

# HERBERT H. BECK

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Herbert Huebener Beck died in the Lancaster Hospital on December 22, 1960, at the age of 85. He was born at Lititz, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on November 15, 1875, and was raised in the educational atmosphere of Audubon Villa, a private school maintained by his father, Abraham Beck. He was graduated from Lehigh University in 1896 and did graduate work in Berlin, Germany. He became a member of the faculty of Franklin and Marshall College in 1901, later serving as head of the Chemistry Department of that institution.

As one who has known and been associated with Dr. Beck over four decades, I have never ceased to marvel at his amazing breadth of interests and activities, encompassing such diverse fields as history, mineralogy, geology, archeology, and ornithology, along with a host of other seemingly unrelated subjects, including horse racing, fox hunting, boxing, music, bridge, and firearms. In these many activities he displayed a sound and encyclopedic knowledge of the subject at hand, and in some he made important contributions. His papers on various subjects, both technical and nontechnical, brought him many honors, and he became known as "Lancaster County's unofficial Ambassador of Good Will."

One of the honors which he valued most highly was his appointment as Custodian of the Audubon Society's Mt. Johnson Island Sanctuary for the Bald Eagle, and he was visibly saddened when the eagles finally deserted that long-occupied nesting site.

His interest in and apprehension for the species of birds that were considered to be in danger of extinction led him to conduct an annual census of the Upland Plover population of Lancaster County. In the spring of 1950 I had the pleasure of joining him and a small party of mutual friends on a trip to southern Texas to see the Whooping Cranes and birds of the Rio Grande Valley, after which he and Carl Fasnacht continued on to the California Condor country. At that time he was still capable of spending a full day in the field without displaying any visible signs of fatigue.

Dr. Beck took great pride in the fact that he was probably one of the last living persons to have seen Passenger Pigeons in Pennsylvania. In later years he would often recall the day in September, 1888, when he saw a flock of 150 to 175 of these rapidly vanishing birds near York.

His "Chapter on the Ornithology of Lancaster County," published in 1924, and a later paper titled "Birds of the Lower Susquehanna Lake Region," printed in 1955, are our chief sources of information on the birdlife of that region.

Dr. Beck had been a member of the D.V.O.C. since 1917, although his attendance at meetings was confined largely to those at which subjects of particular interest to him were being presented or discussed.

For many years he was the Executive Director of the Franklin and Marshall College Museum, which later became known as the North Museum. He was also an active force in the Lancaster County Historical Society, serving as President for over a quarter of a century. Dr. Beck was a charter member and Director of the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, and in his later years he acted as professional consultant for the Pennsylvania Farm Museum at Landis Valley, where he overhauled and catalogued the museum's large collection of historic firearms.

During this latter period he became less prone to physical exertion, and it was then that he and his wife, Gladys (Thome) Beck, devoted much of their time to bridge, a game in which they were both considered experts.

Whenever and wherever I have seen him, Herbert Beck, who above all was a friendly man, seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself, and it was quite typical of him to say, on the occasion of his eighty-fifth birthday, just a few weeks before his death, "I've seen a lot, and I have been interested in many, many things. I have had a wonderful life, and I believe that I have lived in the best period this nation has ever known."

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FULVOUS TREE DUCKS AT BRIGANTINE