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West American Scientist

V. 12 no. 8 (whole no. 109)

Jan. 1902



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# The West American Scientist.

Vol. XII. No. 8.

January, 1902.

Whole No. 109.

Established 1884.

THE WEST AMERICAN SCIENTIST.

Published monthly.

Price 10c a copy; \$1 a year; \$10 for life.

Charles Russell Orcutt, Editor.

Number 365 Twenty-first Street,  
San Diego, California, U. S. A.

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## SAN DIEGO SOCIETY OF NATURAL HISTORY.

On the first day of October, A. D. 1874, Dr. George W. Barnes, Charles Coleman, Jr., (principal of the public school), J. B. Wells (local observer of the U. S. Signal Service), Charles J. Fox, L. L. Roberts, W. F. Allen, O. N. Sanford, L. E. Wilson, George W. Marston, E. W. Hendrick and Daniel Cleveland, met at Mr. Cleveland's office in this city and effected the preliminary organization of the San Diego Society of Natural History. Of these eleven persons, the first four have died, the next four have removed from this county, while the last three of them still reside here. Articles of incorporation were filed October 14, 1874. On the 2d of November, 1874, the permanent organization was effected by the election of the following officers: President, Dr. Gorge W. Barnes; vice-president, Daniel Cleveland; secretary, E. W. Hendrick, and treasurer, O. N. Sanford. Dr. Barnes held the office of president until his resignation was presented, because of failing health, about one year before his death, in February, 1890. He was succeeded by Daniel Cleveland, who has been president ever since, with the exception of the years 1892-3, when the Rev. B. F. McDaniel, now of Newton, Mass., was the incumbent.

The object of the society, as declared

in its constitution, is "the study of nature, the acquirement and diffusion of scientific knowledge, and the collection and preservation of materials pertaining thereto."

To this purpose the society has ever remained true, during the twenty-seven years of its existence, and it is believed that this association is the first scientific society organized in this state south of San Francisco. During its first year, meetings were held weekly, and were always well attended. Thereafter, the meetings, held once a month, were interesting and successful. About 1889, however, interest in the society seemed to abate somewhat, and for some years meetings were not regularly held. It is hoped that the time has now come when the regular meetings and work of the society can be successfully resumed.

In this brief article upon the society only a small portion of its work, and a few items of special interest connected with it, can be mentioned. At one of the first regular meetings of the society—Nov. 9, 1874—contributions of scientific material—biological and literary—began to flow in, and have continued, until the society has now amassed a considerable museum and library. Unfortunately, as the society possesses no building of its own, this material is packed away where it is not accessible. As early as July, 1875, the society, at the request of Gen. Myer, Chief Signal Officer, U. S. A., appointed a local meteorological committee to co-operate with him. Later in the year, this committee, aided by an appropriation of \$100, granted by the county board of supervisors, established at different

points in the interior of this county ten weather stations, equipped with all the necessary instruments, blanks and books for observing, reporting and recording meteorological conditions. Resident volunteer observers were secured for all the stations, who reported to the society, which, in turn, reported to the chief signal officer. Stations were thus established at Banner, Campo, El Cajon, Julian, Pine Valley, Poway, San Pasqual, Stonewall mine, in the Cuyamaca valley, and at Temecula, and were maintained—according to the good faith and perseverance of the observer—for periods ranging from one to ten years. The meteorological data thus obtained by the society is interesting and valuable.

In this connection, attention may be called to a few interesting "weather" items contained in the records of the society. On the 12th of March, 1876, J. S. Harbison reported to the society that "while certain curious clouds were visible, the atmosphere had qualities unfavorable to honey making. Dr. Barnes thought that northerly winds contained more electricity, and may have some effect in this way. Mr. Harbison stated further that while these 'curious clouds' were present horses seemed to be nervous. Doctors had observed at such time unusual nervousness in their patients." On Sept. 7, 1877, it was stated by the meteorological committee that "settlers regarded this season—1876-7—as the dryest year they have known in San Diego county, as is indicated by the drying up of the lagoons, streams, springs, etc.; the limited rainfall of the season (amounting to only 3.63 inches), and the rapidity of evaporation caused by the unusual heat, and the drying (north) winds." Nov. 2, 1877, "C. J. Fox called attention to the unusually early precipitation of snow on the Cuyamaca mountains, which occurred October 29, 1877." Brilliant meteors were observed here Nov. 30, 1877. Dr. Barnes reported that in the fourteen months during which the sunset observations of the sky had been made at San Diego, 86 per cent of the forecasts of the anticipated weather for the succeeding twenty-four hours had been verified. Dec. 6, 1878, Dr. Barnes

reported upon the heat wave of September, 1878. March 3, 1897, Ford A. Carpenter, local weather observer, reported that "so far at least as the United States is concerned, San Diego has a unique record in the amount of sunshine in the winter months, and throughout the year—the amount of sunshine being relatively very great during the winter months—when it is needed—and small during the summer months, when it would be objectionable."

Oct. 11, 1879 the meteorological committee reported successful tests for ozone made at the San Diego and Campo weather stations for September, 1879.

