

Jan 6-40 Sent Ed Averill for Journal
Edith Ruth

CALL FOR MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

by

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"Your articles in the Magazine Section of the Oregon Journal relating to wildlife have proved of real interest to lovers of outdoor Oregon, and especially to the younger people who are studying natural history," wrote Mr. W. H. Crowell, past President of the Oregon Audubon Society. "In addition to the Pittock Sanctuary and other areas that give protection to bird life, we are hoping to see a natural history museum established in Portland."

Many others feel this is a commendable and much needed movement on foot in Portland to establish this museum as an important educational necessity of the city and its environs. In a city of over 300,000 population with thousands of school children needing the information and inspiration to know more about wild creatures that live near them is in need of this as a part of their mental growth as much as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Museums that were established throughout the world were devoted to science, learning, and fine arts. The first was the Alexandrian Museum founded about 280 B. C. . In this country the first museum of real value was the United States National Museum, a development of the Smithsonian ^{in the District} in Washington. A Englishman by the name of James Smithson in 1826 bequeathed the reserve of his estate of \$541,380 to the United States of America, and later in 1846 the Smithsonian Institution was founded.

Valuable museums of natural history and science have been founded since in many parts of this country. One of the largest is the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Almost every other large city has created a permanent memorial to those who have allotted the funds to erect a building and assemble the needed collections for the interest and benefit of children and older people.

This is not a new movement. Nearly forty years ago Col. L. L. Hawkins persuaded various collectors who had different kinds of outdoor specimens to

exhibit these in the City Hall. Anything of this kind requires either money to employ workers, or the time devoted by some one as Mr. Hawkins did, because of his interest in the project. After this exhibit was well established, there was a lack of needed space on account of the growth of Portland, so gradually the collections were returned to the owners and this plan of a museum died.

But for the past thirty years the main urge and need has been in the minds of many people to eventually create a permanent natural history museum. It has been discussed by individuals and organizations, but up to the present time sufficient funds have never been allotted, although some valuable collections have been built up by private individuals. like Stanley Jewett and John C. Braly.

A great deal of interest has developed in the Braly Museum of Natural History at Depoe Bay, the only one of its kind in Oregon, which was built on a sound scientific basis. The nests and eggs, beautifully mounted birds and mammals, and other natural history subjects were carefully prepared with full data regarding every specimen.

John C. Braly spent his boyhood days in San Diego, California. At that time he used to roam the fields and canyons because he became interested in birds. He became acquainted with A. M. Shields, who is one of nature's leading oologists, and started collecting bird eggs. Like many other naturalists, this was the beg inning of a life-long interest in the study of bird life.

When Mr. Braly came to Oregon, he entered the automobile business and for many years his time was devoted to this and not to the study of natural history. Some ten or twelve years ago he retired from the automobile business and gave all of his time to bird study. He moved from Portland to the beach resort town of Depoe Bay on the Oregon coast. He has made one of the finest private collections of birds, bird nests and eggs. To take proper care of this collection, he built a private museum which has developed into one of the best show places in Oregon.

One of the leading attractions of the Braly collection is some of the

birds like the passenger pigeon which is now extinct. In addition to the splendid collection of Oregon wildlife species, there are also birds that live in the Arctic seas and the tundras of Alaska south to California and Texas. There are birds of plain color and others of most beautiful plumage, and a great variety of different kinds of nests. The size of specimens ranges from hummingbirds to eagles.

Practically all of the species represented in Oregon are in his collection, and there is also another beautiful exhibit in a glass case of tropical birds of delicately colored feathers. Some of these are gorgeously plumed birds of paradise and other rare species. In addition to the interesting size and color of the birds, there is a great variety of nests and eggs.

Large and small mammals mounted by expert Taxidermists are also represented in this collection. Any visitor has a chance to see the well prepared specimens of flying squirrels, tiny wandering shrews, foxes, bobcats, as well as different big game species.

The Braly museum of natural history is the best and most alluring exhibit of Oregon wildlife in existence today. It is not only an attraction to tourists and many residents, but it is sought by those who want to gain a better knowledge of Oregon and educate children in the love of our out-of-doors.

The leading organization in the state relating to bird life is the Oregon Audubon Society, which for nearly forty years has been engaged not only in the better protection of birds, but in educating people about the different wildlife species that inhabit our farms, forests, and coastline. Establishment of both state and federal reservations has been one of its objects, and it was the Pittock family that allotted a number of acres in the canyon beyond McCleay Park for a bird reservation in the city. Additional acres were purchased and this is an area where all lovers of the out-of-doors will have a good chance to study and get acquainted with bird life.

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The Oregon Audubon Society now has the interest of public and private schools, also of the city and state, to arrange for a valuable public museum in Portland. Inasmuch as it is more difficult to maintain the Braly collection at the coast because of damp winter conditions, arrangements may be made to transfer this collection to Portland so it will be more of a benefit to a much larger number of people.

While the national parks throughout the United States are carefully protecting the wild creatures that live in those areas, they have also found it necessary to establish museums so that all visitors may get better acquainted, not only with natural history, but with geology and all forms of plant life.

For many years Portland has maintained a public zoo in Washington Park. Different kinds of wild birds and mammals that are kept in captivity attract many people, but a natural history museum is of greater advantage from an educational standpoint.