

**The Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter
Agassiz Association
1897 - 1961
Eloise Butler and the Chapter**

Within the preserved writings of Eloise Butler are references to correspondence with other botanists and replies to correspondence from others. Most references imply or refer to her membership in the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter, Division D. The Gray originally was a chapter, with five divisions, of the Agassiz Association. This correspondence was circulated between the membership of the Chapter.

Selections of Butler's correspondence with the Chapter are included in the group of her writings that we have in our [history archive](#).

Here is a sampling of these references to the Chapter Bulletin:

"Mrs. Keeler's paper leads me to write about our ferns."⁽¹⁾

"I will faithfully record in the Bulletin next fall the haps and mishaps of my new fern plantation."⁽²⁾

"I would say to Mrs. Jackson that it is much easier to ask questions than to answer them."⁽³⁾

"To Mrs. Holtzoff's list of substitutes for tea, I can add. . ."⁽⁴⁾

"I would like to exchange roots of asters, if agreeable to any members of the chapter..."⁽⁵⁾

"Eloise Butler - D Bulletin, October" - Heading of typed manuscript.⁽⁶⁾

"It reads like a fairy tale or a story out of Arabian Nights. I shall rehearse it for my botanical correspondence club."⁽⁷⁾

Eloise Butler was a member of Division D⁽⁸⁾ which was mainly made up of members in the middle west of the United States, although anyone could belong to any of the divisions as long as you contributed articles for circulation to the members. More on Eloise in the Chapter history section.

The Agassiz Association

The Agassiz Association, named after famed botanist Louis Agassiz, was founded in the late 1800's to be an association of local chapters that would combine the like interests of individuals and organizations in the study of nature. Chapters could be associated with colleges, universities, secondary schools and just interested parties, but over the years the Agassiz Association membership dwindled and by 1900 the Gray Chapter was one of few still active and remained so until 1943.

This chapter was named for Asa Gray (1810-1888), American botanist, Professor of Natural History at Harvard and instrumental in unifying plant knowledge of North America and author of Gray's Manual - *Manual of the Botany of the Northern United States, from New England to Wisconsin and South to Ohio and Pennsylvania Inclusive*. He is considered the most important American botanist of the 19th century.

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History of the Gray Chapter



Asa Gray in 1867

round-robin fashion by mail to the membership. Non-contributors were asked to provide their excuses for not contributing. This of course led to members leaving because of their personal time constraints on preparing articles and of the time it took for the bulletin to make the rounds, not to mention the postal costs.

These membership problems led to the creation of a published journal in 1893, which ran to January 1901. Members subscribed to the journal and it began to accept articles from outside parties and the necessity of preparing contributions was alleviated. Editorship transitioned to several persons and institutions over the years. During those 7 years Chapter members gradually dissociated themselves from the Bulletin. Some Chapter members known as the "conservative wing" preferred the old and more personable circular routing and continued to do that. When the editor of the

The Gray chapter was formed in 1888 following Gray's death in January of that year and eventually had 5 divisions, A B C D E. Members of the chapter were expected to contribute articles of general interest, specific researches or "a report of one's own finding — a personal letter as it were — to all of the fellow members, which would have an appeal that most formal contributions lack."⁽⁹⁾ These articles were bundled together as a bulletin, in the format in which the author had submitted, and sent in

(Reprinted, November, 1901, by the Plant World Company.)

Bulletin of the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter —OF THE— AGASSIZ ASSOCIATION.

NUMBER I. SECOND QUARTER, 1893.

Contents—Reports of Division A.

Notes on *Carya tomentosa**
Mosses of Mt. Desert Island,
A Fern Garden,
Growth without Roots,

Frances Wilson
Theodore G. White
Frances M. Graves
E. L. Ruggles

DIVISION B.

Notes on *Utricularia vulgaris*, etc*
Woodland Studies,
Carices,
In Season and Out of It.

Edna Porter
Matilde Schlegel
Stewart H. Burnham
Willard N. Chute.

*ILLUSTRATED.

ALCOVE, N. Y., MAY 11, 1893.
Dear Members of the G. M. B. C.

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF
THE GRAY MEMORIAL BOTANICAL
CHAPTER OF A. A. REPORT FOR
QUARTER ENDING APRIL 1st, 1893.

NOTES ON *CARYA TOMENTOSA*.

This species, in the New England States and perhaps throughout the country (?) is the most abundant of the genus. It is a very beautiful tree, which has interested me greatly—my "particular friend" of the woods. At this time of the year, when its young branches are tipped with large round buds, enfolding the season's undeveloped growth, it has a marked individuality, and a tree-lover's eye may easily recognize it afar off, as it towers among its neighbors, equaling most of them and exceeding many, in height and spread; for the tree grows to a large size when the wood-cutter lets it alone—which he does not, as a general thing, the wood being so highly prized for fuel. The furrowed bark and stout, rugged branches have an aspect of strength and hardy endurance which is well associated with the rocky New

Cordially Yours,
C. L. SHEAR, Pres.

