

Charles Clemon Deam 1865-1953

What Indiana native traveled throughout all of Indiana's 1,016 townships to collect more than 78,000 plant specimens, discovered 25 new plant species, has at least 48 plants bearing his name, and has a state recreation area and a U.S. wilderness area named in his honor? Considering such accomplishments, Charles Deam should be a household name. But most Hoosiers know little or nothing about him.



Charles Clemon Deam was born August 30, 1865 near Bluffton, Indiana in Wells county. Deam's childhood was spent on the family farm where he developed a strong work ethic that would be his hallmark the rest of his life.

After finishing high school, Deam attended DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana. After 2 years, he ran out of money and discovered he "already knew more than they could teach me", so he returned home to Bluffton. He worked on the family farm, worked for a surveyor, and eventually discovered the drug store business. He worked at a couple of drug stores and eventually took ownership of one in Bluffton. But his non-stop work habits and lack of sleep soon caught up with him. With failing health, he was advised by his doctor to take some time off. Little did the doctor know this would lead Deam to a passion more consuming than his drug store business. He started taking long walks and developed a keen interest in nature, particularly plants. With his avid interest and boundless energy, it wasn't long before Deam was recognized as one of the foremost botanists in the country.

Another interest that captivated Charles at this time was a young teacher, Stella Mullins. In 1893 they were married, and their union lasted until her death in April of 1953. Charles followed her in death 1 month later, on May 29.



Charles Deam was Indiana's first state forester, from 1909 to 1913. He was re-appointed to the position in 1917 and served until 1928. He remained with the state as a research forester, continuing to collect and write about Indiana's plant species. Deam's books include Trees of Indiana (1911), Shrubs of Indiana (1924), Grasses of Indiana (1929) and Flora of Indiana (1940). These exhaustive volumes are still sought after and used as references today.