SCIENCE

VOL. LVII JUNE 15, 1923 No. 1485

SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, publishing the official notices and proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKeen Cattell and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

100 Liberty St., Utica, N. Y. Garrison, N. Y.
New York City: Grand Central Terminal.

Annual Subscription, $6.00. **Single Copies, 15 Cts.**

Entered as second-class matter January 21, 1922, at the Post Office at Utica, N. Y., Under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS OF MUSEUM HISTORY[1]

WE have come together here to celebrate a dual anniversary—the anniversary of the founding of the Charleston Museum and the anniversary of the inception of the museum idea in the New World. That this idea has been a fruitful one is evidenced by the long roster of museums represented in this national association. It would be inappropriate for us to meet this year in any less historic place than Charleston.

In behalf of the American Association of Museums it is my duty and my privilege to pay homage to the broad vision of the founders of The Charleston Museum, to honor the city of Charleston for its steadfast preservation and nurture of the institution through the vicissitudes of a hundred and fifty years, and to congratulate the present generation of Charlestonians upon the youthful vigor of their venerable museum.

In behalf of the Charleston Museum it is but fitting that some of the more significant features of its history should be reviewed on its sesquicentennial anniversary.

The museum was founded in 1773 by the Charles-Town Library Society, to which belongs the credit of conceiving the museum idea, or at least of first giving it formal expression. This was done in a document so thoroughly worthy of the movement it initiated that I shall read it in full:

THE LIBRARY SOCIETY OF CHARLES-TOWN[2]

Taking into their consideration the many advantages and great credit that would result to this Province from a full and accurate Natural

[1] Address delivered at the anniversary session of the American Association of Museums, in its eighteenth annual meeting, held at Charleston, S. C., April 4, 1923.

[2] *South Carolina Gazette* (Powell's) of March 22 and April 5 and 12, 1773. *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* of March 30 and April 6, 1773.

History of the same, and being desirous to promote so useful a design, have appointed a committee of their number to collect and prepare materials for that purpose.

That this may be done in the most complete and extensive manner, *they do now invite* every gentleman who wishes well to the undertaking, especially those who reside in the country, to cooperate with them in the advancement of this plan. . . . For this purpose, the Society would request such gentlemen to procure and send to them all the natural productions, either animal, vegetable, or mineral, that can be had in their several bounds, with accounts of the various soils, rivers, waters, springs, etc., and the most remarkable appearances of the different parts of the country.

Of the animal tribe they would wish to have every species, whether terrestrial or aquatic, *viz.*, quadrupeds, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, worms, etc., with the best accounts of their customs and natural habitudes.

Of vegetables they will thankfully receive every kind, from the loftiest tree in the forest to the smallest plants of the fields. . . . A complete specimen of any tree or plant will be two small branches of each, one having the flower in full blossom and the other the ripe fruit. . . . At the same time the Society beg to be furnished with the best accounts that can be given of the uses and virtues, either in agriculture, commerce or medicine, of which such tree or plant is possessed —the soil in which it most commonly grows—the season in which it flowers and when it bears its fruit.

They would be glad to be furnished also with specimens of all the various fossils, minerals and ores, the different soils, earths, clays, marles, stones, sands, shells, etc., the productions of this Province, with the best accounts of their several natures, qualities, situations and uses.

The Society, in order that this design may be carried into immediate execution, have fitted up a museum for the reception and preservation of specimens of these several natural productions and have appointed Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and Thomas Heyward, Jun., esquires, with Alexander Baron and Peter Fayssoux, physicians, in *Charles-Town,* to receive them, to whom all letters of intelligence, specimens, etc., are to be addressed.

And they flatter themselves, that the evident utility of the plan will engage such a number of public spirited gentlemen to assist them that they will soon be able to make a considerable progress. . . . They will not only gratefully receive all such communications and apply them in the best manner they can for the above purposes, but the names of all such shall be recorded as promoters of and contributors to so useful a work.

Any expense that may be incurred by forwarding letters of intelligence, specimens, etc., to town the Society will cheerfully repay.

By order of the Committee,

JOHN MURRAY,
Chairman.

The purpose of a local museum could hardly be better expressed to-day and the importance of local collections needs to be stressed in all natural history museums.

In 1814 the Literary and Philosophical Society was incorporated in Charleston for the development of a greater museum. To this new body the Library Society, in 1815, generously transferred the museum, thus undoubtedly making possible a larger development than could have been expected of a subsidiary activity of the library.

In 1815 the state legislature and the city council "with a promptness and liberality which will forever redound to the credit,"[3] as the old record runs, made appropriations for the purchase of the extensive collections of Dr. Felix l'Herminier, who became the superintendent of the museum. This is the first record that I have found of the appropriation of money by a state legislature or a city council to any American museum.

During the next ten years the museum grew rapidly and acquired an astonishing popularity. In 1824 an editorial in the *Courier* says: "In these enlightened times, a public museum is as necessary an appendage to a city as a public newspaper or a public library."[4]

In 1826 the museum was "open every day from 9 o'clock and brilliantly illuminated every evening."[5] I think this period was one of the high spots in museum history.

