

HISTORICAL NOTE

On November 24, 1888, six persons connected with Columbia University, four with the Department of Mathematics and two with the Department of Astronomy, formed a society to meet monthly for the discussion of mathematical topics. This society was the idea of Doctor T. S. Fiske, an instructor in mathematics, who had recently returned from Cambridge, England, where he had studied for a time with Cayley, Glaisher, and Forsyth. In Glaisher's company he had attended several meetings of the London Mathematical Society; from this fact and from a desire for mathematical companionship, stimulated by his experiences in Cambridge and especially by Glaisher's many friendly talks about mathematics and mathematicians, arose his eagerness to bring about the establishment of a society in New York.

A month later at the second meeting of the society, it was resolved to adopt the name "New York Mathematical Society" and to invite to membership everyone living in or near New York who might be interested. The young society prospered, its meetings interested those who attended them, and its membership gradually increased. In 1889 its activities were greatly quickened through the accession of Doctor Emory McClintock, who was called to New York as Actuary of the Mutual Life Insurance Company. He strengthened the Society not only by his interest in scientific research but also by his administrative wisdom. At the annual meeting in December, 1890, he was elected president in succession to Professor Van Amringe of Columbia University.

In December, 1890, it was proposed that the Society publish a journal which should contain reports of its meetings, historical and critical articles, general mathematical news, and short original papers. Doctor McClintock pointed out that in order to put this proposal into effect it would be necessary greatly to enlarge the membership of the Society; and at once the Secretary undertook to send to mathematicians all over the country a prospectus of the proposed journal and an invitation to join the Society. In June, 1891, the membership of the Society had increased to 174, and in October of the same year the first number of the *Bulletin of the New York Mathematical Society* made its appearance.

By the beginning of 1894 it was generally recognized that the Society had assumed a national character; and in response to a demand that came from many quarters its name was changed to the American Mathematical Society. A few months later the Society voted to provide funds for the publication of the papers read at the International Mathematical Congress held in Chicago in connection with the World's Fair in 1893. This was the first book published by the Society. The same year the Society held its first summer meeting in connection with the Brooklyn meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In 1895, Professor Cole was called from the University of Michigan to Columbia University and became Secretary of the Society, in which capacity he continued to serve the Society for twenty-five years, being succeeded by the present Secretary in 1920.

In 1896, at the suggestion of Professor H. S. White, the Society arranged for a colloquium to be held in connection with the summer meeting at Buffalo; since then, at intervals of one, two, or three years, nineteen colloquia have been held. Beginning with that held in Boston in 1903 the lectures have been published in book form.

To provide for regular meetings at strategic points not on the Atlantic seaboard various sections were established from time to time. In 1897 there was organized the Chicago Section, in 1902 the San Francisco Section, and in 1907 the Southwestern Section. These sections have now all been merged into the parent body. The total number of regular meetings held is now 334, besides sectional meetings. From the outset, the field of the Society has included Canada; important meetings have been held in Toronto in the summer of 1897 in connection with the British Association for the Advancement of Science and in the winter of 1921 with the American Association for the Advancement of Science.