Dr. Friesner, Botanist-Teacher

J. Johanna Jones

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Recommended Citation
Jones, J. Johanna (1954), "Dr. Friesner, Botanist-Teacher," Butler University Botanical Studies: Vol. 11, Article 10.
Available at: http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/botanical/vol11/iss1/10

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Butler University
Botanical Studies
(1929-1964)

Edited by

J. E. Potzger
The Butler University Botanical Studies journal was published by the Botany Department of Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana, from 1929 to 1964. The scientific journal featured original papers primarily on plant ecology, taxonomy, and microbiology. The papers contain valuable historical studies, especially floristic surveys that document Indiana’s vegetation in past decades. Authors were Butler faculty, current and former master’s degree students and undergraduates, and other Indiana botanists. The journal was started by Stanley Cain, noted conservation biologist, and edited through most of its years of production by Ray C. Friesner, Butler’s first botanist and founder of the department in 1919. The journal was distributed to learned societies and libraries through exchange.

During the years of the journal’s publication, the Butler University Botany Department had an active program of research and student training. 201 bachelor’s degrees and 75 master’s degrees in Botany were conferred during this period. Thirty-five of these graduates went on to earn doctorates at other institutions.

The Botany Department attracted many notable faculty members and students. Distinguished faculty, in addition to Cain and Friesner, included John E. Potzger, a forest ecologist and palynologist, Willard Nelson Clute, co-founder of the American Fern Society, Marion T. Hall, former director of the Morton Arboretum, C. Mervin Palmer, Rex Webster, and John Pelton. Some of the former undergraduate and master’s students who made active contributions to the fields of botany and ecology include Dwight W. Billings, Fay Kenoyer Daily, William A. Daily, Rexford Daudenmire, Francis Hueber, Frank McCormick, Scott McCoy, Robert Petty, Potzger, Helene Starcs, and Theodore Sperry. Cain, Daubenmire, Potzger, and Billings served as Presidents of the Ecological Society of America.

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DR. FRIESNER, BOTANIST-TEACHER

By J. Johanna Jones, Butler 1952

With the passing of Dr. Ray C. Friesner, Indiana has lost one of her most active field botanists and teachers. For more than thirty years, Dr. Friesner hiked the woods and fields of Indiana, collecting and identifying plants to swell the records of Indiana flora. As a teacher and scientist, he inspired many students with his example of industry, study, and vision.

Dr. Friesner was born in 1894 at Bremen, Ohio. He worked his way through high school, and received his A.B. from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1916, and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1919. During the summers of 1918 and 1919 he was instructor at the University of Michigan. In the fall of 1919 he became assistant professor of botany in the Biology Department of Butler University, Indianapolis. The following year he became head of the new Department of Botany; in 1947 he was appointed Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and retained both positions until his death on December 1, 1952.

Shortly after his arrival in Indiana he met Dr. Charles C. Deam, nationally-known Indiana botanist and author of "Flora of Indiana" and other books on Hoosier plants. Dr. Friesner became vitally interested in field taxonomy as practiced by Dr. Deam, and with his characteristic energy and thoroughness set about collecting and identifying every species of higher plant hitherto unreported for Indiana or for the county in which it was found. His collections total 25,500 and swelled the Butler University herbarium. Not only a general taxonomist, Dr. Friesner was a widely recognized authority on the goldenrods, on which he published monographs. In connection with his field work, he compiled each year the Indiana Plant Distributions Records, supplements to Deam's "Flora of Indiana."

A leader in the Indiana Academy of Science, Dr. Friesner was secretary from 1926 to 1935, and president in 1936. He was active on many of the Academy committees and in the botany, taxonomy, and history of science meetings. One of his most recent contribu-
tions was an index of the Indiana Academy of Science Proceedings from 1941 to 1950.

During his more than thirty years of service to the Botany Department at Butler University, Dr. Friesner supervised the development of the departmental library and the Butler University Botanical Studies. The latter is a publication presenting original research performed mainly in Indiana. In normal times it is distributed to libraries scattered throughout the world. Under his direction the department has expanded from a total of three courses offered at the time of its origin, to a total of twenty-seven listed in the current catalog.

In addition to his numerous duties as administrator, teacher, and scientist, Dr. Friesner was active in the Indianapolis Downey Avenue Christian Church, and was chairman of the official Board of Directors there. He was teacher of a Philathea class for more than twenty years. He held membership in the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Association of University Professors, the American Genetic Association, the Botanical Society of America, Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Sigma, Phi Kappa Phi, the Eugenics Research Association, and the Academies of Science of the states of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. In 1948 Dr. Friesner was the recipient of the James Irving Holcomb Award at Butler University. In 1951 he received the D.Sc. degree from Ohio Wesleyan University. He has been cited in Indiana Men of Science, American Men of Science, and Who's Who in America.

Dr. Friesner will long be remembered among his associates for his traits of honesty, industry, kindness, and devotion to duty. His record is not contained only in the lists of his publications, offices, and honors, but must be measured also by the ranks of students whom he inspired with his teaching and by his example and companionship. He has erected his own memorial within the hearts of those who knew him.

DEAN RAY C. FRIESNER

The moral and intellectual greatness of a University depends primarily upon the qualities of heart and mind which animate the men who make and direct its policies and teach its students. That man is touched by sublimity whose life is marked at once by love of God,