

**The Tarheel Victorian: H. H. Brimley and the North Carolina State Museum in Raleigh  
(1880-1946)**

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## Introduction: The Tarheel Victorian

On August 23, 1900, the *Raleigh News and Observer* reported that the North Carolina State Museum had some 3,692 visitors enter through its doors. They poured into the old National Hotel in Raleigh, North Carolina “from before 8 am to the evening.”<sup>1</sup> With a population of 13,643 in 1900, some three percent of the city’s total population visited the museum in a single day.<sup>2</sup> The crowd of visitors seemed “more than satisfied” with the exhibits on display.<sup>3</sup> One visitor thought the price for museum entry “was not worth half as much as what he had seen” on that day.<sup>4</sup> Wilmington’s *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, meanwhile, called it, the best of “an enlightened and progressive people.”<sup>5</sup> No less enthusiastic was Raleigh’s *News and Observer*, which insisted to its readers that “no other museum south of Washington” could ever offer the public such a unique “collection of valuable exhibits.”<sup>6</sup> During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this tiny wing of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture became one of its most widely known features. In fact, by the start of the Second World War, the museum, though small in size, enjoyed a quarter of a million patrons every year.<sup>7</sup>

Today, the modern North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (the reimagined successor of the North Carolina State Museum) is the largest natural history museum in the American south-east, and stands as an imposing institution in the heart of Raleigh.<sup>8</sup> Within its

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<sup>1</sup> “At the Museum Yesterday,” *The News and Observer*, August 23, 1900, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Joe A. Mobley, *Raleigh North Carolina: A Brief History*, (Charleston, SC: The History Press), 175.

<sup>3</sup> “At the Museum Yesterday,” *The News and Observer*, August 23, 1900, 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, March 1, 1901, 8.

<sup>6</sup> “Mr. W.H. Brimley,” *The News and Observer*, August 24, 1899, 199.

<sup>7</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture For the Biennium 1942-1944*, State Publication, 217.

<sup>8</sup> North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, “Museum History,” Accessed January 29, 2021, <https://naturalsciences.org/about/museum-history>.

walls, the museum houses exhibits that include everything from giant whale skeletons, to valuable gems, gorgeous nature dioramas, live venomous snakes, and skeletons of giant flesh-eating dinosaurs. However, on the second floor of the museum, stands a relatively unknown and underappreciated exhibit that displays the history of the museum itself and its most significant architect, Herbert Hutchinson Brimley.

H. H. Brimley (1861-1946) was born on March 7, 1861 in the village of Willington just outside of Bedfordshire, England. Brimley, an avid hunter, naturalist, conservationist, and poet, who, along with some of his family members, immigrated to the United States in December 1880. From the early 1880s to the mid-1890s, Brimley, along with his brother Clement Samuel Brimley (1863-1946), acquired a reputation for excellence in taxidermy (especially in oddities of the trade), and was thus often the subject of local newspaper stories. An October 1890 article in *The Daily State Chronicle*, for example, reported on the “Large Elk’s Head” from the Olympic Mountains in Washington state that Brimley prepared.<sup>9</sup> In another article that December, *The Daily State Chronicle* described his mounting of “A Monster Bird of Prey”—i.e. a four-foot-tall owl shot and killed by chicken farmers just outside of Raleigh.<sup>10</sup> Brimley’s work soon caught the attention of the Department of Agriculture, and he began a long career preparing exhibitions for the state, which lasted until his death in 1946.

Brimley’s first major exhibition came in 1884 with the North Carolina Centennial exhibition held in Raleigh, which showcased the agricultural and industrial products of the state. At this exposition, Brimley displayed the state’s fish and waterfowl.<sup>11</sup> Impressed by his work, the state government charged Brimley to help prepare exhibits for the North Carolina exposition at

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<sup>9</sup> “A Large Elk’s Head,” *The Daily State Chronicle*, October 24, 1890, 4.

<sup>10</sup> “A Monster Bird of Prey,” *The Daily State Chronicle*, December 17, 1890, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Eugene P. Odum, *A North Carolina Naturalist*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949), xiii.

the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.<sup>12</sup> Following his successful work at Chicago in 1893, Brimley acquired a new position as Curator of the nascent North Carolina State Museum. When the Department of Agriculture hired Brimley as curator, he quickly accustomed himself to the maintenance and preparation of museum exhibits and dealt with the bureaucratic state politics of Raleigh.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, while Curator, Brimley managed to create exhibits for international fairs, acquiring new specimens for the Museum, and maintained an impressive facility with few staff members and a perpetual lack of funding.<sup>14</sup>

Through hard work, passion, and pragmatism, Brimley and his associates from 1895-1946 built a museum that experienced a long period of exponential growth in both the number of accessions and the number of visitors to the museum per year. Through the Museum, Brimley helped proliferate much needed scientific knowledge about the flora and fauna of not only North Carolina, but the South as a whole.<sup>15</sup> His efforts helped restore a sense of cultural and scientific pride in North Carolina following its defeat in the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the economic depression of Reconstruction (1865-1877).

Overall, natural history museums—involving both the acquisition and exhibition of specimens-- became prominent in the United States during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the earliest endeavors, however, began during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the American Philosophical Society (1770), the Charleston Museum (1773), the East India Marine Hall of Salem (1799), and the mineral cabinets of Harvard (1793), Yale (1803), and Princeton (1817).<sup>16</sup> By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the notion of these facilities being “public”—i.e. fully “available to the public at large”

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<sup>12</sup> Eugene P. Odum, *A North Carolina Naturalist*, xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Cooper, “The Brothers Brimley: North Carolina Naturalists,” *Brimleyana* vol. 1 no. 1 (March 1979): 1-14, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Odum, 164.

<sup>15</sup> Cooper, 12-14.

<sup>16</sup> George Gaylord Simpson, “The First Natural History Museum in America,” *Science* (September 18, 1942), 262.

and “involving institutional or communal rather than personal ownership”-- was well established.<sup>17</sup> These types of public institutions, then, brought individuals intimately close with animals, plants, rocks, and fossils, while simultaneously educating the public on the natural world. By the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—and coinciding with the rise of new scientific disciplines, including archeology, geology, and paleontology-- they represented the convergence of art, nature, and scientific inquiry.

In the historiography of the American South, science and natural history museums tend to be omitted from any historical discussion. While not completely unjustified, this historiographical omission deserves some significant attention. Possibly the most important historian to contribute to this historiographical hole was Robert V. Bruce. In his landmark work *The Launching of Modern American Science 1846-1876* (1987), he argued that the stunted growth of southern science and scientific inquiry came from a number of different factors which included the institution of slavery, the lack of sizeable cities, religious fundamentalism, difficulty in acquiring decent scientific works, and the devastation of southern cities from Union Armies during the American Civil War.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, Bruce’s work has set the tone for how historians have interpreted southern science (and by extension natural history museums) over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

However, Bruce’s assessment of southern science has been challenged. In Stephen D. Lester’s work entitled *Science, Race, and Religion in the American South: John Bachman and*

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Robert V. Bruce, *The Launching of Modern American Science 1846-1876*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 57-59. From Bruce’s perspective, the only southern cities deserving of any serious historical mention were Charleston and New Orleans. In fact, Charleston had the first major natural history museum in the American South during the antebellum period. Besides these southern cities, Bruce acknowledges North Carolina’s own achievement in developing one of the first public education systems with the establishment of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen D. Lester, *Science, Race, and Religion in the American South: John Bachman and the Charleston Circle of Naturalists, 1815-1895*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 220



*the Charleston Circle of Naturalists, 1815-1895* (2000), Lester discusses the impressive scientific accomplishments of the Charleston circle of naturalists.<sup>20</sup> In his concluding remarks, Lester openly criticizes Bruce's assessment of southern science's backwardness and argued that the antebellum produced some of the finest naturalists in the nation.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, southern science suffered dramatically following the conclusion of the Civil War. Like other institutions in the South and due to the demands of the war, science and scientific inquiry stifled in the region. During Reconstruction, southerners developed different means to restore a sense of scientific education and inquiry to the region.<sup>22</sup> In fact, in the case of North Carolina, the State Museum, over time, became an organization that attempted to restore this sense of scientific inquiry in North Carolina.

Unfortunately, there is presently little in the way of scholarly works on either Brimley or the development of the State Museum. There are a few books and articles that deal with the Museum generally—usually providing only basic facts and authored by scientists (and not historians)—but none specifically. Indeed, none of the state's leading history texts devote any attention at all to the Museum. For example, in his *Raleigh North Carolina: A Brief History* (2009), Joe Mobley, who managed to detail hospitals, schools, and firehouses in Raleigh, failed to even mention the city's first state-sponsored natural history museum. Similarly, William S. Powell's more prestigious work published by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill *North Carolina: A History* (1977) and Milton Ready's more recent *The Tarheel State: A History of North Carolina* (2020) neglected to reference either Brimley or the State Museum.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lester, *Science, Race, and Religion in the American South: John Bachman and the Charleston Circle of Naturalists, 1815-1895*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Lester, 220-221.

<sup>22</sup> Midgette, *To Foster the Spirit of Professionalism: Southern Scientists and State Academies of Science*, (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 13, 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> Powell does mention both Brimley brothers in the *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*.

There are at least two reasons for this gap in North Carolina historiography. First, the Museum was predominately a state funded organization, and did not have many large financial backers—at least when compared to other public institutions in Raleigh and around the country. And second, historians traditionally argued that scientific pursuits in the former Confederate states collapsed following the Civil War, and that subsequent scientific pursuits focused specifically on agriculture as a means to promote economic growth. While generally true, the State Museum in North Carolina reveals a specific exception to that analysis. Indeed, Brimley was intentional in creating a museum that did not exclusively focus on highlighting the state's agricultural capacity or natural resources. He wanted instead to develop an institution that educated the public on the wonders of North Carolina's very own natural history.<sup>24</sup>

The only monograph on the Museum is Margaret Martin's *A Long Look at Nature: The North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences*, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2001. Martin attempted to place Brimley into a longer tradition of North Carolina naturalists, including John Lawson, Ebenezer Emmons, Moses Ashley Curtis, Denison Olmstead, and W.C. Kerr.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, Martin limited her history of the Museum to only the first chapter, and only mentioned Brimley, when she discusses the modern museum's scientific pursuits. She also failed to mention that some of the exhibits created for the State Museum were not exclusively limited to natural history and agriculture.

Unsurprisingly, especially considering the scarcity of works on the Museum itself, Brimley is mentioned in only a handful of secondary works. In 1949, three years after his death, Eugen P. Odum, a professor of Biology and Ecology at the University of Georgia, released the

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<sup>24</sup> Margaret Martin, *A Long Look at Nature: The North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-10.

monumental *A North Carolina Naturalist*, an edited compilation of Brimley's published and unpublished articles, poems, and speeches. Odum knew Brimley personally and, in his Preface, recalled his first visit to the State Museum. "He [Brimley] took me under his wing and made me feel at home immediately," Odum wrote.<sup>26</sup> "The enthusiasm and sincerity with which he worked and talked impressed me especially."<sup>27</sup> While undoubtedly an invaluable resource, there are problems with Odum's collection. Indeed, his editing of Brimley's materials often lacked an overall historical analysis. There was little in the way, then, of a biographical overview of Brimley or contextual information about the Museum itself. Odum compiled this important material, but failed to integrate it into a larger historical framework.

The next major work on Brimley was not published until 1979 in John E. Cooper's "The Brothers Brimley: North Carolina Naturalists." Overall, Cooper's work-- a part of a scientific journal distributed by the modern North Carolina State Museum of Natural History-- sought to explain the historical significance of the legacy of the Brimley brothers, insisting they possessed "incredibly inquisitive minds and an intense interest in nature" and wielded tremendous influence on the history of the museum and a generation of biologists.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, like Odum, Cooper failed to place Brimley into a larger historical context. Then, in 1986, the last significant work on Brimley was published, Eloise F. Potter's "H.H. and C.S. Brimley: Brother Naturalists." Printed in the Carolina Bird Club's journal *The Chat*, Potter's essay revealed little in the way of new information on Brimley.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Odum, xvi.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., vi.

<sup>28</sup> Cooper, 1-14.

<sup>29</sup> Potter did, however, explore in more detail the role of Harry T. Davis, Brimley's successor at the State Museum—especially as it related to the growth of the museum in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eloise F. Potter, "H.H. and C.S. Brimley: Brother Naturalists." *The Chat*, vol. 50, no.1 (Winter 1986): 1-9. In 1997, Potter wrote a 900-page history of the museum. It remains unpublished, but she managed to craft one of the most detailed histories on the museum to date.

In the end, H.H. Brimley and the development of the North Carolina State Museum are worthy of serious historical consideration for at least three reasons. First, it fills a gap in North Carolina historiography, especially as it relates to North Carolina's own economic development. Indeed, the museum emerged out of a desire to develop and advertise the state's natural resources to northern markets. Thus, the State Museum acted as a repository for this economic information, and Brimley created exhibits that showcased the economic opportunities available in the state to potential immigrants.

Secondly, the Museum played a distinct role in the developments of the New South, as a whole. In Edward Ayer's landmark work, the *Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (1992), Ayers argues that one of the defining features of the "newness" of the New South derived from the region's cities.<sup>30</sup> One of the key facets of this was tourism. Museums played a key role in American tourism during the turn of the century, and the State Museum was certainly no exception to this growing phenomena in post-Reconstruction Raleigh. Indeed, the State Museum attracted thousands of people to Raleigh and became a force that gave the city the beginnings of a cosmopolitan atmosphere. In fact, Brimley was distinctly aware of the State Museum's role in tourism and used this reality to argue for further funding of museum operations.

Thirdly, the museum played a role in the way that conservation efforts were communicated to the public. The State Museum, as a natural history museum, gave the public a unique perspective on nature--- i.e. by creating life-like portrayals of animals in their natural environment. Furthermore, with reforms in public education being enacted by the North Carolina General Assembly, the State Museum became a unique part of the state's public education

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<sup>30</sup> Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 61.

system. It did this by taking education out of the classroom, and allowed students to examine nature in a far more personal manner.

Overall, the State Museum, like other institutions in the region, contributed to the South's ability to reorient itself following the aftermath of the American Civil War and Reconstruction. The history of the North Carolina State Museum allows historians to examine this process of growth and recovery from an entirely new perspective. Furthermore, it reveals that the South could create natural history museums on par with their northern counterparts and inspire that same level of wonder to the public at large. The story of the North Carolina State Museum is a history of Brimley's passion and dedication, along with a life-long fascination with nature and the outdoors. Therefore, the history of H.H. Brimley, along with the museum he fostered for some forty years, gave both the state of North Carolina, and by extension the region, an opportunity to experience the wonders of the natural world.

## Chapter 1: Tarheel Geology: The Rise of the State Museum, 1799-1887

The North Carolina State Museum was the culmination of nearly a century of scientific and economic endeavor. While Brimley was central to the growth of the museum in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, he built upon the efforts of state geologists and reformers dating back to the first half of the century. Much of that early work was inextricably linked to the politics and economics of North Carolina. Indeed, while scientific discovery was an important factor in the museum's development, it was not the institution's chief aim. Rather, the State Museum emerged out of economic necessity, state politics, and a desire to promote and catalog the state's natural resources. Later, the Civil War and Reconstruction accelerated this demand to catalogue the state's resources, culminating in the establishment of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture in 1877, and then the founding of the State Museum itself in 1887.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the State Museum, during its conception proved to be a critical economic component of post-Civil War North Carolina. It gave state government an opportunity to both advertise the state and to catalogue its natural resources to the outside world. "I have personally visited most of the more important [museums] of those of the Eastern States," H.H. Brimley wrote in 1902, "I say that ours is ahead of any museum south of Washington, so far as my knowledge goes, in the lines on which it was conceived and has been developed. . ."<sup>2</sup> The State Museum's conception and development established an organization that transformed not only the state, but also the capitol city of Raleigh.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the journey toward the creation of a museum that was "worthy of an

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<sup>1</sup> While the modern museum in downtown Raleigh cites its founding in 1879, upon further investigation, the North Carolina General Assembly did not create a formal institution with a clear mission statement until 1887. Therefore, it could be argued that the museum did not truly begin as a formal institution until 1887.

<sup>2</sup> S.L. Patterson, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of North Carolina*, (Raleigh, N.C., Edwards & Broughton, State Printers, 1903), 54.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 54.

enlightened and progressive people,” spanned nearly a century.<sup>4</sup> Overall, then, there were seven factors that contributed to the rise of this premier southern institution.

One key factor in the development of the State Museum was the North Carolina Gold Rush of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the discovery of gold in the North Carolina backcountry in 1799, the western part of the state experienced a tremendous boom in population. From the 1820’s until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, southern planters, northern businessmen, foreign laborers, and subsistence farmers attempted to stake their claim at gold mining operations in the western counties.<sup>5</sup> According to one historian, nearly \$60,000,000 worth of gold arrived at the Philadelphia mint during those years.<sup>6</sup> While this pre-war boom, revealed that the state had valuable resources that could be exploited, the state’s traditional apathy toward internal improvements forced many discontented North Carolinians to emigrate to other states and territories in search of economic opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

In 1819—just as the gold rush was beginning in earnest—the legislature created the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvements designed to advise the state government on the types of reforms needed for North Carolina, which included a geological survey of the state. Unfortunately, the Board was unsuccessful in their attempts. Indeed, according to one reformer in the legislature, Archibald D Murphey—a lawyer from Orange County—the effort was insufficient “It has also been an object with the Board,” Murphey wrote, “to render those Surveys subservient to the interests of Science, by collecting information of the Geology and

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<sup>4</sup> *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, March 1, 1901, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Hauser, “A Golden Harvest’: Gold Mining and Agricultural Reform in North Carolina 1799-1842,” *Agricultural History*, 91, no. 4 (Fall 2017), 473-476.

<sup>6</sup> Fletcher Melvin Green, “Gold Mining: A Forgotten Industry of Ante-Bellum North Carolina,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 14, no.1 (1937), 2-3. In fact, a United States mint was established in nearby Charlotte, but Confederate forces seized the mint once North Carolina seceded from the United States in 1861.

<sup>7</sup> Hauser, “A Golden Harvest’: Gold Mining and Agricultural Reform in North Carolina 1799-1842,” *Agricultural History*, 477.

Mineralogy of the State. But thus far they have found it impossible to realize their wishes in this respect. They hope, however, should the General Assembly continue the Board, to be able to collect much useful information on these subjects.”<sup>8</sup> Despite this dismal outlook, in 1823, the State Board of Agriculture commissioned Professor Denison Olmstead of the University of North Carolina to conduct a geological survey of the State.<sup>9</sup>

A second key factor in the state’s drive toward the State Museum was the Olmstead geological survey. In 1823, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a resolution instructing the Board of Agriculture to appoint a geologist to conduct a geological survey.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the geologist was instructed to “commence and carry on a geological and mineralogical survey of the various regions of this State; and...furnish to the Board true and correct accounts of the results of said surveys and investigations. . .for the benefit of this public. . .”<sup>11</sup> The Board, then, appointed Denison Olmstead, a professor of geology and chemistry at the University of North Carolina, to conduct the survey. The legislature paid Olmstead \$250 annually for his services.<sup>12</sup> Overall, three reports were planned for the survey.

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<sup>8</sup> Murphey, *Memoir on the Internal Improvements Contemplated by the Legislation of North Carolina and on the Resources and Finances of that State*, (Raleigh: J. Gales, 1819), 18.

