

## WILLIAM N. SUKSDORF

On October 3, 1932, Mr. Wilhelm Nikolaus Suksdorf, veteran Washington botanist, was killed by a railway train at Bingen, Klickitat County, Washington.

Mr. Suksdorf was born in Holstein, Germany, on September 15, 1850. He was a small boy when the family emigrated to Iowa, where they stayed for a few years before settling in the White Salmon Valley in Klickitat County. Later, they moved to the present site of Bingen, on the Columbia River, so named by them after "Bingen am Rhein." Here was Suksdorf's headquarters for fifty-seven years.

Even when he was a boy working with his brothers on the farm, he was interested in the plant life about him, sufficiently so to start a collection of specimens. At the age of twenty-four he entered the University of California, making up his entrance requirements as he went along.

It was during this time that Suksdorf began to correspond with and to send some of his specimens to Dr. Asa Gray of Harvard, and it took a deal of courage for this rather shy country boy to write to such an eminent scientist as Asa Gray, who was then the dominant figure in American botany. Dr. Gray was so impressed with the enthusiasm and keen scientific acumen of young Wilhelm that in 1886 he invited him to go to the Gray Herbarium of Harvard University where he remained until the death of Dr. Gray in 1888.

In 1888, Suksdorf returned to Klickitat County, where, for the next forty-four years he carried on his botanical work.

Suksdorf's specimens have been distributed to most of the important botanical institutions in Europe and America. His private herbarium, containing approximately 25,000 specimens, and his books, will go to the Herbarium of the State College of Washington at Pullman.

Wilhelm Suksdorf discovered and named many new plants, and many others were named in his honor. In 1879, Dr. Gray, years before they met, had established a new genus of the Saxifragaceae which he named *Suksdorfia*. In 1910 this name was made a *nomen conservandum* by the International Botanical Congress which met in Brussels. Hence this generic name will stand as a

permanent monument to the industry and scientific ardor of Suksdorf.

Suksdorf made the first list of the flowering plants and ferns of Washington in his *Flora Washingtonensis*, published in 1892. In 1896, in cooperation with the pioneer Oregon botanist, Thomas Howell, he published a list of all the flowering plants known to occur on Mount Adams. From 1897 to 1931 there appeared numerous contributions to the flora of Washington. Nearly all of these were published in German and appeared in the *Deutsche Monatsschrift* the *Allgemeine Botanische Zeitschrift*, the *West American Scientist*, *Rhodora*, and other publications. In 1923 Suksdorf started his own publication bearing the engaging name *Werdenda*, numbers of which appeared from time to time until 1931, containing descriptions of and valuable notes pertaining to the flora of Washington. On December 31, 1931, his last and biggest work appeared as numbers 5, 6, 7, 8 of volume one of *Werdenda*. The "Untersuchungen in Der Gattung *Amsinckia*" is a revision of the difficult genus *Amsinckia*, with descriptions of two hundred and thirty species. Suksdorf cultivated many of the plants in his garden, carefully carrying on experimental cultures for twenty years.

In 1929 the honorary degree of Master of Science in Botany was conferred upon him by the State College of Washington at Pullman.

With the death of W. N. Suksdorf, Washington has lost its outstanding pioneer botanist, a modest unassuming scientist, and a man of rare charm and sincerity.

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