

## PREFACE

### DR. HENRY ALLAN GLEASON: HIS MICHIGAN PERIOD

North American botanists may most readily associate Gleason's name with The New York Botanical Garden, from using either *The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada* (1952) or the *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada* (with Arthur Cronquist, 1963, 1991). Before he wrote any of these botanical classics, Dr. Henry Allan Gleason spent some years in Michigan, during which he wrote a key to its flora, *The Plants of Michigan*.

Dr. Gleason came to Michigan in 1910, joining the University of Michigan Botany Department as an Assistant Professor, being promoted to the rank of Associate Professor six years later. His research involved both plant taxonomy and plant ecology; the latter was a relatively new field of endeavor in which Gleason's work was to be very influential for many years (Smith 1951). The first edition of *The Plants of Michigan* (1918), his most extensive floristic work to that date, appeared one year before he would leave the University.

Besides his duties in the Botany Department, Dr. Gleason became involved in both teaching and administration at the Biological Station near Pellston. He taught during seven different summers at the Station, offering one or more of the following courses: systematic botany, field and forest botany, plant ecology, or plant anatomy. After serving as Acting Director during 1913 and 1914, he was appointed Director of the Biological Station for the 1915 session (Gates 1983). Several of his papers on Michigan plants arose from his work at and around the Biological Station. Curiously, most of these that I have encountered, including "The introduced vegetation in the vicinity of Douglas Lake, Michigan" (1914, with Frank T. McFarland), deal at least in part with the introduced rather than the native flora of that area; an intriguing parallel to my own interests!

H. A. Gleason was also involved with the University of Michigan Botanical Gardens. He served as Director of the "Botanical Gardens and Arboretum" from 1915 until his departure from the University in 1919. During his tenure, he would have dealt with the move of the

Gardens from what is now the Nichols Arboretum to the Iroquois Street site, which preceded the present site on Dixboro Road east of Ann Arbor (Bartlett 1943).

After Dr. Gleason joined the staff of the New York Botanical Garden in 1919—Smith (1951) noted that Gleason was “prevalued upon” by Dr. N. L. Britton, Director of the NYBG and a key advisor to Gleason’s earlier doctoral study there (1905–1906; Gleason 1976), to leave Michigan—his “Michigan connection” was not broken. He taught plant anatomy at the Biological Station for a final time in 1923 and spent several other summers conducting research at the station (Gates 1983, Smith 1951). Two more editions of *Plants of Michigan* appeared, the second in 1926, the third in 1939. Although titled “editions”, the changes from his initial 1918 text were minor. In a 1925 letter from Gleason to George Wahr, the publisher, Gleason enclosed three pages “indicating the necessary changes for a second edition . . . only one line needs to be added.”

The idea of revising the 3rd edition of *Plants of Michigan* dates back to 1950. After selling all of the ca.1000 copies of the 3rd edition printed in 1939, the publisher wrote to Gleason in May of 1950 suggesting that the work should be revised before being reprinted. Gleason liked the idea but withdrew from the project in December of 1950 because of poor health. Photolithographed copies of the 3rd edition (1939) were produced, beginning in 1951. Throughout the 1950’s a total of 1900 copies were printed. The final reprinting appears to have been 500 copies produced in 1963.

Henry Allan Gleason published many works besides those already mentioned during his thirty-one-year career at the New York Botanical Garden; they included papers on ecology, systematics of South American plants (especially members of the family Melastomataceae), and a small volume that is strikingly similar to *The Plants of Michigan*. First appearing in 1935 (Gleason 1935), in a second “edition” (apparently identical except for correcting known errata in the 1935 work) twelve years later, (Gleason 1947), and as a “revised edition” (and enlarged) in 1962 (Gleason 1962), *Plants of the Vicinity of New York* arose from his interest in the local flora (Smith 1951) and is to serve for plant identification in “all the region within two hundred miles of New York City” (Gleason 1962). The layout of

group keys leading to family treatments first used in *Plants of Michigan* is maintained; in fact, it is likely the model which Gleason followed for the introductory keys in his 1952 *The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora* and those in the later Gleason and Cronquist manuals (Voss 1996).

The major differences between Gleason's *Plants of the Vicinity of New York* and his *The Plants of Michigan* are the inclusion of line illustrations, a section discussing plant structure, and a key to Ferns and Fern Allies in the New York volumes. Would Gleason have added these sections to a subsequent revision of *The Plants of Michigan*? One can only suspect that, given the success of his edition of *The New Britton and Brown Illustrated Flora*, illustrations similar to those we have included might have appeared.

The preface which appears in each of H. A. Gleason's three editions of *The Plants of Michigan* was succinct. After stating that the book was "not intended for the expert botanist" nor for "the merely curious" and that "it is not a textbook", Gleason clarified its purpose in a single sentence:

"Its mission is fully accomplished if, through its use, students, vacationists, and plant-lovers in general are able to recognize by name the plants about them."

I hope that, in this revised form, this book still fulfills the mission which Henry Allan Gleason foresaw some 80 years ago.

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1998