CHARLOTTE ELLIS
OF THE SANDIA MOUNTAINS

The poetry of history does not consist of imagination, but of imagination pursuing the fact and fastening upon it. The dead were and are not. Their place knows them no more and is ours today. Yet they were once as real as we, and we shall tomorrow be shadows like them.

George Macaulay Trevelyan, FRS (1876-1962)

By Eugene Jercinovic

The remarkable naturalist Theodore Dru Alison Cockerell (1866-1948) began his professional scientific career as Curator of the Public Museum in Kingston, Jamaica in 1891. After two years, his tuberculosis, which he contracted in 1887, recurred, and he determined he needed to leave the moist climate of Jamaica. Having spent time in Colorado in order to effect an initial cure of his tuberculosis, Cockerell wished he could return to the Rocky Mountains. It so happened that he was in correspondence with C.H.T. Townsend, then at the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (NMCA & MA). Cockerell casually suggested that he and Townsend exchange positions. Amazingly Townsend agreed. Cockerell spent the years from 1893 to 1900 at Mesilla Park (now Las Cruces) NM. He then spent three years at New Mexico Normal University in Las Vegas NM before moving to Colorado, where he spent the rest of his career.

In 1937, Cockerell penned an article in the obscure journal *Bios* entitled "Recollections of a Naturalist IV. The Amateur Botanist." He, from his youth, had a fascination with the genus *Primula.* In his article, he tells an absorbing tale of the discovery of a new *Primula* in New Mexico as evidenced by the following excerpt:

> It was in connection with the genus *Primula* that I made the acquaintance of another great botanist. When I lived in New Mexico, Miss Charlotte Ellis, one of my students, found a beautiful *Primula* in the Sandia Mountains and as it appeared to be new, it was named *Primula ellisiae* (Pollard & Cockerell, 1902). In the Mogollon Mountains, about 160 miles away, on the other side of the Rio Grande Valley, there was a related species, *Primula rusbyi* (Greene, 1881). Pax and Kunth, apparently without seeing *P. ellisiae*, reduced it to a synonym of *P. rusbyi* in their revision of *Primula* (1905). This did not seem satisfactory, but for a time nothing could be done about it. Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, the head of the Edinburgh Botanical Garden, was the most learned expert on *Primula*, and had a very large collection of living plants. I sent him seed of *P. ellisiae*, and he procured seed of *P. rusbyi* from another source. In 1921, when my wife and I visited the Edinburgh Garden, Bayley Balfour had brought both species to flowering, and it was a dramatic moment when he stood before us, with a pot in each hand, and pointed out that the living plants were quite distinct. It seems extraordinary to have to go to Edinburgh to settle a point in the botany of New Mexico, no one in that State having seen both plants alive.

Now, in 2008*, P. ellisiae* and *P. rusbyi* are recognized as distinct species. Charlotte's collection in 1900 is the holotype[1] (US) of *P. ellisiae*. She also collected the holotype (US) of the white shooting star, *Dodecatheon ellisiae* (Standley 1913). She developed relationships not only with Cockerell, but also with Elmer Otis Wooton and Paul Carpenter Standley. Despite much adversity, she collected hundreds of specimens and helped to define the flora of New Mexico.

[1] A holotype is the one collection which is permanently attached to a given scientific name.

Charlotte Cortlandt Ellis (1874 - 1956)

George Cortlandt Ellis was born in Indiana on February 17, 1845, even though the Ellis family roots were in Syracuse, New York. When George Cortlandt was four, his father, George Clinton Ellis, died. In 1850 George, his younger sister and his mother Eliza Carter Ellis were living in Brooklyn, New York with Eliza's parents. After the death of her father in 1860, Eliza and her two children moved to Racine, Wisconsin just north of Chicago. While in his teens young George contracted tuberculosis. In spite of his health, in 1862 he volunteered for the New York Regiment of the Union Army and went to war. When the war ended, he returned to the Chicago area and entered the business world. He met Julia Gardell Shipman there and they were married on October 7, 1869. Their first child Guy Carter Ellis was born on September 13, 1870, in Wilmington Illinois, followed by Helen Maude Ellis on September 6, 1872, and then Charlotte Cortlandt Ellis on June 27, 1874 in Joliet Illinois. By 1877, George's tuberculosis again became a problem, and the family decided to seek a new life in the west. So George and a pregnant Julia packed up the three young children and Grandma Ellis and headed to Kansas. The first Ellis ranch was along Owl Creek in Comanche County, a few miles north of the Oklahoma border. Years later Maude remembered the first house: "The grass grew very thick and by cutting sod with axe and spade, bricks were made to build a house. It was very warm, but there was no way to make a good roof. When the rains came, the floors were mud. Brother and I could walk on planks but Sister had to sit on a bed." A new son, Augustus Weisert (Augie), was born shortly thereafter, followed by another son, Francis Shipman (Frank), in 1879. The family had begun quite a new life in an unfamiliar environment with hope and energy. Charlotte described the scene: "Owl Creek ran just below the house. There was a grove of cottonwoods and other trees nearby. A path went up the hill at the back. Our cyclone cellar was there somewhere, I used to go down there to play. I was five."

For the once urban family the times fell somewhere between bucolic and primitive. They struggled along, raising cattle on the windswept prairie far from civilization. Julia was a bastion of stability and refinement. Charlotte depicts her: "I suppose none of us will ever forget how our mother comported herself day by day in the wilds. She was always the perfect lady under all circumstances. It was as natural for her to be so as it was to breathe. No one ever saw her careless in either dress or posture." For Julia, and Eliza Ellis as well, values and education were very important, and despite the remoteness of location and difficult circumstances, every effort was made to "home school" the children. Charlotte recalled:

> Yes, she taught us – we three older children that is – but it was not only the three R's…. We read most of Dickens together, she taught us to like Shakespeare, the Waverly novels, travels (how I enjoyed "Into Morocco"). She read poetry to us, Byron, Whittier, Jean Ingelow. (I always wanted her to read "Two Brothers and a Sermon" if I had to lie around with a cold.) I remember one Christmas especially, she read Dickens Christmas Carol to us and we enjoyed it more than I can tell.

