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THE AMERICAN MINERALOGIST: ITS FIRST FOUR YEARS

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In this, the 50th year of the Mineralogical Society of America,² it is fitting that the Society acknowledge its debt to *The American Mineralogist*, and to the nation's mineral collectors whose support made the journal a reality. At the time the Society was first organized in late 1919, its adopted vehicle, *The American Mineralogist*, was already three years old, given to periods of heavy coughing, but in running condition none the less. It is this pre-MSA period in the life of the journal that is the subject of the present tribute. It is high time honor was paid to the inspired coniving, masterful improvisations and financial sacrifices of those men who launched the ship and kept it afloat during those difficult early years. This was a time when dollars were hard to come by, and no beneficent society nor affluent foundation stood by waiting in the wings to pick up the tab should the need arise.

The early files plainly show that the late S. G. Gordon, then Assistant Curator at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia was the prime instigator and organizer of *The American Mineralogist*. To be sure, an organization of American mineralogists with its own vehicle of publication had been proposed in academic circles as early as the 1913 meeting of the Geological Society of America, but nothing had come of it for want of a means of implementation. Gordon conceived the idea of implementing publication by working through the nation's larger mineral clubs. In this

¹ Archivist, Mineralogical Society of America.

² Papers and other records, or permanent copies thereof, relating to the early history of the Mineralogical Society of America are urgently requested from the membership for preservation in the Archives of the Society. Time is getting short, and considerable documentation remains to be done. In particular, actual correspondence that bears upon the problems besetting the Society in its early years is needed.

The collection is temporarily housed in the U. S. National Museum, and at present includes papers and memorabilia generously donated by E. H. Kraus, W. F. Hunt, S. G. Gordon, and W. T. Schaller. Please send all contributions to George Phair, Archivist MSA, U. S. Geological Survey, Washington, D. C., 20242. If in doubt as to suitability of material, write first.

less specialized era the number of practicing professionals who could be relied upon to support a mineralogical journal was open to debate, whereas the membership in the larger mineral clubs was a known quantity. Gordon himself, was a member of the Philadelphia Mineralogical Society and had connections in the New York Mineralogical Club (76 members) and in the Mineral Collector's Association, a nationwide organization (80 members).

Gordon was a highly competent mineralogist who had risen from the ranks of the mineral collectors. Though he lacked the financial resources needed to obtain a college degree he more than made up for this insufficiency by the quality of his desire, dedication, and intelligence. These virtues had impressed others, notably Dr. E. T. Wherry, who throughout Gordon's early career provided extracurricular tutoring and general guidance and whose commendations opened the gateway to professional status. Gordon's formal training was limited to a course on mineralogy and geology as a boy under Dr. Wherry at Wagner Free Institute of Science at Philadelphia, supplemented by later courses in mathematics, chemistry, physics and geology at the University of Pennsylvania and at Drexel Institute. During the period 1926-1927 he spent six months with Goldschmidt at Heidelberg. In short, the time that others would have diluted with nonscientific undergraduate and graduate studies he spent working on his beloved minerals. Gordon was 19 years old when he recruited and set up the staff of what was to become "*The American Mineralogist*."

In 1926 Gordon turned over to the Society his correspondence files covering the formative years of the publication. In certain letters he has made marginal annotations "how Wherry came to be Associate Editor," "how Wherry came to be Editor in Chief," etc., which considerably lighten the historian's load.

These files make fascinating reading. The reader shares the trepidation of a group of voyagers who, imbued with a sense of high mission, set out on strange seas in a small leaky, jerry-built boat. In counterpoint to the exhilaration of the initial slide down the ways is the usual last minute apprehension as to whether the sea cocks were closed. The reader shares their triumphs as they successfully navigate the inevitable shoals of publication deadlines, balky printers, cranky authors, nonpaying subscribers, and bills, bills, bills.

Among those who expected the newly christened craft to make for the bottom in a babel of bubbles was the eminent Secretary of the Society of Economic Geologists. In a letter to E. T. Wherry he advised against placing an advertisement for the fledgling publication in *Economic Geology*. Safe in the security of a paid circulation of 900 he predicted a maximum circulation of less than 250 for *The American Mineralogist*, and, in closing

wished the new journal well with an undertaker's enthusiasm. The extent to which the Secretary's restraint was tempered by Wherry's oft repeated intent to keep "economic junk" out of the pages of the *American Mineralogist* is not known. Wherry was later to reverse this stand as World War I drew closer, and the need to utilize new domestic sources of minerals became a matter of national survival.

