

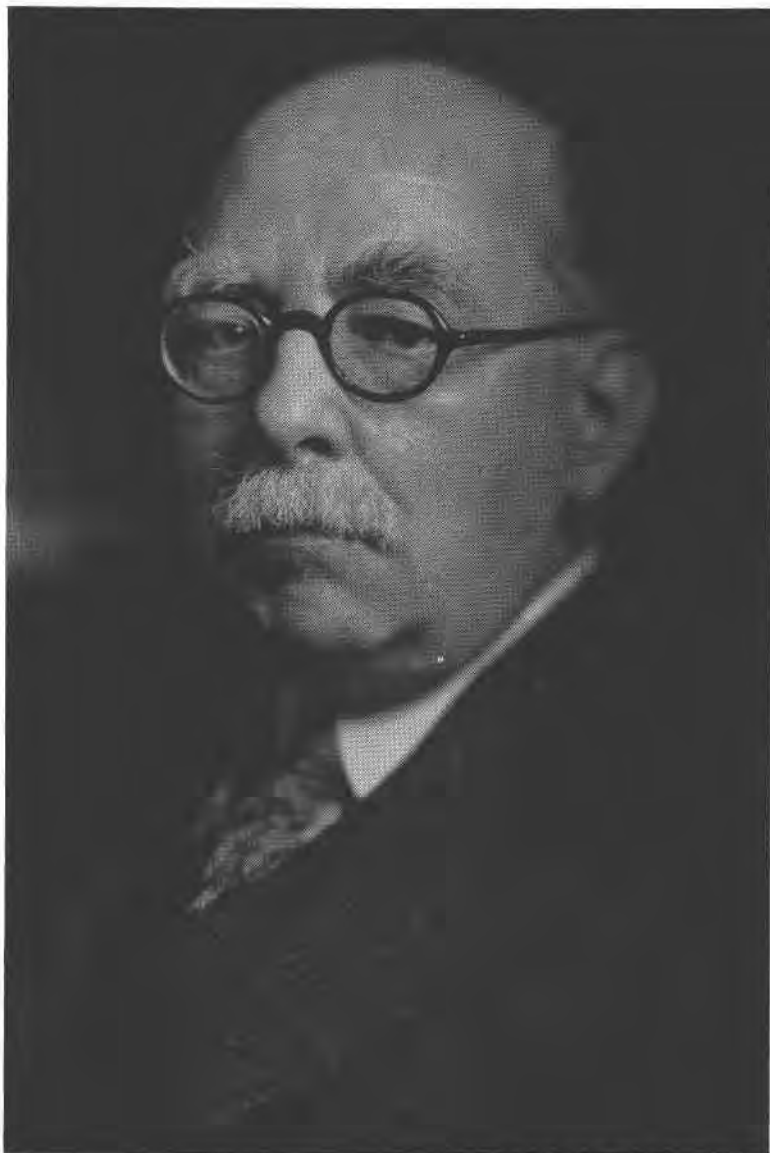
MEMORIAL OF HERBERT PERCY WHITLOCK

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For twenty-three years, Herbert P. Whitlock served as Curator of Mineralogy at The American Museum of Natural History, where he had charge of one of the finest mineral and gem collections in the world. In this role his service to mineralogy had several facets, both through the popularization of the subject among laymen who happened by accident to enter Morgan Hall, but more especially by his stimulation and encouragement of an interest in the subject among impressionable youths, many of whom went on to specialize in geological studies in their later academic work. Along with this time-consuming educational work he carried on his writings, predominantly scientific in the early phases but increasingly directed at popular education in his latter years.

Herbert Whitlock was born July 31, 1868, in New York City, the son of Thomas and Caroline V. (Hull) Whitlock. He attended private school in New York and graduated from the Charlier Institute in 1884. He then went to the School of Mines at Columbia University, where he took an engineering course, with a few lectures in geology and mineralogy. He studied mineralogy under Professor Alfred E. Moses and did so well that, after his graduation in 1889 with the degree of C. E., he was offered an assistantship in mineralogy, to help out in Professor Moses' laboratory and classes. He held this position until 1901. A position as assistant in mineralogy in the New York State Museum was then offered to him and he served in the junior capacity at Albany from 1901 to 1904. He then was appointed Mineralogist, a rank he held for twelve years. During this period he worked actively with the mineral collection of the State Museum, rearranging the displays and designing new cases to display the minerals to better advantage. He considered the technique of display one of his specialties, and so listed himself in reference books. At the same time he was very active in mineralogical studies and published some of his best work. His second paper after going to Albany was the now long out of print, but still very useful, guide to mineral localities of New York. He wrote numerous studies of a morphological and crystallographic nature, specializing particularly on calcite. He taught himself to use the gnomonic projection methods and the two-circle goniometer of Victor Goldschmidt, and all of his life was rather proud of the fact that he had attained his position in mineralogy without further academic study and a Ph.D. degree. He became State Mineralogist in 1916 and remained in Albany with this title until 1918.

