

# The First Century

*R. Bruce McMillan, Museum Director*

*The Illinois State Museum was officially founded on May 25, 1877, when Governor Shelby Cullom signed into law Senate Bill 220, creating “a State Historical Library and Natural History Museum.” The Museum’s story begins much earlier, however, in the frontier utopian community of New Harmony, Indiana, on the banks of the Wabash River.*

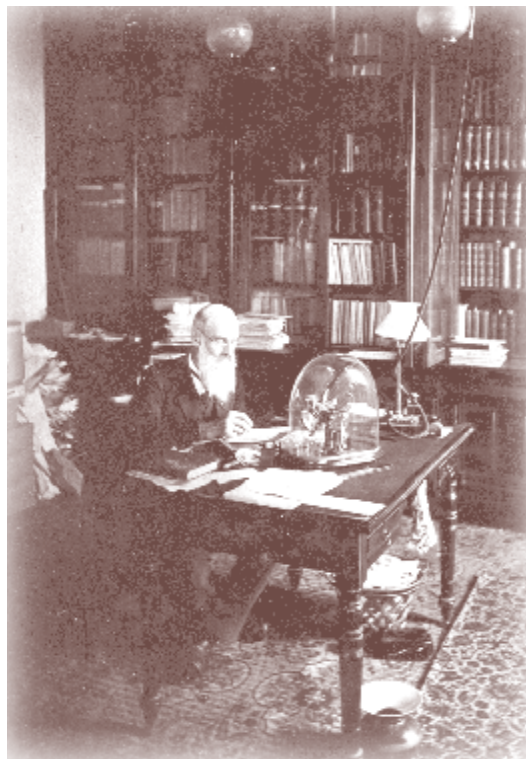
## From New Harmony to Springfield, 1853–77

The Museum’s roots can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, when travel was becoming easier as railroads connected principal cities and served the many towns that sprang up along the routes. Illinois had just exceeded the one million mark in population as immigrants flocked to the Prairie State. One writer, Harlow B. Mills, characterized the period as one of “ferment, excitement, and great ideas.” In his book *Illinois: A History of the Prairie State*, Robert Howard writes that in this period, the struggle to establish a public school system resulted in cultural programs failing to keep pace. But he goes on to say that “the state was not an intellectual wasteland—lyceums helped

It was in this environment leading up to the Civil War that the first seeds were sown for what one day would become the Illinois State Museum. It all started in 1851 when the State commissioned its first geological survey by appointing Joseph Granville Norwood as state geologist. Although the survey was authorized, no work space was provided, so Norwood approached his friend and fellow geologist David Dale Owen in New Harmony; Owen agreed to share his facilities in this educational, cultural, and scientific mecca on the Wabash. The first year, twenty-four counties in southern Illinois were surveyed, and by the end of 1853 a large collection of minerals and fossils had been assembled. Norwood retained the services of two assistants, one of whom, Amos Henry Worthen, would later assume the position of state geologist and, with the founding of the museum, would become its first curator.

When state officials became aware that the Geological Survey of Illinois was operating out of New Harmony, Indiana, instructions were dispatched to Norwood to move the collections to Springfield. This task was initiated in December 1854 when the collections were packed in boxes and loaded aboard a steamboat for the trip down the Wabash and Ohio Rivers to the Mississippi, and up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, where they were transferred to a train and transported to Springfield. River ice plagued the trip, delaying the cargo from reaching Springfield until the following spring, April 1855.

When the collection first arrived at the State House (Old State Capitol), it was accorded a rather cool reception, since no space had been allocated for it. It was first stored in the Supreme Court but was soon



*Amos Henry Worthen, first curator of the ISM, developed natural history displays in the Capitol. ISM photograph.*

adult education, denominational colleges came into being, the first theaters provided entertainment, and each town had a least one printing press.” This was also the time of the Lincoln-Douglas debates and, on the world stage, the appearance of Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*.

moved to the Senate Chamber, where it resided throughout 1855 until the following summer; at that time it was moved to the newly constructed Arsenal (424 North Fifth Street) in Springfield. There the space was unheated, making work unbearable during the winter months.

Given that the collection was moved three times in the first two years and ended up in a facility that was unfit for work, criticisms began to mount as to the value of the organization. In 1858 a legislative committee formed to investigate the work of the Survey commissioned a prominent geologist of the time, G. C. Swallow, to assess the significance of the work carried out by the Geological Survey. Swallow's report attested to the significance of the collection: "The collection is very large and contains a great variety of minerals and fossils... When properly arranged and set up in a suitable room, it cannot fail to be a source of pride and gratification to every citizen of Illinois."

