

New England Botanical Club – Minutes of the 1034th Meeting
7 March 2008

Robert Bertin, Recording Secretary

The 807th meeting of the New England Botanical Club, being the 1034th since its original organization, was held on Friday, 7 March, 2008 in the lecture hall of the Fairchild Biochemistry Building at Harvard University, with 47 members and guests in attendance. Brief committee reports were presented. The Special Publications Committee announced that Searcy's flora of the Holyoke Range would be in print and available by the May meeting. The Fernald Award Committee announced that a winner for 2007 had been chosen and would be announced at the April meeting. The Library Committee reported that two new volumes of the Flora of North America had been added to the NEBC library and that *Rhodora* articles through 1977 and since 2005 were available on-line through Botanicus and BioOne, respectively. The Graduate Student Award was made to Benjamin Wolfe of Harvard University for a project on the biogeography of *Amanita*. The curator of the vascular herbarium reported the addition of 242 herbarium sheets to bring the total to 253,834. Integration of the NEBC and Gray Herbarium collections continues. The curator of the non-vascular herbarium continues her organization of the collection, with much repackaging of lichens. George Newman reported on the upcoming June Pine Barrens field trip. The registration fee of \$15 is due by 1 May. Field trips are scheduled for Saturday morning and afternoon and Sunday morning, and a speaker is scheduled for Saturday evening. A new slate of officers was presented and approved.

Dr. Noel Holmgren of the New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) presented the evening seminar: "Intermountain Flora: Great Basin, Colorado Plateau, and Middle Rocky Mountains." He provided a historical overview of the project, followed by a description of the main regional patterns in the flora and illustrations of some of its more showy members. Work began on the project (though not by Dr. Holmgren!) 76 years ago. It was first envisioned by Bassett Maguire, who taught at Utah State Agricultural College before joining the staff of the NYBG in 1943. The speaker's father, Arthur Holmgren, who received a master's degree under Maguire, was later hired at Utah State University in Logan and did some of the early collecting in the region. Meanwhile, botanical work in the Guayana Highlands of South America drew Maguire away from the Intermountain region, and Arthur Cronquist was hired to take over the project. After a 1961 accident that left Cronquist's arm in a sling, the senior Holmgren insisted that he be accompanied into the field by an assistant, a position that fell to the speaker, then an eager undergraduate at Utah State. This experience led eventually to the speaker's doctorate at Columbia University and a lifelong affiliation with the NYBG and the *Intermountain Flora*. Also heavily involved in the project were Jim Reveal, a major contributor to the first two volumes, and Rupert Barnaby, who authored the legume volume and was involved in all remaining volumes until his death. Meanwhile, Patricia Kern arrived at the NYBG with a doctorate from the University of Washington, eventually working her way into the uppermost levels of administration of the NYBG herbarium. She and the speaker were married and the couple took over the task of completing the *Intermountain Flora* series after the deaths of Cronquist and the senior Holmgren in 1992. Currently, seven volumes are in print and the eighth and final volume is expected within three years. A field manual with keys to the entire flora and including all recent discoveries and nomenclatural changes will be the final work of this massive project.

In brief, the Intermountain region extends from the Sierras to the Rockies and from southeastern Oregon to Arizona. Elevation ranges from 2100 feet to over 13,000 feet. Four major geographic divisions are recognized in this Texas-sized region. The Great Basin is an area of basin and range topography, and is known mostly for its lowland deserts, though it includes beautiful forests and meadows in its many mountains. The Uinta Mountains of northeastern Utah include spectacular alpine and subalpine landscapes along with coniferous forests. The Wasatch Mountains run through central Utah into southern Idaho and contain a similar mix of habitats, though with a distinct flora including several endemic species. The Colorado Plateau extends from the north rim of the Grand Canyon north into Utah, and includes many spectacular national parks and monuments: Capitol Reef, Bryce Canyon, Dinosaur, Zion, Canyonlands, and Arches.

The *Intermountain Flora* series, when complete, will comprise nearly 4000 species in 138 families. Many were discovered by the speaker and his collaborators, and new ones continue to be found. In *Penstemon* alone, 15 species have been added since the volume containing the Scrophulariaceae was published in 1984, including 7 new to science. Dr. Holmgren concluded with a set of images of several Intermountain species, including representatives of the large genera *Astragalus* and *Penstemon*, and attractive members of several genera that would bring credit to any landscape or garden.