In 1918, the sudden death of L. P. Gratacap created a vacancy in the



HERBERT PERCY WHITLOCK
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Department of Mineralogy at The American Museum of Natural History and Mr. Whitlock resigned his state position to accept an appointment as Curator and Chairman of the department in New York. This new job soon proved to be rather different in its requirements, and he found it increasingly difficult to continue his research work and fulfill the demands of the public at the same time. Feeling that as the Curator of a great public collection he owed it to the visitors to tell them interestingly the many things he knew about minerals, and to answer their questions and identify their unknowns, he concentrated increasingly upon lecturing, popular writing, and educational work.

Mr. Whitlock was for 23 years the Curator of the mineral collection before he retired in 1941 to become Curator Emeritus, and he retained his affiliation with the department as Research Associate in Jade. His interest in jade was stimulated by the bequest to the Museum of the I. Wyman Drummond Collection of Jade and Oriental art. Originally feeling that it was his responsibility to inform himself upon the subject, he soon became so interested in the symbolism and mythology illustrated by carvings in jade, that he was recognized as an authority upon this subject. Many of his later publications deal with this subject, and he was honored by an appointment as Honorary Curator of the Wadsworth Atheneum and Morgan Memorial of Hartford, Connecticut.

In addition to the Drummond Collection, the Museum received one of its most notable gifts, the William Boyce Thompson collection of minerals and jade, during Mr. Whitlock's term. He took great interest in the arrangement of the mineral display and in the proper background and setting for the many notable examples. He also designed new gem cases and supervised the reinstallation of that important collection, using new types of blown glass holders developed with the help of the Museum's staff. Several other important additions were made to the collections during his period of tenure, including the Schettler emerald, the DeLong ruby, and most recently, the endowment that accompanies the Thompson Collection.

Mr. Whitlock's many kindnesses and feeling of public responsibility can best be illustrated by a few examples. He gave "surplus" minerals to boy scouts (and any others who requested the privilege), who could identify the specimens from a box he kept in his office. Since the Museum sent out no expeditions and as Mr. Whitlock did not enjoy travel in automobiles, his field work was very limited, the "surplus stuff" was actually pound material purchased at his own expense from various mineral supply houses. He regularly spent Saturday morning in the Morgan Hall to answer all sorts of questions from the visitors. For many

years he ran spring and fall series of lectures on Saturday afternoons, one on jade, the other gems, and these were filled year after year, by the general public as well as jewelers.

He was very popular among his fellow curators and though he often seemed a little strange with his courtly old world manners, he was generally admired through the Museum for his charm and friendliness. He was plagued in his later years by rheumatism and failing eyesight, but he did not lose his interest in his subject and his fellows, nor his sense of humor. Though he was prone to correct people who addressed him as "doctor" he often used to say that if he ever caught a college president at it, he was going to take him up on it at once, and see what kind of a degree he got.

Mr. Whitlock's accomplishments led to the reception of many other honors, even though he never trapped himself into an honorary doctorate. He was Secretary of our Society from 1920 to 1922, and was elected President in 1933. He was a Fellow of The Geological Society of America, and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Member of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain, the New York Academy of Sciences, and of the New York Mineralogical Club. He was Secretary and President of the latter organization and was made an Honorary Member after his retirement from the museum curatorship. His contributions to the Museum made him a Patron of the Museum in 1930.

The death of Mr. Whitlock has taken another of the popular figures of the less specialized type of mineralogist from American science. He felt himself that too many of the younger mineralogists were so specialized that they had little love for minerals and little chance to become well acquainted with them, when they devoted themselves to the microscope or to photographic reproductions of x -ray patterns. Though not a field man in his later years, Mr. Whitlock had the love for minerals that is essential in good teachers who inspire others to go into the science. His general background and earlier training made him a leader at sight identification, a first requisite for the position he held so successfully for so many years. The failing eyesight which came with his advancing years was probably felt most keenly because it prevented him from seeing and loving the beauties of the well crystallized mineral specimens that had been his joy for so many years. To his friends and relatives, and to the hundreds he has helped and inspired, Mr. Whitlock's passing leaves another hole that cannot be filled, but a warm feeling too, when we think of him, of pleasure in his memory and in the knowledge that we carry on some of his appreciation of the beauty of minerals, that they enthuse us as they did him for so many years.

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