

Centenary Minute No 1 - January 8, 2002

In the months ahead, leading up to our Centenary Dinner on November 15th, I shall speak briefly on some aspect of the Club's history at each of our meetings.

When I became secretary-treasurer in 1980, Hap Kennard called me over to his house to pass on the Club's records. John Field, who held the same office before me, had sense enough not to want to be bothered with such things. And all the secretary-treasurers since have held the same view, so the Club archives—the equivalent of two plus full-size file cabinets—remain with me.

These have pretty much sat unlooked at until the past few days when I started going through the scrapbooks, correspondence, minutes and so forth, in preparation not only for these short monthly observations but more importantly as a prelude in the preparation of a Club historical publication which if all goes well will be ready for our 100th anniversary. As I proceed with this project, my monthly comments should become more interesting. Let's hope so.

To start off tonight, I'd like to recount the circumstances surrounding the founding of the Club in 1902. This is taken pretty much verbatim from a Club history that was written in 1933.

One hundred years ago—this coming November 15th—Harvard's eminent geographer, Professor William Morris Davis, in association with Copley Amory, Roland B. Dixon, James H. Kidder, and the late Archibald Cary Coolidge, invited Harvard men and others in this vicinity, who might be interested in "promoting intelligent travel and exploration," to meet together on November 15, 1902, in the assembly room of the Harvard Union at Cambridge, to consider the formation of a Harvard Travellers Club. Thirty men responded to the call. Professor Davis outlined his plans for the organization of the Club, and explained its proposed objects. The idea met with enthusiastic reception. Professor Davis was elected the first President and Dr. John

C. Phillips was chosen the first Secretary. As an earnest of interesting narratives to come, Mr. James H. Kidder gave an account of his experiences in hunting bears in Alaska, at that time a comparatively little-travelled region. Those registering at this first meeting included professors at the college, graduates and undergraduates, in all thirty. Thus the Harvard Travellers Club was auspiciously launched upon its career."

In another publication, in 1908, Professor Davis, who really was the founding father of the Club, wrote this:

Membership is not limited to Harvard graduates or to travelers, but is composed of "men who are interested in the object of the Club." A few undergraduates were originally included, but their number has decreased. Most of the members are doctors, lawyers, and business men in Boston. Resident members are those who reside within 40 miles of the State House. The numbers of these grew so rapidly in the third year of the Club's life that a limit of 200 was then set. This limit was reached in 1906, and has since then been maintained. About 50 non-resident members are also on the Club list. Fellows are elected from among the members whose journeys have led them off the ordinary routes of travel; and to these Fellows, numbering nearly 60, is entrusted the government of the Club, under a constitution adopted in 1905. A council of five members attends to the ordinary affairs of meetings; it also elects new members, selecting from among those nominated the ones who it is believed will best contribute to the Club's welfare.

Centenary Minute No 2 - February 12, 2002

The Club seal which graces each Meeting Notice first appeared on the 'Preliminary Programme of Meetings of the Club' issued in the fall of 1907 which was found in the earliest of the Club's scrapbooks. It is essentially unchanged today although one can notice some subtle differences. It was designed initially for the Club Medal.

From the 1933 Club History: "Among various plans for the encouragement of effective travel, especially among the younger men, Professor Davis [the founding force behind the Club] early proposed that a medal should be awarded from time to time to some person whose record of travel or exploration should be deemed unusually worthy of recognition. Accordingly, in April, 1906, the Fellows appointed a committee . . . to prepare and submit designs for a suitable medal. The committee at once requested suggestions for a suitable design from the members, at the same time having in view its use as the Club's seal."

The Medal was first presented at the Annual Meeting of the Club held at the University Club, 270 Beacon Street, Boston, on May 18, 1906. The speaker that evening was Professor Solon I. Bailey of Harvard College Observatory. His talk was entitled "A Journey made in 1905 from Arequipa, Peru, over the Andes to the Headwaters of the Amazon." Sixty members were in attendance. The recipient of the Medal was WILLIAM BROOKS CABOT (*For explorations in Labrador*)

The design of the seal shows [again from the Club History] “. . . a pilgrim in oldtime costume, with his staff in his hand and his wallet slung over his shoulder, surmounted by the word “Peregrinantur”—“they wander in foreign lands.” Our pilgrim is walking along the shore of the sea, which appears in the background, bounded on the right by steeply conventional peaks, the mountains of his desire, toward which his face is set. A lonely flower blossoming at his feet on the edge of the strand, and a wheeling dolphin, the fish that is the friend of man, thrusting its head above water, symbolize the flora and fauna, while a distant caraval is significant of travel by sea. At that time, travel by air had not been thought of, so no symbol is included!”

