

MEMORIAL OF CHARLES ROBINSON TOOTHAKER

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Charles Robinson Toothaker, Curator of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum for 54 years, died Sunday morning, May 25, 1952, in the University Hospital of Philadelphia after a month's illness. He was born in Philadelphia on May 4, 1873, of Zetta Elder and Charles Everett Toothaker, a physician. As a boy, he attended the Central Manual Training High School in Philadelphia. While in high school he took an active part in athletics, certain phases of which he continued throughout his life. After graduation from high school in 1890, he continued his education on a part-time basis. This included taking special courses in geology under Professor Edward Drinker Cope of the University of Pennsylvania and other courses of particular need in his work, for he had joined the staff of the famous Dr. A. E. Foote, mineralogist and mineral dealer of Philadelphia. Dr. Foote's company, for many years the chief supplier of mineral specimens to schools and colleges in the United States and abroad, was the forerunner of the present Foote Mineral Company, now prominent in industrial mineral research. During his work for Dr. Foote, Charles Toothaker gained a wide knowledge of topographical mineralogy and became well versed in mineral identification. In later years this knowledge was often sought by mineralogists wishing to locate original or type specimens. As a member of Foote's staff, he was assigned, as Commissioner in charge, the task of preparing the Pennsylvania Mining Exhibit of the Atlanta Exposition of 1895.

He remained with the Foote Company until 1898, when he accepted the position of Assistant Curator, in charge of exhibits, at the Commercial Museum. In 1904 his industry and ability were recognized and rewarded by his being promoted to the rank of Curator. In the years that followed, however, it was evident that his work included not only curatorial duties but administrative duties as well.

While he was Curator of the Commercial Museum, he served as advisor to industry and to the city officials of Philadelphia on problems involving the raw materials imported or shipped to Philadelphia and vicinity. In this capacity he was in a position to introduce new materials to industry, and minerals were his particular interest. He also published articles, in popular tone, which were particularly effective in bringing raw materials to the attention of possible users. Along these lines he also gained wide recognition for his lectures in commercial geography.

Charles Toothaker was particularly successful in his plan to make the Commercial Museum a vital part of the educational system. According to a press release from the Museum, "He pioneered in the movement to



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convert museums from inert collections of inanimate materials into living, dynamic institutions for the promotion of popular education. Mr. Toothaker projected his museum into thousands of Pennsylvania schools by means of special collections, carefully prepared for educational use. He taught the new philosophy of museum administration in widely disseminated writings. His methods and ideals, adopted in hundreds of communities, have won for museums a permanent place of usefulness in the modern world."

In connection with his work, Charles Toothaker visited and maintained cordial relations with a large number of the world's famous museums. Ever mindful of the needs of museums, he was deeply touched by the loss of the mineral collections during World War II at the University of Liege, in Belgium.

When the American mineralogists decided to come to the rescue, he volunteered to assemble their gifts and to ship them. He personally packed them with so much care that even the most delicate ones were unharmed in shipment.

His travels were also made with the welfare of the Museum in mind. In 1922 and 1923, at the invitation of the Secretary of State, he attended the Brazilian Centennial Exposition in Rio de Janeiro with his colleague Dr. William P. Wilson. He used this opportunity to travel extensively in Brazil, up the Amazon River and to important mining areas, obtaining numerous specimens for the Museum collections. In the summer of 1937 he made a collection of minerals from the cryolite deposit at Ivigtut, Greenland, which he described in *Rocks and Minerals* in 1937. His publications comprise brief notes and articles dealing chiefly with minerals and museums and one book on industrial raw materials, which has been a source of information since its initial appearance in 1905. He was a natural-born writer with a literary style that appealed especially to the average reader interested in scientific subjects.

For many years, Charles Toothaker was an active member of the Philadelphia Mineralogical Society, holding various offices. He exerted a profound influence on the junior membership of the Society and was directly or indirectly responsible for many of the members choosing to enter the geological and chemical professions, or to pursue advanced study in mineralogy. During my high school years, I was fortunate to be among those who benefited by his counsel and to be influenced in the direction of mineralogy.

Charles Toothaker was happy in the recognition which he received for his attainments in his chosen field of work. On April 24, 1930, he was elected a member of Kappa Chapter of Sigma Gamma Epsilon at Pennsylvania State College. On May 9, 1946, he was elected a Fellow

of the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences by reason of his distinguished contributions to the field of museum education. In 1946 the Mineralogical Society of America, of which he was a member for many years, elected him a Fellow, an honor which he cherished. In 1951, he was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In addition to the aforementioned societies, Charles Toothaker was a member of the Pennsylvania Society, Sons of the Revolution, Schoolmen's Club, the Pan American Association, the American Association of Museums, the Museum Council of Philadelphia, and the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.

It was typical of the man that, along with all his regular duties, he should find time for his continued participation in athletics. He was a member of the first organized basketball team in Philadelphia. At the age of 50, he was high-jumping, and at 60 and later he was still demonstrating his skill as a fencer.

From 1928 to 1952 he served as Consul in Philadelphia for Czechoslovakia, and in 1933 was made an officer of the Order of the White Lion of Czechoslovakia. He also served as Consul for Colombia.

On September 27, 1904, he married Martha Taylor McCandless, who survives him and who has been very helpful in furnishing material for the preparation of this biographical sketch. The members of the staff of the Commercial Museum, in particular Miss Marie L. Marley, have also very kindly supplied data.

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