<sup>9</sup> J.A. Holmes, “Historical Notes Concerning the North Carolina Geological Surveys,” *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society* 6, no. 1 (January-June 1889), 5-18. This was not the first time a survey of North Carolina’s natural resources occurred. The Amadas and Barlowe expedition in 1584 left England to explore and gather scientific knowledge on the flora, fauna, and natives of the North Carolina coast. English artist John White painted breathtaking watercolors of animals, plants, and natives of the coastline. The success of their expedition steered Sir Walter Raleigh’s decision to establish a colony on Roanoke Island. However, this first attempt at English settlement failed in 1590, and it would not be until the far more successful colonies of Jamestown and Plymouth that England established a far more secure hold in the New World. Following the establishment of the colony of Carolina, John Lawson embarked on an expedition from Charleston into the interior of North Carolina. In his work entitled, *A Voyage to Carolina* (1709) Lawson recounted his experience and some of the flora and fauna that existed in the colony. He included modern animals like black bear, deer, and rattlesnakes. More importantly, he included animals that are now extinct in North Carolina, like the woodland bison, Carolina parakeet, and the American panther.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Hyde Pratt, “History of Geological Investigations in North Carolina,” *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society* 57, no.2 (December 1941): 295-305.

<sup>11</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at its Session Commencing on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1823*, (Raleigh, NC: J. Gales & Son—State Printers, 1824), 17.

<sup>12</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at its Session Commencing on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1823*, 17.



Olmstead spent much of his time collecting and examining certain geological formations in the western counties. In his first report to the state in 1825, he included the “Plumbago and Magnesian Minerals of Wake; the Free-stone and Coal of Orange and Chatham; the great Slate formation of Person, Orange and Chatham; and the Gold Mines of Montgomery, Anson and Cabarrus.”<sup>13</sup> Specifically, Olmstead focused on the economic utility of this region. “My observations,” he wrote, “...will assume the form rather of a Statistical Memoir, on the useful minerals which our State embraces, than of a scientific Geological Survey; although I hope to make some use of the information collected in my excursions, to promote the interests of Geological Science.”<sup>14</sup>

Following the publication of his 1825 report, Olmstead-- although having failed to complete his survey commitment (including two additional reports)-- left the Geological survey prematurely and acquired a professorship at Yale University.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Elisha Mitchell, another professor at the University of North Carolina, took over the work of the survey for the following two years.<sup>16</sup> Born in Washington, Connecticut in 1793, Mitchell came from a line of eminent scholars, missionaries, and farmers of New England.<sup>17</sup> Like Olmstead, Mitchell was a Yale graduate.<sup>18</sup> In 1825, he became chairman of Chemistry, Geology, and Mineralogy at the

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<sup>13</sup> George W. Jefferys, Denison Olmstead, Elisha Mitchell; and North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Papers on Agricultural Subjects and Professor Olmstead's report on the geology of part of the western counties of North Carolina*, (Raleigh, NC: Board of Agriculture, 1825), 5.

<sup>14</sup> George W. Jefferys, Denison Olmstead, Elisha Mitchell; and North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Papers on Agricultural Subjects and Professor Olmstead's report on the geology of part of the western counties of North Carolina*, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Pratt, “History of Geological Investigations in North Carolina,” 297.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 297. Olmstead left the Geological Survey prematurely

<sup>17</sup> Elgiva D. Watson, “Elisha Mitchell: A Connecticut Yankee in North Carolina,” *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society* vol. 100 no.2 (1984): 43.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, “Elisha Mitchell: A Connecticut Yankee in North Carolina,” 43.

University of North Carolina.<sup>19</sup> That same year, he assumed Olmstead's unfinished task, completing and publishing the final two reports of the 1825 survey.

Mitchell's brief tenure (1826-1827) coincided with a laissez faire, Jeffersonian approach to state government. Throughout the Antebellum period, state government was "considered at best to be a necessary evil, and its functions were extremely limited."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in North Carolina—like most states across the South—government responsibilities merely included maintaining order, protecting life, and safeguarding the rights and interests of property.<sup>21</sup> North Carolina, however, did possess a healthy two-party competition between Democrats and the Whig Party, which was founded in 1833. Traditionally, the Democrats were opposed to government spending and internal improvements, while the Whigs were generally in favor of those things. Throughout most of the Antebellum period (1835-1850), Whigs controlled both the General Assembly and the governorship.<sup>22</sup> Democrats and planters of the eastern counties resisted reforms, until the Whig party itself collapsed within the state during the 1850s.<sup>23</sup> While Democrats never displayed a visceral hostility toward the geological surveys, the Whigs were the most outspoken champions of scientific endeavors and cataloguing the state's mineralogical potential.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the state discontinued the survey in 1828, and did not commission another one until 1851.<sup>25</sup> Despite this decision made by the General Assembly, Mitchell's interest in the survey, however, went unabated, and he continued to conduct additional

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>20</sup> Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries*, 247-248.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 282

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>24</sup> Pratt, 298.

<sup>25</sup> J.A. Holmes, "Historical Notes Concerning the North Carolina Geological Surveys," 8.

geological surveys of the state at his own expense, making important expeditions into the western mountainous regions of the state from 1838 until his death in 1857.<sup>26</sup>

In 1842, Mitchell published his own work on the geology of North Carolina entitled, *Elements of Geology with an Outline of the Geology of North Carolina for the Use of the Students of the University*.<sup>27</sup> The work was a textbook for students at the University of North Carolina and contained one of the earliest geological maps of the state.<sup>28</sup> It highlighted different geological formations across the width and breadth of North Carolina. The work represented Mitchell's belief in the utility of education as a means to promote reforms.<sup>29</sup> In fact, Mitchell became one of the most important reform minded individuals and advocated for state sponsored public schools, as a means to improve the societal health of the state.<sup>30</sup> He believed that women should be educated, and supported the temperance movement, and, like many of his fellow southerners, supported the institution of slavery.<sup>31</sup>

A third element in the development of the State Museum was the establishment of the office of State Geologist in 1851. Following the geological surveys of the 1820s, multiple North

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<sup>26</sup> Watson, 47. Mitchell's private scientific expeditions in the Black Mountain region of North Carolina cast a long shadow in the history of North Carolina science.

<sup>27</sup> Elisha Mitchell, *Elements of Geology with an Outline of the Geology of North Carolina for the Use of the Students of the University*, (1842).

<sup>28</sup> Elisha Mitchell, *Elements of Geology with an Outline of the Geology of North Carolina for the Use of the Students of the University*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Watson, 44.

<sup>30</sup> Watson, 43-47.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 45. Despite his political views of the time, Mitchell became deeply interested with traversing the Black Mountains of North Carolina. Mitchell sought to prove that the Black Mountain region had the tallest peaks East of the Mississippi. In 1844, Mitchell measured the highest peak in the mountain range at the site of present day Mount-Mitchell, North Carolina. He measured it at 6,672 feet only 12 feet short of the modern measurement, however it remains the tallest peak east of the Mississippi River. Ten years later Senator Thomas Clingman questioned the accuracy of Mitchell's measurement. In 1857, to prove his claim, Mitchell set out again into the wilderness. Tragically, he did not return in time and a search party found his body. While attempting to climb the mountain, he lost his footing and slipped into a pool. Ultimately, Mitchell was proven correct in his measurement and was buried with full honors for his scientific success. He was one of North Carolina's most formidable naturalists, and, following his death in 1857, the Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society was named in his honor. This academic journal began in 1884 and became the first major scientific journal in the State's history. Also, the mountain itself was named after Mitchell and became one of North Carolina's first state parks.

Carolina governors called upon the state legislature to enact legislation to continue the work of the survey.<sup>32</sup> “The cause of agriculture, of science and the arts demands that this shall be no longer postponed,” Governor Charles Manly, a Whig, insisted in 1850.<sup>33</sup> “The sagacity of our statesman thirty years ago foresaw its advantages,” Manly added, “and North Carolina was the very first State in the Union that took up this subject—a small appropriation was made, and the Professors of our University, at different periods, are the only persons who have entered this interesting field.”<sup>34</sup> The Governor, then, concluded that, “enough only has been done to indicate the value and extent of what has been left undone,” and that it was in the state’s economic interest to renew the geological surveys.<sup>35</sup> During the session of 1851-1852, the General Assembly obliged the governor, and enacted the office of State Geologist as a formal governmental position.<sup>36</sup>

Specifically, the law called for the governor to appoint a State Geologist “under the general supervision of himself and the Literary Board.”<sup>37</sup> The State Geologists’ responsibility required him to “ascertain the different geological formations of each county and section of the State...”<sup>38</sup> Like the survey conducted by Denison Olmstead and Elisha Mitchell in the 1820’s, the State Geologist was required to give detailed reports on the “value” of the state’s natural resources.<sup>39</sup> Similarly to the 1823-1825 survey, the State Geologist would submit reports on these findings

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<sup>32</sup> Pratt, 298.

<sup>33</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Executive Documents, Printed for the General Assembly of North Carolina, at the Session of 1850-51* vol.1 (Raleigh, NC: Thomas J Lemay, Printer to the State, 1851), 31

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 31

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>37</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Laws of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at the Session of 1850-51*, (Raleigh, NC: State Office—T.J. Lenay, State Printer, 1851), 162-163.

<sup>38</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Laws of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at the Session of 1850-51*, 162-163.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-163.

and would be published for public use.<sup>40</sup> More importantly, the State Geologist would be paid \$5,000 a year for his work by the Public Treasurer.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the General Assembly required that the State Geologist “deliver lectures upon the subjects committed to his charge, in the villages through which he shall pass. . .”<sup>42</sup> This law also made the North Carolina Geological Survey an official state government policy initiative, and expanded its surveying powers to include agriculture, botany and every aspect of internal development. In order to advise government officials on internal improvements, the State Geologist acted in an advising capacity to the state government with the use of its reports.<sup>43</sup>

In 1851, Governor David Settle Reid, Manly’s Democratic successor, appointed Ebenezer Emmons of New York as the first State Geologist under the new law, and tasked him to conduct the first official geological survey of the state in over two decades. Born in Middlefield, Massachusetts on 1800, Emmons was a practicing physician before embarking on a career in geology.<sup>44</sup> He spent years assisting New York’s geological survey and helped establish the New York Board of Geologists.<sup>45</sup> The Board adopted much of the geological nomenclature and techniques that Emmons employed in his study of New York’s geology.<sup>46</sup> According to one historian, of the sixteen geological surveys conducted by the individual states, the New York geological survey became the standard of all subsequent geological surveys conducted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> Emmons was indispensable in that process.<sup>48</sup> Following an ugly libel court case

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 162-163

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 163

<sup>44</sup> Jules Marcou, “Ebenezer Emmons,” *Science* 5, no. 122 (June 5, 1885), 456.

<sup>45</sup> Cecil J. Schneer, “Ebenezer Emmons and the Foundations of American Geology,” *Isis* vol. 60, no. 4 (1969), 445.

<sup>46</sup> Schneer, 450.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 445.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 450.

against Louis Agassiz, one of the most prominent naturalists in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, Emmons accepted the position offered to him by Governor Reid.<sup>49</sup>

In 1851, Emmons began the hard work of conducting a geological survey of the state and published three different reports.<sup>50</sup> Like his time spent in New York, Emmons applied the latest scientific methods and nomenclature to the work of the survey.<sup>51</sup> The work of both Olmstead and Mitchell were valuable in Emmon's eyes. However, as he stated in his first report in 1856, "I have not referred so frequently to their labors as I should, if I could have had access to them at the proper time. But geology has undergone important changes since their investigations were made, and these gentlemen would now put an entirely new phase upon their reports, were they in the field."<sup>52</sup> The science of geology changed significantly since the 1820's and Emmons applied the latest scientific methods and geological classification to the work of the survey.

His first report in 1856 covered the counties of the midland portions of the state.<sup>53</sup> Two years later, Emmons published his second report on the geology of the marl pits of the eastern counties.<sup>54</sup> At the end of this second report in 1858, he included fossil discoveries he made in the region and the role they played in helping him distinguish between different layers of geological strata. Emmons described the presence of mastodon fossils in Eastern North Carolina, and he found evidence of pre-Columbian horses and pigs in the region.<sup>55</sup> Also, he discovered a number

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>50</sup> Pratt, 300.

<sup>51</sup> Pratt, 299-300.

<sup>52</sup> Ebenezer Emmons, *Geological Report of the Midland Counties of North Carolina*, (New York: George P. Putnam & Co., 1856), vi.

<sup>53</sup> Ebenezer Emmons, *Geological Report of the Midland Counties of North Carolina*, (New York: George P. Putnam & Co., 1856).

<sup>54</sup> Ebenezer Emmons, *Report of the North Carolina Geological Survey, Together with Descriptions of the Fossils of the marl beds Agriculture of the Eastern Counties*, (Raleigh, NC: H.D. Turner, 1858).

<sup>55</sup> Emmons, *Report of the North Carolina Geological Survey, Together with Descriptions of the Fossils of the marl beds Agriculture of the Eastern Counties*, 193-199.

of Mosasaur teeth dating to the late Cretaceous period.<sup>56</sup> However, his most vivid and interesting fossil discovery made on this expedition were the number of Megalodon teeth he found.<sup>57</sup> Emmons postulated that if the tooth specimens he found were any indication of the animal's size, that Megalodon, a giant shark who hunted whales in the Miocene's oceans, would have been nearly 100 feet long.<sup>58</sup> Emmons speculated that Megalodon must have "constituted the most terrific and irresistible of the predaceous monsters of the ancient deep."<sup>59</sup> Overall, Emmons' fossil discoveries in the marl pits of eastern North Carolina became the foundation for future paleontological work conducted by both future state geologists and H.H. Brimley (at the State Museum). More importantly, the discoveries made by Emmons in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century allowed for one of the earliest conceptions of North Carolina's prehistoric past.<sup>60</sup>

Although Emmons managed to make major geological and paleontological discoveries in North Carolina compared to any of his predecessors, the focus of his work rested chiefly in economic development for the state, particularly with agriculture. In his 1858 report to the governor of North Carolina, he argued strongly for the importance of utilizing the best scientific methods and techniques to improve the state of agriculture in North Carolina. The importance of agriculture, Emmons noted, was generally understood by the public at large. Less understood, but just as important, he argued, was "an improved agriculture... one founded upon established principles—one which leaves a beaten road and inquiries into the why and wherefore." In the end, Emmons concluded, "This is the only kind of agriculture which will elevate the masses, and give laborers a status or standing beside professional men, and enable them to exercise an

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 218-219

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 227-230

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>60</sup> Martin, 43. Although the fossil remains were scattered and incomplete, the discoveries, nevertheless, managed to allow future paleontologists to compare these remains with other fossils across the world.

influence as wide as theirs.”<sup>61</sup> For Emmons, then, the General Assembly needed to adopt the best methods of soil analysis and scientific technique to better profit from the natural abundance of the state’s soil composition. In short, Emmons advocated for a progressive, systematic, and scientific approach to the improvement of North Carolina’s agriculture.<sup>62</sup> This method of agricultural examination became an important aspect of the subsequent geological surveys and laid the scientific justification for agricultural reform in the state.

After each expedition, Emmons stored his finds in the Cabinet of Minerals.<sup>63</sup> Located on the third floor of the North Carolina Capitol building in Raleigh, this room acted as both library and repository for the geological survey.<sup>64</sup> Prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, this room held considerable value.<sup>65</sup> The Mineralogical Cabinet became the originator of the State museum. Up to this point, it became the State government’s most important sampling of North Carolina’s natural resources. However, for all of Ebenezer Emmons’ hard work during the 1850s, his time in North Carolina came to a sudden and abrupt end.

The fourth important factor in the development of the State Museum was the American Civil War (1861-1865), including Sherman’s Carolina Campaign and the occupation of Raleigh. Following Abraham Lincoln’s election to the presidency in 1860, eleven Southern states, including North Carolina (June 1861) seceded from the Union. In 1863, Emmons died, and was briefly succeeded by his son, Ebenezer, Jr. For the remainder of the war, then, the actual work of the geological survey remained virtually untouched. Indeed, by the end of 1864, North Carolina

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<sup>61</sup> Emmons, *Report of the North Carolina Geological Survey, Together with Descriptions of the Fossils of the marl beds Agriculture of the Eastern Counties*, xvi.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>63</sup> Martin, 8.

<sup>64</sup> JA Holmes, “Historical Notes Concerning the North Carolina Geological Surveys,” *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society* 6, no. 1 (January-June 1889), 10.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.



was under the threat of Union military invasion and occupation, and did not enjoy the luxury of further surveys or reports.

In early 1865, Union General William T. Sherman left Savannah, Georgia, and began the Carolinas Campaign, capturing Columbia, South Carolina in February, and entering North Carolina in early March. In anticipation of Sherman's push to Raleigh that spring, Confederate Governor Zebulon B. Vance asked Sherman to spare the city from the same fate as both Atlanta and Columbia (which had burned).<sup>66</sup> Sherman agreed to spare the city and peacefully occupied Raleigh on April 13, 1865.<sup>67</sup> However, the Capitol Building, including the Mineralogical Cabinet, was looted by Union soldiers, and many of the items collected by Emmons were taken from the collection and never recovered.<sup>68</sup>

A fifth key factor in the development of the State Museum was the tenure of Washington Caruthers Kerr as State Geologist (1864-1882). It was under the supervision of Kerr that the state's geological survey found new life. Unlike any of his predecessors, Kerr was a native of North Carolina. Born in Guilford County in 1827, Kerr attended the University of North Carolina and graduated with the highest honors in 1850.<sup>69</sup> Poverty stricken throughout most of his young life, Kerr was deeply insecure about his financial position at the university.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, he donated to the university in remembrance for the immeasurable positive impact it had on him.<sup>71</sup> In the years preceding the Civil War, Kerr worked as a teacher in Martin county, had a brief

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<sup>66</sup> Bradley, *This Astounding Close: The Road to Bennett Place*, 108.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>68</sup> Margaret Martin, *A Long Look at Nature: The North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 8.

<sup>69</sup> J.A. Holmes, "Caruthers Kerr, M.A., D. Ph. A Lecture before the Mitchell Society, at the University of North Carolina, January 24, 1887, by J.A. Holmes," *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society* vol. 4, no.2 (July-December, 1887), 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> Holmes, "Caruthers Kerr, M.A., D. Ph. A Lecture before the Mitchell Society, at the University of North Carolina, January 24, 1887, by J.A. Holmes," 3.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

professorship at Marshall University in Texas, worked for the National Almanac in Cambridge Massachusetts, and taught as a professor at Davidson College in North Carolina.<sup>72</sup> However, with the outbreak of Civil War, Kerr requested a leave of absence to aid in the war effort.<sup>73</sup> He worked on a salt mill until it was destroyed by the union army.<sup>74</sup> In the wake of Ebenezer Emmons jr.'s resignation, Governor Zebulon B. Vance appointed Kerr as State Geologist in 1864.<sup>75</sup>

During the 1860s and 1870s, Kerr worked tirelessly at the geological survey by publishing multiple reports for the state government and rebuilt its collections in the Mineralogical Cabinet.<sup>76</sup> Once again, like his predecessors, Kerr managed to expand the geological knowledge of the state for economic exploitation. He believed the educational benefits were immeasurable to the economic recovery of North Carolina following the Civil War. In his 1875 report, Kerr wrote, “And the educational value of the work is greater than can easily be stated; and the influence on immigration and the general influx of business, capital, and the better class of population is far greater and wider and subtler than is commonly imagined.”<sup>77</sup> At a time when North Carolina tried to reconfigure itself following the social upheaval of abolition and civil war, the geological survey served as one avenue by which the state invested in its economic recovery.

A sixth important element in the rise of the State Museum—and perhaps the most significant-- was the writing of a new state constitution in 1868, and the subsequent creation of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. In 1868, the North Carolina General Assembly

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>76</sup> Pratt, 301-303.

<sup>77</sup> Washington Caruthers Kerr, *Report of the Geological Survey of North Carolina* vol I., Raleigh, NC: Josiah Turner, State Printer and Binder, 1875, xv.

convened to adopt a new state constitution, a postwar prerequisite for readmission into the union.<sup>78</sup> Like the rest of the American South following Reconstruction, the advent of new industries and the collapse of the slave based economy ushered in the birth of urbanization and new industries. These included tobacco cultivation, furniture making, textiles, and with the arrival of new railroad tracts throughout the state, new railroad towns emerged.<sup>79</sup> These new industries pushed many people into the cities; however, North Carolina remained a predominately agricultural society.<sup>80</sup> Agriculture writhed, however, in the state throughout much of this period due to a drop in farm prices.<sup>81</sup> Many of these poor tenant farmers suffered from low yields and reluctantly paid the merchant's price for farm supplies.<sup>82</sup> Another round of reforms were needed for the plight of North Carolina's farmers and resulted in the establishment of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

With the adoption of the North Carolina State Constitution in 1868, the delegates called for a Department of Agriculture, Immigration and Statistics in 1877 to help facilitate and expand state government oversight on issues related to farming.<sup>83</sup> The Department consisted of a Board of Agriculture that met every two years in Raleigh.<sup>84</sup> They were required to make a full report to the General Assembly about their "proceedings and plans, together with an itemized report of the

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<sup>78</sup> Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, 392-395.

