

**Lyman Churchill Newell**  
**Chairman of HIST 1927-1932**

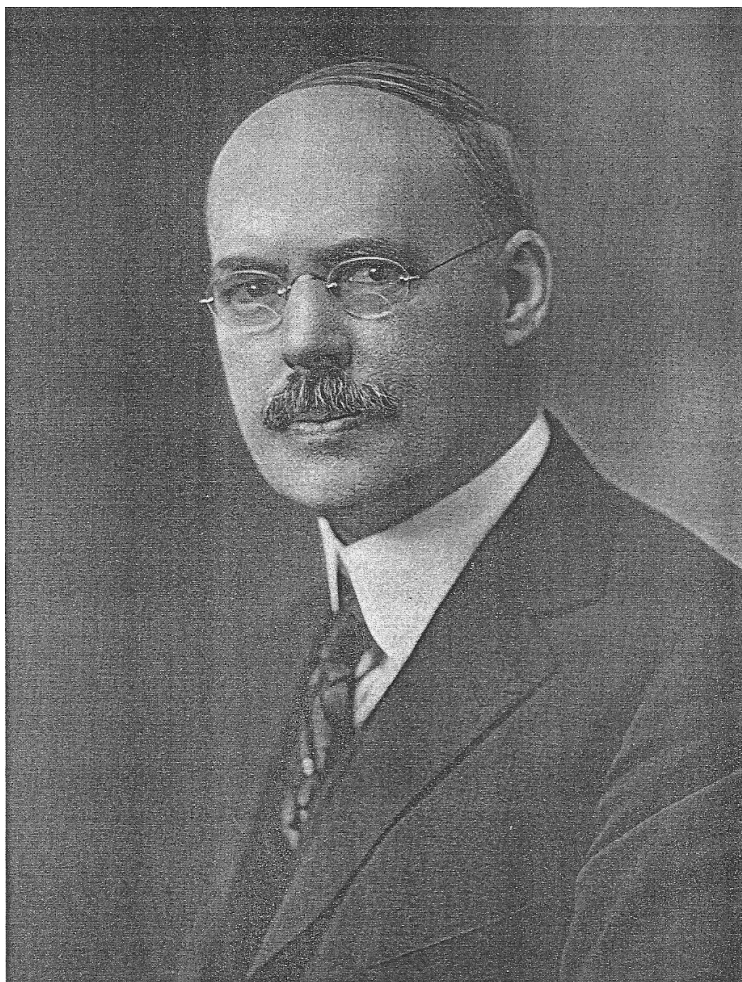
Gary Patterson  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
[gp9a@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:gp9a@andrew.cmu.edu)

**Abstract**

Lyman Churchill Newell was the first Chairman of the official Division of the History of Chemistry. He had served as Secretary and shepherded the Section through its probationary period. He was one of the most dedicated teachers of chemistry in the history of New England. He was much beloved by all who knew him, and he left the HIST Division a legacy of both memories and a superb archival collection at Boston University.

## Introduction

Lyman Churchill Newell was the first Chairman of the newly constituted Division of the History of Chemistry (HIST). He was present at the founding meetings and was Secretary during the years when the Section was being considered for promotion to a Division. He led an especially rich life and a short article such as this cannot begin to do justice to his contributions both to Chemistry and to humanity. The present contribution will detail his work with HIST, his many professional connections, and his remarkable personality. The existence of the Lyman Churchill Newell Collection at Boston University has made possible a well-illustrated document(Fig. 1).



