MEMORIAL OF ARTHUR LEONARD PARSONS

V. B. MEEN, *Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Ontario.*

Arthur Leonard Parsons, former President of our Society, passed away quietly on Sunday, January 6, 1957, at the age of 83. Although he had suffered from a form of heart ailment for more than forty years and had been increasingly frail during the last few years, none the less he was in excellent spirits two days before his passing when he enjoyed a dinner and evening with some close friends.

He was born on September 16, 1873, in Mount Morris, New York, the son of the late Reverend Levi and Mrs. Parsons. After elementary schooling at Mount Morris Union Free School and Academy, he attended New York University, where he received his A.B. degree in 1896. Planning to enter the teaching profession, he attended Geneseo Normal School in 1897 and served as principal of Hinsdale Union School, Hinsdale, New York, in 1897–98.

Then followed a variety of appointments varying from one to two years in length: Inspector of Oils, Olean, New York; Assistant Registrar, New York University; Foote Mineral Company, Philadelphia; Assistant Mineralogist, New York State Museum, Albany, New York; the United States Geological Survey; the Commission on Additional Water Supply, New York City. Although his early life and training had been centered on the Classics, his interests and employment during these later years were changing rapidly toward a major occupation with the subject of mineralogy.

From 1903 to 1907 he served as Instructor in Mineralogy at the University of Minnesota; then, forsaking the land of his birth, he moved with his wife, the former Isabel Louise Smith, and their young daughter, Alice Harriet, to Toronto, Canada, where he took the position of Lecturer in Mineralogy in the University of Toronto. In 1912 he became Assistant Professor of Mineralogy, which title was changed to Associate in 1919 and to Professor of Mineralogy in 1929. He headed the Department from 1936 until his retirement in 1943.

From 1907 to 1920, he served during the summer seasons as field geologist on the staff of the Ontario Bureau (now Department) of Mines. From his investigations in northwestern Ontario forty years ago, he predicted that large iron deposits would be located there. He lived to see this prediction verified in the discovery and development of the deposits at Steep Rock Lake.

In 1920, in addition to his teaching load, he was appointed Assistant Director of the then Royal Ontario Museum of Mineralogy. In association with his chief and colleague, the late Professor T. L. Walker, he

ARTHUR LEONARD PARSONS
1873–1957

(Photograph taken about 1940)

helped build the Museum's mineral collections, now acknowledged to be among the finest in the world. In 1936 he succeeded Professor Walker as Director of the Museum, retiring in 1943.

In his quest for specimens for the collections, he searched Canada from coast to coast and travelled widely in Europe and North America. Always fair in all his dealings, he none the less was happiest when the acquisition of a specimen required a session of horsetrading. His investigations of the minerals and their occurrences resulted in many papers. His special love was crystallography and latterly the hexagonal system took his particular attention. At his death he was compiling a catalogue of the mineral occurrences of Ontario.

He was a Charter Member of the Mineralogical Society of America and served as its President in 1929. In the same year, he served as Vice-president of the Geological Society of America of which he was also a Fellow. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a member of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain, the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy; founder, first president and, for many years, Honorary President of the Walker Mineralogical Club. He belonged to the Masonic Order and was a member of University Lodge.

The number of his friends, particularly his former students, seemed almost without limit; and, although his retirement of more than thirteen years had withdrawn him from active association with them, his passing left them a real sense of loss. He is survived by his daughter, Alice Harriet Parsons of Toronto, and a sister, Anne C. Parsons of Mount Morris, New York.

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