

Harvey Monroe Hall wouldn't let an amputated leg keep him from becoming a leading desert botanist . . .

# BUCKBOARD BOTANIST

By Edmund C. Jaeger

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One summer Sunday morning toward the end of the last century two boys set

out from Riverside, California, bent on hunting and collecting bird eggs on Blue Mountain, a rough rocky ridge to the east of the town. They took their guns along, but game other than rabbits, they found, was scarce, and during the early morning hours they shot nothing. But their concern was not great. They were both lovers of the out-of-doors, and were having a great good time just climbing through the brush.

It was about eleven o'clock when Harvey Monroe Hall, the older of the two lads, climbed a small tree to get some bird eggs. In doing so he slipped and somehow discharged the whole load of his shotgun into one of his feet. The shot mangled the foot and his frightened companion, after giving him such first aid as he could, ran to the nearest house for help. But on Sunday it was hard to find a doctor in, until finally one was reached at Corona, 16 miles away. It was late afternoon when the physician reached young Hall. Then his decision was immediate: amputation just above the knee.

To this active boy who loved to hunt and roam the wilds, the partial loss of a limb was a severe blow. But in the end, that accidental discharge of a shotgun gave to Western America one of its leading desert botanists. It diverted young Hall's attention from ornithology, which had been his chief interest, to the serious study of plants. Fortunately at this time he came under the tutorage of a high school teacher who guided and encouraged him, and when Harvey Hall left Riverside to go to the University of California at Berkeley, he was well versed in the local flora.

At Berkeley, where he was under the instruction of Doctors Wm. A. Seward and W. L. Jepson, who then dominated the Department of Botany, Hall obtained his Bachelor of Science and then

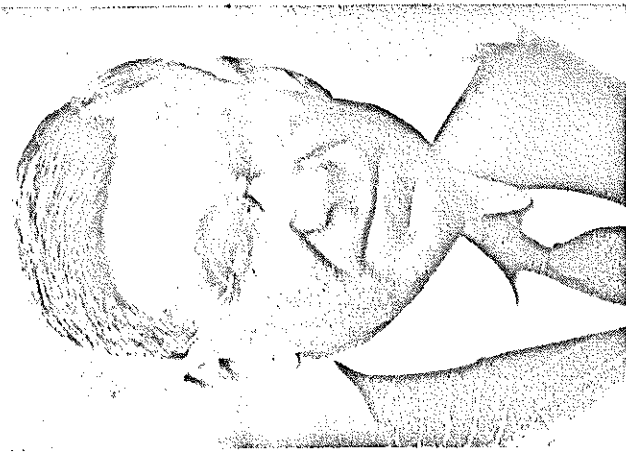


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## PURPLE BUSH

Named by Lloyd Mason Smith, after Edmund C. Jaeger, for CALICO PRINT.

Purple Bush, *Halimolobos laetiflora*, known as the Cottonwood, Chuckawalla and Chocolate Mountains and along the Colorado River in California, and in the Kofa Mountains, Arizona. It forms a compact, rigid, intricately branched bush, one to four feet high. During much of the year the leaves are dark purple, markedly contrasting with the green stems. Blossoms are quite inconspicuous, and the leaves on separate plants. The green, fleshy fruits which often hang on in clusters are very rigidly attached to the stems. Both leaves and fruit are strongly odored when crushed.—EDMUND C. JAEGER, from DESERT WILD FLOWERS, University of California Press.



DR. HARVEY MONROE HALL  
Portrait courtesy of Department of Plant Biology,  
Carnegie Institution of Washington.

in the days of poor roads and few places where supplies could be purchased.

By the time he commenced his expeditions, studying the Compositae, he had so well adapted himself to the use of his artificial limb that while not able to run he could walk with but little perceptible limp, and rove the fields far and wide for botanical treasure. He outfitted himself with a horse and an old-fashioned buckboard which would carry him and his camp outfit, his botanical presses and specimens. When he could, he took some one with him but when necessary, and that was quite often, he went alone.

