



D. H. Gordon

MEMORIAL OF CHARLES HENRY GORDON, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

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Charles Henry Gordon, the first President of the Tennessee Academy of Science, was born in Caledonia, New York, May 10, 1857, and died in his home in Anna Maria, Florida, 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 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 (1890-93) were spent as an Instructor in Natural History in the Academy of Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In August, 1893, he was elected to Fellowship in the Geological Society of America in recognition of his excellent work in the geology of Iowa and adjacent states.

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 he interrupted his teaching career to travel and study abroad. A large part 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 frequent 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.

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 1903-4 he was Acting Professor in Geology in the University of Washington at Seattle; during 1904-05 Professor of Geology and Mineralogy in the New Mexico School of Mines at Socorro. In 1907, after an interval of several 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 on account 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 amazing. They cherish the hours spent in his classes and the time spent in office in important conferences.

Active field work always 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 1890-92 he was connected with the Missouri Geological Survey; 1893-95 with the Iowa Survey; and 1898-99 with the Michigan Survey. From 1905-12 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 immediately in the movement to revive the Tennessee Geological Survey. Due in a large part to his activity, it was revived in 1910 with George Hall Ashley, now State Geologist of Pennsylvania, as State Geologist, and L. C. Glenn, Professor of Geology, 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. His bulletin on the marbles of Tennessee is the standard work on the subject.

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 fellowman and gave generously of his time, energy, and money for the welfare of mankind. No civic movement was complete without him. He was active in trying to establish local scientific societies and formed the Knoxville Geographical Society which unfortunately had a 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 1913 he was in charge of the geological exhibits of the National Conservation Exhibition in Knoxville. He was an 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.

As shown by his energetic work in arousing the sentiment that resulted in the reviving of the Tennessee Geological Survey in 1910 his interests were not confined to Knoxville but were state wide. When Dr. George H. Ashley suggested that a Tennessee Academy of Science should be organized, Dr. Gordon undertook to issue a call and circulate it among his colleagues at the University of Tennessee. Later it was circulated in the other institutions in the state with the result that the interested persons met in the State Capitol at Nashville on March 9, 1912, and organized the Tennessee Academy of Science. At this meeting he was a member of a committee of three that wrote the constitution and by-laws. At the first regular meeting of the Academy on April 6, 1912, he was elected the first President and at the end of his term, November 30, 1912, he delivered the first Presidential Address of the Academy. In this address he clearly set forth the status of science in the state and suggested improvements. This Academy is in part a monument to his enthusiasm for science and his desire to bring science to the front in his adopted state. He issued the call, obtained signatures, framed its constitution and by-laws, steered it through its early days, contributed to its programs, and assisted in guiding it for many years. His loss has left a vacancy in our membership that cannot be filled.

He took an active part in fraternal organizations and was a member of Delta Tau Delta, Sigma Pi and 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 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.

Always a religious man he was active in church work. During the last 15 or 20 years of his residence in Knoxville he was a member of the Second Presbyterian Church, and was a guiding spirit in the religious and welfare work of that active congregation.

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 energetically with him in his many activities.