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THE CHICAGO ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.

BY C. H. GORDON, EVANSTON, ILL.

THE arrangements recently completed whereby the Chicago Academy of Sciences receives from Mathew Lafin of Chicago \$75,000 for the construction of a building at Lincoln Park, revives interest in an association formerly among the foremost of similar associations in this country. In giving a brief résumé of the history of the Academy, the treatment will naturally follow the order suggested by its financial experiences, as follows: (1) period of organization and early struggle—1856-64; (2) prosperity—1864-81; (3) decline—1881-91; (4) revival—1891.

1. *Organization.* The Chicago Academy of Natural Sciences, as it was at first termed, was established in 1856, chiefly through the efforts of Robert Kennicott, then a young man of indomitable perseverance and rare scientific attainments. There were fourteen charter members as follows: J. B. Blaney, M.D., N. S. Davis, M.D., J. W. Freer, M.D., C. Helmuth, M.D., E. W. Andrews, M.D., H. A. Johnson, M.D., H. Parker, M.D., F. Scammon, M.D., Robert Kennicott, George A. Mariner, Samuel Stone, R. K. Swift, J. D. Webster, H. W. Zimmerman. The energy, loyalty, and ability of these men, some of whom are still active in the affairs of the Academy, gave the impetus which contributed largely to the success attending it in subsequent years. Steps were taken very early to establish a museum, and rooms were secured in what was then known as Dearborn Seminary on Wabash Avenue, north of Washington Street. Subscriptions to the amount of \$1,500 were obtained, and Robert Kennicott, who had contributed his fine collection of zoological specimens, was installed as Director. Contributions were also made by Dr. Andrews and others until many thousand specimens were accumulated.

The financial crash of 1857 ruined most of the subscribers to the original fund, and left the Academy nearly destitute of means for meeting its necessary expenses. In 1859 it was incorporated under the laws of Illinois and its name changed to its present form. The Civil War breaking out soon afterwards completely absorbed public attention, and took from its ranks the more active members for service in the army. Deprived of public attention, destitute of money, and stripped of working members, the whole enterprise seemed likely to be extinguished.

In 1859, Robert Kennicott departed for Arctic America in charge of an exploring expedition under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. He returned from Alaska in 1862, richly laden with specimens in all departments of natural history. The results of this exploration were considered to be second to no other similar expedition on record. As the expenses of the expedition were borne by the Smithsonian Institution, the collections all went to Washington with the understanding, however, that a full series of the specimens was to be presented to any institution, otherwise eligible to such donation, that Mr.

Kennicott might designate, provided suitable provisions were made for their reception and preservation. Naturally, Mr. Kennicott designated the Chicago Academy of Sciences as the recipient of such donation. During the year 1863 the collections were studied and arranged, and early in 1864 word was received stating that the duplicate series awaited the action of the Academy.

2. *Period of Prosperity.* The opportunity thus offered was eagerly seized by the active spirits remaining, and steps taken to secure the requisite funds. On Feb. 22, 1864, an informal meeting of interested gentlemen was held, at which Professor Agassiz, who was opportunely visiting Chicago, was present. Professor Agassiz testified to the great value of the collection and gave added impulse to the movement.

A reorganization of the Academy followed, and a corresponding act of incorporation obtained in 1865. A change in the constitution was effected by which life memberships of \$500 each were established. During the summer of 1864, an active canvass was made resulting in 125 subscribers to life-memberships, making a total of \$62,500. Of this, \$50,000 was to be held as a permanent endowment. The following year the collections were received and deposited temporarily in the Metropolitan Building, at the corner of Randolph and LaSalle Streets.

The selection of a lot and the erection of a building next engaged the attention of the Academy, and it was only after much effort and discussion that a location was decided upon; but finally in January, 1867, the trustees reported the purchase of a lot on Wabash Avenue, just north of VanBuren Street, and the construction of a fireproof building thereon soon after began. Here began the contention, sometimes characterized by good humor, sometimes by acrimony, and renewed from time to time through the following years between the Academy and its trustees. The cause of this contention lay in the constitution, which was defective in two points; first, in delegating to the trustees, a body of its own creation, sole authority in certain lines, thus depriving itself of supervision over the acts of its servants; and, second, of failure to define clearly the powers and limits of the two bodies. A dual government was thus inaugurated, destined to bring trouble and perplexity into the affairs of the Academy. The assets of the Academy at this time, as shown by the financial report, were \$72,000, with an annual income of \$6,500. In the meantime, however, it had suffered two irreparable losses. The first was in the death of Robert Kennicott, which occurred at Nulato, a Russian port on the Yukon river, May 13, 1866, while on a second expedition to the far north, which had been undertaken the previous summer. Following close upon this (June 7th) came a disastrous fire in the building containing the collections, by which a large portion were destroyed and the remainder badly damaged.

Notwithstanding these misfortunes, however, the years from 1864 to 1871 may be reckoned as the most prosperous years in the history of the Academy. Active investigations of much importance were being carried on in various lines, and the work of its active members attracted the attention of leading scientists throughout the country, many of whom were enrolled as corresponding members. In meteorology, observations were conducted under the special supervision of Dr. Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution. The work in natural history, which had received special impetus from the labors of Robert Kennicott, was continued under the able leadership of Dr. Stimpson, and the growth of the museum was remarkable. The library was in constant receipt of books and the publications of scientific associations of all countries, while the papers presented to the Academy were of a high order of merit.

The Academy building was completed in 1867, and the association immediately entered upon the publication of its proceedings, the first part of volume one being issued in 1868 and the second in 1870.

On the departure of Mr. Kennicott, in 1865, Dr. W. S. Stimpson, a young man of rare scholarship and excellent scientific attainments was called to act as director of the museum, to which duties were added those of the secretaryship. The Academy was especially fortunate in having at the helm in its early career two men of such eminent ability, energy, and devotion as Kennicott