Gordon spent much of 1915 contacting individuals and organizations and by early 1916 had assembled a staff. With becoming modesty he took upon himself the nominally secondary role of an associate editor but, in fact, remained a major force in the enterprise.

By virtue of seniority the nominal Editor-in-Chief was W. G. Levison, the Secretary of the New York Mineralogical Club. It was his contention that the new publication should continue the function of the old *Mineral Collector*, if possible retaining the same title and format. The publication of the *Mineral Collector* had been a labor of love on the part of Arthur Chamberlain, a printer by trade, who according to Levison's appreciative account left his plant at 5:00 p. m. to gulp a hurried dinner at home and proceed to his basement where he would set type for the journal by the light of a solitary dim lamp till 12:00 p.m. or later. The *Mineral Collector* had been published monthly over the 15 years between 1894 and 1909. The reader senses that Levison became a bit disillusioned rather early in proceedings when his recommendations as to format and makeup were not followed. He played a secondary role thereafter.¹

In a footnote to a long letter to Gordon dated December 31, 1915, Dr. E. T. Wherry had written "Let me know how the proposed *Mineral Collector* is coming on; I want to be an assistant editor of it." Wherry was named Managing Editor, but for all practical purposes was "the" Editor. This was during the mineralogical phase of a remarkable many faceted career. He was then Assistant Curator of Mineralogy and Petrography at the U. S. National Museum having completed a Doctorate in mineralogy at the University of Pennsylvania in 1909 and a summer at Heidelberg in 1910. Later, after a term in 1923 as President of the MSA he, was to make his mark in chemistry, becoming a Principal Chemist with the Department of Agriculture in 1927, and still later in botany, attaining a full Professorship at the University of Pennsylvania in 1941. Those of us who are devotees of the native flora have found his handbook of ferns to be an invaluable reference and to this day look forward to his all too infrequent articles on such subjects as "Domesticating the Wildings" that appear in

¹ His place in history, however, was already secure. An illustrated article in the Brooklyn Standard Union of May 8, 1921 credited Levison with the invention, in June 1887, of the first moving picture camera. His system utilized a reservoir of plates rather than a roll of continuous film, and apparently created a sensation when first publicly demonstrated. (Written communication R. J. Holmes and Marjorie Hooker, 1968)

the pages of *Horticulture* magazine. Among numerous other accomplishments Dr. Wherry is a skilled linguist and, according to Dr. Judith Frondel, taught Russian in addition to botany at the University of Pennsylvania during World War II.

Because Dr. Wherry combined the broad gauge interests of the born naturalist with the disciplined skills of the professional scientist and, above all, could speak the layman's language, he seemed the ideal man to bridge the communications gap between amateur and professional. He more than lived up to this promise. Toward the close of Wherry's second year as Managing Editor, Trudell and Gordon in a letter dated June 11, 1918, were to write Levison,

Dr. Wherry as we all know has been doing practically all the editorial work and has written no small part of the literary contributions. In addition at great personal sacrifice he has repeatedly aided the enterprise financially.

The only member of the staff to have his name in full capitals on the letterhead of *The American Mineralogist* stationary was the Publisher, Robert Rosenbaum, whose job it was to make printing arrangements and solicit new subscribers. After an enthusiastic start and an initial canvas of potential subscribers, his twin duties as a full-time student at Lehigh University and as a "manufacturing chemist" in partnership with his brother left little time for work with the journal. As time went on, more and more of his duties fell to other members of the staff and in particular to the Business Manager, H. W. Trudell who, so far as the files can tell us, was appointed later in the year to bring order into the bookkeeping chaos.

Trudell like Gordon and Wherry was a member of the Philadelphia Mineralogical Society. He was the only member of the staff not to have his name on the letterhead and on the cover of the early issues of the journal. This omission, understandably, was a source of some chagrin to him, particularly since he performed yeoman service. Trudell had a sense of humor, and needed it.

On February 9, 1969, Dr. Wherry wrote the Archivist:

If I may get reminiscent, around 1910 I was lecturing on geology at the Wagner Free Institute of Science, a privately endowed organization, and the small group of mineral collectors came to my lectures and we proceeded to get acquainted; that included Gordon, Rosenbaum, Trudell, and a few others, mostly now deceased. Since Rosenbaum was especially enthusiastic, he was the one picked out as "manager" of the *American Mineralogist* rather than the retiring Trudell. . . . I wish you could slip into the account that had it not been for Trudell's ability in getting contributions from unexpected places, the magazine would indeed have expired."

