

**David  
Lewis  
de Schweinitz  
1780-1834  
Compendium**

By

Helga von Schweinitz

**Introduction**

This compendium is a collections of information Hans and Helga compiled in their research of Louis David de Schweinitz (b 1780, d 1834). A lot has been written about David de Schweinitz, but Hans and Helga were more intrigued by David's contribution to botany, mycology, and apothecary.

David de Schweinitz name in research is sometimes 'von Schweinitz' and Louis is 'Lewis' or 'Ludwig'. David de Schweinitz was born a 'von Schweinitz' and later started to use 'de Schweinitz'.

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**David von Schweinitz as a Person**

Excerpts from Encyclopedia Americana 1950 pg 411  
and from Wikipedia

Louis David von Schweinitz was a Moravian clergyman and botanist. He was born on 13 February 1780 in Bethlehem Pennsylvania and died on 8 February 1834 also in Bethlehem. During his life, he went to Germany for his education, and spent significant amount of time in Salem North Carolina. Both in Bethlehem and in Salem, David catalogued over 1,400 new specimens in flora and fungi. He is in some literature called "Father of North American Mycology". In Bethlehem, he ran an Apothecary (Pharmacy) which involved growing and identifying the medicinal uses of local flora.

His parents were Hans Christian Alexander von Schweinitz (1740-1802) and Anna Dorothea Elizabeth von Watteville. David married Louisa Amelia LeDoux on 24 May 1812. This is probably the time when David changed his name from 'von Schweinitz' to 'de Schweinitz' which could be the influence of his French descendent wife. They had five children: Edmund Alexander (1825-1857), Emil Adolphus (1815-1879), Robert (1819-1901), Edward William (1814-1815), and Barnard Eugene (1828-1854). All five children used 'de Schweinitz' as family name.

**David's Relation to Hans-Ludwig von Schweinitz****Family Tree**

David's father, Hans Christian was a member of the "Kutscheborwitz" branch of the Schweinitz family. Most of this family branch were Moravian. Father Hans Christian married twice, and David is from the second marriage. On the family tree David "Lewis" or David "Louis" is instead "Ludwig". David had seven brothers and sisters. These eight children of father Hans Christian broke away from the main family branch became the "Kutscheborwitz Jüngere Linie" the younger line.

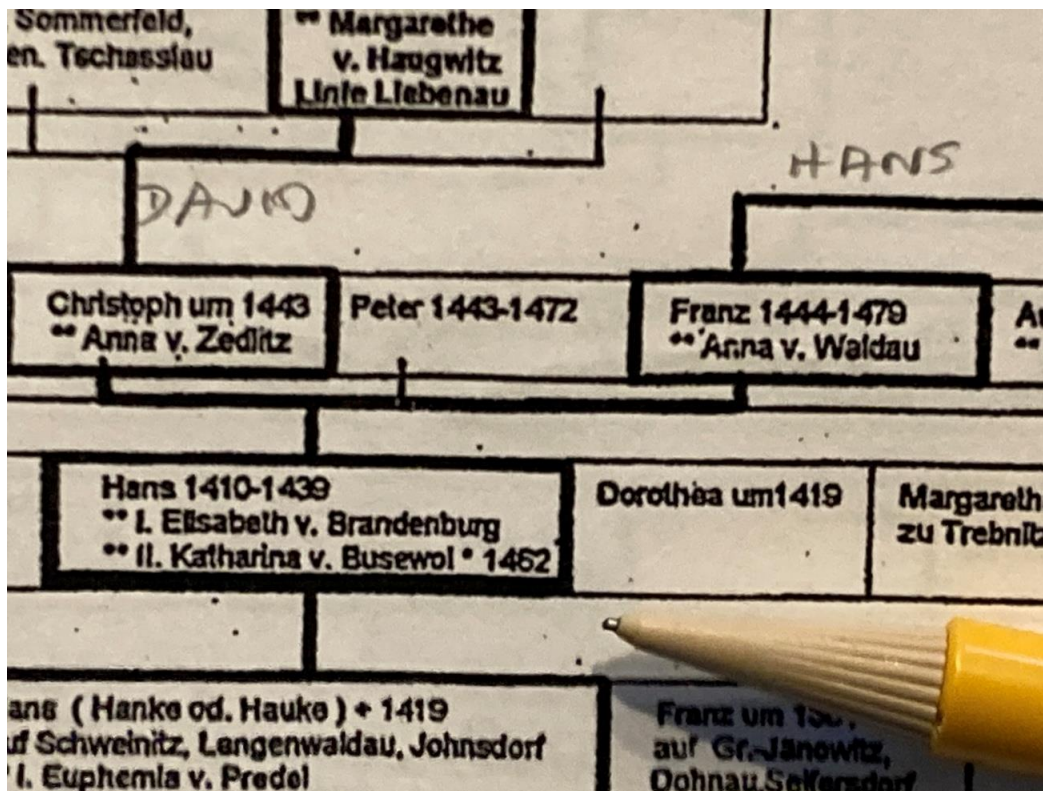
Hans Ludwig von Schweinitz is from the "Klein Krichen: Alt Raudten" branch of the Schweinitz family.

