

LEADERS OF THE TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE, 1912-1936: AN OVERVIEW AND BIBLIOGRAPHY*

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ABSTRACT—Forty-four leaders managed the Tennessee Academy of Science from its founding in 1912 through the end of its first quarter-century in 1936. Each is briefly identified. These leaders guided a changing Academy through 39 general meetings and many other meetings, established three learned journals, founded a biological laboratory at Reelfoot Lake, affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and created both geographic and disciplinary sections of the Academy. Leaders are defined as people who held the Academy's senior offices plus those who planned the original organizational meetings. While most early leaders were professional scientists, amateur naturalists played important roles.

This study identified the people who led the Tennessee Academy of Science during its first 25 years. The leaders guided the group through World War I, influenza epidemics, and a global depression, gradually shaping a stable, successful organization. Beginning in 1911, three scientists, George H. Ashley, Wilbur A. Nelson, and Charles H. Gordon, planned a statewide scientific society. Ashley was the major force behind the Academy's birth but left Tennessee before the constitution was ratified. During the Academy's first quarter-century, Ashley, Nelson, and Gordon were followed by 41 additional leaders, all unknown to most modern Tennesseans (Table 1). A leader is here defined as a person who guided organizational meetings or a person who held one of the following offices: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Secretary-Treasurer, or Editor.

As the Academy took shape, most pure and applied scientific fields were involved, including science education, agriculture, archaeology, dentistry, medicine, meteorology, and psychology. Meetings of the first quarter-century were often held twice annually. The general membership met thirty-nine times. There was one special meeting, one organizational meeting, at least five meetings of the Nashville Section, and at least four of the Botanical Section (Table 2).

One strength of the group was a broad involvement by amateur naturalists. In 1915 William A. Myer, a furniture dealer and self-trained archaeologist, became the first amateur to serve as President. He eventually joined the Smithsonian staff. The president for 1926 was Albert Gainer, a professional engineer who devoted himself to amateur-level work in ornithology, archaeology, and geology. In 1929 P. E. Cox, a banker and self-trained archaeologist, became the last amateur to hold the presidency during the first quarter century. Forty-three officers are listed in Table 1. The Academy's major organizer, George H. Ashley, was a 44th leader.

BIOGRAPHIES

Twenty-nine of the 44 leaders (66%) are discussed in Academy-published biographical texts (Table 1). Data on two addi-

tional leaders are in well-known Tennessee archives (Table 1). For all leaders, and for all early members, the Academy's archival and published membership rolls generally provide academic interests and a professional address. These sources show that most leaders from Nashville and Knoxville are documented biographically. Those from Jackson, Chattanooga, and other cities are less likely to be known. Institutional archives and discipline-specific literature may have information on leaders for whom the Academy did not publish data. For example, Wilson (1981) discussed George Ashley, the Academy's founder.

In addition to major officers, the Academy had minor officers. Eleanor Eggleston (Anonymous, 1935) was Librarian for several years; Walton C. Miser was Acting Secretary for part of 1926; Jessie May Gill was Acting Secretary for part of 1932; and in some years there were Directors, generally without specified duties.

MEETINGS

As the Academy developed, leaders guided the group through many meetings (Corgan, 1990). Fifteen of these meetings are highlighted in Table 2. However, since every meeting had value, emphasizing 15 is interpretive. The Reelfoot Lake Biological Station, for example, was first discussed at an Executive Committee meeting on February 23, 1923 (McGill, 1933). Later, the Committee presented data at general meetings, seeking approval for planning. The Station concept was reappraised in 1925, when it was the topic of a Presidential Address (Lyon, 1926). The station came into service in August 1932. Originally funded by the Academy, State support began in 1935. The lab attracted graduate students and other researchers from several states. It functioned through 1977 when the Academy's lease lapsed (Corgan, 1998).

For most years before 1926, information about meetings and other activities derives from manuscripts in the Academy's archives, published summaries of Executive Committee meetings, and articles by the Secretary (Anonymous, 1911-1936; Anonymous, 1914a; 1914b; 1917; 1926b; Corgan, 1987a; Nelson,

TABLE 1. Officers of the Tennessee Academy of Science: 1912-1936.

