

Humboldt State University

Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University

Botanical Studies

Open Educational Resources and Data

12-2019

Willis Linn Jepson

James P. Smith Jr

Humboldt State University, james.smith@humboldt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/botany_jps



Part of the [Botany Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, James P. Jr, "Willis Linn Jepson" (2019). *Botanical Studies*. 87.

https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/botany_jps/87

This Biographical Sketches is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Educational Resources and Data at Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Botanical Studies by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University. For more information, please contact kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu.

WILLIS LINN JEPSON (1867 – 1946): HIS TIME LINE AND PUBLICATIONS

**James P. Smith, Jr.
Professor Emeritus of Botany
Department of Biological Sciences
Humboldt State University
Arcata, California**

December 2019

Willis Linn Jepson has been called “the botany man” and the “high priest” of the California flora. He was the preeminent student of the flora of California during the first half of the twentieth century. He is often cited as the first native born California botanist. His entire professional career, from undergraduate to Professor Emeritus of Botany, was spent at the University of California at Berkeley. In addition to his voluminous accomplishments in systematic botany and California floristics, Jepson was a journal editor (*Erythraea* and *Madroño*) and a conservationist. His estate provided the funds to establish the Jepson Herbarium and Library. Its mission was “to understand and conserve the California flora,” more specifically to update his 1925 Manual, to complete his *Flora of California*, and to maintain and expand the collection of vascular plants and associated library. The genus *Jepsonia*, the specific names of a long list of plants, and various place names, including Mt. Jepson, also perpetuate his memory, as do *The Jepson Globe* and *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California*, the essential reference on the subject.

T I M E L I N E

- 1867. Born at Little Oak Ranch in Vaca Valley, Solano County, California (18 August)
- 1885. Enrolls at the University of California at Berkeley
- 1889. Graduates from Berkeley
- 1894. Begins plans for a comprehensive flora of California.
- 1890. His earliest numbered collection (*Juncus bufonius*)
- 1890. First trip to Yosemite
- 1891. Appointed Assistant in the Department of Botany at Berkeley
- 1891. Becomes President of the Chamisso Botanical Society at Berkeley
- 1892. Trip to Yuba Pass in the Sierra
- 1892. Joins John Muir and others to found the Sierra Club
- 1893. Co-founder (with E. L. Greene) the *Erythraea*, a Journal of Botany, West American and General
- 1894. Trip to Mt. Shasta
- 1895. E. L. Greene leaves Berkeley to become Professor of Botany at Catholic University
- 1895. Jepson appointed Instructor in Botany at Berkeley
- 1895. Research at Cornell University
- 1896. Trip to Santa Cruz Mtns.
- 1896. Takes leave of absence to visit the Gray Herbarium at Harvard
- 1897. Trip to Yolla Bolly area and northwestern California
- 1898. Earns his doctorate in systematic botany at Berkeley, the university's tenth and its first in botany
- 1899. Delivers a series of six lectures at the California Academy of Sciences
- 1899. Member of the Harriman Expedition to Alaska
- 1900. Trip to Mt. Whitney
- 1900. Elected President of the Field Club at Berkeley
- 1905. Takes first sabbatical to Europe
- 1906. Visits the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew
- 1909. Extended Sierra Club excursion to Yosemite and Hetch Hetchy
- 1911. Appointed Associate Professor of Botany
- 1912. Takes second sabbatical to Mojave Desert

- 1913. Founds the California Botanical Society and serves as its first president (1913-1915)
- 1915. Suffers a mental breakdown and goes to a sanatorium in St. Helena
- 1916. Founds *Madroño*, the journal of the California Botanical Society
- 1917. Trip to Death Valley and the White Mountains
- 1918. Appointed Professor of Botany
- 1922. *Erythea* ceases publication
- 1925. Moves into his new home on a prominence above the Berkeley campus
- 1925. Takes third sabbatical to the Middle East
- 1926. Visits Kew Herbarium
- 1930. Occupies new facilities in the Life Sciences Building at Berkeley
- 1934. Elected Faculty Research Lecturer and delivers prestigious lecture
- 1936. Spends summer in the redwood region
- 1937. Suffers a serious ankle fracture while in Crescent City; returns to the sanatorium in St. Helena
- 1937. Becomes Professor Emeritus
- 1938. Delivers principal address at the silver jubilee anniversary of the California Botanical Society
- 1941. Awarded Ll. D. degree
- 1941. Extended field trip to Rancho Santa Ana, his last
- 1945. Last collection number 27,571 (*Salsola tragus*)
- 1945. Suffers a heart attack from which he never fully recovers
- 1946. Dies at his home in Berkeley, California (7 November)

