



SAMUEL COPELAND PALMER

1874 - 1961

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W. E. HANNUM

It is an esteemed privilege to contribute, in reminiscent spirit, to this memorial to a distinguished naturalist, because through long association with him in school, college, and after life, I owe my rather modest career as a devotee of ornithology to Sam's interest and influence.

He was born on April 27, 1874, on a farm in Concord, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. His father, Lewis Palmer, was an elder in Concord's Friend's meeting; his mother, Hannah, nee Pancoast, was my maternal grandmother's sister. Our farms were adjoining.

Educated in Concord and Westchester, he entered Swarthmore College in the Class of 1895, graduating with a degree of A.B. He joined the faculty of Swarthmore Preparatory School that year, serving as Vice-Principal from 1905 to 1907, when the degree of A.M. was conferred upon him by Swarthmore College. In 1909 he was made Acting Professor of Biology at Swarthmore College and, in 1911, Assistant Professor. In the intervening years he studied for his Doctorate at Harvard, living at Winthrop, Massachusetts, with his wife, Margaret Swayne Palmer, and children. He became Associate Professor of Biology at Swarthmore in 1923, and occupied the Chair of Biology from 1926 to 1942. He was actively engaged in biological work and as Graduate Manager of Athletics at the College, however, for twenty years prior to his death.

In 1929 he accompanied Donald B. MacMillan on an Arctic expedition as Botanist, collecting and identifying one hundred species of northern plants in the vicinity of Baffin's Bay. On this voyage an island was named in his honor, which appears on Navy maps.

Sam loved adventure. At the close of the last century, he, with a college friend, went to Paris via cattle ship to visit the exposition. Sam must have been the better sailor, for it is said that while he fed the cattle John spent most of his time feeding the fishes.

He was a member of Sigma Xi, national honorary scientific Society, and he became a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1938. A member of the D.V.O.C. since 1899, he is listed as an Honorary member in the 1955 issue of *Cassinia*.

In the Biological Building at Swarthmore there is a collection of 5455 hand-painted sketches embracing a total of 1556 varieties of plants, exhibiting an accuracy of detail and artistic execution which characterized Dr. Palmer's painstaking work.

He married Margaret Bancroft Swayne at Kennett Square, Pa., on August 6, 1902.

Dr. Palmer died on October 30, 1961, after an attack of pneumonia, thus terminating a busy and active life. Margaret entered into rest in 1932 at the age of 51 years. There are three surviving children: Samuel Copeland (with whom he was living at the time of his death), Katherine, and Lawrence Benjamin.

Such are the principal landmarks of Dr. Palmer's life. In a more personal and intimate vein, I must acknowledge a debt of gratitude. It was through his active intervention that I entered Swarthmore Preparatory School in 1896 and Swarthmore College in the Class of 1903. Dr. Spencer Trotter, then Professor of Biology at Swarthmore, provided the means (as student instructor of Biology and Geology) of continuing in college until graduation. Dr. Trotter also put in my name at the D.V.O.C., of which I became a member in 1901. So in this roundabout way I was obligated to Dr. Palmer, not only for an education, but also a life-long membership in the D.V.O.C.

In later years Sam's field activities became more circumscribed, owing to failing vision and advancing age. Asa P. Way's field notes inform us of what may have been his last extensive field trip — a visit to Romancoke on February 25, 1950, where, in addition to numerous landbirds, he saw Whistling Swans by the hundreds and, for good measure, the Surf and Common Scoters.

To me, Samuel C. Palmer was not only an eminent naturalist but a valued friend. For a number of years it had been his practice to send Christmas card size reproductions of his nature drawings as Yuletide greetings. The last one (which I shall always treasure) was a handsome sketch of *Cypripedium*, var. *pubescens*, received at Christmas, 1961. His Christmas cards for that year were finished and ready for mailing in September. He had jokingly said that if anything happened to him, his children were to mail them out. According to his wish the cards were sent out following his death. Ever considerate, what could have better exemplified his thoughtfulness?

926 Woodside Avenue, Secane, Pa.