

Eliphalet Wickes Blatchford

DOB May 31, 1826

DOD 1915

Eliphalet Wickes Blatchford was an American manufacturer, and the son of Rev. John Blatchford and Frances Wickes Blatchford. In 1837, the Blatchfords moved from Stillwater, New York to Chicago, Illinois, where Eliphalet's father, Rev. John Blatchford, became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church.

The family eventually settled in Marion City, Missouri, where John Blatchford became president of Marion College. After early schooling in Missouri, E.W. Blatchford attended Illinois College, graduating in 1845. E.W. became a leading manufacturer in St. Louis. He established a lead and linseed oil manufacturing plant with a partner, eventually opening a branch of the company in Chicago and relocating there. By the early 1860s he had bought out his partner and reorganized the company into E.W. Blatchford and Co. The firm manufactured lead pipe for plumbing equipment, as well as animal feed derived from linseed oil, and later provided lead wire for the production of ammunition during the Civil War. By the 1890s, the company was known for producing lead shot, and also type metal for the printing industry..

In addition to being a successful manufacturer, Blatchford was well known for his religious activities. He served for forty years as the president of the Chicago Theological Seminary, and also contributed his time and money to several mission organizations such as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Chicago Missionary Society.

In 1856 Eliphalet W. Blatchford was one of a group of men interested in natural sciences who began to meet in the offices of fellow member, Dr. Edmund Andrews, to establish a new academy, the Chicago Academy of Natural Sciences. The Great Chicago Fire in 1871 destroyed the Academy's building and almost all of its holdings. After the devastating fire, it was noted that the Academy had \$30,000 of insurance on its property. Proof of loss involved a great deal of careful labor, much credit for which was given to Mr. Blatchford and Dr. Stimpson. Plans for a new building at the rear of the Academy's Wabash property were under the supervision of a committee of the board of trustees consisting of Mr. Blatchford, Daniel Thompson, and George C. Walker. The Academy's members and trustees never lost their dedication to establishing a permanent museum of the natural sciences and finally succeeded in 1894 with the completion of the Matthew Laflin Memorial Building which served the Academy until 1994.

Blatchford's contributions continued to be present across the state of Illinois through his extensive work as a trustee of Illinois College, Rockford Seminary, and the Art Institute of Chicago. As the executor of Walter Newberry's estate, Blatchford also established the Newberry and was instrumental in early construction and staff decisions. The Newberry Library originated as half of the \$4 million estate of the railroad and real-estate magnate Walter Loomis Newberry (1804-1868). As longtime chairman of the Newberry Library's board of trustees, Blatchford

oversaw the hiring of the Newberry's first librarians and did much to shape the institution, including developing its commitment to genealogy.

Blatchford married Mary Emily Williams in 1858. The Blatchfords built and settled in the first of two houses named Ulmenheim, which roughly translates to “elm home” in German. This house was destroyed in the Chicago fire, but was later rebuilt. The Blatchfords remained an active couple in Chicago, devoting their time to social and philanthropic activities until E.W.’s death. Following her husband’s death, Mary moved to Upper Montclair, New Jersey with her daughter, Fanny Blatchford. The Blatchfords had seven children, Paul (1859-1925), Amy (1862-1941), Frances May (Fanny) (1865-1919), Edward Williams (Ned) (1868-1956), Florence (1872-1874), Charles Hammond (1874-1953), and E. Huntington (1876-1905).

Reference

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