

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

CYRUS FISHER TOLMAN (1873 – 1942)

Cyrus Fisher Tolman, Professor Emeritus of Economic Geology, died suddenly at Spokane, Washington, on October 13, 1942, in the course of a professional trip. For nearly two years, as consulting Geologist for Henry J. Kaiser Company, he had devoted most of his time to a survey of the ores of magnesium and iron available in the Western states. He had always led an active, vigorous life, but the arduous trips by airplane and the excessive work both in office and field probably shortened his life. Warnings to take life more easily were laughed off. To die in the harness would undoubtedly have been his preference if he had been allowed a choice.

Born in Chicago in 1873, Professor Tolman graduated from the University of Chicago in 1896. As the school did not at that time afford professional training in economic geology, he went, after brief service in the army during the Spanish-American war, to the territory of Arizona and there took part in the active development of the southern copper district. There he learned mining geology by intimate study in the field. For a decade or more he was a consulting geologist visiting mines in various parts of southwestern United States and Mexico. During that interval he also served for one year as professor of economic geology at the University of Arizona in Tucson and another as territorial geologist, before Arizona became a state. In 1912 Dr. Branner invited him to Stanford as associate professor of economic geology. He retired from active duty in 1938.

At Stanford Professor Tolman reorganized the important summer course in field geology setting up professional standards and making it perhaps the best in the country. It was as head of the summer field parties out in the mountains that he acquired the informal title of "Chief," by which he has ever since been known to his students. In class and laboratory he proved to be a most effective teacher, clear and interesting in lectures and inspiring in field and laboratory research. He always took a deep personal interest in his students and continued to help many of them long after graduation. Their warm regard for him was shown by their contribution of a fund in 1938-39 to establish the Tolman scholarship in economic geology. Professor Tolman's friends in the faculty, the community, and among his students will doubtless remember him best for his kindly disposition, his witty stories, and his genial companionship.

In his own field Professor Tolman made important contributions to an unusual variety of subjects. While in his earlier years the geology of copper deposits claimed most of his attention, after he came to Stanford he turned to petroleum geology and afterwards to gold mining in the Sierra Nevada. In later years he became one of the two leading American authorities on the geology of underground water, and his book on that subject is now standard.

For more than forty years Tolman was a busy consultant on geologic problems for various corporations and municipalities in the western United States and Hawaii. His services were prized for their accuracy, thoroughness, and sound judgment. Combining the outlook of the engineer with that of the research scientist, he had a ready comprehension of the problems of industry and stood high among the economic geologists of the Pacific Coast. It was a trait of character that made him readily adaptive to miners as well as engineers, to company executives and politicians, and even to Mexican peons. Being a prodigious worker, he found no time to avail himself of sabbatical years and his vacation generally consisted merely of a change from the classroom to field work. His rather short bibliography is deceptive in that it does not include the detailed geologic reports he wrote for his clients. It was his hope, often expressed but unfortunately not realized, that in his last years he would be able to retire from professional work and write for publication some of the general results of his varied studies.

Be it therefore resolved that these words of appreciation be recorded in our minutes and a copy of them be sent to the family of our departed colleague.

Eliot Blackwelder
Paul E. Holden
Aaron C. Waters