In 1827, however, a movement to erect a building having failed, the Literary and Philosophical Society deposited the Museum with the new Medical College of the State of South

[3] Shecut, J. L. E. W., Medical and Philosophical Essays, Charleston, 1819.

[4] The *Courier,* November 23, 1824.

[5] The *City Gazette,* most of the issues of January, 1826. An advt.

Carolina, under whose auspices it was developed for more than twenty years.

In 1850 the American Association for the Advancement of Science held its third meeting in Charleston, and at the session of March 16, Louis Agassiz suggested the desirability of establishing a larger museum in Charleston about the nucleus of the museum of the Literary and Philosophical Society. This is apparently Agassiz's first effort in museum development and is particularly interesting as a prelude to his great work for the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Cambridge.

Interest developed rapidly and at a meeting of the board of trustees of the College of Charleston on March 28 (almost exactly the seventy-seventh anniversary of the founding of the museum) a proposal was favorably received looking to the use of rooms in the College of Charleston for the museum. This plan was formally approved by the trustees on July 15, 1850, and was communicated to the city council for endorsement, since the city was expected to defray the maintenance of the museum. The minutes of city council were destroyed during the Civil War, but the communication of the trustees of the college fortunately was printed in the Charleston *Courier* of July 19, 1850, and contains the following indications of the plans for the museum:

> The yearly regular expenses therefore may be estimated at about fifteen hundred dollars and it is believed that at present that amount can not be raised by private subscription and, under existing circumstances, could only be permanently provided by an annual appropriation by the city. It is confidently believed that such an appropriation would be amply compensated by the advantages which a well regulated and well sustained museum would bring to the city. It would aid greatly in exciting and rewarding a spirit of research and accurate inquiry among all our students of natural history. It would furnish us with new and accurate information of the changes which have taken place in the different accessible strata of our state and of the inhabitants in all departments of nature, by which these strata have been successfully occupied. It would assist the agriculturalist in studying the nature of his soil and suggest the means of stimulating its fertility.
>
> It would bring us into direct relations with the distinguished naturalists of this country and of Europe and be a point of attraction to them under favorable auspices and, maintained with that zeal and ability which it would surely deserve, it would be an ornament and an honor to the city and to the state.

The application of the trustees was favorably received by city council and on August 28, 1850, an "Ordinance to provide for the appointment of a curator for the museum of the College of Charleston"[6] was duly ratified.

The City of Charleston was thus the first municipality in America to enter into a permanent supporting relation to a museum. It has faithfully maintained that relation to the present time. Charleston's example has been widely followed by other cities, notably New York, and the principle is now recognized as an exemplary one.

Surviving the war between the states, the museum continued to grow through the devotion of its curators. It was, however, too much an adjunct of the college to fill the rapidly growing functions of a public museum in the early years of the present century.

The city council responded to a new program for the museum with a generosity and appreciation in keeping with its tradition, increased its appropriations, and in 1907 provided the present building.

In March, 1915, the Charleston Museum was incorporated in the one hundred forty-second year of its age. The city reaffirmed its partnership. The work of the museum was expanded and the interest of the people broadened and deepened. In 1919 Mr. William M. Bird, a trustee, bequeathed the nucleus of an endowment and the County of Charleston became a new partner, levying a one-quarter mill tax for the benefit of the museum.

The history of America's first museum is filled with originality, perseverance, vigor and high promise. The museum holds a conspicuous place in the life of Charleston. Under the able leadership of the director its attendance in 1922 was over 50,000. In a city of only 35,000 white population this is a record probably never before equalled.

Parallel with this development of the Charleston Museum there is a complex history of museums in other parts of the United States. We may appropriately sketch the outline of

[6] The *Courier*, August 31, 1850.

this broader movement as a background for the vision that must fill our minds of the future of museums.

I have referred to the Charleston Museum as the first expression of the museum idea. It does not seem probable that it was the pattern of the museums which sprang up in other parts of the country. Rather, we must conceive of the idea as developing more or less independently and under somewhat different auspices in widely scattered places. The second American museum was the Peale Museum of Philadelphia. Since this had but a brief history we need not dwell upon it. The second oldest museum in existence is the East India Marine Society Museum, now a part of the Peabody Museum at Salem, Massachusetts. This was founded in 1799 as a repository for the curiosities gathered by ship captains of Salem from distant parts of the world.

The first half of the Nineteenth Century gave rise to a number of museums in connection with both learned societies and colleges. Among those may be mentioned the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art (1805), Bowdoin College Art Museum (1811), Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (1812), Allegheny College Museum (1820), Boston Society of Natural History (1830), Wesleyan College Museum (1831), and the Portland Society of Natural History (1843). The beginning of the National Museum in 1846 marks the culmination in the museum development of the period.

The founding of science museums by colleges and learned societies was a natural expression of the interest of the time in descriptive natural history. The displacement of that interest by the biology of the succeeding half-century, with its emphasis upon laboratory study of morphology and embryology, is the fundamental reason for the large number of neglected and inactive college museums to-day. It is essential that we recognize that these museums filled a vital place in the life of their time. Their deterioration was the result of fundamentally changed conditions. They are largely responsible for the widespread popular concept of museums as static and somewhat dreary things. One of the tasks in which we are making progress is that of changing this concept in the minds of the people.