The 'Kutscheborwitz' branch and the 'Klein Krichen' branch do not come together until back in 1443 and 1444. Hans von Schweinitz (1410-1439) in his brief 29 years had six children. Chrisoph was born in 1443 and his descendents eventual

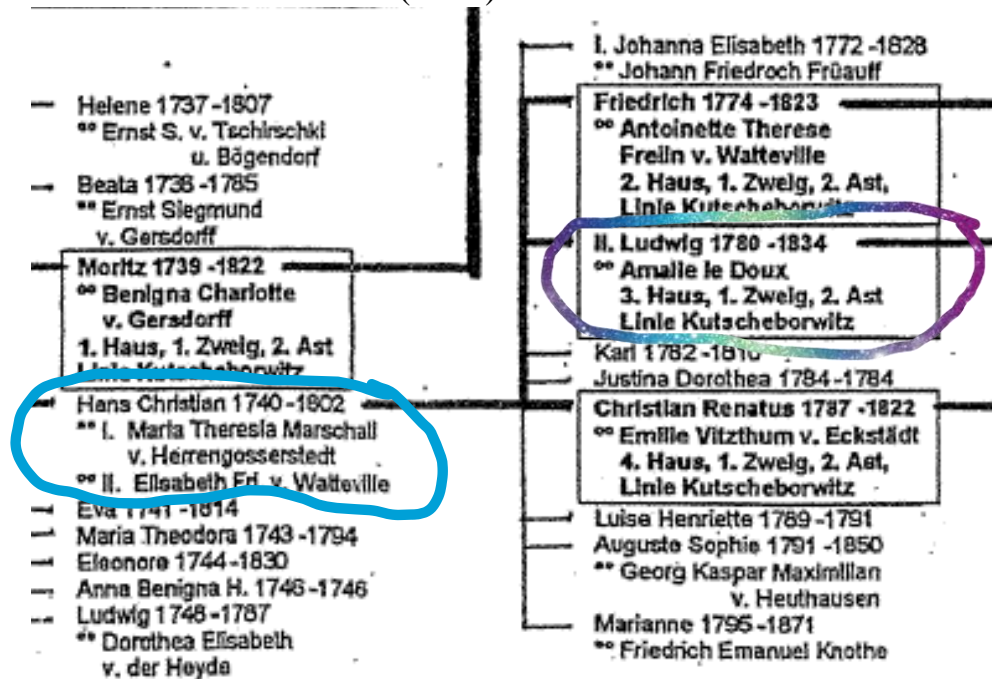
created the 'Kurscheborwitz' branch. Another son, Franz was born in 1444 and his descendents eventual created the 'Klein Krichen' branch.