It was implicit in Swallow's report that this collection was of museum quality and, for that matter, was often referred to as a "cabinet," the vernacular for early museums. But even with this positive report, Governor William H. Bissell was not convinced that the Survey's work was worthwhile. Citing the lack of published results, Bissell replaced Norwood with Amos Henry Worthen, Norwood's assistant. It would be eight years following the Civil War before Worthen issued the first major publication. Writing a few years later, Alja Crook, who we will hear more about later, suggested that Norwood had been unfairly treated, since he had had neither the time nor money that Worthen received when he first published in 1866. Crook also indicated that there was always some tension between the politicians, who were interested in purely economic ends of the Survey—and the geologists, who were more interested in paleontology. According to Crook, the geologists' interest "was natural because at the time paleontology offered the most attractive field for original work."

Under Worthen's direction, the collection remained in the Arsenal until the outbreak of the Civil War, when it was moved to the Masonic Hall (Fifth and Monroe Streets) in Springfield. Worthen proclaimed that "the collection now comprised the largest and most valuable State cabinet in the west." He also warned that an effort should be made to secure a fireproof building for the specimens. His prophecy was accurate, for in 1871 the Masonic Hall burned, destroying the offices of the Survey. Fortunately, Worthen's son Charles, asleep in the offices that night, awoke in time to rescue his father's library and most of the collection before the inferno reached the offices of the Survey.

In 1875, when the sixth volume of the *Geological Survey of Illinois* was completed, the Illinois Legisla-

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—G. C. Swallow

ture determined that everything worth knowing about the geology of the State was known, so no further funds were appropriated to continue the enterprise. Following the fire in the Masonic Hall, the library and geological specimens were moved to the basement of the Springfield post office where, even after the Survey was disbanded, Worthen continued without pay to care for the collection.

Now let us digress for a moment and return to the pre-Civil War year of 1857. This is necessary since there was a second antecedent to which the Illinois State Museum must trace its history. In the year 1857, Cyrus Thomas of Carbondale proposed to the State Teachers Association that a natural history society be established in Illinois. A year later on June 30 the Natural History Society of Illinois was organized and housed at the State Normal School, where a new majestic three-story building had just been completed in open countryside two miles north of Bloomington. The Society immediately began to assemble a library of scientific literature and to develop a museum to house its collections. Many of the scientific luminaries of the time were active in the Society, people such as Cyrus Thomas, John Wesley Powell, George W. Vasey, J. A. Sewall, C. D. Wilber, and Amos H. Worthen, among others. Many of these men were to later serve in varying curatorial roles for the museum. A state charter was awarded the Natural History Society in 1861, and following the Civil War the State Legislature established the State Entomologist's Office as a major function of the Natural History Society. Four years later the Society's museum at the State Normal School at Normal (formerly North Bloomington) officially became state property, and Stephen A. Forbes was appointed Curator. Then in 1877, the year of the founding of the State Historical Library and Natural History Museum in Springfield, the legislature authorized changing the Illinois Museum of Natural History at Normal to the State Laboratory of Natural History—the forerunner of the Illinois Natural History Survey.



*Stephen A. Forbes, director of the State Laboratory of Natural History in Normal, helped establish solid ground for the Illinois State Museum by supplying a variety of zoological materials that would form the nucleus of its collections. Photograph courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey.*



## A Victorian Passion for Order, 1877–1905

With the disbanding of the Geological Survey in 1875, the collection was stored in the basement of the post office, where Worthen continued to care for the specimens. Enlightened citizens, such as members of the Natural History Society, realized that the collection was far too important to let it be dispersed, and they pushed for the creation of a museum. This effort resulted in the introduction of Senate Bill 220, drafted from language provided by

series of specimens illustrating the zoology and botany of the state and to deposit them from time to time in the State Museum.” In compliance with this, Professor Forbes sent a variety of zoological materials to Springfield including “alcoholic specimens of fishes and reptiles, artistic casts of Illinois fishes, mounted birds, and mammals—a buffalo, deer, bear, and smaller mammals.” So the nucleus of the collections for the newly created State Natural History Museum were the fossil and mineral specimens from the first Geological Survey and natural history materials supplied by Forbes from the Natural History Laboratory in Normal.

