

Memorial of Ernest Emerson Fairbanks November 6, 1897–September 21, 1982

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Ernest Emerson Fairbanks was born in Wakefield, Massachusetts, on November 6, 1897. He was the son of John D. and Grace W. (Ballard) Fairbanks. He attended the high school in Wakefield until the United States entered World War I; he then enlisted in the U.S. Army in March of 1917. He was wounded in action in 1918, received the Purple Heart, the Victory Medal with ribbons, and was discharged later in 1918. Fairbanks completed his high school education in France and later attended the A.E.F. University of Beaume during the 1919 term.

Fairbanks was interested in mineralogy, economic geology, and optics. He was impressed by the continental practice of studying in a given discipline under as many experts in the field and at as many institutions as was practical. Accordingly, when he returned to the "States," he continued his college studies at the University of Utah, 1920–1921, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology 1921–1922, and at Harvard University, 1922–1923.

The U.S. Bureau of Mines had an opening at the "Rare and Precious Metals" station in Reno, Nevada. Fairbanks entered the Civil Service in 1924 and remained at Reno until 1926. He was elected a Fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America in 1924. The E. Leitz Company offered him a position on their staff, and he moved to New York City and remained with Leitz into 1927.

Later in 1927, Fairbanks became a member of the Department of Geology in the Buffalo Museum, Buffalo, New York. Here, in addition to his staff duties, he was engaged in the assembly of manuscripts and preparation of the book "The Laboratory Investigation of Ores; a Symposium" of which he was the editor. His enthusiasm for the use of the new techniques to advance the study of ores and ore deposits, his genial disposition, and his persistence in getting the manuscripts completed greatly facilitated the completion of the undertaking. N. L. Bowen's classic paper "Geologic Thermometry" first appeared in this volume. In 1929, Fairbanks joined the technical staff of the Museum of Science and Industry in New York City and remained there until 1931. This was the period of the "Great Depression," and untenured personnel were experiencing severe employment problems.

In 1931, Fairbanks joined the staff of Pictorial Science Service and was engaged in editorial duties, continuing through part of 1932. During the rest of 1932 and part of 1933, he was employed by the Winton Syndicate. Fairbanks opened a Photo and Optical Service in New York



City and continued this enterprise until he was appointed an Associate Metallurgist at the U.S. Bureau of Mines in 1936. In 1946, he was appointed to the Nonmetals Experiment Station of the U.S. Bureau of Mines in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He retired in 1946 and moved to Biddeford, Maine.

Fairbanks' scientific papers were concerned chiefly with the improvement or extension of laboratory methods for purifying, concentrating, and identifying minerals. He was interested in the textures of ore and gangue assemblages, as they related to mineral paragenesis, and to the laboratory evaluation of replacement processes.

After retiring, Fairbanks continued and expanded his interest in mineral collecting. He was actively involved in some mineral collectors' societies. He continued to publish articles on minerals and mineral localities in the mineral collectors' magazines almost to the time of his death.

Fairbanks married Jane Bell Haverty who died in 1956. They had two children, John, of Rockville, Maryland, and James, of Old Orchard Beach, Maine. Fairbanks moved to Old Orchard Beach, after his wife's death. He was buried in the family plot in St. Marys Cemetery in Biddeford, Maine.

I am indebted to his son James for supplying me with information to prepare this memorial.

Selected Bibliography of Ernest E. Fairbanks

Book

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¹ Deceased.

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