

Memorial of Clifton Sherwin Corbett 1891–1984

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Clifton Sherwin Corbett, a life fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America, was born August 11, 1891, at Edwardsville, Illinois. He graduated from Edwardsville High School in 1908 and continued his education at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. He received the B.A. with honors in 1912 and the M.A. in 1913. He served in the U.S. Army during World War I (1914–1918), then continued his geologic studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he earned the Ph.D. in 1921. In 1922, he married Vira F. Winchell, the eldest daughter of one of his professors at Wisconsin and a niece of one of his professors, U. S. Grant, at Northwestern, thus joining a family with many geologists.

After leaving Madison, Corbett taught geology at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, then joined Standard-Vacuum Oil Co. as a petroleum geologist. He spent three years in Batavia, Java, with the Netherlands Petroleum Co. In the 1930s, he traveled extensively to England, Colombia, and Venezuela for Gulf Oil Co. In about 1939, Corbett joined Mobil Oil Co. in New York and in 1943 was sent with his family to Calgary, Alberta, Canada. There he became head of Mobil's office for western Canada and was responsible for much of that company's early success in the area. He was brought back to New York in 1952 and retired in 1956 after 19 years with Mobil.

Corbett's first wife, Vira, died in 1957. In 1967, he married Adelaide Knuble and moved to Scotch Plains, New Jersey. She died in 1979, and in 1981 Corbett moved to Meadow Lakes Retirement Community near Hightstown, New Jersey, where he enjoyed excellent health, even driving his automobile, to age 90. His death in January 1984 resulted from complications suffered with a broken hip. He is survived by three children and six grandchildren.

Clifton Corbett belonged to the Free Masons; he was a constant attendant and loyal member of the Methodist Church. He was a conservative Republican who supported business causes (especially those deemed favorable to free enterprise and laissez-faire economy). He was one of the founders of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and a member of the Society of Economic Geologists and of the Mineralogical Society of America. His major interest after retirement was focused on the stock market, with special attention to mining and energy issues. Petroleum geologists will remember him particularly in connection with his espousal of the in situ origin of the McMurray oil of northeastern Alberta, propounded in 1955.

Publications by Corbett include a paper in *Economic Geology* on projecting structure through an angular unconformity (1919); two papers in the *American Journal of Science*, one on the mineral leverrierite (1925) and one on a Kansas meteorite (1926); a paper in the *Journal of Geology* on the measurement of cross-bedding and formation thickness (1937). Corbett's early interest in mineralogy was supplanted by more rewarding studies on origin and recovery of petroleum. His memorial to Alexander N. Winchell appeared in the *Proceedings of the Geological Society of America for 1958* (1959). Corbett's measurements in 1912 of stratigraphic sections were cited by Clyde P. Ross in a U.S. Geological Survey paper on the geology of Glacier National Park (1959).

His contributions to oil exploration in western Canada and elsewhere and to his favorite organizations including the AAPG, his church, and political causes, will be remembered.