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January 22, 1982

DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY AND PLANT PATHOLOGY

"The College is in great need of a teacher to take Agriculture and teach Botany. I would respectfully state that I have actually taught classes in English, German, French, Latin, and Greek for the last 2 years. This has compelled me to labor at least 10 hours a day and in addition to all this work, I teach a class in Botany and one in Fruit Culture." So wrote a Professor B. J. Hawthorne of the School of Languages of Oregon Agricultural College in the Biennial Report for 1874-1876. There is no mention of what Professor Hawthorne did in his spare time! From 1883 to 1888, Botany was taught in the Department of Natural Sciences by Professor E. Grim.

From this modest beginning developed the present Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, with 28 faculty members, 13 Courtesy faculty members, 8 post-doctoral Research Associates, 13 Classified staff, 21 research technicians, 27 Graduate Research Assistants and 15 Graduate Teaching Assistants. Fifty-three undergraduate students and 63 graduate students are majoring in the Department in 1981-1982. Its programs of teaching, research and Extension representing all major Botany disciplines are jointly administered by the College of Science, School of Agriculture and School of Forestry. Nearly 800 students from all over campus take courses in the Department each term. The Department of Botany and Plant Pathology is presently housed in Cordley Hall, the first section of which was built in 1957, and named for A. B. Cordley. Cordley, although Head of Zoology and Entomology, worked principally as a Plant Pathologist, making a major contribution to the control of apple diseases with lime-sulphur spray.

Cordley became Dean of the School of Agriculture in 1908. Prominent among present facilities are one of the nation's major herberia, a modern Plant Clinic for diagnosis of plant disease problems, a 40-acre experimental farm and an Electron Microscopy Laboratory.

With creation of the Agricultural Experiment Station in 1888, a Department of Botany and Horticulture was established with E. R. Lake as Head. Extension Plant Pathology began just one year later as four Farmers' Institutes were held. One of the earliest publications in Plant Pathology was Bulletin No. 27 entitled "Causes and Prevention of Plant Diseases," which was written in 1894 by Moses Craig, then Department Head. The first formal course in Plant Pathology, "Plant Hygiene," was taught one year later.

In 1898, besides teaching nine courses in Botany and Plant Pathology, Professor Lake added a course in Forestry, and from 1904 to 1908 the Department actually was known as the Department of Botany and Forestry. When Oregon Agricultural College was divided into four schools, Botany remained in the School of Agriculture under the leadership of E. R. Lake. Not until many years later, about 1932, did the Department come under joint administration by the then School of Science.

The Department's name was changed to Botany and Plant Pathology in 1909. During this and succeeding years, as the Department expanded, it was joined by several individuals who were to have a profound influence upon the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, the University and the City of Corvallis for more than 30 years. Among them were:

Helen M. Gilkey, who taught Botany from 1904 until 1951, was the first curator of the Herbarium and author of several books and numerous publications on Oregon plants.

William M. Atwood, who was the first Professor of Plant Physiology and taught General Botany from 1911 to 1951 and for many years managed the Oregon Agricultural College Student Loan Fund.

Howard P. Barss, who did outstanding research on the brown rot fungi and served as Head of the Department from 1915 until 1936.

Charles E. Owens, who taught Plant Pathology, published a textbook of Plant Pathology, and served as Head of the Department from 1936 to 1947.

George W. Peavy, the first Professor of Forestry, organized the School of Forestry, and became its first Dean. He later became President of Oregon State College, and ultimately Mayor of the City of Corvallis.

Among other notable additions to the faculty of the Department were Frank P. McWhorter (1929-1967), Edward K. Vaughan (1931-1974), Frank H. Smith (1936-1971), Henry P. Hansen (1939-1972), and Lewis F. Roth (1940-1979), all of whom presently are Emeritus professors.

From 1909, through the World War I years, and the Great Depression and for several years thereafter, the Department did not undergo rapid changes. Along the way it did begin to offer the M.S. degree (1911) and the Ph.D. degree (1938). The late John A. Milbrath (1937-1968), known by many local residents, was one of the first four persons to complete a Ph.D. degree in Plant Pathology in 1938.

Since 1927 U.S.D.A. scientists have been associated with the Department, contributing much to research, and in later years to the training of graduate students.

From 1947 to 1958, under the supervision of S. M. Dietz, the Department began to undergo rapid change with substantial reorganization. This era of rapid development continued at an accelerated pace under the successive leadership of Roy A. Young and J. Ralph Shay, who were Department Head from 1958-1966 and 1966-1978, respectively. Today the Department is widely recognized nationally and internationally as one of this nation's foremost departments of plant science.

