

Field Museum of Natural History

Founded by Marshall Field, 1893

Roosevelt Road and Field Drive, Chicago

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FIELD MUSEUM NEWS

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Field Museum is open every day of the year (except Christmas and New Year's Day) during the hours indicated below:

November, December, January, February	9 A.M. to 4 P.M.
March, April, September, October	9 A.M. to 5 P.M.
May, June, July, August	9 A.M. to 6 P.M.

Admission is free to Members on all days. Other adults are admitted free on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays; non-members pay 25 cents on other days. Children are admitted free on all days. Students and faculty members of educational institutions are admitted free any day upon presentation of credentials.

The Museum's natural history Library is open for reference daily except Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

Traveling exhibits are circulated in the schools of Chicago by the N. W. Harris Public School Extension Department of the Museum.

Lectures for schools, and special entertainments and tours for children at the Museum, are provided by the James Nelson and Anna Louise Raymond Foundation for Public School and Children's Lectures.

Announcements of free illustrated lectures for the public, and special lectures for Members of the Museum, will appear in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS.

A cafeteria in the Museum serves visitors. Rooms are provided for those bringing their lunches.

Chicago Motor Coach Company No. 26 buses go direct to the Museum.

Members are requested to inform the Museum promptly of changes of address.

MEMBERSHIP IN FIELD MUSEUM

Field Museum has several classes of Members. Benefactors give or devise \$100,000 or more. Contributors give or devise \$1,000 to \$100,000. Life Members give \$500; Non-Resident Life and Associate Members pay \$100; Non-Resident Associate Members pay \$50. All the above classes are exempt from dues. Sustaining Members contribute \$25 annually. After six years they become Associate Members. Annual Members contribute \$10 annually. Other memberships are Corporate, Honorary, Patron, and Corresponding, additions under these classifications being made by special action of the Board of Trustees.

Each Member, in all classes, is entitled to free admission to the Museum for himself, his family and house guests, and to two reserved seats for Museum lectures provided for Members. Subscription to FIELD MUSEUM NEWS is included with all memberships. The courtesies of every museum of note in the United States and Canada are extended to all Members of Field Museum. A Member may give his personal card to non-residents of Chicago, upon presentation of which they will be admitted to the Museum without charge. Further information about memberships will be sent on request.

BEQUESTS AND ENDOWMENTS

Bequests to Field Museum of Natural History may be made in securities, money, books or collections. They may, if desired, take the form of a memorial to a person or cause, named by the giver.

Contributions made within the taxable year not exceeding 15 per cent of the taxpayer's net income are allowable as deductions in computing net income for federal income tax purposes.

Endowments may be made to the Museum with the provision that an annuity be paid to the patron for life. These annuities are guaranteed against fluctuation in amount, and may reduce federal income taxes.

CHARLES ABEL CORWIN

1857-1938

Field Museum has suffered a great loss by the death, on January 27, of its veteran Staff Artist, Charles Abel Corwin.

Mr. Corwin was 81 years old, and had been ill for some time past. He had been associated with the Museum for thirty-five years. Prior to joining the staff he had a long and noteworthy career both as an independent artist, and on commissions for other institutions.

Charles Abel Corwin created a whole world within the walls of the Museum. He prepared nearly all the painted backgrounds used as settings for habitat groups of modern mammals and birds, and for restorations of prehistoric peoples and animals. The exhibits he thus embellished line the walls of several entire halls. His work includes scenes from every continent—landscapes and seascapes of the earth as it is today, and as it was many thousands and even millions of years ago. In addition to more than eighty backgrounds for groups, he painted a series of large mural paintings of exotic plants and trees for the Museum's Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29).



Charles A. Corwin

In his work he developed a technique which produced remarkably realistic results. A special problem in perspectives arose from the fact that most of the exhibition cases for habitat groups have elliptically curved backgrounds. Upon these the artist must so create his scenes that illusions of reality, depth, and great stretches of distance shall be felt regardless of the angle from which the completed exhibit may be viewed, and whether from a point close to it or several feet away.