So Hans Ludwig von Schweinitz is related to Lewis David de Schweinitz based on a common ancestor Hans von Schweinitz (1410-1439).

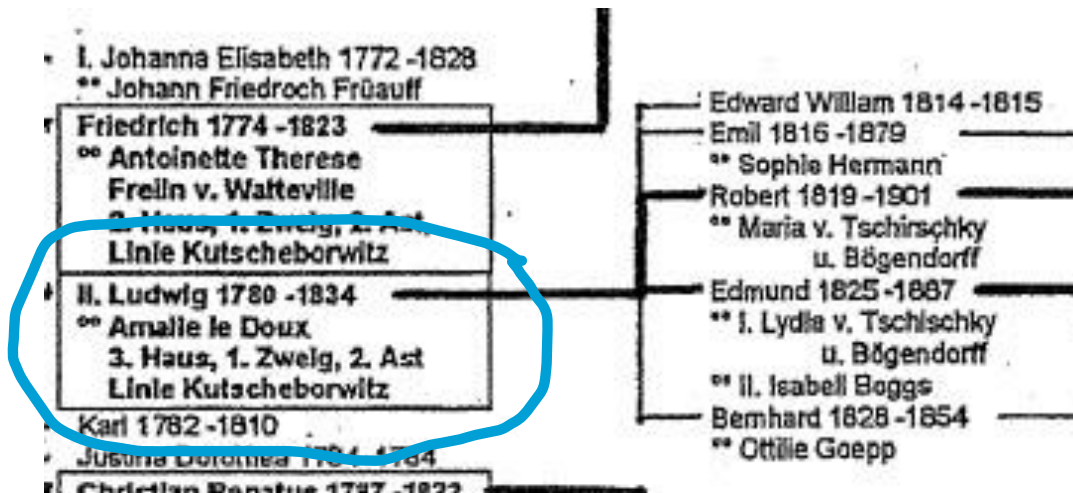




Where Hans Ludwig and Lewis David have a common ancestor: Hans 1410-1439  
 Lewis David is descendent of son Christoph (1443) and Hans Ludwig is a descendent of son Franz (1444)



On family tree, Lewis David's name is Ludwig and his father is Hans Christian (1740-1802). David has seven brothers and sisters.



Lewis David (Ludwig) married Amalie le Doux and they had five children.

### Lewis David de Schweinitz as a Botanist, Mycologist, and Apothecary

David catalogued over 1,400 new specimens in flora and fungi. One flora and one fungi have been named in his honor. And a water fall in North Carolina.

Flora: The Schweinitz's Sunflower is named after Lewis David de Schweinitz. Its scientific name is 'Helianthus schweinitzii'. 'Helianthus' is from the Greek words for 'sun' and 'flower'. This flower was not named in David's honor until 1842, about 8 years after David died in 1834. This sunflower is one of the rarest plants in the United States and is only found in North and South Carolina. David had spent a great amount of time in Salem North Carolina, which was a Moravian community during his time.

