

## MEMORIAL OF BURNHAM STANDISH COLBURN

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Burnham Standish Colburn was born in Detroit, Michigan, December 10, 1872, and died in his home in Asheville, North Carolina, December 26, 1959. He was a descendant of Miles Standish, John Alden, Edward Doty, and Richard Warren, of the Mayflower, and had served at one time as Governor General of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants. On November 21, 1900, he married Elizabeth G. Pierce, who died on January 12, 1959. He is survived by his brother, William B. Colburn, a son, Burnham Standish Colburn, Jr., three daughters, Elizabeth (Mrs. E. Wayford Willmar), Evelyn (Mrs. Evelyn C. Thorn), and Mary Louise (Mrs. J. Frazier Glenn, Jr.), and several grandchildren.

Mr. Colburn received his B.S. in civil engineering at the University of Michigan in 1896. His first serious interest was in bridge building, but it soon veered to banking and from 1911 to 1913 he was vice-president of the People's State Bank in Detroit. Later he was Treasurer of the Biltmore Estate Company, and from 1933 to 1953, President of the First National Bank and Trust Company of Asheville, North Carolina, where he had moved during the First World War. His interest in minerals apparently dated from his childhood, his father having owned a large iron mine. Soon after moving to Asheville, he became acquainted with Joseph Hyde Pratt, State Geologist of North Carolina. He soon acquired a collection of North Carolina minerals that was rated as the finest collection of its kind in the country, and a part of it was the Pratt collection, particularly rich in gemstones from North Carolina. His interests centered in the southern Appalachian region, and the Spruce Pine area, with the many dumps at abandoned mica mines and at the operating mines, yielded him many good specimens. Among these were specimens from the old emerald mine near Little Switzerland, the rare pitchblende from Penland with its gaily colored alteration products, thin red garnets enclosed in sheets of mica, and sheets of white mica with included crystals of black mica and vice versa. These last were exhibited as transparencies in the windows of his mineral room. Many other nearby localities intrigued him immensely—Corundum Hill, Shooting Creek, Cowee Creek, Mason Mountain. Perhaps his greatest "field excursion" was his reopening, at great personal expense of both time and money, of the famous old hiddenite mine near Stony Point.

Most of his collection was purchased in 1945 by friends and alumni of the University of South Carolina and presented to the university for permanent exhibition in the Geology Department, as it was his wish that the collection should be kept intact in a place where it would be



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1872-1959

available to all. The specimens that he kept for himself at that time, to show to those who were interested, have now been donated by his family to form the nucleus of the Burnham S. Colburn Memorial Mineral Museum at 170 Cove Avenue, Asheville, sponsored by the Southern Appalachian Mineral Society, founded by Mr. Colburn.

Mr. Colburn became a member of the Mineralogical Society of America in 1930. In December 1936, in recognition of his lifelong interest in minerals and his great kindness and generosity to amateurs and professionals alike, he was elected a Fellow. He served as Vice-President for the year 1939.

The writer is one of many who enjoyed and benefited greatly by knowing this charming gentleman and his most hospitable family. No finer tribute could be written about him than to quote the statement recorded when the Southern Appalachian Mineral Society was formed (and probably written by Mr. Colburn himself)—“The objects of this society are to promote good fellowship and better acquaintance among its members, to add to the available information regarding mineral deposits of both commercial and museum value, to make such information readily accessible to the members, and to foster a free interchange of ideas.”

In noting his passing, the Southern Appalachian Mineral Society recorded the following appreciation, “He welcomed friend and stranger to his home and to his office. He discussed minerals, he gave away specimens, he loaned books, he did all he could to foster knowledge and interest in the mineral world.”