

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Bulletin of the University of Nebraska State
Museum

Museum, University of Nebraska State


1924

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE NEBRASKA STATE MUSEUM

Erwin H. Barbour

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/museumbulletin>

 Part of the [Entomology Commons](#), [Geology Commons](#), [Geomorphology Commons](#), [Other Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Commons](#), [Paleobiology Commons](#), [Paleontology Commons](#), and the [Sedimentology Commons](#)

Barbour, Erwin H., "A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE NEBRASKA STATE MUSEUM" (1924). *Bulletin of the University of Nebraska State Museum*. 17.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/museumbulletin/17>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Museum, University of Nebraska State at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bulletin of the University of Nebraska State Museum by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

BULLETIN 1

VOLUME 1

DECEMBER, 1924

THE NEBRASKA STATE MUSEUM

ERWIN H. BARBOUR, *Director*



A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE
NEBRASKA STATE MUSEUM

By ERWIN H. BARBOUR

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

U. S. A.

THE BOARD OF REGENTS

MEMBERS	TERM EXPIRES
FRANK WOODHULL JUDSON, <i>President</i> , Omaha.....	1925
JOHN ROBINSON WEBSTER, Omaha.....	1925
GEORGE N. SEYMOUR, Elgin.....	1927
FRANK J. TAYLOR, St. Paul.....	1927
HARRY DEWITT LANDIS, Seward.....	1929
WILLIAM P. WARNER, Dakota City.....	1929
JAMES STUART DALES, <i>Corporation Secretary</i>	

CHANCELLOR

SAMUEL AVERY, Ph. D., LL. D., *Chancellor and President of the Senate*

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE NEBRASKA STATE MUSEUM

The Nebraska State Museum has been established a sufficient number of years to make it widely known throughout the state, both by reputation and by personal visits. Incident to a growing clientele and an expanding correspondence, it is expedient that a concise circular letter be issued in bulletin form. Such a pamphlet can be promptly forwarded to inquirers and will offer obvious advantages over individual replies.

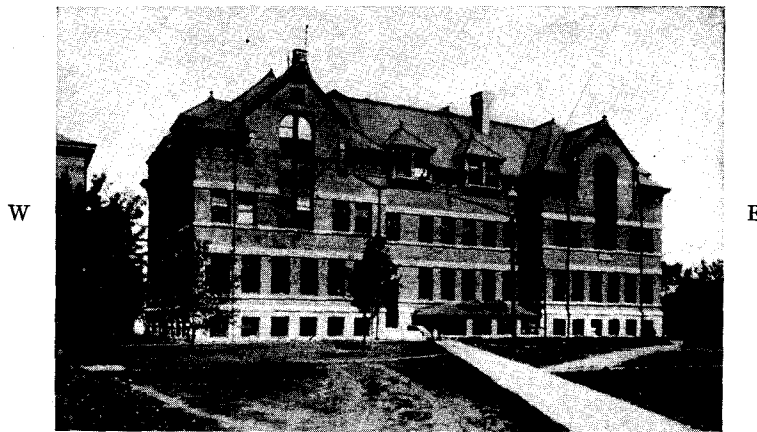


Fig. 1. Nebraska Hall, in which the second and third floors of the east wing were occupied by the Nebraska State Museum until 1907 at which time the Museum was removed to its present quarters.

HISTORICAL

In 1888, when Nebraska Hall was built, space was reserved on the second and third floors for the Nebraska State Museum. For several years the Museum consisted essentially of bare floors and empty cases; even as late as 1891, Chancellor James

