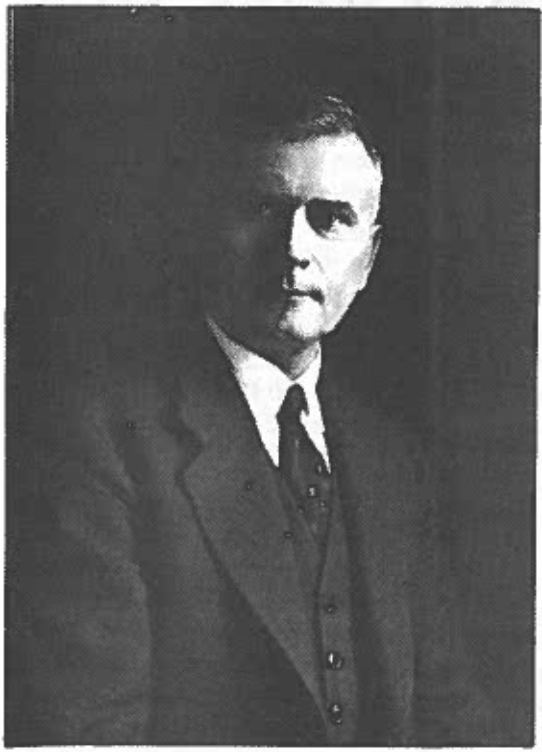


Alfred Huettner

An embryologist captured the MBL of the 1920s and 30s on film



Alfred Huettner

by Jane Maienschein

In 1941, Alfred Francis Huettner published his classic textbook, *Fundamentals of Comparative Embryology of the Vertebrates*. Known for its excellence as a teaching text, it is also noted for its unique three-dimensional illustrations, most of which were his own drawings based on his own preparations. This volume remained in print for more than forty years, an achievement that few textbook writers have duplicated.

Born in Reichenbach, Germany in 1882, he completed his studies in the Gymnasium and left the country soon after. He found his way to his career in biology by a long, harsh and circuitous route, starting as a sailor on a Cape Horn sailing vessel. In the United States at the turn of the century, he earned his living as a section hand, an iron miner, and a silk weaver, using his spare time for labor organizing and for studies.

Having dreamed of seeing the great American West, he worked his way across the country as a harvest farm hand, a photographer, and a teacher on the Sioux Reservation in South Dakota.

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Wherever he traveled, he took his camera with him. In his early days, he used a 2" x 3" bellows extension camera; in later years, he used a Leica. Having made his living in South Dakota as a professional photographer, he had a special talent for capturing the essence of his scenes and subjects.

There is an unusual collection from his Dakota years: panoramic views recording the vastness and loneliness of the rolling prairies and of the badlands to the west and

pictures of towering snow drifts left by a blizzard—drifts that rise higher than the great black locomotives clearing the tracks. And then there are the pictures of the people: the farmers and their families, the townspeople, the cowboys, the sodbusters, and the Sioux

Indians on the reservation.

Many of the most famous photographs from the MBL taken in 1920s and 1930s were taken by Huettner, who came to Woods Hole for many summers with the Columbia group. Since he generously gave prints of his pictures to his friends, many people have seen these quality photographs without ever realizing their source.

While continuing his embryological and cytological work and his teaching, and while bringing up his many successful professional sons with his wife Mary, he also managed to capture the life of the MBL with his lens. Scientists playing horseshoes, paddling off by canoe for a picnic, relaxing on the beach, swimming, gardening, talking, working in their laboratories — these are the fundamental aspects of Woods Hole life that he captured so well.

For his outstanding photography as well as for his embryological work, he joins the group of great men from that early era at the MBL. ■



Huettner's photograph of T.H. Morgan with his daughters Lillian and Isabel