<sup>79</sup> Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, 406-414; and Edward L. Ayers, *Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 9-11.

<sup>80</sup> Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, 416-418.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

<sup>84</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at its Session of 1887, Begun and Held in the city of Raleigh on Wednesday, the Fifth Day of January, A.D. 1887* (Raleigh, NC: Josephus Daniels, State Printer and Binder, 1887), 714-716.

operations of the department...”<sup>85</sup> To head this Department, a Commissioner of Agriculture would be appointed by the governor.

The first Commissioner of Agriculture Colonel Leonidas Lafayette Polk from Anson county North Carolina became one of the state’s greatest champions of agricultural reform during this period. His efforts at the Grange, the Farmer’s Alliance, and his newspaper the *Progressive Farmer*, helped in the political organization of farmers throughout the state. With his success in state politics and influencing farmer votes, he was appointed the first commissioner of Agriculture. For the first few years of its existence, the Department of Agriculture’s main office building was in the old Brigg’s Building in Raleigh.<sup>86</sup> As the Department grew in size, the state government purchased the Old National Hotel, one of the oldest hotels in Raleigh, for some \$13,000 and remained as the main government office of the Department until the 1920’s.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the office of the State Geologist came under the control of the Department of Agriculture and the State Geologist became an integral part of the departments operations.<sup>88</sup> More importantly, in 1887, the North Carolina General Assembly passed an act ordering the Department of Agriculture to establish a museum to display the agricultural, the natural resources, and, most importantly, the natural history of the state.<sup>89</sup> This act established the North Carolina State Museum.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at its Session of 1887*, 714.

<sup>86</sup> HH Brimley, “Notes on Growth and Expansion of the N.C. Department of Agriculture,” North Carolina State Archives, NCDR-PC.203, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at its Session of 1887*, 716.

<sup>90</sup> The modern North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences considers its founding to be 1879. However, this not entirely accurate. There was no act passed by the General Assembly in 1879 that called for the creation of a museum. The General Assembly placed the office of State Geologist under the control of the Department of Agriculture, along with the specimens stored in the Mineralogical Cabinet. It is not until 1887 that the General Assembly establishes a formal institution with a clear mission statement.

Finally, the promotion of trade fairs paved the way for Brimley's involvement in the State Museum. According to one modern scholar, the success of trade expos throughout much of the United States during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century pushed many notable citizens in the state to create their own industrial trade fairs.<sup>91</sup> Members of the state government, believed that trade fairs represented the spirit of American reunion following the Civil War, and provided a means to promote investment in the state from Northern capitalists and immigrants.<sup>92</sup> The Department of Agriculture helped sponsor these fairs in this period including Philadelphia in 1876, the Atlanta World's Fair in 1881, and the New Orleans exposition in 1884.<sup>93</sup> In the words of Southern historian C Van Woodward, trade expos were designed to be, "modern engines of propaganda, advertising, and salesmanship geared primarily to the aims of attracting capital and immigration and selling the goods."<sup>94</sup> In 1884, on the anniversary of the founding of Roanoke Colony in 1584, North Carolina held its first trade exposition in Raleigh to advertise the State's industry and to highlight the progressive forces within the state.<sup>95</sup> From then onwards, following the success of the 1884 exposition in Raleigh, the Department of Agriculture continued to finance these fairs as a means to promote the state's industries well towards the eve of the First World War.

From the North Carolina Gold Rush, to the Civil War, and on towards the establishment of the Department of Agriculture, North Carolina experienced dramatic socio-economic changes that developed the state's institutions prior to the arrival of Brimley. In order to better understand the State Museum, historians must seriously consider that the rise of the museum was

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<sup>91</sup> Jim L. Sumner, "'Let Us Have a Big Fair': The North Carolina Exposition of 1884," *The North Carolina Historical Review* vol. 69, 1, (January 1992), 57.

<sup>92</sup> Sumner, 58.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>94</sup> C Van Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 124-125.

<sup>95</sup> Sumner, 58.

inextricably linked to the politics and economics of the State. Both the Geological Survey and the Department of Agriculture existed as a means to facilitate reforms in North Carolina during severe agricultural and economic hardship. The State Museum existed as a by-product of these institutions and housed a sampling of North Carolina's natural resources. More importantly, a progressive outlook toward agriculture and industry further fueled a need for the State Museum to be a repository of North Carolina's industry. In short, it was a museum showcasing the progressive nature of North Carolina and highlighted the state's ability to transform itself following an abortive attempt at political independency.

Thus, when H.H. Brimley was appointed as the State Museum's curator in 1895, he arrived at an institution dedicated to the exhibition and promotion of the state itself rather than the state's natural history. With the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brimley transformed the role of the State museum from merely showcasing trade expositions into a proper natural history museum dedicated to the promulgation of nature study rather than the state's agriculture or industry. Of course this was a gradual evolution, and Brimley faced some opposition from the Board of Agriculture.<sup>96</sup> Nevertheless, North Carolina's reformers, scientists, politicians, and former confederates of the 19<sup>th</sup> century planted an egg that Brimley later hatched in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the work of these men who came before Brimley, along with the horrors of Civil War and Reconstruction, may never have created the conditions necessary for the State Museum to exist at all.

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<sup>96</sup> Margaret Martin, *A Long Look at Nature: The North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 13.

## Chapter 2: Immigrants, Trade Fairs, and Mastodons

The tenure of Herbert Hutchison Brimley as curator (1895-1936) at the North Carolina State Museum marked the transition of the institution into what one contemporary called “the leading museum in this section of America.”<sup>1</sup> By the 1890s, the museum was in a state of disrepair and neglect, comprised of piles of dirty cases “so covered with dust that it [proved] a most filthy job to even give it a cursory examination.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, many items were unlabeled. Some had simply never been labeled while others “had had said labels removed by insect pests.”<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the next fifteen years, then, Brimley engineered a “legacy of a wealth of knowledge about [the state’s] natural heritage.”<sup>4</sup> Specifically, he organized the museum’s vast collection, built impressive displays at both national and international expositions, and advised others on the creation of their own state institutions. Described by contemporaries as “capable, industrious, and faithful,” Brimley was above all a visionary, possessing keen insight into the museum’s potential.<sup>5</sup> The museum, then, was to be an institution that added “to the educational, and the recreational needs of the people,”—a testimony to the richness of the state’s natural history and resources.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, Brimley “gave his best” to develop one of the nation’s foremost natural history museums, touching “the lives of thousands of young people and they perpetuate his tradition.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harry T. Davis, “H.H. Brimley: Obituary,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, PP3 Personal Papers of H.H. Brimley, 1.

<sup>2</sup> H.H. Brimley, “Letter to Mr. Chas. W. Gilmore from H.H. Brimley, June 28, 1911,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records, Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M5, 1.

<sup>3</sup> H.H. Brimley “Letter to T.W. True from H.H. Brimley, April 18, 1908,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records, Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3) Box M5 Paleontology, 1.

<sup>4</sup> John E. Cooper, “The Brothers Brimley: North Carolina Naturalists,” *Brimleyana* no.1 (March 1979), 14.  
<sup>5</sup> Samuel L. Patterson, *Biennial Report of Report of Samuel L. Patterson Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1905), 22.

<sup>6</sup> H.H. Brimley, *Raleigh Times*, January 11, 1929, found in Odum, 172.

<sup>7</sup> Harry T. Davis, “H.H. Brimley: Obituary,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10 Personal Papers, PP3, Personal Papers of H.H. Brimley, 2.

Brimley was the second of five children of Joseph and Harriet Brimley from Bedfordshire, England.<sup>8</sup> According to the 1851 census, his father, Joseph, worked some 161 acres of farmland and employed eight laborers to work the fields.<sup>9</sup> By the time H.H. was born in 1861, the family farm doubled in size with 386 acres and twenty-four laborers.<sup>10</sup> Brimley's early life in England was idyllic, and had a tremendous impact on his future endeavors. "From early youth he was, and still is, passionately devoted to the life of field and stream," one contemporary observed.<sup>11</sup> Brimley himself later recalled that the "proximity of water enabled me to learn to swim, row a boat and paddle a canoe, handle a shotgun and fishing rod at an early age."<sup>12</sup> It was in this environment, then, that he learned to enjoy the outdoors.<sup>13</sup>

This youthful bliss came to an end in the 1870s when farm prices in England began to decline.<sup>14</sup> Initially, Brimley's father considered the merits of immigration to other parts of the British Empire, including Australia and Canada.<sup>15</sup> Following a meeting with an agent from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, however, Joseph decided to immigrate his family to the "agrarian paradise" of the sunny south, Raleigh, North Carolina.<sup>16</sup> Leaving Great Britain in

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<sup>8</sup> Ancestry.com, *1861 England Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. *1851 England Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005

<sup>9</sup> Ancestry.com, *1861 England Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Ancestry.com, *1861 England Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2005. His father had been married twice before meeting H.H.'s mother. Joseph's first wife died prematurely; while his second wife gave Joseph two daughters named Marry and Hannah. Following his marriage to H.H.'s mother, Harriet, the couple had seven children. Sophia was the oldest born in 1849, then came Lucy born in 1851, and then followed by an older brother, named Fred born in 1859. Then there were two younger siblings, C.S., born in 1863, and Mark born in 1865.

<sup>11</sup> R.C. Lawrence, "H.H. Brimley" January 15, 1944, North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, PP3, Personal Papers of H.H. Brimley, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Brimley quoted by Odum. Eugene P. Odum, *A North Carolina Naturalist HH Brimley*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), xi..

<sup>13</sup> Eugene P. Odum, *A North Carolina Naturalist HH Brimley*, xi.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>15</sup> John E. Cooper, "The Brothers Brimley: North Carolina Naturalists," 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



December 1880, the Brimleys traversed the North Atlantic and arrived in New York harbor on December 27, 1880.<sup>17</sup>

On New Year's Eve 1880, the family arrived at Raleigh. They checked into the National Hotel across from the state legislature and spent their first night in the United States shivering.<sup>18</sup> "The hotel, now the Old Agricultural Building, was not equipped with running water and that in the pitcher in the bedroom I occupied was frozen solid," Brimley later recalled. "We had to pull up the carpets and use them for blankets to keep from freezing to death the first night, no artificial heat being provided in the rooms."<sup>19</sup> Brimley, then, struggled acclimating to North Carolina. "My first impression of Raleigh was that it was without question the damndest place I had ever seen," Brimley later wrote.<sup>20</sup> "Expecting to jump directly into the justly celebrated Sunny South irrespective of the time of the year... I found a town with unpaved streets, ruts hub deep, frozen solid and covered with snow... There were some board sidewalks but military tanks or caterpillar tractors would have been the only suitable vehicles for negotiating those streets under the prevailing conditions."<sup>21</sup> As Brimley accustomed himself to his new surroundings, however, he quickly found Raleigh to have "a restless, pushing air," and that its people "impressed" him.<sup>22</sup>

Initially, Brimley set out to be a farmer in in his newly adopted home.<sup>23</sup> Farming, however, proved untenable due to the soil being rocky and infertile.<sup>24</sup> In 1882, then, Brimley

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<sup>17</sup> Ancestry.com, *New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Odum, xii, and Cooper, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Odum, xii.

<sup>20</sup> Brimley quoted by Odum, Odum, xi..

<sup>21</sup> Brimley quoted in Odum, Ibid, xi-xii.

<sup>22</sup> Brimley quoted in Odum, Ibid, xii.

<sup>23</sup> Cooper, 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

turned to teaching, receiving his Teacher First Grade Certificate license that January.<sup>25</sup> Even teaching presented him with challenges. While he had scored high on his teaching exam, he struggled with classroom management, and lasted in the profession for only a year. Language—accents in particular—proved the main obstacle. “I will never know which of the three bodies were happier when I resigned—the school committee, the students or myself,” Brimley later recalled.<sup>26</sup> “We just could not understand each other.”<sup>27</sup> Still, Brimley—in what would later characterize his approach to museum work—remained positive and flexible in the face of difficulty, possessing an attitude of “Do What You Can Now With What You Have.”<sup>28</sup>

It was during this time too that Brimley, along with his brother, C.S., became interested in taxidermy. An influential and new work in the field was Walter P. Manton’s 1882 *Taxidermy Without a Teacher*.<sup>29</sup> The work was essentially an instruction manual for the novice taxidermist that provided step-by-step instructions on mounting birds, fish, mammals, and reptiles.<sup>30</sup> Manton consistently encouraged his readers by reminding them that the art of taxidermy was a skill that required both patience and perseverance. “... I would,” Manton wrote, “caution the beginner against all impatience and disappointment and an unsuccessful attempts, and urge him to press forward, continually striving to improve upon past failures, and soon, to his own astonishment, those things which at first appeared difficult and awkward will become comparatively simple

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<sup>25</sup> County Superintendent of Public Education, “Teacher’s First Grade Certificate, January 30, 1882,” Margaret Cortrufo Office Files.

<sup>26</sup> Brimley quoted by Cooper. Cooper, 4

<sup>27</sup> Brimley quoted by Cooper. Ibid, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Title of Brimley’s article on securing Trouble the Sperm Whale, found in Odum. H.H. Brimley, “Do What You Can Now With What You Have, The Museum News vol. 8, no.10 (November 15, 1930), 8-12., 184.

<sup>29</sup> Walter P. Manton, *Taxidermy Without a Teacher: Comprising A Complete Manual of Instruction for Preparing and Preserving Birds, Animals and Fish with a Chapter on Hunting and Hygiene; Instructions for Preserving for Eggs and Making Skeletons and a Number of Valuable Receipts*, (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1882).

<sup>30</sup> Manton, *Taxidermy without a Teacher*, 9.

and easy.”<sup>31</sup> Manton also emphasized the importance of field work, and studying the animals in their natural habitat in order to better understand their character.<sup>32</sup> Field research, he believed, was essential for the taxidermist to capture an aesthetic realism. Manton’s work, and this emphasis on taxidermy as an art form, had a tremendous impact on Brimley. In short, it represented the perfect professional blend among art, science, and the outdoors that he enjoyed since he was a child in England. “Taxidermy is an art,” H.H. wrote in 1901.<sup>33</sup> “Not only is it necessary for the operator to know the natural attitudes of his subjects when alive, but he must, in addition, possess the knowledge needed to properly model their skinned bodies...”<sup>34</sup>

In 1883, Brimley, along with his younger brother C.S. Brimley, opened their own taxidermy shop called Brimley Brothers Collectors and Preparers.<sup>35</sup> Located on New Berne Avenue at the corner of Tarboro Road in Raleigh, they prepared mounts of North Carolina animals for schools, wealthy businessmen, and private citizens in the area.<sup>36</sup> They also provided live animals for classroom dissection and insects in alcohol solutions.<sup>37</sup> The collecting of bird eggs and feathers also became an important part of their job. Indeed, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with a heightened interest in ornithology, as well as a growing demand for feathers in women’s fashion.<sup>38</sup> The main priority of the taxidermy shop, Brimley remembered, was “to keep the justly celebrated wolf from the not-too-securely-fastened door. . .”<sup>39</sup> In other words, the shop needed

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>33</sup> H.H. Brimley, “The Art of Taxidermy,” *Charlotte Daily Observer*, October 23, 1910, found in Odum, 177.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 177.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>36</sup> Cooper, 4 and Eloise F. Potter, *The North Carolina State Museum of Natural Science 1879-1990*, (unpublished manuscript), 104.

<sup>37</sup> “Price List of Zoological Material for sale by H.H. & C.S. Brimley, September 15, 1898” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, PP3, Personal Papers of H.H. Brimley, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Oliver H. Orr, *Saving American Birds: T. Gilbert Pearson and the Founding of the Audubon Society*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida), 27.

<sup>39</sup> Orr, *Saving American Birds*, 10.

to make money, quickly. To do this, the brothers embarked on “a crude grade of custom taxidermy together with the collecting of bird skins and eggs for wealthy men in the big cities, who vied for each other over the comparative magnitude of their collections.”<sup>40</sup> By 1884, the brothers’ were successful enough in business to be described by one local newspaper as “scientific taxidermists.”<sup>41</sup>

The Brimleys were the most notable taxidermists in the capitol city, and had published several different articles on the birds of Raleigh including, “A list of birds known to breed at Raleigh N.C.” (1888), “The Nesting of the Yellow-Throated Warbler at Raleigh, N.C.” (1890), and “On the Breeding Habits of *Dendroica vigorsii* at Raleigh North Carolina,” (1891) to name but a few.<sup>42</sup> In an article published for the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society in 1888, George F. Atkinson wrote an early catalogue of some of the species of birds found in North Carolina.<sup>43</sup> Atkinson employed the services of the Brimley brothers and mentioned that they had located some 175 different species in the city of Raleigh alone and critically noted that some of these were either duplicates and noted that “some additions [were] made from the coast region.”<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, H.H. Brimley’s work with taxidermy marked the beginning of his experiences in the wilderness of North Carolina, and the collecting and preparing of wildlife specimens (especially bird eggs) that proved essential in later servicing the State Museum.

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<sup>40</sup> H.H. Brimley, “Some Random Notes on Egg Collecting,” *The Chat*, vol. 6, no.3 (May, 1942), 37-40, found in Odum, 10.

<sup>41</sup> “An Immense Elk’s Head,” *The Daily State Chronicle*, October 24, 1890, 4.

<sup>42</sup> C.S. Brimley, “A List of birds to breed at Raleigh, N.C.,” *The Ornithologist and Oölogist*, vol. 13 (1888):42-43; C.S. Brimley “The Nesting of the Yellow-Throated Warbler at Raleigh, N.C.” *The Auk* vol. 7 (1890): 323-326; and C.S. Brimley, “On the Breeding Habits of *Dendroica vigorsii* at Raleigh, North Carolina,” *The Auk*, vol.8 (1891):199-200. These can be found on biodiversity heritage library. All of these articles were written by C.S. Brimley. He was the far more scientifically driven of the Brimley brothers.

<sup>43</sup> George Francis Atkinson, “Preliminary Catalogue of the Birds of North Carolina, with notes on some of the species,” *Journal of the Elisha Mitchell Scientific Society*, vol. 4, no.2 (1887): 44-87.

<sup>44</sup> Atkinson, “Preliminary Catalogue of the Birds of North Carolina, with notes on some of the Species,” 46.

The North Carolina Centennial Exposition of 1884 in Raleigh marked Brimley's first exposure to statewide professional acclaim. In preparation for the exposition, the State Department of Agriculture commissioned Brimley to mount a number of fish and waterfowl specimens.<sup>45</sup> Brimley travelled to Currituck Sound off the coast of North Carolina to collect the specimens necessary.<sup>46</sup> He left in February 1884 and later recalled that, "many of the impressions experienced at that time were so deeply engraved on my memory that they continue to show up clearly at the present day."<sup>47</sup> He wrote a poem titled, "The Waterfowl of Currituck" where he described the beautiful and numerous number of waterfowl in the region:

On the stretches of the Sound to westward,  
And over the Sound to east  
The Fowl are adrift in thousands  
Alert at their watery feast;  
And down in the southward reaches---  
As over the bay to north---  
Are many more thousands winging  
Their aerals back and forth.

