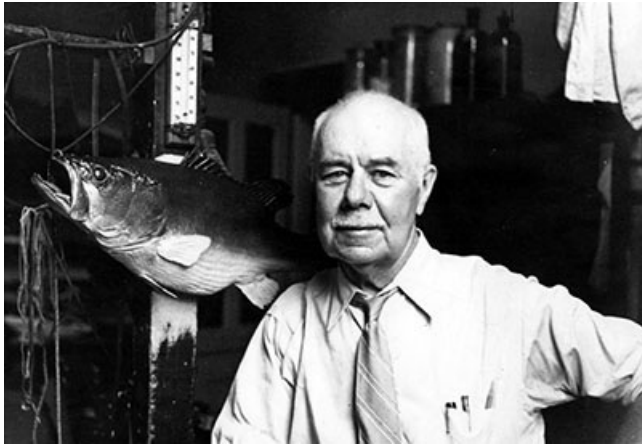


Brimley, Herbert Hutchinson ^[1]

Brimley, Herbert Hutchinson

by Marcus B. Simpson, Jr., 1979

7 Mar. 1861–4 Apr. 1946



A 1934 photograph of Herbert Hutchinson Brimley. Image from the State Archives of North Carolina.

^[2]Herbert Hutchinson Brimley, zoologist and director of the North Carolina State Museum, was born in Willington, Bedfordshire, England, the son of Joseph and Harriet Brimley, who immigrated with their family to Raleigh in December 1880. Brimley received his formal education at the Bedford County School in Elstow, England, where he excelled in mathematics and sports.

Following unsuccessful attempts at farming and teaching, he and his brother Clement ^[3] opened a taxidermy and biological supply company in Raleigh, where they quickly gained an international reputation as the leading naturalists of their day in the South. In 1884 the North Carolina Department of Agriculture ^[4] commissioned Brimley to prepare a display of waterfowl and fishes for the State Centennial Exposition, and in 1892–93 he supervised the North Carolina zoological exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair. In 1893 the Department of Agriculture designated two rooms in its office building as the North Carolina State Museum, for the permanent display of the exhibits assembled by Brimley. On 15 Apr. 1895, Brimley was appointed curator of the museum, a post he held until 1928, when his title was changed to director. He served as director until 30 June 1937, when he became curator of zoology for the museum, a position he retained until his death. During the fifty years of his leadership, the institution grew into one of the best-known state museums in the United States, containing an outstanding collection of animal, plant, and geological specimens from the southeastern United States.

During his years with the state museum, Brimley worked with the North Carolina exhibits at various international expositions and published numerous scientific papers on the natural history of the Southeast, these appearing chiefly in the *Ornithologist and Oologist*, *Auk*, and *Chat*. He collaborated with H. M. Smith in writing *Fishes of North Carolina* (1907) and with T. G. Pearson ^[5] and C. S. Brimley ^[3] on *Birds of North Carolina* ^[6] (1919 and 1942); both were regarded as classics in their fields. He served as a member of the advisory committee of the World's Congress on Ornithology in 1894–95. He was a member of the American Association of Museums, the American Society of Mammalogists, and the Museum Association of Great Britain; a founder and life member of the North Carolina Academy of Science; founder, president, and life member of the North Carolina Bird Club; and full member of the American Ornithologists' Union. Actively involved in civic affairs, he was an honorary life member of the Raleigh Rotary Club, serving as its president in 1921–22. In 1924 he was president of the Raleigh Festival Association, and for many years he was a leader in the Boy Scouts of America, serving as district council president and receiving the Scouts' highest award for distinguished contributions. In addition to his natural history writing, Brimley composed poetry, some included in *North Carolina Poems* ^[7], edited by E. C. Brooks ^[8] in 1912.

Brimley was married twice, first in December 1895 to Edith Jane Taylor, who died in January 1911, and then to Bettie Moore Love in February 1913. He had two sons, Robert E. and Arthur H. Both sons were born to H. H. Brimley and his first wife, Edith Jane Taylor. He was an active member of Christ Episcopal Church in Raleigh. Copies of numerous portraits are found in E. P. Odum's edition of Brimley's writings.

References:

Biographies of Members of the American Ornithologists' Union (1954).

Chat 10 (1946).

E. P. Odum, *A North Carolina Naturalist: H. H. Brimley* (1949).

Additional Resources:

Cooper, John E. "The Brothers Brimley: North Carolina Naturalists." *Brimleyana* 1. (March 1979).
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/brimleyana-1979-march-no.1/3703125>^[9] (accessed October 2, 2013).

Herbert Hutchinson Brimley Papers, 1861, 1880-1948. State Archives of North Carolina.
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/herbert-hutchinson-brimley-1861-1946-papers-1861-1880-1948/372410>^[10]
(accessed October 2, 2013).

Herbert Hutchinson Brimley Papers, 1939-1945 (collection no. 02829-z). The Southern Historical Collection. Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/b/Brimley_Herbert_Hutchinson.html^[11] (accessed October 2, 2013).

Museum Archives Finding Aid. H. H. Brimley Memorial Library, North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. <http://naturalsciences.org/research/brimley-library>^[12] (accessed October 19, 2015).

Image Credits:

State Archives of North Carolina. "H. H. Brimley, Museum of Natural History, 1934. Museum now known as the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC." Photograph. From the Brimley Photo Collection, PhC.42, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC (call #: PhC42_Bx18_Museum of Natural History_F5). *Flickr*,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/7096742855>^[2] (accessed October 2, 2013).

Subjects:

[Biographies](#)^[13]

[Scientists & Inventors](#)^[14]

Authors:

[Simpson, Marcus B., Jr.](#)^[15]

Origin - location:

[Raleigh](#)^[16]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#)^[17]

1 January 1979 | Simpson, Marcus B., Jr.

Source URL: <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/brimley-herbert>

Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/brimley-herbert> [2] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/7096742855> [3]
<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/brimley-clement-samuel> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/agriculture-and-consumer-services> [5]
<https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/pearson-thomas-gilbert> [6] <https://archive.org/details/birdsofnorthcaro00pear> [7]
<https://archive.org/stream/northcarolinapoe00broo#page/12/mode/2up> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/brooks-eugene-clyde> [9]
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/brimleyana-1979-march-no.1/3703125> [10] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/herbert-hutchinson-brimley-1861-1946-papers-1861-1880-1948/372410> [11] http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/b/Brimley_Herbert_Hutchinson.html [12]
<http://naturalsciences.org/research/brimley-library> [13] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [14]
<https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/scientists-inventors> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/simpson-marcus-b-jr> [16]
<https://www.ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmont-0> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>