

Personalities Associated with the Early History of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University 1872-1927

Joseph Weld (1599-1646)

In the 1600s the colonial legislature granted Captain Joseph Weld, who was an aide to Governor Winthrop and a deputy to the Massachusetts General Court, 278 acres in what was then the town of Roxbury, and is now much of present-day Jamaica Plain. One of his sons, Captain John Weld, inherited his estate and built his home, Weld Hall, on what came to be called Weld Hill. Weld Hill is across the street from the Forest Hills MBTA station. Not to be confused with what we now call Weld Hill, a 14 acre Harvard-owned parcel which is bounded by Weld and Walter Streets across from **the Arboretum's Peters Hill (named after** Andrew James Peters, a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1907 to 1914, and the Mayor of Boston, Massachusetts from 1918 to 1922).

After Lieutenant Eleazer Weld died in 1880 fellow revolutionary war veteran Benjamin Bussey purchased approximately 120 acres of the original Weld holdings. Bussey subsequently bequeathed his land to Harvard.



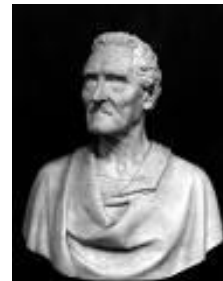
In 1711, Joseph Weld and 44 other men organized the Second Church of Christ on Walter Street. The church once stood on Peters Hill, and behind it to the south, the church burying ground was created. This 0.81-acre parcel is **one of Boston's** 15 historic cemeteries and although it is under the purview of the Boston Park Department its grounds are maintained by the Arboretum. Few headstones remain, but there are ten Welds, including two who fought in the Revolutionary War and their wives and children, buried in the graveyard. This repaired slate tombstone marks the grave of Daniel Weld, who died in 1761. Joseph Weld, however, was buried at the Eustis Street Burying Ground.

More about the cemetery

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1573.pdf>

Benjamin Bussey (1757-1842)

Bussey was born in 1757 in Stoughton (later Canton), Massachusetts. He served in the American Revolution seeing service at Saratoga and rising to the rank of Quartermaster. About 1779 he went into business as a silversmith in Dedham, Massachusetts and he married in 1780. By 1792, when he moved to Summer Street in Boston, his business had expanded into trading in a variety of goods. Bussey also established woolen mills in Dedham and bought extensive properties in Maine. He retired from business in 1806 and in turning his interests to farming and manufacturing began buying small farmsteads and part of the Weld family holdings. In 1815 he built a mansion on his Roxbury property where he resided until his death in 1842.



In his will, Bussey created an endowment at Harvard for the establishment of an undergraduate school of agriculture and horticulture to be **called the Bussey Institution for the "instruction in practical agriculture, in useful and ornamental gardening, in botany, and in such other branches of natural science as may tend to promote a knowledge of practical agriculture, and the various arts**

subservient thereto and connected therewith." Also included in his 1835 will was the grant of his estate "Woodland Hill" in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts to the President and Fellows of Harvard College which would be the site of the school. A number of years would elapse before Harvard could act upon the bequest.

In 1870, his granddaughter, Mrs. Maria Bussey Motley, released seven acres of the property for the establishment of the school and work began on the Bussey Institution building. By 1871 the Bussey Institution had been established to carry out the terms of the will. At the same time her husband, Thomas Motley, Jr., was appointed instructor of farming, a post he held until his death in 1895. Francis Storer was named professor of agricultural chemistry, and in 1871 Francis Parkman was named professor of horticulture.



THE SCHOOL BUILDING OF THE BUSSEY INSTITUTION

More about Bussey

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1832.pdf>

<http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/findAidDisplay?collection=oasis&inoid=1500&histno=1>

James Arnold (1781-1868)



The son of Thomas and Mary (Brown) Arnold, James was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on September 9, 1781. He came to New Bedford, Massachusetts, to work for William Rotch, Jr., a merchant of the city, whose family had established the whaling industry in New England prior to the American Revolution. Arnold later became a partner and married Rotch's daughter Sarah on October 29, 1807.

Arnold was among a number of successful businessmen from the area who became interested in agriculture and horticulture and he was one of the founders of the New Bedford Horticultural Society in 1847. In 1821 he erected a Federal style brick mansion in New Bedford and established extensive gardens. He opened his private gardens to the public, at the time an unusual and highly regarded act. In 1868, Unitarian minister William J. Potter called the Arnold mansion "a home the most conspicuous among all our homes for culture, for hospitality, for charity."

