

ACCEPTANCE OF THE ROEBLING MEDAL OF THE
MINERALOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

HERBERT E. MERWIN, *Geophysical Laboratory, Washington, D. C.*

As a boy in a dairying community, I learned a trade, that of making small tight barrels and tubs for storing butter in brine. I became greatly impressed by the special tools used and by the many particular properties required of wood for staves and for hoops. Much of my spare time was spent in reading, experimenting and botanizing. In the summer our shop doors were open, and men vacationing from the city came in. One such visitor who came in a second time brought to me a newspaper clipping telling of argon, the atmospheric gas just discovered, and of the formation of magnesium nitride in purifying it. I hadn't interpreted my reading as allowing such a compound, and the inadequacy of my reading became apparent. I gave up coopering and taught school for two years.

Then I entered a training school for teachers at Oneonta, New York, and found an enthusiastic science teacher, Howard Lyon, who had acquired for the school a well-filled cabinet of selected minerals. I was soon handling pitchblende and the spintharoscope. While Marconi was busy in England with wireless we were carrying a coherer beyond the local campus and catching signals from our physics laboratory. Not many months later I received week after week from a distant hospital reports of the progress of Lyon's recovery from an x -ray burn from one of our Crookes tubes. During the maple sugar seasons we made observations on sap pressure, and for two years I taught physical geography and biology.

In the excitement of university life I became acquainted with the goniometer, that instrument which marks the upbringing of the mineralogist and finally I was guided by Professors Charles Palache and John E. Wolff into Geophysical Laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, in the establishment of which Professor Wolff had been keenly interested a few years before.

During my forty years there my colleagues and I witnessed and took part in the development of methods of preparing and characterizing crystalline materials, and finding their physical and chemical relationships. Developments such as these were so varied and interrelated that cooperation was sought in research.

Thus, the world to me has been one of friendly associates, and now to the the Mineralogical Society of America I express my sincere gratitude for the Roebing Medal.