Trudell put in a normal work week as treasurer of a leather firm and transacted the business of *The American Mineralogist* after hours and on weekends. In later years Gordon was to name the new mineral "Tru-

dellite" after his life-long friend. Trudell was also an avid botanist and a frequent companion of Wherry's on plant-collecting trips. Wherry named the fern, "asplenium trudelli" from Lancaster County, in his honor. Trudell died at the age of 84 in 1964.

Rounding out the staff was a second Associate Editor, W. Scott Lewis of the Krotona Institute, Los Angeles. As Secretary of the Mineral Collector's Association, he supplied new members, solicited articles, and wrote the club notes. Beyond that his role, like that of the Editor-in-Chief's, was largely honorary.

The make-up of the Editorial Staff represented a marriage of convenience involving individuals separated by distance and by differences in points of view. Inevitably once the objectives of the union had been reasonably assured, the domestic tranquility underwent strain. Thus in a letter dated August 11, 1916, the nominal Editor-in-Chief wrote Gordon,

Mr. Rosenbaum wrote me a letter this week asking to advance \$30.00 to pay some bill he has incurred. As the magazine is a Philadelphia enterprise, I think the Philadelphians should take care of themselves.

And a Philadelphia enterprise it truly was! Even at this early stage in the journal's history the setting of policy, and the actual operations had devolved largely upon three men, Wherry, Gordon, and Trudell. For the ensuing four years this trio was to give unstintingly of themselves and of their resources, and the journal was seldom out of debt financially to one or all of the three.

Once the staff had been appointed, the next orders of business were, (1) naming the journal and, (2) defining its scope. Levison, who had argued for the continuation of the *Mineral Collector* and lost, submitted as alternatives, *The Mineralogical Record*, *The Mineralogical Review*, or *The Mineralogical Survey*. He favored names that did not limit the subject matter to America, but rather would "extend it to the universe which will permit us to discuss in it even celestial mineralogy." At the same time he cautioned, "but all of these names would commit us to a journal of a more dignified, pretentious, and exacting style than that of the former 'Mineral Collector' and perhaps would not appeal to as large a body of unscientific subscribers."

It is apparent that the title finally agreed upon, *The American Mineralogist*, was a compromise thought to exhibit the necessary level of dignity while keeping the human touch. It appears to have been suggested by Gordon.

Now came the task of deciding just what types of subject matter the journal was to include. To attract the mineral collector, space was allotted for minutes of the meetings of the mineral clubs involved, for exchange notices, and for write-ups of collecting trips. Wherry was adamant

in keeping superfluous technical jargon out of the journal. He wrote Gordon, "Perhaps the greater part of our readership will be amateurs who do not know what Bx_{100} etc. means, and if we put in too much unintelligible high brow dope they will not renew their subscriptions." Wherry and Gordon while recognizing the legitimacy of the demands of the collectors were not disposed to limit the subject matter entirely to such an audience and the final product was a reasonably balanced blend.

The first issue included (1) an appreciation of the past contributions of Arthur Chamberlain, (2) descriptions of lamellar calcite, columnar mangano-calcite, and of the role of the chemical elements in mineralogy, (3) abstracts of pertinent papers that had appeared in the "more technical" journals, (4) club notes and news.

The second issue included as the feature article a comprehensive description of the gem minerals of Madagascar. After its publication a review in *Science* dated December 15, 1916, opened as follows,

The *American Mineralogist* is a new magazine devoted to the interests of the scientific mineralogist, the student of mineralogy, curators of museums, and collectors of minerals . . . It noted in closing, "As this special field has never before been covered the journal should meet with considerable encouragement and success.

In the fourth number of Volume 1 the editors tried a new and daring tack. They offered to identify, free of charge and to the extent facilities permitted, unknown minerals sent in by readers. Dr. Wherry recalls that very few readers of the journal (not to mention writers of theses) took advantage of this golden opportunity.

Though the efforts of the editors went far beyond the call of duty, the advent of the "*American Mineralogist*" hardly burst like a fireball across the publishing firmament. On May 12, 1917, Trudell wrote Gordon,

The South Dakota School of Mines wants the magazine for a year but first requires that I sign and fill in their voucher, *and have my signature sworn to by a notary*. . . This is the worst cheek I have met with thus far . . . well if I do all this they will have to pay the notary or otherwise remain in black ignorance of matters mineralogical.

