

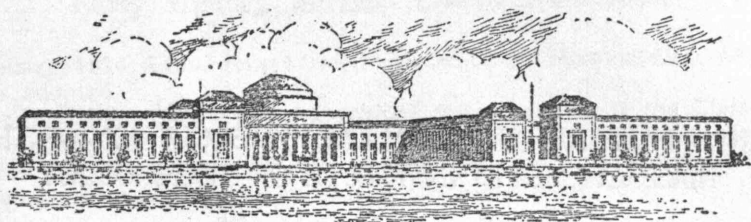


ROBERT H. RICHARDS, '68
Elected President January 27, 1876



CHARLES R. CROSS, '70
Elected Secretary January 27, 1876

THE FIRST PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



The Technology Review

Published at Cambridge 39, Boston, Mass.

ROBERT E. ROGERS, *Editor*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.

VOL. XXII

NOVEMBER, 1920

No. 4

EDITORIAL

THE Alumni Association of Technology has closed one year of high achievement and is beginning another. During the past school year it raised four million dollars, it published a new and complete directory of past Technology men, it published a War Record of extraordinary completeness and value, it held an All-Technology Reunion which will undoubtedly have a great effect on the progress of this year and of future years. It saw launched, under the auspices of the Technology Clubs Associated, a new plan for co-operation between education and industry which its sponsors believe offers a solution of present difficulties. It saw launched, under direction of the Institute itself, an organization which shall draw our school in particular very close to its supporting industries. It is on the point of choosing a general manager for all alumni activity, who shall keep the organization everywhere and always alive and useful. It will perhaps have a voice, individually if not as a body, in the necessary and imminent choice of a new president for the Institute. Its task this coming year is no less than it was a year ago.

For this reason we can perhaps best judge our possibilities today by looking back at our origin. From what little things the Alumni Association grew, what a little time ago it began its work! Its first president and secretary are with us still, their faces familiar to all. Its first secretary has written for us, with his accustomed care and accuracy of detail, the story of those early days, the beginning of the Alumni Association of Technology. As a historical document it is of great value; as food for thought on the problems of today it should be inspiring and helpful.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

BY CHARLES R. CROSS, '70

It is only within comparatively recent years that the alumni of our colleges have come to play a leading part, perhaps I should say the leading part, in their educational development. It was in 1878, ten years after the graduation of its first class, that a graduate of the Institute was elected to be a member of its corporation, but not until 1906 that its alumni as such were given a representation as term members in that body where their services have since proved to be of inestimable value. But at a very early date in its existence the Alumni Association came to be of great service to the Institute, for which reason it has seemed desirable to a number of those who have long been intimately connected with both, that some account of its origin and early history should be put into more accessible form than is now the case. The present paper is intended to constitute a sketch of the principal matters with which the Alumni Association concerned itself from its inception through the first twenty-five years of its existence or thereabouts, with such reference to later activities as may be desirable because of their relation to earlier work.

PRELIMINARY STEPS AND ORGANIZATION

The earliest move toward the formation of such an association originated with the Class of 1873. The records of the class association of that year as communicated to me by Mr. S. E. Tinkham, secretary, contain the following:

"At the annual meeting of the Association of the Class of 1873 held at the Parker House on January 23, 1874, Mr. Blodgett presented the subject of an Alumni Association of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and advocated action by the class association in reference to such an organization, and in furtherance of this purpose offered the following motion, which after a short discussion was adopted: 'Moved, That a committee of three be appointed to consult the classes and students who have graduated from the Institute and see what action they will take, if any, in regard to the formation of an Alumni Association of graduates of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and report on the matter at the next annual meeting of the class association.' Messrs. William A. Kimball, George W. Blodgett and Webster Wells were elected to serve on that committee."

The members of the Class of 1873, as all the other Institute graduates, were of course greatly scattered after graduation, but the subject in question was considered carefully during the next two years, and in

January, 1876, a final report was presented at the class meeting, which was adopted.

In October, 1874, the chairman of the committee of the Class of 1873 above referred to sent a printed circular to each living graduate of the Institute whose address was known, of which the following is a copy from the manuscript records of the Association:

“21 Summer Street, Boston,
October, 1874.

Dear Sir:

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology being now nearly ten years old and having about ninety graduates, it seems desirable that steps should be taken to form an Alumni Association. With this object in view, a committee has been appointed by the class association of 1873. The committee wish to obtain, if possible, an expression of opinion from each of the graduates; therefore your answers are requested to the following:

1. Whether in your opinion an Alumni Association is desirable?
2. If so, why? If not, why?
3. Whether the first meeting of the alumni should be held during the next midwinter vacation in January, or at the beginning of the summer vacation in June?

