

PAUL F. KERR: HIS YEARS AS SECRETARY OF THE
MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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The unexpected passing of Frank R. Van Horn, then Secretary of the young Mineralogical Society of America, on August 1, 1933, meant that the Society was faced with the selection of a new Secretary. Frank had served the Society ably and generously since 1923, an eleven-year span in the early period of slow but steady growth. Albert Peck at the University of Michigan stepped in temporarily to perform the secretarial duties until the Society elected Paul F. Kerr at Columbia University as the permanent Secretary. Paul had served on the Council from 1930 until his selection by the Council for the office of Secretary, and had demonstrated his interest in Society affairs and his willingness to devote the necessary time to attending to them. In those days, 32 years ago, the Society numbered 395 individuals (115 Fellows, 280 Members) and sent its journal, *The American Mineralogist*, to approximately 260 library subscribers in colleges, universities, government bureaus, and a few industrial companies. Although the Society was growing steadily from an original 173 members (48 Fellows, 125 Members) and 130 subscribers, a grand total of 303, the problem of stretching the income from dues and subscriptions to accommodate the publication of manuscripts was beginning to be a real one that needed attention. So it was that Walter Hunt, our Editor in Ann Arbor, and I as Treasurer in Washington, welcomed the addition of a "younger man" as Secretary.

As matters developed within the next few years, it turned out to be a fortunate choice. From the time of the founding of the Mineralogical Society of America in 1919, there had been a close association with the Geological Society of America and the annual meeting was held at the same time and place. As the headquarters of the Geological Society were at that time on the Columbia University campus where the Program Committee met to arrange the sessions of the annual meeting, it was convenient to have our Secretary near at hand both for the committee meeting and for consultation. In those days, the program for a meeting during Christmas week was arranged over the Thanksgiving weekend, sent to the printer a day or so later, and mailed in mid-December with the December issue of *The American Mineralogist*.

Early in 1934, after receiving the Penrose bequest, the Geological Society of America asked its affiliated societies to cooperate in a survey of their fields of activity and publication as they related to that of the parent organization. The Council of the MSA appointed a Committee on

Affiliation consisting of our Editor, Walter Hunt, our Secretary, Paul Kerr, as chairman, and the Treasurer. During that year there was a great deal of discussion among the three of us and also between the Committee and the Geological Society. One specific aim was the establishment of closer cooperation between the editorial offices of the two societies with respect to publication policies. From consideration of the situation, it became apparent that an increase in the size of *The American Mineralogist* would be necessary for the prompt publication of manuscripts, and for this purpose the Geological Society of America appropriated \$1500 from the Penrose Fund in 1934, and a similar sum in 1935. These grants were the first in a series of annual grants that continued until just a few years ago. Throughout the discussions that formed a major part of the Committee work, and through the tending of all the details that are always an indispensable part of the initiation of any new program, Paul steered the Committee and the Society on a wise course that has contributed in large measure to the reputation that *The American Mineralogist* enjoys today as a leading mineralogical journal.

There comes to mind another incident of those years when Walter, Paul, and I were guiding Society fortunes. When George F. Kunz, internationally known gem expert for Tiffany & Company and a Fellow of the Society, died in June 1932, it was learned that he had left the Society a bequest of \$1000. In the course of carrying out the provisions of his will, various complications arose in connection with the bequests and it was thought by legal counsel that the Society, not being incorporated, might not be eligible to receive the bequest. Consequently, on the 17th of June, 1937, President Norman L. Bowen, Councilor Frank Schairer, and I went to the proper offices in the District of Columbia, and for the sum of \$1.00, incorporated the Society. The District was chosen strictly in the interests of economy as incorporation in New York State at that time cost \$25.00. In the final disposition of the will, the Society was never able to receive the bequest, but because of the possibility, took a step that has since proved to be a wise one.

I am greatly obligated to Marjorie Hooker, our present Treasurer, for many figures given here and for her help in preparing these notes.