

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST GENERAL MEETING AND THE FIRST LOCAL SECTION OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

BY CHARLES E. MUNROE

Part I. First General Meeting of the American Chemical Society at Newport, R. I., August 6-7, 1890

Like many another of the original members of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY who lived outside of New York City, after more than a decade of association with it, I became somewhat restive with the way that things were done in the city, and felt that my relations with the SOCIETY were quite tenuous. Hence, though situated as I was, for much of the time, remote from other chemists, I was not surprised to note that the SOCIETY was languishing, or to receive, in the fall of 1889, when it was definitely threatened by several more or less active movements throughout the country looking to the formation of a truly national organization, a copy of the call that was made on all the members to advise means by which new life might be put into the SOCIETY. In a somewhat lengthy letter, in response to this call, besides giving a review of the situation as I saw it, I suggested that the SOCIETY hold migratory meetings, such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science had held for years, and that it form local sections in various parts of the country, as the United States Naval Institute had done. I advocated these measures from my personal experience with each of these organizations and my knowledge of the success attending each.

To my gratification I learned that one or the other of these suggestions were offered by other members of the SOCIETY and that both were adopted and were later incorporated in the revised Constitution adopted June 6, 1890. I was, however, greatly surprised to be informed that, at a meeting of the Board of Directors, held July 22, 1890, a call had been issued for a general

meeting to be held at Newport, R. I., on August 6 and 7, 1890, and that I had been designated as chairman of the local committee with power. Not only was the time very short but Newport seemed, in my judgment, one of the least suitable places for holding a scientific meeting.

However, the die being cast, I drew on my social relations with officers of the Army and Navy on duty at the several posts about Newport and the scientific and professional men residing there, and succeeded in forming a committee of fourteen, each of whom actively participated in the preparations for the meeting and the entertainment of the visiting chemists. Among the members of the local committee were Drs. Wolcott Gibbs and Josiah P. Cooke, professors of chemistry at Harvard University with residences in Newport, Maj. W. R. Livermore, Engineer Corps, U. S. A., in charge of the District, Comdr. T. F. Jewell, U. S. N., commanding the United States Naval Torpedo Station, Surg. C. A. Siegfried, U. S. N., representing the U. S. Naval Training Station and War College, Lieut. DeW. Wilcox, 2d Artillery, U. S. A., representing Fort Adams, together with several physicians, the principal of the high school, the secretary of the Newport Natural History Society, and some of the younger chemists of that vicinity.

Our committee meetings were held in Major Livermore's office, and I well recall the unexpressed feeling of apprehension that came over me at the session on the afternoon of August 5, as I noted the extensive preparations being made for the accommodation and entertainment of the visiting chemists. I had been notified that the President of the SOCIETY, Dr. Nason, was too ill to come and, with the exception of the Secretary of the SOCIETY, I knew of no one who was planning to attend the meeting but F. W. Clarke, William McMurtrie, and Marcus Benjamin, who were to be my house guests.

But the next morning my apprehensions were completely dissipated for quite a party, headed by the genial, efficient, confidence-inspiring Dr. Charles F. Chandler, a host by himself, came in on the Fall River boat with a party including A. A. Breneman, C. A. Doremus, L. H. Friedburg, A. P. Hallock, Charles E. Pellew, Lucius Pitkin, A. H. Sabin, J. H. Wainwright, and Elwyn Waller. Urbane Prof. John H. Appleton came down from Brown University, and Dr. H. J. Wheeler came across from the Agricultural Experiment Station at Kingston, Rhode Island. They were joined by Edwin C. Calder, Lyman C. Newell, G. W. Patterson, Charles M. Perry, and other Rhode Island chemists. Dr.

A. E. Dolbear appeared from Tufts College, E. B. Newberry from Cornell, Morris Loeb from Clark, Herbert E. Smith from Yale, and most unexpected and most welcome was Dr. E. W. Morley, of Western Reserve University, carrying his quaintly ministerial manner in a most attractive form. The records showed a signed enrollment of forty-three, representing seven states and territories, namely, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Virginia.

