

50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER
HARVARD TRAVELLERS CLUB
Æsculapian Room, Harvard Club of Boston

Address given by President Harrison E. Kennard

November 18, 1952

HISTORY OF HARVARD TRAVELLERS CLUB

Gentlemen, as you all know, this is the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Harvard Travellers Club.

The Council has requested that I give you a brief summary of the history of the Club.

Undoubtedly, many of the older members know much more about it than I. Judge Robert Walcott, who is with us tonight, was one of the original group, 50 years ago. However, I shall try to give you a brief account of some of the high points in our history.

Concerning the actual founding of the Club, I will quote from the "History of The Harvard Travellers Club," published in 1933. . . . "Harvard's eminent geographer, Professor William Morris Davis, in association with Copley Amory, Roland B. Dixon, James H. Kidder, and the late Archibald Cary Coolidge, invited Harvard men and others in this vicinity who might be interested in 'promoting intelligent travel and exploration' to meet together on November 15, 1902, in the assembly room of the Harvard Union in Cambridge, to consider the formation of a Harvard Travellers Club. Thirty men responded to the call."

Here we are now 50 years later, in November 1952, celebrating our 50th birthday. During that 50-year period, this Club has had a highly interesting career.

In 1904, our brief and practical Constitution was drawn up by Dr. Townsend W. Thorndike, and was promptly adopted at the next meeting of the Club.

The earliest meetings were held at the Harvard Union or at the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, but soon many of the gatherings were held at the homes of our members. Also various clubs were used for meetings. Since 1913, when the Harvard Club of Boston opened its new building, where we are sitting this evening, most of the meetings have been held right here in this room.

When the Institute of Geographical Exploration at Harvard was opened in 1931, through the kindness of its director, Dr. A. Hamilton Rice, we were given space there for storage of our records and small library. We were also permitted to use its beautiful lecture hall for special meetings. With the closing of that building, last year, our records were moved to Henry Hall's house in Cambridge. Henry, who is well known to all of us as a former secretary, vice-president, and president, has probably done as much for us as any other one member.

The Club has had various other endeavors besides monthly meetings during the winter.

In 1906, a committee, consisting of Judge Robert Walcott and E. J. Holmes, was appointed to submit designs for a suitable Club medal. With the advice of Professor George Lyman Kittredge of Harvard, the present design was adopted. It can be seen on all our Club notices and publications, as well as on the Club medal.

Quoting again from the Club History, a description of that medal is as follows: — "A pilgrim in old-time costume, with his staff in his hand and his wallet slung over his shoulder, surmounted by the word 'Peregrinantur' — 'They wander in foreign lands.' Our pilgrim is walking along the shore of the sea, which appears in the background, bounded on the right by steeply conventional peaks, the mountains of his desire, toward which his face is set. A lonely flower blossoming at his feet on the edge of the

strand, and a wheeling dolphin, the fish that is the friend of man, thrusting its head above water, symbolize the flora and fauna, while a distant caravel is significant of travel by sea."

This medal has been awarded to 14 famous travellers since 1906. The first was awarded to William Brooks Cabot, for many years a member of this Club, for his wonderful canoe trips and explorations in the interior of Labrador. The last medal was awarded in 1936 to Albert W. Stevens, who had made a world's record ascent by balloon into the stratosphere.

We also have seven honorary members. These, according to our constitution, are those on whom the Club confers a mark of respect. One of these is our present vice-president, Dr. Alexander Forbes. Dr. Forbes, besides being a top flight physiologist, is an expert aviator and navigator. He has sailed his own yacht across the Atlantic and has cruised on it in the Baltic and Mediterranean as well as on the coast of Labrador. He also made an aerial survey of Northern Labrador from which the first map of that region was made.

Election to fellowship in this Club is a lesser honor, for those who have been on journeys which have led them off the ordinary routes of travel. We now have 25 fellows among our total membership of 290.

In 1908, a public exhibition was held in Horticultural Hall "of trophies and other interesting mementoes of travel gathered by members in the course of their wanderings." (quotation from "History of Harvard Travellers Club")

This was repeated in 1911 and 1914.

Frequent year books have been published, listing our members and their travels. The last one was published in 1949, and a new one is in preparation at the present time, under the guidance of our able secretary, Henry Howe.

In 1917, a "Handbook of Travel," edited by Dr. Glover M. Allen, was published by the University Press. A second edition was published in 1935. These Handbooks were both over 500 pages in length and must have involved a tre-

mendous amount of work. Dr. George Cheever Shattuck was chairman of the editorial committee of the second edition and Thomas D. Cabot, Alexander Forbes, George A. Lyon, and John C. Phillips made up the rest of the committee.

In 1933, a very useful little book was published by the Club entitled "History of the Harvard Travellers Club." Most of the information that I am giving you tonight was derived from it.

The Club has, over the years, assembled a small library which Henry Hall now kindly stores for us in his home.

Our first president, Professor William Morris Davis, held office for nine years and set a very high standard for the type of lectures and meetings that were held. Many famous persons have addressed this Club. I have time to mention only a few of them.

At the third meeting of the Club in 1903, our speaker was (then) Commander Robert E. Peary. That night in 1903, Peary announced his firm belief that the North Pole could be reached by way of North Greenland. In later years, as we all know, he lived to prove it.

In 1905, Vilhjalmur Stefansson, the Arctic explorer, gave us a lecture. He has spoken before this Club twice since then.

In 1910, Captain Bob Bartlett, who commanded Peary's ship "Roosevelt," told of the expedition on which he supported Peary's final successful attempt to reach the North Pole by dogsled.

On December 12, 1911, at the Exchange Club, Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Ex-President of the United States, spoke on his hunting experiences in East Africa. Two hundred people attended that dinner.

In 1912, Carl E. Akeley spoke on elephant hunting in Africa. As many of you know, he was a famous big-game hunter on the staff of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard gave us a talk on China, in 1913.

In 1923, as a guest, at a meeting at the Harvard Union,

I heard the famous mountaineer, George Leigh Mallory, tell of the 1922 Mt. Everest Expedition. As many of you know, he died near the top of Mt. Everest on a subsequent expedition. Only yesterday it was announced by radio that a Swiss party had been turned back not far from the top of that same mountain.

I well remember a dinner at the Union Club in 1930, with Sir Francis Younghusband as guest of honor. He gave us a fascinating account of his journey overland from China to India, about 50 years ago, and told us about the magnificent Himalayan peaks he had seen at that time.

One of our best dinners was in 1932, when the famous Swedish traveller, Dr. Sven Hedin, spoke on "Some Geographical Problems of the Lob Nor Region." This was a particularly interesting account of the untravelled areas of Central Asia.

As you all know, membership in this Club is not confined to Harvard graduates. The object of the Club is merely the promotion of intelligent travel and exploration. All that is necessary for membership is a sustained interest in travel, of which the candidate must have done some himself, preferably off the beaten track. Then the candidate must be nominated by two members for election by the Council.

We ordinarily hold eight meetings per year, mostly in this room, and try to have as interesting speakers as we can possibly obtain. The members are all invited to make suggestions as to possible speakers.

As may be seen from our treasurer's last Annual Report, the financial condition of the Club has remained good, although due to increasing costs we have recently had to spend some of the small surplus accumulated in past years.