Museums of the late-nineteenth century were characterized with a new mission, the Victorian quest for order. They invariably featured long halls densely packed with glass cases filled with specimens, a sharp contrast with their antebellum predecessors where cabinets of curiosities often accented the bizarre and the unusual. In his book *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876–1926*, Steven Conn wrote that this arrangement, specimen after specimen, case after case, might seem mind-numbingly dull, but that *the glass cases played a functional role in the development of an object-based epistemology. The cases forced the visitor to stare at objects and to consider them first on their own terms and then in relation to neighboring objects. Museum objects, and the relationships in which they were arranged, were intended to convey a narrative. The glass cases made sure nothing interfered with that. If the museum represented the world... then the glass cases represented the windows to the world.*

Early images of the State Natural History Museum demonstrate that its philosophy was fully in concert with this Victorian concept.

The Museum’s early years were tumultuous times for an emerging institution. It moved into a State House that was still under construction and would not be completed until 1884. Because of competition for space, the museum was moved several times, and then in 1887, when Worthen was out of town, Secretary of State Henry D. Dement ordered that the Museum be dismantled. Some cases were moved to a hallway on the main floor, but most of the materials—especially the geology collections—were dumped haphazardly in the basement of the Capitol. Worthen was emotionally traumatized and simply lost his will to live—he died a year later. A succession of politically appointed museum curators succeeded Worthen—Josua Lindahl, William Gurley, C. H. Crantz—none lasting longer than the administration under which they were appointed. Both Worthen and Lindahl, in addition to holding the position of Curator, served as librarian for the State Historical Library and held the

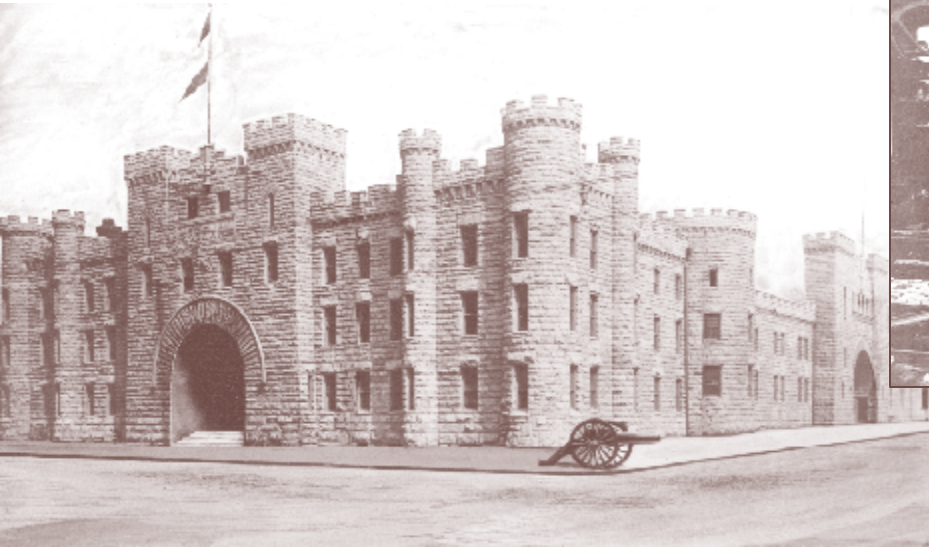


*The Museum’s first official home was the State Capitol at Second and Capitol Streets, Springfield (shown here ca. 1886–7).*

*Photograph courtesy of the Illinois State Historical Library.*

Stephen A. Forbes and Amos H. Worthen, which would pass the Legislature and then be signed into law by Governor Shelby M. Cullom. The action, on May 25, 1877, created the State Historical Library and Natural History Museum. The Board of Trustees, composed of the Governor, the Secretary of State, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, immediately appointed Amos H. Worthen as Curator and allocated space for the museum on the third-floor west wing of the Capitol, which was still under construction.

The law that established the State Historical Library and Natural History Museum also directed that the Illinois Museum of Natural History in Normal be renamed the State Laboratory of Natural History, where Stephen A. Forbes served as its director. Forbes wrote that the State Laboratory of Natural History was charged with the “collection, preservation, and determination of all zoological and botanical material for the State Museum (in Springfield)... and it was the duty of the director of the laboratory to provide a



*The State Arsenal at Second and Monroe Streets, Springfield, became the Museum's second home in 1903. Photograph left courtesy of the Illinois State Historical Library.*

*The ISM's exhibition area (above) in the State Arsenal was on the south end of the second floor. ISM photograph.*

title of State Geologist. In 1889 the State Historical Library was made a separate institution, and in 1905 the State Geological Survey was recreated and located on the campus of the University of Illinois in Urbana, with its chief being accorded the title of State Geologist.