Dr. Chandler was designated as Chairman with Prof. Albert C. Hale as Secretary. The SOCIETY was welcomed to Newport by Col. John Hare Powell, ex-Mayor of Newport and a grandson of the distinguished chemist, Dr. Robert Hare of Philadelphia, in an address delivered on behalf of the citizens of Newport, to which Dr. Chandler made a happy and most appropriate reply. Seventeen papers were presented. Two were presented by Dr. Morley in the field of atomic weight determinations, which so long occupied his attention. In reviewing the chemical work of the United States Geological Survey, Professor Clarke made the first disclosure of Hillebrand's discovery of a gas in uraninite. Naturally, from the location, there were two papers on explosives. Loeb spoke on the Gooch crucible as a silver voltameter and Doremus on fluorine for the softening of hard water. Breneman addressed the meeting on water analysis; Friedburg on resins; Dodge on grass oils; Livermore on the perissad law; Colby and Dodge on the action of nitriles on organic acids; Morgan on the extraction of indigotin from commercial indigo; Sabin on a new form of thermometer for technical use; Bartley on a new apparatus and improved method for the estimation of urea; Siegfried on Bütschli's experimental imitation of protoplasm; and Friedburg on the relative intensity of chemical force. Time was assigned for an informal discussion on the more general organization of chemists in America, which was opened by Professor Clarke with a brief review of the new movement for a proposed "Continental Society." The issue was quite actively discussed, many participating in it. The result was the appointment of a committee which played an important part in the further development of the SOCIETY, especially in reconciling differences among American chemists. It will be observed that a wide variety of topics was presented at the meetings by men of excellent standing in their specialties.

During the meeting a collection of chemical apparatus was exhibited in a room adjoining the assembly hall and the hope was expressed that in the future this feature might be more fully developed at the general meetings. This exhibit was secured by

the Committee of Arrangements in New York. The committee consisted of A. A. Breneman, chairman, C. F. Chandler, William Rapp, C. F. McKenna, and J. F. Geisler, and was undoubtedly responsible for a considerable part of the attendance on the meeting.

An attractive and substantial lunch was provided each day. The afternoons were given up to witnessing demonstrations, visits of inspection, and excursions. Fortunately, the weather was perfect. At 2:30 p. m., Wednesday, government launches conveyed the members to the U. S. N. Torpedo Station, where they were met by Comdr. T. F. Jewell, U. S. N., and, through his courtesy, given an opportunity to inspect the laboratories, workshops, and the museum, in the latter of which were many interesting historic objects, as well as those of later date including the most recent forms of automobile torpedoes. The demonstrations included the firing of torpedoes in the harbor and of a considerable series of experiments with high explosives designed to develop their characteristics and to show the Munroe effect. At 4 p. m. the party was conveyed to the U. S. N. Training Station on Coaster's Harbor Island where, through the courtesy of Capt. T. W. Stanton, U. S. N., commanding, a parade of the battalion was given in its honor. Afterwards the visitors were entertained at the officers' quarters and, before leaving, inspected the barracks and drill hall under the guidance of Surg. C. A. Siegfried, U. S. N.

On Thursday, at 2 p. m., two excursions were offered: one a tour of Newport Harbor, under the guidance of Maj. W. R. Livermore, Engineer Corps, U. S. A., in his inspection launch; the other, a run of some 30 miles about Conanicut Island in the Herreshoff torpedo boat Stilletto, kindly placed at the service of the SOCIETY by Commander Jewell. This was the first high speed torpedo boat put into commission in the United States Navy. Both parties joined for a stimulating picnic lunch at Fort Dumpling, a picturesque ruin of revolutionary days, and then sailed for Fort Adams, where, through the courtesy of Col. John Mendenhall, 2d Artillery, U. S. A., commanding, a parade of a battery of artillery was viewed, and the guests given an opportunity to inspect the light and heavy artillery, and the many interesting features of the Fort.

In the evening a well-attended reception was given to the members by Prof. Josiah P. Cooke at his home. He exhibited his interesting collection of meteorites and gave a most entertaining and informing address on the Canyon Diablo meteorite and the diamonds contained in it.

The beneficial effects of this meeting on the fortunes of the SOCIETY were immediately noticeable. It established an era of good feeling and confidence. At the next regular meeting in September, instead of considering resignations, as had been too often the case, four applicants to membership were elected and twenty-one were proposed for membership or associate membership. At the October meeting these twenty-one were elected and ten proposed; at the December meeting fourteen were elected and seven proposed. The increase in membership has continued with acceleration ever since until we have become the largest chemical society in the world, but this result has been accomplished only through the efficient and devoted service of many members and officers since the time of the Newport meeting.