FLORISTIC PUBLICATIONS AND HIS BOTANICAL EXCURSIONS

- 1891. Botany of the Marysville Buttes. *Bull. Torrey Club* 18: 317-327. His first publication.
- 1893. Alien plants in California. *Erythea* 1: 141-143.
- 1893. The mountain region of Clear Lake. *Erythea* 1: 10-16.
- 1893. The riparian botany of the lower Sacramento. *Erythea* 1: 238-246.
- 1896. The chaparral of the Coast Range. *Univ. California Mag.* 2: 98-103.
- 1897. Botanical exploration in California in 1896. *Erythea* 3: 7-9.
- 1898. Seed plants of western middle California. Key to the orders and anomalous genera. University Press. Berkeley. 10 pp.
- 1899. Vegetation of the summit of Mt. St. Helena. *Erythea* 7: 105-113.
- 1901. A flora of Western Middle California. Cunningham, Curtiss, & Welch. San Francisco, CA. 625 pp.
- 1902. A school flora for the Pacific coast. Appleton and Co. New York, NY. 96 pp.
- 1903. Mount Whitney, Whitney Creek, and the Poison Meadow Trail. *Sierra Club Bull.* 4: 207-215.
- 1905. Street trees in California. Hand Book series. California Promotion Committee. San Francisco. 16 pp.
- 1909. The trees of California. Cunningham, Curtiss, & Welch. San Francisco, CA. 228 pp.
- 1909-1943. A flora of California. Three vols. Incomplete. Associated Students Store. Univ. California. Berkeley. A fourth installment by Lauramay Dempster was published in 1979.
- 1910. *Silva of California*. Memoirs of the University of California. University Press. Berkeley. 480 pp.
- 1911. A flora of western middle California. Second edition. Cunningham, Curtiss, & Welch. San Francisco, CA. 515 pp. (The published version of his doctoral dissertation)
- 1912. Trees, shrubs, and flowers of Napa County. In, Gregory, T. et al. History of Solano and Napa counties. Historic Record Co. Los Angeles, CA. Pp. 150-153.
- 1915. Principal trees between the summit of the Sierras and San Francisco Bay. In, Guidebook of the Western United States. U. S. Geol. Survey Bull. 612: 202-203.
- 1915. Forests of the western United States. In, Grinnell, J. (editor). Nature and science on the Pacific Coast. Paul Elder & Co. San Francisco, CA. Pp. 159-167.
- 1917. Springtime in the desert. *California J. Agric.* 4: 214-215.
- 1918. The White Mountains of California. *Sierra Club Bull.* 10: 282-286.
- 1921. The flowers of Yosemite National Park. In, Hall, A. F. (editor). Yosemite National Park Handbook. G. P. Putnam's Sons. New York, NY. Pp. 247-267.
- 1923. Trees of California. Second edition. Sather Gate Bookshop. Berkeley, CA. 240 pp.
- 1923-1925. Manual of the flowering plants of California. Univ. California Press. Berkeley. 1238 pp.

1924. Flora of the economic plants of California, for agricultural students, including important crop plants, agricultural weeds, poisonous plants, honey plants, medicinal plants, chaparral shrubs, native timber trees, and the most common native plants of the spring flowering. Associated Students Store. Berkeley, CA. 223 pp.
1935. A high school flora for California, including the more common native flowering plants and cultivated crop plants. Associated Students Store. Univ. California. Berkeley. 223 pp.
1940. Trees, shrubs and flowers of the Redwood region. Save the Redwoods League. 15 pp.