A striking feature of Mr. Corwin's work is the skill with which he merged his painted backgrounds into the built-up foregrounds composed of actual or reproduced rocks, trees, and other accessories representing environmental features.

Mr. Corwin was born on January 6, 1857, at Newburgh-on-Hudson, New York. He began his art studies in New York in 1875, and continued with several years at the Royal Academy of Munich, and under the tutelage of Italian masters. Returning to this country, he became an instructor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1883. At the same time he continued his own painting and was a contributor to many exhibits. He won various honors and prizes in Chicago and elsewhere. While the larger part of his work in the realm of natural history is to be found at Field Museum, he is also represented by backgrounds for habitat groups in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, the Los Angeles Museum, and the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.

Mr. Corwin's accomplishments at Field Museum have been, and remain, a source of constant wonderment and favorable comment on the part of visitors. Countless and unceasing are the remarks of astonishment called forth by the realistic living qualities of the scenes he has created. It is as though his hand had been guided by

Nature herself, so truly has his brush depicted her phenomena. Withal, there is something more—something that was expressed by a critic who said: "He paints not only realism, but romance—his sensitivity is unsurpassed."

SOME DISCOVERIES IN THE FLORA OF CHICAGO DRINKING WATER

About a year ago the Department of Botany of Field Museum collected, by use of a filter, a small amount of sediment from ordinary Chicago tap water. This was done at the request of Dr. B. V. Skvortzow of Harbin, Manchukuo, who is engaged in studying the fresh-water diatoms of the world. The sample was forwarded to him for study, and he recently sent to the Museum a report on some of the first results of his examination.

From the specimen received by him, which was collected in winter, he selected for description seventeen kinds of diatoms, some of which were previously unknown to science. Diatoms are minute aquatic plants, visible only under a microscope of fairly high power. They possess a siliceous external skeleton or covering which is the part ordinarily studied. This is variable in form, but of a general pill box construction, and frequently marked with elegant sculpturing or intricate patterns of dots and lines. Consequently diatoms are favorite test objects for the microscope.

Diatoms constitute a part of the microscopic flora which contributes to the "fishy" taste that sometimes characterizes the water. To obtain a complete list of the kinds of diatoms occurring in the lake, sediment, and scrapings from submerged objects, would have to be collected at frequent intervals throughout the year. Such an investigation would show the number of diatoms occurring in Lake Michigan to be many times greater than those in the winter sample examined by Dr. Skvortzow.

Accumulations of diatom skeletons which are found in various places formerly covered by the sea form kieselguhr, an unusually white and fine powder used as an absorbent in the making of dynamite. Diatom remains are also a large component part of diatomaceous or "fuller's" earth, a substance sometimes used for water filtering, and one which, strangely enough, is an effective agent for filtering the diatoms themselves out of water.

On exhibition in the Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29) are glass models of some species of diatoms and other minute water plants, shown as they appear under a microscope.

LAUREL

The laurel of the ancients, among whom it was dedicated to Apollo, is a small tree of western Asia and the Mediterranean region. It is often cultivated as an ornamental plant, especially in southern Europe, for the sake of its evergreen foliage which, with the berries, is employed as a traditional symbol of achievement and glory—hence, "baccalaureate," from *bacca* and *laureatus* (crowned with laurel berries). In the modern Greek church laurel branches take the place of palm leaves on Palm Sunday. As a sacred tree it long enjoyed the reputation of being immune from harm by lightning. It is said that the emperor Tiberius would call for his laurel wreath whenever a thunderstorm threatened.

Laurel leaves contain an essential oil, and are commonly used as a spice. A branch is included in the exhibit of spices and condiments in Hall 25.



1938. "Charles Abel Corwin 1857-1938." *Field Museum news* 9(3), 2-2.

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