Learning was not always in traditional settings. Charlotte continues:

> One day the horses pulled down and spilled a hundred-pound sack of corn. We children had to pick that corn up kernel by kernel, for there was so much gravel mixed with it. How well I remember our pretty girlish mother, sitting on a log under a tree, reading to us as we worked. What was it she read? Homer's "Iliad". She had a wonderful reading voice and we children thrilled over Hector's burning of the wooden horse and all.

By 1882, the grass on the ranch had grown thin. Guy always felt that George had overgrazed the land. The family moved to a new location on Owl Creek. The situation lasted about two years. In September of 1884, George sold out and the family moved back to Chicago and stayed with Julia's parents.

George was determined to make a life in the frontier west. During the fall of 1884 he continued to explore for the perfect location. In his reminiscence of Charlotte entitled *Tiny Tools,* Charlotte's younger brother Paul (1891-1980) stated: "I often heard Father say that he was on his way to Old Mexico to look for a coffee plantation, when he saw this mountain of quartz. He had always heard that there was always water where there was a large body of quartz." The mountain in what is now eastern Torrance County New Mexico, was called Pedernal Peak, and was located about halfway between the thriving town of Las Vegas, NM and the booming mining community of White Oaks in Lincoln County, NM. George decided it was the perfect place to establish another ranch. He sent for the rest of the family. Julia, Guy, Maude, Charlotte, Augie, Frank, and Grandma Ellis arrived in Las Vegas by train in late February 1885.

Charlotte remembered the area: "I'm not sure Pedernal would be called a mountain, but it has all the things mountains have except trees. For some reason or other it is a barren peak. But it has cliffs and canyons (miniature 'tis true), and wild flowers, birds and lizards, with clouds around the summit at times and springs in wet weather. We used to call the clouds around the top 'Pedernal's nightcap'." Her brother Guy observed: "There were no schools or churches. A doctor eighty miles away was as good as no doctor at all. Our nearest neighbors were twenty miles away and they were cattle and sheep ranches. There was only one of them where there were any women. Mother was cut off from any such things as morning calls or afternoon teas. We children didn't miss anything like that. We did not live so well here. Not so much of a variety on the table. There was not so much to do, more of a humdrum life. Yet we felt the lure of the country and were not unhappy."

During the summer of 1885, George built an eight-room house for the family out of rough lumber hauled from a mill eighty miles to the west. The house was comfortable during temperate seasons, but was miserable in winter. George and Guy spent the fall chiseling a 35 foot deep well through rock, hitting water just before winter. Winter snows filled the well to overflowing. The flow continued into the following summer. Even after the well stopped flowing, it held water until the summer of 1887, when it dried up completely. From the spring of 1886 to the fall of 1887 the family eked out a life on the high plains of central New Mexico. Sheep and cattle herders frequently passed through the area. The Ellis family was able to make much needed money by providing food and lodging. George traveled to Las Vegas every other month or so to get mail, goods, and supplies. The family even operated a country store. Guy remembered: "We also had a stock of goods for the sheepherders, which brought in a little cash and a lot of

sheep pelts. The poor herder was glad to find a place where he could buy such luxuries as flour, lard, baking powder and matches. Also overalls, shirt or a pair of socks." Other visitors used the Pedernal home as a way station. At least one was rather famous. On April 10, 1954, Charlotte wrote a letter[2] to William MacLeod Raine, author of *Famous Sheriffs and Western Outlaws,* to thank him for agreeing to autograph a copy of his book for her young nephew. In the letter she wrote: "We (Ellis') knew Pat Garrett[3] very well. He would stay all night with us on his way from White Oaks to Las Vegas, or wherever he was bound from or to. To little me he seemed very refined. He dressed better than most of the men of the plains and was very soft-spoken and well-spoken." In the same letter Charlotte mentions another traveler in the area:

> When I was a small girl we (the Ellis family) lived at Pedernal Peak for four years. The Carruthers at the time had a butcher shop in San Pedro, New Mexico (and some mines, of course) and Jim used to take the long trip to Montenceno (?) to buy beef cattle of Jose (?) Pera. Pera owned the Turkey Track brand. The brand spread from the animal's shoulder to its flank.
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> Jim knew many of the people we knew – the Pereas and some of their relatives, the Spence brothers at Penos Well, people at Antelope Springs, Estancia, Stinking Springs and so on – and yet since Jim took the route that passed on the other side of Pedernal, we did not meet until several years later . . .

In the fall of 1887, the well went dry. Money ran short. George went to Nebraska to work for a time. Julia, grandma Ellis and the five children had to make do. Guy and his two younger brothers had to haul water from miles away, water that had to be strained and boiled before use. The situation looked grim for the Pedernal venture with winter coming on, but fate was to take a hand. In his trips to Las Vegas George had make the acquaintance of a man named Ferris who lived midway between Pedernal and Las Vegas. Ferris was a fellow tuberculosis sufferer who had been a banker in Tennessee before moving west for his health. The two had become friends. Early in 1888, Ferris bought 300 horses and invited George to be his partner in managing and caring for the herd.

George built a large one-room house on the Ferris ranch, secured the house at Pedernal and the family started a new chapter. During the summer, Ferris invited both Maude and Charlotte to select a horse to make their own. Maude named her horse Nig and Charlotte, Lancer. Guy trained Nig for Maude, but fourteen-year-old Charlotte insisted on training Lancer herself. Lancer was strong-willed and difficult, but after much time and effort Charlotte calmed him. In her words: "Well I rode him and tamed him and trained him. He would carry double or treble, or as many as could crowd on him. I taught him to stand on his hind feet and to lie down, jump a rope and nod his head for oats." He was to be her dearest friend for the next sixteen years.