Part II. Formation of the Rhode Island Section of the American Chemical Society, June 4, 1891

When the members of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY assembled at Newport for the first general meeting of the SOCIETY, it was but natural, with the general feeling of satisfaction which pervaded the members present, that the next proposed step, viz., that of the formation of local sections, should become a subject of discussion and consideration as we met in groups during our excursions. It was generally conceded that the compact little State of Rhode Island, with three chemical centers in Brown University at Providence, the Rhode Island Agricultural Experiment Station at Kingston, the U. S. N. Torpedo Station at Newport, and many manufacturing plants at which chemists were employed, especially as it was in easy communication with the home of the parent SOCIETY, offered a particularly good opportunity for the trying out of this new feature.

To set the matter on foot, the following circular letter was sent out:

Providence, R. I.

Dear Sir:

It is believed that it will be advantageous to the chemists of Rhode Island to form a local section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY here.

The Constitution of the SOCIETY, recently adopted, provides for the formation of such local sections under certain restrictions. A petition has been prepared (enclosed herewith). The intention is to secure the signatures of ten members of the SOCIETY, residing in Rhode Island; then to forward the petition to the SOCIETY in New York for approval. As soon as the petition is granted, it is intended to call a meeting of the members of the SOCIETY for the purpose of organizing the local section. We beg you to permit the signing of your name to the petition herewith enclosed. We also request that after the local section is organized, you will participate in its meetings. The general plan of the proposers is that the meetings shall be of informal character, for conference and free discussion rather than for the reading of formal papers. Of course, the scope and policy of the local section, when organized, will be determined by the decision of the persons joining the section.

It is believed that the local section when organized will not involve any considerable expense to members. The Constitution of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY provides that local sections may receive from the treasury of the SOCIETY-at-large, some fractional part of the annual dues paid by members of the local section into the general treasury. It is believed, therefore, that such an appropriation will meet all necessary expenses, such as printing, postage, and the like. If such society is organized, it is thought that there may be no expense for room rent, fuel, and lighting, as the government of Brown University will probably allow one of its lecture rooms to be used as a place of meeting by the section. It is hoped that when the section is once organized, meetings may be held occasionally in Newport and in Kingston (at the Rhode Island State Agricultural School and Experiment Station) and perhaps elsewhere.

JOHN HOWARD APPLETON
CHARLES E. MUNROE

As a result of this canvass a petition to form a section with headquarters at Providence, R. I., with permission to conduct business in the State of Rhode Island and to be known as the Rhode Island Section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY, as provided in the Constitution, was addressed to the Secretary of the SOCIETY, December 31, 1890, presented by him at the regular meeting, January 2, 1891, and referred to the Board of Directors, which, on January 21, 1891, granted the petition and created the first local section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY. The ten charter members were as follows:

John Howard Appleton	G. W. Patterson
Edwin E. Calder	George E. Perkins
Charles A. Catlin	William R. Potter
W. R. Livermore	Walter M. Saunders
Charles E. Munroe	H. J. Wheeler

The records of the first meeting of the Rhode Island Section held in Brown University, Chemical Laboratory Building, Thursday, June 4, 1891, at 12 noon, for purposes of organization, are as follows:

Members present

Prof. John H. Appleton	W. R. Potter, Esq.
Prof. Charles E. Munroe	G. M. Perkins, Esq.
C. A. Catlin, Esq.	Walter M. Saunders, Esq.
Prof. E. E. Calder	

Prof. C. E. Munroe was elected chairman, E. E. Calder, secretary. It was voted that Prof. John H. Appleton be entrusted with the care of the Charter. On motion of Professor Appleton, it was voted that the whole matter of organization be referred to a committee of five, consisting of three members from Providence, one from Newport, and one from Kingston, said committee to be appointed by the chair at his discretion.

On motion of Mr. Catlin, the following resolution was passed, to be sent to the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY in New York at their meeting. The Rhode Island Section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY, at its meeting for organization held June 4, 1891,

Resolved, That it is highly desirable that the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY participate in the conference to be held in Washington in August next, but it is not prepared to advise that its delegates commit this SOCIETY to any definite and final action on the question of the Continental Chemical Society.

An informal discussion concerning the aims and purposes of the new organization took place, and the meeting adjourned subject to the call of the chairman.

