

## INTRODUCTION

by

Gil Leisman

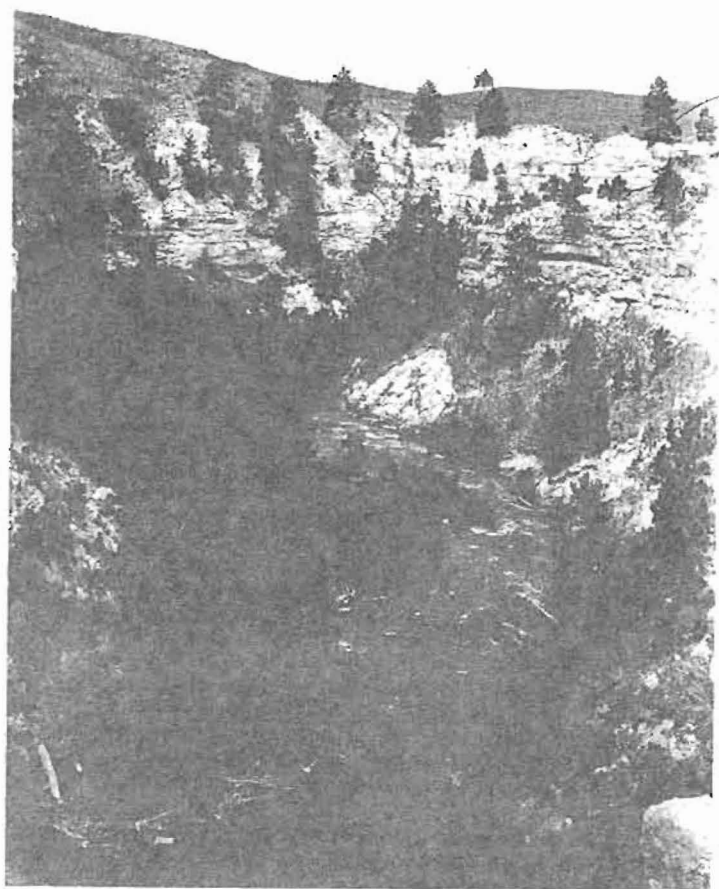
When the manuscript entitled, in part, The Journal of Frank H. Shoemaker, was handed to me, I thought "who is Frank Shoemaker?" His name does not appear in biological textbooks that I'm familiar with, and his name is not immortalized in words or pictures in any museum that I have visited. After reading the manuscript, I now know enough to wish I had known Shoemaker personally and could have travelled with him. His journal reflects his deep respect, love, and knowledge of all plants and animals, great and small. It also reflects an extremely scholarly gentleman with an elegant use of the English language.

If the name Shoemaker did not impress me, the names of two of his fellow naturalists did--Charles Bessey and Raymond Pool, both of the University of Nebraska. Bessey was a world famous plant taxonomist, who was very much concerned with primitive and advanced characteristics of flowering plants. He constructed a chart to show the evolutionary relationships of the various taxonomic orders, with each circumscription curiously coming out to look like a pad (or flattened stem) of the prickly pear. Ever since, the chart has been known as Bessey's cactus.

Raymond Pool was also a plant taxonomist, and, if memory serves me correctly, a student of Bessey. After receiving his Ph.D., he joined the Botany Department as a faculty member, eventually becoming chairman. His textbook, Flowers and Flowering Plants, was widely used in the 1940s and '50s.

Another world famous botanist of that era was John Weaver, also from the University of Nebraska. Along with Frederic Clements, he authored the foundation textbook, Plant Ecology, for the science of that name. Weaver specialized in prairie ecology and was especially interested in the root systems of prairie grasses and forbs. Many prairie plants, especially the grasses, have what is known as a fibrous root system. This means that all of the roots are relatively thin but of approximately equal size. Such root systems are usually very extensive and require a great deal of time and effort to be extracted intact. The effort involves the digging of a trench, deep enough to expose the deepest rootlets of the plant to be sampled, and the use of water under pressure to wash away all of the soil particles.

The Bessey, Pool, Weaver era, from the late nineteenth century to about 1950, represents the University of Nebraska Botany Department at its finest. And Frank Shoemaker was a part of those glory years.



*Snake River, near falls, Cherry County, Nebraska, 1911.*