In the fall, Ferris sold the herd and the partnership ended. The Ellis clan returned to Pedernal. Sometime that autumn, George made contact with a man in Chicago who was planning to purchase land on the Pecos River, stock it, and create a working ranch.

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[2] See Raine letter Appendix 3

[3] Pat Garrett is the sheriff generally credited with killing Billy the Kid on July 13, 1881 near Fort Sumner, NM.

George was offered the job of foreman with the stipulation that he would teach the man's son about ranching. In the depth of winter early in 1889 the family made ready to move. With George and Guy driving a large wagon, Frank and Augie on top of the load, Julia and Eliza in a buggy, and Maude and Charlotte on Nig and Lancer, the frontier pioneers made their way to their new home which they would call Valley Ranch.

Valley Ranch contained roughly 600 acres, the majority forested. It bordered the Pecos River. There was a ten-room adobe house and a large barn, large enough to house 30 cows and 6 horses. An orchard grew behind the house. Fourteen acres of alfalfa were well established. The sound of the river was a constant background. The scenery was breathtaking. With the coming of spring, there was much work to be done – animals to be cared for, fences to repair, and a garden to be planted. These were happy times for the itinerant family.

Charlotte reveled in the new environment. Paul indicates: "Charlotte was fifteen now with a passion to learn about everything around her. The trees, the shrubs, grasses, plants and flowers, the birds and chipmunks all became her friends. She not only read everything she could get her hands on, but memorized a lot of it." Charlotte describes herself: " At Valley Ranch when Mother was too busy to teach us I used to take my books and go over to that 'island' above the dam and study all afternoon." Charlotte spent countless hours on her horse, hours that inextricably linked the two. Charlotte stated: "At Valley Ranch I used to enjoy riding along the steep bank above the dam. One slip and we would have plunged into the deep water below. I doted on swimming the river with Lancer. I taught him to walk the foot log over the irrigation ditch." Astonishingly, as was the custom of the time for women, Charlotte almost always rode sidesaddle.

Life for the Ellises was always a curious mixture of joy and sadness. During the time at Valley Ranch Charlotte fell from the hayloft in the barn, producing an injury to her back that would bother her for the rest of her life. The youth who was to be trained by George was unfriendly and refused to go the Valley Ranch, choosing, perhaps to spite his father, to go to work as a cowhand for another rancher. As a result, by 1890 the salary being paid to George was discontinued. George was dismayed. He and Guy, almost twenty years old, began to have friction. After the summer, Guy left Valley Ranch and moved to the Albuquerque area, getting a job in the small town of Golden near the San Pedro Mountains, about 50 miles southeast of Valley Ranch. Soon thereafter the Ellises were told to vacate Valley Ranch. Guy came back and helped the family move to Albuquerque, to begin again, far from the montane majesty of the upper Pecos river Valley, the best place they had ever seen.

George found a job as a part-time carpenter in the Santa Fe Railroad shops. Grandma Eliza apparently returned to Chicago for a time. Frank and Augie were enrolled in school for the first time. On June 15, 1891 Julia, at age 42, gave birth to her last child, Paul Munson. The pregnancy had taken its toll on Julia, but she, with the help of Maude and Charlotte, operated a boarding house. Charlotte wrote to Guy many years later: "Neither of us went to school or anywhere as long as we had boarders; and two girls never worked harder than we did, for Mother was never very well after Paul came and we did all we could to help. Don't you remember how you and Mr. Wells used to come in and help me out? I do with greatful (sic) thanks. You, or Augie, or Frank nearly always helped me if I was going somewhere." Even in the busy life at the boarding

house, Charlotte tried to pursue her passion for learning. She continued to Guy: "I was always ambitious; not only for myself, but for all of us; I always wanted to learn, always liked to study…Always had a textbook of some kind on hand at the boarding house."

In February 1889, the New Mexico Territorial Legislature passed House Bill No. 186 establishing the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque (as well as the Agricultural College and Experiment Station at Las Cruces, the School of Mines at Socorro, and the Insane Asylum at Las Vegas). By 1891, the first president of the University had been selected and construction began on the school's first building. Charlotte desperately wanted to attend, but did not think it would be possible. She elaborates in her letter to Guy:

> One day (I will never forget that day) I went over to see Nelly Stagg. She wasn't home, and while I sat waiting for her I gradually unburdened my heart to Mrs. Stagg, and we had a long heart to heart talk, though I might say shoulder to shoulder talk, for we both talked "right from the shoulder". Mrs. Stagg said I was to go to the university when Nelly did; and Nelly took me to see Professor Ramsey, the president,[4] that very afternoon. He was splendid and gave me every encouragement, and in his mind as far as he knew it was all settled that I was to enter school. Still there were other obsticles (sic) to surmount – fees, books, clothes and means of getting to the university.
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> The obsticles were not so large as they seemed. As luck would have it the woman who cleaned house for Mrs. Munson once a week left town at that time and Mrs. Munson gave me the job. I cleaned house for her Saturday mornings all the rest of the time I was in Albuquerque, and I did the same for her neighbor Saturday afternoons. Hard work but they had lovely houses and beautiful things to take care of and I enjoyed it in a way. Then I had the job of taking care of the little girl next door some times. You remember them – their name was Moor(e). I planned to walk to school; two miles didn't seem far, but Margaret Jenks was tired of riding horse back to school after the first few weeks so suggested we go up in my cart, using her horse. This worked out just fine, and we only went horseback on rare occasions.
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> When I got all my strings ready to pull I went in great excitement to tell you and Mother. She thought I couldn't stand the work and confinement, for I had always been a "puny" child and girl, but I told her what I had done and how Professor Ramsey said he would make it as easy as possible for me. She went up to see him herself for she always had our education at heart. She gave her consent and entered right into the spirit of it; trimmed the prettyest (sic) hat for me and got out the piece bag and made me one of the prettyest dresses I ever had. I hated to tell you boys of my plans for it somehow didn't seem right for me to be going to school when you were working and supporting us, but I salved my conscience by thinking what I could do for every one when I had been trained for