The State Natural History Museum would move from the State House to the newly completed State Arsenal (Second and Monroe Streets) in 1903. During the Museum's early years, the curators that followed Worthen

attempted to care for the collections, but limited space and financial support precluded the institution from progressing. Alja Crook, the first curator appointed in the twentieth century, when reflecting on the Museum's early history, characterized it as meager, ill kept, and uninteresting, a condition that resulted in a lasting negative impression on visitors, including legislators. Crook lamented this unfortunate image, for he truly believed the Museum could be so much more.

## Progressivism in the New Century, 1906–30

The country's Progressive Movement that grew out of conditions in the 1890s culminated in the early years of the twentieth century. It was a time of social and political change, and for the Illinois State Museum, this milieu led to what Milton D. Thompson in his *The Illinois State Museum: Historical Sketch and Memoirs* called the "Museum's metamorphosis." The individual largely responsible for this transformation was Alja R. Crook, who was hired as Curator on September 15, 1906. Crook was the son of the president of Ohio Wesleyan University and had received most of his formal training in Europe. He had received his doctor of philosophy degree at the University of Munich and, prior to coming to the Museum, had taught natural history at Wheaton College, and later, geology at Northwestern University. Crook's initial assessment of the Museum is echoed in his statement cited in the paragraph above. He quickly realized that the Museum needed far more public support. A year after assuming his position, he took the lead in organizing the Illinois State Academy of Science, for which he served as President in 1914.

Perhaps Crook's greatest contributions were his administrative acumen and his skill in working with political leaders of the time. His tenure came at a time when Frank O. Lowden was elected Governor in 1917, a chief executive who ranks near the top in having made a lasting impact on Illinois State Government. Lowden deserves major credit for the enactment of the Civil Administrative Code of 1917, which reorganized Illinois government to improve its efficiency and economy. Lowden took a mishmash of over a hundred offices, boards, agencies, commissions, institutions, and departments, and streamlined them into nine departments, one of which was the Department of Registration and Education. Among other functions, the latter contained the Normal Schools, the Illinois State Museum, and the three Scientific

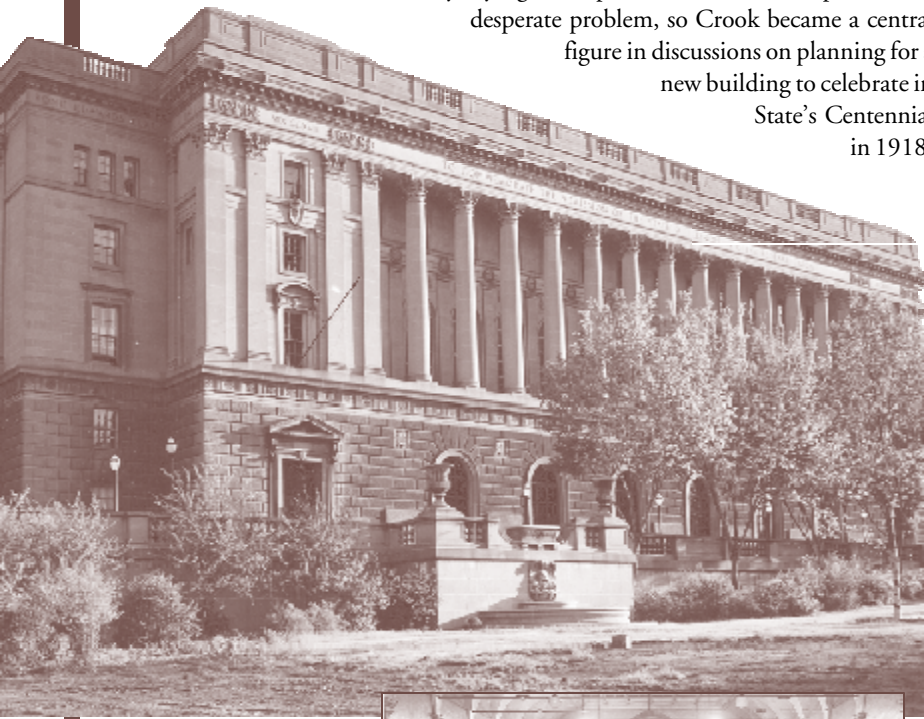


*Dr. Alja R. Crook—shown here with his wife Florence and children Richard, William, Elinor, Robert, and Frederick—became curator of the Illinois State Museum in 1906. Photograph from ISM archives, courtesy of the Elinor Crook Stericker family.*



