**by Guy Belleranti**

Wilson Bentley was born in 1865, shortly before the end of the Civil War. He was to someday become known as the "Snowflake Man"..



Bentley lived on a farm in Jericho, Vermont. Along with a brother, he was homeschooled by his mother, a former teacher. At the age of 15, Bentley began using a microscope from his mother's teaching days.

Soon he was studying snow crystals and the resulting snowflakes they formed.

At first, he tried to capture the crystals and snowflakes in sketches. However, none of his drawings could really show the intricacies and beauty of what he saw. Then, Bentley read about cameras that could take photographs through a microscope. His father thought the whole thing was foolishness. However, Bentley's mother eventually convinced him to purchase a camera that the boy could use.

Learning by trial and error, Bentley spent countless cold Vermont winter days attempting to photograph snow crystals onto light sensitive glass plates with his bulky camera and microscope set-up. Finally, not long before his twentieth birthday, he achieved success, recording the first photomicrograph ever of a snow crystal.

Over the next 13 years, Bentley took hundreds of additional photomicrographs. He saw that the shapes and sizes of the crystals varied and that every snowflake was different. He began filling notebooks with detailed weather observations. He also recorded information on his photographic techniques. Finally, in 1898, he had his first of many articles on snow crystals published.

During this time he was also busy running the family farm. His father had passed away, and his mother was now an invalid. Many thought he was kind of a strange man, a man who loved nature and music. Indeed, he was a talented musician. He played several instruments including piano, organ, clarinet and cornet. And he did love nature. In fact, it is said he often imitated the sounds of birds and other animals on his violin.

But it was his interest in snow crystals and other weather-related subjects that consumed him most. His "hobby" included learning about water in all its forms from raindrops and dew to clouds and fog. During the warm weather he studied raindrops and their varying sizes. To measure the raindrops he exposed a shallow pan of wheat flour to falling rain for several seconds. He then photographed the splash patterns. In addition, each raindrop would soak up some flour forming a tiny flour pellet. When the pellet dried he found he could measure it to find the size of the raindrop. Over time, he found new information that linked raindrop size to storm type.

Still, it was years before many scientists and professional photographers accepted

Bentley's abilities and findings. However, as his work appeared in publications such as

Scientific American, National Geographic and Popular Science, he gained their respect.

In 1920, Bentley was named a fellow of the American Meteorological Society. And in 1931, shortly before his death from pneumonia, his book "Snow Crystals" was published. In it were over 2,400 photographs, most of them of snow crystals.

-Originally purchased by EdGate Total Reader in 2006 for use in a Lexile-based reading assessment program.

1. Which answer contradicts the information given in the passage?
   1. In order to best capture the real beauty of snowflakes, Bentley took to photographing snowflakes.
   2. It didn't take long for scientists and professional photographs to accept Bentley's paintings and abilities.
   3. Apart from being a photographer, Bentley played several musical instruments including piano.
   4. Bentley's father was initially reluctant to buy him a camera.
2. Explain how rightly Wilson Bentley was called the “Snowflake Man”.
3. Wilson Bentley was very keen about the beauty and intricacies of what he wanted to capture, and in fact, this was the reason why he stopped sketching them and started capturing them in photographs. Why might artists, and not just painters for that matter, give great importance to such details?
4. How did Bentley's findings eventually gain the respect of scientists and what was he honored with?
5. Write a paragraph about your favorite hobby. Explain how often you practice this hobby and what aspects of it specially intrigue you. Is this something you wish to turn into a career?

# Answer key

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   1. In order to best capture the real beauty of snowflakes, Bentley took to photographing snowflakes.
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2. Explain how rightly Wilson Bentley was called the “Snowflake Man”.

**There couldn't have been a better title to describe Wilson Bentley, a man**

**who dedicated nearly all his life for the cause of capturing the beauty and**

**intricacies of snowflakes. For Bentley, snowflakes were not just an**

**instrument to showcase his creativity, but it was a passion which consumed himself day in and day out. Not only did he take photographs of a**

**snow flake, but he also recorded the intricacies of these great weather**

**beauties in his notebook. These notes were later published in reputed**

**magazines like National Geographic and Scientific American.**

1. Wilson Bentley was very keen about the beauty and intricacies of what he wanted to capture, and in fact, this was the reason why he stopped sketching them and started capturing them in photographs. Why might artists, and not just painters for that matter, give great importance to such details?

**Art is an undying thirst for perfection. Seldom is an artist pleased with their work unless they find the intricate elements of perfect craftsmanship and**

* 1. **near-ideal translation of what they have been madly chasing, superbly**

# Answer key

**expressing itself through the medium they have chosen. Pretty much like**

**Wilson Bentley, who was not content with the sketches of snowflakes and**

**instead caught their beauty in photographs, every painter and every artist craves to achieve success in their works. Only when they find an artistic**

**work exemplary, will they consider themselves successful.**

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**"Snow Crystals" was published. It contained over 2,400 photographs,**

**most of them of snow crystals.**

1. Write a paragraph about your favorite hobby. Explain how often you practice this hobby and what aspects of it specially intrigue you. Is this something you wish to turn into a career?

**Answers may vary.**