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University of California, Berkeley, June, 1933.

## THE BOTANICAL EXPLORERS OF CALIFORNIA—IX.

WILLIS LINN JEPSON

### Charles Frederick Sonne

The birth place of Charles F. Sonne is said to have been on the island of Bon, a possession of Denmark. The date of his birth was July 2, 1845. When a young man he emigrated to the United States and worked in a grocery store in Boston, soon thereafter going to Denver. From this place in the early days he drove across the deserts a herd of cattle to Virginia City in Nevada. In 1876 he removed to Truckee where he was employed as a bookkeeper by the Truckee Lumber Company. It was more especially during the period of this employment that he collected with much zeal the native plants of the region of the Truckee River watershed and made large numbers of dried specimens. He numbered his specimens carefully and faithfully recorded on the labels the validating facts of locality, date and habitat. His specimens were well prepared and the mounted sheets are remarkable for their clear and handsome lettering and general neatness.



Out of the results of his long-continued field work in this region grew a list of the plants which he had collected in Placer, Nevada and Sierra counties in California and Washoe County in Nevada, especially between the years 1878 and 1892. This manuscript is done in his usual methodical and scholarly manner. It reflects, doubtless, the thoroughness of the college education which he had received in Denmark in his youth.

Dedicating to him the Boraginaceous genus *Sonnea*, E. L. Greene in 1889 said that he "gives promise of becoming as intelligent a botanist as he has been a diligent collector and field observer in that region



of country to which these plants belong" (cf. *Pittonia* 1:22). *Lomatium Sonnei* was also named for him by Coulter and Rose and *Cicuta Sonnei* by Greene.

About 1900 he went to San Francisco to live and there died May 11, 1913. His body was taken to Truckee for burial and now lies amongst the mountains where he botanized for so many years.

### Nancy Jane Davis

In the northern Sierra Nevada one of the more unusual and peculiar shrubs is *Leucothoe Davisiae*. This name was published by Asa Gray in the Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, volume 7, page 400, in 1867. It was based on a manuscript name by John Torrey and the specific description rested on material collected near Eureka in Nevada County by Miss N. J. Davis, the discoverer. During this entire period since 1867, it does not appear to have been known in California whether Miss Davis were a local botanist or a chance traveler. At any rate this was a collector concerning whom the writer never had the faintest clue.

One evening in August, 1926, a small group of botanists, engaged in cheerful talk, were seated on a garden lawn above Lake Cayuga in the state of New York. One of them, Professor J. H. Faull, then of the Toronto University, very incidentally and very casually to other matters, spoke the name Nancy Davis. The writer of this article had never before heard the name, but some impulse caused him to make one query after another and it soon developed that Nancy Davis of Birmingham, Pennsylvania, and Miss N. J. Davis, the discoverer of the rare shrub, *Leucothoe Davisiae* of California, were one and the same. Through the interest of Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Faull were obtained the printed memorials of Miss Davis from which are derived the following facts as to her life.

Nancy Jane Davis was born in the Kishacoquillas Valley near Lewiston, Pennsylvania, on December 20, 1833. She died at Birmingham, Pennsylvania, on June 18, 1921. At that place she had been in 1853 one of the founders of the Birmingham School and for over sixty years its principal. On the sixtieth anniversary of the school, Mount Holyoke College, of which she was an early graduate, honored her with the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. In 1863 she came to California by way of Panama and made in the district of Nevada County, says Dr. Gray, "a fine and beautifully prepared collection of plants". She visited California again in 1893 and yet again in 1915.

The name of Miss Davis is enshrined in many a memorial at or hard by Birmingham School. It is pleasant to make more definitely known the name of another plant lover, noble in mind and generous in purpose, who belongs to the roster of Californian field botanists. Her plants, it is to be said, went mainly to Asa Gray, and towards Cambridge she bent her steps for several summers in order to carry on botanical work. Amongst other things she also collected a sub-alpine *Polygonum* in northern California which was named for her as *Polygonum Davisiae* by W. H. Brewer in 1872 (*Proc. Am. Acad.* 8:399).

[In Memorium. Nancy Jane Davis, A. M., L. H. D. Three Portraits. Birmingham School. 1921. Davis Memorial Fund and Alumnae Notes. 1925.]



### John Boardman Trask

On February 8, 1849, a company of argonauts under the leadership of John Woodhouse Audubon, son of the great ornithologist, Audubon, left New York City for New Orleans. The party traversed the plains, mountains and deserts from Texas by way of northern Mexico to San Diego where it arrived on November 4, 1849, proceeding thence to the placer diggings in the Sierra Nevada. One of the members of this company was John B. Trask.