THE NEBRASKA STATE MUSEUM

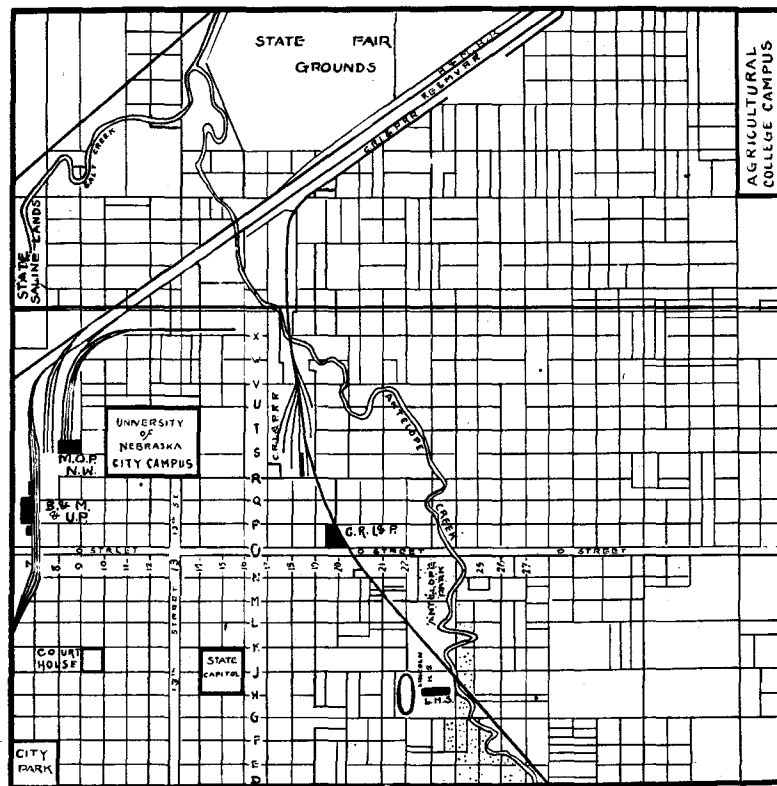


Fig. 2. A map showing the campus of the University of Nebraska in relation to the railway stations and various State institutions in the city. The Nebraska State Museum is in the center of the University campus and is but four blocks from O street, the business center of Lincoln.

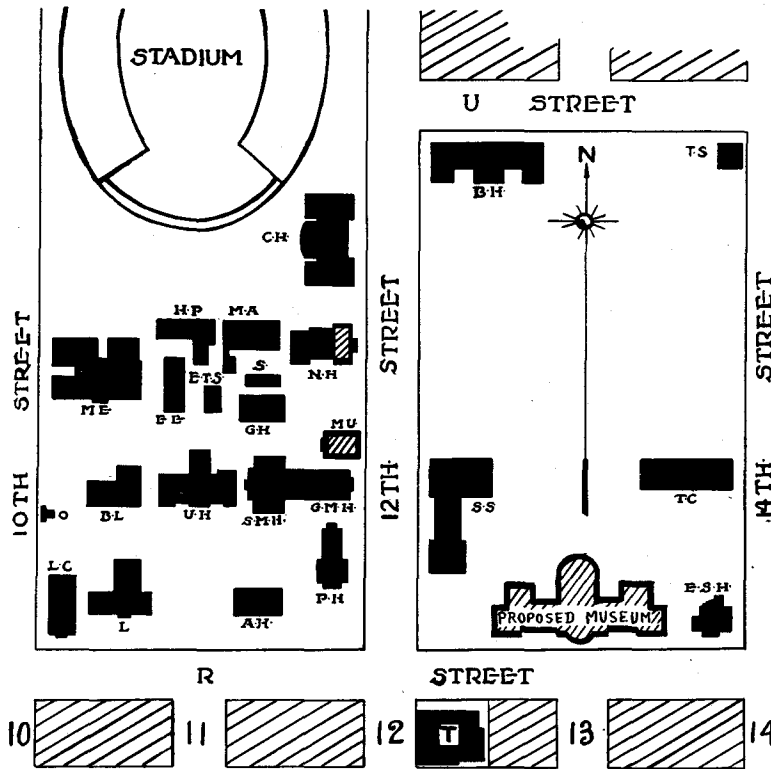


Fig. 3. City Campus of the University of Nebraska, showing at N. H. the old Museum, at MU. the present Museum, and the proposed Museum at the intersection of 13th and R streets.

