

PRESENTATION OF THE ROEBLING MEDAL  
OF THE MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF  
AMERICA TO ESPER S. LARSEN, JR.\*

CLARENCE S. ROSS, *U. S. Geological Survey, Washington, D.C.*

The Mineralogical Society of America has given me the duty and privilege of presenting to you, Professor Larsen, the Roebling Medal as a token of its appreciation of your service to the Society and to the science of mineralogy. This duty is a pleasure; more fully so than commonly falls to one's lot.

The record shows that Esper Signius Larsen, Jr., is a graduate of the University of California, and received his doctor's degree from the same institution. After graduation, two years were spent in the Geophysical Laboratory, 14 years with the United States Geological Survey, and since 1923 with Harvard University as professor of petrology. You were a charter fellow of the Mineralogical Society, a councilor from 1923 to 1926, and president in 1928. A bibliography of about 100 papers on mineralogy, petrology, and geology includes the description of some 24 new mineral species.

The science of the microscopic study of rocks and minerals was founded by Sorby, and developed by such men as Zirkel and Rosenbusch; but you have placed your name with those of these great leaders by giving the petrographic microscope its fullest usefulness. Your careful determination of the optical properties of over 600 minerals, and the compilation of other data, led to the publication of a book entitled "The microscopic determination of the non-opaque minerals." The data it contains, giving the optical properties of all known non-opaque minerals, have made the petrographic microscope the supreme instrument of precise mineral determination, and this volume of yours must needs be a companion piece for every petrographic microscope. Thus, not only mineralogists and petrologists, but all who deal with crystalline materials—chemists, ceramists, and soil specialists the world over—have ever before them a reminder of the debt they owe to you.

Colonel Roebling would be happy to participate in the award of the Roebling Medal to you, for he aided in your work by placing at your disposal his unusual mineral collection, so rich in type materials. Thus you yourself experienced the generosity of Colonel Roebling, and I am sure that, again this day, you are deeply grateful to him; and in this we all concur.

Your other contributions have been mainly in the field of petrology, a

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sister science of mineralogy. The years while connected with the United States Geological Survey were devoted largely to the study of the San Juan region of Colorado and New Mexico, the largest area of volcanic rocks in the world which has been studied and mapped in detail. A long series of papers have resulted from this investigation, and similar studies are now being extended to other regions of the West.

Your work at Harvard University has been equally successful, where for 18 years you have continued to make notable contributions in both mineralogy and petrology. During that time, generations of students have received instruction from you, and you have given them a goodly portion of your enthusiasm and inspiration. You have been unusually successful in passing these attributes on to your students; no doubt a major factor in the notable success they have attained. You may well be proud of them as they are proud of having worked with you.

May I also say a word for myself. We have worked together in the laboratory with microscope by microscope, where I have seen your great volume come to completion. We have eaten camp fare together, traveled the mountain trails together, slept under the stars together, or listened to the plaints of sheep herders' proteges. We have traced lava flows and mapped boundaries together; in the laboratory or by the campfire we have had many discussions, some of them heated, but all of them friendly. Thus it is with a very personal feeling, and an intimate knowledge of your work that I discharge this pleasant duty here today.

And so, speaking for all groups here represented, in the name of the Mineralogical Society of America, I present you, Esper S. Larsen, with the Roebling Medal, given in recognition of exceptionally distinguished work in the field of mineralogy. May you have as great pleasure in receiving it as I have in placing it in your hand.