E. E. CALDER, *Secretary*.

Prof. Charles E. Munroe, chairman, has appointed the following committee to report upon a plan of organization for the Rhode Island Section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY:

Prof. John H. Appleton	Mr. C. A. Catlin
Prof. E. E. Calder	Mr. G. W. Patterson
Dr. H. J. Wheeler	

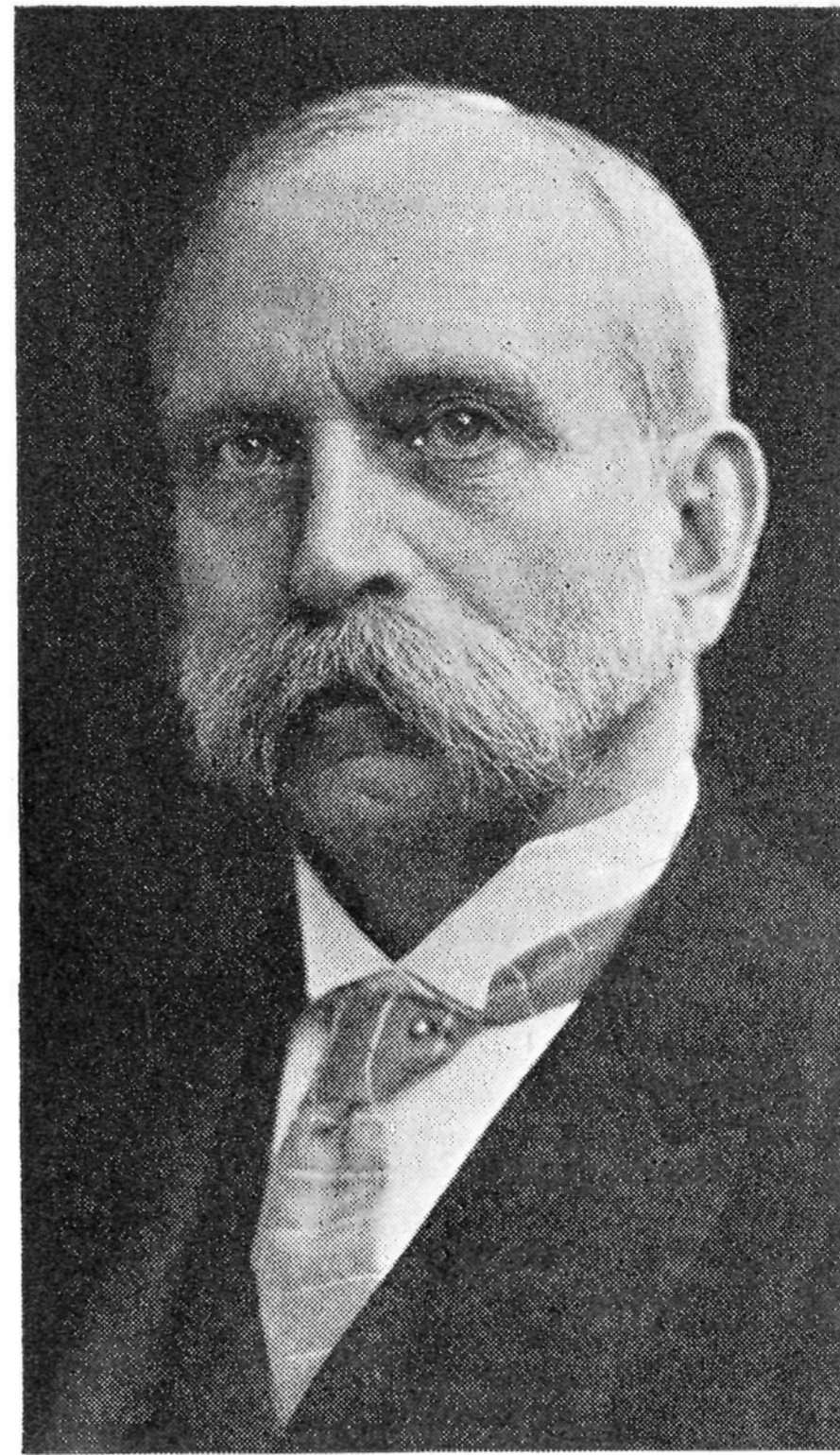
Professor Appleton is constituted senior member, and will arrange the matter of calling the committee.