James Arnold died in 1868 in New Bedford, outliving both his wife and daughter. Arnold's will specified that \$100,000 of his fortune should be used to advance agriculture and horticulture. The trustees of his will (**Francis E. Parker**, trust lawyer, managed charities; **George Barrell Emerson**, teacher, philanthropist; **John James Dixwell**, merchant, bank president and Jamaica Plain resident) suggested the sum be transferred to the President and Fellows of Harvard College to found an organization devoted to that purpose. In 1872 the Arnold Arboretum was founded on a portion of the land in Jamaica Plain willed to Harvard by Benjamin Bussey.

Although his extensive gardens are gone, the Wamsutta Club, founded in 1866 for the affluent of New Bedford's community who came from not only the

whaling industry, like Arnold, but the new textile industry, purchased the Arnold Mansion in 1919 and added two large wings on the north and south.

More about James Arnold, George Barrell Emerson and the founding of the Arboretum

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1311.pdf>

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/916.pdf>

Asa Gray (1810-1888)

Born in Sauquit, NY, he became an MD 1831. In 1842, Gray was appointed professor of natural history at Harvard, a post he retained until 1873. He is considered the father of American botany and instrumental in unifying the knowledge of the plants of North America in his *Manual of the Botany of the Northern United States, from New England to Wisconsin and South to Ohio and Pennsylvania Inclusive*. Known as *Gray's Manual*, it has gone through eight editions and remains a standard in the field.



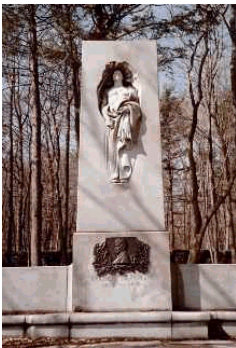
By donating his book and immense plant collection which numbered in the thousands, he effectively created the botany department at Harvard; the Gray Herbarium which is part of the Harvard University Herbaria is named after him. The Gray Herbarium at its original location on Garden Street in Cambridge is now the home of the Harvard University Press.

More about Gray

<http://www.huh.harvard.edu/libraries/asa/ASABIO.html>

Francis Parkman (1823-1893)

Parkman was born in Boston, Massachusetts to Reverend Francis Parkman Sr. (1788-1852), and Caroline (Hall) Parkman. A scion of a wealthy Boston family, Parkman had enough money to pursue his research without much worry about finances. His financial stability was enhanced by his modest lifestyle, and later, by the royalties from his book sales. He was thus able to commit much of his time to research, as well as to travel. He traveled across North America, visiting most of the historical locations he wrote about, and made frequent trips to Europe seeking original documents for his research.



A neighbor of the Sergeants, **Parkman's estate**, called "Sunnyside," was on the northwest shore of Jamaica Pond. A granite memorial featuring a formal bench with central shaft, from which emerges a forest Indian was erected by friends of Francis Parkman in 1906 at the approximate site.

Parkman has been hailed as one of America's first great historians and a master of narrative history. However, he was also a horticulturalist, author of *The Book of Roses* (1866) and the first professor of horticulture in the United States. After a year as Professor of Horticulture at the Bussey Institute Francis Parkman – never healthy - resigned and very well may have suggested his young neighbor as not only his successor at the Bussey Institution, but a candidate for director at the newly created Arnold Arboretum.

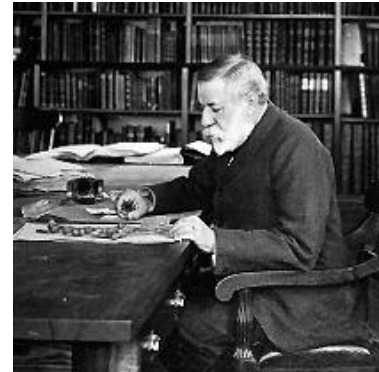
More about Francis Parkman

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/939.pdf>

Charles Sprague Sargent (1841 -1927)

Sargent, the Arboretum's first director served the institution for over 54 years. Charles was the child of Henrietta Gray and Ignatius Sargent, a successful Boston merchant, banker, and railroad financier. After graduating Harvard College and serving in the Union Army, he toured Europe then returned to manage "Holm Lea," the family estate and gardens in Brookline, Massachusetts.

In 1872 he was appointed Director of the Harvard Botanic Garden, becoming in effect an apprentice to Asa Gray. This position included the administration of the Bussey Institution as Professor of Horticulture, thus becoming Francis Parkman's successor. On November 24, 1873, Sargent received his ultimate charge as the Director of the Arnold Arboretum. Sargent held all three positions concurrently for several years; he was Director of the Garden until 1879, and a Professor at the Bussey until 1879.