	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916
President	Charles H. Gordon ¹	Watson Selvage	L. C. Glenn ²	William E. Myer ³	Samuel M. Bain ⁹
Vice-President	J. I. D. Hinds	G. W. Dyer	William E. Myer ³	P. H. Manning	Samuel M. Barton ⁶
Secretary	Wilbur A. Nelson ⁴	Wilbur A. Nelson ⁴	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵
Treasurer	Samuel M. Barton ⁶	Samuel M. Barton ⁶	A. Belcher	A. Belcher	A. Belcher
Editor	E. S. Reynolds (moved) Asa A. Schaeffer ⁸	R. M. Ogden	James A. Lyon ⁷	James A. Lyon ⁷	Albert H. Purdue ¹⁰
	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
President	Samuel M. Barton ⁶	Albert H. Purdue ¹⁰ (died) John T. McGill ¹¹	L. C. Glenn ²	L. C. Glenn ²	Roscoe Nunn ⁵
Vice-President	A. Belcher	John T. McGill ¹¹	Scott C. Lyon	Jeanette Moore King ¹³	Harcourt A. Morgan ¹⁴
Secretary/Treasurer	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Wilbur A. Nelson ⁴
Editor	Albert H. Purdue ¹⁰	H. E. Buchanan	Charles H. Gordon ¹	Charles H. Gordon ¹	Charles H. Gordon ¹
	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
President	Lucius Polk Brown ¹²	A. E. Parkins ¹⁵	Wilbur A. Nelson ⁴	Scott C. Lyon	Albert F. Ganier ¹⁶
Vice-President	A. E. Parkins ⁹	Wilbur A. Nelson ⁴	Samuel M. Barton ⁶	Albert F. Ganier ¹⁶	C. A. Mooers
Secretary/Treasurer	Wilbur A. Nelson ⁴	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	John T. McGill ¹¹
Editor	Roscoe Nunn ⁵	Samuel M. Barton ⁶	Fletcher D. Dresslar ¹⁷	Fletcher D. Dresslar ¹⁷	George R. Mayfield ²¹
	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931
President	Waller S. Leathers ¹⁸	Waller S. Leathers ¹⁸	P. E. Cox ²²	F. D. Dresslar ¹⁷ (died)	L. R. Hesler ²⁰
Vice President	David W. Cornelius ¹⁹	L. R. Hesler ²⁰	Andrew R. Bliss, Jr. ²³	David W. Cornelius ¹⁹	Honor A. Webb ²⁴
Secretary/Treasurer	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹
Editor	George R. Mayfield ²¹	George R. Mayfield ²¹	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶
	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
President	Andrew R. Bliss, Jr. ²³	Francis S. Slack ²⁴	Walter F. Pond ²⁷	George M. Hall ²⁹	Claude R. Fountain ³⁰
Vice-President	Louis J. Bircher ²⁸	Charles W. Davis	George M. Hall ²⁹	William A. Litterer	Paul J. Krussi
Secretary/Treasurer	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹	John T. McGill ¹¹
Editor	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶	Jesse M. Shaver ²⁶

¹ Hall (1948).² Anonymous (1941).³ DeWitt (1948).⁴ Anonymous (1943a).⁵ Anonymous (1942); Shaver (1950).⁶ Anonymous (1926a); Roberts (1926); Shaver (1950).⁷ Hinds (1917); Shaver (1950).⁸ University of Tennessee Archives.⁹ Essary (1944).¹⁰ Glenn (1946); Shaver (1946).¹¹ Baker (1953); Shaver (1946).¹² Wolfe (1976).¹³ Anonymous (1944).¹⁴ Shaver (1951).¹⁵ Anonymous (1938b).¹⁶ Anonymous (1939b).¹⁷ Davis (1930); Pruett (1932); Shaver (1950).¹⁸ Anonymous (1940a).¹⁹ Shaver (1947).²⁰ Anonymous (1939a).²¹ Ganier (1950; 1955); Shaver (1950).²² Tennessee State Archives.²³ Anonymous (1940b); Burns (1942).²⁴ Anonymous (1946; 1955).²⁵ Hamilton, Lagermann, and Jones (1979).²⁶ Anonymous (1943b; 1954); Behnke (1955); Chadwick (1961); Hill (1955); Sharp (1955); Shaver (1950, 1956); Woodruff (1955).²⁷ Anonymous (1938c).²⁸ Anonymous (1938a).²⁹ Amick (1941).³⁰ Anonymous (1936).