Surveys—Geology, Natural History, and Water. This legislation had a far-reaching impact on the Museum, granting it division status in the new code department, creating a nonpolitical Board of Advisors, officially changing the institution's name to the Illinois State Museum, and changing the title for the Museum's CEO from curator to chief. The creation of the Museum Board has had a positive and lasting impact on the Museum ever since; the Board is as important today as it was in 1917. Much of the credit for the substantive legislation on the Museum is due to U.S. District Judge Charles E. Woodward, who worked closely with Crook in drafting the bill.

Even before the state reorganization, Crook was busy trying to improve the Museum. Space was a desperate problem, so Crook became a central figure in discussions on planning for a new building to celebrate in State's Centennial in 1918.



*The Centennial Memorial Building, at Second and Edwards Streets, Springfield, was the ISM's home from 1923 to 1962. ISM photographs.*



As early as 1909 Crook attended meetings on the proposal and then was added to a legislative committee to plan the project. A bill was drafted and passed to fund the construction of the new Centennial Building, but because of World War I, the building was not completed until 1923, five years after the anniversary. That same year, the Museum moved from the Arsenal to its new quarters, occupying the entire fifth floor and the basement. This new home, with significantly more space, fostered a renaissance in the Museum. Crook used this opportunity to develop several major, life-sized natural history dioramas that depicted the state at the time of its settlement, an advancement in exhibit technology that ushered in the state's new century.

In 1925, two years after the Museum moved into the new facility, the Illinois Academy of Fine Arts was organized in Chicago and held its first exhibition in cooperation with the Illinois State Museum, in the new facilities in Springfield. This was the genesis of the art program at the Illinois State Museum. The premier exhibition, which opened November 20, 1926, featured 336 paintings, sculptures, and prints, a presentation that subsequently toured to fifteen additional venues in the state. The mission of this formative program was to provide a chronological record of art created in Illinois. Two years later a permanent art gallery for Illinois was formally dedicated as part of the Illinois State Museum, with Lorado Taft serving as one of the principal speakers. At this event, the Friends of Illinois Art presented the Museum with twelve major works by Illinois artists. The following July, in 1929, Crook hired the first art curator. He had successfully established the Illinois State Museum in the field of fine art. That same year, a few months before his death, Crook also added the first curator of zoology to the Museum's staff.

Alja Crook was the person responsible for transforming the Museum into a modern institution, one suitable for the twentieth century. He was central in getting a new facility built that housed the Museum, was an early pioneer in developing life-sized natural history dioramas, initiated a fine art program, helped organize the Illinois State Academy of Science and the Illinois Academy of Fine Arts, and was instrumental in seeing that the Museum's governing structure was modernized when the opportunity availed itself during state government reorganization. Terry Zeller, Professor of Art at Northern Illinois University, spoke about Crook at the Illinois History Conference a few years ago and characterized him as belonging to a tradition of "cultural idealism." Zeller described Crook as a progressive reformer whose philosophy was that the museum was "a repository of ideas, not just a collection of things." Zeller capably captured Crook's character and contributions with the following characterization:

*[Crook] championed making museums as broadly accessible—physically, socially, psychologically, and intellectually—as possible. The “collection of thoughts” that were the animating principles behind Crook’s museum practices included evolutionary theory tempered by religious belief, acceptance of the idea of material/technological progress, faith in the improving power of education, and a commitment to American-style democracy. He insisted not only that museums were for everyone but that they were properly places for enlightened entertainment as well as for research and learning. He saw museums as instruments for fostering civic pride, improving taste and intellectual ability, and inculcating or reinforcing the practices of free private enterprise, American democratic ideals, and family values. Though in many way a man of his times, A. R. Crook was also in the vanguard of his profession, not merely pointing the way but determining the direction museums took in the first third of the twentieth century.*



*This painting, Main Street, by Elbert Drew, was featured in the ISM’s first art exhibition in 1926. ISM photograph.*

