

## SOME SPECIMEN LABELS TELL ODD STORIES

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IN THE RESEARCH COLLECTIONS housed on the third and fourth floors of the Museum are thousands upon thousands of specimens, neatly arranged in trays in dust-proof cabinets. Each specimen must have a label, telling certain vital bits of information about it.

Such a label is a very terse, straightforward bit of writing—number, name, geographic locality, date collected, and name of the collector. This is hardly an item of romance or adventure, yet there is often a fascinating story behind the label which sometimes breaks through the paper barrier.

Only a zoologist could appreciate the thrill of unpacking a shell and reading "Red Sea, Forskal, 1769." Here is a specimen collected by a student of the famous Linnaeus who died while searching for specimens in the Middle East. The same story can be found from labels of all well-known collectors. Unpacking *Pupina brazieri* from Erromanga in the New Hebrides brings to mind Brazier's statement that he collected on Erromanga while under attack by natives. A notable case of devotion to science.

Yet occasionally, a universally interesting label is found. Recently Chicago Natural History Museum received some western North American land shells on exchange from Munroe L. Walton. With specimens of *Oreohelix amariradix* (a rare Montana land snail) was the cryptic message "All taken dead which may be excusable with the rancher beside you with a shot gun making sure you did not set the place on fire."

Several malacologists have called attention to a note with the type specimens of *Melania brerispina* J. G. Anthony which reads "New species determined when I was blind, by touch alone."

A former curator at the University of Michigan, Calvin Goodrich, even wrote a brief paper on the unusual labels he'd seen. A Mr. S. C. Shoup sent specimens with the unscientific data "This is at the site of 'Maggie's Mill' where the song, 'When You and I were Young Maggie,' was written."

A former Illinois resident, W. W. Calkins, added "Battle Field of Chickamauga, near which on the second day of the battle I was wounded."

From the labels seen, it is an easy step to contemplate those not yet written. Last winter Henry S. Dybas, Associate Curator of Insects, and I were collecting insects and snails from the Rio Tribique in the hinterlands of Panama. The village women were doing the weekly laundry in the same stream and were quite curious about the activities of the "Locos gringos." On finding that I was after "caracolitos" (snails) one woman excitedly kept insisting that

there were bigger ones around the bend of the river. I was interested in some tiny snails only found in stream riffles and did not desire the large *Neritina* found in the calmer stretches. She kept insisting I see the bigger snails and waved her machete wildly. At last I went and collected a few. Perhaps it would be slightly misleading, but these snails were "Collected at knife point."

Calvin Goodrich relates the acme of unwritten labels. A famous entomologist, E. B. Williamson, went on a Sunday afternoon excursion. Slipping away from the crowd, he changed into old pants for collecting and started after dragonflies. Spotting a species known previously from only two specimens, the afternoon passed quickly. Finally he just barely caught the train home—still wearing his old pants. The others were left by the stream. The specimens really could have been labeled "This is the spot where I lost my pants!"

## SOUTH SEA ISLES—

(Continued from page 3)

panions. He was autocratic, uncompromising, ploddingly stubborn—a characteristic which allowed him to persevere and to accomplish deeds which would have defeated less sturdy wills, but which also brought him to an untimely end at the very apogee of his success.

After months of exploration of the nooks and crannies of the east coast of South America and a bleak winter season spent in a cove or two near Patagonia, success was met and the strait that now bears his name was found. Not, however, without mutiny and the defection of one of the larger ships in the convoy (it turned around and went back across the Atlantic to Spain), and the loss of another vessel before Tierra del Fuego was reached.

Magellan overcame the mutiny, buried his scurvy-ridden dead, and finally, much depleted in supplies, set out across the unknown Pacific with three remaining ships. These weathered and worn craft left behind the desolate slopes of bleak Patagonia and sailed northwestward in calm seas where water tanks became putrid, flour crawled with vermin, rats were bartered for at high prices, and finally even the leather hides in the rigging were cooked and chewed along with sawdust to sustain life.

A trail of withered corpses dropped behind as the course proceeded westward. Finally land was sighted and unspeakable disappointment followed when it was found to be several treeless atolls in what must have been the northern Marshalls in Micronesia. These they called St. Paul's and Shark Islands, or the Desadventuradas. Weeks later the Marianas were sighted and contact with the natives made. These Magellan called the Islands of the Lateen sails. It was March, 1521.

## CHILDREN'S MOVIES BEGIN MARCH 5

The Raymond Foundation will open its spring series of free programs for children on Saturday morning, March 5, with color motion pictures on "China, Land of the Dragon." On the same program there will be a cartoon. Other programs scheduled for March are:

### March 12—Falconry—the Sport of Kings

(To be presented in person by Lou Gaeta and his live falcon, Jezebel)

### March 19—My Home State—Illinois

(Cub Scout day)

### March 26—Conservation Is Our Business

(Camp Fire Girl Day)

Except for the March 12 program, all these shows are motion pictures. More films will be presented on each Saturday morning through April, and the rest of the titles will be announced in the March BULLETIN. All programs begin at 10:30 A.M. in the James Simpson Theatre.

Pigafetta made drawings of the first contact with islanders by Europeans, but he neglected to give us any real idea of what the people looked like. He did say, however, that "They go naked, and some are bearded and have black hair that reaches to the waist . . . . Their amusement . . . is to plough the seas with those small boats of theirs," and the "thieves stole whatever they could lay their hands on, so that we could not protect ourselves . . . . They even very deftly stole from us the small boat which was fastened to the poop of the flagship." In a fracas arising out of a shore party's attempt to recapture the boat, the native population was attacked and displayed their absolute ignorance of the bow and crossbow by standing dumbly while the arrows pierced their bodies. The record states that a wounded native would look surprisedly at his impaled arm and try to pluck the missile from his flesh with an amazing lack of understanding as to how it got there. The retreat was general. The islands were renamed the Islands of Thieves (the *Ladrones*) because of the obvious propensity of the natives.

Newly provisioned, and with crews in a healthier state of mind, the vessels sailed on to the Philippines, which were at first taken by Magellan to be the famed Spice Islands for which he was headed. Even when it became apparent that this was not the case, Magellan lingered, exploring more and more of the small islands which form the central and south-central Philippines. He came ultimately to Cebu and with much pomp and ceremony "Christianized" the chief's family and as many of his subjects as appeared. Success was within his grasp—he could have left and sailed on to the





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