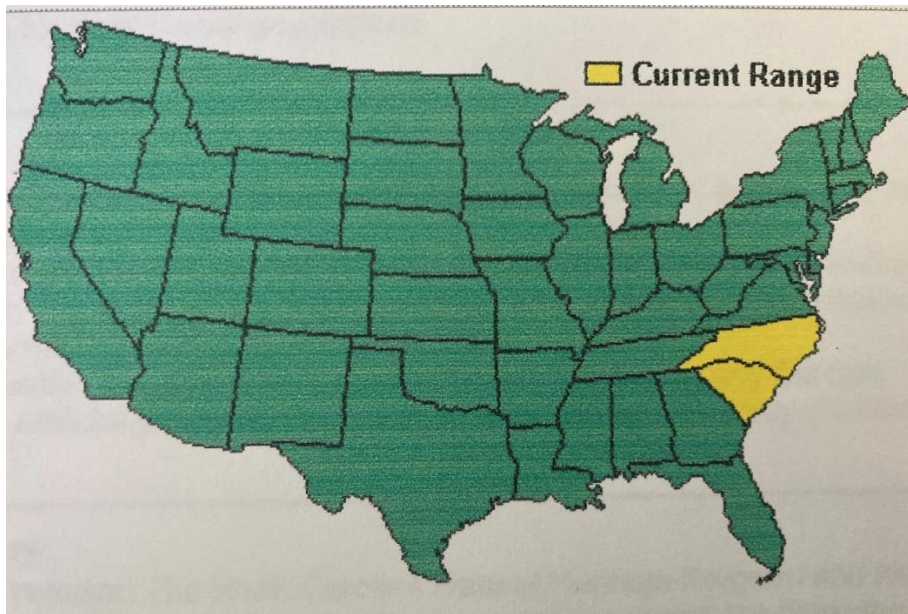
Mycologist: In 1821 a fungus was named in David's honor. At that time the scientific name was 'Polyporus schweinitzii' and in 1990 the scientific name was changed to 'Phaeolus schweinitzii'. This fungus is known as a 'butt rot' which is not what it seems. This fungus grows from the roots or base of the host tree. Once identified, it has been found in North America, Eurasia, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa. Since this fungus leads to decay and will cause the tree to become brittle and fracture, it is not a favorite fungus of Forest Managers, but it is a favorite of some crafters. It has several common names such as dyer's polypore and dyer's mazegill. It is an excellent natural source of green, yellow, gold, or brown dye.

Apothecary: In Bethlehem Pennsylvania, the Apothecary that David had, has been restored, and in the back is a garden of apothecary plants. These plants have

medicinal purpose and are identified. Many of the plants and their uses were identified by David. David did interact with local Indian tribes and gained quite a lot of his knowledge from these tribes.

**Sunflower: *Helianthus schweinitzii***

*Helianthus schweinitzii*



Current range of Sunflower

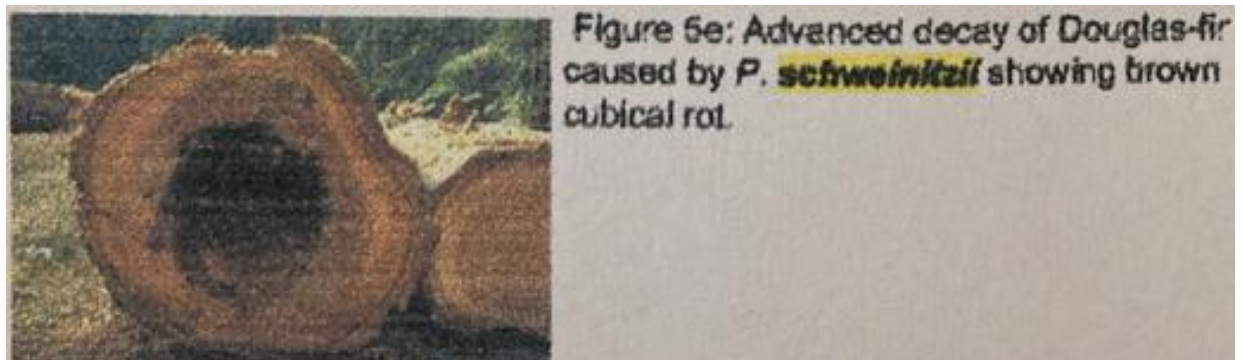


Schweinitz's Sunflower '*Helianthus schweinitzii*' botanical drawing

**Fungus: Butt Rot: *Phaeolus schweinitzii***



One version of Schweinitz Butt Rot ' *Phaeolus schweinitzii*'



Advance decay in Douglas-fir caused by Butt Rot. Characteristic is cubical shaped rot.