One of his most important trips was made in the spring of 1905 over the lonely trail up Salt Creek Wash—southeast of Indio, California—and into the Orocoopia,  
(Continued on Page 22)



Edmund C. Jaeger writes about Harvey Monroe Hall in a personal acquaintance and he credits Hall with giving him his real start in acquiring a basic knowledge of botany and the impetus to make himself a desert authority.

a Master of Science degree in Botany. Then he went on for a doctorate with his thesis the ambitious subject: *The Compositae of Southern California*, really a critical study of all the species of floral members of the Sunflower Family growing in the great area which extended from the Tehachapi Mountains to the Mexican border, and from the Pacific slopes to the Colorado River. It was a big bite indeed for a man so young. But it was just what Harvey Hall had an appetite for; and it gave him a very good excuse for long camping trips over a broad territory that included seashore, plains, mountains and sere desert. And the work he did on the Compositae of this region is still considered a model of careful botanical research.

When I moved to Palm Springs in 1915, to teach in its little one-room schoolhouse, I had a great deal to learn about the local flora. I began sending, almost every week, boxes of plants to the University of California Herbarium for identification. Harvey Hall was by then Professor of Botany, and he took the liveliest interest in my collections, promptly sending me identifications and helping me with advice. Finally he put me in touch with Samuel B. Parish, veteran botanist of San Bernardino. I must credit Hall and Parish with my real start in acquiring a basic knowledge of desert botany.

I fully appreciated Dr. Hall's genial kindness later when he made it possible for me to visit him at Berkeley. Knowing my ardent wish to meet him and see the university herbarium, and knowing also my youthful poverty, he provided me with transportation from Los Angeles to Berkeley and back, and kept me as a guest in his home on several occasions for a number of weeks at a time. It was a rich experience for me and it was then I formed the opinion, rightly I believe, that Harvey Hall never forgot anything he had ever seen, read or heard. His profundity of knowledge and good memory was to me an ever recurring wonder.

And I have many times heard him say that the most memorable and pleasing parts of his botanical journeys were the miles over the West's desert basins and dry mountain ranges. Those were made

negie Botanical Laboratory at Stanford University. Today the man he sponsored and so ably trained holds one of the most responsible botanical positions in America—that of Head Curator of the New York Botanical Garden.

Harvey Hall, who was born in 1874, died in 1932. To the year of his death, he was always on the move. His extensive travels while at the University of California and later while working for the Carnegie Institute of Washington (1919-1931) included not only the western United States but also Mexico and many countries in Europe where he visited numerous botanical gardens and experimental establishments.



## ... M. HALL...

(Continued from Page 15)

Chocolate, Chucakawalla and Eagle Mountain and on to the Colorado River. When he started this expedition, he had along a young fellow named Louis Greata. But by the time they reached Canyon Springs, in Salt Creek Wash, Greata had had enough of the rough life. He shortly turned back, but not before they had discovered in the lower wash one of the rarest and strangest of all American Bush Mints, which Dr. Brandegee later named *Salvia Greatae* in honor of Hall's companion. There then was, and there is today, perhaps not more than several hundred plants in this rare colony of Bush Mints. Very few people, even among botanists, have seen the living plant.

When Hall reached the vicinity of Cottonwood Springs, now in Joshua Tree National Monument, he found a low bushy spurge, unusual in appearance. This plant, commonly known as the purple bush, was named by Dr. Brandegee *Tetradococcus Hallii*, to forever link Harvey Hall's name with this unique discovery. Later Dr. Ivan Johnston called this shrub *Halliooblythum Hallii*, thus honoring Dr. Hall twice in the scientific name, a unique procedure indeed.

Many years later I botanized over the same road that the youthful Hall had taken with his horse and buckboard, and I chanced to discover by the roadside a shrubby specimen of a Milkwort (Polygala) which Hall had failed to see. He was much disturbed over this, for Harvey Hall prized greatly his well-deserved reputation of seldom missing any plant that lay along his route.

He and his wife, Carlotta Case Hall, a good botanist in her own right, worked out a *Flora of Yosemite* which is still, after many years, considered the most complete guide to that region.

Harvey Hall also was an excellent teacher. When looking forward to his retirement, he asked me to recommend some capable young botanist who later might take over his work. I suggested my brilliant young camp and field companion, David Daniels Keck, then at Pomona College. Dr. Hall was pleased with the youth and arranged for his transfer to the Car-