1912a; 1912b). Also many talks were published in the Academy's pioneer serials, *Science Record* and *Transactions of the Tennessee Academy of Science*. Each early journal fell victim to a lean budget. The *Record* lasted a few months (Corgan, 1985); the *Transactions* survived for a few years (Table 2). After 1925, the *Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science* became an important chronicle of Society activity. Also, Bircher (1938) gave a presidential address, marking the 25th anniversary. It is long on philosophy; short on details.

Dull but detailed records list the number of talks given at most meetings and, for some meetings, the number of people in attendance. Published lists may mislead the unwary. Anonymous (1926b), for example, printed the planned programs for 1917–1925. Corrected records in the Academy archives show that in some years most planned talks were not given. Influenza epidemics, which peaked about 1918, inhibited participation and negatively impacted both recruitment and retention (Corgan, 1990). Problems were intensified by changing priorities related to World War I. The budget tightened. Survival of the Academy required adjustments that were rooted in skillful leadership.

In 1917, the Academy restructured in several ways. World War I and influenza made travel harder and reduced the population of scientists within Tennessee. Executive Committee reorganization included combination of the duties of the secretary and treasurer. *Transactions of the Tennessee Academy of Science* was terminated and the pattern of meetings changed. In 1917 the Academy met in the spring and fall. Twice-yearly meetings did not resume until 1926. In earlier years the Academy met at several sites. From 1917 through 1926, all meetings were in Nashville.

The same person, L. C. Glenn, served as President in both 1919 and 1920. He had been President in 1914 (Table 1). In 1919, the Academy's first President, Charles H. Gordon, returned as Editor, continuing into 1921. During 1921–1924 the original Secretary, Wilbur A. Nelson, rejoined the Executive Committee, holding varied positions. By 1917 Samuel M. Barton had been treasurer, vice president, and president. He became editor in 1923 and returned to the vice-presidency in 1924. Thus Barton held all of the Academy's senior offices. There was a shortage of new blood.

From 1922 through 1925 the Academy's archives are less detailed (Corgan, 1988). Perhaps leaders were hesitant to record signs of decline. In 1923 and 1924, meetings were joint sessions with other groups. While there were joint programs in earlier years, such as 1914 (Table 2), by 1923 perhaps there were not enough Academy members to provide a strong program.

MEMBERSHIP

Academy leaders served a variable number of members. For most years the precise number of active members seems impossible to quantify. Yet, the recruitment of new members was always recorded with reasonable care (Corgan, 1987b). Recruitment data imply a decrease in membership in the early 1920s. In 1922, the Executive Committee was dominated by previous leaders (Table 1), and the Academy had one new member. Five new members were added in 1923 and 8 in 1924. Renewed membership growth began in 1925 with the addition of 82, and continued with 187 new members in 1926, 66 in 1927, and 126 in 1928.

However, recruitment statistics may be misleading. Counts were made in the summer before the fall meeting. Thus the 187

members counted for 1926 actually joined in 1925, paying dues for 1926. Still, the abrupt change is impressive.

In all years some members lapsed but this statistic was rarely recorded. Through the end of the first quarter century recruitment remained relatively robust despite economic problems caused by the Great Depression.

In 1924 and later years, Academy leaders were guiding a different group than they guided in 1921. Albert F. Ganier, who joined in 1922, had much to do with the change. He arranged joint meetings with amateur organizations, served as vice president in 1925, and president in 1926. Strengthening of recruitment was, in part, an involvement of amateurs and, in part, a broadening of the society's appeal to professionals.

Meeting jointly with amateur-dominated societies (Table 2) brought new and dynamic leadership from people who lacked conventional credentials in the pure sciences. One notable amateur, George R. Mayfield, was both a student of birds and a Professor of German. He became the first editor of the Academy's *Journal*, strongly influencing its success.

