A Historical Sketch of the Purdue Biological Society

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The University's interest in the presentation of the development of Natural History and Scientific subjects to the more or less meagerly informed individual manifested itself at a rather early date.

In 1883, when such brilliant, adventurous, courageous and ingenious men as Ferdinand Cohn, Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, Elie Metchnikoff, Lord Joseph Lister and Paul Ehrlich and many others were making monumental scientific history, some of the faculty and students organized a group known as the Purdue Scientific Society.* The first meeting was held in the Biological Laboratory of the Main Building, Professor Charles Reed Barnes was chairman. Subjects pertaining to the various branches in Agriculture, Engineering and Science were presented.

It is of interest to note that John M. Coulter, then of Wabash College, discussed "The Physical Basis of Life". Winthrop E. Stone, later the University's President, a recent graduate of the University of Goettingen, spoke on "American Students in German Universities". Meetings were held in various buildings, depending to some extent on the nature of the program and the facilities required for the speaker.

Most of Purdue's early scientific elite were members of its first scientific society. To mention only a few of whom we have heard and have read of their noteworthy attainments were John C. Arthur, Charles R. Barnes, Stanley Coulter, John V. Nef, William C. Latta, Henry A. Huston, James Troop, Katherine, Helen and Michael Golden, Frank L. Rainey, Henry L. Bolley, Anne M. Lutz, Arthur Goss, Handley Caraway, Ernest Knaufft, Erastus Test, Presidents James H. Smart and Winthrop E. Stone; John S. Wright, H. E. Stockbridge, Winthrop K. Howe, William P. Turner, and Pierre van Landeghem.

Arthur Goss served as the Society's first President, Handley Caraway Vice President, Frank L. Rainey Secretary and Treasurer and Charles Gough as Marshal.

Later Katherine Golden and John S. Wright held the office of President, Winthrop K. Howe and W. F. McBride Vice President, Henry L. Bolley, Herbert N. McCoy and John S. Wright Secretary-Treasurer and Enos L. Shaw was Marshal.

With the rapid development and formation of various scientific societies in Agriculture and Engineering the Society confined its subjects to Biology and Chemistry.

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Purdue's pioneering Scientific Society, a forerunner of the Biological Society and which flourished some twenty years before the latter organization came into being, went the way most similar groups did.

The Purdue Biology Society* was conceived when Dean Stanley Coulter, Professor Howard Enders, and Drs. Oliver Terry and Severance Burrage, sole members of the Biology Department, in 1907 met in their homes, to discuss research that was being carried on in the various fields of Biology. After their scientific discussions lunch was served and since three of them were "chain smokers" one can imagine that the air was pretty blue.

In 1909 this very select group expanded and held their meetings in the old Science Hall. Some of you will recall that this building was formerly the old Engineering shops and stood on the present site of Stanley Coulter Hall.

At first there were no officers or dues. Stanley Coulter always presided, Professor Enders was responsible for the program and Professor George Hoffer was secretary. Meetings were held about twice a month and some twenty papers were presented during a school year. The lectures were very popular and the average attendance was around sixty.

General subjects were discussed from various angles as for example when heredity was taken up the different professors on the campus presented that subject as it was related to their particular field. Professor G. I. Christie spoke on Heredity in relation to crops, Professor A. L. Winako to grains, Professor W. W. Smith to animal husbandry, and Dean Stanley Coulter to plants. Professor H. E. Enders expounded on Heredity and the Mendelian ratio and Professor E. H. Davis discussed the famous Kallikak family.

One would assume that the idea back of this plan was excellent especially at that time, for it tied the various departments together. The professors interested more or less in some branch of the same field became not only better acquainted but were aware of what was going on in the various lines of the subject as a whole not to say anything about a more comprehensive consideration of Biology.

In 1913 it was decided to do away with these general presentations and to confine these gatherings to a sort of a round-table discusion a seminar if you please—of subjects which were strictly research in nature. The meetings were attended mainly by members of the Biology staff. This change from a popular to a scientific approach of the subject matter at this time, apparently, sounded the death knell to the organization, for interest rapidly waned and by the end of the school year of 1914 the meetings were discontinued.

After a comparatively short lapse of time in 1921 the Purdue Biological Society was reorganized in the regular big business manner with a constitution and by-laws. The membership was open to everyone interested in any line of Biology. Yearly dues were one dollar, every cent of which was to go to bring in outside speakers. Its aims were:

"To present and discuss all kinds of biological problems.

To bring most prominent scientists of our various interests before us.

- To provide a common avenue where all members of the University community interested in these lines may become better acquainted.
- To keep members informed of all national and local meetings of a biological interest.
- To promote study of migratory birds"—a chart of the same was maintained in Stanley Coulter Hall.

Meetings were held at least once a month, often times twice, and its officers were: C. A. Behrens—President; M. W. Gardner—Vicepresident; I. L. Baldwin—Secretary-treasurer.