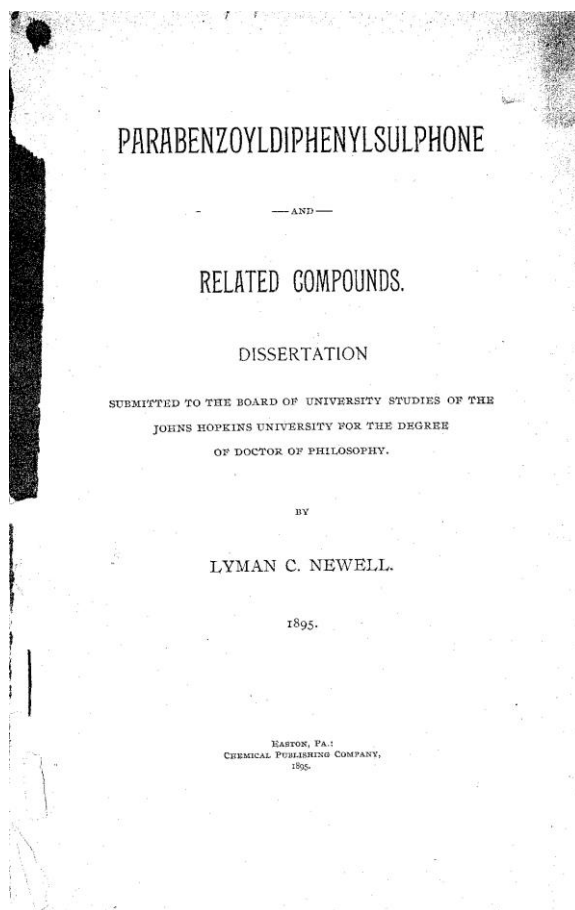
LYMAN CHURCHILL NEWELL  
1867-1933

**Figure 1** Lyman Churchill Newell ( Boston University Library Gotlieb Archives, by permission ).

## Early Life and Education

Lyman Churchill Newell was born on September 18, 1867 in Pawtucket, RI . He was educated in the local schools and attended Brown University (B.S. 1890, M.S. 1891). He immediately taught Chemistry in the Pawtucket public schools. His love of teaching remained throughout his lifetime.

He soon recognized that in order to improve his understanding of chemistry he would need further education. He chose to stay in America and attend Johns Hopkins University. His graduate work with Ira Remsen changed his life forever. While he did obtain his Ph.D. in organic chemistry in 1895 (Fig. 2), it was the history of chemistry that captured his heart, with substantial encouragement from Remsen.

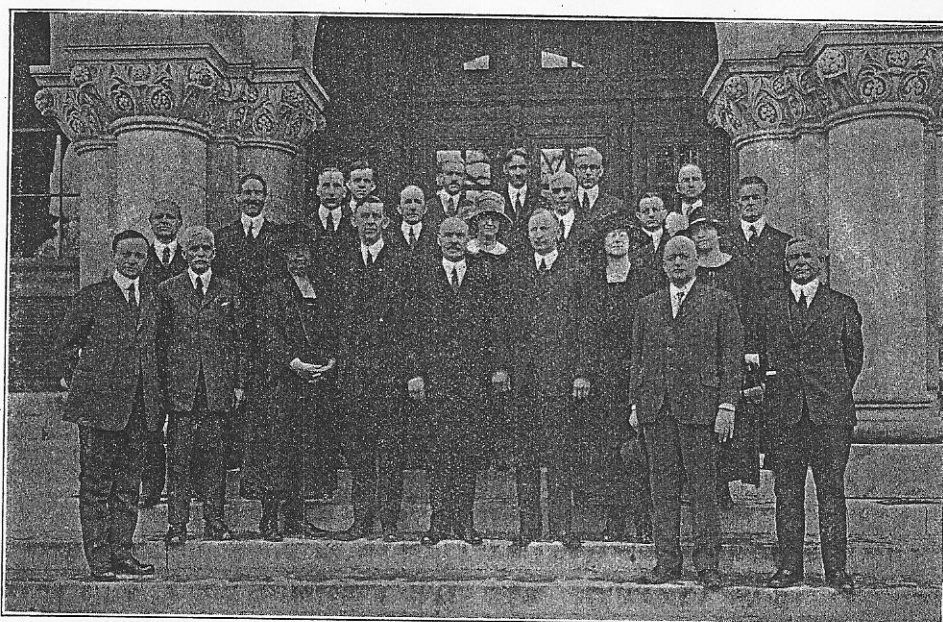


**Figure 2** Thesis of Lyman C. Newell (Boston University Library Gotlieb Archives, by permission )

## Lyman Newell as New England's Pre-eminent Teacher of Chemistry

Even though he now had a doctorate in Chemistry, he returned to high school teaching in the Somerville Schools. However, rather than think small, he founded the New England Association of Chemistry Teachers in 1898 and served as its first President. His lifelong participation in this organization was recognized with a celebration in 1924 (Fig. 3).