***Phaeolus schweinitzii*****Scientific classification**

Kingdom:	<u>Fungi</u>
Division:	<u>Basidiomycota</u>
Class:	<u>Agaricomycetes</u>
Order:	<u>Polyporales</u>
Family:	<u>Fomitopsidaceae</u>
Genus:	<u><i>Phaeolus</i></u>
Species:	<b><i>P. schweinitzii</i></b>

**Binomial name*****Phaeolus schweinitzii***(Fr.) Pat. (1900)**Bethlehem PA and Salem NC**

In 1994 the Schweinitz family had a reunion in Winston Salem North Carolina and in 19?? there was another reunion in Bethlehem PA. Both places have quite a bit of information about David. In Bethlehem there is a Museum about David's contributions and a restored Apothecary. And the cemetery has many headstones of his descendents. In Salem there is a colored window in his honor in the church.

In Salem, NC, Helga bought some note cards with a floral bouquet in honor of Ludwig David von Schweinitz. Helga sent this card to many relatives, including

relatives in Germany, so she translated the caption on the back of the card into German.

While in Salem NC, the family went to Hanging Rock State Park in Danbury NC. The Lower Cascade falls used to be known as 'Schweinitz Cascade' in honor of David.



Schweinitz family on step of church in Salem North Carolina.

## Schweinitz Falls



Schweinitz Cascade (now Lower Cascades) in Hanging Rock State Park NC  
Stokes County

"Cascade Saurtown Mnts. (called **Schweinitz** fall)." This water fall is located in Hanging Rock State Park, Danbury, N.C., and is now known as the Lower Cascades. Earlier it was known as **Schweinitz** Cascade in honor of German naturalist David von **Schweinitz**. Image no. 43.85.1.



Photos of Schweinitz fall's for Stereoscope Viewer used to create a 3d effect image.

**Floral Card from Salem North Carolina****FLORAL BOUQUET**

Ludwig David von Schweinitz (1780-1843) painted this watercolor in March 1798 at the age of 18. Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he became a Moravian minister and well-known botanist. He lived in Salem, North Carolina from 1812-1821 while he was administrator of the Moravians' holdings there.

*With the permission of Old Salem, Incorporated,  
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Ludwig David von Schweinitz (1780-1843) painted this watercolor in March 1798 at the age of 18. Born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he became a Moravian minister and well-known botanist. He lived in Salem, North Carolina from 1812-1821 while he was administrator of the Moravians' holdings there.

Helga's notes on translating into German

## Blumenstrauß

Ludwig David von Schweinitz (1780-1843)  
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## Article by Dr Frank Kuserk

Dr Frank T Kuserk published an indepth article about David in the Moravian [College] Alumni Quarterly, Fall 1985 [34 (3):2-4 title "Lewis David von Schweinitz: Pioneer of American Science."

### LEWIS DAVID VON SCHWEINITZ: PIONEER OF AMERICAN SCIENCE

by Dr. Frank T. Kuserk

**T**he early nineteenth century was a formative period in the history of American science.

Europeans, who had already begun to professionalize the various scientific branches, were clearly the dominant world figures at that time. Through their great universities and museums they had built the laboratories and brought together the collections needed to formulate the fundamental ideas and theories of their disciplines. In the natural sciences men such as Georges Cuvier, Jean Baptiste de Lamarck and Augustin de Candolle were already building on the earlier works of their European forebears, and young naturalists such as Charles Darwin, Joseph Hooker and Thomas Henry Huxley were gaining the experience necessary for them to make their own contributions in the next generation.

Yet, in these early years of the republic, some unusually acute and foresighted Americans began

to lay the foundation for the establishment of a scientific infrastructure which would eventually be unsurpassed in the world. It has only been in recent years that we have begun to understand and appreciate the long overlooked roles which these individuals played in establishing and shaping our scientific heritage.

One of these Americans shares a close bond with Moravian College. Lewis David von Schweinitz, clergyman, church administrator and educator was, during the decades of the 1810's and 1820's, an active naturalist. He and his close friend and correspondent, John Torrey, were the two dominant figures in American botany during those years. Through his work on the American flora, particularly the fungi, von Schweinitz provided critical answers to important questions on plant taxonomy, classification, and biogeography. In addition, his involvement in the fledgling American scientific institutions of the day and his

influence on young scholars gained von Schweinitz a place among the respected American scientific pioneers of the day.

#### Early Education at Nazareth Hall

Born in Bethlehem on February 13, 1780, von Schweinitz was the eldest son of Hans Christian Alexander von Schweinitz, the superintendent of fiscal and secular concerns of the Unitas Fratrum in North America. His mother, the former Dorothea Elizabeth de Watteville, was the granddaughter of Countess Benigna, herself the daughter of Nicholas Lewis, Count Zinzendorf.

It was thus assured early on that the young Lewis David should have every advantage in life which his prominent family could offer, including the education necessary to advance within the hierarchy of the church and in the world of science. He responded even as a pupil at Nazareth Hall by showing his love of learning and, in particular, his

(continued on page 4)

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interest in botany. It is said that during an early visit to the school with his grandfather, Bishop John de Watteville, von Schweinitz, upon seeing a specimen of a lichen, became so interested in it that he took up the study of plants with great enthusiasm. His interest was indeed strong, for by his graduation in 1798, he had already catalogued all of the plants in the vicinity of Nazareth.

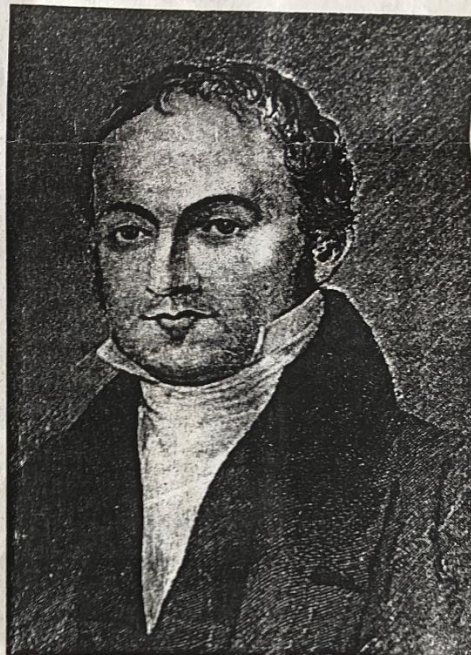
#### Seminal Work in Botany

It was in 1798 that the young von Schweinitz left Bethlehem with his family for an extended stay in Europe. His father had been recalled to the continent on church business and Lewis, who was at that time eighteen, used the opportunity to obtain a theological education at the Moravian seminary at Niesky. While there he became close friends with one of his professors, Johannes Baptista von Albertini, who provided him with religious, philosophical and scientific inspiration. By 1805 he and Albertini, through their diligent botanical studies, had described enough species of fungi to co-author an eight volume treatise on the subject. The work contained descriptions of over 1100 species and 70 genera of fungi of which 127 species and two genera were newly described. Also found in this seminal work were original drawings of 93 of the species produced by von Schweinitz himself.

To von Schweinitz, however, natural history was only his avocation. In 1807 and again in 1808 he was called to the Moravian settlements at Gnadenberg, Silesia and Gnadau, Saxony to serve as preacher and teacher. Even at this early stage of his life he showed the temperament which was to become both his religious and scientific style. It is said that, "his discourses were invariably practical, not argumentative; experimental, not speculative." Indeed, as one also examines his scientific works, his precise, careful nature comes through. His penchant for detail and accuracy have allowed his taxonomic work to stand the test of time.

By 1812, having gained a reputation as an accomplished clergyman and administrator, von Schweinitz was given the assignment of serving as the general agent of the Moravian Church in the southern United States. With his new bride, Louiza Amelia Le Doux, and an honorary doctorate awarded by the University of Kiel in recognition of his scientific achievements, von Schweinitz set sail for America. His ship, beset by British privateers and damaged in a severe storm, finally arrived in Philadelphia later that year, and after a brief visit with friends in Bethlehem, he and his wife journeyed south to Salem, North Carolina where he took up his new administrative duties.

