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A. B. Massey is one of those rarest of natural phenomena, an endemic Virginia botanist. Born at Miller School in Albemarle County in 1889, he has lived out of the state for a few years only, and has spent the great majority of his professional career as a resident student of the vascular plants of Virginia. Blacksburg has been his home since 1918.

"A. B." received his bachelor's degree from North Carolina State College in 1909, and was employed as instructor in Botany at Clemson for the following three years. From 1913 to 1918, he held the rank of Assistant Professor at Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), and in 1918 began his long association with Virginia Polytechnic Institute. In 1928 he earned his M.S. from V.P.I.

The name Massey has over the years become so linked with the systematic study of the Virginia flora that many younger botanists are surprised to learn that during the early years at V.P.I., Dr. Massey worked and taught as a bacteriologist in the Department of Plant Pathology! Later his time was shared between the Department of Biology and the Wildlife Unit, and the latter organization occupied his full time from 1935 to 1959. From 1918 to 1955 he held the staff rank of Associate Professor of Biology, promotion to Professor coming in 1956. Through all of these years, Dr. Massey's courses covered the entire spectrum of botanical specializations, including bacteriology, plant anatomy, plant ecology, systematic botany, dendrology, agrostology, and a variety of other related subjects. Upon his retirement it was discovered by the Wildlife Unit that botanists in the old, broad sense are no longer being trained, and that it was impossible to replace him by a single qualified person!

A. B. Massey found it impossible to continue graduate work beyond the M.S. degree, but his actual knowledge of botanical subjects far transcended that of most holders of recent doctorates. He was awarded an honorary D.Sc. in 1956 by Lynchburg College, but his claim



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to academic pre-eminence has never really needed formal documentation. Several decades of students at V.P.I. have been better biologists for having passed under his tutelage; in fact one member of the *Wildlife*

Unit staff recently remarked that students in forestry and wildlife doubtless got their most rigorous and lasting training in Massey's courses. Trust students to know and appreciate quality instruction: when the coveted "Wine Award" was initiated by V.P.I. in 1958, Massey was in the first group of faculty members to be so honored. The Wine Award is given each year to a few outstanding teachers selected by a ballot of the student body.

Former members of his classes will doubtless recall Dr. Massey at his best on field trips, during which he commanded student respect and admiration for his wide-ranging knowledge of natural history generally and an apparently boundless store of energy. Instead of retiring at the usual age of 65, he continued to teach a few courses as a service to the college until 1960, when he completed his final class in plant taxonomy at the age of 70! A member of this last group recalls that he (an active naturalist himself) and five robust young forestry graduate students were virtually walked to fatigue on the weekly field trip while their leader apologetically remarked that some incipient foot trouble had almost immobilized him!

Over the years the Massey tradition at V.P.I. produced a frame of reference that admirably reflects the image of the man among students and colleagues. He became Professor Massey, and more specifically around Price Hall, simply "Professor". The title in its academic sense has never been more honorably earned, and in its transition into a form of address, more affectionately bestowed.

It is, however, in connection with the vascular plants of Virginia that Professor Massey is best known to readers of *CASTANEA*. Upon his arrival at V.P.I. in 1918, he found no herbarium useful in his taxonomic courses, and he thereupon set out to remedy this deficiency largely as a personally-conducted project. There was only negligible financial aid from the college; mounting paper was often in short supply and stacks of specimens in newsprint folders often piled high. Herbarium cases came slowly and sporadically. Yet through his own efforts and those of graduate students the collection grew. The presently commonplace arrangements of part-time teaching and part-time research were unknown to Professor Massey; he taught full time and worked on the herbarium whenever possible. His personal involvement with these labors went so far that, at one time, he was working 12 months on a 9 month salary basis! Currently the herbarium numbers about 40,000 specimens, and is scheduled for transfer into new quarters in the nearly-completed Derring Hall at V.P.I. It is of course strongest in material from western Virginia, but in recent years has acquired material from various other eastern states. In 1968, just 50 years after his first association with

V.P.I., and nine years after his retirement from active service, the Board of Visitors of that institution voted to honor Professor Massey by formally naming for him the Herbarium that he almost single-handedly built up as a labor of love and contributed on his retirement to the college that he served so long and well.

