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Henry James Clark Papers

1858-1912

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The first professor of Natural History at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, Henry James Clark, had one of the briefest and most tragic tenures of any member of the faculty during the nineteenth century. Having studied under Asa Gray and Louis Agassiz at Harvard, Clark became an expert microscopist and student of the structure and development of flagellate protozoans and sponges. Barely a year after joining the faculty at Massachusetts Agricultural College at its first professor of Natural History, Clark died of tuberculosis on July 1, 1873.

A small remnant of a brief, but important career in the natural sciences, the Henry James Clark Papers consist largely of obituary notices and a fraction of his published works. The three manuscript items include two letters from Clark's widow to his obituarist

and fellow naturalist, Alpheus Hyatt (one including some minor personal memories), and a contract to build a house on Pleasant Street in Amherst.

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Background on Henry James Clark

The first professor of Natural History at the Massachusetts Agricultural College, Henry James Clark, had one of the briefest and most tragic tenures of any member of the faculty during the nineteenth century. Born in Easton, Mass., on June 22, 1826, the son of Rev. Henry Porter and Abigail Jackson (Orton) Clark, Henry was raised primarily in Brooklyn, N.Y. After graduating from the City University of New York in 1848, Clark took a job teaching in White Plains. Already interested in the local flora, his wife recalled that he contacted the great botanist at Harvard, Asa Gray, after discovering a flower that he thought might be new to science. With Gray's encouragement, Clark resumed his studies in 1850, working under both Gray and Louis Agassiz, and graduating from the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard in 1854.

At Harvard, Clark's interests gradually shifted from flora to fauna, and he became fascinated with the then-fashionable questions of the nature of the cell and the nature of protoplasm. After graduation, he remained in Cambridge for several years, working as an assistant to Agassiz, and from June 1860 to 1865, as an adjunct professor at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. A talented microscopist and keen observer, he published a series of widely-regarded works in histology and on the structure of flagellate protists, sponges, and the coelenterate *Haliclystus auricula*. He is sometimes credited with being the first to identify the choanoflagellates and he produced important works on flagellae in sponges and the nature of individuality in animals.

Clark's longest and most philosophical work, *Mind in nature* (1865), explored the origins and organization of life, grappling with larger concepts such as spontaneous generation (of which he was a strong advocate), symmetry, development and form, and the relationship of natural history to natural theology. Without referencing Charles Darwin, Clark staked out a position similar to Richard Owen on the evolution of life forms. Clark earned election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1856, and enjoyed membership in the Boston Society of Natural History (1857), American Microscopical Society (1865), and the National Academy of Sciences (1872).

Leaving Cambridge in 1866, Clark passed through academic appointments on the faculty of the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania (now Penn State) and the University of Kentucky (1869-1872). Already diagnosed with tabes mesenterica (tuberculosis), he accepted a position at the relatively new Massachusetts Agricultural College in February 1872. His disease, however, progressed rapidly, and on July 1, 1873, he succumbed, leaving behind his wife, Mary, whom he had married in 1854, and seven of their eight children.

Scope of collection

A small remnant of a brief, but important career in the natural sciences, the Henry James Clark Papers consist largely of obituary notices and a fraction of his published works. The three manuscript items include two letters from Clark's widow to his obituarist and fellow naturalist, Alpheus Hyatt (one including some minor personal memories), and a contract to build a house on Pleasant Street in Amherst.

Inventory

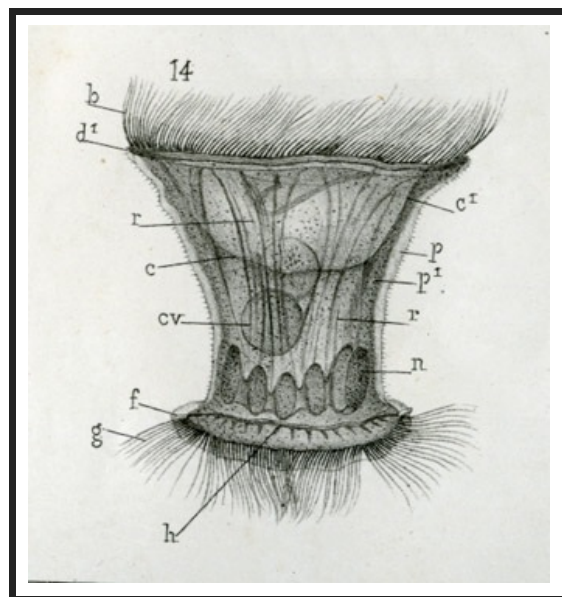
Manuscript materials

1872-1873

Clark, Mary Young Holbrook: Letter to Alpheus Hyatt, Amherst, Mass.

