The First Forty Years of the Society of American Bacteriologists: Dr. C.-E. A. Winslow

The last ten years of the nineteenth century are perhaps best known by the term “the gay nineties.” A more important taxonomic characteristic is perhaps expressed in the description of this decade, and the one preceding it, as “the golden age of bacteriology.” Between 1880 and 1900, a new science was born, a science fraught with rich gifts of health and happiness for the human race and one which—unlike many other sciences—has been used by man only for beneficent purposes. It was natural, therefore, that toward the close of this century the devotees of this new science should organize for the better performance of their challenging task.

This tendency took shape in the establishment of the Laboratory Section of the American Public Health Association at the Minneapolis meeting in 1899. Our own society was, however, the first independent organization devoted specifically to the service of bacteriology in the United States—perhaps in the world.

The idea was first evolved by A. C. Abbott, H. W. Conn and E. O. Jordan at the 1898 meeting of the American Society of Naturalists, and the new organization was conceived as an affiliate of that society. On October 17, 1899, a circular letter was sent out by the three pioneers to some forty bacteriologists, and on December 28, 1899, the organization meeting of the Society of American Bacteriologists was held at the Yale Medical School, in response to this call. W. T.
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