Yours respectfully,
WILLIAM A. KIMBALL, *Chairman of Committee.*”

The replies to this letter indicated so strong an interest in the subject that the class committee of 1873 issued a call for a meeting of the graduates of the Institute for the purpose of taking definite measures toward the formation of an Alumni Association, to be held on January 29, 1875, at 2 P.M.

In response to the call such a meeting was held in the physical lecture room, in what is now the Rogers Building, twenty-seven graduates being present. Professor Robert H. Richards, '68, and Mr. William A. Kimball, '73, were elected president and secretary, respectively. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Kimball who spoke as follows:

“Mr. Chairman: Before completing our organization it seems advisable we should consider why we are to form an association and the objects that we have in view. I wish to offer a few suggestions, not because my personal opinion is particularly valuable, but as it is the result of the opinions of those who have written to the committee on this subject, and many of the writers are not here to speak for themselves.

An Alumni Association is more especially desirable for us than it is for college graduates, inasmuch as we do not, like them, further continue our preparation for work by means of law schools, medical colleges, etc., but at once make a practical use of our Institute training. We naturally, therefore, take a more immediate interest in our Alma Mater and are sooner qualified to estimate the value of her course of study. It is good that we should regard the pleasure of meeting together socially,

but this is not our first object. It seems to me that we owe a duty to education, to science in general, and to the Institute of Technology in particular, that we can only pay by strengthening its hands and increasing its influence in every possible way. This we shall do at once by forming an Alumni Association, and limiting the membership to those who have been endorsed by the degree of the faculty. We show them that the degree of the Institute means something to us, and we in some measure discourage the idea, too prevalent in the school, that it makes little difference whether or not a man takes the required course. If we find by experience that the regular courses are not good, let us advise with the authorities — not encourage a disregard of their requirements.

The elder alumni can also directly benefit the Institute by doing what lies in their power to furnish graduates with work; by recommending them for vacancies where they have influence, and by informing them, through the secretary of the Association, of such openings as they know of in different parts of the country.

I think, gentlemen, that the alumni may in future give an immense help to the young graduates in their start in life. In so doing they will assist professors, they will assist the cause of scientific education, they will furnish a strong motive for young men to go to the Institute of Technology and to do their best while there.

In forming this Association then, and in organizing it, we must keep clearly in mind the fact that we are engaged not so much in a work of pleasure, as of duty, and that our aim is to help our professors and to advance science by increasing the efficiency of that school to which we owe so much."

The unanimous feeling of the alumni present at the meeting was that immediate steps toward the formation of an Alumni Association should be taken, and a committee consisting of Messrs. Cross, Richards, and Kimball was appointed to draw up a constitution. Much discussion ensued as to the provisions which this proposed constitution should embody.

Of the twenty-seven alumni present at this meeting thirteen are still living.

At a later meeting, March 17, 1875 (of which Mr. Richards was chairman and Mr. Cross secretary), the draft of the proposed constitution submitted by the committee was considered at much length article by article and various changes were made, after which the document as it had been amended was adopted without dissent.

The following are the three most vital articles of the constitution as then adopted. The other articles relate to matters of officers and their duties, elections and like subjects.

"ARTICLE I. This Society shall be called the Alumni Association of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Its object shall be to further the well-being of the Institute and its graduates by increasing the interest of members in the school and in each other.

ARTICLE II. All graduates of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shall be entitled to the rights of membership.

ARTICLE VI. Every member shall pay to the treasurer the sum of one dollar, annually, to defray contingent expenses."

Except as regards the membership of the Association, which will be considered shortly, the provisions embodied in these articles have remained substantially unchanged up to the present. Article VI relating to dues is now transferred to the By-Laws. In Article I in the statement of the object of the Association the word "increasing" is replaced by "fostering."

It is interesting to note that the expression in Article I, as it stands at present, necessarily modified from the original restricted form in view of the enlarged membership of the Association, so as to read, "Its object shall be to further the well-being of the Institute," omits the next following words "and its graduates" of the earlier form, which carries Article I back to precisely the wording used in the first draft of the tentative constitution as sent to the alumni for consideration, March 8, 1875.

In the afternoon and evening of January 27, 1876, the first annual meeting and dinner of the Association were held, the former in the physical lecture room, the latter at "Young's." Officers for the ensuing term of two years were elected, R. H. Richards, '68, president, I. S. P. Weeks, '71, vice-president, C. R. Cross, '70, secretary (and treasurer), Messrs. C. F. Allen, '72, F. H. Williams, '73, executive committee.

At the close of the dinner, which was the first of a series that has continued down to the present time, a brief address was made by President Richards, calling the attention of the alumni to the value which their consideration of the work of the school might have to those responsible for its guidance. Also the following resolution was unanimously passed and the president directed to transmit it to Professor Rogers.