An early, more detailed version of the Club Seal was incorporated into a bookplate for the Club Library which was established in 1914 and originally housed at the Harvard Club. With the opening of the Institute of Geographical Exploration in Cambridge, the over 400 volumes were moved there and accommodated in “...modern bookcases in the Club’s room...” Alas, only a few titles remain from the collection which was otherwise dispersed.

Centenary Minute No 3 - March 12, 2002

The Club has met in many locations over the years. The first meeting was held on November 15, 1902, in the assembly room of the Harvard Union at Cambridge where it met another 11 times over the years. Many of the early meetings, 25 in total, were held in the homes of members, particularly at Beacon Street, Commonwealth Avenue, Newbury Street and Brattle Street addresses. Clubs were, and continue to be, the most common venue. Some of these are no more or have moved. Eight meetings were held at the Boston Athletic Association on Exeter Street, one at the Colonial Club in Cambridge, three at the Exchange Club on Milk Street, two at the MIT Faculty Club, one at the St Botolph Club on Commonwealth Avenue, two at the Tavern Club in Boylston Place, one at the Union Club on Park Street and 23 at the University Club then at 270 Beacon Street. A hotel was used only once, the Hotel Brunswick in Boston. Other places that hosted the Club: Three at The Fogg Art Museum, two at Horticultural Hall, and one each at Huntington Hall and the Legion of Honor Hall, 200 Huntington Avenue. From the day of its ^{grand} opening ¹² on November 1913, the Harvard Club has by far been the most common meeting place. We met there first on the evening of November 28th, 1913, when Professor Roland B. Dixon spoke on 'Twelve Hundred Miles through the Northern Himalayas.' Counting tonight, we have met here 631 times (which represents 85% of the meetings), in recent years usually in this room, the Massachusetts Room, but in the past most often next door in the Aesculapian Room the walls of which for much of that time were decorated with animal heads, some of which no doubt were provided by Club members. It is unlikely that any group has convened

in this building more often or started doing so earlier than the Harvard Travellers Club.

Possibly the most interesting venue—given its close connection to the Club—was the Institute of Geographical Exploration where we met a total of 13 times between 1931 and 1949. The speaker at the first gathering, which celebrated the opening of the building, was Professor A. Hamilton Rice who spoke on “Explorations in South America.” Professor Rice was a past president of the Club and a Club Medalist. He also paid for the building which still stands at 2 Divinity Avenue. Rice offered to foot the bill for the Institute if he was named its Director and appointed a professor. He could afford it: his wife was the former Eleanor Elkins Widener. The architect of the building was Horace Trumbauer who, not coincidentally was the designer of Widener Library. Harvard closed the Institute in 1952 and the building now houses the Harvard-Yenching Library and other non-geographical departments and offices. Earlier, when President Conant declared that ‘geography is not a university subject,’ Rice withdrew his support and went back to his wife’s 65-room Newport cottage in his chauffeured blue Rolls Royce. And to this day the ‘world’s greatest university’ lacks a geography department. Perhaps our most distinguished member today—Bradford Washburn—was a student of Rice’s and was later assistant director of the Institute before going to the Museum of Science.

It’s been said that on Rice’s last expedition to South America in 1924-25, short wave radio was used for the first time on an expedition, so too aerial photography resulting in the first map of a large area made from the air.

Centenary Minute No 4 - April 9, 2002

Including this evening the Club has held 741 regular meetings. I say regular because there have also been special meetings and lunches and in the early days of the Club—when the Fellows ran things—there were also Fellows Meetings and Dinners.

In going through the Club records I've come up with a total of 887 talks given at regular meetings, meaning there were two and sometimes three talks at a single meeting.

Classifying the talks, wherever possible, by geographical area, I come up with following, in descending order of frequency:

Asia	26%
Africa	15%
The Pacific	9%
South America	8%
USA	8%
Canada	7%
Europe	6%
Arctic	6%
Central America	4%
Middle East	4%
Antarctic	3%
Space	1%
The Caribbean	1%

And under 1%, Australia and The World.