1873 Nov. 11

ALS, 4p.



Trichodina pediculus

Pleased that Hyatt will write a memoir of Henry James Clark and suggests he contact Clark's brother J. Edwards Clark. Personal memories of Clark and his scientific interests.

Clark, Mary Young Holbrook: Letter to Alpheus Hyatt, Amherst, Mass.

1873 Nov. 18

ALS, 4p.

Remitting biographical information on Henry James Clark provided by J.E. Clark.

Grainger, L. N.: Contract with Henry James Clark to build house on Pleasant Street, Amherst, Mass.

1873 Oct. 21

ALS, 4p.

Printed materials

1865-1912

Notices of Henry James Clark

1873-1878

Bound volume

Clark, Henry James: Recapitulation of the "embryology of the turtle," as given in Prof. Agassiz's "Contributions to the Natural History of the United States of North America," *American Journal of Science*, 2, 25

1858

Clark, Henry James: Some remarks upon the use of the microscope, as recently improved in, in the investigation of the minute organization of living bodies, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 28

1859

Clark, Henry James: On the origin of Vibrio, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 28

1859

Clark, Henry James: On apparent equivocal generation, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 28

1859

Clark, Henry James: Lucernaria the coenotype of acalephae, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 35

1863

Clark, Henry James: Prodrromus of the history, structure and physiology of the order Lucernariae, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 35

1863

Clark, Henry James: On the cellular structure of *Actinophrys eichornii*, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 38

1864

Clark, Henry James: Tubularia not parthenogenous, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 37

1864

Clark, Henry James: The anatomy and physiology of the vorticellidian parasite (*Trichodina pediculus* Ehr.) of *Hydra*, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 42

1866

Reviews of *Mind in Nature*

1866

Clark, Henry James: On the structure and habits of *Anhtophysa mulleri*(Bory), one of the sedentary monadiform protozoa, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 42

1866

Clark, Henry James: Conclusive proofs of the animality of the ciliate sponges, and of their affinities with the infusoria flagellata, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 42

1866

Clark, Henry James: On the spongiae ciliatae as infusoria flagellate; or, observations on the structure, animality, and relationships of *Leucosolenia botryoides* Bowerbank, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 45

1868

Clark, Henry James: Polarity and polycephalism, an essay on individuality, *American Journal of Science*, 2, 49

1870

Clark, Henry James: On the infusoria flagellate and the spongiae ciliatae, *American Journal of Science*, 3, 1

1871

Clark, Henry James: The American spongillae, a craspedote, flagellate infusoria, *American Journal of Science*, 3, 2

1871

Clark, Henry James: Report of the Veterinary Department, 10th *Annual Report*, Massachusetts Agricultural College

1873

Clark, Henry James: The anatomy and physiology of the vorticellidan parasite (*Trichodina pediculus*, Ehr.) of *Hydra*. *Memoirs of the Boston Society of Natural History* 1

1865

Bound volume

Clark, Henry James: Lucernariae and their allies. A memoir on the anatomy and physiology of *Haliclystus auricular*, and other lucernarians. *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge* 242

1878

Bound volume

Henry James Clark, 1826-1873. *General Catalogue of the Massachusetts Agricultural College* 1

1886

Pamphlet, 3 copies

Packard, Alfred Spring: Memoir of Henry James Clark, 1826-1873. *Biographical Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences* 1

1874

Pamphlet, 3 copies

Tuckerman, Frederick: Henry James Clark: Teacher and Investigator. *Science*, n.s. 35

1912

Pamphlet, 4 copies

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Provenance unknown.

Processing Information

Processed by Dex Haven, March 2009.

Related Material

See also: Clark, Henry James, *Mind in Nature, Or, the Origin of Life and the Mode of Development in Animals*. New York, Appleton, 1865. Call no. (SCUA): QH 311 .C61.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

Developmental biology.

Protozoans.

Contributors

Clark, Henry James, 1826-1873 [main entry]

Clark, Henry James, 1826-1873.

Genres and formats

Contracts.

Letters (Correspondence).

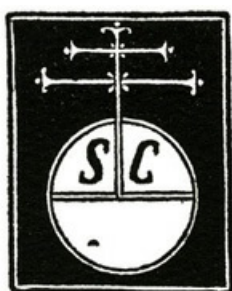
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