When Sargent assumed the directorship of the Arnold Arboretum only the land on which the institution would take form existed. Without a building on site Sargent used "Dwight house" a large house located on his family's estate.



Although Sargent also had offices at the Bussey Institution adjacent to the Arboretum, and at the Gray Herbarium, in Cambridge, "Dwight House" headquartered Sargent's library and herbarium and first administrative offices of the Arnold Arboretum until 1892 when the Hunnewell building was constructed on the Arboretum's grounds. Sargent's library and herbarium, along with some of his correspondence files moved from his estate to "the museum," as the building was called, late in 1892.

More about Sargent <http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1328.pdf>
<http://books.nap.edu/html/biomems/csargent.pdf>

Horatio Hollis Hunnewell (1810-1902)

Most often known as H. H. Hunnewell, he was a wealthy banker, railroad financier, philanthropist, amateur botanist, and one of the most prominent horticulturists in America in the nineteenth century. Practicing horticulture for nearly six decades on his estate in Wellesley, Massachusetts, Hunnewell made a donation in 1873 that helped Asa Gray revise and complete his *Flora of North America*. He also funded the conifer collection at the Arboretum and in 1892 donated the Arboretum's administration building known then as the Museum.



THE MUSEUM OF THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM

Sargent conferred with Hunnewell often as he made plans for the Arboretum. The Hunnewell rhododendrons may be

the oldest cultivated specimens in the United States, as H. H. Hunnewell started planting them in the 1850s and 1860s. Today his Pinetum consists of 140-year-old topiary garden of native white pine and arborvite.

More about Hunnewell

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1882.pdf>

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903)



Olmsted is widely known as the father of landscape architecture, a profession that he was instrumental in defining. He was born in 1822 in Hartford, Connecticut.

Sargent met Olmsted in the summer of 1878 while Olmsted was working on his first studies for his Boston commission for the Park Department. The Arboretum was intended to function as a pleasure ground for the citizens of Boston and as an encyclopedic tree museum for scientists.

The arrangement and design of the Arboretum's living collections was collaboration between Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles Sprague Sargent. In their design, Sargent and Olmsted were in agreement that they had both scientific and aesthetic goals. Together they created a design based on a botanical sequence devised by George Bentham and Joseph Hooker displayed in a naturalistic fashion. The Arnold Arboretum is the only extant arboretum designed by Olmsted.

For more about Olmsted visit the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

<http://www.nps.gov/frla/>

City of Boston/Harvard College (1883)

In order to serve the dual purpose he believed the Arboretum would have, Sargent had to persuade the City of Boston and Harvard College to undertake a joint financial venture. His motives were not entirely altruistic: he needed additional money to build and maintain the Arboretum.

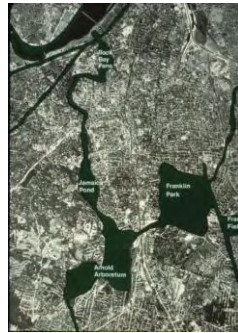
By 1880 Olmsted would write to Charles Eliot Norton, professor of fine arts at Harvard, about his frustration with the Arboretum project. "The scheme is that the city shall lease the condemned ... land to the college at a nominal rent for a thousand years and the college shall establish and maintain the arboretum. This is the whole of the scheme as I would have it. I am sure that it is a capital bargain for both parties. ... The sole difficulty is that nobody (feeling free to act) is alive to the opportunity. I have been shaking Dalton [chairman of the Park Commission] and Sargent and have tried to stir up Mr. Pulsifer at the Herald. ..."

The negotiations lasted four years. The Arboretum's nurseries were bursting at the seams. Sargent could not begin to implement Olmsted's design without commitment from the city. The proposition finally came to a vote by the City Council on October 13, 1882, after lengthy debate, but it failed to pass, receiving only 36 of the required 59 votes.

Proponents of the Arboretum on the Council quickly moved to set up an Arboretum Committee, and Sargent and Olmsted stepped up their efforts to rally support. A public relations drive was launched that had the "Arboretum Question" debated in the city's newspapers. November's headlines read: "VOICES OF THE PEOPLE IN ITS FAVOR—THROWING AWAY A BARGAIN," "THE ARBORETUM'S VALUE TO BOSTON," "AN EDUCATIONAL PARK AT A BARGAIN." Sargent pulled out all stops with the circulation of a petition, to which 1,305 of the most powerful people added their signatures. If Olmsted had failed to shake up someone at the Herald, the petition certainly succeeded. A story in its issue of December 1, read, in part:

"The petition to the city council in favor of the Arnold Arboretum is probably the most influential ever received by that body. It includes almost all of the large taxpayers of Boston. ... Nearly all of the prominent citizens are there, including ex-mayors and ex-governors. ... The petition would be a prize to a collector of autographs."