In turn the other officers of the society were: M. W. Gardner, J. J. Davis, L. E. Compton, I. L. Baldwin, L. F. Heimlich, C. L. Porter, B. N. Prentice, E. J. Kohl and D. H. Dunham—Presidents; L. F. Heimlich, F. D. Cullinan, L. P. Doyle, G. N. Hoffer, C. L. Porter, B. Pontius, C. O. Lee, Dorothy Thompson, H. G. DeKay—Vice-presidents; while I. L. Baldwin, G. N. Hoffer, L. E. Compton, B. N. Prentice, Dorothy M. Thompson, D. C. Cooper, J. H. Mac Gillivray and P. R. Miller held the office of Secretary-treasurer.

Papers given during the first year of the societies reorganization were of a diverse nature and were as follows: December 12, 1921, Dr. C. A. Behrens: Technique in Advanced Bacteriology with Practical Applications. January 9, 1922, Dr. E. B. Mains: Rust Resistance with Special Reference to the Leaf Rust of Wheat and Rye. January 30, Mr. J. B. Kendrick: The Colorimetric Method of Detecting Hydrogen Ion Changes Induced by Bacteria in Sugar Media. Mr. D. H. Thompson: Factors Controlling Facet Number in the Eye of Drosophila melanogaster. February 13, Professor J. J. Davis: Entomology and Its Relation to Man. March 13, Professor B. N. Prentice: Present Status of the White Pine Blister Rust. April 7, Professor W. F. Gidley: Blood Phenomena and Their Chemical Significance. October 30, Professor H. S. Jackson: Mushrooms and other Fungi in the Woods at the Present Time. November 3, Dr. Maynard M. Metcalf, Orchard Laboratory, Oberlin, Ohio: Animal Distribution. November 13, Dr. R. A. Whiting: Swine Dysentery. December 4, Mr. F. P. Cullinan: The Effects of Pruning and Soil Treatments Upon the Growth and Development of the Root System of Apple Trees; and December 11, 1922, Mr. C. M. Vestal: Mineral Supplements to Protein Feeding.

As time went on the society was addressed by such outstanding national and international figures as: E. F. Phillips—Chief of Division of Bee Culture, U.S. Department of Agriculture; C. R. Ball, Head of the Office of Cereal Investigations of the Bureau of Plant Industry; T. H. Frison, University of Illinois; F. D. Kern, Dean of Graduate School, Pennsylvania State College; Drs. H. J. Page and D. W. Cutler of the Rothamsted Experiment Station, England; C. A. Shull, Professor Plant Physiology, University of Chicago; P. V. Allison, Tropical Plant Research Foundation; H. H. Wetzel, Professor of Plant Pathology, Cornell University; A. H. Reginald Buller, Botanist, University of Manitoba; L. R. Jones, Head of Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin; W. B. McDougall, University of Illinois; E. W. Lindstrom, Head of Department of Genetics, Iowa State College; C. R. Orton, Boyce Thompson Institute, Yonkers, New York; F. L. Stevens, Head of Department of Plant Pathology, University of Illinois; G. N. Hoffer, Pathologist, U. S. Department of Agriculture and Purdue Agricultural Experiment Station; H. B. Humphrey, Head of Cereal Rust Investigations of United States Department of Agriculture; F. E. Lloyd, MacDonald, Professor of Botany in McGill University, Montreal; F. W. Tanner, Head of Department of Bacteriology, University of Illinois; L. R. Tehon of the Illinois Natural History Survey; W. A. Jamieson, Director of Biological Division of Eli Lilly; M. H. Soule, Head of the Department of Bacteriology, University of Michigan; J. Henderson Smith, Rothamsted Experiment Station, England; and George Wagner, Zoology Department, University of Wisconsin.

Dr. R. B. Wetherill, a local physician and traveler of note, spoke to us on "Tropical Diseases" following his trip to Africa. Likewise Dr. Tetrault who had just returned from France told us about the famous Pasteur Institute. Also when A. G. Phillips at that time Head of the Poultry Department, returned from his trip to Europe he talked to us on "Innocence Abroad". For several years it was the custom to devote one meeting to a review of the most outstanding of the Bachelor's theses which were of interest to the Biological Society.

In some instances meetings were conducted jointly with the chapter of Sigma Xi, the Purdue section of the American Society of Plant Physiologists, and the Indiana Branch of the Society of American Bacteriologists, but for the most part independently. "Smokers", dinner meetings, dining at such familiar places as the Lahr House, Lafayette Club, and on the campus, were held.

The gatherings were not always of a serious turn of mind for two picnics were enjoyed; one in May 1925 at "Tecumseh Trail" and in 1927 "On the Wea". The announcement of the latter read something like this: "Meet at Coulter Hall. Proceed by Auto to the Wea where games will be provided for all. Big feed provided by the eats committee. Transportation furnished those without same. Come and bring the family." In short there was a great diversification in the program.

In 1928 interest in the Society had waned to such an extent that it too went the way of its predecessors. In 1942 the organization was resuscitated and up to date is carrying on in an admirable manner.

And so by four distinct steps the present Purdue Biological Society evolved.