The broad and long expanses  
Of shoal and feeding ground  
Are alive with countless myriads  
As nowhere else are found:  
Acres of fowl on the water  
And clouds of them in the air,---  
There's naught among Nature's pictures  
Can ever with this compare<sup>48</sup>

"Reaching Currituck was not easy in those days," wrote H.H. Brimley in 1943, "as that section of the State then possessed no railway facilities."<sup>49</sup> "By rail to Norkfolk, [VA] was the first lap; thence by steamer up the Elizabeth River, through the Albemarle and Chesapeake canal and

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<sup>45</sup> Cooper, 5.

<sup>46</sup> H.H. Brimley, "Old Times on Currituck," *North Carolina Wildlife Conservation*, vol.7 no. 3 (March, 1943), 8-13., found in Odum, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 15-17.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 17.

North River into Currituck Sound. The canal was again entered at the south end of Coinjock Bay, my getting off place being the settlement of Coinjock. From there, across Church Island to the Midyette place on the sound was by ox-cart.”<sup>50</sup>

Brimley hunted and purchased many of his specimens, while in Currituck.<sup>51</sup> In fact, a local boy reported to Brimley a pair of Bald Eagles that he found perched in a tree, while passing by in his ox-cart.<sup>52</sup> He approached the tree where the pair of eagles perched, but his foot slipped and missed his shot.<sup>53</sup> Quite embarrassed after the fact, Brimley wrote later on, “Since then I have often wondered what sort of a tale the boy told his fellow-employees about the poor marksmanship of the city feller who couldn’t hit as big an object as an eagle when it was almost sitting on his head!”<sup>54</sup> When Brimley returned, he began the process of mounting the specimens he collected in Currituck for the fish and game exhibit.

The pomp and ceremony of the 1884 centennial exposition showcased the finest products and industries that the state could offer.<sup>55</sup> Along with Currituck, he found the State Fair to be a memorable experience, especially the “deep red mud or the unspeakable red dust. . . and the tented barrooms where the mud could be forgotten or the dust washed from one’s throat. . .”<sup>56</sup> Impressed by Brimley’s work in mounting the state’s fish and game during the 1884 State Fair,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 19. HH Brimley lived at a time when the commercial hunting of birds was at its height. Although it might appear distasteful to shoot birds like the Bald Eagle at will, North Carolina did not have comprehensive bird conservation laws at this point.

<sup>55</sup> Sumner, Jim L., “‘Let Us Have a Big Fair’: The North Carolina Exposition of 1884,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* vol. 69, no. 1 (January 1992): 57-81.

<sup>56</sup> H.H. Brimley, “The North Carolina State Fair in the 1890s,” *Agricultural Review*, September 25, 1931, Odum, 33. In context, Brimley discussed the North Carolina State Fair in the 1890s, but it is not necessarily out of place to use this to describe Brimley’s impressions of the 1884 Centennial Fair and the State Fair as a whole.

the Department of Agriculture commissioned Brimley to mount some of North Carolina's fish and wildlife for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.<sup>57</sup>

The 1893 Chicago World's Fair, also known as the Columbian exposition, marked the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus's expedition to the Americas. The fair's architects sought to outperform previous international fairs and the Department of Agriculture wanted to showcase the industriousness, along with the bountiful natural resources of North Carolina in Chicago's White City.<sup>58</sup> Thus in February 1892, Brimley left for New Bern, North Carolina to begin the process of collecting fish and other water fowl for Chicago.<sup>59</sup> At Chicago, he mounted different species of wildlife including, but not limited to, a Canadian Goose, a redhead duck, mallard, black duck, bear, mink, otter, a nine foot sturgeon, and a 150 pound tarpon.<sup>60</sup> Brimley also shipped live species including diamond back terrapin and a number of saltwater fish.<sup>61</sup> One of the most remarkable displays at Chicago was the recreation of a thatched mullet hut used by the fisherman of the North Carolina coast.<sup>62</sup>

By April 1893, H.H. Brimley left Raleigh for Chicago to help oversee the preparation of exhibits.<sup>63</sup> The international exposition in Chicago opened during the summer of 1893 until it closed down in December that same year. Although it had a small budget, the Department of Agriculture managed to create a laudable exhibition for Chicago's White City.<sup>64</sup> One newspaper

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<sup>57</sup> Cooper, 5-6.

<sup>58</sup> David Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893*, (University Press of Kentucky, 1976), xii.

<sup>59</sup> "For the World's Fair," *The Daily State Chronicle*, February 23, 1892, 1.

<sup>60</sup> "North Carolina at the World's Fair," *The Gold Leaf*, April 6, 1893, 2, and "City News," *The Daily State Chronicle*, April 24, 1892, 4.

<sup>61</sup> "Salt Water Exhibits for the World's Fair," *The Daily State Chronicle*, April 13, 1893, 1.

<sup>62</sup> "North Carolina at Chicago. Report of the Executive Committee of the Board of World's Fair Examines for North Carolina Upon the Exhibit of This State at the World's Columbian Exposition," *The Gold Leaf*, September 28, 1893, 1.

<sup>63</sup> "Salt Water Exhibits for the World's Fair," *The Daily State Chronicle*, April 13, 1893, 1.

<sup>64</sup> "Editorial Notes: The World's Fair," *The Gold Leaf*, June 8, 1893, 2.

reported, “Never has the State had such a display. They [the exhibits] are superior, and wonder is expressed by all that so much has been accomplished with so little money.”<sup>65</sup> The North Carolina commission to the world’s fair highlighted the limited funds and claimed that the state managed to produce a truly dazzling display with such little funding.<sup>66</sup> International visitors and members of the scientific community were equally impressed by the “classification, arrangement, comprehensiveness, neatness, and the absence of overdress,” with North Carolina’s exhibits.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, the specimens on display would be sent to the State Museum and it was hoped that these specimens would “awaken a State pride not heretofore existing in North Carolina, and that the younger people of our State will be more deeply impressed than heretofore with its wonderful and various resources.”<sup>68</sup>

Brimley was aided in his efforts at Chicago by Thomas Kincaid Bruner, who served as the Secretary of the Board of Agriculture in North Carolina (1883-1907).<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, Bruner became the most important figure in the logistical and organizational aspects of North Carolina’s trade expositions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>70</sup> During this period, he and Brimley became close compatriots in this business—Bruner often referring to Brimley as “Old Brim” or just simply “Brim.”<sup>71</sup> Together, the two men became indispensable to North Carolina’s displays at the various expositions it partook.

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<sup>65</sup> “North Carolina’s Exhibits at Chicago,” *Watauga Democrat*, June 29, 1893, 1.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>67</sup> “The State’s Exhibit at the Great World’s Fair,” *The Gold Leaf*, November 2, 1893, 1.

<sup>68</sup> “North Carolina at Chicago. Report of the Executive Committee of the Board of World’s Fair Examiners for North Carolina Upon the Exhibit of This State at the World’s Columbian Exposition,” *The Gold Leaf*, September 28, 1893, 1.

<sup>69</sup> Potter, *North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences 1879-1990*, (unpublished), 87.

<sup>70</sup> “Summation of the Exhibits that TK Bruner worked at during his tenure as Secretary of the Board of Agriculture.” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 18, 1.

<sup>71</sup> “Letter from TK Bruner to HH Brimley January 1, 1902,” 1-2; and “Letter from TK Bruner to HH Brimley January 3, 1902,” 1, N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director’s Office, miscellaneous (RU1) Box 8.



After impressing the State Board of Agriculture at both Raleigh (1884) and Chicago (1893), the Department appointed Brimley as Curator of the State Museum on April 15, 1895.<sup>72</sup> He was the State Museum's sole employee and custodian.<sup>73</sup> For his efforts, the Board of Agriculture offered him a \$900 annual stipend in compensation.<sup>74</sup> While an experienced, if self-taught naturalist, Brimley was a complete novice at museum administration and had to quickly accustom himself to the day to day operations of museum work.<sup>75</sup> He described his crash-course in museum administration by writing, "I became an expert with a feather duster and pushed a wicked carpet sweeper!"<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, Brimley accustomed himself well to the work of the State Museum and created displays that, "looked so natural."<sup>77</sup> His supervisors in the Department of Agriculture considered him to be, "a very superior man and that any change would be a set back to the work he is now doing."<sup>78</sup> One newspaper declared that, "In all the changes being made among office holders at Raleigh, there is one place that should remain untouched. That is the position of [H.H. Brimley] Curator of the State Museum."<sup>79</sup> "Mr. Brimley is a practical and scientific man in his line, well fitted by both taste and training for the duties devolving upon him. . . He is full of zeal, intensely interested in his work, and besides being capable and efficient, is

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<sup>72</sup> Cooper, 6. It is important to note that Brimley was in fact the third curator of the museum appointed by the state government. Eloise F. Potter's makes this known in her 1997 unpublished manuscript of the museum's history.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>74</sup> Cooper, 6, and Potter, "HH and CS Brimley: Brother Naturalists," *The Chat*, vol. 50, no. 1 (Winter 1986), 2.

<sup>76</sup> Potter, "HH and CS Brimley: Brother Naturalists," 2.

<sup>77</sup> "At the State Musuem," *The News and Observer*, April 3, 1897, 1

<sup>78</sup> *The News and Observer* March 24, 1897, 5.

<sup>79</sup> "Prof. Brimley and the State Museum," *The Gold Leaf*, March 25, 1897, 2.

polite and accommodating taking special pride and pleasure at all times in showing visitors through the Museum. . .”<sup>80</sup>

As curator, Brimley’s foremost duty was to organize the museum into different exhibit halls and classify individual specimens for display. In 1896, the State Museum covered the entire second floor of the Department of Agriculture.<sup>81</sup> It was originally a loose configuration of both historical and natural exhibits, as well as a celebration of North Carolina’s Agricultural commodities and mineral resources. As curator, Brimley initially, at least, oversaw all collections.<sup>82</sup> While priority was given to North Carolina’s natural resources (which reflected the Department’s interests) and natural history (which reflected Brimley’s own personal interest) there was by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a growing state history collection—so much so, in fact, that in 1914, the history collection was removed from the Department of Agriculture building and became its own institution, the “Hall of History,” located in the State Administration Building.<sup>83</sup> Some of the early history exhibits included Civil War items, such as an “old musket from the battle fields of Sharpsburg” and a “smoke stack of the Confederate gun boat *Albemarle*.”<sup>84</sup> Other

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<sup>80</sup> “Prof. Brimley and the State Museum,” *The Gold Leaf*, March 25, 1897, 2. Following the Democratic Party’s defeat in the North Carolina State election of 1896, Brimley nearly lost his job and many called for his retaining the position of Curator.

<sup>81</sup>State Board of Agriculture, *North Carolina and its Resources*, (Winston, NC: M.I. & J.C. Stewart, Public Printers and Binders, 1896), 233.

<sup>82</sup> A key figure in the development of the North Carolina Museum of History, which ultimately sprang from the State Museum, was Colonel Frederick Augustus Olds. Olds was a prominent newspaper reporter in Raleigh in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and originally developed the concept of a State Museum of History. For decades, he managed to collect various historical documents, and relics. He became a staunch supporter of the State Museum and was given a place to store some of the relics he collected during the 1880s.

<sup>83</sup>North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1914), 30-31.

<sup>84</sup> “Letter from HH Brimley to W.L. Poteat November 14, 1903” State Archives of North Carolina, Herbert H. Brimley Correspondence, Private Collections.,203, 1.

historical artifacts included farm equipment, Native American pottery, and American Revolution, Civil War, and Spanish-American War weapons.<sup>85</sup>

Still, Brimley's main interest was in natural history specimens. He continuously collected, mounted, and prepared new specimens for the museum. Brimley, then, regularly argued for the continual expansion of the museum's collections and its square footage to the Board of Agriculture. As he famously wrote to the Board, "A finished museum is a dead museum, and such a one must deteriorate and begin to lose usefulness from the time its growth stops."<sup>86</sup> As a consequence, Brimley set about collecting new specimens for the museum on an annual basis and often collected them from private citizens.

For example, in January 1899, Brimley placed an advertisement in the papers asking for two large Black Bears over 200 pounds.<sup>87</sup> He received many responses to this advertisement and gave specific packing instructions to those who managed to get one of the bears.<sup>88</sup> He also exhibited animals now extinct to North Carolina including a bison, an elk, and two American Panthers.<sup>89</sup> Besides mounted specimens, Brimley acquired some living ones including live venomous and non-venomous snakes.<sup>90</sup> In fact, he suffered from being constantly bit, especially from the non-venomous black rat snakes and King Snakes.<sup>91</sup> Though their bite was not lethal,

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<sup>85</sup> "The Original Whitney Cotton Gin," *Fisherman and Farmer*, April 25, 1901 and "Letter from H.H. Brimley to The Briggs-Seabury Gun & Ammunition Company August 18, 1899," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 5, 1-2.

<sup>86</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of North Carolina*, (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton, State Printers, 1903), 51.

<sup>87</sup> "BEARS WANTED!" *The Progressive Farmer*, January 10, 1899, 6.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>89</sup> "Additions to the Museum, Curator Brimley is Mounting Excellent Specimens of the Buffalo, Elk, and Panther," *The News and Observer*, March 2, 1901, 5.

<sup>90</sup> "Peculiar Results of Snake Bite," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, July 17, 1900, 2 and "In and about the City," *The News and Observer* August 11, 1901, 13.

<sup>91</sup> "Peculiar Results of Snakebite," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger* July 17, 1900, 2. And "Peculiar Effects of a Black Snake's Bite," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger* November 6, 1900, 8.

Brimley nevertheless suffered from a series of prolonged illnesses that caused him to lose a significant amount of weight and his physicians recommended that he leave Raleigh to aid in his recovery.<sup>92</sup> Brimley also made routine hunting trips, on his own time, to collect specimens of birds, mammals, and reptiles for the State Museum.<sup>93</sup>

In 1899, he traveled to Washington D.C. and met with some of the nation's best museum administrators in hopes of acquiring information about the best methods in exhibit presentation and museum administration.<sup>94</sup> Apparently, his mission was a success. In 1901, one North Carolina newspaper insisted that Brimley's bird displays in the State Museum "compared with the best in this country, and is superior to much in the national museum at Washington."<sup>95</sup> With state-wide attention drawn to the appeal of the State Museum and its exhibits, visitors flocked to the Department of Agriculture to see the variety of specimens on display. By the end of June 1900, some 60,000 people visited the State Museum during that year alone.<sup>96</sup> Brimley divided the museum into five distinct exhibition halls which included agriculture, forestry, geology, natural history, and "a room devoted to photographic representation of the State's notable features of scenery..."<sup>97</sup> The museum entertained thousands of visitors on both an annual and semi-annual basis and the Raleigh *News and Observer* declared in 1899, "Under his [Brimley's] charge it has advanced in usefulness along all lines until now no other museum south of Washington can show a like of collection of valuable exhibits."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> "Peculiar Results of Snake's Bite," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger* November 6, 1900, 8; and "Raleigh Notes," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger* August 21, 1903, 7.

<sup>93</sup> "Personals" *The News and Observer*, December 27, 1902, 8; and "In and About the City," *The News and Observer*, July 15, 1905, 8.

<sup>94</sup> "Arrangement for North Carolina Exhibits," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, November 21, 1899, 1; "Personals," *The News and Observer*, December 2, 1899, 8.

<sup>95</sup> "Messenger Bureau," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, March 29, 1901, 4.

<sup>96</sup> "The Museum Grows," *The News and Observer*, February 21, 1901, 5.

<sup>97</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *North Carolina and its Resources*, 233.

<sup>98</sup> "Mr. W.H. Brimley," *The News and Observer*, August 24, 1899, 199.

Notwithstanding the private donations of North Carolinians, the taxidermical, collecting, and hunting of H.H. Brimley, perhaps the greatest factor in the growth of the North Carolina State Museum were both the various international and national expositions the state attended from 1902 to 1908. The North Carolina General Assembly financed trade expositions and these specimens moved to the State museum for permanent display. This became a pattern for the museum up until the outbreak of the First World War. For the State Museum, this became an easier way to acquire new specimens, but it added to the laundry list of things Brimley had to maintain.

There were four major expositions made between 1902-1908, the Charleston Exposition, the St. Louis World's Fair, the Boston Food Fair, and the Jamestown Exposition. Like at Chicago in 1893, Brimley worked closely with T.K. Bruner in the collection and preparation of these expositions. On average it took Brimley and Bruner some four to five months out of the year to prepare for these expositions. They then remained on the fairgrounds to meet and discuss with prospective immigrants and then lingered there for weeks afterwards to ship the specimens back to the State Museum. More importantly, they were expensive ventures. In some instances, these expositions required a combination of both taxpayer money and private subscriptions to meet the cost of exhibition. Apart from the logistical challenges, these fairs proved to be an immense benefit to the expansion, growth, and popularity of the State Museum.

The Charleston and West Indian Exposition of 1902 was the first of these expositions. It consisted of five major categories for display: agriculture, horticulture, forestry, mining, and economics.<sup>99</sup> In preparation, the men travelled across the eastern, central and the western

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<sup>99</sup> "Exhibit at Charleston," *News and Observer*, August 17, 1901, 5.

counties of the State collecting specimens to send to Charleston.<sup>100</sup> By late November 1901, following a long summer of travelling across the state, the men returned and began the process of shipping and installing the state's exhibits. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1901, Brimley travelled ahead to Charleston to begin the process of constructing the exhibits.<sup>101</sup> As he feverishly prepared the displays, Bruner humorously reminded his friend "to have your laundry done before I reach you with this one."<sup>102</sup> He continued, "I know that it is asking a great deal, but I feel it only due to the State, that I should give you this solemn advice."<sup>103</sup> Out of the seven gold medals awarded to the United States at the Charleston expo, North Carolina won three of those medals for their display of tobacco.<sup>104</sup> H.H. reported to the Board of Agriculture, "it was one which any State might be proud."<sup>105</sup>

For months prior to Charleston, Brimley and Bruner considered the possibility of publishing literature on North Carolina's resources for the fair.<sup>106</sup> They believed that any published literature on North Carolina could be exceedingly beneficial to advertisement for the State. However, after spending sometime in Charleston, Bruner felt that it was unnecessary to

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<sup>100</sup> "Watch North Carolina, the Old North State at the Charleston Exposition," *The Gold Leaf*, June 6, 1901, 1; "Short Local Mention," *The Free Press*, July 19, 1901, 1 and 4; "New Steamboat Company, Chartered for Eastern Carolina Photographs of Fruit and Vegetables," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, July 26, 1901, 5; "Personals," *The News & Observer*, September 28, 1901, 6; *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, October 1, 1901, 8; and *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, October 11, 1901, 7.

<sup>101</sup> "North Carolina at Charleston," *News and Observer*, December 20, 1901, 1.

<sup>102</sup> "Letter from T.K. Bruner to H.H. Brimley, January 1, 1902" N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director's Office, Miscellaneous, (RU1), Box 8, 1.

<sup>103</sup> "Letter from T.K. Bruner to H.H. Brimley, January 1, 1902" N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director's Office, Miscellaneous, (RU1), Box 8, 1.

<sup>104</sup> "Takes Three Medals, Our Tobacco a Winner at Charleston Exposition," *The News and Observer* May 14, 1902, 5; and "Medals from Paris and Charleston Expositions," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger* May 16, 1902, 1.

<sup>105</sup> Samuel L. Patterson, *Biennial Report of Samuel L. Patterson Commissioner of Agriculture 1902*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders), 52

<sup>106</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.K. Bruner, February 27, 1902"; 1-2 "Letter from T.K. Bruner to H.H. Brimley, February 25, 1902," 1-2; and "Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.K. Bruner, March 1, 1902," 1, N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 8.

publish a large piece on the subject, and argued for something much smaller in scale due to the attendance level of the fair.<sup>107</sup> Bruner wrote, “The situation here as I see it does not justify any large outlay in literature. . . this show is not and will not be a drawing card. Already, the cry is for St. Louis, and people are now planning for that.”<sup>108</sup> Bruner discovered that much of the attendance at the Charleston exposition came from people in the adjacent states like North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.<sup>109</sup> The whole purpose of these expositions was to invite northern capital and immigration to help improve North Carolina’s economic situation. The Charleston exposition proved not to be a lively advertising campaign as originally conceived; thus the Department of Agriculture fixed its gaze upon the advertising prospects of the St. Louis World’s Fair. The St. Louis exposition became the most important and significant exposition for everyone involved. Most importantly, it became a career changing point for H.H. Brimley and the development of the State Museum.

