist, 1938; president, Botanical Society of America, 1942; honorary president, International Botanical Congress, Stockholm, 1950. Member or honorary member of a number of American and foreign scientific societies. A tireless worker and exacting critic, he was remembered as an outstanding teacher. It was said he could remember years later exact spots where plants had been collected.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Trained the future leaders in taxonomy and descriptive botany and helped maintain a high level in botanical writing through his work as editor of *Rhodora* and through his published critiques of the work of colleagues. Eighth edition of *Gray's* remains a landmark in botany.

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John A. Drobnicki

FERNOW, BERNHARD EDUARD. Born Inowrazlaw (now Inowroclaw), Prussia (now Poland), 7 January 1851; died Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 6 February 1923. Forester, university professor and dean, conservationist.

FAMILY AND EDUCATION

Son of Eduard Fernow, estate owner and lawyer, and his second wife, Clara Nordman Fernow. His father held distinguished position in the service of the Prussian government. Young Fernow graduated from the gymnasium at Bromberg, 1869. Study at Prussian Forest Academy, Munden, interrupted by Franco-Prussian War. Spent one year at Law School of University of Königsberg,

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN NATURALISTS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS

EDITED BY

*Keir B. Sterling, Richard P. Harmond,
George A. Cevalasco, and Lorne F. Hammond*



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