



O. H. Gordon

MEMORIAL OF CHARLES HENRY GORDON

BY GEORGE MARTIN HALL

Charles Henry Gordon was born in Caledonia, New York, May 10, 1857, and died in his home in Anna Maria, Florida, on June 12, 1934. His parents, John and Ann (McKinnon) Gordon were descendants of Scotch people who had emigrated to New York. Later the family moved to Michigan. After a public school training he entered Albion College, where the Bachelor of Science degree was conferred upon him in 1886 and the Master of Science degree in 1890.

Immediately upon receiving his bachelor's degree he entered the field of public education as a high school instructor and school principal in Keokuk, Iowa, where he remained until 1890. The next three years (1890-1893) were spent as an Instructor in Natural History in the Academy of Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In August of 1893 he was elected to Fellowship in the Geological Society of America.

While he was at Evanston, the department of geology of the University of Chicago was being formed and the opportunity for additional training attracted him so strongly that he forsook his teaching, temporarily, in the fall of 1893, and entered the newly formed department. In 1895 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the first to be conferred in geology by the University of Chicago.

After obtaining his degree he became superintendent of schools in Beloit, Wisconsin, where he remained until the spring of 1897, when again he interrupted his teaching career to travel and study abroad. A large portion of his time was spent in the laboratory of Victor Goldschmidt at Heidelberg. The great crystallographer made a deep and lasting impression upon him, as shown in his reference in later years to his sojourn in Goldschmidt's laboratory.

Upon returning to America in 1898, some time was spent in field work, but in 1899 he became superintendent of schools in Lincoln, Nebraska, where he remained until 1903. Although this was his last official connection with secondary education he maintained a lively interest in it throughout his life. He was particularly interested in improving the preparation for college entrance.

While at Lincoln he became active in university instruction as lecturer in education and geology in the University of Nebraska. This lectureship evidently drew his interests to university work, which was to be his major endeavor for the larger part of the remainder of his long career. During 1903-1904 he was Acting Professor in Geology in the University of Washington at Seattle; during 1904-1905, Professor of Geology and Mineralogy in the New Mexico School of Mines at Socorro. In 1907, after an interval of two years spent in field work on the United States Geological Survey, he returned again to the teaching field as Professor of Geology and Mineralogy in the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, where he remained until he became Professor Emeritus in 1931, because of failing health. Due to his broad training, wide experience, and strength of character he became one of the leading spirits on the campus. His vision, with that of other far-seeing members of the faculty, aided in the plans which enabled the university to expand from a small school to a widespread university serving the entire State. His influence with the students was so wholesome that they still cherish the hours spent in his class rooms and laboratories.

Active field work appealed to him, and when not connected with some official survey he was always working on a project of his own. As soon as he went to Iowa he began work on the Paleozoic rocks of the eastern part of the State. During 1890-1892 he was connected with the Missouri Geological Survey; 1893-1895 with the Iowa Survey; and 1898-1899 with the Michigan Survey. From 1905-1912 he was a member of the staff of the United States Geological Survey. With such a background of survey experience when he came to Tennessee, he became active in the movement to revive the Tennessee Geological Survey. Due largely to his activity it was revived in 1910 with George Hall Ashley, now State Geologist of Pennsylvania, as State Geologist and L. C. Glenn, of Vanderbilt University, and himself as Associate State Geologists. This official position was terminated in 1913, but he continued working for the State Survey on a part time basis until 1928, when ill health forced him to give up his beloved work.

It is almost impossible for one to discuss adequately his influence in civic affairs in Knoxville. He was active in numerous organizations, committees, and clubs for the betterment of life. He had a genuine love for his fellow man and gave generously of his time and energy to the welfare of mankind. No civic movement was complete without him. He was active in trying to establish local scientific societies and succeeded in organizing the Knoxville Geographical Society, which unfortunately had

a very brief existence. In 1910 he was chief of the Section of Mines and Minerals of the Appalachian Exposition at Knoxville. He was one of the leading spirits in the organization of the Knoxville Technical Society, a noon luncheon group composed of those interested in the several fields of pure and applied science. At a later date he was president of the organization. In 1912 the Tennessee Academy of Science was founded at Nashville, and although he had been in the State less than five years he was elected the first president and helped formulate the policies under which the organization continues to function. In 1913 he was in charge of the geological exhibits of the National Conservation Exhibition in Knoxville. He was active Rotarian for many years, resigning in 1928, when his health became impaired. Although he went to Anna Maria on account of his failing health and for a long needed rest, as soon as his condition improved he became interested in the community life and was elected vice mayor of the town.

He took an active part in fraternal organizations and was a member of Delta Tau Delta, Sigma Xi, the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi. He was made a Mason in 1901 and a member of the Shrine in 1905. Elected to membership in the Tennessee chapter of the Phi Kappa Phi in 1908, he was made Treasurer-General of the Society in 1912. In 1923 when the position was consolidated with the office of Secretary-General, he was elected to the new office, which he filled with honor until his death. He was a most active leader in the Society, and under his skillful guidance it increased in both membership and influence. When he was made Professor Emeritus in 1931 and moved to Anna Maria, Florida, permanently, he established his office there and continued to direct the work, except for brief periods of illness, until his death. It was due to his deep interest in Phi Kappa Phi, which meets at the same time and place as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, that he was rarely at the meetings of the Geological Society of America in recent years.

Always a religious man, he was very active in church work. During the last fifteen or twenty years of his residence in Knoxville he was a member of the Second Presbyterian Church, and was a guiding spirit in religious and welfare work.

On June 22, 1887, he married Mary E. Hydorn, who survives him. To this union were born three daughters, Irene Hydorn (Mrs. Ashton Gaskill); Helen Garnett (Mrs. Don Carlos Ellis) and Isabel (Mrs. Hugh Sevier Carter). Mrs. Gordon collaborated most actively with him in his many activities.

Although he was in poor health during the spring of 1934, it was thought

that he might regain his strength sufficiently to continue his office work, but he slowly weakened and died on June 12. His body was returned to Michigan and interred in the family lot at Middleville.

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