

## CARL LUDWIG ROMINGER

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Carl Ludwig Rominger, the son of Ludwig and Johanna Dorothea (Hoecklin) Rominger, was born at Schaitheim, in Württemberg, December 31, 1820, and died at Ann Arbor, Michigan, April 27, 1907.

He was matriculated at the University of Tübingen in the fall of 1839, receiving his diploma as a doctor of medicine in the fall of 1842. His record as a student was that of a painstaking, detailed worker and the winner of two academic prizes, one for a research demonstrating the mode of ascension and distribution of the sap in plants, and the other for making a detailed geological map of the environs of Tübingen.

From 1842 to 1845 he remained at Tübingen as an assistant in the chemical laboratory of Chr. Gmelin, and at the same time devoted considerable attention to the study of geology and paleontology under the guidance of Professor Quenstedt. From 1845 to 1848, under an annual grant of four hundred florins from the government of Württemberg, he traveled extensively on foot over a great portion of Germany, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, and France, his main object being the study of the geological structure of these countries. At the outbreak of the Revolution in 1848, fearing an interruption of his studies, he crossed the Atlantic with the idea of continuing his work in America, though, as it subsequently proved, the step was premature and ill-advised, owing to his being poorly equipped for such an undertaking and mainly on account of his slight knowledge of the English language. He shipped in a sailing vessel from Bremen in April, 1848, arriving in New York some fifty days later. Being unable to understand the language or make himself understood; without letters of introduction or knowledge of the manners and customs of the people, and without funds, he was obliged to follow his medical profession for a livelihood. After a

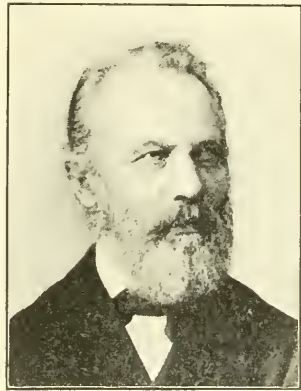


FIG. 23. Carl Ludwig Rominger

few months of travel through the coal regions of Virginia and Kentucky, he finally arrived in Cincinnati, to which locality he was attracted by the rich paleontological nature of the underlying formations.

His financial condition, however, was such that the only choice left open to him was to establish himself in his profession, which he continued to practice for the ensuing twenty-four years, in the meantime perfecting himself in his English studies as best he might and occupying his leisure hours with a study of the natural sciences, particularly the fresh-water mollusks and invertebrate fossils with which the region abounded. After a few months' residence at Cincinnati he removed to Chillicothe, Ohio, where he remained for eleven years, though only fairly prosperous. In 1860 he removed to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he resided for the remainder of his life. During the first twelve years' residence here he continued his medical practice, and was pecuniarily somewhat more successful than at Chillicothe.

The Geological Survey of Michigan was reorganized in 1869, with Professor Alexander Winchell as director. On the recommendation of the numerous friends he had made through his paleontological studies, and especially through the influence of Professor James Hall, of Albany, Dr. Rominger was engaged by the survey as paleontologist in 1870. Professor Winchell resigned in 1871, and Rominger remained in full charge, first of his particular department and finally, after the withdrawal of Brooks and Pumpelly, of the entire survey, until, with a change in the political administration in 1883, he was succeeded by Professor Charles E. Wright.

During all this time his chief interests were paleontological, though circumstances naturally caused him to devote attention also to stratigraphy. Among the reports of this survey, the third part of volume I (1873), volumes III (1876) and IV (1881) in their entirety, and the first part of volume V (1895) are of his authorship. The third part of volume I related to the Paleozoic rocks in the upper peninsula. Of volume III, two hundred and twenty-five pages and fifty-five plates were devoted to paleontology—mainly to fossil corals. The reports of 1881 and 1895 dealt almost entirely with economical problems relating to the iron and copper regions of the Upper Peninsula.

Rominger's life was typical of that of many of the earlier geological workers, and that he accomplished so much, considering the difficulties under which he labored, is one of the many impressive facts brought out by the study of the history of early American geology. Aside from financial considerations, his ignorance of the language

offered a great obstacle to his progress. Indeed, he never became a ready writer of English. German was his native tongue and to it he resorted whenever conditions would allow. Even when writing or talking, his form of construction was more German than English, and the force and point of his remarks and criticisms were often wholly lost on this account.

The following quotation from a personal memorandum to the present writer, made a few years before his death, and referring to his work on corals (vol. III of the Survey reports), will illustrate both of these points:

"It was my original intention to continue the work I had begun under the auspices of the Geological Survey, but the installation of Governor Alger made a sudden end of my position, which I had filled for fourteen years. . . . To continue this work on my own expense I became totally discouraged after I had made the experience with the extra copies I had printed of the third volume on my own expense. Urged to do it by more than one hundred letters of persons wishing to obtain it from me after the State had no more of this volume to give away, I ordered two hundred fifty copies printed, and paid for each volume \$4.75; wanted to sell them for the same amount, but to my surprise most of the persons ordering the volume were expecting it as a donation. With difficulty I could sell at the rate of \$3.00 about fifty volumes, and one hundred fifty I gave away, and about one hundred are left in my hands unsold. This experience cost me about \$800.00 direct loss and cured me of every attempt to edit a book at my own expense."

Dr. Rominger is described by those who knew him as a genuine scientist of the old school—brusque in his manner, not always too patient toward those who asked what seemed to him foolish questions, but withal generous and unpretentious.

He was an indefatigable collector and spared neither time nor energy in the pursuit of his favorite study. His tremendous physique enabled him to make collections in regions which were practically inaccessible to those having less power of endurance. In illustration of this, attention may be called to the extensive collections of choice Silurian corals made by him in the Glade regions of west Tennessee. These glades even today are penetrated with difficulty, and at that time the entire journey had to be made on foot.

Rominger left two important paleontological collections, the first being now the property of the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor, and the second of the National Museum, at Washington. The first collection was especially rich in corals—in fact, it was the most complete set from the Paleozoic extant at the time it was made, and was the basis of his monograph (vol. III of the Michigan Survey). The second collection was of a more general biological nature and

included a particularly fine set of Stromatoporoids. Unlike many of the earlier paleontologists, Rominger was most careful to accurately label his material, giving the exact horizon and locality. This, of course, added enormously to the value of his collections.

He will be remembered by paleontologists, particularly those who appreciate the importance of such methods, as being one of the first, if not the first, to study fossil corals, Stromatoporoids and Bryozoa, by means of thin-sections. Many species of fossils and one genus, the unique coral *Romingeria*, are named in his honor.

He was married in 1854 to Frederika Meyer, of Tübingen, by whom he had two daughters, Louise and Marie, and one son, Dr. Louis Rominger, now of Louisville, Kentucky.

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