The 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair was the most ambitious international exposition in the United States since Chicago. North Carolina’s own total cost for the exposition amounted to \$21,938.<sup>110</sup> Some \$10,000 came from the state-treasurer, while the other half came from subscriptions from private donors.<sup>111</sup> With the approval of the state legislature and Governor Charles Brantley Aycock, Brimley became the Commissioner General of the St. Louis exposition.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> “Letter from T.K. Bruner, February 25, 1902” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 8 , 1.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>110</sup> “North Carolina at St. Louis: Financial Statement,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 14, 1.

<sup>111</sup> “Resolution Concerning St. Louis,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 14.

<sup>112</sup> “Resolution on H.H. Brimley as Commissioner General of the St. Louis World’s Fair,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 14.

In his report to the Board of Agriculture, Brimley noted that many of the challenges faced by himself and Bruner came from the lack of funds that had yet to be released from the State Treasurer prior to September 1903.<sup>113</sup> He stated, “Nevertheless, if an exhibit was going to be made work had to be undertaken previous to funds being in sight and a great deal was accomplished before that date.”<sup>114</sup> Brimley also reported that the work had been carried out “vigorously” and promised that his own personal collecting trips for animals would be a tremendous benefit.<sup>115</sup>

By January 1904, with necessary specimens collected, the long process of packing and shipping the material began.<sup>116</sup> By February, some eight car loads of material left for St. Louis.<sup>117</sup> In April 1904, a Raleigh newspaper published a letter between Commissioner of Agriculture S.L. Patterson and Bruner. In the letter, Patterson praised Bruner for his efforts at reducing labor and living expenses for the exhibition at St. Louis. He lauded Bruner’s efforts at the exposition and advertised the excitement of the expo. Patterson wrote, “This is going to be the ‘greatest show on earth’ without any question, and I am glad our State will be represented. It would have done us a good deal of harm to have been the only Southern State not progressive enough to show herself to this world at such a time as this.”<sup>118</sup> He continued by arguing for the net good in displaying some of North Carolina’s own resources at the fair and lauded the hard

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<sup>113</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to Commissioner S.L. Patterson and the State Board of Agriculture, Raleigh, NC” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 14, 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>116</sup> “N.C. Exhibit at St. Louis,” *The News and Observer*, February 26, 1904, 5.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>118</sup> “Praises Mr. T.K. Bruner: Items of Interest to North Carolina from St. Louis Exposition,” *News and Observer* April 23, 1904, 5.



work of the North Carolina exhibition.<sup>119</sup> For Patterson, the diligence and hard work of men like H.H. Brimley and T.K. Bruner was something worth celebrating to the press.

For the state's exhibit in St. Louis, the fair's superintendent, Tarleton H. Beam, allotted the North Carolina Department of Agriculture a sizeable section of the Forestry Hall.<sup>120</sup> Specifically, North Carolina was given 2,320 square feet for forestry and another 1,160 for fish and game in Forestry Hall.<sup>121</sup> Photographs taken during the fair revealed elaborate glass cases filled with foxes, deer, birds, waterfowl, and bear.<sup>122</sup> The most notable piece on display, however, was a large log cabin with its façade decked in animal skins and hunting gear.<sup>123</sup> Meanwhile, in the adjacent Hall, Mines and Metallurgy, North Carolina was given 1,694 square feet and then increased to 1,828 square feet. Agriculture received the most with 3,376 square feet.<sup>124</sup>

During the summer of 1904, North Carolina newspapers continued to advertise the scope of the St. Louis World's Fair. One paper regaled its readers on its "marvelous completeness and comprehensiveness...it has passed out of the realm of the great optimistic designs and purposes of its own promoters and builders."<sup>125</sup> Unfortunately, however, the article described the State's display as a "puny appropriation," yet applauded the hard work of H.H. Brimley and his assistant

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>120</sup> "Letter from Tarleton H. Beam to H.H. Brimley June 20, 1904," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 14, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>122</sup> "Expositions: St. Louis," image, North Carolina Digital Collections, Brimley Photograph Collection, PhC42, 4.46 (Series).

<sup>123</sup> "Photograph of Mounted Animals in Glass Cases," image, North Carolina Digital Collections, Brimley Photograph Collection, PhC42, 4.46 (Series).

<sup>124</sup> "Letter from J.A. Holmes, Chief, Department of Mines and Metallurgy at St. Louis World's Fair to H.H. Brimley January 22, 1904," 1; and "Letter from J.A. Holmes, Chief, Department of Mines and Metallurgy at the St. Louis World's Fair, March 14, 1904" Box N.C Museum of Natural Sciences, Director's Office, Miscellaneous, Box (RU1) 14, 1.

<sup>125</sup> F.B. Arendell, "Crowning Glory, That's the World's Fair at St. Louis," *The News and Observer*, July 2, 1904, 3.

William Green for “their splendid and untiring work.”<sup>126</sup> The article continued by stating that “The State owes a debt of gratitude to them [Brimley and his assistant] and to Professor J.A. Holmes and Mr. T.K. Bruner of the Exposition management for their many concessions and favors.”<sup>127</sup> Throughout the summer months of 1904, Brimley, Bruner, and the rest of the North Carolina exposition’s work were consistently applauded by the state press. The Department won gold for their display of North Carolina gem stones and Brimley won silver medals for his display of North Carolina mammals and fish.<sup>128</sup> Overall, the fair was quite successful and garnered much attention to North Carolina’s resources and the State Museum.

As the hubbub of the fair began to die down during the fall and winter months of 1904, T.K. Bruner returned to Raleigh and H.H. Brimley began the process of packing, shipping and preparing the exhibits for permanent display in the State Museum. Alone with the snow piling outside his office window in St. Louis he wrote to his friend and colleague in Raleigh about the depressing state of affairs, “You had better get down on your little knees and offer up most sincere thanks that you did not have to stay and pack in these cold dull and lonesome old buildings, with the whole ground completely covered with snow for this past twelve days as has been the case.”<sup>129</sup> Unlike any previous expositions, the St. Louis exposition provided the State Museum with a tremendous amount of material to catalogue and label.

The 1906 Boston Food Fair was less logistically demanding than St. Louis but no less time consuming for the Department. Frank K Haynes, the general manager of the Boston Food Fair, wrote to T.K. Bruner promising, “exceedingly liberal terms” for the Department of

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<sup>126</sup> Arendell, *The News and Observer*, July 2, 1904, 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>128</sup> “The North Carolina Awards, the Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals for Fishery Exhibits,” *The News and Observer*, October 11, 1904, 11.

<sup>129</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.K. Bruner December 22, 1904,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 9, 1.

Agriculture's exhibit at Boston.<sup>130</sup> Haynes wanted to place the North Carolina Exhibit in the spacious Paul Revere Hall. Haynes described the hall as, "an ideal hall for your purpose, both by reason of its superior location in the building and its attractive size and shape."<sup>131</sup> Haynes promised Bruner to offer the space from anywhere between "\$2500 to \$3000."<sup>132</sup> He also offered to lower the price to \$1000 in exchange that the North Carolina exhibition pay for the lighting services.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, he promised the possibility of further advertisement for North Carolina businesses and guaranteed that "it will be the greatest advertisement of any southern state ever received from the north."<sup>134</sup> This proved to be an immense opportunity for the state to advertise state products and industries to a northern market.

During the summer months of 1906, Bruner and Brimley wrote frantically to various businesses throughout the state asking them for samples and promising free advertisement to potential investors and business partners in Boston. The estimated cost of the Boston exposition ran at \$2830, while the Board of Agriculture appropriated some \$5000, "at the request of the governor."<sup>135</sup> As for the exhibit itself, according to photographs taken at the time, the North Carolina exhibition consisted of mainly fruits, vegetables, and the mineral wealth of the state.<sup>136</sup> At the end of the exhibition hall, stood a stage with a table and chairs on top, which acted as a

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<sup>130</sup> "Letter from Frank K. Haynes to T.K. Bruner July 13, 1906" N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 17, 1.

<sup>131</sup> The News and Observer, January 17, 1905

<sup>132</sup> "Letter from Frank K. Haynes to T.K. Bruner July 13, 1906" N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 17, 1.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>135</sup> "Estimate of cost of an Exhibit at Boston," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 17, 1; and "Raleigh News Notes," *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, June 22, 1906, 6.

<sup>136</sup> "Expositions Boston," image, Brimley Photograph Collection, North Carolina Digital Collections, , PhC42, 4.46.

work station for both Brimley and Bruner.<sup>137</sup> Behind the desk and chairs stood a large poster that highlighted North Carolina's various economic opportunities for people that wanted to immigrate.<sup>138</sup> Brimley reported some 20,000 people at the fair and predicted that, "the prospects are good now for a large attendance from now until the end."<sup>139</sup> The Boston food fair proved to be far less of a time commitment than St. Louis, but nonetheless fruitful.

The Jamestown exposition proved to be the most challenging for Brimley.<sup>140</sup> The first major challenge arrived with the cutting off of funds. Infuriated by this decision, Brimley wrote to Mr. E.L Daughtridge who was the treasurer for the North Carolina exhibition at Jamestown, chastising the decision as it would affect North Carolinian farmers that had a poor harvest that year.<sup>141</sup> With the abrupt cut in funding, Brimley wrote to Bruner assuring him to not worry about this situation in Jamestown and contacted the governor of their blight.<sup>142</sup> Secondly, and far more importantly to Brimley, Bruner's health began to deteriorate from a recent "attack."<sup>143</sup> Bruner suffered from a combination of both gallstones and Bright's disease.<sup>144</sup> From September 1907 to February 1908, Bruner was bedridden and lost a considerable amount of weight.<sup>145</sup> On February 16, 1908, T.K. Bruner died and Brimley wrote to a mutual friend of theirs that "He [Bruner] was

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<sup>137</sup> "Expositions: Boston," image, Brimley Photograph Collection, North Carolina Digital Collections, PhC42, 4.46.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, F5.

<sup>139</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to Mr. R.M. Shepherd, Secretary of the Carolina Trucking Development Company," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, miscellaneous (RU1) Box 17, 2.

<sup>140</sup> Eloise F. Potter, *Museum History*, (unpublished manuscript), 261-262.

<sup>141</sup> "Exhibition at Jamestown, Will be Very Attractive and Novel" *The Semi-Weekly Messenger*, March 15, 1907, 2.

<sup>142</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.K. Bruner, September 20, 1907," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 18, 1.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>144</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to Mr. Frederic W. Taylor, February 19, 1908" N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 18, 1.

<sup>145</sup> "Letter from T.W. Adickes to H.H. Brimley October 10, 1907," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 18, 1.

cheerful and uncomplaining all through his illness and the end was quiet and painless.”<sup>146</sup>

Bruner’s death marked the end of an era in the Department of Agriculture’s history, and the history of the State Museum, since he had been instrumental in the logistical aspects of North Carolina’s trade expositions.

Overall, then, despite Bruner and Brimley’s hard work, North Carolina’s trade fairs attracted few immigrants. According to the United States census bureau, the majority of non-native North Carolinians born in the United States came from neighboring states like Virginia or South Carolina from 1900-1910.<sup>147</sup> The 1910 U.S. Census shows that fewer than 500 residents of North Carolina originated from New England from 1900-1910, indicating that a desire to immigrate to the state did not manifest as the Department of Agriculture intended.<sup>148</sup>

Additionally, these trade expositions were costly to the treasury and provided little revenue return. As a consequence, the Department of Agriculture shifted its focus towards supporting the State Fair, in Raleigh, rather than trade expos. In fact, the last major exhibition Brimley worked at was the Panama Pacific Exposition, but it was cancelled prematurely following the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>149</sup> Although they might not have provided long term benefits to the state’s economy, they did provide some service to the North Carolina State Museum by means of providing new acquisitions. Brimley even reported this to the Commissioner of Agriculture. “But in connection with this it must be noted that the close of one of these expositions always brings

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<sup>146</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to Frederic W. Taylor, February 19, 1908,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 18, 1.

<sup>147</sup> Department of Commerce, *Statistics for North Carolina: Containing Statistics of Population, Agriculture, Manufactures, and Mining for the State, Counties, Cities, and Other Divisions* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 519.

<sup>148</sup> Department of Commerce, *Statistics for North Carolina*, 591.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

to the Museum a large amount of new material and cases; so it is not a losing game, by any means, in the long run.”<sup>150</sup>

In particular, the St. Louis World’s Fair provided the State Museum with a tremendous number of new specimens. Even the state’s newspapers were aware of this change. *The Gold Leaf* reported in April 1904 that the additions brought from St. Louis made it an entirely new State Museum and it claimed that North Carolina had “the best, largest, and most complete museum in the South.”<sup>151</sup> This was not necessarily the usual hyperbolic rhetoric the press was prone towards in their articles. Indeed, the State Museum’s notoriety began to become a model institution for other southern states.

In fact, Brimley received letters from both Virginia and Maryland asking for assistance in the creation of their own state museums. In a letter to a Virginia State Legislator, Brimley advised and wrote a basic blueprint for Virginia’s own state museum, which he loosely based off the North Carolina State Museum.<sup>152</sup> Additionally, when he advised a representative from Maryland on the type of curator needed to administer Maryland’s own state museum he wrote, “I believe that the best results can be obtained by giving a man [the museum curator] a pretty free hand and a fair salary and then demanding that he show results.”<sup>153</sup> The State Museum began to

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<sup>150</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of William A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1909), 56.

<sup>151</sup>“Almost a New State Museum, Complete Rearrangement Will Be Made. Best in the South.,” *The News and Observer*, April 4, 1905, 5

<sup>152</sup> “Letter from W.W. Baker to H.H. Brimley March 13, 1917” NCMNS Box 20, 1; “Letter from H.H. Brimley to W.W. Baker, March 15, 1917” NCMNS Box 20, 1-2; “Suggestions for the Organization of the State Museum of Virginia,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director’s Office Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 20, 1-1; and “Suggested Budget for the Museum,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director’s Office Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 20, 1.

<sup>153</sup>“Letter from H.H. Brimley to William L. Amoss, April 27, 1905” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 15, 4. “Museum a Model, Maryland to Build on Plan of Tar Heel Institution,” *The News and Observer*, April 14, 1905, 5.

have a cultural influence across the American South and became a model by which neighboring states wanted to follow.

Although the museum began to exert significant influence in the region, it began to undergo significant changes both to its administration and its character. With the publication of Charles Darwin's work on the *Origin of Species* (1859), culminating with a surge of interest in nature study, the rise of great museums in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C. and New York, and along with the development of the modern biological sciences in academia, brought a surge of public interest with natural history museums.<sup>154</sup> As a consequence, Brimley informed the Department of Agriculture in 1910 that the exhibit displays of "birds and mammals" were, "the ones that appeal much more strongly to the average visitor than all put together."<sup>155</sup> "Nature study being now everywhere regarded as a valuable unit in the educational scheme, we feel that our work along this line is well justified."<sup>156</sup> Specifically, Brimley wanted to create an educational institution that helped the public understand the importance of nature, the natural history of North Carolina, and the importance of conservation work. "We make no attempt to show objects that are mere freaks of curiosities."<sup>157</sup> He continued, "Everything we exhibit has educational value of some kind, and I really believe that our State Museum is filling a valuable place in the educational system of the State."<sup>158</sup>

Additionally, Brimley informed the Board that he created dioramas that attempted to create life-like scenes for the animals on display.<sup>159</sup> This brought tension between the Board of

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<sup>154</sup> Margaret Martin, *A Long Look at Nature, The North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 10.

<sup>155</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of William A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., State Printers, 1910), 36-37.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of William A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture* (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1912), 31.

Agriculture and Brimley over the trajectory of the State Museum.<sup>160</sup> Ultimately, Brimley reminded the Board that the State Museum was legally required by the General Assembly to display the state's natural resources along with its natural history.<sup>161</sup>

The museum's new focus in nature study, natural history, and education in the early 1910s was best punctuated by the work of Brimley's younger brother C.S. Brimley. As H.H. Brimley maintained the facilities of the museum and prepared exhibits for Charleston, St. Louis, Boston, and Jamestown, C.S. Brimley continued his own personal research on the fauna located in Raleigh. He kept painstakingly accurate and detailed journal notes on the migratory patterns of birds.<sup>162</sup> It was a project that he continued from 1885 until his death in 1946 and his work was cited by other leading bird researches in North Carolina. C.S. also published his own scientific articles for national scientific journals on the birds of Raleigh like *The Auk* and *The Ornithologist and Oologist*.<sup>163</sup> Furthermore, he published articles on non-ornithological subjects including articles on mammals, fish, and reptiles.<sup>164</sup> C.S. Brimley managed to discover new species of salamanders and published well "over 150 different" scholarly articles on the flora and fauna of North Carolina.<sup>165</sup> His fortunes changed once more when he met the State Entomologist Frank Sherman Jr. in 1901.<sup>166</sup> "My main interest for many years zoologically has been," wrote C.S., "to gain and disseminate knowledge about the fauna of North Carolina, both vertebrate and invertebrate, with especial regard to Herpetology and Entomology, an interest very largely

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<sup>160</sup> Martin, 13.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>162</sup> "C.S. Brimley's Journal Migration and other Bird Data in Raleigh, NC," North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, PP11, Personal Papers of C.S. Brimley, Box 7.

<sup>163</sup> Cooper, 10.

<sup>164</sup> Cooper, 10-12.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 9-12.



inspired and stimulated by Mr. Sherman.”<sup>167</sup> As for Sherman, he was appointed as North Carolina’s first state entomologist in 1900; and C.S. assisted in the work of identifying and cataloguing various insects species in North Carolina.<sup>168</sup>

By 1902, their collection accumulated some 30,000 insect specimens and by 1919 C.S. took charge of North Carolina’s Insect Survey.<sup>169</sup> Besides his work in the insect survey, C.S. became a member of many national scientific organizations including the American Association of Economic Entomologists, the American Society of Mammologists, the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, and the Biological Society of Washington DC.<sup>170</sup> In short, this self-taught naturalist became one of the most widely recognized and admired scientists of his age. He was a “real naturalist.”<sup>171</sup> For his scientific endeavors and a life-long commitment in service to his state C.S. was awarded an honorary Ph.D. by the University of North Carolina.<sup>172</sup> By the end of his life, C.S. donated his scientific articles and much of his own publications to the State Museum in the 1940s.

Although C.S., did not deal with the day to day management of the museum, he managed to expand greatly the state’s scientific understanding of the native plant and animal species. Furthermore, C.S.’s decision to donate and contribute to the museum’s library allowed the State Museum to maintain a repository of scientific data, so that it would be able to maintain a current understanding of the state’s natural history.<sup>173</sup> Without, the crucial scientific work of C.S.

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<sup>167</sup> “C.S. Brimley, Summer 1925,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, Personal Papers, PP7, Box 3, 2

<sup>168</sup> Cooper., 9-10.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>170</sup> “C.S. Brimley, Summer 1925,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, Personal Papers, PP7, Box 3, 3.

<sup>171</sup> “Letter from Helen J. Gauge to Harry T. Davis, September 2, 1946,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10, Personal Papers, PP7, 1 .

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<sup>173</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From July 1, 1940 to June 30, 1942*, (Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Department of Agriculture, November 1942), 82.