## The Great Depression and World War II Years, 1931–45

Following the death of Alja Crook in 1930, the Museum languished for a period of time. There was, however, an important appointment to the Museum Board that would have significant benefits for the Museum in later years. Dr. Fay-Cooper Cole, an internationally renowned anthropologist on the faculty of the University of Chicago, was appointed to the Board and elected chair. Cole was a visionary and strong leader who would leave his mark on the Illinois State Museum. He was instrumental in hiring a museum chief to succeed Crook when he retained the service of Arthur S. Coggeshall, who had served as chief preparator in vertebrate paleontology and curator of public education at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, as well as director of the St. Paul Institute of Science. Coggeshall, who arrived at the Museum during the early years of the Great Depression, focused primarily on exhibition issues during his six-year tenure. His concern was to modernize the exhibition areas to make them more interesting to the public. Exhibits were cleaned, and labels were prepared to be far more informative than they had been. Coggeshall’s philosophy was that exhibits should “tell a story.” Major habitat groups were moved from the basement of the Centennial Building to the main Museum space on the fifth floor, and

the Grover firearm collection was moved from the State Fairgrounds and installed in the Museum. The old-fashioned method of using natural light for “direct lighting” was replaced with new tungsten illumination. Coggeshall also fostered a public relations effort to attract greater numbers of people to the Museum. The Museum was changing to become a more educational and service-oriented agency. Arthur Coggeshall would resign his position in January 1937 to accept the directorship of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. During that year while the Museum Board searched for a new museum director, A. Gilbert Wright served as acting chief. Wright had been hired as curator of zoology four years earlier.

After a lengthy search led by Fay-Cooper Cole, Thorne Deuel, a former graduate student and protégé of Cole at the University of Chicago, was hired as museum chief on January 1, 1938. Deuel, an anthropologist by training, was supervising a WPA-sponsored Mississippi Valley Archaeological Survey when he was hired. Unlike his predecessor, Deuel was an academic with little museum experience but was well versed in the content of the Museum. Formerly a West Point military man, Deuel was both energetic and disciplined. He immediately set forth to begin expanding the staff and building the programs of the



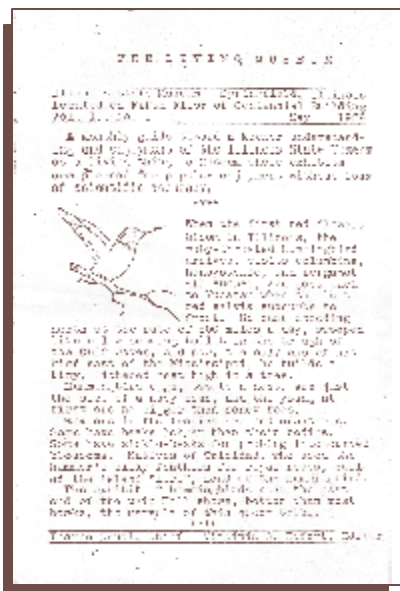
Museum. The Depression was waning, but several work relief programs were now in place that were substantially supplementing the Museum's labor. Deuel was determined to establish the Museum as a greater educational force around the state. One of his initial program decisions, which has had a lasting impact, was the creation of a monthly museum periodical, *The Living Museum*. This publication was founded in April 1939 with the hiring of its first editor, Virginia Eifert, who, in addition to preparing the text and editing the periodical, authored several popular natural history books that have placed her on the list of acclaimed Illinois authors. *The Living Museum* was the first of several outreach programs that would be implemented to serve both school children and the general public.

Federal assistance through the Works Progress Administration supported a number of Museum programs. This was coordinated through a WPA Museum Extension Project that was housed in a central laboratory in the Edward Payne House at Second and South Grand Streets in Springfield. The laboratory project supplemented Museum efforts in collecting, collections care, exhibit preparation, and archaeological research, and provided general clerical help. Art exhibitions were shown in the Museum that were produced under the auspices of the Federal Art Project. In 1940 the WPA Extension Project had developed a series of loan cases for the public schools, and loans were scheduled and shipped to schools throughout the state. During the summer of that year, the Illinois State Museum

opened a Modern Youth Museum in the Payne House, sharing the facility with the WPA Central Laboratory. As part of his outreach Deuel initiated even more programs. He had a weekly radio program entitled "The Tales Museums Tell." He also initiated a new series of evening educational programs under the banner of "Tours of Exploration," which covered a variety of natural history subjects. Deuel was responsible for developing a comprehensive publication program including *The Living Museum*, a popular science series, and a more technical scientific papers series. One of his more ambitious projects was the creation of two series of miniature dioramas depicting cultural evolution, entitled "Man's Venture in Culture," and twelve historically themed dioramas that portrayed the "Story of Illinois." Fieldwork was also being promoted under the sponsorship of the WPA—several archaeological sites were being investigated around the state.

