

THE DIATOM LEGACY OF HARRY SOVEREIGN IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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The unique diatom flora of the Pacific Northwest attracted the attention of prominent European diatomists beginning in the middle of the Nineteenth Century and continuing on into the early part of the Twentieth Century. These included Ehrenberg, A. Schmidt, and Hustedt. Not until the 1930s did the region have its own resident diatomist in the person of Harry E. Sovereign (1884-1965). Sovereign was born and raised in Colorado where he was trained as a civil engineer. His engineering career took him to projects in Idaho and Mexico and finally, in 1927, to Seattle, Washington, where he retired in 1953. His side interest in diatoms began shortly after his arrival in Seattle, where he became acquainted with UW professor and self-proclaimed “omnologist” Trevor Kincaid. He also began corresponding and collaborating with Friedrich Hustedt, who verified Sovereign’s new species and prepared figures for Sovereign’s publications. Sovereign published only two diatom papers in his lifetime, both after the age of 70. In these papers he described 43 new taxa, most of them endemic to the Pacific Northwest. Sovereign was the first to sample the Pacific Northwest extensively for diatoms and from an ecological point of view. His collection of 1400 strewn mounts, including a number prepared by Hustedt, and 600 vials of cleaned material, resides at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. We will examine twelve species described by Sovereign, along with their habitats and distributions in the Northwest.

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