Brimley, this shift in focus away from advertising North Carolina's natural resources to focusing upon the natural history of the state would not have been able to effectively occur due to H.H. Brimley's own time constraints.<sup>174</sup>

Beyond this change in the State Museum's focus, Brimley needed more staff members to help with office work, taxidermy, and classification of the new specimens, which arrived following the conclusion of the trade expositions.<sup>175</sup> "In the technical work of the Museum, as would be the case in any similar institution of like size," wrote H.H. Brimley to the Commissioner of Agriculture in 1905, "there is more than one man can possibly handle and keep up the office work and general supervision as well, and it would advance its interests very materially could an assistant be employed to help the Curator along technical and scientific lines." Preferably, Brimley wanted someone who had "some scientific training, particularly in biology and, preferably, in mineralogy as well. . ."<sup>176</sup> However, Brimley was fully aware that "no thoroughly trained man could be secured for the salary at present..."<sup>177</sup> Ultimately, on October 24, 1905, Brimley hired a Raleigh native named T.W. Adickes who was a "young man interested in Natural History."<sup>178</sup> Adickes accustomed himself to the work of the museum and helped Brimley with the laundry list of chores around the museum, and helped in the acquisition of new material.

In fact, Adickes led the museum's first paleontological dig in the summer of 1910. Adickes, along with local hands, excavated two different Mastodon fossil sites in both

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<sup>174</sup> This is part of the reason why both Brimley brothers are both considered to be the founding fathers of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

<sup>175</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to S.L. Patterson, March 1, 1905," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 15, 1-2.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>178</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to S.L. Patterson, October 4, 1905," N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU1) Box 15, 1

Jacksonville, and Maysville, North Carolina.<sup>179</sup> “Save every bone or fragment of bone that you come across,” Brimley instructed Adickes in June 1910.<sup>180</sup> Throughout the process, Adickes located as many bones as possible and helped discover a partially completed skeleton for the museum.<sup>181</sup> Besides fossil hunting, Adickes and Brimley went on different collecting trips throughout the state and collected impressive specimens to expand the State Museum’s collections. One of these included a 47 foot long Finback Whale skeleton from the coast of Cape Lookout.<sup>182</sup> Ultimately, on April 30, 1919, T.W. Adickes resigned as assistant curator to the State Museum to enter a career in the life insurance business.<sup>183</sup> Grateful for having been part of the State museum he wrote to Brimley, “I have spent fourteen years with you in the service of the State, and I will always remember this association with a great deal of pleasure.”<sup>184</sup>

From 1880-1912, the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History emerged as a tiny enterprise in the mid 1890s to become one of the premier state museums in the American South. It emerged gradually overtime and became a permanent home for North Carolina’s natural resources and history. Through hard work and perseverance as an immigrant and civil servant, H.H. Brimley created something truly remarkable by the eve for the First World War. Other state’s attempted to emulate the success of the State Museum and it became a source of pride for North Carolinians.

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<sup>179</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to Mr. Andrew Collins, May 20, 1910,” 1; and “Letter from T.W. Adickes to H.H. Brimley, June 25, 1910,” 1, N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 19.

<sup>180</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to Mr. T.W. Adickes, June 29, 1910,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous, (RU1), Box 19, 1.

<sup>181</sup> “Telegram from T.W. Adickes to H.H. Brimley, July 16, 1910,” 1; and “Letter from H.H. Brimley to O.P. Hay, November 26, 1910,” 1, N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 19.

<sup>182</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of William A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., State Printers, 1910), Biennial Report 1908-1910, 37.

<sup>183</sup> “Resignation Letter of T.W. Adickes to H.H. Brimley, April 30, 1919,” 1, N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 20

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

### Chapter 3: “Do What You Can Now with What You Have!”

The North Carolina State Museum grew in stature over the course of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with over 200,000 visitors from all over North Carolina and the United States touring the facility annually by the 1930s. Indeed, the museum’s popularity coincided with the rapid transformation of the United States from a predominately rural nation to a modern, urban, and industrial one. Increased urbanization and industrial acceleration, then, contributed to a nostalgia for America’s agrarian past and open spaces. In works of fiction, this was apparent by the popularity of such novels as *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and *White Fang* (1906), by Jack London. Meanwhile, in non-fiction, writers such as Theodore Roosevelt enjoyed success with titles such as *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (1885), *The Wilderness Hunter* (1893), *American Big Game Hunting* (1893), and *Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter* (1905). Other popular publications included magazines like *Scientific American* (1845), *Popular Science* (1872), and *Field & Stream* (1895). It was during this same period too that conservation organizations such as the Sierra Club (1892) and the Audubon Society (1905) were formed and that national parks like Yosemite established. Finally, the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the dawn of major paleontological discoveries like T-rex, Triceratops, and Brontosaurus that filled museum collections throughout the nation and captured the attention of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the State Museum’s successes, along with a growing national attention to nature and natural history, it did, in fact, face several challenges-- both external and internal. Still, Brimley and his staff persevered and maintained an institution that became “a valuable place in

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<sup>1</sup> The North Carolina State Museum did not have dinosaur skeletons on display. The museum’s lack of dinosaur fossils derived from a lack of well-preserved Mesozoic fossils east of the Appalachian Mountains. Many of the fossils on display included animals from the Ice Age--- i.e. Mastodons, horses, and sharks teeth etc.

the educational system of the State.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one contemporary observed, the museum’s success was “remarkable when one considers that his operating budget was relatively small and he often lacked materials and aids which would be considered routine in a large city museum.”<sup>3</sup> It was not just financial burdens (i.e. lack of funding) that concerned Brimley, however. There were other challenges, including conservation, personnel changes, and the entire remodeling (and relocating) of the museum itself in 1925. Ultimately, these challenges allowed the museum to grow. For Brimley, this growth was categorized not in terms of new acquisitions, but rather a growth in “character.”<sup>4</sup> “By this is meant,” he wrote in 1928, “more attractive exhibition rooms, a closer attention to cleanliness, improvements in the installation of exhibits, improved lighting in some of the rooms and other factors tending to add to the appeal of the institution as a whole to those who make use of it.”<sup>5</sup> Compared to the previous period (1895-1912), this period in the history of the State Museum became a time in which it began to influence and impact a number of different areas through the challenges presented. Fundamentally, it impacted the state in terms of science education and the cultivation of a more cosmopolitan atmosphere in Raleigh.

One of the first critical challenges the museum faced was in the lobbying of important conservation bills in the North Carolina General Assembly. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, expanding industries and overhunting brought a gradual decrease in the biodiversity of the state.<sup>6</sup> Birds constituted a major conservation concern for Brimley, especially in light of the extinction

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<sup>2</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1914), 31.

<sup>3</sup> Eugen P. Odum, *A North Carolina Naturalist*, H.H. Brimley, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 164.

<sup>4</sup> H.H. Brimley, “The State Museum in 1928,” *Raleigh Times*, 172. Found in Odum.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>6</sup> Johnathan Pishney, “Collecting Nature: The Beginning of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.” Office of Archives and History, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, 3.

of the Passenger Pigeon in 1914 and the Carolina Parakeet in 1918.<sup>7</sup> These birds were representative of an existential threat posed by human beings, during this period. As a means to promote nature conservation and to educate the public on the importance of nature to their daily lives, Brimley took special interest in the publication and circulation of newspaper articles and short stories to promote conservation and the utility of those animals considered to be either clothes, food, or pests. In Brimley's estimation, then, the South had "been slow [overall] in taking a serious and broad-minded view of the problems of game protection and of the conservation of bird-life in general."<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, North Carolina, along with the rest of the South, had done little to preserve the wild life of the state.

In an 1899 essay entitled "Some Bird and Snake Notes," Brimley made one of his first public appeals for conservation. Overall, he argued for the economic utility in not killing snakes or predatory birds to maintain the pest population. For years, of course, farmers in North Carolina had made a common practice of killing these animals to protect livestock, like chickens. Brimley believed, though, that nature had a role to play in the protection of crops and the growth of agriculture in the state. "Let us look a little deeper into this economic business," he wrote. "Here is a great horned owl (*Bubo Virginianus*), just killed. On dissecting his crop and stomach what do we find? Rabbit, chicken and field rat remains. Of course the chicken was a dead loss to the farmer, but the rabbit had been gnawing the bark off his young fruit trees and the rat had been eating his early peas in spring and his sweet potatoes in the hill during winter."<sup>9</sup> Ultimately,

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<sup>7</sup> Oliver H. Orr, *Saving American Birds: T. Gilbert Pearson and the Founding of the Audubon Movement*, (University Press of Florida, 1992), 1.

<sup>8</sup> H.H. Brimley, "Bird Conservation in the South," *The Southern Review*, May 2, 1920, 74. Found in Odum.

<sup>9</sup> "Some Bird and Snake Notes," *The Progressive Farmer*, September 26, 1899, 1 and 8.

Brimley insisted, owls, hawks, and snakes were beneficial allies to farmers by keeping the population of rats and mice down.<sup>10</sup>

He also tried his hand at fiction to get his conservation message across to the public. In a 1902 short story for *The Biblical Recorder* entitled “The Last of the Panthers,” Brimley described the extinction of the Panther in North Carolina.<sup>11</sup> The emotional tale—originally published as a series-- followed the exploits of a young American panther named Leo, who lost both his mother and brother to the hands of trappers in Brunswick County, North Carolina.<sup>12</sup> After his family’s death, Leo traveled across the eastern swamps of the state, where he was ultimately cornered by a trapper and a pack of hunting dogs. During a “fight like of which may never be seen again in North Carolina,” Leo managed to kill some of the dogs.<sup>13</sup> In the end, however, the outnumbered Leo was overwhelmed and killed. “And as the crimson flood slowly darkened the trampled grass,” Brimley dramatically concluded, “so ebbd away the life of Leo, the last of the panthers.”<sup>14</sup>

While an early advocate of conservation, Brimley was nevertheless an avid and enthusiastic hunter—i.e. he wanted to conserve nature but was not opposed to hunting. Indeed, Brimley’s own hunting trips were periods of intense fellowship among colleagues, friends, and family members.<sup>15</sup> For him these trips were meant to escape the “petty troubles of complex

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> “The Last of the Panthers” *The Biblical Recorder*, July 9, 1902, North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 1.2, Administrative Papers: Manuscripts, Speeches and Articles 1900-1932, Box S1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>15</sup> On one occasion in 1909, he brought his sons with him. He recalled that his sons Arthur and Robert would not dissuade from going with their father on one of these trips. “I offered them bribes of ten dollars each not to go, just to try them,” wrote Brimley, “but each boy turned his down in scorn. Mere money was no object compared with the anticipated joys of this trip.”

modern civilization...”<sup>16</sup> He was described as, “as an expert with rod and rifle.”<sup>17</sup> His favorite “pet” rifle was a “twenty five Remington Automatic.”<sup>18</sup> He referred to it as “the greatest gun for all game, including the largest, found in North Carolina.”<sup>19</sup> During his lifetime, Brimley was one of the foremost hunters and fishermen in the state, and many of his personal trips were conducted in coordination with the interests of the State Museum. In fact, in a report for the Department of Agriculture in 1915, Brimley advocated for further funding of these trips. “Specimens are not permanent,” he observed.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, “New material must be added to take the place of the older specimens in certain lines that are losing their effectiveness by reason of their age, or by long exposure to light or to insect pests.”<sup>21</sup> As a passionate hunter himself, Brimley understood, then, the value of game conservation. Too many hunters—all “good, law-abiding citizens at home,” he wrote in 1920, “seem to have the idea when they reach their favorite deer, or turkey or duck shooting grounds that all game laws are for the other fellow!”<sup>22</sup>

Brimley’s first attempt at lobbying state government for conservation came with the 1903 Audubon Bill, which incorporated the North Carolina Audubon Society and protected certain birds from public consumption by establishing penalties for poaching. By the late 1890s, state Democrats—in power at all levels since the 1870s—lost control of state government. In 1896, the Fusion Party—representing rising agrarian and populist discontent in the state-- won control of the legislature as well as the governorship. In 1900, Democrats were able to wrestle back

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<sup>16</sup> Odum, 38.

<sup>17</sup> R.C. Lawrence, “H.H. Brimley January 15, 1944,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 10 Personal Papers PP3, 2.

<sup>18</sup> “In Camp with Kids,” North Carolina State Museum Records, Series 1.2, Administrative Papers, S1, 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture From December 1, 1914 to November 30, 1916*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printers Company State Printers 1917), 41.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>22</sup> Brimley, “Bird Conservation in the South,” found in Odum, 78-79.



control, and-- humbled by their earlier defeat-- began to invest heavily into new “progressive” policy initiatives, including compulsory attendance laws in education, child labor laws, and the creation of North Carolina’s first State Park, Mt. Mitchell.<sup>23</sup> The rise of conservation legislation in North Carolina, then, coincided with the resurgence of the Democratic Party at the dawn of the twentieth century, complete, now, with a new progressive bent.<sup>24</sup> Following the 1900 elections, Democrats controlled the governorship (with Charles B. Aycock), and enjoyed a solid majority in the legislature.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most important figures in the conservation of birds in North Carolina—and a chief ally of Brimley-- was Thomas Gilbert Pearson. Like Brimley, Pearson grew up on a farm.<sup>26</sup> Similar to Brimley, in his hometown of Archer, Florida, Pearson spent much of his childhood outdoors collecting birds, eggs, and feathers.<sup>27</sup> In 1891, he enrolled as a student at Guilford College in Greensboro.<sup>28</sup> Pearson managed to bring with him a number of bird specimens to the college’s own natural history museum, and that following spring he added several specimens of migratory birds to the museum’s collection.<sup>29</sup> His time at Guilford came to an end, however, in 1895, and in 1898, he became an assistant to the State Geologist J.A. Holmes.<sup>30</sup> Pearson’s first

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<sup>23</sup> Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Press, 1989), 445-448, 449-450, and 455-458.

<sup>24</sup> Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, 443-444.

<sup>25</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Journal of the Senate of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina Session 1901*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, and E.M. Uzzell, State Printers, 1901), 1; North Carolina General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at its Session of 1901*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton and E.M. Uzzell, State Printers and Binders, 1901), 3-5; and Powell, *North Carolina Through Four Centuries*, 443-444. Democrats had 85 seats in the House, with 17 Republicans and 2 Populists. In the Senate, the number was 24 Democrats, 8 Republicans, and 3 Populists.

<sup>26</sup> Orr, 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Orr, 10-12. On one occasion, he brought home an adolescent Great Egret that Pearson kept as a pet for some years, but when the bird killed one of his father’s chickens, Pearson was forced to release him into the wild.

<sup>28</sup> Orr, 32-33.

<sup>29</sup> Orr, 36. Like Brimley, he collected Native American arrowheads, mounted his own specimens, visited nearly 100 different natural history museums, conducted his own personal field research, and created a highly creditable natural history museum for the college. Ord.

<sup>30</sup> Pearson actually tried to get Brimley’s job.

task was to collect specimens for Brimley's State Museum, including many marine species. In the summer of 1898 alone, Pearson secured over one hundred different specimens of marine life.<sup>31</sup> More importantly, Pearson and Brimley became fast friends and colleagues in the pursuit of bird conservation in the state.<sup>32</sup> Pearson, Brimley later wrote, was "an educator, a pioneer, an enthusiast (I might almost say a Moses) with a mission, and the most compelling public-speaker—particularly on the subject of bird-protection—I have ever known...the word 'failure' was not in his vocabulary."<sup>33</sup>

A key element in securing bird conservation in North Carolina was the establishment of a state Audubon Society itself. In 1902, Pearson established North Carolina's own Audubon Society to help pass legislation for bird conservation.<sup>34</sup> Education—i.e. enlightening the public on the science of birds and their usefulness to humanity-- was the centerpiece of this new society. The North Carolina Audubon Society coordinated, then, with the state's public school system to promote ornithological science, and to educate the public on the value of bird conservation.<sup>35</sup> Brimley later recalled that it was Pearson and the state Audubon Society that proved essential in establishing "the first step towards recognizing the principle of State control of our wildlife."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> "List of Marine Material Collected in Vicinity of Beaufort, N.C. by T. Gilbert Pearson—Summer of 1898" North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1-7.

<sup>32</sup> Orr, 59.

<sup>33</sup> H.H. Brimley, "A Sketch of the History of Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina," *Division of Game and Inland Fisheries, North Carolina Department of Conservation and Development*, Found in Odum, 91.

<sup>34</sup> Orr, 92-93.

<sup>35</sup> "The Audubon Society, Professor Pearson's Paper at the Teacher's Assembly at Morehead," *News and Observer*, June 14, 1902, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Brimley, "A Sketch of the History of Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina," Found in Odum, 89.

By the fall of 1902, Pearson looked to Brimley for wisdom on the likelihood of the Audubon Bill's success in the General Assembly.<sup>37</sup> He informed Brimley that several sportsmen in Asheville had contacted him, and were—to his great delight-- quite interested in the passage of legislation to protect certain “non-game birds.”<sup>38</sup> They hoped such legislation would “(1) [place] a tax on all non-resident gunmen and (2) prohibit the exploitation of game from the state.” Furthermore, Pearson wrote, “They say many states have these laws. Georgia and Florida have such I believe among our southern states. Do you think all this will be too much to labor for this winter? And do you approve of these suggestions?”<sup>39</sup> He was uncertain about the articulation of these issues in the bill; and more importantly, whether they would even pass in the General Assembly. Brimley responded by writing that the “time may be ripe for something reasonable in game laws... and with proper help something a little more in keeping with modern ideas on the subject might now take the place of the awful collection we now stagger under.”<sup>40</sup> Ever tactful, Brimley cautioned Pearson that “Too severe or too elaborate a bill at the beginning will kill itself I am afraid.”<sup>41</sup> As a civil servant of the state for nearly a decade by 1902, Brimley had a unique insight into the innerworkings of the state's government economy.<sup>42</sup> He understood that if their lobbying was to be successful they needed to first consider the interests of the public and to not resort to a certain militancy. As Brimley later noted to Pearson, “there is no possibility of passing

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<sup>37</sup> “Letter from T.G. Pearson to H.H. Brimley (undated),” 1-2; and “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson, August 16, 1902,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1-2.

<sup>38</sup> “Letter from T.G. Pearson to H.H. Brimley (undated),” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson, August 16, 1902,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson, January 12, 1903,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Orr, 108. Orr points out that Brimley provided Pearson with contact information on many individuals within the General Assembly to contact about the Audubon Bill.

anything like as drastic and sweeping a measure as the bill now is and that it will have to be modified very materially before it will be worth while to introduce it at all.”<sup>43</sup>

In late 1902, the North Carolina Audubon Society moved toward political action. That September, the society’s executive committee appointed Brimley, Pearson, and Richard H. Lewis, who was a local physician and bird admirer in Raleigh, to develop legislation to propose before the General Assembly.<sup>44</sup> By mid-November 1902, Pearson and his lawyer Aubrey L. Brooks completed the first draft of the bill.<sup>45</sup> Pearson confided to Brimley, “This bill has given me no end of thought and of course I know it is not perfect yet.”<sup>46</sup> Ultimately, the bill was managed through the legislature by Representative Wescott Roberson of Guilford County and Senator R.B. McLaughlin of Iredell County. Both men were sympathetic to what Brimley called the “movement on foot... to try and get enacted... a bird protective law containing also machinery for the proper enforcement of the law as well as the more rigid enforcement of the present game laws of the state.”<sup>47</sup> In a letter to McLaughlin in late December 1902, Brimley expressed hope that a law could be framed that would not arouse “too much opposition among those who would like the privilege of killing anything and everything at any and all times.”<sup>48</sup> McLaughlin responded to Brimley a couple of days later, reassuring the museum curator of his commitment to the measure and agreeing to meet with him early in the next session. “I should like to be empowered to ask him [McLaughlin] definitely to introduce and take charge of the bill in the Senate as I fully believe he is the man to do it to the best advantage,” Brimley wrote

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<sup>43</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson, January 12, 1903,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Orr, 104.

<sup>45</sup> Orr, 104.