Since that pleasant day in June the section has continued active and vigorous and today it numbers ninety-two members. It has always cultivated the social side, which has made attendance on its meetings especially agreeable, as well as profitable. The section celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding in a becoming manner by a meeting, on June 3, 1916, at the Wannamoisett Country Club, which was attended by representatives of the parent SOCIETY and neighboring sections and at which Prof. Chandler made the principal address.

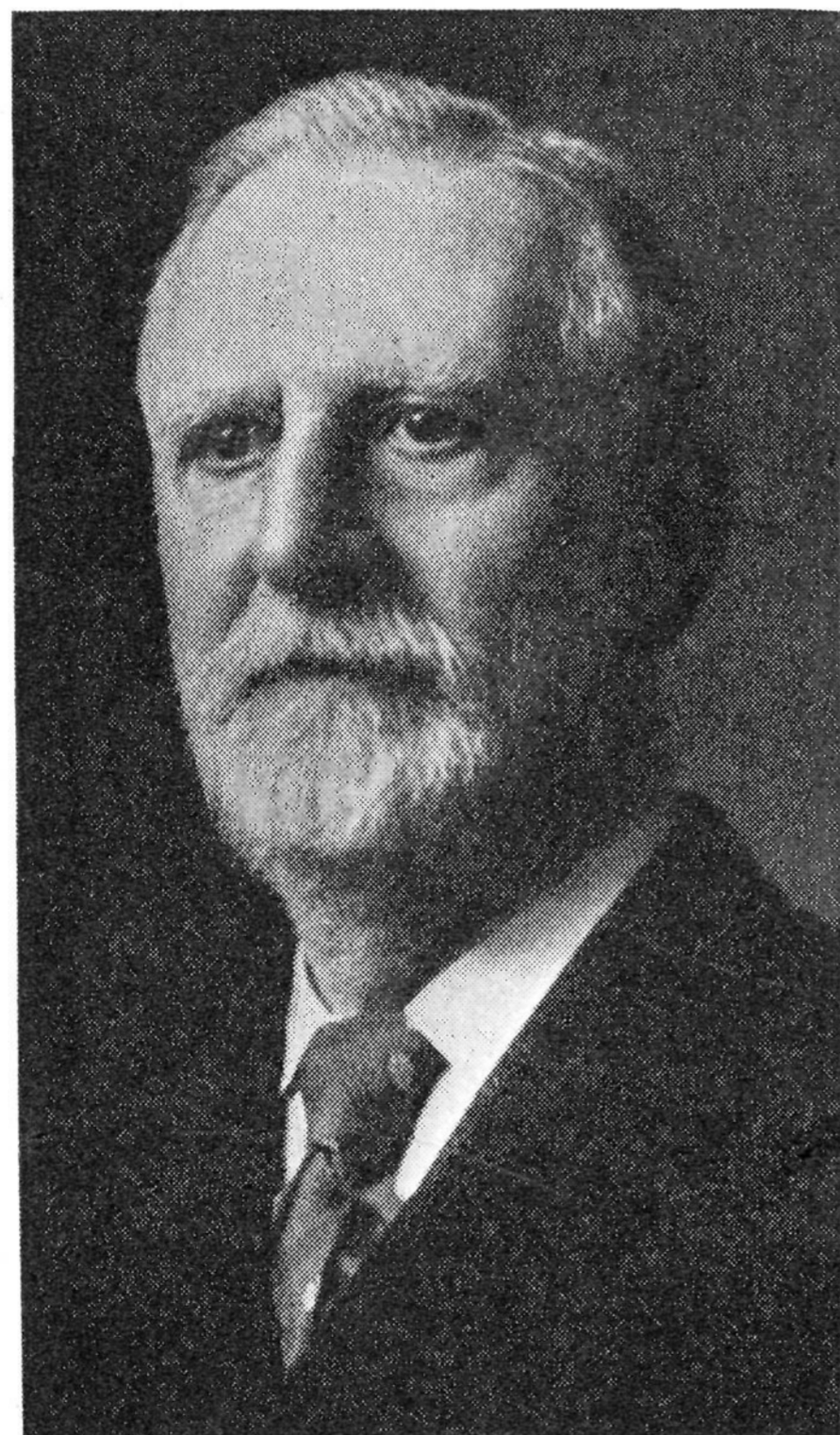
The Rhode Island Section of the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY enjoys the distinction of being the first of seventy sections to which the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY has granted charters. The local sections have proved of much value in maintaining the interest of the members in the objects which the AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY was created to advance and promote.



