



*Arthur Taylor*

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## C. STUART GAGER

(1873–1943)

Charles Stuart Gager was born on December 24, 1873, in central New York in the town of Norwich, and graduated from Syracuse University in 1895, where he became laboratory assistant in botany during his last year. For a year he was vice-principal of Ives Seminary at Antwerp, New York, a position which was to foreshadow his lifelong interest in education, and for the succeeding years until 1905 he was Professor of Biology and Physiography at the State Normal College in Albany. During this period he had studied physiography with Atwood at Harvard, and this subject also held great fascination for him throughout his lifetime. Meanwhile, also, he had obtained a Ph.D. in botany from Cornell in 1902, and taught there in the Summer School during part of this time. In 1905 he was Acting Professor of Botany at Rutgers University, and was Professor of Botany in the summer session of New York University in 1905–6. During the next two years he was director of laboratories at the New York Botanical Garden and completed at this time an extensive and fundamental piece of research in a new field of plant physiology, with results published as "Effects of the Rays of Radium on Plants." He was now advanced to the position of Professor of Botany at the University of Missouri, which he held until the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1910 called upon him to head the new Brooklyn Botanic Garden, which had been projected for a long time and which was now made possible through the interest and gifts of Alfred T. White.

The fifty acres of unimproved lands—and they were unimproved—at the outskirts of the city must have been a discouraging sight; Dr. Gager, however, had the great fortune, which is given to but few in this life, to see the entire fulfillment of his plans—a Botanic Garden complete in all its departments and attracting more than a million visitors a year. His idea of "Gardens within a Garden" was well carried out by the architects, and the Oriental Garden, Rose Garden, Children's Garden, and similar enclosed units made the plan remarkably successful. During his more than thirty years of directorship of the Garden, Dr. Gager had enjoyed good health; his death occurred after a very brief illness while he was on his vacation in Maine, on August 9, 1943.

With years of teaching he had a well-organized fund of botanical information which he incorporated in a successful textbook, "Fundamentals of Botany," completed in 1916; its readability and clear illustrations made a new departure in botanical textbooks, and by myself and many other college instructors and professors in the 1920's it was widely used. Realizing that, except for purely horticultural exhibits and for such large-scale displays as crocuses, daffodils, and flowering cherries, botanical interests in general are centered on the plants of the surrounding region, Dr. Gager, from the very first, established exhibits of the local flora. In the beginning these were largely in systematic arrangement; later the two acres devoted to this purpose were placed entirely on an ecological

basis to illustrate plant associations within one hundred miles of New York City. Dr. Gager took keen interest as each new project was carried out in this area; the last of these ecological habitats—of limestone rocks brought from western New Jersey—was not completed until 1942.

In addition to his work as director of the Botanic Garden, he took an important part in civic affairs, serving for many years as a church officer and as a member of various civic committees, and as president of the National Institute of Social Sciences from 1932 to 1935. Such activities had much to do with his publication of "The Relation between Science and Theology." His reputation as a botanist grew with the Botanic Garden, and in addition to honorary membership in many foreign botanical societies, he was president of the Botanical Society of America in 1938, president of the Torrey Botanical Club in 1942, a member of the board of directors of the New York Horticultural Society, and a member of committees on botanical exhibits at the World's Fairs at Chicago (1933) and New York (1939–

1940). As a crowning achievement he received in 1941 the Arthur Hoyt Scott Garden and Horticultural Award including a gold medal and one thousand dollars. He will be remembered by all as a gracious and witty public speaker, and his kindness and broad view of life endeared him to all who knew him. While in Albany he married Bertha Bagg, who came from the adjacent town of Rensselaer; their life was an unusually happy one.

Dr. Gager held a very close association with the Ecological Society as business manager of *ECOLOGY*, which in 1920 replaced the *PLANT WORLD*. Perhaps no better idea of the relationship between the Ecological Society and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden can be conveyed than by a phrase from their mutual agreement: ". . . the Brooklyn Botanic Garden organized for the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge and love of plants, desires to cooperate with the Ecological Society of America in the publication of the proposed journal. . . ."

HENRY K. SVENSON

BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN