

HUNTIA

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While HUNTIA serves primarily as a record of investigations at The Hunt Botanical Library, its pages are open also to papers from scholars of other institutions.

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Fig. 37. Jane Quinby (1901-1965), in 1961.

Photo by H. Dean Quinby, Jr.

Jane Quinby (1901-1965)

George H. M. Lawrence

THE RICHNESS and calibre of the library of the late Mrs. Roy Arthur Hunt first became known to botanists and horticulturists, not to mention bibliophiles in other fields, through the publication in 1958 of the first of two volumes composing the *Catalogue of botanical books in the collection of Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt*. This first volume was the product of four years of patient, painstaking, and loving labor by the late Jane Quinby, who died 31 January 1965, in New York City, from a long illness of respiratory difficulties terminated by broncholithiasis. Miss Quinby was born 15 October 1901, in Rochester, N. Y., the daughter of Henry Dean and Laura Chace Quinby.

Jane Quinby was first employed by Mrs. Hunt in the autumn of 1950, as her librarian. She was charged with putting in order the many collections of the library (in addition to her botanical and horticultural books, Mrs. Hunt had extensive holdings of belles lettres, as well as works on the arts, history, bibliography, and travel).

From the beginning of her work with Mrs. Hunt, it was the latter's plan to commence work as soon as possible on a catalogue of her botanical and horticultural books, and to include all published through 1860. Later, the terminal date was set back to 1800. Miss Quinby's assignment was to treat the incunabula and works published through 1700. In preparation for this, she consulted with Miss Elizabeth Mongan at the National Gallery in Washington, D. C., with Fred Anthoensen—master printer and typographer—in Portland, Maine, with Frederick Goff, Chief of the Rare Books Division at the Library of Congress, and with Miss Margaret Stillwell, world authority on incunabula at Brown University in Providence.

Among her earlier accomplishments was the publication of a definitive catalogue of the works of Beatrix Potter, author of the "Peter Rabbit" books. During World War II she was a Red Cross worker in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy, having previously been a volunteer worker in the consultant bureau of the New York City Women's Council of the Navy League—an agency that assisted dependents of naval personnel in finding emer-

gency employment at a time when desperately needed.

Although her previous bibliographic experience included cataloguing the William Osgood Field collection before it went to the Houghton Library at Harvard, the William A. M. Burden collection of aeronautical works (now in the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences Library, Washington), and the Urling Sibley Iselin collection, she had not been trained in the intricacies of analytical or descriptive bibliography of the more difficult earlier works. In partial compensation, and after embarking on this project, she often received counsel and assistance from such scholars as the late William A. Jackson, John Cook Wyllie, Sarah A. Dickson, and Allen Hazen, and throughout all of her work she enjoyed very material assistance from Miss Stillwell. The typescript of all but the preliminary matter was completed and sent to the printer—Fred Anthoensen—in October, 1957, and the last of the corrected page proof was returned to him in June, 1958. The volume was published and distributed in November of that year. Her mission accomplished, she returned to New York.

In the last year of her association with Mrs. Hunt, Miss Quinby suffered from asthmatic attacks whose frequency and severity increased with time. After leaving Pittsburgh, she spent nearly asthmatic-free summers at her cottage at Small Point, Maine, and winters in her New York apartment. Respiratory difficulties increased, as did the frequency of periods of hospitalization, and during her last months every day became increasingly difficult. Her major bibliographic activity during this time was the completion of a manuscript on the works by and of the eleventh-century nun, Hroswitha, Abbess of Gundersheim, and to be a section of a near definitive work being published by the Hroswitha Club of New York, of which Miss Quinby was for 15 years its historian.

Jane Quinby greeted me the first time we met in Mrs. Hunt's library in 1957, a tall, erect, well-proportioned woman, with blue eyes that danced with vitality; the warmth of her graciousness was omnipresent, the affectionate love for her books and all that they meant was powerfully effervescent, the enthusiasm embodied in her running commentary about every rarity shown me was indeed infectious. When tea was served two hours later, I felt vitiated and woefully conscious of my own inadequacies. Throughout that afternoon's introduction to works I had never before handled, I became increasingly conscious of Miss Quinby's appreciation of the importance of her task and of her devotion to Mrs. Hunt. Later, with the development of a deep and mutual friendship, it became clear that she counted her relatively few years in Pittsburgh among the happiest and most satisfying of her life.