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## Building a Museum

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## BUILDING A MUSEUM.

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BY T. VAN HYNING.\*

The up-to-date museum is the highest possible type of an educational institution; it supplies the text accompanied by the object. (Object teaching.)

All museums should be, in a manner, provincial, i. e., organized to cover a certain territory as a specialty, whether this territory be a single state, several states, the United States, or the whole world. In this connection it should be remembered that almost any single state will produce a much more varied and larger amount of museum material than is commonly supposed. The geology, flora, fauna, pre-historic and civil history of a state, will, in many instances, nearly duplicate its border states, and very well represent the United States.

The mistake is often made by the museum builder, of working backwards, by constructing a fine, large and expensive building, with no apparent forethought as to the specific uses to which it is to be applied; consequently, as his plans begin to mature, and the material accumulates, he discovers that his rooms are not properly proportioned in size to suit the various departments. The architecture may be inconvenient, the ceilings and windows too low, the heating apparatus in the way, the artificial lighting improper, and many other things wrong that might have been prevented by forethought.

In building a museum the province is the first step for its builder to decide. The writer has for some time been giving considerable thought towards a plan of school museums; a plan whereby every common school in the country might have a museum, if it be no more than a single case on the wall filled with well-selected specimens; or possibly a scheme of traveling museums, something after the traveling library plan. The traveling museum plan has been in operation to some considerable extent in some cities, the idea being to extend substantial encouragement in the observation of objects in nature, to young minds, many of whom never even reach a high school, that they

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may acquire some knowledge of objects in nature so near and so common to them, but yet of which they never learn to know anything.

It is such knowledge, acquired by the young brain, that tends towards the conservation of all things beautiful. Rather than to kill a bird or rob its nest, learn to encourage them, and rather than pull up wild flowers by the basketful and leave them to perish, cultivate them and observe their beauties all the season.

By a plan of co-operation between the schools of a state and a central state museum, with the central one in turn, in a degree, co-operating with other states, and with larger museums, there can be brought about, such general results to all as could not be accomplished by individual action.

In building a museum, first determine the province, then the nature, whether it is to be of some special feature, or to be a general museum. This done, then determine the amount of material desired. (Number of species, and specimens of each species.) This being decided, you are ready to begin plans for a building. The province and nature of your museum being determined, will decide the classes of material to be collected. The classes of material, and the amount of it, will decide the styles and numbers of cases required to exhibit it to the best advantage. The number of styles of cases of any division will determine the size and shape of a room to accommodate them,—its architecture, light, heat, ventilation, etc. The number of divisions and rooms, their various sizes, forms and architecture for their various purposes, will in turn determine the size, shape, and general architecture of a completed building to contain the whole.

With the provincial idea in mind, we will now take our state of Iowa as an example, and let the boundary line of the state be the outline of our province. The province determined, we must next decide on the nature of our museum, and the classes of material desired. For conservation and general educational purposes, a State Museum (as it now would be) should collect, preserve and exhibit material sufficient to illustrate its history, both natural and civil. The history of a state then, speaking from a museum standpoint, is composed of these two great divisions, its natural history and its civil history, each of which is susceptible of, and is conveniently divided into many subordinate divisions. When we speak of divisions, we do not infer that there be straight and rigid lines of demarcation, for there are not; all objects of history, both natural and civil, when considered as a whole, are very closely united. But for the convenience of study, and the division of labor and responsibility among its curators, divisions and

classifications have been made, under one or the other of which objects conveniently fall.

The first and greatest of these divisions is a state's natural history, which is first divided into the three great groups known as the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, each of which is again many times subdivided. Civil history is co-ordinate with ethnology, and subordinate to natural history, because upon the former the latter depends for its existence.

We have determined that within our province herein outlined we have the following approximate figures with which to deal:

#### NATURAL HISTORY.

##### MINERAL KINGDOM.

*Hall of Geology*—Stratified rocks; building and other commercial stones; minerals; clays; sands and soils. These will require six cases affording 300 square feet of exhibition surface, in a room of 900 square feet.

*Hall of Palaeontology*—Fossil remains of the vegetable and animal kingdom; 700 species, 4,200 specimens, requiring sixteen cases of 800 square feet, and a room of 2,400 square feet.

##### VEGETABLE KINGDOM.

*Hall of Botany*—Fungi; poisonous and medicinal plants; commercial woods and a complete flora, 3,000 species, requiring thirty-two cases of ninety-six drawers each, using a floor space of 1,600 square feet in a room of 4,800 square feet.