By 1926 the Academy had a much stronger membership base. In that year the presidential address focused on the Academy's role in Tennessee culture. It was very positive (Ganier, 1926), and reflected the attitude of an energized Executive Committee. In 1925–1926 the Executive Committee began aggressive recruitment, entered Scopes Trial litigation, clarified plans for a Reelfoot Lake Biological Station, began publication of the *Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science*, formally affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), joined an AAAS group called the Conference of Affiliated State Academies of Science, abandoned geographic sections, and authorized discipline-specific sections. Executive Committee actions made the group interesting and important. The Academy was reborn as a direct result of decisive leadership.

SUMMARY

This study identifies leaders in the Tennessee Academy of Science for the years 1912–1936. Each leader is named and associated with a role or roles in management. Seventy percent are more fully identified in Academy-published articles or in well-known archives. Twenty-two people served as president. Two died in office. Waller S. Leathers served two terms. L. C. Glenn served three. There were 23 vice-presidents, 11 editors, and five secretaries, treasurers, or secretary-treasurers. Most vice-presidents became president. One person, Samuel M. Barton, held all major offices; quite a few held three offices. Forty-three officers led the Academy. A 44th person, George H. Ashley, guided planning of the organization but never held office. Year-by-year the Academy changed. Here, 15 milestones are recognized, but each year brought adjustments. Soon after the Academy formed, major influenza epidemics and World War I impacted Tennessee, stressing a young organization. By the early 1920s the Academy was in decline. Bold leadership reversed negative trends.

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TABLE 2. Fifteen milestones during the first 25 years of the Tennessee Academy of Science.

Meeting title/#	Date	Location	Outcome ¹
Organizational Meeting	March 9, 1912	Nashville	Outlined a constitution.
General Meeting 1	April 6, 1912	Nashville	Ratified constitution. George Ashley became the first honorary member. Issued recommendations on political and social issues. Recommendations were common in later meetings.
Meeting 2	November 29–30, 1912	Knoxville	The editor was to publish a monthly journal, <i>Science Record</i> , with financing guaranteed by the Academy.
Meeting 3	November 28, 1913	Nashville	<i>Science Record</i> ended. Planned the Academy's <i>Transactions</i> , which appeared in 1914 and 1917.
Meeting 4	April 10, 1914	Nashville	First joint program. Met with the Tennessee Educational Association.
Meeting 8	May 4–5, 1917	Sewanee	First symposium, on the natural history of the Sewanee region. First field trip, to Wonder Cave in Monteagle.
Meeting 12	November 25, 1920	Knoxville	Authorized geographic sections for Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Memphis.
Nashville Section Meeting 1	April 19, 1921	Nashville	This section met five times, ending on March 22, 1923. Other cities lack known sectional activity.
Meeting 13	November 25, 1921	Nashville	Began to study affiliation with the AAAS. ²
Meeting 15	November 30, 1923	Nashville	A symposium sponsored by the Tennessee Geological Survey replaced the normal program.
Meeting 16	November 28, 1924	Nashville	The Inland Bird Banding Association and the Wilson Ornithological Club met jointly with the Academy.
Meeting 17	November 27, 1925		The Academy retained counsel and became formally involved in the famed Scopes Trial (Colton, 1927). Plans for the <i>Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science</i> were implemented with the <i>Journal</i> beginning in 1926. Twice-yearly meetings were scheduled for 1926.
Meeting 19	November 26, 1926		Based on discussion in earlier meetings the Academy began a sustained commitment to a Reelfoot Lake biological Laboratory. On paper, disciplinary sections replaced geographic sections. No section became active. Joined the AAAS Conference of Affiliated State Academies of Science.
Special Meeting	August 13, 1932		Reelfoot Lake laboratory opened. The group toured the facility (Gill, 1932).
Botanical (now Botany)	April 1934	Knoxville	Met intermittently during the general section meeting of April 26–28. Included the first sectional field trip. There were at least three later meetings during the first quarter century (Bold, 1937; Corgan, 1987a).

¹ Derived from Academy minutes, as published in Academy serials and preserved in archives (Anonymous, 1911–1936). Some actions developed earlier but were approved at the annual business meeting.

² American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Ervin, made useful comments. A version of Table 1 was discussed and distributed at the 1999 Academy meeting (Corgan, 2001).

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