[4] George S. Ramsey, Principal of the Normal and Preparatory Departments. See Appendix 1

> something. It was hard to convince you of the desirability of my going to school but I do not think that side ever entered your generous old head. You were sure I couldn't stand the confinement, and Mother needed me at home.
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> But finally you were reconciled to the idea of my trying; and so I went for eight and a half happy months. It was a happiness a young person who has been to school all their life could not understand.
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> Yes, it was hard in some ways at first, not only (nor so much) on account of the confinement as from the morbid, agonizing shyness, with which I have always been afflicted, and the feeling of being "rural" and "green". But how the teachers did "back me up" – Professor Ramsey, Miss Taylor,[5] Miss Morrow[6] especially, -- talk about helping lame dogs over stiles!

Thus, in the summer of 1892, Charlotte became a student at the University of New Mexico during the first year it opened its doors. The summer session began June 15. On June 20, 1892 Charlotte made her first formal plant collection, of the comb-leaf evening primrose (*Oenothera coronopifolia*), an unnumbered specimen now at the New York Botanical Gardern. The collection was made of the Plains of San Agustin in Socorro County, New Mexico. This, almost certainly, must have been part of a university-sponsored activity. Charlotte was one of 75 students who entered UNM that first summer. Most, including Charlotte, were placed in the Preparatory Department, whose function was to assure that students had achieved the educational level of a high school graduate, since New Mexico had no high schools at the time. Guy and Maude also became students in the fall of 1892. In its early years, the University published the names of prospective students for the following year in the course catalog published each spring. Charlotte and Maude were listed as freshmen in the Normal Department and Guy in Special Studies for the 1893-94 school year (see Appendix 1). Entering the University in 1892 was undoubtedly one of the happiest moments in Charlotte's life.

Meanwhile, George's tuberculosis reappeared. He was unable to continue as a carpenter. He became associated with an entrepreneur by the name of Herman Blueher. George and Herman established a lifelong friendship. Years later the Ellises and the Bluehers often visited one another. Blueher was growing fruit and vegetables for the increasing Albuquerque population and was interested in expanding sales to the developing mining communities of Golden and San Pedro about 30 miles to the east. George began making trips with a loaded wagon drawn by Nig and Lancer. A great opportunity arose for Maude when a family friend in Las Vegas, Mrs. McGee, suggested that Maude should come to live with her and enroll in the newly established Normal School. With the financial help of friends and Julia's parents, Maude was able to complete her education in Las Vegas over the next three years. However, George's health problems grew worse and his doctor advised him to get out of the Rio Grande Valley. He began looking around in the mountains east of Albuquerque for a suitable place to relocate. On his travels to and from Golden, he noticed an abandoned water pipeline coming down from the Sandia Mountains. In the early spring of 1893 he traced

[5] Marsha L. Taylor. See Appendix 1

[6] Alcinda L. Morrow. See Appendix 1

the pipeline to moist, wooded Las Huertas Canyon. He had found what would become the new Ellis ranch.

By May of 1893, he was ready to move the family to the mountains. He pulled Frank and Augie out of school and began moving the family's belongings out of the Rio Grande Valley. Charlotte's world was about to fall apart. George was going to take her out of the University two weeks before the end of the semester. She described the situation in her letter to Guy:

> It was Father who took me out of school. He came down in May and I tried to coax him into letting me stay, at least until the end of the term. You talked to him to (sic), and I thank you. Miss Keepers[7] invited me to stay with her. Mrs. Munson, and Mrs. Ives said they would do all they could for me. Don't you remember how I sold that bicycle you gave me (when you bought that other one) and bought my Delsarte[8] costume? Don't you remember giving me suggestions for my essay on killing birds? I was to read it at Commencement. And how Professor Ramsey insisted I should bring Father up to see him so he could talk to him in my behalf. And Father told him what he thought of him for interfering in his affairs? So humiliating.

Charlotte found herself living in a double-walled tent in Las Huertas Canyon, sad and bitter, her dream stolen.

The first year or two were busy at the new ranch, which soon became known as Ellis Ranch. George, with the help of Frank and Augie built a large log house, a house that withstood the pressures of time and weather until it was razed by an arsonist in 1991. A garden was established, fences built. Charlotte endured. Paul imagines the situation: "She would avoid meeting or speaking to Father whenever possible. Perhaps Mother, too, for 'siding in' with Father. She would have seen little of Augie and Frank away from Father." Her closest associates were the family dog Sport and, of course, her beloved Lancer. Paul continues:

> Charlotte took short explorations at first, looking for butterflies and flowers. To relieve her pent-up energies, she would have climbed higher and higher to see just how high her "fences", the surrounding mountains, were. In that dark mood she might have been thinking of running away from home. She had had a taste of association with other people and school work, and it was sweet to her very ambitious nature.

Charlotte describes her solitary time with Lancer:

> In the Sandias I have ridden my pony over places where one would think a goat could hardly get a foothold. Up places where he had to jump form step to step. Down steep hillsides where he had to put all four feet together, sit down, then slide. I rode him through bogs and snow drifts and down timber. I'll tell you, there was a horse.

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[7] Lily Keepers, another student at the University of New Mexico. See Appendix 1

[8] François Delsarte, French musician and teacher (1811-1871), developed an acting method to facilitate emotional expression through gesture and vocal control. "Delsarte" courses were popular in the late 1800's emphasizing poise, breathing control, posture, etc. for effective appearance on stage or at the podium.

