

Wellesley Historical Society

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Sherman Denton (1856 – 1937)

Sherman F. Denton was born on Sept. 24, 1856 in Dayton, Ohio to William and Elizabeth Foote Denton. The Denton family moved to Wellesley in the 1860s and lived off of Washington Street in the area now known as Denton Road. The Denton family were avid naturalists and Sherman's younger brothers were internationally known for their butterfly specimens sold through the Denton Brothers Company. Sherman assisted his brothers in this business by developing and patenting a plaster mount for the butterflies in 1894.

Sherman Denton was a skilled artist and taught himself to draw and paint. In the late 1880s, Sherman was hired by the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries to create taxidermy specimens of fish. His painting skills were put to excellent use as the skin of a fish loses its coloration as it dries. To record the natural shape and color of the freshly-caught fish, Sherman painted detailed watercolors of the specimen which he then referenced to create the mounted and painted fish. He also patented a method of mounting the preserved fish skin over a papier-mâché form, creating a surprisingly life-like model that was in great demand in U.S. museums.

Denton is perhaps most well-known for the chromo-lithographic prints of his fish illustrations that were published by the State of New York Fisheries, Game and Forest Commission at the turn of the twentieth century. These prints proved to be collectible immediately after publication and continue to be popular with collectors today.

Sherman F. Denton lived with his wife and two children in Wellesley for several years before moving to Weston. He died at his home on June 24, 1937 at the age of 81 and is buried at the Woodlawn Cemetery in Wellesley.

Bibliography

Denton Collection, Wellesley Historical Society