Doing the same as far as subject is concerned, again in descending order:

Mountaineering	30%
Natural history	23%
Nautical	13%
Public Affairs & Hunting, each	7%
Exploration & Flight, each	4%
Health	3%
Archaeology, Anthropology & Historical, each	2%
Glaciers, Anthropology & Science, each	1%

Who has spoken to the Club the most times? Our member, Club Medallist Bradford Washburn. He's spoken on 13 occasions, the first on December 16, 1930, when he spoke on "Mountain Photography in the High Alps," and most recently at the 700th meeting on March 11, 1997, when his subjects was "Matterhorn, McKinley and Everest."

By the way, in combing through the Archives I've discovered Brad's Nomination Blank, dated February 24, 1931 (making him and Norman Vaughan our members of longest standing). Occupation is given as student, address as Lowell House. A note at the foot of the Blank instructs the proposer (who in Brad's case was Hal Coolidge): "It is requested that a brief statement be made on the back of this blank respecting the candidate." On the back appears: "Mountain climbing & Alaska."

Centenary Minute No 5 - May 28, 2002

In researching the history of the Club I have been going through the minutes and records from its founding in 1902 and adding interesting and relevant details to a computer database. I have now reached the early 1960s. Food and drink and their associated cost have been a constant topic of discussion by the Council from the very beginning. And needless to say there have been many changes. Here are some of things I've found so far:

In the early days of the Club there were no dinner meetings as we now know them. Members gathered to hear a talk or sometimes two or three talks in a single evening. However, refreshments were often served afterwards, including beer apparently. Secretary Townsend Thorndike wrote President Davis after a meeting in 1906: "Do you know whether the beer held out? When I get through the doctor business I am going to become a professional caterer. There would be little waste in my kitchen. I have got the science of ordering down to the least common denominator."

The Minutes of the 216th meeting, April 25, 1933 note that "The supper afterwards was sufficient although not too generous, as I have cut the price from 75¢ to 50¢, but we had real ale which made up for any shortcomings."

Post-meeting refreshments were still being served into the 1940s. The Minutes of the 271st meeting, April 16, 1940, report "...43 stayed for the usual refreshments (beer, ginger ale, sandwiches, crackers and cheese) afterwards."

Initially, dinners were only served at the separate meetings attended by the Fellows, back when they were the ones that ran Club affairs. At one dinner in 1904 at the Colonial Club they dined for \$1 each on "... Mock Turtle Soup, Fried Scallops, Roast Spring Chicken, Lettuce & Tomato salad, Neapolitan Ice Cream & Cake, Cheese, Coffee."

Occasionally a special dinner was held when a particularly important person spoke (Teddy Roosevelt and Peary's captain, Bob Bartlett, being early examples) or in conjunction with an annual meeting. The First Annual Dinner was held on February 14, 1908, at the Hotel Brunswick and was attended by President Eliot. Here's what was served, all for \$2.00:

Cape Oysters
Radishes
Olives

Bisque of Lobsters a'la Travellers Club
Consomme Julienne

Filet of Chicken Halibut Estragon
Potato Croquettes

Tenderloin of Beef, Bordelaise
Delmonico Potatoes
String Beans

Roast Young Capon, Giblet Sauce

Frozen Tom and Jerry

Sweetbreads en Caisses
Peach Fritters, au Cognac

Fancy Assorted Cake

Neapolitan Ice Cream

Fruit Cheese Coffee

Eventually buffet dinners before some of the meetings became common. The Minutes of the 220th meeting, 19 December 1933 record "...a buffet supper at \$1.75 per plate, including cocktails. With the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment we are able to charge those present for the cocktails instead of having them furnished by some generous member of the Council (usually Mr. Lyon)."

By 1950 the cost of dinner had risen to \$3.00. The Council met in November and "...voted that starting at our next meeting there will be an extra charge for cocktails. Tickets will be sold; charge, 50¢ per cocktail."

Not long after the present pattern of sit-down dinners was established. From the Minutes of the Council meeting, April 14, 1953: "We discussed the Harvard Club meal charges for next year starting October, 1953. Including all taxes, a semi-buffet dinner will cost at the rate of \$4.00 per person, while a plated dinner will cost \$3.75 per person. It was the consensus of the meeting that for our October meeting we would try the plated meal at \$3.75, and then charge each member present \$3.50, the Travellers Club thus subsidizing 50 cents per person."

The subsidizing of dinners still continues today even with the price now at \$30.

Centenary Minute No 6 - October 8, 2002

Beginning last January I spoke at each meeting about various aspects of the history of the Club, the 100th anniversary of which we will celebrate next month.