The campaign worked. On December 27, 1882, terms similar to those Sargent had proposed eight years earlier were agreed upon. It took another year to work out the details, but on December 20, 1883, a thousand-year lease was signed, and an unprecedented agreement between the City of Boston and Harvard College began.



Olmsted's "Emerald Necklace"

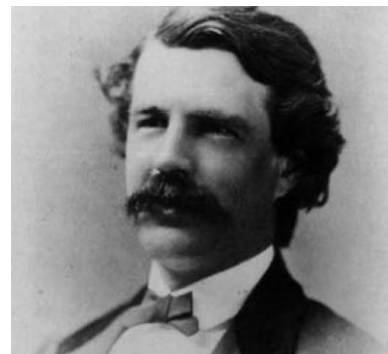
Under the terms of the agreement, the Arboretum became part of the City of Boston's park system. The city was to be responsible for the construction and ongoing maintenance of the driveways and boundary fences throughout the Arboretum. Harvard University was to collect the plants, design the Arboretum, and maintain the collections and programs.

To learn more

<http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/752.pdf>

Jackson Thornton Dawson (1841-1916)

As the first plant propagator and superintendent of the Arnold Arboretum, Dawson served 43 years and played a significant role in the growth of the Arboretum as a world-class institution. During these years he raised 450,718 plants and distributed 47,993 packets of seed throughout the world. He was known for his legendary skill at the propagation of plants, as the ultimate "green thumb."



Dawson, a Civil War veteran, was an active member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, serving on committees, giving lectures and publishing papers. In 1911 he was awarded the Society's prestigious prize for cultivation. His stature was such that in 1927 Massachusetts Horticultural Society established the Jackson Dawson Memorial Medal for "skill in the science and practice of hybridization and propagation of hardy woody plants." Jack Alexander is a recipient of the Dawson Medal.

More about Dawson <http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1097.pdf>

Charles Edward Faxon (1846-1918)

According to Charles Sprague Sargent, "Mr. Faxon joined the staff of the Arnold Arboretum in May, 1882, to take charge of the library and herbarium, which he managed successfully until his death [February 6, 1918] and which he saw grow from insignificance to importance. For these duties



he was equipped with a critical knowledge of the New England flora and a facility for acquiring languages which enabled him to read currently those of nearly every country of Europe. It is, however, as a botanical draftsman that Faxon is most distinguished. During his connection with the Arboretum 1,920 of his drawings were published. With few exceptions they illustrate works on trees which have been prepared here. His drawings unite botanical accuracy with graceful composition, and the skill of his pencil has placed him among the few great masters of his art whose names will live as long as plants are studied."



More about Faxon <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~ajp00008>

Alfred Rehder (1863-1949)

Rehder grew up in an environment that stimulated his interest in plants. His father was the Park Director for the Princes of Schonburg-Waldenburg, his paternal grandfather had been Park Director for Prince Puckler at his park in Muskau in Upper Lusatia, Silesia. His paternal grandmother was the daughter of the head gardener on the estates of Count Bruhl in Brandenburg.

In 1884 he went to Berlin and studied at the Botanic Gardens of the University for two years. He also worked at the park in Muskau where his grandfather had been director, at the Grand Ducal Botanic Garden in Darmstadt, Hesse, and finally the Botanic Gardens in Gottingen from 1889-1895 where he was the Associate Editor of *Moller's Deutsche Gartner-Zeitung* for three years.

In 1898 Rehder traveled to the United States to make dendrological studies for *Moller's Deutsche Gartner-Zeitung* and investigate fruit growing and viniculture in the northeastern United States for the German government. In order to supplement his income he weeded the shrub collection at the Arnold Arboretum for a dollar a day. Sargent quickly recognized his talent and knowledge, brought him inside and persuaded him to stay.

In 1902 Rehder visited Germany and worked on his *Synopsis of the genus Lonicera*. From 1904 to 1906 he returned to Europe to obtain bibliographic data for the *Bradley Bibliography* and attend the International Botanical Congress of 1905 in Vienna, Austria on behalf of Harvard University. In 1927 Rehder became senior editor of the Journal of the Arnold Arboretum and complete his most influential work, *Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs Hardy in North America*.

Although Rehder officially retired in 1940, he continued to work at his desk every day on his *Bibliography of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the Cooler Temperate Regions of the Northern Hemisphere*. It was published in June 1949 and



he continued to work at the Arnold Arboretum until early July. He died on July 21, 1949.

