

Obituary

FREDERICK HAVEN PRATT

Frederick Pratt was born in Worcester on July 19, 1873, a son of Frederick Sumner and Sarah M. (Hilliard) Pratt. Among his earliest recollections was that of being taken up the long steps of Antiquarian Hall to see his uncle, Samuel Foster Haven, then librarian of the Society. Later he used to frequent the Library to beg postage stamps of Mr. Barton. However, the real interest of his youthful years was Natural History, and he embarked on a systematic collection intended to include every known species of plant and animal life. When he visited the Agassiz Museum he was relieved to see that someone else had gone to work on the project. In Harvard College his only distinction was a minor one in Natural History. When he graduated, in 1896, he intended to become a country physician, but travel and a few months of study at Göttingen gave him a taste of research which was thereafter his purpose in life. Back at Harvard he took an M.A. in 1898 and an M.D. in 1906, and settled down happily to work in the Laboratory of Physiology of the Medical School. After three years he went a bit further afield to become instructor in physiology at Wellesley College.

With research, poetry, snowshoeing, and sailing (not racing), Pratt lived the contented bachelor. His marriage to Margery Wilerd Davis on June 12, 1912, and his acceptance of a professorship at the University of Buffalo about the same time, marked a culling of his interests and the beginning of his period of productive scholarship. He was

not, however, entirely happy in teaching at the Medical School, for he was painfully aware of the unanswered questions in medical science, and particularly in his ever narrowing field. In frustration at not being able to contribute more to the war effort he served in the State Guard Cavalry—usually on foot. In 1919 he resigned his professorship at Buffalo and took an appointment at Clark University which promised more time for research, and two years later he moved on to a teaching fellowship at Harvard for the same reason. In 1921 he became a professor in physiology at Boston University, where he remained until his retirement in 1942. From 1941 to 1948 he served as librarian of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

With Fred Pratt's contributions in the field of muscle and heart physiology we are not concerned. To us he was an amateur historian who frequently used the resources of this library for research in medical biography and history such as his pamphlet, *The Craigies: A Footnote to the Medical History of the Revolution* (Cambridge, 1941). It was typical of his unselfishness that he was of more help to this institution than it was to him. After his election in 1943 he attended meetings faithfully, and when he for reasons of health could no longer do so, he continued the annual financial contributions to our work which were, coming from a college professor, magnificent. He died on July 12, 1958, leaving his widow and five children.

Fred Pratt combined a slightly stiff and formal manner with a gentle charm and sweetness which is not too common among New Englanders. His never-failing courtesy and his quiet good humor will be missed in the meetings of these societies.

C. K. S.

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