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MEMORIAL OF ROBERT MITCHELL THOMPSON

July 28, 1918-April 15, 1967

L. G. BERRY, *Department of Geological Science, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.*

Robert Mitchell Thompson, devoted teacher and meticulous scientist, passed away on April 15, 1967, after an illness of several months. Dr. Thompson, professor of mineralogy in the Department of Geology at the University of British Columbia, was widely known and highly regarded by his many students, prospectors and mining men and his colleagues in his field of mineralogy. He was conscientious and untiring in his

willingness to help others identify rare or unusual minerals or to understand the peculiarities of minerals.

Bob Thompson was born, July 28, 1918, in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, but he received most of his schooling in Vancouver where he moved with his family in his early years. He graduated as a geological engineer (B.A.Sc.) from University of British Columbia in 1941 and obtained his M.A.Sc. from the same institution two years later. Moving to the University of Toronto in 1943 he studied mineralogy and crystallography under the late M. A. Peacock, obtaining his Ph.D. in 1947. During his formal university training Bob won several awards including the Britannia Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd. Scholarship with W. R. Bacon in 1941 and by himself in 1942, the Dr. J. F. Nicholson Scholarship in 1941, and a National Research Council Fellowship in 1943.

Towards the end of his graduate studies at Toronto in 1946, Bob Thompson accepted a position as a Lecturer in Mineralogy at the Ajax Division of the University of Toronto, where he helped in the teaching of large numbers of returning war veterans. In 1947 he returned to his alma mater, the University of British Columbia, where he steadily progressed from Assistant Professor to Professor in 1962, and for a year 1963-4 served as Acting Head of the Department of Geology.

Bob Thompson's interests were mainly with the ore minerals and with deposits of these minerals, particularly those found in British Columbia. His early graduate work at U.B.C. with H. V. Warren, consisted mainly of spectrographic analyses of metallic elements in a variety of metallic minerals and ores. His graduate work at Toronto combined his general interest in ore minerals with Peacock's interest in the detailed crystallography of the ore minerals. His thesis was devoted to a thorough study of the telluride minerals. His work with Peacock opened up to him the application of X-ray diffraction to the study and identification of ore minerals. During his years at Toronto he prepared, measured, and indexed many of the X-ray powder diagrams of the ore minerals which were published in "X-ray powder data for the ore minerals: The Peacock Atlas" (Geological Society of America Memoir 85) by L. G. Berry and R. M. Thompson in 1962. Bob spent many hours on this work at U.B.C. and during the summer of 1951 in Kingston. His careful and painstaking observations formed a large and significant part of the publication and contributed greatly to its accuracy and usefulness.

In recent years Bob Thompson had published steadily on a variety of ore and other mineral occurrences, particularly in British Columbia, as well as on broader geological subjects. One of the latter papers, written with W. H. White and K. C. McTaggart "The geology and mineral deposits of Highland Valley, B. C." won for the authors the prized Gold Medal of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in 1957. As



Robert Mitchell Thompson

a consequence of Bob's meticulous work several ore minerals have been discredited and several new minerals have been described. The latter include montbrayite and frohbergite (named after his good friend Hans Frohberg). At the time of his death Bob Thompson was in the process of describing several new sulphosalt and silicate minerals. In 1966 a new sulphosalt from Madoc, Ontario was named "twinnite" in honour of R. M. Thompson by J. L. Jambor, a former student at U.B.C. (The appellation Thompson is "son of Thomas," the latter being Aramaic, "a twin".) This mineral is described for the first time in the Canadian Mineralogist [9, 191-213 (1967)]. A complete list of publications by R. M. Thompson is published in the same journal [*Can. Mineral.* 9, 5-6 (1967)].

Bob Thompson was a member of the Mineralogical Society of America from 1946 and elected to Fellowship in 1951. He was a Life Member of the Mineralogical Society (London) from 1945; a member of the Geological Society of America from 1955; a charter member of the Mineralogical Association of Canada, Vice-President 1959, 1960 and President 1961, 1962; a member of the Walker Mineralogical Club (Toronto) and elected to Honorary Membership January 18, 1966. He was elected to Fellowship in the Royal Society of Canada in 1965. As a member of the Professional Engineers he maintained his life-long interest in mineral deposits and mining and in 1965 he was a member of the Special Board of Examiners of the Professional Engineers of British Columbia.

Few mineralogists have been more interested in and rendered more service to the amateur mineralogist and the prospector. His door was always open for the inquirer who needed help in identifying a mineral. From 1947 Bob Thompson taught mineralogy in the prospecting course given to inmates of the B.C. penitentiary for several years. He also presented a night school course on Rocks and Minerals in the Extension Department in 1959 and 1960. At U.B.C. he was for many years honorary president of the G. M. Dawson Club, the student society in the fields of geology and mining.

Bob Thompson will long be remembered for his warm personality, his eagerness in helping with the identification of unusual minerals, and his enthusiasm for the latest prized specimen. His students will remember him as a tireless and dedicated teacher, always happy and ready to help with the difficult points of his subject. In token of the esteem in which Bob was held in British Columbia, a memorial fund has been established at the University of British Columbia which will be used to provide a scholarship to support deserving students in Geology.

Bob is survived by his wife Dorothea, children Colin and Mary, two brothers, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. T. Thompson of Vancouver.