BOTANISTS AND BOTANICAL EXPLORATION

1893. Early scientific expeditions to California. I. *Erythea* 1: 185-190.
- 1893-1922. *Erythea*: a journal of botany.... Univ. California. Berkeley. 8 volumes.
1894. Professor Greene's mission in Europe. *Erythea* 2: 153-155.
1897. The explorations of Hartweg in America. *Erythea* 5: 31-35; 51-56.
1898. Dr. Henry N. Bolander, botanical explorer. *Erythea* 6: 100-107.
1899. Biographical sketch of H. G. Bloomer. *Erythea* 7: 163-166.
1899. Biographical sketch of Henry Bolander. *Erythea* 7: 163-166.
1899. Early scientific expeditions to California. II. *Erythea* 7(11): 129-134.
1899. Epitaph of David Douglas. *Erythea* 7: 174, 175.
1918. Edward Lee Greene, the man and botanist. *Newman Hall Rev.* 1: 24-29.
1928. The botanical explorers of California. I. *Madroño* 1: 167-170.
1928. The botanical explorers of California. II. Joseph Whipple Congdon. *Madroño* 1: 175-177.
1928. The botanical explorers of California. III. George Hansen. *Madroño* 1: 183-185.
1928. The botanical explorers of California. IV. George Dexter Butler. *Madroño* 1: 188-190.
1929. Charles Russell Orcutt, natural history collector. *Madroño* 1: 273, 274.
1929. Johann Friederich Eschscholtz. *Madroño* 1: 253.
1929. The botanical explorers of California. V. Charles Lewis Anderson. *Madroño* 1: 214-216.
1929. The botanical explorers of California. VI. *Madroño* 1: 266-270.
1931. Biographical sketch of Patrick Beveridge Kennedy. *Madroño* 2: 34, 35.
1931. The botanical explorers of California. VII. *Madroño* 2: 25-29.
1932. Death of Dr. Harvey Monroe Hall. *Madroño* 2(7): 63.
1932. Samuel Bonsall Parish. *Univ. California Publ. Bot.* 16(12): 427-444.
1932. Thomas Jefferson Howell. *Dict. American Biog.* 9: 305, 306.
1933. Albert Kellogg. *Dictionary American Biog.* 10: 300, 301.
1933. David Douglas in California. *Madroño* 2(12): 97-100.
1933. John Gill Lemmon. *Dictionary American Biog.* 11: 162, 163.
1933. The botanical explorers of California. VIII. *Madroño* 2: 83-88.
1934. The botanical explorers of California. IX. Nancy Jane Davis. *Madroño* 2(14): 115-118.
1934. The botanical explorers of California. X. Rachel Merritt Austin. *Madroño* 2(16): 130-135.
1934. The botanical explorers of California. XI. *Madroño* 2(17): 156, 157.
1934. The overland journey of Thomas Nuttall. *Madroño* 2(17): 143-147.
1938. The botanical explorers of California. John Milton Bigelow. *Erythea* 3(13): 102-104.
1942. Early botanical ascents of Mount Shasta. *Sierra Club Bull.* 27(4): 23-30.
1943. Edward Lee Greene, the individualist. *American Midl. Nat.* 30(1): 3-5.
1947. Carl Purdy, lover of the lilies. *J. California Hort. Soc.* 8: 2-4.
1962. California botanical explorers. XII. John Milton Bigelow. *Madroño* 16(6): 179-183. (A combination of his 1938 paper and a typescript discovered among WLJ's papers.)

SOURCES

- Beidleman, R. G. 2000. Willis Linn Jepson – “the botany man.” *Madroño* 47(4): 273-286.
- Beidleman, R. G. 2000. Rowboat botanizing with Willis Jepson on the Colorado River. *Fremontia* 28(2-4): 3-12.
- Beidleman, R. G. 2006. Botany man Jepson, naturalist Muir, and the Sierra Club outing of 1909. *Fremontia* 34(3): 3-8.
- Carew, H. D. 1928. The high priest of flora: a glance at the life and works of California's foremost botanist. *Touring Topics* 20(12): 32-34.
- Constance, L. 1947. Willis Linn Jepson. *Science* 105: 614.
- Constance, L. 1950. Disposition of the Willis Linn Jepson estate. *Madroño* 10: 128.
- Constance, L. 1995. Homage to Willis Linn Jepson. *Madroño* 42: 96-102.
- Ewan, J. 1947. Willis Linn Jepson. *J. Washington Acad. Sci.* 37: 414-416.
- Fritz, E. 1947. Willis Linn Jepson, a eulogy and a bit of California forestry history. *California Forester* 14: 6-8.
- Fritz, E. 1948. Willis Linn Jepson: lover of California's trees and flowers. *California Hort. Soc.* 9: 23-26.
- Heckard, L. R., J. T. Howell, & R. Bacigalupi. 1967. The scientific writings of Willis Linn Jepson (1867-1946). *Madroño* 19: 97-160.
- Hickman, J. C. 1986. The legacy of Willis Linn Jepson. *Fremontia* 13(4): 22-26.
- Keck, D. D. 1948. The place of Willis Linn Jepson in California botany. *Madroño* 9: 223-228.
- Mason, H. L. 1947. Willis Linn Jepson. *Madroño* 9: 61-64.
- Parsons, M. R. 1947. Willis Linn Jepson. *Sierra Club Bull.* 32: 104-107.