

**A HISTORY OF THE
ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM
OF NATURAL HISTORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649165629

A history of the Illinois state museum of natural history by A. R. Crook

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BY

A. R. Crook

JUNE, 1907



SPRINGFIELD, ILL.:
Phillips Bros., State Printers.
1907

MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY:

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HISTORY OF THE ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

(A paper presented at the Pittsburgh Meeting of the American Association of Museums.)

PREFACE.

The work of bringing the following material together has not been done in the spirit of idle inquiry into things of small moment but for the purpose of learning of events which have had valuable results.

There is a dearth of records concerning the Museum. For long periods of years no catalogues were made. The catalogues that were begun within the last thirty years have not been made complete. But few curator's reports have ever been published.

The facts presented have been found in the "State Laws," "Geological Survey Reports," in two "Curator's Reports," in letters and from conversation with people acquainted with the institution.

If the history of a dozen or more like institutions in the country were written there would doubtless be presented facts which would be of valuable service to those institutions and render them more capable of efficiently carrying out the purpose of their foundation.

A. R. CROOK.

June 12, 1907.



J. G. NORWOOD.

HISTORY OF THE ILLINOIS STATE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

The existence of the Illinois State Museum of Natural History, may be said to begin with the enactment of a law in February, 1851, establishing a State Geological Survey. The 4th section of the law reads:

"It shall be the duty of said geologist to procure and preserve a full and entire suit of the different specimens found in the State and cause them to be delivered to the Secretary of State, who shall cause them to be properly arranged in a cabinet, and deposited in some apartment in, or convenient to, the capitol. Said suit shall be sufficiently large to furnish specimens to all institutions of learning within the State, empowered to confer degrees in the arts and sciences."*

Thus the history of the Museum covers a period of fifty-six years. At first it was conducted as a part of the geological survey, but for the last thirty years as an independent institution, although by the law of 1877, which established the Museum upon a separate basis, it was provided that the curator "perform the Acts which are or may be required by law of the State Geologist."†

Geology was the science that led to the establishment of the Museum and that caused its vigorous growth. The other sciences such as zoology, botany and archaeology have been secondary, chronologically and materially. But in later years their importance has increased.

The first man to be chosen as State Geologist, was a doctor of medicine, J. G. Norwood,‡ a native of Indiana, who was thought by the committee to meet the requirements of the law to the effect that the appointee be a "geologist of known integrity and practical skill."

Dr. Norwood had been assistant geologist under D. D. Owen, on a geological survey of Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and had just written a report which was his most extensive work either before or after that time. It covered 205 quarto pages, was illustrated with drawings and plates, and gave a description of the geology of a portion

* The clause providing for the delivery of the specimens to the Secretary of State, "who shall cause them to be properly arranged in a cabinet," seems never to have been carried out inasmuch as the first two State Geologists took charge of the materials and later curators were appointed.

† Laws of Illinois, 1877, section 5, p. 15.

‡ Dr. Norwood's son, Prof. C. J. Norwood, is at present State Geologist of Kentucky.

of Minnesota and of the western shores of Lake Superior. Previous to that time he had published a geological report on Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin (54 pages), and a description of an Echinoderm (3 pages).

In '55 he published three articles (34 pp.) on fossils and in '57 an "Abstract of Report on Illinois Coal," with geological map of Illinois. (106 pp.)

For full list see below.*

Norwood began his work July 29, 1851, and in the fall of the year employed two young men as assistants. One of them, Anthony Varner, died shortly after; but the other, A. H. Worthen, was connected with the work for many years, and at his death was one of the most widely known geologists in the State.

Norwood considered it to be of prime importance to assemble materials with which to work, and for this end began to form a museum. He says, "a rich and extensive collection of minerals and organic remains was made during that season (1851) and the ensuing winter was devoted to arranging them."†

Collecting was continued so vigorously in '52 that in '53, Norwood says (*ibid* p. 12): "The collection of rocks, minerals and organic remains made for the State is large and valuable. For the magnificent collection of fossils made during the survey, it is particularly indebted to Mr. Worthen, whose industry and zeal cannot be too highly praised."

In confirmation of his opinion that as far as carboniferous fossils are concerned the collection is 'unequaled in this country,' Norwood presents a letter‡ from D. D. Owen,§ dated New Harmony, Indiana, Jan. 19, 1853, in which Owen says:

"Respecting the collections made on the Illinois Survey, which I have inspected, I have to state that I consider it the finest collection ever made in the same length of time, on any survey that has come within my notice. * * * The collection is both rich in minerals and fossils; some of rare beauty and perfection * * *"

* 1846. J. G. Norwood and D. D. Owen. Description of Echinoderm from St. Louis.

Am. Jour. Science (2) Vol. II, p. 225-8.

1847—and Owen, D. D. Researches among the Protzoic and Carboniferous rocks of Central Kentucky, etc.

Abstract Am. Jour. Science, 2d series, Vol. 5, pp. 268-269.

1848—and Owen, D. D. (Devonian fossils near the falls of the Ohio.)

Boston Soc. Nat. Hist. Proc. Vol. 2, p. 116.

Norwood, J. G. Report of a Geological Reconnaissance of Chippewa, Wisconsin; pp. 73-129, 30th Cong., 1st Sess., Senate Ex. Doc. No. 57, Washington.

1852. Geology of Minnesota and Shores of Lake Superior; Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota, by D. D. Owen, pp. 213-418, plates, Philadelphia.

1855. J. G. Norwood and H. Pratten. Notice of Products in Western States.

Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci., Philadelphia. (2) Vol. III, pp. 5-22.

Notice of Chonetes.

Journal Acad. Nat. Sci., Philadelphia, Vol. I, p. 23-32.

Notice of Fossils from Carboniferous.

Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci., Philadelphia, Vol. III, pp. 71-77.

1857. Abstract of a report on Illinois coal, 93 pages, 5 plates, map, Chicago, Illinois Geol. Survey.

1860. Discovery of Permian Rocks at LaSalle, Ill.

St. Louis Acad. Sci. Trans., Vol. I, pp. 115-116.

1866. Norwood, J. G. Report on Rosiclare lead mines Geo. Sur. Ill., Vol. I, pp. 366-372, plates, Chicago.

1874. Abstract of notes on Madison county. Geo. Sur. Missouri, report 1873-74, Vol. I, pp. 371-379, Jefferson City.

† Norwood, "Report of Progress of the State Geological Survey," 1858, p. 6.

‡ *Ibid*.

§ D. D. Owen, the well known author of many geological papers; geologist on Indiana survey, 1837-45; on survey of Wis., Minn. and Iowa, 1848; State Geologist Ark., 1857.