Eventually, Charlotte began to soften. Despite her disappointment and misery, she came to recognize a certain inevitability. Then, one night, she had a dream. Paul relates:

> Charlotte dreamed, that with her favorite teacher, Miss Taylor, she was exploring the face of Palomas Mountain. Miss Taylor was telling Charlotte about the butterflies, flowers, oak brush, acorns, pinyon pines and their delicious nuts. They reached and scaled the edge of the limestone rim that caps Palomas Mountain, and Charlotte began to lag. Miss Taylor was hurrying on up and east, calling to Charlotte to follow. But from a prominence, Charlotte, looking back, saw the house in the distance far below. Mother was sitting in front of it, weeping. Awakening from her dream, Charlotte clipped her own, restless, ambitious wings and resigned herself to stay with Mother.

She began to accept her role in maintaining the family's well being. Gradually she began to rediscover the simple pleasures and gentle beauties of living in a mountain forest. She collected butterflies and became enthralled with the flowers. She began to assign her own special names to her favorite haunts, like Chokecherry Lane, Midnight Flat, and Balcomb's Camp. She referred to the Ellis Ranch as Balsam Park.

George, Augie, and Frank continued to push back the wilderness, cutting trails, clearing trees, pulling stumps. Eventually, seven fields averaging an acre each were prepared. Charlotte, Julia, and Grandmother Eliza, who had returned from Chicago, took care of the cooking, washing, and other domestic chores including taking care of young Paul. Meanwhile Maude completed her education at Las Vegas in the Spring of 1895 and began teaching kindergarten in Albuquerque. After a few months, measles broke out and the school was closed. Guy delivered her to the Ellis Ranch. During the mid-1890's George and Frank began to have problems and in 1896, Frank ran away at age seventeen. He would occasionally visit the ranch, but the family was one smaller. In 1897 Guy married Marian Hubbs. Late in the decade Charlotte became Paul's teacher. George built a school desk and Charlotte held class. Around the house Charlotte had the nickname "Charlie", but in her schoolhouse, Paul was required to address her as "Miss Ellis." For several years, the son of a family friend, R.G. Balcomb, spent the summers with Paul at the Ellis ranch and joined the "school." Kenneth Balcomb remembers:

> As Paul had no chance to attend regular school, Charlie (Charlotte) taught him school subjects in pace with the curriculum of public schools. It was much easier for her to keep his interest when I, or some other visiting boy, was there, so we had school every weekday morning – grammar, reading, writing, spelling and geography; and such was her artistry as a teacher that we enjoyed it.

By the late 1890's the Ellis ranch was well established. There was a field of wheat and a large garden. Cattle roamed the ranch and surrounding woods. Chickens provided fresh eggs. George felt that Charlotte and Maude would be permanent residents. Paul recalls: "Father planned for both Maude and Charlotte to file on a homestead there. Charlotte's house was even started. The posts were set and floor plates laid." After the turn of the century things began to change. George's mother died on November 12, 1901 and was buried on the ranch. Maude became friends with a man named Horace Richard Yeomans. The couple got married at the ranch on April 30, 1902

and left soon thereafter. George never really accepted the marriage and never forgave Maude. Maude and Dick moved to Arizona. Lancer died in 1904. Friends of George informed him the United States Government was preparing to set up a Forest Reserve (National Forest) System which would likely absorb the property he had worked so hard to carve out of the woods. George traveled to Santa Fe to make sure his homestead would be preserved. On July 13, 1905, he received Homestead Certificate #3519, personally signed by Theodore Roosevelt, and the ranch became truly the Ellis Ranch, which the family abbreviated as the LS Ranch for the brand on their cattle.

During this period Charlotte began to not merely accept her situation, but to enjoy it. She liked teaching Paul. Gardening was rewarding and she enjoyed quilting and sewing. Charlotte had always loved animals. She tended to the animals at the ranch. She attached names to all of them, even the chickens. She came to enjoy interacting with neighbors and the not infrequent visitors to the ranch. Over the years she began traveling to nearby homes, sometimes tracking down lost cattle, sometimes to just say hello. She even traveled all the way to the town of San Pedro where she was a welcome visitor or even an overnight guest at the home of Jim Carruthers and his family with whom the Ellises had developed a strong friendship. In her diary she tells of coming home to Balsam Park from a trip with Augie on December 26, 1908 down the east side of the Sandia Mountains:

> It was late afternoon when we climbed the slope for home, and the mountains to the east of us were sights to behold, the Santa Fe and Pecos Mountains looked like filmy pale lavender chiffon that had been thrown carelessly on the plains. The Cerrillos Mountains were rose, the Ortiz were a dark blue, and the San Pedro and South Mountain, shades of purple, seamed with black shadow, and casting shadows across the plains. Imagine all this sitting on the brightest, goldenest of the plains with the bluest of blue skies for a background.

The allure of the wildflowers became her passion. Paul summarizes: "Charlotte had a nice collection of butterflies, but as my memory of her awakened, she had turned her hobby to botany and collecting flowers." She became dedicated to the study of the plants of her area. In the late 1890's she made contact with T.D.A. Cockerell and E.O. Wooton at the NMCA & MA (now New Mexico State University) in Las Cruces. They encouraged her to send specimens and helped her with identifications. Her first major discovery was the *Primula ellisiae* sometime prior to1900, which just whetted her appetite. A few years later, she came upon her second exciting find, the white shooting star. She spent many hours trekking through the meadows and woods for miles both on foot and on horseback, hunting her plants. Through her mentors she learned how to press and dry her finds, and to collect all parts of the plants. She also became interested in rocks and minerals. On the second floor of the house, Charlotte set up space for dealing with both her botanical and geological pursuits. A letter Charlotte wrote to a friend named Kate in December of 1941 makes explicit the level of her relationship with E. O. Wooton. Charlotte had made a visit to Washington, D. C. in late September of that year. Charlotte writes:

> Three days before I left I called up the man [Wooton] who was instrumental in getting my collection of flowers before the National

> Museum. He taught in the New Mexico Agricultural College years ago and we entertained him at our ranch in the Sandia Mountains for a few days of plant-collecting. I had not heard from him for many years, but he remembered me and came next day with his car and took me all sorts of interesting places.