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. H. Administration Hall | M. E. Mechanical Engineering |
| B. H. Bessey Hall | Mu. Museum |
| B. L. Brace Laboratory | N. H. Nebraska Hall |
| C. H. Chemistry Hall | O. Observatory |
| E. E. Electrical Engineering | P. H. Pharmacy Hall |
| E. S. H. Ellen Smith Hall | S. S. Social Science |
| G. M. H. Grant Memorial Hall | S. H. H. Soldiers' Memorial Hall |
| G. H. Greenhouse | S. Studio |
| H. P. Heat and Power Plant | T. C. Teachers' College |
| L. C. Law College | T. Temple |
| L. Library | T. S. Trade School |
| M. A. Mechanic Arts | U. H. University Hall |

H. Canfield in a public address proclaimed facetiously that the museum of that time comprised the mounted skeletons of the domestic cow and horse. They at least were the most prominent objects on display. But in addition there were certain collections of invertebrate fossils secured by Dr. Samuel Aughey, and those procured later by Dr. Lewis E. Hicks. There was a set of Permian fossils from Gage County collected by Dr. Wilbur Knight, when a student in the University of Nebraska. There were a few alcoholic specimens and certain excellent dissections prepared by Dr. J. S. Kingsley and his students. A set of Nebraska birds, secured and mounted by Professor Lawrence Bruner, was plainly the outstanding exhibit. Aside from these the vertebrates were scarcely represented. In June 1874 Professor Samuel Aughey was appointed Director of Cabinets. He was followed by Professor Lewis E. Hicks who was appointed June 1885. The present incumbent, the writer, has served since 1891, although formal appointment as Director dates from April 1893.

All field and collecting expenses for the years 1891, 1892, and half of 1893, were borne privately by the Director, but in July of 1893, encouragement and impetus were given, especially to palaeontological research, by the liberal financial support of Hon. Charles H. Morrill, the first patron of the Nebraska State Museum. By the end of the third year, 1893, the Museum was so congested and overloaded that the floors sagged and the south wall was sprung to the point where it was necessary to tear it down to the foundation and rebuild it, necessitating the boxing and removal of such material as would bear storing. Many such boxes have stood unopened since 1893, while in the meantime hundreds of others have been added.

THE PRESENT MUSEUM

Plans for a new museum were drafted by Mr. Thomas R. Kimball, of Omaha. Ground was broken February, 1907, and the building was formally opened to the public on Feb-

ruary 14, 1908. On the night of March 6, 1912, a fire of undetermined origin, burned out the heavy oak stairway on the four floors, doing damage to all parts of the building and its contents. Everything was flooded, not a pane of glass remained intact. Everything had to be refinished, all glass replaced, the specimens cleaned and rearranged, and all labels rewritten, which entailed a serious loss of time, energy, and materials. The burned stairway was replaced by iron so as to preclude a recurrence.

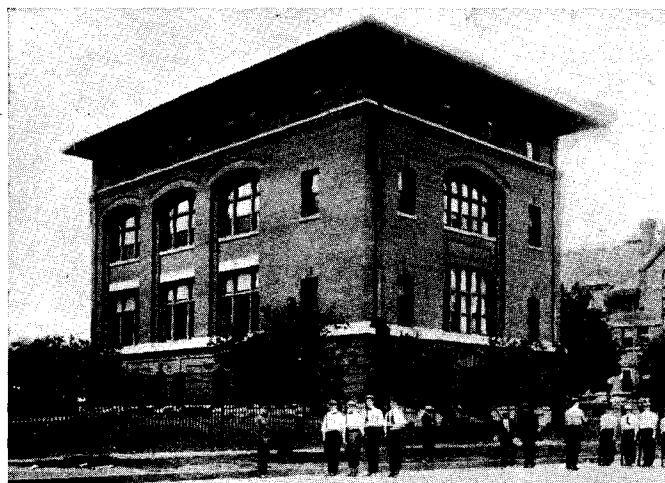


Fig. 4. The east half of the unfinished wing of the Nebraska State Museum building.