GROUP OF CHARTER MEMBERS, OFFICERS AND PAST OFFICERS  
OF THE N. E. A. C. T., MALDEN, MASS., MARCH 15, 1924



Left to right, Front Row: Chas. H. Stone, Clarence Boylston, Laura P. Patten, Wilhelm Segerblom, Dr. Lyman C. Newell, John W. Hutchins, Mary B. Ford, Geo. A. Cowan, Frederick C. Adams.  
Second Row: Walter G. Whitman, John B. Merrill, Myron E. Berry, William W. Obeare, Eva B. Ammidown, Alfred M. Butler, John H. Card, Octavia Chapin, Ralph W. Channell.  
Back Row: L. R. Atwood, J. Herbert Ward, S. Walter Hoyt, Sidney Peterson.

**Figure 3** Group photo at 1924 NEACT Meeting (Boston University Library Gotlieb Archives, by permission )

In addition to receiving personal plaudits from innumerable people at this meeting in 1924, he presented one of the best known lectures on chemistry in New England: *The Earlier and Later Days of Chemistry in New England*. An original copy of this paper, with handwritten salutation from L.C.N., was shown at the New Orleans ACS Meeting. This recalls one of Newell's favorite activities at ACS Meetings. He loved to present

documents signed by chemists. His collection of such ephemera is world famous and is part of his Collection at Boston University.

Another writing for which Lyman C. Newell is known is *The Teacher's Vow* (Fig. 4).

#### THE TEACHER'S VOW

I will see the good in all pupils and lead them on to higher attainments.  
I will be patient and forbearing, confident in the belief that kindness and generosity will ultimately triumph.  
I will scorn error, deceit, and all forms of falsehood, persistently foregoing sarcasm and injustice.  
I will claim all nature as my heritage and spend a portion of each day quietly in God's open air.  
I will hold daily communion with my own soul.  
I will accept my remuneration, however small, without envy, complaint, or discouragement, never forgetting that a teacher is a leader into the higher life, and not merely a wage earner.  
I will work each day in unshaken assurance that peace and power come in full measure to all who are ready for the truth.

LYMAN C. NEWELL (1915)

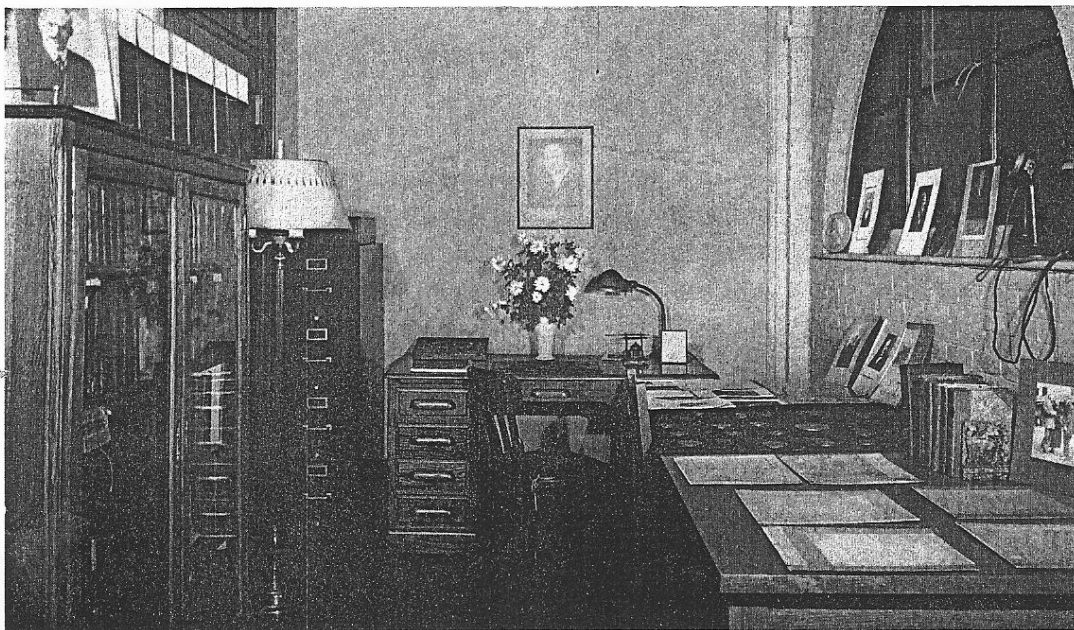
*(Reproduced by courtesy of D. C. Heath and Company)*