Prior to 1918, knowledge of the Virginia flora was not much advanced beyond the stage where it had been brought by the earlier work of Pursh, Michaux, Nuttall, and Gray during the early 1800's. Professor Massey was quick to realize that a collaborative effort might be a far more satisfactory approach than his personal effort, and as early as 1926 proposed to Dr. Ivey F. Lewis, then President of the Virginia Academy of Science, that some kind of organization of Virginia botanists might be achieved under the aegis of the Academy. From the first, the subsequently-appointed Flora Committee was active and productive, and resulted in many local specimens finding their way to the herbarium at Blacksburg. At Academy meetings each year one could always be sure that at least one committee would report tangible progress, as Professor Massey rose to recount the activities of the past year. One product of the Flora Committee was the much-used and now out-of-print *Flora of Richmond* by Paul R. Merriam, published in 1930.

In the belief that interest in Virginia plants might be increased through a journal devoted specifically to local matters, several interested persons (Massey, R. P. Carroll, R. S. Freer, and others) organized the journal *Claytonia* which appeared first in 1934, under Freer's editorship. Professor Massey contributed the first article, a brief sketch of the life and work of John Clayton, and thereafter was a regular contributor. At first a mimeographed flyer for several volumes, *Claytonia* soon graduated to a formal printed format, and thereafter continued as a most respectable local periodical for several more years. With the inauguration of the *Virginia Journal of Science* in 1940, *Claytonia* was discontinued in the expectation that its mission might be carried on by the *Journal*. Regrettably this hope was never realized, and *Claytonia*, in the opinion of many Virginia naturalists, was sacrificed for naught, after its auspicious beginnings.

In addition to the significant impetus given by Massey to the knowledge of Virginia plants through his own field work, his encouragement of students and active collaboration with various colleagues, and involvement with the Flora Committee, a considerable number of papers appeared under his name in various journals. These included state surveys for the ferns (1944, 1960), *Salix* (1944, with C. R. Ball), *Vitis* (1945), orchids (1953) and reports on the occurrence of smaller taxa. The Professor's opus magnus, toward which he patiently accumulated

data for 40 years, is the 258-page *Virginia Flora*, a catalog listing over 3,500 species and varieties of plants recorded from the Commonwealth.

The recitation of dry facts gives us an idea of the dimension of the man who carried taxonomic botany through a half-century of Virginia history almost single-handedly. They must fail to convey an impression of the inner fiber, the patience, diligence, and optimism of this man, and of the influence these traits—among others—have exerted upon his friends, colleagues, and especially his students. Although Professor Massey still comes to his office daily, to continue his botanical studies at the age of 79, he now considers that others will have to take up the torch that he carried for so long, and strive for the ultimate preparation of a formal “*Flora of Virginia*”. Such an achievement, whenever and by whomever finally completed, must always be considered a monument to the man who laid its foundations; the learned, dedicated botanist and inspiring teacher, Arthur Ballard Massey.

Notes relative to Plant Ecology in Virginia

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Virginia's varied climate, topography and geology give rise to an interesting flora. The State is a “no-man's-land” in the flora of the eastern States. In the mountain province some typically northern species reach their southern limit. In the Coastal Plain and Southeastern Piedmont some southern species occur in their northern range. The varied geology, hence soil types, is an ecological challenge. The sandstone-capped ridges of the Alleghanies, their shale and limestone foothills and valleys, with their characteristic floristics, is challenging to one for studies in plant ecology and plant indicators. The igneous rocks of the Blue Ridge give rise to a soil more fertile than soil of the Alleghany sandstone, hence a richer vegetation of hardwood forest shrubs and herbaceous species. Mountain laurel, Rhododendrons and others of the Heath family are prevalent.

The Piedmont, an area of crystalline rock and predominantly red clay soil, varies as to physical features and fertility. Because of the infrequency of limestone and basic elements the soil is commonly acid. In lowground areas near streams or swamps the soil, frequently alluvial, is more fertile and physically more favorable for a richer flora and cropping.

Open, drier neglected areas and those abandoned for cropping, the soil of which is low in pH and fertility, especially phosphate, become