The Nebraska State Museum occupies a central position on the old campus just north of Grant Memorial Hall. It is a four-story brick building of fireproof construction, 75 feet long by 50 feet wide. The portion completed represents the first half of the first wing, for according to the plans of the architect, the building was to have been a large one covering the northeast corner of the original campus, and was to have been built by units as growth demanded. It was planned to house not only the Museum but the department of Geology

and Geography, the Geological Library, and related departments needing quarters. The rooms now occupied as offices and laboratories were intended for research students. The laboratories and lecture rooms were to have been in the west wing when completed.

The rapid growth of the University has forced many changes and the architect recently appointed to draft plans for the greatly enlarged campus and university finds it expedient to preempt the present museum site. Ultimately then, the building will be razed to make an open court.

In the plans published by the Board of Regents it will be seen that a site for the proposed new Museum has been selected on the enlarged campus at the intersection of Thirteenth and R streets (Fig. 3). The inadequacy of the present building is the more apparent when it is known that three or four times as much material is stored in attics, cellars, steam tunnels, and in downtown storerooms as is on exhibition, and that the cases are so close together that there is little more than room to pass between them. In many instances there is insufficient room between cases to admit of opening the doors, which must be taken from their hinges to get at the material. The congestion entails many hardships, denials, and losses. Beauty and permanence of installation, systematic arrangement, and classification are rendered nearly impractical, if not impossible. Active and aggressive field work must be repressed and the acceptance of large private and public donations must be deferred, and thereby often lost. Gifts of material and liberal sums of money have been forfeited because conditioned upon ample exhibition space, and a strictly fireproof building.

OFFICE HOURS AND ADMISSION

The Museum is open to the public without charge on week days from eight A. M. to six P. M., and on Sundays from two until five P. M. On request, individuals, groups, clubs, and schools are received in the Museum lecture room, are

addressed concerning the objects on display, and are then given personal escort through the building. This plan seems to have met with considerable response.

DIRECTORY OF THE FIRST FLOOR

On entering the vestibule the visitor sees displayed upon the walls various maps and daily forecasts of the Weather Bureau, photographic reproductions of cloud forms, charts of the mean annual temperature of the State, average annual precipitation, average dates of killing frosts of spring and of autumn, and the like.

On entering the building itself the visitor faces three large panel mounts, each 9 by 15 feet. The first represents the two-horned fossil rhinoceros, *Diceratherium*, and its environment. The specimens in the group belong to the collections of Mr. Charles H. Morrill. Next is a similar habitat group of giant fossil tortoises of the state, belonging to the collections of Mr. Hector Maiben. Adjoining it is a group of the Sioux County *Moropus*, a strange fossil mammal from Agate, Nebraska, having large claw-shaped hoofs. The bone layer from which it was taken is represented artificially, and an actual bone slab is imbedded in the foreground. The skeleton of this group was donated by the American Museum of Natural History through Professor Henry Fairfield Osborn. In proximity are displayed three type skulls of *Tetrabelodon*, the early four-tusked "mastodon," and certain bones, horns, and replicas of famous dinosaurs. One part has been set aside as a museum for children and here is installed in low cabinets certain invertebrates, birds, nests, eggs, mammals, reptiles, and products of first interest to children.

Against the north wall is a cross section of the Oregon pine, *Pseudotsuga*, computed to be five hundred and twenty-five years old, with growth rings dated historically, showing the size of the tree when America was discovered, etc. By the stairs is a special case of winged frames in which is mounted a complete set of aeronautical photographs by Col.

