Norman Craig cheers on Ruth Spendelow, one of six Hall family members attending the landmark event, as she opens the ceremonies by ringing the chemistry department's aluminum gong.

Hall and His Discovery Honored by American Chemical Society

If Charles Martin Hall, Class of 1885, were alive today, suggests his great-great-nephew Charles Hall Acton, Jr., he would be inventing a safe and inexpensive battery to power aluminum-body automobiles—and writing to his sister Julia about it.

Acton's fantasy was one of many remembrances and speculations peppering the presentations last Wednesday, September 17, when the College and the Cleveland Section of the American Chemical Society (ACS) held a public ceremony and reception to commemorate Hall's work and name his work site a National Historic Chemical Landmark. About 250 people, including about 50 out-of-town members of the ACS, joined to celebrate Hall's discovery of an economical way to extract aluminum from its ore.

In her remarks President Nancy Dye emphasized the collaboration between Hall and his faculty mentor, Frank Jewett, and drew a parallel to current faculty-student collaboration, including that between chemist Norman Craig, Biggs Professor in the Natural Sciences, and his students.

As master of ceremony for the event Craig introduced the other speakers: James Burrington, chair of the ACS Cleveland Section; Acton, supervisor of the Mission and Science Analysis Software Group of the Navigation and Flight Mechanics Section at the California Institute of Technology Jet Propulsion Laboratory; Frank Lederman, vice president for technology at Alcoa; Bernard Guest, grandson of Paul Héroult, Hall's French counterpart inventor; Paul Anderson, ACS president; and Dye.

Anderson presented to Dye an aluminum commemorative plaque that will be mounted on the wall in back of the statue of Hall in the Kettering building.

In the Root Room of the Carnegie Building, besides the presentations, were showings of a short video produced by the Office of College Relations, *Charles Martin Hall and the Development of Aluminum*, and of *Unfinished Rainbows*, a 1941 industrial film (starring Alan Ladd) about Hall and his discovery. On display in the room were several related posters and artifacts and a model of the proposed new science facility.

The Jewett House, at 73 South Professor Street, now the property of the Oberlin Historical Improvement Organization (O.H.I.O), was open to the public during the early afternoon. On view was an exhibition focusing on Hall, the Jewetts, the discovery of aluminum, and the founding of Alcoa by Hall and Alfred Hunt as well as a simulation of the woodshed laboratory in which Hall did his early work. The O.H.I.O distributed a publication, *Traces of Charles M. Hall in Oberlin: Walking (Plus) Tour Map and Guide* for the occasion; retired Prospect School teacher Ann Craig created the tour and leaflet.

Oberlin resident Lewis McCarty '41 played "a major role in setting up the materials for the displays and in writing the award nomination and the

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Aluminum . . .

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ACS brochure *Production of Aluminum Metal by Electrochemistry*," says Norman Craig. "He also helped with the new display at the Jewett House. Simply put, without Lew's help this event would not have occurred."

Acton's figment has a historical basis, says Craig. "For about 10 years (1895-1905) Hall worked very hard to develop an inexpensive fuel cell." Another aspect of Acton's dream—that Hall was collaborating with Héroult on the battery invention—is not entirely far fetched either. The two men, although engaged in litigation until the patent rights were split between the U.S. (Hall) and Europe (Héroult), developed, says Craig, "respect for each other and met more than once in later years."