As Deuel expanded both staff and programming, the ubiquitous problem that museums inevitably face—lack of space—was being exacerbated by competition among other agencies for space in the Centennial Building. Deuel, with Chairman Fay-Cooper Cole and the rest of the Board, began serious planning for a new museum facility that would be solely dedicated to the Illinois State Museum. Just as these plans were getting under way, the United States entered World War II, delaying this initiative as Deuel was called into military service and took leave in May of 1942. Before his departure he urged the Board to keep the Museum operating during the war years while he was away.

Since Deuel was part of the inactive reserve, Fay-Cooper Cole had expected that Deuel would be recalled into military service. Cole was prepared and immediately secured the services of John C. McGregor, Curator of Archaeology and Dendrochronology at the Museum of Northern Arizona, to serve as Acting Chief while Deuel was away on active duty. McGregor served for three years and maintained and developed many of the programs that had been set in motion during Deuel's first few years. He worked with the Museum Board to continue to pursue the planning for a new museum, and during his tenure conceptual plans and a model were produced of a museum that would have been located just north of the Capitol. Thorne Deuel returned to the Museum in July 1945 as the war was ending. Considering that the past fifteen years had witnessed a great depression and a world war, the Museum, remarkably, had grown and made substantial progress.



*The first issue of The Living Museum appeared in 1939, representing one of several outreach programs designed to serve both school children and the general public.*

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## An Age of Fluorescence: The Postwar Expansion, 1946–76

The thirty-year period following World War II was one of rapid growth and development of the Illinois State Museum. The Museum had lost the benefits of the federal work-relief programs at the beginning of the war, but the postwar years were ones of economic growth. Upon his return, Deuel, whose title changed from chief to museum director, continued to expand the Museum's staff so that there were

now curators in art, anthropology, botany, geology, and zoology. There was a fully staffed exhibits department, an editor, and a full-time photographer. In order to reach many of the rural areas of the state, the Museum pioneered an innovative outreach program—the Museumobile. This mobile minimumuseum, a bus fully equipped with exhibits, traveled to schools and communities where students and the public had

little other opportunity to avail themselves of the Museum's services. This was the first traveling museum of its kind in the country, and a program for which the Illinois State Museum received much national acclaim. Deuel and his staff continued to expand in-house and outreach programs by scheduling lecture series, film programs, a film loan service to schools, and by printing *The Living Museum* in Braille. It was also an era when many major collections were donated to the Illinois State Museum.

By 1951 the Museum had grown to a point that it hired its first full-time assistant director. Milton D. Thompson, a museum naturalist who had served as director of the Science Museum in the Minneapolis Public Library, was hired initially to develop three program areas. He was charged with establishing an accessioning and cataloging system, was asked to oversee and continue to expand the educational offerings, and perhaps most important, he was given the job of launching a not-for-profit membership organization. Thompson implemented the accessioning-cataloging system that, for its time, systematized the Museum's collections records and thereby provided the necessary order and controls. Working with Deuel and the curatorial staff, he continued to expand the educational programs and was instrumental in bringing in audio phones to enhance the interpretation of exhibits. He also recruited volunteers and enlisted the services of organizations such as the Junior League. Working with the Board, Milton Thompson was instrumental in the formation of the Illinois State Museum Society, which was founded on December 3, 1952. The Society, a membership organization, was chartered to support the research and educational programs of the Illinois State Museum. This initiative, accomplished fifty years ago this year, has been crucial to the development and growth of the Museum over these past five decades.

