

THE HISTORY OF THE HERBARIUM
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT
CHAPEL HILL, NC
1908 - 1998

By
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PREFACE

Soon after establishing a support group called the "Friends of the Herbarium", Dr. J.R. Massey, the new Director of the Herbarium (1983), began the publication of a semi-annual Friends' "Newsletter". He asked me to contribute an article on the early history of the Herbarium since I had known all the curators connected with its development from Dr. W.C. Coker's time on --- no doubt a gentle way of saying I had been around for quite awhile. I had indeed been privileged to know all these folk and to be involved in some way or another with the growth of the Herbarium since 1935, when I began my graduate studies in Botany at Chapel Hill.

After countless hours of researching Dr. Coker's voluminous files of personal letters in the Southern Historical Section of Wilson Library, and looking through my many letters written from Chapel Hill to my parents, I had a beginning chapter ready for the 1984 spring issue of the "Newsletter". There had been no time to think through the whole project before starting - probably not the best way to begin a series, as the article turned out to be. Deadline followed deadline in rapid succession. Still I managed to turn in the seventh and final issue on time, in the fall of 1986.

A number of readers told me they enjoyed the series and some even suggested that they be published as a unit. At the time I was busy with other projects, so let the suggestion pass. Now that the drive is on to develop the Botanical Garden in which the Herbarium will be a very significant part of the Garden's Research Center, I am having second thoughts.

Public support is essential to the success of such a project. Thus it seems imperative that the public know something of the history and development of our Herbarium, how it has grown to be one of the largest and best organized collections in the country, an integral part of the International Plant Resources System, and one of twenty-five National Resource Centers in the United States. The public should also know that many major works produced by our Biology faculty are the result of herbarium-based research; and that over the years a great number of graduate student degrees have been conferred by the Department, degrees in which the Herbarium's specimens have played a very important part.

Few people are aware that many visitors come from far and near and around the world to see our Herbarium and study its specimens. A look through the Guest Book is an interesting lesson in geography. Even fewer people know of our exchange of thousands of specimens with numerous other herbaria around the globe. In so many ways the Herbarium has been and continues to be a viable asset to the University, to the faculty and to the students, and especially to society itself through outreach in service in many areas.

The History of the Herbarium is presented here as a unit, updated to the present by a number of changes and additions.

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