More about Rehder <http://arnoldia.arboretum.harvard.edu/pdf/articles/1764.pdf>

Arboretum Plant Explorers 1907 - 1927.



John George Jack (1861–1949)

In 1905, John George Jack embarked on a year-long trip to the Far East that focused principally on Korea and Japan, and may have also been planned in order to include spending time with his younger brother, the Reverend Milton Jack of the Presbyterian Foreign Ministry, who had long been stationed in Taiwan.

In addition to collecting seeds and herbarium specimens, Jack returned with images, many in a format especially useful for teaching purposes—lantern slides. Covering some of the ground that Arboretum plant explorer Ernest Henry Wilson would later visit, Jack toured the forest preserves in Japan, as well as the forests of Taiwan and Korea.

More about Jack

http://arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_jack2.html

Ernest Henry Wilson (1876-1930)

Wilson's career as an explorer began in 1899 when he traveled to China seeking the dove tree, *Davidia involucrata*, for the Veitch Nursery in England. A visit to the Arnold Arboretum on his way to China initiated a lifelong collaboration with Charles Sargent. As Wilson was preparing for his first Arboretum journey, Sargent insisted that he take along a large-format, Sanderson whole-plate field camera capable of recording both great detail and broad perspectives without distortion. The rest of his camera gear included a cumbersome wooden tripod and many crates of large, heavy, fragile glass-plate negatives. Between 1907 and 1922, Wilson used the Sanderson camera to take 2,488 images of eastern Asia for the Arnold Arboretum.



Wilson became a popular lecturer on his collection trips and on horticulture, often illustrating his talks with hand-colored lantern slides. After Sargent's death in 1927, Wilson became "Keeper" of the Arnold Arboretum. Three years later his remarkable career was cut short when he and his wife were killed in an automobile accident outside Worcester, Massachusetts. Ernest and Ellen Wilson are buried in the Mont-Royal Cemetery in Montreal, Canada.

More about Wilson

http://arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_wilson2.html

Frank Nicholas Meyer (1875-1918)



In 1905, the United States Department of Agriculture's Office of Seed and Plant Introduction recruited Frank Meyer, a native of Holland who had immigrated to America in 1901, to gather economically useful plants in China. Through an arrangement between Charles Sprague Sargent, the Director of the Arboretum and David Fairchild, Chairman of the USDA Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, Meyer was to send to the Arboretum trees and shrubs of ornamental value along with images of his travels.

In 1920, his former associates at the USDA had a medal struck as a tribute to Meyer with funds he had left to them as a bequest. **In recognition of Meyer's contributions, dedication, and service to humanity,** The Frank N. Meyer Medal for Plant Genetic Resources is presented each year for distinctive service to the National Plant Germplasm System.

More about Meyer

http://arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_meyer2.html

William Purdom (1880-1921)

In 1909, with Ernest Henry Wilson about to return from southern China and an agreement with the USDA in place to **ensure that Frank Meyer's Asian collections would be shared with the Arboretum,** Sargent was eager to dispatch yet another plant collector to the largely unexplored northeastern provinces of China. Hoping, **in Sargent's words,** to "**bring into our gardens Chinese plants from regions with climates even more severe than those of New England,**" the most inexperienced of Arboretum explorers, William Purdom, embarked on his first expedition in February of that year.



More about Purdom

http://arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_purdom2.html

Joseph Hers (1884-1965)



It was Joseph Hers, an administrator of the Lung-Hai and Pien-Lo railways, who first approached Sargent with a proposal to collect specimens for the Arboretum.

Stationed in Chengchow, Hers was superbly situated to range far and wide collecting and photographing plants. In 1919 Hers wrote Sargent **that although his "own knowledge of botany is, I regret to say, very limited, I happen to live in a part of China where very few botanical collections, if any, have been made, and as I enjoy frequent opportunities to travel in little known districts . . ."** Enclosed with the letter was a list of trees and shrubs that included **a number of new species, and Hers offered to send "seeds, or cuttings, or photos."**

More about Hers

http://arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_hers2.html

Joseph Charles Francis Rock (1884–1962)

The last of the great plant hunters employed by Charles Sprague Sargent, Rock was a botanist, anthropologist, explorer, linguist, and author. He had immigrated to the United States from his native Austria in 1905, but between 1920 and 1949 Rock lived in China for extended periods, exploring, collecting plants and animals, and taking pictures for various United States agencies and other institutions, including The National Geographic Society, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Arnold Arboretum.



More about Rock

http://arboretum.harvard.edu/programs/eastern_asia/explorers_rock2.html