

PRESENT CONDITION OF THE STATE MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY.

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Illinois State Museum of Natural History.

In view of the interest which the Academy has taken in the State Museum, it may be well at this time to call attention to progress recently made at the museum—progress which, though slight is nevertheless gratifying.

One of the most important pieces of work accomplished has been that in connection with the arrangement of the library. More than 1,500 books have been bound, sets have been completed, several hundred books have been added, all have been arranged on accessible shelves, and about 12,000 cards have been written for card catalogue.

A card catalogue of the specimens on exhibition in the museum is being rapidly brought to completion. During the past six months more than 4,000 cards have been written.

The space at the disposal of the museum has been more than doubled, permitting a slight expansion and some addition to the exhibits. But the floor space for exhibition and for work should be at least four times what it now is, in order to adequately represent the things which as soon as possible should be collected for the sake of preservation, study and exhibition.

There are at this time special reasons for hoping that increased space will soon be obtained. It is becoming widely realized that at least \$100,000 worth of material is now inadequately cared for in the museum. Among this material are about 700 type specimens. The present quarters are unsightly. The location, directly at the intersection of two busy streets, renders the dust nuisance almost unbearable. The danger of fire is great because of inflammable materials of which the building is constructed and because of storage of such materials therein. The loss which a fire would cause would be irreparable. If new quarters can be provided as is the earnest wish of practically all conversant with the situation, the present material can be safely housed and properly used; and the value of the collections can in a short time be doubled. More than \$25,000 worth of specimens have already been offered the museum on the condition that a new building be secured, and it will be easy to increase these gifts.

It is impossible for a museum to work effectively without proper quarters. When needed space is provided, the exhibits which now represent the work of collection covering more than half a century, can become of great value to three classes of citizens: first, men of science who wish to use material (notably **type specimens**) for research work; second, men of business, who wish information concerning raw materials, and third, the casual sightseer and even the unlettered man who, in the museum can find entertainment of the finest type.

In the matter of collecting, the attitude of the present curator is that there is a vast field in the state yet uncovered by existing agencies, and that there is ample room for all institutions doing work of this character. The one care should be to see that for our own people are preserved records which otherwise would be transferred to other regions of the country or, far more unfortunately than that, lost to science entirely. The chief aim of the institution is to be of direct value to all who may be assisted. It should be in a position to represent the excellent work which is being done along scientific lines notable at the University of Illinois and by workers in other localities of the state. Situated at the center of the state geographically and at some distance from the great intellectual center which Chicago always will be, it has a large field of usefulness.

Imperfect as the institution now is, it was visited last year by more than 31,000 people by actual count and judging by the increase in the early part of this year that number will probably approach 50,000 this year.

Exhibits furnished by the State Geological Survey, State Entomologist, the Highway Commissioner, the Department of Soils, the Bureau of Mines, the Department of Health, etc., would be a means of spreading abroad concrete knowledge of the work along these lines.

The museum being in a somewhat isolated position, may very well become a special protégé of the State Academy of Science to the advantage of all concerned. And it is to be hoped that individually and collectively, the members of the organization will interest themselves in the furthering of the interests of the museum. Sixty members of the academy wrote clearly stated and urgent letters to the governor and legislators asking that a new building be provided at Springfield for the museum. These

letters and the resolutions of the academy* will aid materially in securing an adequate building for which there is now a bright prospect.