Tonight, I'd like to give a summary of those Centenary Comments.

My first talk was on the Club's founding. The Club History, which appeared in 1933, recounted it as follows:

Harvard's eminent geographer, Professor William Morris Davis, in association with Copley Amory, Roland B. Dixon, James H. Kidder, and the late Archibald Cary Coolidge, invited Harvard men and others in this vicinity, who might be interested in "promoting intelligent travel and exploration," to meet together on November 15, 1902, in the assembly room of the Harvard Union at Cambridge, to consider the formation of a Harvard Travellers Club. Thirty men responded to the call. Professor Davis outlined his plans for the organization of the Club, and explained its proposed objects. The idea met with enthusiastic reception. Professor Davis was elected the first President and Dr. John C. Phillips was chosen the first Secretary. As an earnest of interesting narratives to come, Mr. James H. Kidder gave an account of his experiences in hunting bears in Alaska, at that time a comparatively little-travelled region. Those registering at this first meeting included professors at the college, graduates and undergraduates, in all thirty. Thus the Harvard Travellers Club was auspiciously launched upon its career."

My second talk, in February, had to do with the Club seal.

It first appeared on the 'Preliminary Programme of Meetings of the Club' issued in the fall of 1907 which was found in the earliest of the Club's scrapbooks. It is essentially unchanged today although one can notice some subtle differences. It was designed initially for the Club Medal.

Again from the 1933 Club History: "Among various plans for the encouragement of effective travel, especially among the younger men, Professor Davis [the founding force behind the Club] early proposed that a medal should be awarded from time to time to some person whose record of travel or exploration should be deemed unusually worthy of recognition. Accordingly, in April, 1906, the Fellows appointed a committee . . . to prepare and submit designs for a suitable medal. The committee at once requested suggestions for a suitable design from the members, at the same time having in view its use as the Club's seal."

The Medal was first presented at the Annual Meeting of the Club held at the University Club, 270 Beacon Street, Boston, on May 18, 1906. The recipient of the Medal was WILLIAM BROOKS CABOT (*For explorations in Labrador*)

The design of the seal shows ". . . a pilgrim in oldtime costume, with his staff in his hand and his wallet slung over his shoulder, surmounted by the word "Peregrinantur"—"they wander in foreign lands." Our pilgrim is walking along the shore of the sea, which appears in the background, bounded on the right by steeply conventional peaks, the mountains of his

desire, toward which his face is set. A lonely flower blossoming at his feet on the edge of the strand, and a wheeling dolphin, the fish that is the friend of man, thrusting its head above water, symbolize the flora and fauna, while a distant caraval is significant of travel by sea. At that time, travel by air had not been thought of, so no symbol is included!"

My third talk, in March, was on the various venues at which the Club has met.

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here 634 times (which represents 85% of the meetings), in recent years usually in this room, the Massachusetts Room, but in the past most often next door in the Aesculapian Room the walls of which for much of that time were decorated with animal heads provided by Club members. It is unlikely that any group has convened in this building more often or started doing so earlier than the Harvard Travellers Club.

My April talk focused on the geographical areas and subjects covered by the 889 talks given at 743 regular meetings.

Classifying the talks, wherever possible, by geographical area, Asia has by far been the most common, the subject of 26% talks, followed by Africa (15%) and the Pacific (9%).

The most common subject has been Mountaineering (30%), followed by Natural history (23%), and Nautical subjects(13%)

Who has spoken to the Club the most times? Our member, Club Medallist Bradford Washburn. He's spoken on 13 occasions, the first on December 16, 1930, when he spoke on "Mountain Photography in the High Alps." Brad along with Norman Vaughan are our members of longest standing, both having joined in 1931.

My last talk, in May, was about food.

Food and drink and their associated cost have been constant topics of discussion by the Council from the very beginning. And needless to say there have been many changes. In the early days of the Club there were no dinner meetings as we now know them. Members gathered to hear a talk or sometimes two or three talks in a single evening. However, refreshments were often served afterwards, including beer apparently. The Minutes of

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String Beans

Roast Young Capon, Giblet Sauce

Frozen Tom and Jerry

Sweetbreads en Caisses
Peach Fritters, au Cognac

Fancy Assorted Cakes

Neapolitan Ice Cream

Fruit Cheese Coffee

Another special dinner is recorded in the Minutes of 344th meeting held on November 18, 1952: "A special 50th Anniversary sit-down dinner was served. Champagne and a large birthday cake were presented by the Council."