

NOTES AND NEWS

AN APPEAL TO AMERICAN AND CANADIAN MINERALOGISTS

Fellow Mineralogist:

The Mineralogical Museum of the University of Liège, Belgium, was destroyed by fire on September 7, 1944, the day the Germans were leaving the city. On February 20, 1945, the Council of the Mineralogical Society of America voted to sponsor the proposal that a continental committee be established to appeal for minerals to restore the Liège Museum and appointed Charles Palache as chairman to organize the committee. It is not known at this time what damage has been suffered by other mineralogical collections in the allied countries, but the committee was instructed by the Council to seek to learn the facts and it will consider the needs of other institutions as far as may be possible.

The purpose of this letter is to launch a continent-wide drive for *mineral specimens* to be presented to the University of Liège as soon as shipping becomes available (possibly by next fall). The committee is chiefly concerned with gathering specimens and is, therefore, not soliciting funds. Money contributions will, however, be accepted by the Secretary; they will be used to cover expenses or to purchase mineralogical books and equipment.

The Belgian-American Educational Foundation of New York (Dr. P. C. Galpin, President) has kindly agreed to pay for the shipment of the gifts from America to Belgium.

Three kinds of specimens are needed: (1) display; (2) teaching; (3) research. The need may be estimated from an appraisal of the damage suffered by the museum (see Appendix). Reprints of scientific papers had better be mailed directly by the authors to the Museum in Liège when fourth-class mail service is re-established to Belgium. If other gifts are contemplated (such as books, wooden models, apparatus), special arrangements should be made through the Secretary.

How to Prepare Your Specimens: Each specimen should be carefully wrapped with its original label signed by donor. A catalogue filing card (3" X 5"), white, preferably unruled and punched, should be typed, giving: name of mineral, locality, size of specimen in centimeters and a short description of features illustrated, name and address of donor. If you do not happen to have such cards, please use pieces of plain white paper of the same size. The filing cards will be assembled into a catalogue to be shipped to Liège along with the collection.

Specimens should be sent prepaid to one of the curators: Mr. Charles R. Toothaker, The Commercial Museum, 34th Street below Spruce,

Philadelphia 4, Pa., U.S.A., or Dr. V. Ben Meen, Director, Royal Ontario Museum of Mineralogy, Toronto 5, Canada. The corresponding filing cards should be mailed (separately) to the same address.

In the improbable event that too many specimens of one species are received, the committee will use its discretion and offer such samples to other devastated museums where they will do the most good or, if the donor desires, will return them to him by express, C.O.D.

The continental committee would welcome the formation of local committees under the sponsorship of local mineralogical societies or geological departments of colleges and universities. Two such committees are already functioning, under the sponsorships of the Philadelphia Mineralogical Society and of the Walker Mineralogical Club of Toronto.

In conclusion the undersigned wish to express their confidence that all mineral lovers of America will want to do their utmost to make this project a success.

Charles Palache, *Chairman*, Harvard University, Cambridge 38, Massachusetts.

J. D. H. Donnay, *Secretary*, 2926 New Road, Wilmington 165, Delaware.

Hugh Alexander Ford	Arthur Montgomery	S. J. Shand
Edward P. Henderson	Joseph Murdoch	Charles R. Toothaker
Walter F. Hunt	Frederick H. Pough	R. C. Vance
V. Ben Meen	Austin F. Rogers	C. D. Woodhouse

APPENDIX

Extent of the Damage Done to the Liège Mineral Collections

(1) DISPLAY MATERIAL: (a) Systematic collection: 3000 specimens lost out of 4500. (b) Belgian collection: 545 specimens lost out of 625. (c) Congolese collection: 39 specimens lost out of 395. (d) Cesàro type-material collection: Rhisnes calcites, 90 per cent lost; Vesuvius and Monte Somma minerals, 90 per cent lost; the remainder saved. (e) Meteorite collection: saved. (f) Didactic exhibits: gem collection saved; the other collections either completely or partially lost; the collections of twins and paramorphs greatly damaged; those of alterations and associations lost.

(2) TEACHING MATERIAL: A total loss. This material included 1850 specimens on exhibit, plus study, laboratory, and examination sets. The igneous rocks with thin sections are lost. Wooden models: 30 remain out of about 900. Three goniometers are left out of 13; three microscopes out of 19. All the teaching aids, projector, photographic and microphotographic equipment, furnace, analytical and specific gravity balances, etc., are destroyed.

(3) RESEARCH MATERIAL: For research and comparison, representatives of many species are needed. Only 455 species are still represented. Some of the most expensive research equipment has been saved.

(4) MINERALOGICAL LIBRARY: A number of periodicals have been saved. All the books and the large collection of reprints were lost.

PLATINUM CRUCIBLE SUBSTITUTES UNDER WAR LIMITATIONS

A. R. V. ARELLANO,
Mexico City, Mexico.

The establishment of a small mineralogical laboratory under war conditions presented innumerable problems, of which the most formidable one appeared to be the acquisition of a platinum crucible for sodium carbonate fusions and silica determinations.

Platinum has an official price of \$35 per ounce troy (31.1 grams) and since a suitable crucible need not weigh much over 40 grams, there apparently should not be a prohibitive expense involved. However, platinum is absent from the free market, so that jewelers in Mexico City are glad to pay 35 pesos (about \$7) per gram. A 40 gram crucible would thus cost about \$300, well beyond the means of a small laboratory.

Accordingly, at the suggestion of Dr. W. F. Foshag, it was determined to make a gold crucible thick enough to permit handling. Fine gold, 99% or better, is sold by the bank of Mexico for industrial uses for about \$1 per gram. The crucible, with cover, weighed 65 grams and cost close to 350 pesos. It proved to be very satisfactory for hydrofluoric acid evaporations, as two successive blank runs showed no appreciable loss in weight. After many carbonate fusions and HF evaporations and blastings the loss in weight was only 13 milligrams.

Careless blasting during a carbonate fusion perforated the crucible, which was taken to the goldsmith for repairs. While there a small amount of palladium became available. Tests run on this material¹ indicated that it was pure enough so that the main mass of it was merely scorified with boric acid and potassium nitrate. During these tests it was found that the more accessible texts and hand-books of chemistry and assaying contain very little precise data on the solubility of palladium in sulfuric acid, therefore it may be of interest to note that 80% H_2SO_4 at temperatures up to 160°C. does not appreciably dissolve palladium, either pure or in a silver alloy.

The palladium was then alloyed with four times its weight of gold and from this a 23 ml. palau crucible was prepared. It weighed 47 grams with