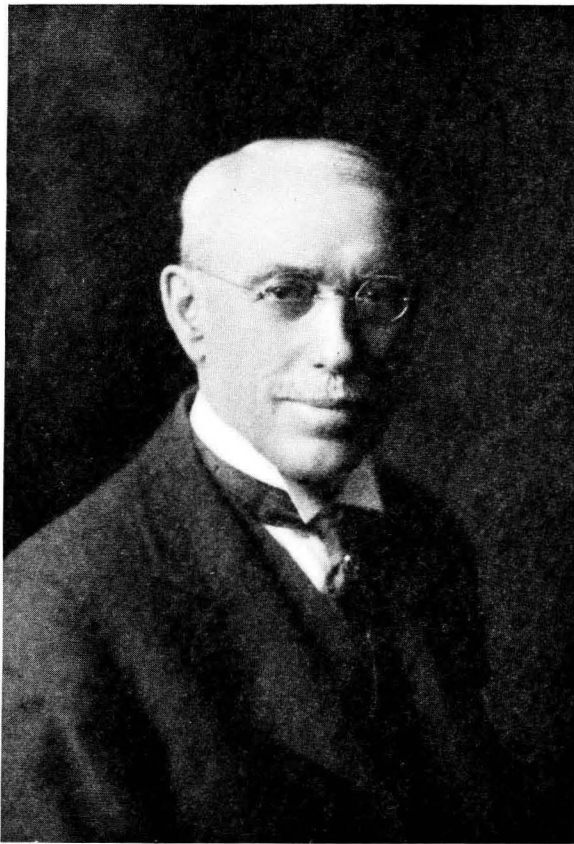


Fig. 5. Hon. Charles Harding Morrill, a generous contributor to the Nebraska State Museum since 1893.

C. C. Culver, class of 1898, who devised for the United States Army methods of voice control for military aeroplanes.

The balance of the floor is devoted to storage cases, work-rooms, and the offices of the curators, Miss Carrie A. Barbour, Mrs. Anna G. Redford, and the Museum preparators.

DIRECTORY OF THE SECOND FLOOR

The second floor is devoted to Palaeontology, and almost exclusively to the fossils of the State. Here is displayed the palaeontological collections of Mr. Charles H. Morrill, Mr. Hector Maiben, Capt. James H. Cook, Mr. Harold J. Cook, and many other donors. The entrance to this hall of bones is through an arch composed of the fore-limbs, associated vertebrae, and ribs of the Lincoln county elephant, a mammoth of extraordinary size. Immediately beyond is the most prominent object on the floor, namely the head, mandible, and tusks of the Franklin County mammoth, *Elephas jeffersoni (columbi)*. The tusks of this fine specimen are 13½ feet long and 29 inches in girth near the base. This huge skull and its tusks are suspended from the ceiling at approximately the natural height. The value and interest of this remarkable mammoth are distinctly enhanced by the fact that the skull, tusks, and skeletal parts of a female are at hand. Articulated fore and hind limbs in proximity give correct conceptions of size. The object next in prominence is the Thurston County mastodon, *Mastodon americanus*. All told there are fifteen complete proboscidean skulls and jaws, together with many others less complete. There are eight or ten skeletons complete enough for mounting. There are a number of embryonic specimens. The two living members of the elephant family are represented by skeletons of a pair of Indian elephants, *Elephas indicus*. The African elephant, *Loxodonta africana*, will be added soon. In one case is displayed the flesh, sinew, long fine wool, and long bristly hair of the extinct hairy mammoth, *Elephas primigenius*, such as is frequently found frozen in the ice of Alaska and Siberia.

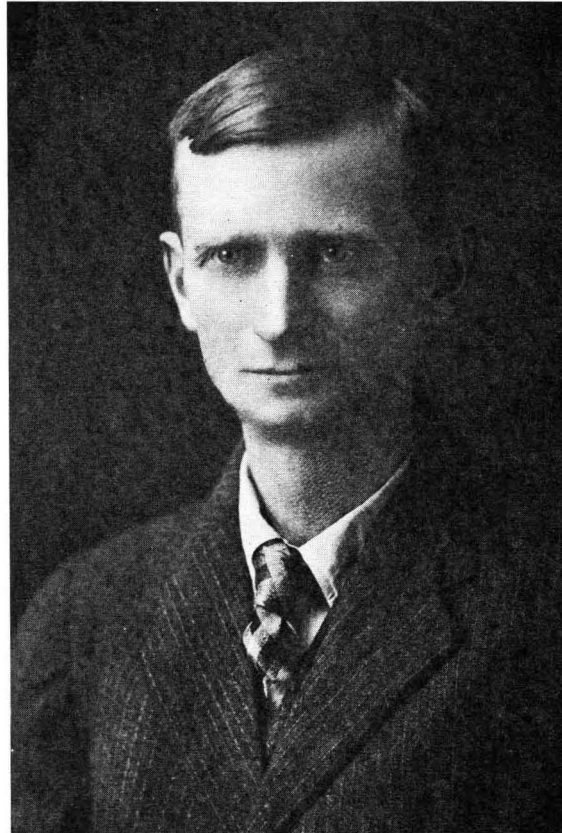


Fig. 6. Mr. Hector Maiben, a generous contributor to the Nebraska State Museum for the past seven years.