**Figure 4** *The Teacher's Vow* by Lyman C. Newell ( D.C. Heath and Company, by permission )

### Lyman Newell and the Call of the Colleges

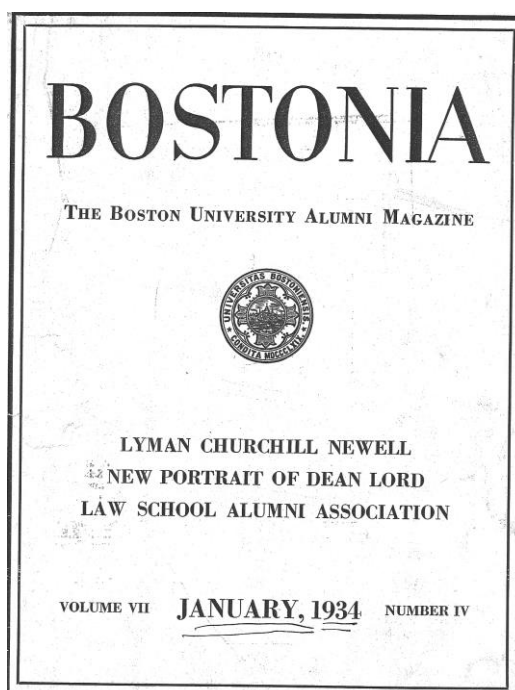
When the state of Massachusetts founded a teachers college, the State Normal School at Lowell, MA, Lyman Newell was the choice as the Chemistry Professor. He served from 1898-1904. He promptly produced suitable textbooks for both high school and college teaching.

When Boston University decided to found a Department of Chemistry, they chose Lyman Churchill Newell as the first appointment. They blessed themselves every day for their good sense. When he died at the end of 1933, they produced a ceremonial volume of *Bostonia* in 1934 that truly did justice to his memory (Fig. 6). He was beloved of everyone from the President, Daniel Marsh, to the janitors who cleaned his overflowing office. The memorial office retained after his death was strangely sterile (Fig. 5). Perhaps his dear wife, Carolyn, organized the material for posterity.



The Newell History of Chemistry Room, Boston University

**Figure 5** The Newell History of Chemistry Room ( Boston University Library Gotlieb Archives, by permission )



**Figure 6** Ceremonial issue of Bostonia ( Boston University Library Gotlieb Archives, by permission )

## **Lyman Newell and the Division of Chemical Education**

While this paper celebrates Lyman Newell for his contributions to the history of chemistry, he was also one of the founders of the Division of Chemical Education (CHED) and served as Chairman in 1932. He was one of the most prolific authors for the *Journal of Chemical Education*. One of his most famous articles was on *Caricatures of Chemists as Contributions to the History of Chemistry* (*J.Chem.Ed.*, **8**, 2138-2155 (1931)). A ceremonial remembrance in the February 1934 issue includes eulogies by Ross A. Baker, Charles A. Browne (more later), Tenney L. Davis (more), Wilhelm Segerblom, and F.B. Dains (more). The overlapping membership and governance of CHED and HIST in this period is notable.

## **Lyman Newell and the Northeastern Section of the American Chemical Society**

Since Lyman Newell lived and worked in New England, it is no surprise that he contributed to the local ACS Section. He was a frequent author in the local section publication *The Nucleus*. He served as councilor many times and as Chairman in 1925-26. Some of his more notable contributions to the journal include: "The chemistry and alchemy of Newton"(1927), "Chemistry and chemists in old Boston"(1931), "The founders of chemistry in America"(1924), "A chemist's tour"(1927), "A new portrait of Joseph Priestley"(1933), "The Theodore William Richards Medal"(1932) and "Professor Alexander Findlay and the Northeastern section"(1925).

## **Lyman Churchill Newell and the Division of the History of Chemistry**

Lyman Newell was present at the founding of the Section of the History of Chemistry in September, 1921, and was elected Secretary. Charles A. Browne was elected President and Edgar Fahs Smith was acknowledged as a founding force. Official recognition as a Section of the American Chemical Society required detailed reporting requirements and a record of achievement sufficient for elevation to Divisional status. A report on the 1922 Birmingham Meeting of the Section of the History of Chemistry appeared in the October, 1922, issue of *The Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*. Papers by Smith, Browne, F.B. Dains, as well as L.C. Newell, were summarized. Lyman Newell was reappointed as Secretary.