The gold rush brought many remarkable men to California but few in that early day more outstanding as a scientist than Trask. His interests were very wide and the soundness of his training in fundamental subjects while an undergraduate at Yale College enabled him to achieve notice or distinction in several lines. He was a physician and surgeon, a chemist, a mineralogist, a seismologist, a geologist, a paleontologist and to no small extent a botanist. The first medical journal in California was founded and edited by John B. Trask, M. D., and David Wooster, M. D. Dr. Trask's connection with it continued through the years 1858 and 1859. As the first State Geologist of California, two of his reports on the geology of California may be found in Assembly Document no. 9 (1854) and in Senate Document no. 14 (1855). These and other reports contain much matter on the soils of various regions of California, as well as some references to the spontaneous vegetation.

Dr. Trask was the first to bring to the notice of botanists the peculiar *Lavatera assurgentiflora* of Anacapa Island which was described as new by Dr. Albert Kellogg (Proc. Cal. Acad. 1:14,—1854). Wherever his investigations took him about California he was likely to collect some plant of interest to his chief botanical friend. Kellogg writes that in a very early day Dr. Trask studied the native medicinal plants of western America and made known or discovered the virtues of such species as yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*) for rheumatism, damiana (*Turnera aphrodisiaca* of Lower California) for nerve aberrations, *Grindelia robusta* for poison oak dermatitis, canchulagua (*Erythraea*) as an anti-febrile, manzanita leaves (native *Arctostaphylos* species) as an anti-lithic, as well as other indigenous plants.

He was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1824 and died at San Francisco July 3, 1879. His latter years were almost exclusively devoted to the practice of medicine in which, says Kellogg, he was professionally skilled and remarkable for originality and independent thought. With Kellogg and a few others, Trask was one of the founders of the California Academy of Sciences in 1853. At a meeting of the Academy on July 21, 1879, it was the gentle Kellogg that delivered his eulogy.

[Remarks of Dr. A. Kellogg on the late Doctor John B. Trask before the California Academy of Sciences, July 21, 1879. pp. 1-8. Audubon's Western Travels, pp. 1-249. 1906. A biographical sketch of Doctor John B. Trask, first state geologist of California, by Anthony W. Vogdes (Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist. 1:27-30,—1907). This contains a bibliography of his geological papers and a good portrait; the biographical matter appears to be mainly or wholly de-



rived from Kellogg's paper. Many of Trask's scientific papers were published in volumes 1 to 3 of the Proceedings of the California Academy of Sciences.]

## CONSERVATION OF NATIVE PLANTS AND SENATE BILL NUMBER SIXTY-FOUR

F. F. BARBOUR

Botanists, students and others interested in the native flora of California, should study carefully the text of the above bill passed by the last California legislature. It is a well-intentioned effort to protect our native shrubs and plants, but is so drastic in its terms as to interfere seriously with the usual requirements of the botany courses of the Universities, and with the practices of scientific collection. It reads in part: "Every person who within the State of California, wilfully . . . cuts . . . or removes any native tree or shrub, or fern, or herb or bulb or cactus or flower, or any portion of any native tree, or shrub or fern or herb or bulb or cactus or flower, growing upon state or county highway rights of way, . . . shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction hereof shall be punished by a fine of not more than two hundred dollars or by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than six months or by both such fine and imprisonment . . ."

It also provides that: "Every person who for commercial purposes wilfully cuts or removes any native tree, etc.," as in the above paragraph, is subject to the same fine or imprisonment. This expression "commercial purposes" might easily be made to apply to picking of flowers for the purpose of making sketches or photographs for inclusion in any manual of botany, or other book, or pictures to be sold.

There is no doubt in the mind of the writer but that certain of our native shrubs and flowers, such as *Escholtzia*, *Brodiaea*, *Photinia*, and some others, should be protected by an absolute prohibition for a period of years or by a very short open season and a rigid limitation of quantity taken, as is done in the case of wild game. It is suggested that a system of licenses as for fishing and hunting, limiting the number picked, could be used to regulate the present practice. The writer heartily believes in conservation, and has repeatedly urged it before schools, clubs and other groups, but he believes that the present law is too drastic and that it interferes seriously with legitimate scientific and educational work.

## NOTES AND NEWS

A twelve-page leaflet recently issued by the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Anaheim, gives a list of the councillors of the garden, the board of trustees and the garden staff. There is also a brief illustrated account of the activities of the garden.

Dr. Irma E. Webber presents a brief paper on the fossil woods of Last Change Gulch near Red Rock Cañon in Kern County. Four species are described as new; one *Pinus Kelloggii*, in honor of Miss



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