The old bronze cannon, "El Jupiter," cast at Manila in 1798, was brought from Old San Diego in November, 1876, to celebrate the supposed election of Samuel J. Tilden to the presidency, over Gen. R. B. Hays. In December, 1880, some mischievous boys filled the gun with mud and fired it at night, hoping to make a great noise, in which they succeeded, bursting the cannon and almost killing one of the boys at the same time. The fragments of the gun were collected by Robert Bailey for his museum. On January 7, 1881, the citizens of "Old Town," who claimed to be the owners of the gun, donated it in writing to the society, and the board of city trustees confirmed this action. Mr. Bailey surrendered the gun to the society, which had the pieces put together. Jan. 17, 1882, the board of city trustees presented to the society, from the city archives, a letter written in 1850 by Capt. J. Hayden, U. S. A., to J. H. Bean, then alcalde of San Diego, relating to the history of this old cannon. May 13, 1898, "El Jupiter" was placed on exhibition at the chamber of commerce, where it now is.

May 7, 1880, a fine specimen of the California vulture (*Cathartes Californianus*), which had long been shot in the Cuyamaca mountains, was presented to the society. It measured ten (10) feet across the wings. Unfortunately, this very valuable skin was not preserved, as there was then no taxidermist at San Diego.

Jan. 17, 1882, Theodore L. Rogers, vice-

president of the California Southern Railway company, donated to the society the first passenger ticket issued by said company.

March 10, 1882, D. Cleveland exhibited a specimen of *Ophloglossum*, recently named *O. Californicum*—a new species—which was collected at San Diego in 1850 by Dr. C. C. Parry, then botanist of the Mexican Boundary Commission. The plant was lost, with others, in transmission to the east, and not seen again until it was rediscovered here, a few days before by Dr. Parry and Mr. Cleveland. Nov. 2, 1883, Mrs. Z. Cronyn reported that some tubers of the common potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) which had been collected by J. G. Lemmon, among the indigenous plants of the Chiricahua mountains of Arizona, were planted by her and had yielded a good crop of tubers of increased size. This is, perhaps, the first discovery of the potato as indigenous to North America. It is generally regarded as a South American plant, naturalized in North America and Europe.

Nov. 2, 1883, Mr. Cleveland presented a written communication upon *Pinus Torreyana*, growing in Soledad canyon. A committee was appointed to take measures to protect this rare tree. August 7, 1883, Joseph Surr reported that, at the request of this committee, the county board of supervisors, and the board of city trustees had each passed ordinances offering a reward of \$100 for the arrest and conviction of any person who should cut, destroy, or injure any of these trees. This action stopped the cutting down and sale of said trees for fire wood, which at one time threatened the destruction of the whole grove.

July 24, 1899, the common council of the city of San Diego, by ordinance, reserved the land—about 369 acres—upon which these trees are standing, as a public park, designating it as "Torrey Pine Park." The park contains about 2,700 trees, and is located about twenty miles north of the city center, though within the municipal limits.

Oct. 2, 1884, on motion of John G. Capron, it was resolved that the United States congress be petitioned to grant to this society sections 12, 13 and 14 on

San Miguel mountain for an astronomical observatory. The petition was sent, prominent senators and representatives became favorably interested in the project, and at one time it seemed as though the grant would be made.

In March, 1887, E. W. Morse and Mary C. Morse, his wife, donated to the society, lot I in block 18 of Horton's addition, upon which Unity hall now stands, under a lease from this society. The society pledged itself to erect a building upon the lot for the use of the society, as soon as practicable.

Aug. 26, 1887, Henry Hemphill donated a large collection of shells to the society.

In the winter of 1892-3 the chamber of commerce undertook the preparation of an exhibit of fishes, in alcohol—the property of this society—for the Columbian exposition at Chicago in 1893.

Dec. 10, 1897, E. W. Morse reported the successful grafting, at Alpine, in this county, of the eastern chestnut upon the common oak.

Many scientific papers have been presented, and many interesting lectures and addresses have been made to the society. Some of these have been of much more than local and transient interest and value. At present the society meets monthly at the house of some member. Papers are presented and addresses made upon some scientific subject (often one of special local interest), announced the previous month. The December, 1901, meeting was held at the residence of Miss Lena Polhamus, and the subject discussed was the marine life of San Diego waters.

The society begins the year 1902 out of debt, with a respectable cash balance in the treasury, and owns a valuable building lot centrally located, upon which, it is hoped, a building for the society will be erected in the near future.

The present officers of the society are: President, Daniel Cleveland; vice-president, Mrs. Harriet Phillips; secretary, Will H. Holcomb, and treasurer, Theodore Fintzelberg.

DANIEL CLEVELAND.

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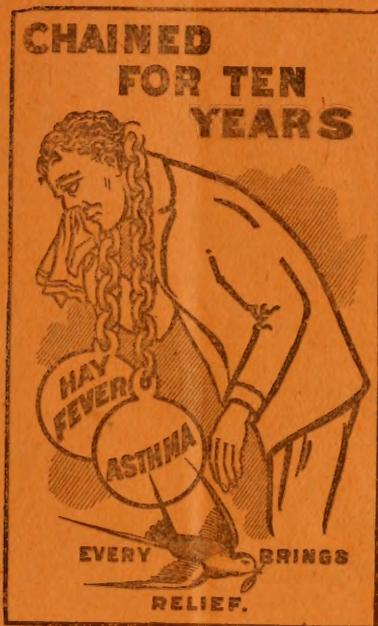
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V. 12 no. 8 (whole no. 109)

Jan. 1902

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