## **ORIGINS & FOUNDERS**

## Edward Fingerhood

It is well known among historians of the D.V.O.C. that the first meetings of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club were held in January and February, 1890. The first constitution was adopted on February 3rd of that year. The members in attendance, seven in all, subsequently were designated "Founders." (Proc D.V.O.C. 1:1) Thus was launched the now 106-year old organization.

Despite being the second American bird club to be established [The Nuttall Ornithological Society was founded about 1880], the D.V.O.C. has outlasted its older relative and is still

an active and thriving organization.

These facts being well established and widely known, it came as an utter surprise to this writer to discover an even earlier attempt to organize a bird club centered in Philadelphia some six years previous. I quote from the Field Notebooks of William L. Baily, dated May 18, 1897: "During the year 1884 the above names [see following] formed a club without formal organization and without a name, but by agreement met at our several houses about once a month for the comparison of [bird] notes and compiling monthly sheets. But as there was considerable work attached to my scheme, the club hardly lived the year out. I had worked very hard for the past three years [18] '82, '83 & '84, and did considerable work in '85 & also in '87 & '88, but did not keep very full notes. [In] '89 I was in Europe and in 1890 with J. Harris Reed organized the Delaware Val. O. Club. Members: [of the 1884 club] A. Garrett, Alban Cope, Will Haines, H. Stokes and myself." (Baily II, W.L., Acad. Nat Sci Archives, Coll. 14 #3; Notes on Ornithology #1:68)

A comparison of the original "Official Founders" list with the no-name club of 1884 follows:

## 1884

## "Official List" 1890

William L. Baily	William L. Baily
H. Baily*	George S. Morris
Alban Cope	Samuel N. Rhoads
H. Stokes	Witmer Stone
A. Garrett	Spencer Trotter
Will Haines	Charles A. Voelker
	J. Harris Reed

<sup>\*</sup> Given as a contributor of monthly bird notes in 1884

The comparative list shows that none but William L. Baily of the 1884 crowd was at the organizational meetings of the D.V.O.C. in 1890. None of the earlier no-name bird clubers are noted in the membership lists or accounts of the meetings of the D.V.O.C. in the early 1890s. The missing persons from 1884 are inexplicable. Had all died, moved, become infirm or lost their enthusiasm for birds in a mere six years? Whatever happened, only the redoubtable William L. Baily remained to renew the attempt to found a Delaware Valley bird club, to recall the failed effort in his notebooks and to try again at a later date. He was, a "Founder," indeed.