

REFLECTIONS ON A LIFE WITH ASA GRAY: A CONVERSATION WITH HUNTER DUPREE

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Archives are collections of documents and objects that embody a life's work. These collections can generate immediate excitement and research or lay dormant until a curious scholar explores them to discover, interpret, and expose the stories within. Jane Loring Gray preserved her husband's legacy after his death in 1888. She organized and selectively published his correspondence, and compiled his papers, manuscripts, documents, and artifacts amassed throughout their marriage. She then donated them to the Gray Herbarium where they are still carefully curated.

Almost nothing is known about the use of Dr. Gray's papers until a young World War II veteran, Anderson Hunter Dupree, arrived at Harvard in 1946 as a graduate student in the History Department under the direction the noted historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr. Dupree was born in 1921 in Hillsboro, Texas, but the family moved to the Texas plains when he was still a child. The contrasting landscapes made a lasting impression on him. His interest in botany was reinforced in high school when he enrolled in a botany course at Texas Technical College taught by Richard A. Studhalter, the father of his friend, Walter. Professor Studhalter instilled in the boys an appreciation of botany as a great science and introduced them to the natural wonders of one of Gray's target areas, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

As a graduate student, Dupree became a welcome regular at the Gray Herbarium and was given full access to Gray's papers. In 1952 he defended his thesis, *Asa Gray, the development of a statesman of science, 1810–1848*, and continued his work as a research fellow at the Herbarium from 1952 through 1956. This culminated in the publication of two major works, *Science in the Federal Government: a History*

of Policies and Activities to 1940 (Harvard University Press, 1957), and *Asa Gray, 1810–1888* (Harvard University Press, 1959). *Asa Gray* was reprinted with a new preface by Johns Hopkins Press in 1988 under the title, *Asa Gray, American Botanist, Friend of Darwin*. Hunter's biography of Gray is more than a series of facts and quotations. It is a warm and moving tribute to a highly intelligent and deliberate man who was determined to turn his passion into a career. In doing so, Gray pioneered a branch of science in American universities.

Dupree enjoyed a successful academic career at the University of California, Berkeley, and Brown University before retiring to Cambridge in 1981. Since his return to Cambridge, Hunter has been a Research Associate of the Harvard University Herbaria and a good friend and colleague to both the faculty and staff. We have had many conversations about Gray's contributions to Harvard, his role in defending Darwin's theory of evolution, his faith, family, friendships, and rivalries. Hunter is now 89 years old and graciously agreed to discuss how spending much of his own life immersed in Asa Gray's has shaped his personal philosophy and influenced his career. We met Hunter and Betty, his lovely wife and able assistant, in their Cambridge home in on May 26, 2010, to reminisce on how Asa Gray first captured his interest and what compelled him to tell his story.

Hunter reflected that he was learning about Gray long before he knew that he existed. Although their lives were separated by nearly a century, Hunter felt a connection having grown up in a place steeped in history and central to Gray's botanical research. Dupree's love of botany and history converge and led him to Harvard. He wanted to trace Gray's course as the "would be" explorer, who in the end would

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