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Bulletin died in late 1900, one other person agreed to publish one last issue and then fold the *Bulletin*.

Sometime in the early 1930 the Chapter changed its name to the Gray Memorial Botanical Association and the circular picked up the name *Asa Gray Bulletin*. The round-robin circular method, in continuous use by some members and after 1900 by all members, continued to be used by the Chapter until 1934 when it was decided to incorporate members submissions into several pages of the quarterly *American Botanist*.

It was during this time period of Eloise Butler's membership (1908-1933) that she submitted articles all of which would have been part of the round-robin circulation method of the Chapter's Bulletin during that time period.

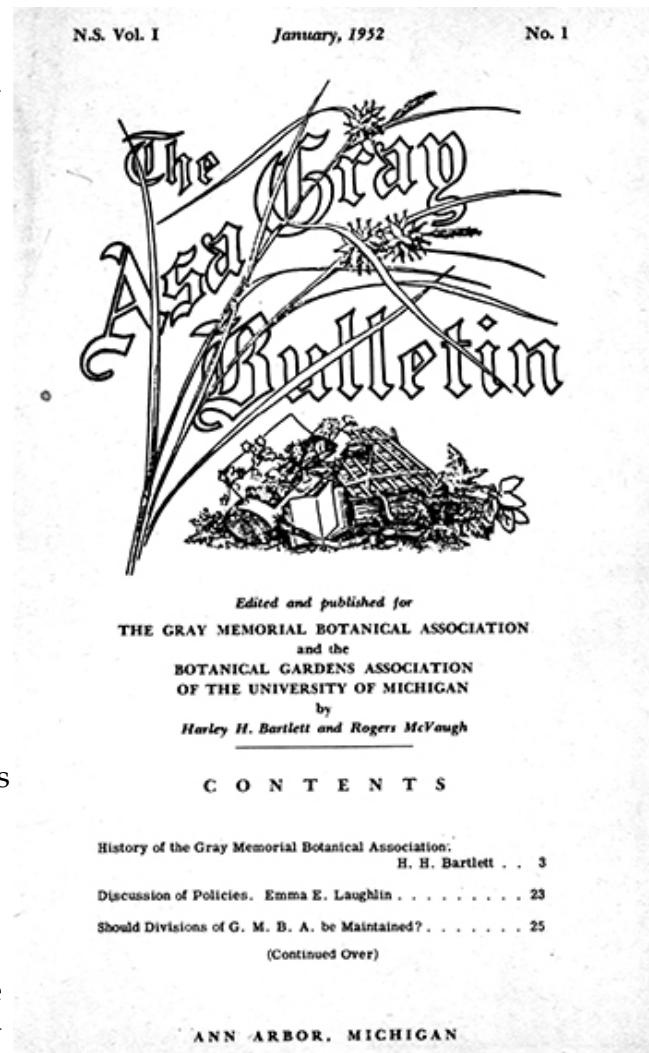
From Nov. 1934 to 1943 an attempt was made to still publish the round-robin Bulletin of the Gray Memorial Botanical Association in the months between issues of the quarterly *American Botanist*, but the circulation method still had its drawbacks.

By 1939 A group of students at Marietta College took over publication of the circulated articles and prepared a printed journal, naming it the "Journal of the Gray Memorial Botanical Association" which lasted until 1943 when the war made it unpractical to continue.

In 1952 the surviving members of the Chapter reorganized and the University of Michigan began to publish a new bulletin, reviving the name "Asa Gray Bulletin." These were created as the "new series" and were quite voluminous. Issues were put out frequently at first but after two years - infrequently. Volume I came out in 1952 with 4 issues - total of 408 pages; volume II in 1953 with 4 issues - total of 464 pages. Volume III was the last with three issues - June 1955, July 1957 and Spring 1961 - total 578 pages. Then publication ceased.⁽¹⁰⁾

Reference notes:

- (1). [*Ferns in the Wild Garden - 1915*](#)
- (2). [*Ferns in the Wild Garden - 1919*](#)
- (3). [*Garden Experiences - 1916*](#)
- (4). [*Children's Forage Plants in the Wild Garden - 1915*](#)



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- (5). [Asters in the Wild Garden](#)
- (6). [The Mallard Pool - 1932](#)
- (7). Letter to Martha and Bill Crone 28 October 1930 ([Pdf](#))
- (8). Martha Hellander's research for her book on Eloise Butler indicated that Eloise joined the Chapter in 1908 and was a member until her death in 1933. *The Wild Gardener*, 1992, North Star Press, page 82.
- (9). More details of the history of the Gray Memorial Botanical Chapter are found in "History of the Gray Memorial Botanical Association and the Asa Gray Bulletin" by Harley H. Bartlett in the *Asa Gray Bulletin* Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1952, Ann Arbor Michigan.
- (10). This information may be found in the Botanicus.org section of the Missouri Botanical Gardens online publications.

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