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A Biological Station at Reelfoot Lake

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The Tennessee General Assembly of 1931 passed an act setting apart to the Tennessee Academy of Science ten acres of land adjacent to Reelfoot Lake for the establishment of a biological station for scientific research work under the management and control of the academy, and making an appropriation of \$2,500.00 to be expended on buildings, plant outfit and grounds. This method of aiding a State academy seems to be unique. The usual method is an appropriation for the publication of the proceedings of the Academy. While an appropriation for this purpose would enable the Tennessee Academy to enlarge and improve its journal, the provision for establishing a biological station at Reelfoot is of much greater prospective value. This, too, the Academy has had in mind for a number of years.

Active interest of the Academy as a body in Reelfoot Lake was first manifested at a meeting of the Nashville Section, March 22, 1923, when after a prolonged discussion of its history, natural features and economic value, a "committee consisting of Dr. H. A. Morgan, Dr. L. C. Glenn, and Mr. A. F. Ganier was appointed to co-operate with the proper committees of the Legislature and the Governor in efforts for the preservation of Reelfoot Lake as a State park and also to promote the matter of establishing a fresh water biological station at Reelfoot." At the November meeting of 1923 the Committee reported progress. As the State Legislature was to meet in January, 1925, the November meeting of the Academy in 1924 was devoted chiefly to the discussion of the State and National Parks in Tennessee.

The General Assembly of Tennessee of the year 1925 passed "An Act authorizing and empowering the State of Tennessee to acquire, in fee absolute, certain lands situated in the State of Tennessee and Counties of Lake and Obion, and adjoining to, on and around the shores at low water mark at the ordinary stages of the large, navigable body of fresh water,

known as and named Reelfoot Lake, said acquisition to become the absolute property of the State, and be an addition to and a part of the State of Tennessee's public park, fish and game preserve of Reelfoot Lake." A Reelfoot Lake Commission of four, including the Governor, was appointed to carry out the provisions of the Act.

Scott C. Lyon, President, made an address (at the meeting of the Academy, November 27, 1925) on the Possibilities for the Establishment of a Biological Station at Reelfoot Lake,¹ and the following resolution was adopted:

WHEREAS: The Tennessee Academy of Science several years ago began to urge the establishment of a State-owned game reserve and duck sanctuary, a biological station and the acquisition of the lands of riparian owners, at Reelfoot Lake;

WHEREAS: This sentiment crystalized into the passage of a bill by the legislature early in January, 1925, providing for the appointment of a commission to make a survey of the lake and the adjoining land and to acquire property for the State;

WHEREAS: It is reported that this commission has been working on the project for about one and one-half years and has completed all preliminary surveys, but the some reason is not proceeding with the acquisition of necessary lands;

THEREFORE: Be it resolved by the Tennessee Academy of Science, that the Tennessee Academy of Science respectfully asks the commission and the governor of Tennessee to proceed promptly with the acquisition of the lands and the establishment of the projects to the end that Reelfoot Lake may be saved to posterity.

Whether influenced by these resolutions or not, the Legislature of 1927 took steps to hasten the acquisition of lands to be included in the "Reelfoot Lake Park and Fish and Game Preserve"; but there were so many obstacles that negotiations for purchasing were far from complete until recently.

The General Assembly of 1931 discharged the Reelfoot Lake Commission and invested complete jurisdiction and control of the lands and property acquired and to be acquired adjacent to Reelfoot Lake in the Game and Fish Commission under the Department of Agriculture.

The paragraph in the Fish and Game Bill passed by the General Assembly of 1931, relating to the Tennessee Academy of Science, reads as follows:

And the said Game and Fish Commission is further directed and ordered to set apart to "The Tennessee Academy of Science" some suitable building belonging to the State and located on the State's property adjacent to Reelfoot Lake, and also such amount of land or real estate adjacent to the Lake, not to exceed ten acres, for the establishment of a Biological Station for carrying on scientific research work, said building and property to be under the management and control of said Academy of Science without the payment of rent or other payment to the State and for such time as may be used for said purposes, but the said Academy of Science is to keep the same in repair at its own expense and to use the same in such way as not to interfere with the remainder of the State's property or the public use thereof, and not contrary to the rules and regulations promulgated by the said Commission from time to time: and the said Academy of Science is authorized to make such addition to and improvement on the property at its own expense, as may be deemed advisable for carrying on its work; and upon the further condition that when it shall cease to be so used, the possession, management and control of the same shall revert to the said Tennessee State Park and Forestry Commission or its successors. And said Commission is hereby directed to confer with some committee selected by said Tennessee Academy of Science and to co-operate with it in selecting and setting apart some such suitable building and location for said purpose, and it will execute to said Tennessee Academy of Science a written lease to said property containing the terms and provisions authorized by this Act.²

For the support of the Biological Station, the General Assembly of 1931 made an appropriation in the following terms:

For the Tennessee Academy of Science to be expended out of the Game and Fish fund and rentals for the State property around Reelfoot Lake by the Department of Fish and Game, under the Commissioner of Agriculture, for the benefit of the Biological Station of the said Tennessee Academy of Science located on said State property on Reelfoot Lake on necessary buildings and plant outfit and grounds not to exceed \$2500.00, to be limited to such funds and rental collected from Reelfoot Lake.