Firmly established in his clerical role von Schweinitz was now able to give the study of botany even more of his attention. In 1818 he published, through the Society of Naturalists of Liepsic, a manuscript on the fungi around North Carolina, and in 1821 he followed with a similar work on the local mosses. He regularly communicated with naturalists in both Europe and in the states and over the next few years gained a



The Rev. Lewis David von Schweinitz

reputation as the foremost American authority on what is known as the cryptogams, fungi, mosses, ferns and lichens. He published numerous scientific articles in the newly established American journals of the day, the *American Journal of Science*, the *Annals of the Lyceum of Natural History of New York*, the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* and the *Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*.

#### Return to Bethlehem

In late 1821 von Schweinitz received his final administrative assignment when he returned to his native Bethlehem as head pastor, general agent of the Moravian estates, principal of the Seminary for Young Ladies and member of the Board of Trustees of the Moravian Theological Seminary. He soon became a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the American Philosophical Society, and was awarded honorary memberships by the Linnean Society of Paris and the Society of Natural Sciences of Liepsic.

In 1823 he took on the task of examining and describing the plants collected by Thomas Say during his explorations on the Long Expedition to the Northwest Territories. The following year he collaborated with John Torrey on a *Monograph of the North American Species of the Genus Carex*. Von Schweinitz had been a regular correspondent of Torrey since 1819 when the young New York physician-turned-botanist wrote to him asking for assistance in identifying some plant specimens.

By far his greatest scientific work, *A Synopsis of North American Fungi*, was published in 1831. In this monumental work von Schweinitz described over 3000 species of fungi in over 240 genera,

including 1203 new species. This work represented the single largest classification of these plants in the world at that time. Indeed, his personal herbarium, when given to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia upon his death a few years later, increased the botanical holdings of that institution fourfold.

#### "Unbounded Scientific Spirit"

Von Schweinitz's contributions to natural history stand as testimony to his unbounded scientific spirit. Walter Johnson, in a memoir prepared for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia after von Schweinitz's death, states that his work was "not just a collection of facts, but a judicious method in the prosecution of his labours." His analytical and synoptical tables attached to several of his monographs made the identification of various plant groups easier and less subject to incidental characteristics. He discarded the all too frequent practice of many botanists of changing the names of plants and adopting new synonyms to compel future naturalists to cite them. He also avoided superfluous repetitions of the names of classes and orders in his writings.

Perhaps von Schweinitz's most outstanding contribution was his personal scientific philosophy—a philosophy which we, who are the bearers of his legacy at Moravian College, try to infuse into each of our own students today. He wrote:

"A solid basis . . . must be laid, not on a sandy foundation, on the varying freaks and fancies of the mind, but on a perpetual daily and nightly employment of microscopic observation, a diligent and oft-repeated examination of the whole history, a careful perusal of authors, a comparison of their respective synonyms and above all, by the observation of living nature herself, as she unfolds her rich abundance in the recesses of forests, lawns and marshes; an observation which must be continued from day to day, and from year to year, if we would reap the true reward of our labours."

Von Schweinitz died on February 8, 1834 at the age of fifty-four. In his later years his scientific reputation had so grown that many naturalists sought his advice and made Bethlehem a regular stop on their scientific journeys. Among these were Maximillian, Prince of Wied and the Swiss artist, Charles Bodmer, and Asa Gray, who was to become America's premier botanist at mid-century and who served as Darwin's confidant and champion in this country. As A. Hunter Dupree wrote in his biography of Gray, "[He] could hardly have failed to see science in a slightly broader dimension through Schweinitz." Those words remain true today. ■

*Dr. Kuserk is associate professor of biology with an interest in the history of science. His 1981 January Term course, "The Darwinian Revolution," explored the genesis and development of evolutionary theory and its impact on many of the areas of Western culture.*

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**The End**