##### ANIMAL KINGDOM.

*Hall of Invertebrates*—Mollusca; butterflies; moths; beetles, etc., 900 species, requiring two table cases, and six case of drawers of 400 square feet, occupying a room of 1,200 square feet.

*Lower Vertebrates*—Reptiles and batrachians; fishes, etc., 108 species, requiring nine table cases of 450 square feet, in a room of 1,350 square feet.

*Aves. Hall of Birds*—354 species, requiring thirty-six cases of 1,900 square feet, in a room of 5,700 square feet.

*Mammal Hall*—78 species, requiring twenty cases of 1,000 square feet, in a room of 3,000 square feet.

##### NATURAL RESOURCES.

*Hall of Resources*—Mineral, vegetable, and animal resources, and the manufactured products therefrom, requires thirteen cases of 700 square feet, in a room of 2,100 square feet.

#### CIVIL HISTORY.

##### ETHNOLOGY.

*Hall of Archaeology*—Prehistoric tribes. In this we have about 15,000 specimens, requiring thirty table cases of 1,500 square feet, and a room of 4,500 square feet. Recent aboriginal tribes will require eight cases of 400 square feet in an annex of 1,200 square feet.

*Pioneer Hall*—Historical relics. These will require ten cases of 500 square feet, and a room of 3,000 square feet.

*Hall of History*—Books; manuscripts; pictures; statuary, etc., will require 800 square feet.

*War Hall*—Material illustrating the part taken by Iowa citizens in the world's wars; will require ten case of 500 square feet, and a room of 3,000 square feet.

RECAPITULATION.

Subject	Number of cases	Square feet in cases	Square feet in floor
Geology .....	6	300	900
Palaeontology .....	16	800	2,400
Botany .....	32	1,600	4,500
Invertebrates .....	8	400	1,200
Lower Vertebrates .....	9	400	1,300
Birds .....	36	1,900	5,200
Mammals .....	20	1,000	2,500
Natural Resources .....	13	700	2,000
Archaeology .....	30	1,500	4,500
Recent tribes .....	8	400	1,200
Pioneers .....	10	500	3,000
History .....	8	800	1,000
War .....	10	500	3,000
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>10,800</b>	<b>32,700</b>

We now have a total of thirteen halls containing 206 exhibition cases of 10,800 square feet, on a floor space of practically 40,000 square feet. This may now be conveniently, and very appropriately, divided into two equal floors, or a building of two stories, 100 by 200 feet, giving 20,000 square feet to each floor. Our natural history requires just 20,000 square feet, and should be all on one floor. The civil history requires 12,700 square feet of the other floor, which leaves 7,300 square feet for laboratories, administration offices, storage, library, lecture room, etc., etc.

While part of the figures given are correct, others are approximate, and illustrative, yet they would need to be changed but slightly in proceeding with details for a building.

It is in bringing together the material for the exhibits where the co-operative method with the schools and individuals of the state would begin. They could assist in collecting desirable objects in their vicinities, locate and report historic places, Indian village sites, prehistoric mounds, etc., etc., and, ultimately, develop the work into a complete natural history and ethnological survey of the state. Material thus

sent in would be identified and prepared, and duplicates distributed to the schools, whereby each would in a short time become the possessor of a small museum representative of the state, and thus afford and encourage conservation in nature in the young minds while they are eager to grasp it. Then, as they advance to the high school or college, they will have acquired a training preparing the way for further and higher study along the same lines, and where they will then find more advanced and larger museums.

A general harmony of the citizens of the state would also be brought about, and they would feel that they had a personal interest in the schools, as they would probably have contributed something to each, and all would feel proud that they had helped to build the central state museum. Above all, thousands of valuable objects of historic interest and scientific value would be preserved and placed where they would become an everlasting benefit, instead of being "scattered to the four winds," or going to destruction entirely. The writer's attention is called almost daily to some article of historic or scientific value, that some fellow used to have, but he doesn't know where it is now. "I would have given it to you, if I had known you wanted it," is the reply generally made by them when asked what they did with it.

The State Historical Building is a magnificent specimen of architecture, and in this respect is a credit to Iowa, but its designer seems to have regarded its use as a museum as quite secondary, and in this we have a remarkable illustration of shortsightedness. However, this is but one instance out of many, and we are gladly accepting the situation, and are trusting to future developments. We have been "hanging on and hammering away" under innumerable difficulties, awaiting the time when the museum will be more than a secondary consideration, for in the eyes of the common people of Iowa, the citizens of the state, the people to whom the institution belongs, the museum is everything, but it has only just begun. Will you help finish it?