The proboscidean collection of the Nebraska State Museum is unique in the number of type specimens. The floor, wall, ceiling, shelves, and the top of cases bristle with their bones. When these can be properly articulated and the great skeletons mounted for the pleasure and instruction of the public, there will be a procession of ancient elephants of which no other institution can boast. In a case close to the stairs may be seen the skull and skeletal parts of the giant hog, *Dinohyus*, from the bone beds of Agate, Nebraska. But two specimens of this creature are known, namely, the one in Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and our own. The Pittsburgh specimen, according to the press, is invoiced at \$50,000 which accounts for the valuation put upon our own specimen by our local state press which has termed ours the \$50,000 Nebraska Hog. Adjacent to this case is one containing the unique four-horned *Syndyoceros*, which, broadly speaking, is a sort of ancient antelope, found at Agate, Nebraska, by Harold J. Cook and by him donated to the State Museum. There is displayed a large bone slab from the Agate Springs fossil quarry, located on the Cook ranch. Nearby is a similar slab from the chalk beds of Kansas, containing 140 free crinoids, *Uintacrinus socialis*. Several cases are filled with vertebrate fossils from the Oligocene badlands of Nebraska and South Dakota, and from the Miocene, and later formations. Here is shown a number of fossil leaves from the Dakota formation of Kansas and Nebraska. It is a part of a collection which altogether comprises about 6,000 specimens, and is a part of the Morrill Geological Collections.

Clay products are shown in a case by the stairs. This is the nucleus for a large future exhibit of industrial pottery, china, and porcelain. Here may be seen the ancient pottery of various countries, many inscribed Babylonian tablets, Peruvian, Mexican, and Pueblo pottery, along with examples of modern types including those of foreign and American kilns.

One interesting collection of fossil bones, black with asphaltum, is from the famous pitch pool of Rancho la Brea,

near Los Angeles, California. In one case is a large and important set of skulls and bones of fossil horses, collected from various horizons in the State. In another case is illustrated the genealogy of the horse from the ancestral, polydactyl form to the modern, one-toed successor. Some prominence is given to an exhibit of Devil's corkscrews, *Daimonelix*. These represent a plant growth which seems to have followed the course of burrows. On this floor are the remains of fossil musk ox, ground sloth, giant bear, giant beaver, giant dogs and cats, tapirs, camels, mososaurs, and many equally interesting but less conspicuous species. Of the invertebrate fossils, those of the Carboniferous of this State hold first place. They were collected largely by Miss Carrie A. Barbour and were mounted for display by Miss Gertrude Johnson. A suite of rooms on the east end of this floor serves to house the library, the files and records. To the right is the office of Miss Marjorie Shanafelt, recorder and instructor, and to the left that of the director. On the wall leading from the second to the third floors are hung portraits of Mr. Charles H. Morrill and Mr. Hector Maiben, together with geologic sections, charts and maps of Nebraska, certain large slabs from the Dakota formation, and a large and varied collection of fossil fish from Fossil, Wyoming.

DIRECTORY OF THIRD FLOOR

The third floor is devoted to minerals, crystals, ores, and rocks, and to offices and laboratories. The outstanding exhibit on this floor is the systematic collection of minerals illustrating, and arranged according to, Dana's system. This set is supplemented by a large collection of crystals, some chosen for display, and others for forms represented. Six cases are devoted to rough and polished gems, semi-gems, polished marble, and other ornamental stones. Here is to be seen the largest recorded fulgerite, the product of sand fused into a tube when struck by lightning. In one case is exhibited showy specimens of malachite, azurite, and other copper ores.