<sup>46</sup> “Letter from T.G. Pearson to H.H. Brimley, December 11, 1902,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>47</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to R.B. McLaughlin, December 20, 1902,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Pearson in early January 1903.<sup>49</sup> Pearson heartily approved, calling McLaughlin “an ornithologist of considerable note...”<sup>50</sup>

On January 12, Brimley—along with his brother, C.S., State Entomologist Frank Sherman, Jr., and Secretary of the Board of Agriculture T.K. Bruner--- met with McLaughlin, and discussed Pearson’s original draft of the bill. McLaughlin, while committed to conservation, believed Pearson’s bill to be unrealistic. Specifically, he believed that the bill would need to be divided into two parts—“one to incorporate the society and the other to provide protection for the birds as it is not possible in one act to incorporate a body and to prescribe criminal acts and penalties.” There were also practical problems with the measure. For example, “Under the provisions of the bill as it now stands every millinery dealer in the State would be liable to a heavy fine and a long term of imprisonment on the passage of the bill. . .”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, “every lady in the State would be liable to a severe penalty if she passed a hat with any feathers on it: every boy in the State would be also liable if he owned even a small collection of bird eggs and every citizen having in his house one mounted could be sent to jail and fined therefore.”<sup>52</sup> In the end, then, McLaughlin agreed to simplify the bill, and provide Brimley and Pearson with edits of the original draft.<sup>53</sup> He proved a key player in navigating Brimley’s conservation goals through the political process.

The 1903 Audubon Bill faced significant opposition within the General Assembly. One of the most fierce critics was Representative John T. Brittain of Randolph County, who felt the

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<sup>49</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson, January 7, 1902,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Letter from T.G. Pearson to Mr. J. F. Jordan, January 8, 1903,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>51</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson. January 12, 1903,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 3.

bill would place the state's farmers at the mercy of "officers who will be more disreputable than internal revenue officers." The legislature, he warned, would eventually infringe upon the "ancient rights and privileges of the people..."<sup>54</sup> Brittain's views represented the traditional Jeffersonian approach to private property in the state—i.e. it was a belief that the citizens of the state could manage their own property as they saw fit without the intrusion of the government.<sup>55</sup> "They had been brought up in the belief that the wild creatures of the woods and waters had been placed there specifically for the use of those humans fortunate enough to live in contact with the birds and animals," Brimley later recalled, "and they strongly resented any attempt to curtail such privileges."<sup>56</sup>

As the Audubon bill began making its way through the legislative process, the citizens of Dare County, located on the far eastern coast of the state, petitioned to the legislature that the bill "be not applied to Dare County."<sup>57</sup> The county was one of many along the coast of the state that relied heavily on the feather trade. Opposition in the county, Pearson observed that winter, was led by a man named Gould, "who hires four or five men every spring to shoot the beach birds for northern markets and terns and gulls every year which they killed chiefly during the northern migration in the spring." Pearson visited one of these millinery houses—i.e. houses where they processed bird feathers for fashion accessories—"he [Gould] and his men skinned thousands of terns and gulls every year."<sup>58</sup> These birds, Pearson lamented, were protected in the North, but demand from Northern states kept those like Gould in business in North Carolina. Indeed, the job

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<sup>54</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, Session 1903*, 1268.

<sup>55</sup> Powell, NC Through Four Centuries, 247-248.

<sup>56</sup> H.H. Brimley "A Sketch of the History of Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina, found in Odum, 89-90.

<sup>57</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, Session 1903*, 234-235.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from T.G. Pearson to H.H. Brimley, January 13, 1903," North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director's Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

“a lucrative one and he [Gould] is loathe to lose the chance of killing these birds.”<sup>59</sup> “They call themselves sportsmen,” Pearson concluded, “and wander around shooting snipes, black birds, or whatever comes along.”<sup>60</sup> Ever sympathetic to his friend, Brimley reminded him that, “we could not expect a bill of this kind to go through without opposition and I hope the antagonism to it will not develop too much strength.”<sup>61</sup>

Despite the vocal opposition, the conservationists had a powerful ally on their side in the person of Governor Aycock. “We have heretofore paid little attention to the preservation of our birds,” Aycock told the General Assembly that February, “other than those which have been protected for the sake of game, but the birds other than game birds are of great practical value to man.”<sup>62</sup> Aycock, then, heartily endorsed the bill, “I recommend,” he said, “a careful and favorable consideration of the plans which will be proposed by the society.”<sup>63</sup> Following the governor’s remarks, Pearson wrote to Brimley stating that, “The Governor did us O.K., didn’t he?”<sup>64</sup>

By March 1903, Pearson addressed the members of the legislature on the importance of the bill while Wescott Roberson and R.B. McLaughlin championed it in each wing of the legislature.<sup>65</sup> When it passed in the legislature, the law incorporated the Audubon Society of North Carolina and distinguished the types of birds that could be legally hunted.<sup>66</sup> These included, “loons, grebes, swans, geese, brant, river, fish and sea ducks, rail, coots, mud hens and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to T.G. Pearson, January 15, 1903,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>62</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, “The Governor’s Message to the General Assembly of North Carolina of 1903,” *Public Documents of the State of North Carolina 1903 vol. 1 part 1*, 45.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> “Letter from T.G. Pearson to H.H. Brimley, January 12, 1903,” North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences Records Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU3), Box M3, 1.

<sup>65</sup> “Audubon Society Chartered to Protect the State’s Birds,” *The News and Observer*, March 22, 1903, 25.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 25 and 31.

gallinules, plovers, shore and serf birds, snipe, wood-cock, sandpipers, yellowlegs and curlews, wild turkeys, grouse, partridge, pheasant, quail, dove, robin and meadow lark.”<sup>67</sup> Any other birds not mentioned on this list were specifically prohibited; however, it did not prevent the hunting of “house sparrow, owls, hawks, crows, black birds, jackdaw and rice birds. . .”<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the violation of this law would be considered a misdemeanor, and those individuals that broke it would be fined or spend at the most thirty days in jail.<sup>69</sup> More importantly, it gave the governor the power to appoint game wardens to enforce the law and required that non- state residents pay \$10 for a hunting license in the state.<sup>70</sup> Finally, the law included certain regulations to curtail the methods and types of animals hunted in local game laws throughout the state.<sup>71</sup>

While North Carolina’s first conservation bill was one of Brimley’s most important accomplishments, it was not without shortcomings. For one, the bill proved over time difficult to fund. Indeed, the only revenue for it was “from a ten dollar license fee to be collected from each non-resident hunter.”<sup>72</sup> Second, there were several counties, including Dare, that successfully petitioned to be exempt from the measure. By 1908, there was such a “drift of counties away from the control of the Audubon Society [that] increased until its income had dwindled to the point where no progressive or constructive work was longer possible.”<sup>73</sup> Third, by 1910, Pearson left for a new position “as Secretary and executive officer of the National Association of Audubon Societies. . . In the years immediately following Pearson’s acceptance of a much wider

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<sup>67</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Private Laws of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at Its session of 1903, Begun and Held in the City of Raleigh 1903, Begun and Held in the City of Raleigh on Wednesday, The Seventh Day of January, A.D. 1903*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1903), 784.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 784.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 784.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 787.

<sup>71</sup> “Audubon Society Chartered to Protect the State’s Birds,” *The News and Observer*, March 22, 1903, 31.

<sup>72</sup> H.H. Brimley, “A Sketch of the History of Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina,” found in Odum, 91.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.



scope of work. . .no enthusiastic conservationist was found to take his place.”<sup>74</sup> Finally, there was the emergence of locals acting as game wardens who were “naturally loath to arrest men of prominence in their communities who were found committing infractions of the new laws.”<sup>75</sup>

In the end, the bill’s early critics, including Brittain, predicted its downfall---“It creates a society that will not be self-sustaining, and will sooner or later, and probably sooner, have to be tacked onto some department of the State (more likely the Agricultural Department), to be carried at a loss to the State.”<sup>76</sup> Overall, in Brimley’s estimation, Pearson did “noble work—but made a lot of enemies in his efforts to carry out the new law.”<sup>77</sup> As Brimley later recalled, Pearson “was faced with a very difficult situation, or perhaps it would be better to say, quite a number of difficult situations.”<sup>78</sup>

Following Pearson’s departure, Brimley remained concerned—even after the passage of the Audubon Bill-- that North Carolina (as late as the 1920s) still lacked a *comprehensive* system of game laws.<sup>79</sup> “In North Carolina,” he wrote in 1920 “we have thirty-six different seasons for deer and an even forty different seasons for quail... Our laws have been so voluminous, so local in character, and often, so poorly drawn, that the United State Department of Agriculture has been the only authority that has dared to attempt the publication of a synopsis of them. And last year even the above-named authority gave it up!”<sup>80</sup> The state’s game laws, then, were wholly inadequate to combat any potential for over-hunting, and increased the possibility of extinction for some of North Carolina’s wildlife, including various bird species, diamond back terrapins,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 92

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>76</sup> North Carolina General Assembly, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, Session 1903*, 1267

<sup>77</sup> H.H. Brimley, “A Sketch of the History of Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina,” found in Odum, 91.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 92-94.

<sup>80</sup> H.H. Brimley, “Bird Conservation in the South,” found in Odum, 74.

and alligators.<sup>81</sup> Thus, Brimley, when it came to promoting conservation in the state, placed priority on the intrinsic value of nature itself—i.e. he believed nature had an esthetic and transcendental value that was “at least equal weight with that relating to dollars and cents.”<sup>82</sup>

For Brimley, the only way conservation managed to succeed in North Carolina came not from lobbying bills through the legislature, but rather from the public’s changing attitude toward conservation through education.<sup>83</sup> The State Museum and the Department of Agriculture, then, became avenues by the 1910s to promote conservation efforts. Key in this promotion was Brimley’s focus on writing. In 1919, for example, he, along with Pearson and C.S. Brimley, collaborated on an exhaustive work entitled *The Birds of North Carolina* (1919), which became the state’s first field guide to North Carolina birds.<sup>84</sup> This publication, along with the State Museum’s own shift toward nature study at the start of the 1910’s, helped to dispense educational material to the public on conservation, and to change “public sentiment” toward the preservation of fish and game.<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, this change in public sentiment allowed the General Assembly to enact a 1927 law for “State-wide seasons for game, and it contained the first provisions for licensing the resident hunter and fisherman, previous game license being imposed only on non-resident hunters.”<sup>86</sup> For Brimley, the conservationist movement in North Carolina, “at last emerged from the woods.”<sup>87</sup>

The other major challenge to the State Museum during this period involved institutional changes, including personnel and infrastructure. Overall, the State Museum was part of a larger

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<sup>81</sup> Martin, 96-97.

<sup>82</sup> H.H. Brimley “Bird Conservation in the South,” found in Odum, 73.

<sup>83</sup> H.H. Brimley “A Sketch of the Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina” found in Odum, 93.

<sup>84</sup> C.S. Brimley, H.H. Brimley, and T. Gilbert Pearson, *Birds of North Carolina*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printers Co. State Printers 1919.)

<sup>85</sup> H.H. Brimley “A Sketch of the Wildlife Conservation in North Carolina,” found in Odum, 93.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 94.

network of American museums that coordinated with each other through an organization known as the American Association of Museums. Established on May 15, 1906, the organization sought to create an association that would allow museums across the nation to collaborate with one another.<sup>88</sup> Brimley himself was a member of the association and considered the regular attendance of these meetings very important in order to keep, “abreast of the times.”<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, Brimley was distinctly aware that museums were “a visual educational institution of the highest value to its surrounding population.”<sup>90</sup> He added, “it is always one of the first items of interest in a city to be visited by both transient and stay-over visitors.”<sup>91</sup>

In 1910, the association published a directory on the various museums across the United States in order to provide museum administrators with a reliable source of information on contacts and statistics.<sup>92</sup> Compared to other museums across the country—both north and south--the State Museum attracted a sizeable attendance. For instance, the Charleston Museum, one of the oldest museums in the American South, boasted an annual attendance record of some 10,000 visitors annually by 1910, while the North Carolina State Museum had some 100,000 visitors annually that same year.<sup>93</sup> Even compared to both the American National Museum in Washington D.C., and the Chicago Field Museum, that averaged some 230,000 visitors between them annually in 1910, the North Carolina State Museum managed to have a regular attendance nearly as close as these two institutions combined.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> “The American Association of Museum.” *Science* 23, no. 596 (1906): 859-861.

<sup>89</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1922 to November 30, 1924*, 63.

<sup>90</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1922 to November 30, 1924*, 31

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>92</sup> Paul Marshall Rea, “A Directory of American Museums of Art, History, and Science” *Bulletin of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences*,” vol. 10 no.1 (October 1910), 1-3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 222 and 280.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46, and 61-64.

Indeed, the State Museum was the most visible expression of the Department of Agriculture's initiatives. Brimley argued as much to the Department. "As a matter of fact, I believe it is better known, to more people in the State, than any other division of the Department's work, and that it has done, and is still doing, a great work beyond the State's borders."<sup>95</sup> Brimley added, "It is not merely a Raleigh affair. The great crowds from all over the State that visit us during Fair Week, the fifty or more excursions from every point of the compass that make this a summer outing place, the numbers of people who have business here at the State Capital, the many outsiders who stop over in Raleigh for a few hours or a day or two---most of these come to the Museum."<sup>96</sup> With the status of American museums taking a more prominent place by the 1920s, the Department of Agriculture could ill-afford to relinquish such a valuable asset to Raleigh's tourism.

As a consequence of the museum's popularity, personnel, then, was a top priority for Brimley. He expected his employees, including his top staff, to be highly trained and qualified. Unfortunately, in 1917, the ever-reliable T.W. Adickes, who had served as Assistant Curator since 1905, left the Museum to start a new career in the life insurance business.<sup>97</sup> His departure left a gap in the museum's staff. <sup>98</sup> Eventually, in May 1920, Brimley settled upon a young graduate (and geologist) from North Carolina State University, Harry T. Davis, who proved an important member of the State Museum's staff. <sup>99</sup> "During the sixteen months of his service with

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<sup>95</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of William A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1912, 34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>97</sup> "Letter from T.W. Adickes to H.H. Brimley, April 30, 1919" N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director's Office, Miscellaneous Box 20 (RU1), 1

<sup>98</sup> In June 1919, Brimley hired Walter W. Eagle as Adickes successor, but Eagle, identify, promptly resigned following a new position teaching summer school at the University of North Carolina..

<sup>99</sup> "Letter from H.H. Brimley to Harry T. Davis, May 20, 1920" N.C. Museum Natural Sciences Director's office, miscellaneous (RU1), Box 21, 1. Brimley was familiar with the Davis family, including Harry's father, J.J. Davis, who was a local doctor and farmer from Buxton, North Carolina.

the Department,” Brimley reported to the Department of Agriculture in 1921 that Davis had “examined 335 specimens of rocks and minerals...covering 62 counties of this State and one each from Virginia, Georgia and Texas.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, he was “a good, all round man,” and deserved a raise.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, Davis’ work, Brimley concluded, “proved an invaluable aid in all the building and equipment work that has been placed with us as well as in his special lines and in the general work of Museum administration.”<sup>102</sup>

By the early 1920s, there was a growing need for renovating and relocating the Museum, still housed in the National Hotel in Raleigh. Indeed, the dilapidated building, originally built before the Civil War, was “a fire trap for our Museum and records.”<sup>103</sup> Writing to the Board as early as 1908, Brimley called for a “new fireproof building.”<sup>104</sup> “No amount of money could replace much of our material, in case of destruction by fire and it would take years of hard work and a good deal of money to again get together the greater part of the collections that could be replaced.”<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Brimley added, “It would be strictly in the line of economy to spend a good round sum on such a building now, rather than run the risks of a devastating fire any longer.”<sup>106</sup> Fearful of the security of the museum’s specimens, the Department of Agriculture doubled the fire insurance of the State Museum at \$120,000 by 1916.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore by 1922,

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<sup>100</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report Department of Agriculture 1920-1922*, (Raleigh: Commercial Printing Company State Printers, 19230), 21

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>102</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1922- November 30, 1924*, 30.

<sup>103</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1920 to November 30, 1922*, (Raleigh Commercial Printing Company State Printers 1923), 11.

<sup>104</sup> North Carolina department of Agriculutre, *Biennial Report of Commissioner William A. Graham, Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell &Co., State Printers and Binders, 1909), 56.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>107</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1914-November 30, 1916*, (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Co. State Printers 1917), 40.

Commissioner of Agriculture William A. Graham decided it was time for the Department to be completely rebuilt. He informed the governor of this decision by declaring, “North Carolina agriculture will soon have a home in Raleigh of which the farmers may justly be proud.”<sup>108</sup> Despite the commissioner’s bravado, Brimley became increasingly apprehensive about the storage and management of the museum until the new agriculture building could be built.<sup>109</sup> “This condition has had a paralyzing effect on our activities, and this may continue to be the case for some time,” he confided to Davis.<sup>110</sup> Although Brimley feared this move would “throw the Museum all out of kilter,” he still felt that it was necessary for the Museum’s long-term success.<sup>111</sup>

Ultimately, the Museum remained closed to the public for two-and a half years (from 1922 to 1925). One newspaper at the time stated, “and by the way why doesn’t he [Brimley] reopen the museum...”<sup>112</sup> The move, however, was positive, and allowed Brimley and Davis to remake the State Museum into a brand new institution, and they expected the museum to open to the public once again in the winter of 1925.<sup>113</sup> “We hope and expect to rebuild the Museum into an institution of even greater value to North Carolina than it has been in the past,” Brimley wrote the department in 1924.<sup>114</sup> The new facility, he added, would be “an institution of which both the Department and the citizenship of the State may well be proud. . .”<sup>115</sup> Still, Brimley warned,

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<sup>108</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1920 to November 30, 1922*, 11

<sup>109</sup> “Report on Some Features of the New Building Proposition, June 6, 1919,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 20, 1- 4.

<sup>110</sup> “Letter from H.H. Brimley to Harry T. Davis, May 30, 1920,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Director’s Office, Miscellaneous (RU1), Box 21, 1.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> “Piscatorial Observations,” *The News and Observer*, June 21, 1925, 22.

<sup>113</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1922- November 30, 1924*, 31.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

“the Museum in the future is going to require more money than it has in the past... we have reached a point now where if we fail to go forward we will have to go backward—and the Department can hardly allow that.”<sup>116</sup>

On Halifax Street, (just around the corner where the previous building stood) the new State Museum was a two story complex complete with nine different exhibit halls, a renewed emphasis on natural history, and “a 45 foot skeleton of [a] Right Whale” that hung from the ceiling, which greeted visitors as they entered the building.<sup>117</sup> The rebuilding of the State Museum in the 1920s marked the institution’s zenith under Brimley. On August 17, 1925, the Museum reopened to the public with some 4,000 visitors in attendance during its first week of reopening to the public.<sup>118</sup> “Grimy youngsters from the streets stood on tiptoe before the cases,” reported the *News and Observer*, “Old men and women, business men and housewives, and people who hadn’t been to Raleigh in ‘nigh bout ten years’ made up the constantly flowing stream of humanity that passed in and out of the doors.”<sup>119</sup> In the first year of its reopening, it witnessed some 126,848 visitors enter through its doors, and it followed an increase in attendance the following year by some 28 percent, reaching 161,495 visitors.<sup>120</sup> “This seems to be the only museum in the country that can show an annual attendance equal to four times the population of the city in which it is situated,” Brimley reported in 1928.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>117</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1926 to November 30, 1928*, 77

<sup>118</sup> “The Museum has 4,000 Visitors First Week After Reopening,” *The News and Observer*, August 24, 1925, 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1926 to November 30, 1928*, 80.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. However, the start of the Great Depression in 1929 caused a serious dip in the number of visitors and hampered museum operations at the start of the 1930s. Remarkably enough, following the stock market crash of 1929, the museum managed to recover its visitor count and in his penultimate report to the Board of Agriculture in 1932, Brimley reported that some 400,000 visitors entered the Museum from 1930-1932.<sup>121</sup>

Inside, the new facility included nine different exhibit halls.<sup>122</sup> Hall I, located on the first floor, featured, “various bones and most of the skull of a mastodon,...”<sup>123</sup> Other displays included a “mounted Elk and Buffalo illustrating animal species formerly abundant but now extinct in the State, a mounted Tarpon, a pair of mounted Ravens, several geological specimens and one or two unusual specimens in forestry.”<sup>124</sup> One of the most intriguing displays for visitors in Hall I was the ‘collection of living snakes which illustrates the differences between the poisonous and the non-poisonous species.’<sup>125</sup> Halls II and III, meanwhile, displayed the “geological and mineralogical collections” under Davis.<sup>126</sup> Hall IV exhibited the forestry and different species of trees in the state, while Hall V---on the second floor---presented “relief maps, pictures and miscellaneous exhibits.”<sup>127</sup> In contrast, Hall VI focused on “the rarer and more striking exhibits” like a “1,200-1,300 pound Ocean Sunfish, from Swansboro.” Other specimens included, “500 pound Sand Shark; an 11 foot Sawfish; Sailfish; 15 pound Lobster; 7 foot Sturgeon; an Octopus with a spread of 5 feet; a 55 pound Red Drum. . .”<sup>128</sup> Hall VII, then, emphasized the birds and reptiles of the state. While not as dramatic as Hall VI, this hall included interesting specimens, such as an 800-lb Leatherback Sea Turtle, the extinct Carolina Parakeet, a 6-foot Diamond-Back Rattlesnake, a Razor-billed Auk, a Golden Eagle, and a 9-foot alligator.<sup>129</sup> Hall VIII included “native mammals, [while] some species being shown in habitat family groups.”<sup>130</sup> These included deer, opossum, skunk, mink, and many other species native to

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<sup>122</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1926 to November 30, 1928*, 77.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.