Wooton's field book shows that he spent at least two days at the Ellis ranch, August 2nd and 3rd, 1910.[9]

By 1910, Augie was employed away from the ranch and had become only an occasional visitor. Guy and Marian had become established in the San Francisco Bay area in California. Dick and Maude were settled in the White Mountains of Arizona. The Ellis Ranch was quiet, with only George, Julia, Charlotte, Paul and occasional visitors. With the family dispersing, George made out his will, leaving the ranch to Charlotte, the eldest remaining child. Early in 1912, the never healthy George grew ill. He died on March 31. Herman Blueher came up to the ranch and buried George next to his mother. Julia, Charlotte, and Paul made arrangements with the Bluehers and other friends and neighbors for the disposition of livestock and the care of the homestead. Paul states: "Nearly twenty-one years after Mother named me Paul, Guy came to Balsam Park to take Mother to Berkeley with him, as Father had passed on a few months before." Charlotte was committed to caring for Julia. Charlotte and Julia gathered essential belongings and headed to Bernalillo with Guy to catch a train to California. Paul followed later. By late 1913 Julia also fell ill and died on January 22, 1914. At this point details about Charlotte's life become difficult to track. Few records remain, but a general picture can be assembled.

Charlotte was back at the ranch by the spring of 1914. It is clear that she had remained in communication with the botanical contacts she had made at NMCA & MA in Las Cruces. As noted above Cockerell had departed Las Cruces in 1900 and New Mexico in 1903. In 1906 Paul Carpenter Standley, later assistant curator of the U.S. National Herbarium, transferred from Drury College in Missouri to NMCA & MA for his senior year, graduating with the class of 1907. He and Wooton developed an excellent rapport. Standley continued, receiving as M.S. in Biology in 1908 and joining the faculty before departing for the Smithsonian Institution in 1909. He and Wooton began to plan writing the first Flora of New Mexico. Standley became familiar with Charlotte's efforts during this period. She is specifically mentioned as one of 46 collectors in his *The Type Localities of Plants First Described from New Mexico* in Contributions from the U.S. National Herbarium 13: 143-246, published in 1910. In 1911 Wooton also left Las Cruces to work at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. Charlotte made extensive collections in the Sandias during the summer of 1914 from her home base back at the Ellis Ranch. It seems almost certain that Wooton and Standley stimulated her activity. She gathered hundreds of specimens that were placed at the U.S. National Herbarium, the Missouri Botanical Garden (MO), and the New York Botanical Garden (NY). When Wooton and Standley published their Flora of New Mexico in the summer of 1915, Charlotte's specimens were cited seven times[10]. She was credited with the type

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[9] Information from Wooton Archives at New Mexico State University. Personal communication from Kelly W. Allred, Range Science Department.

[10] *Fagoppyrum fagopyrum, Silene noctiflora, Lychnis githago, Dodecatheon ellisiae, Achillea Laxiflora, Anthemis cotula, Primula ellisiae.*

localities[11] of *Primula ellisiae, Dodecatheon ellisiae*, and *Achillea laxiflora* (later synonymized to *A. millefolium*). Charlotte also continued correspondence with Cockerell[12] in Colorado during this time in regard to her favorite little Primula. She maintained her contact with Cockerell well into the 1930's.

In July of 1915, from the vicinity of Springerville, Arizona, Charlotte again contacted Cockerell in Boulder[12]. She was visiting Dick, Maude and their seven children at their "Rancho" along the Little Colorado River. It was as if she were finally free, at last the keeper of her own destiny. She could travel around Arizona and to Balsam Park. She could have whims. She loved being back at the ranch in temperate seasons. Paul averred that no one spent winter at the ranch after 1912. Charlotte's presence on South Edith Street in Albuquerque in September of 1914[12] seems to verify this. Charlotte reappeared at Dick and Maude's White Mountains Rancho again in October 1916 when she stayed with Maude until the birth of Maude's new daughter Francis on October 23.

In the spring of 1917 Charlotte and Paul returned to the Ranch. They were considering putting the place up for sale and wanted to put things in order. They reestablished contact with old friends and neighbors, the Luceros, the Trujillos, the Carruthers, and in particular Dr. Hugh A. Cooper. Cooper is described by Sherry Thomson in her 1991 study of the Ellis Ranch:

> One of the many people who traveled in the canyon and met the Ellises was Dr. Hugh A. Cooper. Reverend Cooper was a Presbyterian minister who had come to the southwest for his health. He, like Mr. Ellis, suffered from tuberculosis. According to his grandson Robert Cooper, Dr. Cooper left his family and congregation in Centerville, Iowa to find a cure, or at least relief, in the arid Arizona desert. He made it as far as Albuquerque, where he got off the train feeling too ill to go on. But after only two weeks in Albuquerque he was feeling much better. In six months he was fully recovered. This was in 1903. He called for his family and started a ministry in his new home. He was always an outdoors type and frequently took walks in the mountains. It is possible that he met the Ellises on one of these sojourns. They became friends.

Since Charlotte and Paul had little money, they bought groceries and supplies on credit from Bernalillo Mercantile Company. They wanted to get the Ranch up and running again. In April of 1917 the United States had entered World War I. Both Paul and Reverend Cooper's son were threatened by the prospect of military service. Dr. Cooper brought his son to the Ranch to enter into partnership with Charlotte and Paul to raise potatoes. After a few months it became obvious that the potato project was a failure. Paul and Dr. Cooper's son determined that the military was inevitable and decided to enlist. Bernalillo Mercantile was demanding payment. Things looked bleak for the Ranch. Dr. Cooper stepped in and paid the debt. Paul states: 'It would have been very much harder for Charlotte when I had to go to France in August, without the friendship and help of the Coopers." The Ranch was saved and somewhat rejuvenated.