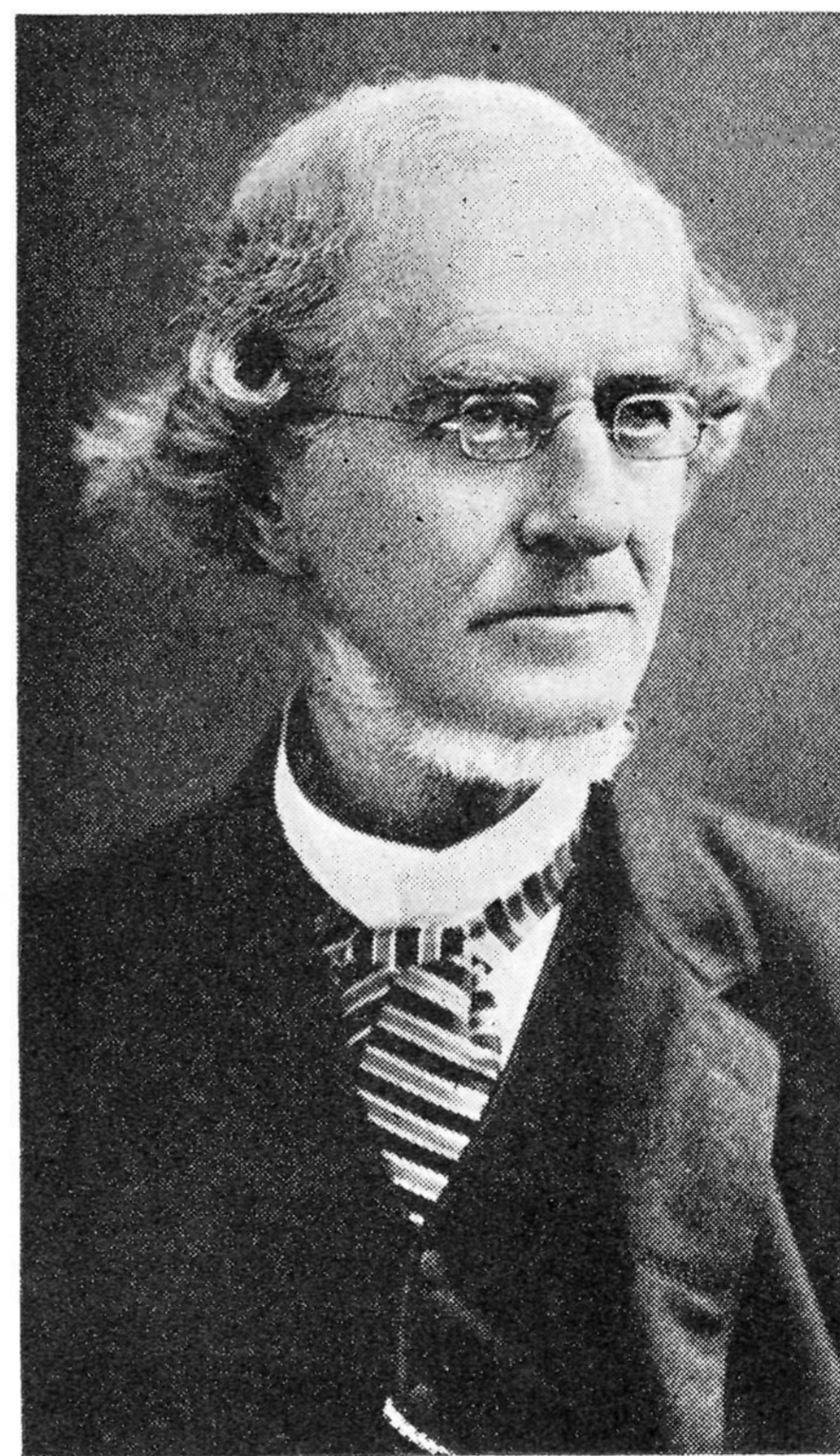
FREDERICK A. GENTH
(1820-1893)
President 1880



Alman & Co.
CHARLES F. CHANDLER
(1836-1925)
President 1881, 1889



Alman & Co.
JOHN W. MALLET
(1832-1912)
President 1882



JAMES C. BOOTH
(1810-1888)
President 1883, 1884, 1885

F. A. Genth, C. F. Chandler, and J. W. Mallet were also Charter Members; C. F. Chandler and J. W. Mallet attended the Priestley Centennial in 1874.