North Carolina.<sup>131</sup> Finally, Hall IX highlighted the state's agricultural products—including tobacco and various fruits and vegetables—as well as a 54-foot long Sperm Whale.

Perhaps the “largest and most valuable” specimen displayed at the State Museum was “Trouble,” a giant Sperm whale that had washed ashore on Wrightsville Beach in southeastern North Carolina in 1928.<sup>132</sup> The process of acquiring “Trouble”—still the Museum's most popular specimen-- was a “mental agony” for both Brimley and Davis.<sup>133</sup> In an article entitled “Do What You Can Now With What You Have” and published for *The Museum News* in 1930, Brimley recalled that “The scarcity of skeletons of this specimen in museums” made it both an exciting acquisition opportunity, as well as a logistical nightmare to transport back to Raleigh (and then to display in the museum). Indeed, Brimley noted the whale's cranium alone weighed “some five or six hundred pounds...”<sup>134</sup> Transporting and preparing the whale for display was an arduous process. First, the carcass was towed “twenty miles up the coast to Topsail Inlet” where it was “cut” and allowed to macerate for six months.<sup>135</sup> Trouble soon ensued. For example, the whale's lower jaw was lost, and local fishermen were a constant source of complaint (insisting that the entrails were contaminating the water and hurting fishing).<sup>136</sup> Transporting the animal to Raleigh, meanwhile, required two 3-ton trucks, and a reburial in a holding facility at the state fairgrounds, while preparations were made at the museum for mounting and display.<sup>137</sup>

Ultimately, Brimley and Davis hired an engineer to give a report on the feasibility of using

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 80. Even to this day, Trouble remains one of the oldest and most iconic specimens on display at the museum. Trouble's skeleton still greets visitors as they enter the modern Museum's exhibit on the state's marine life.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 80

<sup>134</sup> H.H. Brimley, “Do What You Can Now With What You Have?” *The Museum News*, vol. 8 no. 10, (November 15, 1930), found in Odum, 191.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 187-189.

various “I-beams of various dimensions” to mount the specimen along with “a hundred per cent as a margin of error. . .”<sup>138</sup> After “six weeks, about half of which was devoted to the skull,” they managed to mount a complete Sperm Whale skeleton for the public. While a grueling process, “we did what we could THEN, with what we had,” Brimley recalled.<sup>139</sup>

With a burgeoning number of visitors in attendance, the museum staff began to expand in congruence with the visitor count and new positions formed as a consequence. A major change that Brimley advocated involved his own title. Since 1895, Brimley was referred to as “Curator.” However, in 1926, he petitioned the Board to change his official title from “Curator” to “Director, and Curator of Zoology,” and Davis’ from “Assistant Curator” to “Associate Director, and Curator of Geology.” This change was one grounded in Brimley’s belief in the importance of professionalization and modernization of the Museum as an institution. Such a move, he insisted, would act in “conformity with modern museum practice and would give the workers of the Museum Division of the Department—and the Museum itself—a better standing among other like institutions.”<sup>140</sup> The Board ultimately obliged, and in 1928, the official titles for both Brimley and Davis were changed.<sup>141</sup>

In 1936, Brimley, after a career of fifty-four years as head of the State Museum, decided to retire from his executive position. Despite his “retirement” from the curatorship, Brimley,

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 197. Of all the accessions acquired by Brimley in his fifty year long career at the State Museum, Trouble was the most unique. By the start of the 1930s, only a handful of museum across the world displayed sperm whale skeleton to the public. In fact, the State Museum ranked amongst them. Part of this was due to the fact that these animals hunted in the depths of the world’s oceans making it difficult for biologists to study them. Skeleton’s like Trouble represented the perfect opportunity for critical scientific discoveries to be made, and more importantly it represented an opportunity for the public to discover more about these animals. In a time before the internet, individual accessions like Trouble gave the public the opportunity to witness the wonders and oddities of the natural world.

<sup>140</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, From December 1, 1924 to November 30, 1926*, 63.

<sup>141</sup> North Carolina department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the Department of Agriculture From July 1, 1930 to June 30, 1932*, 94; and Odum, xiii. Brimley signs his report as Director of the State Museum.

aged seventy-five, continued as an employee of the state—just in a much-reduced capacity. Specifically, he worked as Curator of Zoology, which required him to work on different specimens including a Blue Marlin, a True’s Beaked Whale, and a revised edition of the *Birds of North Carolina*.<sup>142</sup> More importantly, Brimley continued to hunt the wilds of North Carolina even at eighty years old in 1944. “Although more than eighty,” wrote one contemporary, “Brimley still is, as was Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord, and last year he participated in six deer hunts and his shirt-tail is still intact!”<sup>143</sup> Upon Brimley’s retirement, Davis lauded his old superior as “a fine citizen of his community who has been a leader in his vocation over a period of 54 years.”<sup>144</sup>

Davis, then, replaced Brimley as Director of the State Museum in 1936, and continued Brimley’s emphasis on perpetual change and growth for the State Museum. He built upon Brimley’s work by cooperating with the North Carolina Archaeological Society. At the time, they were making groundbreaking archaeological discoveries at Mount Gilead, North Carolina with the discovery of the, “only Indian Mound in Central North Carolina.”<sup>145</sup> Davis reported to the Board that the artifacts discovered benefitted the Museum’s exhibits.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, during Davis’ early tenure as director, the museum embarked upon publications outside of North Carolina newspapers with “the first printed publication of the Museum.”<sup>147</sup> Davis explained to the Board that this was “a modest leaflet giving in outline the scope of our exhibits and work.”<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Report of North Carolina Department of Agriculture for the Biennium 1938-1940, (New Bern, N.C.: Owen G. Dunn State Printer, 1940), 67, and 69.

<sup>143</sup> R.C. Lawrence “H.H. Brimley January 15, 1944” North Carolina State Museum Records Series 10 Personal Papers, Box PP3, 2.

<sup>144</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture For the Biennium 1936-1938, (New Bern, N.C.: Owen G. Dunn State Printer, 1938), 128.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 128.

Additionally, the State Museum continued to build “a creditable Natural History Library,” that had begun under Brimley’s curatorship, but truly began to thrive under Davis’ directorship.<sup>149</sup>

The ability of the State Museum to overcome these challenges was a testament to the life, leadership and perseverance of H.H. Brimley. Indeed, his ability to navigate the State Museum to unbelievable growth and success, during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century proved that the State Museum would become an enduring cultural, educational, and scientific legacy for generations of North Carolinians. By the time of his death in April 1946, the State Museum had become a focal point for science education and the championing of conservation in North Carolina.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 128.

## Conclusion: Our Natural Heritage

“Museum people are always overworked and underpaid,” wrote world famous paleontologist Robert T. Bakker in 1986, “and they all deserve sainthood, every one.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the people of the North Carolina State Museum created “a valuable place in the educational system of [their] state.”<sup>2</sup> H.H. Brimley described the museum’s mission in 1900 as “to teach what the state possesses, and next, so far as possible, how we utilize what we have.”<sup>3</sup> “[T]his idea will be the guiding star in the future, as has in the past.”<sup>4</sup> Brimley himself considered the institution as a selfless act to the people of North Carolina and the nation. Furthermore, its perpetual growth as an institution in Raleigh served the public at large. As he wrote in 1928, “People sometimes ask, ‘when will the Museum be finished?’ Such a condition should never come to pass. No good museum was ever ‘finished,’ and it is not the idea that this institution will ever be allowed to suffer from dry-rot... There must be movement—one way or the other—and the spirit of the State Museum of North Carolina knows no direction other than forward, and then forward again. . . towards the highest ideals of its work of adding to the knowledge and to the recreation of the public.”<sup>5</sup>

When considering the importance of the State Museum and why it matters, one must consider, like any other natural history museum, that the State Museum acted as a bridge between the public and nature. The State Museum arose in congruence with the American museums of the northern and mid-western states. Although not as grand in size as its northern

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<sup>1</sup> Bakker, *The Dinosaur Heresies: New Theories Unlocking the Mystery of the Dinosaurs and Their Extinction*, (New York, Kensington Publishing Corp., 1986) 10.

<sup>2</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture*, (Raleigh: E.M. Uzzell & Co., State Printers and Binders, 1914), 31

<sup>3</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture of the State of North Carolina, 1900*, (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards & Broughton, and E.M. Uzzell State Printers Presses of Edwards & Broughton, 1901), 39

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>5</sup> H.H. Brimley, “The State Museum in 1928,” *Raleigh Times*, January 11, 1929, found in Odum, 176.

counterparts, the State Museum acted as an institution that was not all too dissimilar and boasted a visitor count of tremendous proportions. Like in Chicago, New York, or Washington D.C., the State Museum acted not only as an educational organization, but also as a key tourist destination for those visiting Raleigh. These two functions were not mutually exclusive, but in fact worked in tandem. Brimley and his compatriots created an institution that brought nature study and scientific education outside of the normal parameters of the classroom. They provided their visitors a wondrous and awe inspiring perspective on nature and the value of conservation to North Carolina. H.H. Brimley believed that the role of any museum was an appeal “to the eye and the impression conveyed by the sight of a thing itself... [has] much more lasting [impact] than that conveyed by a dry statement of fact.”<sup>6</sup>

For Brimley and his associates, education became the fundamental role the museum played as a state institution. The educational benefits of a museum went beyond the “dry statement of fact,” because it engaged all the senses and created a unique learning environment for the public.<sup>7</sup> This was certainly the case when the State Museum began to host students from the Institution of the Blind. Brimley and the museum took precautions so that even their disabled visitors might be able to “see” animals, plants, minerals, or fossils for the first time.<sup>8</sup> As Brimley wrote in 1915, he found the reactions of these students to be particularly touching when he wrote, “it is most interesting, though at times rather pitiful to hear the exclamations of a little blind child “seeing” a deer, or a bear, or a fox for the first time.”<sup>9</sup> He added, “It is wonderful, too, to note what knowledge of form and texture the extra-sensitive fingertips of a blind person

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<sup>6</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Department of Agriculture of the State of North Carolina*, (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards & Broughton, State Printers, 1903), 51.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> H.H. Brimley, “The State Museum in 1915,” *Charlotte Daily Observer*, February 17, 1915, found in Odum, 170.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 170.

convey to his brain.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, although Raleigh, along with much of the South, segregated its public school system, the museum created a social environment by which both black and white students learned about nature together.<sup>11</sup> It is, however, important to recognize that the museum planned to segregate its public restrooms in their new facilities during the museum’s renovations (1922-1925).<sup>12</sup>

Beyond the role it played in public education, the State Museum is representative of an institution that helped in properly recovering scientific inquiry and education from the aftermath of the Civil War. It educated and inspired an entire generation of southerners to engross themselves with both nature and science in a unique way. It personally affected individual careers and helped in the development of new fields in science. This is particularly true with the careers of both Roxie Collie Simpson and Eugene P. Odum, who established the new scientific fields of Ecology and Forensic Ornithology, respectively.

Possibly the most significant changes to the State Museum during the 1930s was the addition of Roxie Collie Simpson, who Harry T. Davis referred to as a “hard-working taxidermist and assistant to Mr. Brimley.”<sup>13</sup> “Roxie,” as she was referred to by her colleagues at the Museum, was born in 1910 at Fayetteville, NC.<sup>14</sup> She was the eldest of 15 children and grew up in Farmville, North Carolina.<sup>15</sup> Graduating from Meredith College in 1932, an all-girls school

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>11</sup> “Museum Hall I April 1938 School Groups,” image, North Carolina Digital Collections, HH Brimley Photograph Collection, PhC42, 4.46 (Series).

<sup>12</sup> “Museum Requirements in New Building,” NCMNS Box 20, It is not entirely clear Brimley’s stance on race relations. At points, he makes derogatory comments toward black people in some of his essays; while having close correspondence with them (mainly from those who worked as janitors at the State Museum).

<sup>13</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, For the Biennium 1936-1938*, (New Bern, N.C.: Owen G. Dunn State Printer), 129.

<sup>14</sup> Carla J. Dove, Marcy Heacker, and Bill Adair, “In Memoriam Roxie Collie Laybourne, 1910-2003,” *The Auk* vol. 121 no. 4, (2004): 1282-1285., N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Records, Series 1.3, Biographical Files, Box P5, 1282.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

in Raleigh, Roxie was unlike many of her fellow classmates.<sup>16</sup> She was athletic, interested in cars, and fascinated by the outdoors.<sup>17</sup>

When she was first hired by the State Museum, Roxie began work as an apprentice to Brimley in the State Museum. “I began work classifying and rearranging the museum collection,” wrote Roxie, “This required two months, after that I checked over the collection of birds and mammal skins then in September I began Taxidermy.”<sup>18</sup> At the time, it was quite unusual that a woman would be apprenticed in taxidermy. One reporter from the *News and Observer* conveyed that, “I found her [Roxie] surrounded by specimens of her handiwork mounted fish and birds and animals, in a malodorous backroom of the State Museum.”<sup>19</sup> The reporter inquired of Roxie, “Do you really like this business?”<sup>20</sup> “Yes, fine,” responded Roxie, “I’d rather do it than anything else. I’ve always been crazy about animals.”<sup>21</sup> Roxie continued to work for the museum until 1944 when she left to work at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. While at the Smithsonian, she helped start an entire field of science called forensic ornithology. This new field created a methodology of identifying different species of birds based on their feathers.<sup>22</sup> This became particularly important for air traffic control and criminal investigations.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “The Remarkable Life of Roxie Laybourne by Chris Sweeney,” Science, Audubon, March 28, 2021 <https://www.audubon.org/news/the-remarkable-life-roxie-laybourne>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> “Roxie Collie Laybourne’s recollections of her early apprenticeship at the State Museum,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Records, Series 1.3, Biographical Files, Box P5, 1.

<sup>19</sup> “The Only One of Her Kind,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Records, Series 1.3, Biographical Files, Box P5, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Article on Roxie from the Smithsonian, August-September 1990,” N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences Records, Series 1.3, Biographical Files, Box P5, 3.

<sup>23</sup> “The Remarkable Life of Roxie Laybourne by Chris Sweeney,” Science, Audubon, March 28, 2021 <https://www.audubon.org/news/the-remarkable-life-roxie-laybourne>.



While Roxie began her impactful career at the Smithsonian, Eugen P. Odum became indispensable in the founding of Ecology. Odum wrote the *Fundamentals of Ecology* a work that enumerated the basic ideas behind the science of Ecology and the Environmental Sciences as a whole.<sup>24</sup> Odum like Roxie was close to both Brimley brothers. “I well remember my first visit with H.H. Brimley when I was a young high-school student. . .” wrote Odum.<sup>25</sup> “The enthusiasm and sincerity with which he [Brimley] worked and talked impressed me especially. In fact, H.H. Brimley and his brother C.S. did more than anyone else to encourage me to develop my interest in birds which later led me to go into teaching and research in biology as a career.”<sup>26</sup> For Roxie and Odum, both as biologists and as southerners, the North Carolina State Museum played a critical role in their respective careers. This indicates that the State Museum had a long lasting impact upon both its employees and upon its visitors, which added to the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century biology and conservation.

However, the real success of the State Museum belongs to Brimley himself. His work ethic, his charisma, and his ability to emotionally invest in people allowed the State Museum to aid in the process of changing Raleigh as a city. There are few figures in North Carolina’s history that managed to achieve such long term success in creating an institution that directly benefitted the wider public. Historians should consider that the State Museum provided its visitors with an opportunity to recognize the intrinsic value of nature and natural history that went beyond mere monetary value. Southern historians have tended to highlight that the South’s attitude towards its natural resources and its environment was mainly exploitative.<sup>27</sup> However, this does not

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<sup>24</sup> Eugene P. Odum, *Fundamentals of Ecology Third Edition*, (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1971)

<sup>25</sup> Odum, vi.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., vi.

<sup>27</sup> William D. Bryan, *The Price of Permanence: Nature and Business in the New South*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018)

necessarily appear to be the case. In fact southerners, created systems of conservation to protect their natural resources.<sup>28</sup> Still, southern historians tend to ignore or omit the role natural history museums played in the public's understanding of nature conservation. This is quite extraordinary since some of the most consequential American biologists, such as Roxie Collie Simpson and Eugene P. Odum, were both Southerners and whose early careers were greatly impacted by the North Carolina State Museum. Part of this omission is quite unsurprising since the State Museum was a small operation compared to its northern counterparts. Nevertheless, natural history museums in the American South played an important role in southerner's changing attitudes toward conservation and science.

H.H. Brimley left an immense memorial to this intrinsic value within nature and inspired generations to consider the world beyond the bustling noises of a new, progressive and industrious South. He helped romanticize and germinate knowledge about a world beyond the poverty, societal struggles, and the day to day challenges of his fellow Tar Heels. For him, nature and the natural world as a whole had the power to inspire people. Brimley died at the age of eighty-four on Thursday evening April 4, 1946 at Rex Hospital.<sup>29</sup> Raleigh's *News and Observer* reported that during Brimley's lifetime the State Museum became, "one of the finest in the South."<sup>30</sup> Harry T. Davis remarked that Brimley, "was always sought as a genial boon companion."<sup>31</sup> The Board of Agriculture adjourned their meeting out of "respect to the memory of H.H. Brimley."<sup>32</sup> Additionally, the Board adopted a motion to adjourn for, Brimley's "long

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<sup>28</sup> William D. Bryan, *The Price of Permanence*, xvi-xvii.

<sup>29</sup> "Herbert H. Brimley," *The Wilmington Morning Star*, April 7, 1946, 11.

<sup>30</sup> "Herbert Brimley Taken By Death" *The News and Observer*, April 5, 1946, 1

<sup>31</sup> "H.H. Brimley, Obituary by Harry T. Davis," North Carolina State Museum Records Series 10, Personal Papers Box PP3, 2.

<sup>32</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, 1944-1948*, 261.

time conscientious and resourceful services,” that “built for the State a leading natural history museum and aided in the conservation and development of our natural resources...”<sup>33</sup>

Although not as extravagant as the Smithsonian institution, nor as famous as the American Museum of Natural History and lacking the same financial support as the Carnegie Institute, the North Carolina State Museum became an institution that championed the same level of awe and wonder that these institutions achieved. The New South was a time in which many aspects of the region began to change following the destructive fires and sufferings of the Civil War. Indeed, the North Carolina State Museum allowed a generation of southerners to consider a world beyond their own. Brimley arrived at a time when these scars were fresh, and he managed to make the best of it and developed an institution that inspires to this day. “He [Brimley] had devoted his life to building a Museum worthy of his State.”<sup>34</sup> The modern North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, with its towering presence in the heart of Raleigh owes its very existence to the passionate work of the Tarheel Victorian---Herbert Hutchinson Brimley.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> North Carolina Department of Agriculture, *Report of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, 1944-1948*, 135.

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