

A Brief History of The Massachusetts Orchid Society

Timeline

- 1829 – Massachusetts Horticultural Society was founded.
- 1921 – American Orchid Society came into being.
- 1952 – Mass Orchid Society had first meeting.

Massachusetts Horticultural Society

Founders were people of means like the DuPonts, Vanderbilts and Rockefellers. Societies in Boston, Philadelphia and New York City all originated about the same time. In Boston – A copper baron – Mr Albert C. Burrage was the key player.

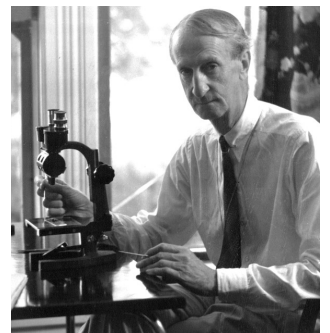
Mr. Albert C. Burrage

Harvard grad 1883.
Passed Mass bar exam 1884.
Boston City Council after bar.
President Boston Allied Gas 1892.
Director of Amalgamated Copper 1894
Traveled to South America and caught orchid bug.
By 1920 Burrage had 20 greenhouses North of the city at Beverly Farms Estate.
He was Hosting monthly orchid shows in the city where he regularly displayed over 1000 of his own plants.
As a reaction to invasive pest – the US Government passed Quarantine 37, preventing the importation of all orchids into the US.
Burrage saw the need to organize the countries orchid growers. Thus, the American Orchid society was born.
In 1928 The Government relented, and provisions were made to bring orchids back into the country.



Oakes Ames

First significant American Botanist – Orchid Taxonomist.
Born in North Easton, MA in 1874.
Harvard grad –hired as professor and the Head of the Harvard Botanical Gardens.
Orchids from around the world were sent to Harvard for identification.
Very quickly the Harvard Botanical Museum rivaled Kew in England for its repository of orchid species.
The premier orchid collector and the foremost orchid taxonomist made their homes right here in Boston.



Far Right: Blanche and Oakes Ames
Right: detail of Ames drawing

A women's rights activist, artist and inventor, Blanche Ames illustrated the taxonomy of her husband's publications on new species of orchids, producing hundreds of outstanding line drawings of orchids.

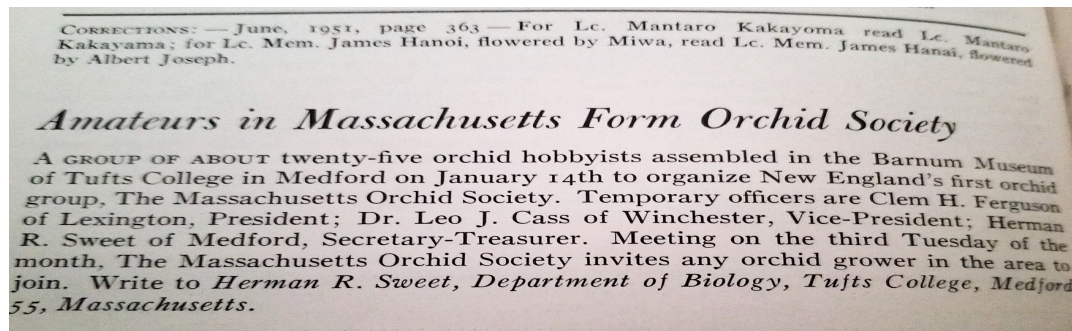
Finally – The Mass Orchid Society

MOS came fashionably late to the orchid world.

Founded in 1952 – The AOS had already been around for over 30 years.

The AOS affiliated societies program had been created 7 years previous.

It took some time for MOS to realize its existence because all that was orchids in the greater Boston area was already assembled within the AOS.



MOS is recognized in the Feb. AOS bulletin

John Miller was invited to the second MOS meeting in Feb 1952.

Meetings were held at members homes on rotating basis.

MOS' first formal display was at the March 9th -15th Boston Flower Show.

No awards were garnered but great fun was had by all!!

There were no summer meetings in 1952.

Fall of 1952

The September meeting saw the first guest speaker: Dr. Gus Melquist. The topic was "The ancestors of our present day Cymbidiums and their bearing on hybridization and culture".

The first show table was presented at this meeting.

The October meeting was held at a private residence without speaker but with a show table.

The November meeting was held at the Botanical Museum at Harvard. The speaker was Mr. Sweenforth, who was a research fellow at Oakes Ames Herbarium. The topic was Native New England Orchids.

Of note on the show table was a spectacular Miltoniopsis presented by Mr. Herman Sweet – the Society's Secretary/Treasurer.



The Butterworth Display

Spring of 1953

The January meeting was the 1st anniversary for the society.

Commercial growers were starting to join.

Mr. L. Sherman and Helen Adams attended this meeting.

The Adams owned the largest greenhouses in the region, eclipsing the Burrage's Beverly Farms Estates.

Helen Adams was instrumental in organizing the AOS Judging System.

Victor DeRosa eventually bought the Adams collection.

The February meeting saw Mr. and Mrs. Butterworth attend.

These were the same Butterworths that the AOS trophy for the best grown plant awarded during any calendar year was named after.

March saw the Spring Boston Flower Show.

The MOS took 1st place for an arrangement of Paphs.

A Cultural Excellence Award was given to Mr. Herman Sweet for Milt. William Pitt var Ruby.

1954

In its 3rd year in existence, the MOS hosted the Eastern Orchid Congress at the Continental Hotel in Cambridge.

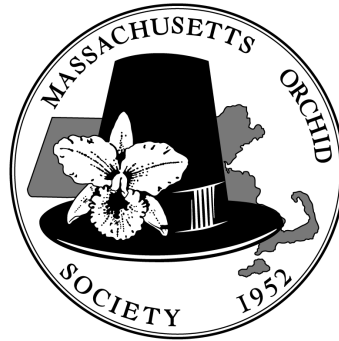
John and Janice Miller created the centerpieces for the event.

At the end of the welcoming dinner, participants took the centerpieces back to the hotels with them.

When John and Janice returned after the dinner, they realized that their centerpieces had been liberated.

They had to start over recreating the art before the morning breakfast

Tired but successful, MOS pulled off a first-class event and set the stage for the myriad of successes to come.



The official MOS seal, designed by Meg Bright-Ryan in 2019.