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WHITMAN COLLECTION, M.B.L.

In the Marine Biological Laboratory library at Woods Hole, Mass., there is an inconspicuous brown paper-wrapped collection of archival material. It includes: more than 60 letters from the M.B.L.'s first Director, C. O. Whitman, to his friend E. G. Conklin; other assorted letters to and from Whitman concerning the M.B.L.; several manuscripts of Whitman's papers; addresses to the M.B.L. Trustees by Whitman; reports on the budget and other financial matters; newspaper clippings on the M.B.L.; printed copies of stories on "Woods Holl" by John Fay and on the Anderson School at Penikese Island by a participant. Most of the material spans the years 1895-1906 and documents a critical period in M.B.L. history. The letters from Whitman to Conklin are the collection's outstanding feature as they contain discussions both of routine matters and of financial and ideological crises through which the M.B.L. passed.

The letters document in much greater detail the crises which are discussed in Lillie's history. They show that the problems began in 1897 when the Board of Trustees, largely made up of wealthy Bostonians, declared that it would maintain tight control over expenditures with a conservative policy of nonexpansion, and that the Director should spend no money "until further action be taken by the Board." This decision was made without consulting either the Director or the Corporation of M.B.L. Scientists.

Only after the bylaws were changed and new Trustees were elected in late 1897 following a tense general meeting of the Corporation, were tensions between Trustees and the Corporation resolved. (See Science, 8 Oct. and 10 Dec. 1897 for public exchange.) The financial situation remained shaky for several more years, as is clear from Whitman's letters:

The Trustees leave me absolutely nothing to pay bills with except our receipts (future and unknown) and have instructed Bursar not to exceed income from receipts. How he is to know beforehand more about this than we, I have not learned. [1897]

I am having many sleepless hours over the lack of funds to pay bills this year. I have about resolved to take from my own poor pocket to settle the \$600 unsettled salaries. I have reason to hesitate to do this, for I do not see the way out of it.

Were it not for the many good hearts behind me, I should feel decidedly blue. [1899?]

Along with financial insecurities came questions of policy: how should the limited funds be acquired and how spent? There were several opportunities to obtain secure financial support, but most of these involved turning over some control of the Laboratory to the supporting organization. Throughout his letters Whitman demonstrated a firm belief that, above all, the M.B.L. must remain independent, run by scientists who were active in research and who understood the needs of a biological research station. M.B.L. ideals must not be sacrificed for financial security, he felt.

From his letters we see that Whitman rejected an idea to combine the M.B.L. with the government-run U. S. Fish Commission. He favored an offer by several individuals from Chicago to give heavy financial support in exchange for placing several M.B.L.-approved men on the Board. Others, including E. B. Wilson, opposed the Chicago plan as leading to unwanted affiliation with just one university. Wilson favored an offer by the Carnegie Institute to take over financial responsibility in exchange for general control of M.B.L. policies. Whitman, however, opposed this plan as involving loss of independence for M.B.L.

Whitman wrote to Conklin:

We would not accept [amalgamation] for all the money in America; we have set our faces against any sort of 'affiliation' or amalgamation. We pledged ourselves to the Corporation to this effect; we pledged ourselves to these principles from first to last, and we cannot and will not desert this rock of faith and science

He favored combining all possible means of support which did not threaten M.B.L. independence. "But what are we to do?" he continued.

It seems to me there is but one thing open to us, that is to stand firm for independence, and to accept such support as is given to us through cooperation and our Trustees and friends. We must not let the bugbear of affiliation frighten us out of our possessions. [17 March 189?]

The problem of financial support was finally resolved by the Carnegie Institute giving \$10,000 per year for 1903-05 in exchange for 20 lab. tables but without control of the M.B.L. Yet Whitman was disillusioned by the recurrent debates and constant tensions and, as Lillie describes, he gradually withdrew from active participation in M.B.L. administration after 1902. His letters reflect his personal disappointments:

The treatment I have received this year from some of our laboratory friends has at times made me wish that I could feel indifferent about the fate of the Laboratory, but when I remember that I have given 15 years to develop a laboratory, with the understanding that it should forever stand an independent affair, I realize that I must not yield to any discouragement. [8 July 1902]

This collection is thus valuable in following Whitman's personal dilemmas as well as in documenting critical events in early M.B.L. history.

Other sources of information on this period of M.B.L. history include:

F. R. Lillie's The Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory (Chicago, U. Chicago Press, 1944), of which two drafts with comments and additions by Conklin are now in the Conklin collection in the Princeton Archives.

E. G. Conklin's "Early Days at Woods Hole" and "MBL Stories" in Am. Sci., 1968, 56: 112-20 and 121-28.

Numerous articles in M.B.L. Annual Announcements (1888-), Biological Bulletin (1899-), Collecting Net (v. 1-20, beg. 1926), and Science (1895-1902).

F. R. L., "Charles Otis Whitman," Science, 1911, 33: 54-56.

Detlev W. Bronk, "Marine Biological Laboratory: Origins and Patrons," Science, 1975, 189: 613-17.

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VICTOR E. SHELFORD PAPERS

The Victor E. Shelford papers in the University Archives at the University of Illinois, Urbana, are a valuable source of information on the institutional growth of ecology in America. Shelford (1877-1968) earned the title "Father of Animal Ecology" by combining the plant ecology of Henry C. Cowles (1869-1939) with the ethology of C. O. Whitman (1842-1910) to produce the first major works on animal ecology in America. He received his education at the University of Chicago and upon his graduation was appointed to the faculty there. In 1914 Shelford left the University of Chicago for the University of Illinois where he spent the rest of his career, as professor of zoology until 1946 and as a very active emeritus until his death in 1968.

The collection consists of two file boxes of letters, manuscripts and research notes and a large box containing four volumes of his pre-retirement reprints and five volumes, labeled "Student contributions to science from the laboratory of V. E. Shelford," which contain students' reprints. The letters date almost entirely from his arrival at the University of Illinois and deal primarily with the institutional aspects of his career. There is very little correspondence related directly to his science. The chief exception to this is his correspondence with various county agents in 1948 while Shelford was attempting to trace the pattern of periodic chinch bug irruptions. The letters are arranged in files according to the date they were written, the last letters being from 1958. Although the letters are arranged by date, they tend to deal with only one subject at a time. Letters extraneous to the issue at hand are missing from the collection. The letters are evenly divided between letters from correspondents and copies of Shelford's own letters.

There are several major issues which reappear frequently in the letters. Shelford was one of the first ecologists to campaign for the preservation of natural sites. In 1917 he proposed the organization of a committee on "The Preservation of Natural Conditions for Ecological Study" which was affiliated with the Ecological Society of America. For the next 20 years there were periods in which the letters dealt with his efforts to get the Society to support conservation. In his effort to spark interest