Like most editors, particularly of new periodicals, Wherry was called upon to do the impossible, namely filling up space while keeping costs down. The former was easier to do than the latter. Abstracts were put in full size type. Wherry himself said he was good for "3 or 4 pages every month if necessary." Wherry also advised his staff to seek out and reserve for use as filler such nuggets as,

Stirling Hill or Sterling Hill

The famous mineral locality of a few miles south of Franklin Furnace, New Jersey, is called in most mineralogy books Sterling Hill. Since it was named after Lord Stirling of England it would seem more appropriate spelled Stirling Hill.

As to the number of subscribers required, Wherry expressed his philosophy as follows:

March 17, 1916. . . If we must get 200 subscribers at \$1.25 we had better make the price \$1.50 and be able to get along with 170, as subscribers to such a magazine are not likely to come in very fast beyond a certain point, which has, I think, about been reached in responses to your letters. . . . The edition of 300 should at first satisfy all these demands and leave us 50 which should be ample for later subscribers.

In the long run, building up the readership proved to be less of a problem than the matter of getting the magazine to the readers on time. A succession of printers flunked the test. As late as August 5, 1918, Trudell was to write Mr. George L. English, of Ward's Natural Science Establishment, the journal's most valued advertiser,

Dear Mr. English:

We beg to acknowledge receipt of yours of the 3rd inst. and note the great annoyance and inconvenience you have been caused by failure of the American Mineralogist to appear on time.

This condition of affairs has been most trying and painful to us we assure you. The trouble lay with the printer's being greatly handicapped by the labor situation. We have been utterly helpless in the matter, threats, demands and appeals had no effect whatever on the progress of the work, from week to week the torture became more acute to us. All we have now to offer is the promises that future numbers will be handled better than that of June. . . .

Similarly other routine day to day trials and tribulations of the operation are best recounted in the words of the long-suffering Business Manager:

Jan. 17, 1917, Trudell to Gordon,

Have a letter from Dr. Wherry in which he says Rosenbaum telegraphed him that the deficit was \$225; if such is the case it is some awful mess to be sure. . . .

June 22, 1917, Trudell to Gordon,

That is sure some beautiful bill and at that rate I suppose we will be in the hands of receivers by about August. . . . Would like to know how the devil I am going to get this overflowing bill paid, for that cruel printer is more prompt by far with his bill than he is with the magazine.

Sept. 9, 1917, Trudell (pseudonym "Tourmaline") to Gordon,

. . . . Note list of poor pieces of cheese who don't want the A.M. anymore:
. . . . renewing "GENTLEMEN:" (list follows).

Dec. 18, 1918, Trudell to Gordon,

Have an immense Wherry-gram with one of those quarterly sheets, magic sheets they seem to me, for by their jugglers' arts our good editor can make one feel rosy and as optimistic as a pig in the mire.

Even in their darkest hours the editors never gave up hope. If nothing else there was always the "hereafter" to look forward to. The following

variation on a well known theme dating from the period of Wherry's editorship was rescued from the files of *The American Mineralogist* by a later editor, Professor E. Wm. Heinrich of the University of Michigan.

My Only Hope

(With apologies to the "Forest Free Press" for certain alterations.)

The editor stood at the pearly gate,
 His face was worn and old;
 He meekly asked of the man of fate
 Admission to the fold.
 "What have you done?" St. Peter asked,
 "To seek admission here?"
 "Oh, I ran *The Mineralogist*
 On earth for many a year."
 The gate swung open sharply
 As St. Peter touched the bell,
 "Come in", he said, "and take a harp;
 You've had enough of Hell."

In 1917 Dr. G. F. Kunz conceived the idea of a volume honoring the French mineralogist, R. J. Haüy, the "Father of Crystallography," and invited papers from a selected group of well known mineralogists including, E. H. Kraus, F. D. Adams, H. P. Whitlock, and E. T. Wherry. The papers covered various aspects of Haüy's life and works, and put his monumental accomplishments in a modern perspective. Kunz, as President of the New York Mineralogical Club, had been one of the first individuals contacted by Gordon in setting up the staff and had been a valued adviser since. His books were advertised prominently in the pages of *The American Mineralogist* under a profit-sharing arrangement. He approached the Smithsonian with his publication plans but was turned down for lack of funds.