Over the next few years Charlotte was in and out of the Ranch. She spent considerable time in Arizona. She remained close to Maude and her family. Frank was

[11] A type locality is the location where a new species is first collected.

[12] See Appendix 2

also living in Arizona. Charlotte actually held a job for a while, working at the Flinn Sanatorium in Prescott. By that time Maude, Dick and children had moved to Prescott. Charlotte was able to help Maude with the care of her son, Art, when he caught scarlet fever and had to be separated form the other children. Charlotte was also able to provide care and critical assistance when her only sister developed double pneumonia. Maude felt that she surely would not have survived without Charlotte. During her time living in Prescott Charlotte met and became good friends with a woman named Sharlot Hall. Sharlot, born in 1870, led an early life strangely similar to Charlotte's starting out in a ranch in Kansas and moving in 1882 to a ranch in Arizona. Sharlot was the first woman to hold office in the Arizona Territory, appointed as Territorial Historian in 1909. Sharlot was also chosen to deliver Arizona's three electoral votes to Washington D.C. after the election of Calvin Coolidge in 1924. There is a Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott to this day.

As the Roaring Twenties matured, Charlotte became more anxious to sell the Ranch. Paul had returned from his service in France and was employed by the Forest Service in Oregon. According to Paul's notes, a family friend, Roy Stamm offered Charlotte $3000 for the ranch. He wanted to make it into a beer garden. Charlotte categorically refused. Apparently another man made a similar offer, but it didn't feel right to Charlotte. Finally Dr. Cooper, along with his son and another man, E.D. Sisk made an offer. It must have been an epiphany for Charlotte. Dr. Cooper put up $5000 for half interest, his son and Sisk $2500 each for quarter interest. In October of 1924 the deal was finalized and the Ellis Ranch became the Cooper LS Ranch. Ten thousand dollars was quite a tidy sum at the time. Charlotte had her first taste of financial independence age 50.

Even though Charlotte had officially sold the Ranch, her close friendship with the Coopers allowed her to continue to spend time there. This turned out to be a stroke of fortune for the dear friend of the Ellises, Jim Carruthers. His wife died and he was in his late seventies. Charlotte had spent her life caring for others and she continued with Jim. Certainly she continued to visit Arizona. Maude's husband died in 1927, but she stayed in Prescott for a while in order for her youngest children to finish high school. Charlotte most likely offered help. By this time Maude's daughter Helen and son Richard were living and working in Denver. Maude was planning to head to Colorado after leaving Prescott. Maude's daughters Edith and Betty had moved to Colorado. Charlotte determined that she had to say her final goodbye to the LS Ranch. Her last known correspondence from the Ranch is a letter to her Uncle George on June 26, 1929.[13] By early 1930, she was living in Denver. Jim Carruthers was soon to follow.

On February 21, 1930 Charlotte wrote a letter to NMCA & MA from her address in Denver regarding control of locoweed. Although her letter is missing, she apparently signed it C.C. Ellis. The return letter[14] uses the greeting "Dear Sir", assuming that C.C. Ellis must be a man. Her choice of the signature must have been a reflection of her view of the status of women at the time. By 1936 she had a different address in Denver when she again contacted Cockerell in Boulder.[15] She was apparently working with children in

[13] See Appendix 3
[14] See Black letter, Appendix 3
[15] See Appendix 2

Denver, ever the teacher, always helping others. By this time old Jim Carruthers was ninety years old, with his vision failing. Charlotte continued to care for him, even reading to him.[16] He died in 1939, leaving his effects and money to Charlotte.[17]

After Jim's death Charlotte did some traveling. She kept a spiral notebook containing a variety of anecdotes about her bird Tiddleywinks, her sister Maude and Jim Carruthers, along with some of her poems and vignettes of her trips in the early 1940's.[18] One, dated August 12, 1940, is entitled "Here I Am At the New York World's Fair". Also included are notes about her attending a Christian Youth Movement Conference in Estes Park, Colorado in June 1941. Another adventure to Miami, Florida and Cuba is described in August 1941. Then in September came her visit to Washington, D. C. Charlotte's letter to Kate describes her visit to the Smithsonian Institution:

> On my first day in Washington I went to the Smithsonian Institution to see how my collection of flowers was being housed. I did not see many of the specimens because they had been filed away with others, each with its kind. However, I asked to see one plant, at least, and mentioned *Primula ellisea* [sic] Pollard and Cockerell, a primrose I had discovered in the Sandia Mountains. The assistant curator of the plant department took me into the filing room and I marveled to see him put his hand right on the specimen. The filing system was that perfect. It was the thrill of a lifetime to again hold in my hand the little flower which I had gathered and pressed forty seven years ago.

After she returned to Denver she restricted her travels to the state of Colorado. Her nieces Edith and Betty had married and moved to Colorado. Family tales remain of Charlotte over the age of 60 traveling to visit nephew Richard and spending countless hours in a pastime she had first mastered at the Ferris Ranch in 1888, breaking horses. Back in Denver she became very active in the Shut-In Society, regularly paying visits to people who could only rarely leave their homes. She was an active member of the Mineral Society of Denver. By the early 1950's niece Betty Keller in Denver had added two young great-nephews to Charlotte's list of charges.