"Whereas, the Alumni Association of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has perfected its organization, and thus completed the final step in the plan of the founder of the Institute, who with so much zeal and unselfishness devoted the best years of his life to its cause:

Resolved, that we take this occasion to express our love and gratitude to Professor William B. Rogers, the father of this great and worthy enterprise."

This resolution was communicated to Professor Rogers in a letter from Professor Richards, as follows:

"Institute of Technology, February 7, 1876.

My dear Professor Rogers:

I have received the enclosed resolve, which was made at the annual dinner of the Alumni Association, and take great pleasure in transmitting it to you.

I can assure you that the meeting was made up of men who felt warmly the advantages they had received from the school, and not of men who came solely for the pleasure of social intercourse, as is often the case at alumni meetings. The welfare of the Institute was more prominent than anything else in the discussions which took place. The

Alumni Association now has one hundred and twenty-two names on its list, which includes all the regular graduates from the school.

The purpose for which the Association was organized is to keep up the interest of its members in the school and in each other, as expressed in the constitution. But the feeling seems to prevail that in many ways the Association may prove of real benefit to the school and to its members. The Association has at present two methods of reaching its members, viz., a directory and an annual meeting.

A directory is to be published annually. This will contain for each member of the Association, first the history since graduating; second, the present occupation; third, the address. This will enable the older men to select employees from the younger, and the younger to seek employment from the older. And it will also enable the Institute officers, whether of government or instruction, to judge of the experience and attainments of the graduates.

A meeting is to be held annually, at which it is expected that the prevailing policy and condition of the school will be discussed with the utmost freedom.

We hope that our aims will merit your approval.

Very sincerely yours,

ROBERT H. RICHARDS.

President, Alumni Association."

To this, the following reply was received:

"117 Marlborough Street, Boston,
February 19, 1876.

Dear Professor Richards:

The resolve of the Alumni Association of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, enclosed in your kind letter of the seventh, has given me a deeper satisfaction than I can find words to express, assuring me, as it does, not only of the kind appreciation by the alumni of what I have endeavored to accomplish in connection with our Institute, but of that warm personal affection which must always be regarded as one of the highest rewards of the labors of a teacher.

To those of the Association whom in the early years of the Institute it was my privilege to know as pupils, I need hardly say that my interest as their instructor was soon ripened into a sentiment of personal attachment, and that the success and distinction they have already won in their several pursuits has become to me a source of constant satisfaction and pride.

To the alumni generally I would beg you to present an expression of my warmest interest in their professional and scientific success, together with my congratulations on the distinguished position among the scientific schools of the country which our Institute continues to maintain.

I hail with pleasure the organization of the society of which you have been chosen president, believing that it cannot fail to promote the educa-

tional and scientific objects for which the Institute was established, and for which its government and teachers have so assiduously labored.

Accept, dear Professor Richards, my thanks for your interesting letter, and believe me with warm esteem,

Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM B. ROGERS."

With this high approval of Professor Rogers the Alumni Association, now numbering one hundred and twenty-two members, was well started upon its career of usefulness.

This being the case, as a sequel to what has been said regarding its beginnings, the object of this sketch will best be attained by a statement of actions and circumstances which are or have been of particular interest. The *Alumni Association Reports* issued in print from year to year up to 1906 constitute a clear, full summary of its procedure up to that date.

Only a few collected copies of these, however, are known to exist. The particulars of the earlier meetings are to be found only in the manuscript records of the secretary. Reports of its proceedings subsequent to 1906 will be found in the *TECHNOLOGY REVIEW*.

It is to be noted that reports of the annual meetings of the Association subsequent to that of January, 1886, are found in the *Annual Report* bearing the date of the next succeeding year, the time of the meetings having been changed from January to December.

MEMBERSHIP

An important question arose to be decided at the very outset of the consideration of the constitution of the Association, the question of membership, whether this should be limited to actual graduates of the school, alumni in the strict sense, or whether all those who were enrolled in the several class associations should be eligible likewise. This was considered very carefully and to a greater extent than would appear from the formal records. Two opposite views were presented. There were many former students who were greatly valued by their classmates but who had not taken the degree, having left too early, and others who had failed to fulfil the requirements. It might well seem wise not to exclude such. On the other hand there had been what at the present time would seem a strange negligence on the part of some who appeared to attach but slight value to graduation. In the earliest days the novel form of the degree then given, "Graduate of the Institute," was not attractive, especially after the establishment of another Institute of Technology, the Stevens Institute, though this form was changed to "Bachelor of Science" in 1872. Also an early requirement, abolished in 1874, that the thesis should be prepared and presented subsequently to the close of the fourth year as the first fruits of the practical work of the candidate, was often very difficult to satisfy. To a majority of the graduates it seemed that it was important that this slighting of the degree should be