In another, in a like manner, is shown iron ores. In yet another may be found the collections of ores procured and donated by Hon. J. Sterling Morton.

One large wall case is devoted to gypsum and its products. It contains rock gypsum and large gypsum crystals, together with alabaster, natural, turned, and carved, along with objects of art cast in plaster-of-Paris.

In a case by the north wall is shown the core of the Nebraska Test Well, which was drilled by legislative enactment one mile west of Lincoln, on the edge of Salt Lake, now included in Capitol Beach. A core was taken by a diamond drill to a depth of 2,463 feet. This core unfortunately was widely scattered, and more than 30 years were required to reassemble it, and certain parts are missing still. This and the 1,000-foot core of the J. H. Kersenbrock well at Dorchester, Nebraska, are frequently consulted by students, drillers, contractors, engineers, and geologists. There are large collections from three well-known caves. These are held in reserve until they can be converted into replicas of actual caves. Many specimens illustrating the various phases of phenomenal geology are on exhibition, such as concretions, folds, faults, veins, dikes, and the like. At the east end of the floor is the geologic laboratory and offices of Miss Edith L. Webster, Mr. Henry Nedom, Dr. Eula McEwan, and laboratory assistants. This room connects with the mineralogical laboratory of Prof. E. F. Schramm and assistants. On the wall of the stairway leading from the third to the fourth floor are hung cases containing Indian relics, beadwork and the like belonging to the collections of Dr. M. H. Everett.

DIRECTORY OF FOURTH FLOOR

The fourth floor is devoted primarily to zoology, and comprises representatives of the great groups of the Animal Kingdom, especially of Nebraska. The birds and animals are mostly mounted, but a few collections are preserved as skins.

The insects injurious and those beneficial to agriculture, those illustrating protective coloration, insect metamorphosis, and the like are displayed in special cases. The Morrill alligator collection occupies a prominent position and comprises large and small alligators and crocodiles, their skeletons, their hides, green and tanned, and articles manufactured from them. A habitat group of beaver on this floor includes several adult males, females, and young, together with beaver-gnawed stumps. These were trapped about 1885 within three miles of Lincoln by Prof. Lawrence Bruner, by whom they were carefully mounted. The set was procured and presented to the Museum by Hon. Chas. H. Morrill. The Egyptian mummy in an adjoining case was purchased and presented by Rev. H. V. Rominger of Crawford, Nebraska. The Peruvian mummies, along with their utensils and wares, were secured and donated by Hon. Patrick Egan, U. S. Minister to Peru. Articles characteristic of the various countries in which they travelled were obtained and donated by Mr. and Mrs. William J. Bryan. Several cases are filled with typical Indian relics, especially from Illinois, collected and donated by Dr. M. H. Everett. This is the largest collection of its kind that has come to the Museum. The collections of Dr. Robert F. Gilder comprise skeletons, skulls, implements, pottery, and the like from the Indian mounds around Omaha and Council Bluffs, as well as specimens from the cliff dwellings of New Mexico and Arizona. Three cases are devoted to marine specimens collected in Puget Sound, identified, labelled, and arranged by Dean C. C. Engberg. This collection is supplemented by a large and representative set of corals from the Bahama Islands, and from the Bermuda Islands, secured by the writer. In one case are displayed rare bird skins and feathers such as are used in millinery. These were confiscated by the Government and donated to the State Museum to aid in creating local sentiment against commercializing, to the point of extermination, birds possessed of striking plumage. The outstanding exhibits on the fourth floor are the groups of birds from Nebraska and Central America, the

work of Prof. Lawrence Bruner, who did so much pioneer work in preserving representatives of the fauna of the State.

A considerable number of the commoner birds of the State, especially the shore birds, are mounted as habitat groups in convenient and portable cabinets with painted backgrounds. These are easily carried to the laboratory tables for the use of students, especially those from visiting schools.