By early 1956 Charlotte was feeling very old. Her memory wasn't what it used to be. She suffered a great deal with arthritis. She had miserable bouts with shingles. Her youthful back injury made it increasingly difficult to get around. In March Charlotte had a stroke. Maude describes the situation in a letter to Paul:

> There are many things I don't know about concerning her stroke but E. [Betty, Maude's daughter] did write that she never cried so much in her life and that tells me a great deal. E. could not take care of her with two lively boys and a husband and no room. She wrote Mother "I don't have anything but love and that is not enough" I wrote Alta Blake and she took her to her home, she was there when she died, she was in a coma for two or three days. Alta said she laughed in the coma. Elizabeth went to see her but she did not know her which broke her heart, they had always been so close.

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[16] See Raine letter, Appendix 3

[17] Personal communication with Maude's granddaughter, Dixie Northcott

[18] See Appendix 4

On March 17, 1956 Charlotte was gone, three months from her eighty-second birthday.

Charlotte's deepest self was born on the frontier, from her earliest awarenesses on the mixed grass prairie of the Great Plains, through the nascency of her intellectuality on the dry high plains beside Pedernal Mountain, to the first glimmering of her identity in the towering forest along the Pecos River and the delicious taste of its growth at the University, finally through agonizing disappointment and sorrow, to reach a comfort and a quiet inner joy that allowed her to give herself to the care of others and to the study of the natural world around her. Despite her lack of formal education, she never ceased to adore the process of learning. Her calm persistence and constant delight in the pursuit of plants would seem products of her history. Her lifelong concern for and dedication to those around her is a gentle reminder for us all. Her contacts with the most significant figures in New Mexico botany in her time will ensure that she will always be some portion of the future, forever part of the State's history. The little Primula that so moved T.D.A. Cockerell stands tall to this day. Her white shooting star is part of research on the genus Dodecatheon at the Missouri Botanical Garden as this article is written, a simple unintended tribute to the character of this irrepressible woman.

Charlotte's Plants

There are great difficulties in locating specimens of collectors like Charlotte Ellis, who was not specifically tied to any institution and who lacked specialized equipment and training. Of course, the passage of almost a hundred years, as well as changes in collection standards, labeling procedures, and plant nomenclature impact as well. Charlotte did not have a consistent numbering system, in fact, numerous collections were without numbers, or numbers were assigned by recipients. For example, in the course of this study eight specimens listed as #3, and three specimens listed as #4, and five specimens listed as #5 were located. Charlotte apparently did not maintain field notes, or at least, none are extant. Site data and dates of collection are sketchy at best. Charlotte sent her material to Cockerell, Wooton, Standley, and possibly others, who would identify the specimen or pass it on to others for analysis, further complicating location.

The vast majority of her collections were not holotypes like *Primula ellisiae* or *Dodecatheon ellisiae*, or even isotypes (collections believed to be duplicates of holotypes). Rather they were predominantly relatively common plants. As such they would have been submerged in the general collection at the herbarium that received them. In this case specimens can become, for all practical purposes, inaccessible. Charlotte's specimens are housed in at least five herbaria, the New York Botanical Garden (NY), the Smithsonian Institution (US), the Missouri Botanical Garden (MO), the University of New Mexico (UNM), and New Mexico State University (NMC). In preparation for this article, all of Charlotte's specimens at UNM (2) and NMC (75), were examined. The collections at UNM and NMC are completely databased. However, the situation at NY, US, and MO is far more complicated. In the case of NY, the general collection contains over 7 million specimens, of which roughly 700,000 are databased and searchable by computer. These represent the more important collections, types and unusual specimens. Collections of common species are mixed in with hundreds or thousands of others and

accessible only by personal observation. At US with 5 million specimens, 800,000 databased, and at MO with 5.2 million, 900,000 databased, the situation is similar. Even with knowledge of the genus and species of a collection, locating it in a major herbarium can be quite laborious.

With all of this in mind, it would seem that a general picture of Charlotte's collections could never be realized. However, in December of 2006, a copy of a list of Charlotte's collections was discovered buried in an obscure folder in a file cabinet at the UNM herbarium. The typed list contains scientific names with cited authorities and is numbered from 2 to 476, but with numerous gaps. It is annotated in Charlotte's own hand, although some entries are too faint to read. She not only filled in many gaps, but also provided her views of common names and the month and day of collection of most specimens, but without a year. It appears quite likely that the list is a compilation of most of the collections she submitted to E.O. Wooton and P.C. Standley, the vast majority from 1914. The nomenclature of the list closely parallels that found in Wooton and Standley's 1915 *Flora of New Mexico.* Since Charlotte did not have a formal education in botany, nor a significant library of technical resources, but did maintain a strong connection with E.O. Wooton, it is extremely probable that Wooton and Standley provided the list to Charlotte.

This list is combined in the following database with information available from NY, US, and MO to provide a general overview of Charlotte's work. Even though a large number of specimens cannot be localized to a specific herbarium, the database certainly provides an effective summary of the taxa she gathered and a snapshot of the flora of the Sandia Mountains during her time there. In no database reviewed have any specimens been located which were collected after 1914. Indeed her life after 1914 almost precludes periods of significant collection. There have been reports of Charlotte collecting in the White Mountains of Arizona in 1915. No record of such has been found in this study. Reported collections around Hot Springs, NM (now Truth or Consequences) housed at NMCA & MA are certainly incorrect. All specimens at NMC were determined and labeled by E.O. Wooton, and according to his labels were collected in 1908 and 1909 in the Sandia Mountains.

Charlotte's 515 collections encompass 80 families, 293 genera and at least 345 species, an amazing diversity for an amateur collector. In addition to typical flowering plants she gathered grasses, ferns, mosses, sedges, and lichens, difficult groups for a generalist. Such breadth of collection speaks to her sharp eye in noting differences in plants and her indefatigable pursuit of them. In addition to the above-mentioned *Primula* and *Dodecatheon*, she is credited with one other holotype, a milkvetch, *Astragalus praelongus* var. *ellisiae* as well as numerous isotypes.