discouraged and that such a result would be furthered if the graduates themselves should aid the faculty by a strict limitation of the membership of the Association to actual graduates of the Institute. Furthermore, it was believed that any considerations regarding the work of the Institute which either directly or indirectly the Association might wish to present to the faculty or corporation would have much more weight if coming from a body of graduates than from a composite one. The idea of establishing a second class of members, as associates, though not overlooked, was not considered to any great extent as it was believed, and probably correctly at that time, that this would not be cared for by those to whom it would apply. The practical objection was also felt that in such a case there would be difficulty in establishing proper limits within which non-graduates should be chosen. It was felt by all, however, that such former students as were likely to be interested should be welcomed to all gatherings of the Association which were of a social character, though it was considered wise for several reasons that such invitations should go from the executive committee. In 1882 a report from the committee regarding the extension of that custom was presented and it was discouraging to the members of the Association to learn that although a considerable number of invitations to the last preceding gathering had been sent out by the executive committee to non-graduates who were thought to be interested, "but few of these even acknowledged the invitation and fewer still attended the reception."

In 1882 a proposition was also made to make eligible to membership all persons holding a "Certificate of Proficiency of the Institute."* A general discussion of the whole subject ensued, as a result of which the executive committee was directed to report at the next annual meeting whether changes in the constitution were desirable in the direction of enlargement of membership.

In 1883 the executive committee, in accordance with these instructions, reported that "Without in any way overlooking the arguments that may be advanced in favor of such a procedure, the Committee feels that such a change in Article 2 of the constitution [as to admit others than graduates to membership] would not be conducive to the best interests of the Association."

The subject was again brought up for consideration at the annual meeting of 1886, when a committee was appointed to consider the question. The committee consisted of the president, Mr. H. A. Carson, '69, the secretary, Mr. G. F. Swain, '77, ex-officiis, and Messrs. C. S. Ward, '72, F. H. Williams, '73, and G. W. Blodgett, '73. The committee was divided in its opinion, and both a majority report opposing a change and a minority report favoring one, which provided for an amendment enlarging the membership with somewhat rigid restrictions, were drawn

*In the annual catalogue for 1866-67 and for a number of years thereafter, there was a statement that besides the degree of the Institute "there will be given certificates of attainment in special subjects to such students as on examination are found to have attained the requisite proficiency in them." At that time the examinations for the degree covered at first all the subjects taken in the whole four years of the courses, afterwards changed to the last two years.

up and a copy was sent to each alumnus with a request for an expression of his opinion regarding the proposition.

The committee reported at the next annual meeting that of those who replied 135 favored the majority report, i. e., were against a change, and 15 favored the minority report. The majority report was thereupon adopted by the Association.

In 1892 it was moved at the annual meeting that the privilege of membership in the Association should be given to all persons who had been connected with the Institute as instructors for not less than four years, but the motion failed to pass.

The subject of enlargement of membership was again brought up for consideration at the annual meeting of 1895 when the executive committee presented to the Association a recommendation for the appointment of a special committee of five of which Professor H. W. Tyler, '84, was chairman, to consider "an amendment to the constitution providing for associate membership of former students not graduates."

The committee made an exhaustive study of the whole subject and two years later, at the annual meeting in December, 1897, the chairman presented a report which was so convincingly in favor of the change recommended by it that it was adopted without discussion by a unanimous vote.

The constitution adopted in accordance with this report provided for the establishment of two new classes of members, associate and honorary. The first of these was open to former students, the second to members or ex-members of the corporation or faculty of the Institute, to be elected by the executive committee.

The report, which in view of its results is probably the most important of any presented to the Association subsequent to its earliest years of existence, is printed in the *Annual Report of the Association*, bearing date 1898. Except for the length of the present article it might profitably be printed in full.

The present qualifications for membership in the Association are those established in the Constitution as adopted in 1909 and amended in 1911. Two classes of members only are recognized, regular and honorary. The former comprises the regular and associate members under the constitution of 1897, to whom are added graduates and other former students of the discontinued School of Mechanic Arts. As previously, the executive committee is vested with the power of election for those not holding a degree from the Institute. The conditions of honorary membership remain unchanged from those of 1897.

ALUMNI COMMITTEE ON THE SCHOOL

As has been explained previously, at the time of the foundation of the Alumni Association, the hope was earnestly expressed that it might be of service to the school in the improvement of its courses of instruction and in aid of the students in one or another way. There was no authorized manner, however, in which considerations of this kind could