The 1950s and 1960s also saw a dramatic growth in the Museum's research enterprise. These Cold War years were the time when the National Science Foundation was created and when the interstate system was being developed, bringing with it highway salvage programs for archaeology and the beginnings of federal environmental and historic preservation legislation that would open many new avenues of funding for research. The Museum's first large-scale archaeological project of national significance was the work in Randolph County at the Modoc Rock Shelter in the early to mid-1950s. This endeavor, which reached nearly thirty feet below the surface along a bluff bordering the Mississippi River floodplain, chronicled a record of human history that was unparalleled at the time and that pushed the antiquity of Illinois' first inhabitants back to the early years following the Ice Age. This discovery captured the



*The Museumobile (1949–71), a bus fully equipped with exhibits, was the first traveling museum of its kind in the country. ISM photographs.*



public's imagination and caused an immediate need for revisions in many of the texts on American prehistory. Shortly thereafter, the Museum played a major role in the salvage archaeological work that accompanied the construction of Interstate 55 across the American Bottom in the Metro-East area of St. Louis. This new transportation corridor all but bisected the Cahokia site, an act that would be almost unconscionable today at this World Heritage location. These two large projects were the first of many Museum field projects as research mushroomed to keep pace



*Modoc Rock Shelter (Randolph County, Illinois), was the site of the ISM's first large-scale archaeological project of national significance. ISM photograph.*



with the burgeoning number of federally sponsored construction projects.

During the 1950s the unparalleled growth in programs and the critical space needs that faced the Museum dominated the attention of the Museum staff and its Board. From the mid-1950s on, in each legislative session there were efforts to draft legislation that would lead to the construction of a new museum facility. Finally, after years of diligent work—and frustration—on the part of the Museum and the Board, the plan for a new museum was approved by Governor William G. Stratton in 1960. A groundbreaking ceremony took place the following January and construction began and was completed the following year. The Museum was given permission to begin moving

in September 1, 1962. Exhibits were installed in the new building, and the facility was dedicated with a ribbon cutting on February 4, 1963. Thorne Deuel had retired a few weeks earlier on December 30, 1962, and with the new year Milton D. Thompson was appointed museum director. With a new 97,000-square-foot facility dedicated solely to the Museum, a new era in the history of the Illinois State Museum began.

Shortly after the new Illinois State Museum facility opened, the Museum, for the first time, was about to expand its operations outside of Springfield. Following discussions with the Illinois Department of Conservation, the Museum Board made a decision to accept a transfer to the Museum of the property containing the Dickson Mounds archaeological site.

*A new era in the history of the ISM began in 1963 with a new 97,000-square-foot facility dedicated solely to the Museum. Photograph right by Marlin Roos. ISM photographs below.*



Dickson Mounds had served as a private museum and tourist attraction for many years, the principal attraction being an excavated Mississippian Indian cemetery. The transfer was formally completed on July 1, 1965. Three years later, during the Illinois Sesqui-centennial, plans were consummated to build a new museum facility at this Fulton County location. Tourism was recognized as a potential economic engine for many parts of the state, including Fulton County. A new museum facility to house the internationally known burial exhibit was considered a prime Sesqui-centennial project—one that would promote tourism into the region. Construction began in 1970, and the new pyramid-shaped facility was dedicated and opened to the public on February 7, 1972.

Milton Thompson, who was well known and respected in the museum field, was eminently familiar with current trends in the field. He promoted Paul W. Parmalee, Curator of Zoology, to serve as assistant museum director. Parmalee would handle many of the day-to-day operations, freeing Thompson to deal with larger issues. The new museum facility in Springfield, equipped with new exhibits, was one of the premier state museums in the United States. Six new life-sized natural history dioramas depicting the various biogeographic areas of Illinois were the centerpieces. The art program thrived with an annual Illinois Invitational, which had its roots in the 1930s. When museum accreditation came along in the early 1970s, Thompson saw to it that the Illinois State Museum was one of the first museums in Illinois to become accredited. With the addition of Dickson Mounds and the construction of a new museum there, he had added two new and modern museum facilities to the state museum system. Even with the new facilities, the Museum had to again lease outside space in the early 1970s to accommodate an expanding interdisciplinary research program founded as the Quaternary Studies Program. This was a program this author was intimately involved with, having arrived at the Museum in 1969. Four years later I succeeded Parmalee as assistant museum director when he left to accept a teaching position at the University of Tennessee. The Museum continued to thrive and grow. Thompson retired December 30, 1976, after building on the strong foundation laid by both Alja Crook and Thorne Deuel. A few weeks before Thompson's retirement, the Museum Board recommended that the author be appointed to replace Milton Thompson as Museum director. This was subsequently approved by state officials, and R. Bruce McMillan became museum director on January 1, 1977.

Five months later, on May 25, 1977, the Illinois State Museum concluded its first century with a rousing Centennial celebration. ☺



## Suggested Readings

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*Dickson Mounds Museum's pyramid-shaped facility was opened to the public in 1972. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*