

Nature

New Lepidoptera Collection -Given To Historical Society

By Edward S. Thomas

It was a real pleasure, recently, to receive from Mrs. Ray Romine, Caledonia, Ohio, a statement about the collection of Lepidoptera. (butterflies and moths) which she has presented to the Natural History Department of the Ohio Historical Society.

The collection had been amassed by her late husband, Raymond Franklin Romine. I had been well acquainted with Ray during his lifetime, had taken some field trips with him and some mutual friends. and had been of some small service in helping to identify difficult species of butterflies and moths.

THE COLLECTION consists of 54 insect cases of spread specimens and 15 lard cans, in which were kept unmounted specimens in envelopes. In all, there were about 3,200 pinned and spread specimens and 2,700 papered specimens. Identified, or identification verified' by an authority, were 5,300 specimens. Most of the specimens were collected in the vicinity of Marion, Ohio, and are especially valuable in that this was an area which had not previously been thoroughly explored for Lepidoptera.

Ray Romine was an especially gifted person. He was by profession a postal carrier out of the Marion, Ohio post office. In addition to the collecting of Lepidoptera, his hobbies included iris hybridizing, gardening, painting and the writing of light verse. Over 300 of his poems were published.

RAY WAS meticulous in everything he undertook. I well remember visiting his iris-hybridizing plot of ground. I thought many of his seedlings superior, but he felt that none of them was worthy of giving a name.

Just then, Trella Haldeman, his fiancée put in her appearance, holding a flowering stalk of iris. Though no authority on iris, I recognized that this was a fine bloom. Ray's jaw dropped; his eyes glazed. It seemed that he had given Trella some seedling plants to bring into flower. And this, the very first seedling to come into bloom, was a knockout!

THE FIRST specimens in the Lepidoptera collection date from 1931. Having little available cash, Ray bought woodworking equipment and made his own cases from apple and orange crates begged from grocery stores.

As Mrs. Romine comments in her letter, mere facts of the collector's life or enumeration of specimens can never portray the enthusiasm with which the collection was made. "Without having been there" she writes, "Can any one know the thrill of finding the gorgeous *Idalia* butterfly on almost every field blossom?"

"Or feel the first splatter of rain from an approaching storm that brought to an end an exciting evening of "sugaring" for *Catocala* moths? Or the thrill of chasing the rare *Smintheus* butterfly over the edge of a Colorado mountain? Only the collector and those who have shared these moments can appreciate the collection."

RAY'S *joie de vivre* is expressed in the following verse, written after a field trip made with Trella, mutual friends, Hazel Chase and John Gill, of Galion and me. It was subsequently published in *Nature Magazine*:

*I meant to get things done — I really did —
But then that thrush would pick that day to' pour
His liquid notes upon the air, and bid
Me follow him to where the summer's core
Lay everywhere about. We found nine-bark,
A yellow-breasted chat, and Queen Anne's lace;
Bob White, a wildly singing meadow-lark,
A field of wheat with ever-changing face,
Sun through an oak; and, in the roadside dust.
A butterfly I'd never seen before.
Till back at last, it ended, as days must,
And, pausing with my hand upon the door, add it up.
Here is the sum precisely.
I lived today; the work has kept quite nicely.*