



SAMUEL NICHOLSON RHOADS

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WILLIAM BACON EVANS

Descended from Quaker ancestors through some seven or eight generations, mostly of English or Welsh origin, Samuel Nicholson Rhoads was born the 30th, IV, 1862, in Philadelphia. His parents were Charles and Anna (H.) Nicholson Rhoads, who at the time of Sam's birth were living at 513 Pine St. He was the only son in a family of five children. When he was but four years old, his mother died and in 1870, when Sam was eight years of age, his father married Beulah Sansom Morris. By that time the family had moved to Had-donfield, N. J., which was to be Sam's future home.

It was with great difficulty that Sam became reconciled to his stepmother. Naturally independent, outspoken, and (let it be confessed) "crotchety," he at first refused any filial affection. She cultivated his interest in Natural History with great patience, wisdom, and forbearance, and in the end won his lasting love and esteem, as well as giving his life its main direction. Witmer Stone and George Spencer Morris, a nephew of Beulah Rhoads, were also influenced by her and associated with Sam in outdoor interests.

In the autumn of 1875 Sam entered Westtown School, an institution then about 75 years old, which had helped educate Say, Cassin, Cope, and other less known naturalists. Among Sam's Westtown associates were T. Chalkley Palmer and Joseph Trimble. Among the hills and woods of Chester County, Pa., Sam received not only literary training, but was allowed considerable freedom for outdoor study. He was even permitted to have a gun, and it may be said that here began his collecting of specimens, which interest he followed as long as he was able.

Upon leaving Westtown in 1880, at the age of 18, Rhoads was inclined to farming. A farm was provided for him, and to this he gave the name of Audubon. When later a suburban settlement occupied the site of his farm, the name of a distinguished American ornithologist was perpetuated.

Eleven years later, Witmer Stone, who had received his A.B. at the University of Pennsylvania in 1887 and his A.M. at the same institution in 1891, came to The Academy of Natural Sciences. Stone's father, who had cherished the hope that his son would specialize in history, was disappointed. Birds, birds! The attraction was irresistible. Rhoads joined the Academy the same year. A year earlier, in 1890 to be exact, seven young men decided to meet

together on Arch Street, between 16th and 17th, on the 22nd, 1 Month. The name they chose for their organization was The Delaware Valley Ornithological Club. William L. Baily, at whose home they met, was chosen President, and Samuel N. Rhoads was elected Secretary and Treasurer. In 1893-1894 Rhoads was again chosen as Secretary, and in 1910-1912 President. For some thirty years, when not absent upon collecting trips, he was constant in attendance, and an active contributor. The Club soon established its headquarters in the Academy, where it continues to meet.

Rhoads did special work at Harvard, Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1892, was associated with the Academy in 1895, and a few years later became a staff member of the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh. However, his basic interests were always centered in the Philadelphia area, and even if not a salaried member of its staff, he long used the Academy as a base for his studies and field explorations. He made important contributions to both mammology and ornithology.

His first paper in the Academy's Proceedings, "On the Birds of South-eastern Texas and Southern Arizona," appeared in 1892, and between that time and 1902 thirty-one other contributions appeared in the same periodical, as well as one jointly with Dr. H. A. Pilsbury on mollusks from western Tennessee. In addition he made numerous contributions to other journals. Of the extralimital studies the most important was that on the mammals collected in northeastern Africa by Dr. A. Donaldson Smith, on his expedition to Lake Rudolf, published in the 1896 Proceedings. This included a number of new species, among them one of the little known "maned Rats" (*Lophomys*).

Rhoads made numerous field expeditions, the results of which came almost entirely to the Academy. These began with his early work in Florida, Texas, Arizona, Washington, and British Columbia, in the last decade of the Nineteenth Century, followed later by others to Lower California, Mexico, Guatemala with Earl Poole, and Ecuador, all of which produced valuable results.

In 1903, in his monumental work on the Mammals of Pennsylvania and New Jersey . . . (266 pp. Phila.), Rhoads gave a summation, by counties, of the status of many species. Here one can find most of the information hitherto available concerning the mammals of extreme northeastern Pennsylvania. This publication may be said to have placed students of Pennsylvania mammals in permanent debt to the indefatigable author.

Except for his labors, numerous records of great interest, particularly those pertaining to pioneer days, would have been irretrievably lost. The possibility of securing many additional unwritten, or word-of-mouth records of vanished species, is now virtually gone.

Rhoads amassed his information by extensive search through the literature, by the examination of museum specimens, by undertaking collecting trips, with personal experience in nearly every county, by the employment of several other collectors, and by personal interviews with naturalists, trappers, hunters, old pioneers, and frontiersmen. He also sought information through insertion of notices in newspapers, and undertook painstaking correspondence with fifty informants distributed over the state. Some of the particular counties from which his collections came, aside from Monroe and Pike, were Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Clinton, Cumberland, Delaware, Somerset, Sullivan, and Westmoreland. The period of preparation of his volume covered eleven years.

Rhoads made his trips long before the days of motor conveyance. He probably went for the most part by rail, but once, according to his friend, Henry W. Fowler, he went as far as Gettysburg by bicycle. Presumably he stopped at country hotels or farmhouses, but at least occasionally he camped out in the mountains. Perhaps the most striking North American mammal made known by him was the Allegheny Least Weasel, (*Putorius allegheniensis*).

From 1902, for twenty years or so, Rhoads maintained the Franklin Book Shop, most of that time at 920 Walnut St., Philadelphia, where he dealt in volumes chiefly of natural history, but also of travel, and of Friends' writings. Always on the lookout for rarities, he discovered a large painting by Audubon, of the Black Cock. This he acquired and found a ready purchaser in Cambridge. In Georgia he found a second portfolio of John Abbot's bird plates. Rhoads republished Ord's Geology, and Ord's section of Guthrie's Geography. Other items offered were William Young's Catalogue of American Plants, and Americana Curiosa et Quakeriana.

Samuel N. Rhoads was a born naturalist, a good field man and an energetic student. Of tall spare build, he had the rugged endurance which field work of his day required. He possessed an individuality which those who knew him in his active years can never forget. He was unsparing in his criticism of what he felt was an incomplete or improperly made observation. He was held rather in awe by younger members of the D.V.O.C., who knew the breadth of his field experience and his insistence on adequate evidence to supplement any record of occurrence of unusual character.

The private collection of over six thousand specimens of mammals made by Rhoads was acquired by the Academy about the turn of the century, and its series now contain the many types of North American mammals which he first made known.

Under a veneer of indifference, Samuel Rhoads had a deep vein of religious feeling. For several years he took an active part in Haddonfield

Friends' Meeting, of which he served as Clerk, 1919-1920, and on committees. He prepared an historical account for the 200th Anniversary of Haddonfield (1913). His father, his grandmother, and his great-grandmother were all Quaker ministers. One of his sisters joined the Salvation Army. His father's twin brother, Dr. James E. Rhoads, was the first president of Bryn Mawr College.

About 1926 conflicting currents of emotion, to which was added the effect of a tragic explosion of the furnace in his beautiful Haddonfield home, all may have been factors in a mental breakdown, following which he lived generally in sanatoria. He was quiet, had little to say, did not write, but continued to read widely. His faithful wife generally visited him weekly. Thus for over a quarter of a century he lingered in isolation from the world of his friends and of his former active interests, and died in his ninety-first year, the 27th XII, 1952, the last founder of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Cawley Rhoads, and by his son, Evan L. Rhoads, to carry on the family name and traditions.

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