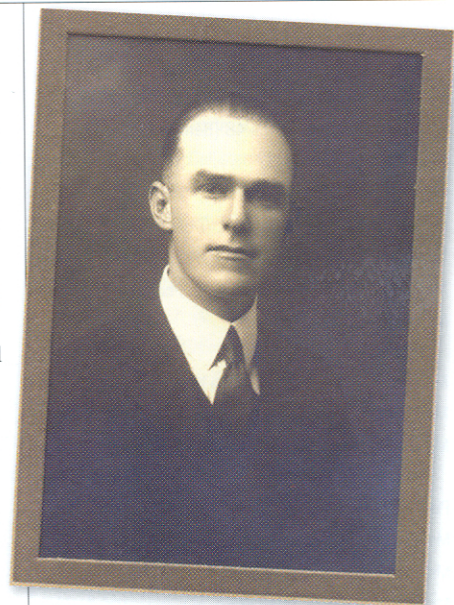


A Founding Father of Texas Tech

As president of the newly founded Texas Technological College, Paul Whitfield Horn had the task of finding and hiring the best faculty he could, despite certain limitations such as funding and few available constructed buildings. A letter Horn received in the late spring of 1924 caught his attention and offered the solution to one of college's faculty needs. The writer, Richard Arthur Studhalter, introduced himself as the professor and head of the Department of Biology and Agriculture at Sul Ross State Teachers' College in Alpine, Texas, and sought to apply for a position in biology or botany. While he still had one more year's work left before completing his Ph.D., Studhalter assured Horn that he had the credentials necessary to do the job.

nothing new to him, for he had done this very thing at Sul Ross, which opened its doors in June of 1920. His letter outlined his program's course structure, teaching load, salary, and professional activities. He was a member of Sigma Xi and Phi Beta Kappa and was well published in his field, most notably in the areas of Riella, Ephedra and tree rings.

It was a stroke of luck that a man of such academic status was interested in Texas Tech. Accepting the position to chair the new Biology Department, Studhalter was undaunted by the challenge of outfitting the biology laboratory with a budget of only \$5,250. While that may have seemed like lot of money in 1925, it had to cover all the furnishings — from tables,



Studhalter's 1932 article in *Scientific Monthly* on "The Elusive Ruffle Plant, Riella" produced worldwide letters of praise. Miss Edith L. Stephens of the University of Cape Town, South Africa, wrote, "I think elusive is just the term I would have applied to it during our three years of drought, 1929-1931... It is a lesson in writing for the Press to see what an excellent 'story' you have made out of this subject, which one would never have thought suited for popular exposition."

During a field trip to the Fort Davis Mountains, Studhalter's suggestion to form a biology club was received with enthusiasm. On Nov. 12, 1937, the Biology Club was officially organized in cabin room two of the Scenic Gateway Tourist Camp. Dues for the semester were set at 10 cents.



"I am well acquainted with western conditions, and my experiences during the pioneer days in Sul Ross should be of some value during the early years of the Texas Technological College," the hopeful applicant wrote.

A review of Studhalter's credentials convinced Horn that he was indeed the right man for the job. Born in Basel, Switzerland, on Aug. 2, 1887, Studhalter received his bachelor's degree from the University of Texas in 1912 and his master's degree from Washington University at St. Louis in 1917. He would go on to complete his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1932. Starting a biology program from scratch was



Biology Club members enjoying lunch at Fern Canyon while on a field trip in Alpine, Texas.

chairs, cabinets, sinks, gas and electric connections to laboratory equipment and maintenance. Some 25 years later, when Studhalter was interviewed for a retrospective article on his career at Tech, he

reflected on that first pivotal year and the tight resources he had to deal with. He recalled having 125 freshmen botany students crammed into one classroom on the third floor of the Administration Building, a less than ideal learning situation.

Aside from establishing the biology department, Studhalter contributed to many important aspects of social and academic life at Texas Tech. He served as the first president of the Plains Museum Society, the precursor for the Museum Association, and held this post four times during his lifetime. Studhalter also served as botanist on several field expeditions from 1933-1937. His most notable trip occurred in 1934 when he accompanied William Curry Holden and others on the Yaqui expedition which was jointly sponsored by Texas Technological College and Harvard University.

For seven years, he served as adviser for pre-med students and helped establish the Tech Pre-Med Club. His fondness for taking students on field trips led to the establishment of the Biology Club, which had succeeded the Botany Club.

In 1948, Studhalter resigned as department head. When he passed away in 1958, a memorial fund was established in his honor at the Tech Museum in recognition of his many years of service. His field notes, sketches and papers are now housed in the Texas Tech University Archives. ■