Two collections which always attract and hold popular attention were procured in the Philippine Islands, and later donated to the Museum, by General Pershing. One of these is an extensive set of implements of war, musical instruments, mats, wall decorations, and the like. The second collection comprises birds of the Islands.

An industrial collection secured by Mr. Morrill and the writer while in Switzerland is made up of typical wood-carvings and inlaid work.

At the east end of this floor is the office of Mr. F. G. Collins, who, as an assistant curator, is rearranging and classifying the materials at hand. He will be found ready and willing to escort guests through the Museum.

STORAGE

For a number of years, the basement of the Lincoln Sanitarium has been put at the disposal of the Museum by the Drs. Everett and affords unlimited storage space. When this building was projected by Dr. M. H. Everett it was known as the Sulpho-Saline Baths, and had in the basement a large swimming pool. As the hospital grew the pool was drained and a cement slab cast over it. This makes a dry, commodious and fireproof place for storage, and many tons of material are already stored there.

Steam tunnels traversing the campus, attics, and basements of various buildings have long been used for this purpose.

DONORS

In accordance with the experience of all museums, liberal donations of every nature come from every quarter of the State, and beyond. The private collections throughout the country are innumerable, and often extensive and some are even valuable. They serve a double purpose in that they not only please and instruct their respective possessors but that they ultimately find their way to the public museums for the gratification and instruction of a far greater constituency. Many large and important private collections have been offered to the State Museum and the proffers declined for lack of room. Such a policy long pursued is ruinous. The forfeiture of moneys seems even more serious. Many promises of financial support are conditioned upon an ample fireproof structure, where collections may be properly displayed, prerequisites which cannot be met.

The collections of this Museum as they stand today are built on the benefactions of Mr. Charles H. Morrill and Mr. Hector Maiben. Of late Mr. Everett M. Swain, Class of 1901, Law, 1903, has become a contributor. In course of time other benefactors are sure to arise to aid in the work of rescuing for the State, before it is too late, some of the objects of interest and worth which for so many years have gone to enrich the cabinets of many eastern and European institutions. Succeeding bulletins will be published from time to time as means will allow.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at the Nebraska State Museum averages several hundred daily and as many as 50,000 have been recorded in ten days. Visiting schools, institutions, and clubs can always arrange for free lectures respecting the collections and for guidance through the building. The number of school children regularly visiting and revisiting the Museum is noteworthy.

PARTIAL LIST OF MUSEUMS IN THE STATE

1. Nebraska State Normal College Museum, Chadron; Mrs. Harold J. Cook, Director.
2. Doane College Museum, Crete; Professor C. O. Carlson, Director.
3. Grand Island College Museum, Grand Island; Professor F. G. Meserve, Director.
4. Hastings Museum, Hastings; Professor J. W. Kent, Director.
5. Masonic Museum, Masonic Temple, Omaha; the Monell and Linger collections of rare old guns, pistols, crossbows, swords, daggers, spears, maces, war clubs, and the like.
6. Morton Museum, Arbor Lodge State Park, Nebraska City; Frank Williams, Director.
7. Nebraska Art Museum and Nebraska Art Association, collection of paintings, The University of Nebraska; Professor Paul H. Grumann, Director.
8. Nebraska State Museum, The University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Erwin H. Barbour, Director.
9. Omaha Museum, Omaha City Library, Omaha; Miss Tobin, Director.
10. State Historical Society Museum, Lincoln; A. E. Sheldon, Superintendent.
11. Union College Museum, College View.

PRIVATE MUSEUMS

12. Brookings, A. M., birds, mammals, and fossils of Nebraska; loaned to Hastings College.
13. Cook, Capt. James H., and Harold J., Agate. Fossils, Indian implements, gem stones, etc.
14. Eiche, August, Lincoln. Collection of ducks and geese of America.
15. Gilder, Dr. Robert F., Omaha. Anthropological.
16. Heaton, Reese, Curtis. Collection of birds and mammals.
17. Howe, John, Stockville. Vertebrate fossils.
18. Hughes, Sam, Howe. Indian relics.
19. Dr. Smart, Madison. Collection of Indian relics, fossils, etc.