The Fall 1922 Meeting in New Haven was well planned and Newell's report appeared in the May 1923 issue of *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*. An extensive display of books, papers and chemical artifacts was prepared for this meeting by both Edgar Fahs Smith and Lyman Churchill Newell. This pattern of carefully planned meetings and public displays continued until the death of Smith in 1928. The first informal sketch of the history of the HIST Division by Lyman C. Newell appeared in the *Journal of Chemical Education* in the April, 1932, issue.

In 1927 all Newell's hard work was rewarded with the designation of the Division of the History of Chemistry. He was elected as the first Chairman and Tenney L. Davis was chosen as the new Secretary. A very nice *American Contemporary* article on Lyman Churchill Newell by Tenney Davis appeared in the September 1932 issue of *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*.

One of the high points of the early period as a Section was the Fiftieth Anniversary Program for the ACS, 1876-1926. The committee consisted of Charles A. Browne, Chair, Father George L. Coyle, F.B. Dains (HIST Chair in 1923-26), Lyman C. Newell and Edgar Fahs Smith. The group produced a volume of 256 pages entitled "A Half-Century of Chemistry in America 1876-1926." Charles A. Browne was also the author of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary history volume. When Lyman Newell needed to step down in 1932, F.B. Dains agreed to serve for one year in 1933.

Lyman Newell was especially active in this period in writing biographies for the *Dictionary of American Biography*. His subjects included: James Curtis Booth, Josiah Parsons Cooke, James Freeman Dana, Samuel Luther Dana, Frederick Augustus Genth, John Gorham, Samuel Guthrie, Augustus Allen Hayes, Eben Norton Horsford, Thomas Sterry Hunt, Charles James, Morris Loeb, Samuel Lytler Metcalfe, Campbell Morfit and James Robinson Nichols.

### **Lyman Newell as World Traveler**

Mr. and Mrs. Newell were avid travelers. They made a memorable trip to the Royal Institution in 1924. One of the most memorable trips was to the Hawaiian Islands (Fig. 7).





(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT) PROFESSOR LYMAN C. NEWELL, THE QUEEN'S LADY IN WAITING, QUEEN LILIUOKALANI  
MR. ADAM H. DICKEY, MRS. S. K. KEA

**Figure 7** Lyman Newell with the Hawaiian Royal Family ( Lyman Churchill Newell Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival research Center at Boston University, by permission )

## Lyman Newell as a lesser poet and friend

Lyman Newell was well known as a creator of doggerel. Many of these short poems have been published in places like *The Nucleus*. Here is one that is part of the permanent large collection of such pieces in the archive.

“Field Work”  
He asked her if she’d like  
To take a little hike  
Or up the mountain climb  
“Perhaps, some other time,  
She said, “I’ll take a walk,  
But now I’d rather talk.”  
“Up there,” he said, “’tis gneiss.”  
And then he ----- her twice.  
“Of course,” she said, “you know  
I always meant to go.”

Upon his passing, a great outpouring of affection was displayed in many publications. One of the largest collections of eulogies contained remembrances by: Daniel L. Marsh, William M. Warren, Avery Ashdown, Alfred Avery, R.K. Carleton, Tenney L. Davis, Gustavus J. Esselen, James Geddes, Edward Holmes, Norton Kent, Arthur Lamb, Wilbert Lindquist, J. Philip Mason, Elmer B. Mode, Janes Flack Norris, Marshall Perrin, Norris Rakestraw, Theodore W. Richards, Allan Rowe, Frank W. Scott, Howard Smith, Margaret South, Helen Stevens, Marguerite Syner and Joseph Taylor. The range of emotions and deep affection was truly moving.

The first Chairman of HIST was a unifying force in all that he did. His own high level of integrity freed everyone to relax and enjoy his passion: the study of chemists. His archival family included many characters, both historical and literary. A visit to the Lyman Churchill Newell Collection in 2013 still preserves his spirit, as well as his toys.