Wherry was quick to realize the values inherent in the publication of such an "international" volume and volunteered *The American Mineralogist*. His offer was accepted.

Now came the problem of finances for this was to be no ordinary volume. At this critical juncture an "angel" appeared on the horizon in the person of one Dr. Pope, a mining engineer and appraiser, who served as an adviser to the wealthy and philanthropically-inclined Col. William Boyce Thompson. In the words of Trudell, Wherry asked "the Pope to intercede with St. Thompson" and \$100.00 was immediately forthcoming. When this sum proved inadequate the staff again "kissed the ring of the Pope" and achieved the miracle of another \$100.00. Dr. Kunz and other members of the New York Mineralogical Club agreed to cover the remaining deficit of \$37.89.

With the publication of the Haüy volume in June 1918 *The American*

Mineralogist came of age. It attracted favorable notice both at home and abroad resulting in an increased inflow of orders for subscriptions and advertisements. The journal's financial problems were not resolved, however, until Washington A. Roebling's generous gift of \$45,000 to the Mineralogical Society of America was made in 1926 with *The American Mineralogist* specifically in mind. The Haüy volume stimulated interest in *The American Mineralogist* in academic and professional circles, an interest which was to shape the course of the journal in the years to come.

Meanwhile Gordon and Trudell had been doing the spadework behind the scenes that led to the elevation of Dr. Wherry to the chair of Editor-in-Chief, commencing with the 1919 volume, in belated recognition of his indispensable service. Not knowing of these moves Kunz on August 13, 1918, wrote Gordon suggesting just such a change, and, in addition proposing the creation of a six- to eight-man editorial staff made up of "the principal mineralogical workers in America." The latter idea was enthusiastically adopted. An eight-man board of associate editors was set up consisting of:

Samuel G. Gordon
Edward H. Kraus
George Frederick Kunz
Alexander H. Phillips

Austin F. Rogers
Waldemar T. Schaller
Thomas L. Walker
Herbert P. Whitlock

Of this board of editors, Wherry, Kraus, Phillips, Walker, and Whitlock comprised five of the six signers of the original organizational letter sent out from Ann Arbor to selected mineralogists in the United States and Canada on February 5, 1917, to assess the reaction to the proposed Mineralogical Society of America. Because of World War I the formation of the MSA was postponed until December of 1919. With the MSA take-over of *The American Mineralogist* shortly thereafter, Harry W. Trudell, the unsung hero of the enterprise, made his exit from the scene with a Shakespearian flourish:

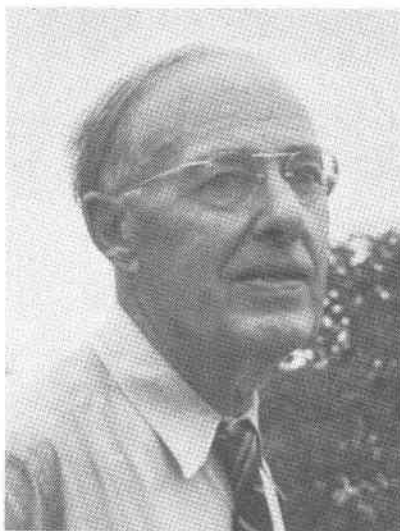
The play is over, the three acts 1917, 1918 and 1919 have produced some comedy and some tragic moments. . . . So sweet audience we make our final bow to you and wish you well

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done
And we'll strive to please you everyday

Exit

Curtain.

The departure of Trudell was in a sense symbolic. He was the last of the dedicated amateurs, of those who had become involved in the publi-



EDGAR T. WHERRY
1885-



SAMUEL G. GORDON
1897-1952



HARRY W. TRUDELL
1880-1964

FIG. 1. All photographs were taken on separate field trips of the Mineralogical Society of Pennsylvania by Mr. F. Harold Evans; his courtesy in supplying prints is gratefully acknowledged (Edgar T. Wherry, June 19, 1955; Samuel G. Gordon, May 3, 1952; Harry W. Trudell, June 8, 1958).

cation for the sheer love of minerals as distinct from love of mineralogy. Under the new "Board of Editors" the publication was to rise to heights of importance and stability hitherto out of reach, but the changes were not all for the best. In the process a certain spontaneity was lost, along with some things of value to amateur and professional alike. In particular those comprehensive descriptions of mineral localities and mineral provinces that distinguished the earlier days of publication were to undergo a gradual deemphasis. Recently the Editors have come to recognize the value of such articles and have taken steps to remedy the situation.