The greatest and most active museums of America to-day, with few exceptions, have originated within the past fifty years and have had their phenomenal development within twenty-five years. A few examples may be given: American Museum of Natural History (1869); Metropolitan Museum of Art (1870); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, (1870); New York State Museum (1870); Pennsylvania Museum (1876); Art Institute of Chicago (1879); Milwaukee Public Museums (1882); Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (1889); Field Museum of Natural History (1894); Worcester Art Museum (1896); John Herron Art Institute (1896); Carnegie Institute Museums (1896). Most of these museums are of a new type, being founded and supported either by private endowments or by municipal or state funds. There is a marked decrease in the number of new museums founded by colleges or by technical societies and museums are henceforth significant as public institutions.

The conception of museums as store-houses and research organizations, of interest principally to specialists, has been broadened to give equal importance to the interpretation of their subject matter to the public. This is the most significant advance in museum purposes and methods during the whole hundred and fifty years of museum history. It is making museums popular universities in a field of apparently endless possibilities.

SUMMARY

The Charleston Museum was the first museum in America. It was the first to take many of the most significant steps in the evolution of the museum idea. The same idea germinated, more or less independently, and expressed itself in somewhat different ways in other places. Four sources of support have been widely used: (1) learned societies; (2) schools, colleges and universities; (3) private endowments; (4) municipal, state or national funds. The first of these leads to museums of high technical value but not to the broader museum functions. The second is responsible for the largest number of existing museums, but this group functioned most fully during the Nineteenth Century and is to-day in a period of decline or eclipse. The third is the foundation of some of the largest and most influential

modern museums, but does not enlist the full support of the people if the endowment is drawn from a single individual. The fourth is a reasonably satisfactory source, but subject to the usual weaknesses of government activities. The most successful foundation for the modern museum, broadly speaking, seems to be the combination of private endowments from many sources for the creation of the museum and municipal support for its operating expenses—the Charleston plan.

About fifty per cent. of American museums are devoted exclusively, or chiefly, to natural history; about twenty-five per cent. to history, and about ten per cent. to art. Approximately thirty-eight per cent. of these museums derive their financial support from schools, colleges and universities; thirty-five per cent. from societies or associations; fifteen per cent. from city governments; seven per cent. from private individuals or endowments exclusively; four per cent. from state government, and one per cent. from the national government.

These statistics do not indicate the relative importance at the present time of the subjects treated by museums, or the importance attached to museums by the various organizations that support them. It is not those museums that reflect past conditions, but those that hold promise of future service that are most significant. The half century in which we live may be confidently expected to see the expansion of the museum ideas that germinated during the second half of the Nineteenth Century. It should be our goal and our determination to secure national recognition of the sentiment expressed ninety-nine years ago in the editorial in the Charleston *Courier,* previously quoted: "A public museum is as necessary an appendage to a city as a public newspaper or a public library."

PAUL M. REA

CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

FIELD EXPLORATIONS OF THE AMERICAN MUSEUM DURING THE YEAR 1922

THE American Museum of Natural History, deeply concerned with the rapid disappearance of the natural life and beauty of the world, among both the native races of men and the mammals of land and sea, is pushing exploration very hard at the present time, especially in Africa, Australia, southern and northern Asia and Polynesia. In the fifty-fourth annual report, issued May first, there is set forth a statement and summary of the scientific achievements and expenditures of the museum during the year 1922 which is recast in condensed form for the readers of SCIENCE.

These expeditions of 1922 represent an expenditure of more than a half million dollars for purely scientific work and about a half million for the extension of the results to educational institutions of the city and country; they represent 194,475 miles of travel during the single year; above all, they represent devotion and self-sacrifice in the interests of the museum on the part of the explorers and collectors which are beyond all praise. The work was made possible through extreme generosity on the part of members and friends of the museum, who in some instances financed the entire cost of an expedition and in others supplemented the funds of the museum which are devoted to this work.

The Third Asiatic Expedition, now in its third year, started in the spring of 1921 under the leadership of Roy Chapman Andrews, and results obtained thus far have exceeded expectations. In April of 1922 the expedition left Kalgan for Mongolia to continue work in zoology, geology, paleontology and geography as far as Urga, westward to the eastern extension of the Altai and Tian Shan Mountains and south to the frontier of Chinese Turkestan, a region including the most arid section of the Gobi Desert and rolling meadow-lands and foothills at the base of high mountains, some of which are covered with perpetual snow. On the way to Urga, about 260 miles northwest of Kalgan, fossil remains comparable to fossils found in Wyoming were unearthed—an epoch-making discovery because it throws light on the migration of animal life from Europe to America *via* Asia. While the fossil hunters were studying these beds, leader Andrews and the zoological branch pushed on to Urga and completed arrangements for the journey west of Urga into the region which was to occupy them for the summer.

In India two parties are enthusiastically