

DEDICATED TO

Robert Mitchell Thompson

1918–1967



Memorial to

Robert Mitchell Thompson

CANADIAN MINERALOGISTS lost one of their most beloved and dedicated colleagues with the premature death on April 15, 1967 of Robert Mitchell Thompson. As Professor of Mineralogy at the University of British Columbia and as author of over forty papers, several of which are in press, Bob Thompson was a leading Canadian mineralogist of world-wide repute who was struck down by cancer at the height of his powers at the age of forty-eight.

Bob Thompson was born in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, but he received most of his schooling in Vancouver where he moved with his family in his early years. He received his B.A.Sc. and his M.A.Sc. in Geology and Mineralogy from the University of British Columbia in 1941 and 1943 respectively. From U.B.C. he went to the University of Toronto for work on his Ph.D. in Mineralogy and Crystallography under the late M. A. Peacock, joining a group of graduate students that included L. G. Berry, E. W. Nuffield, S. A. Forman, Sol Kaiman and the writer. He was awarded his Ph.D. in 1947. His graduate work was characterized by the winning of 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 work at Toronto in 1946 Bob Thompson accepted a position as Lecturer in Mineralogy at the Ajax Division of the University of Toronto. This temporary Division was located in a former munitions plant 20 miles east of the Toronto campus, and here Bob helped in the teaching of large numbers of returned war veterans. In 1947 he began his teaching career on the staff of his alma mater, the University of British Columbia, where he steadily rose through the ranks to that of Professor in 1962. In 1963-64 he was Acting Head of the Department of Geology.

Bob Thompson's interests were mainly with the ore minerals and with mineral deposits. His early graduate work at U.B.C., with H. V. Warren, consisted mainly of spectrographic analyses of several metallic elements in a variety of ore minerals and ores. This work resulted in several joint papers of a more or less review nature. His research work at Toronto

combined his own general interest in ore minerals with Peacock's interest in the detailed crystallography of the ore minerals and consisted of a thorough study of the complex telluride minerals. His Ph.D. Thesis describing his results is a classical description and delineation of the telluride minerals, and nearly a dozen papers were published from the thesis. Bob Thompson's work on the crystallography of the ore minerals culminated with the publishing in 1962 with L. G. Berry of "X-Ray Powder Data for Ore Minerals: The Peacock Atlas". In publishing this work, Berry and Thompson completed the ambitious and valuable project begun by Martin Peacock whose inspiration for it was Victor Goldschmidt's monumental "Atlas der Krystalformen". Peacock like Bob Thompson had died prematurely, and had had to leave his spiritual successors to complete his work.

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. G. 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 a consequence of Bob Thompson'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 sulfosalt and silicate minerals.

In 1966 a new sulphosalt mineral from Madoc, Ontario, was named twinnite in honour of R. M. Thompson by J. L. Jambor. (The appellation Thompson is "son of Thomas", the latter being Aramaic, "a twin".) The description of this mineral is included in a thesis accepted at Carleton University and will be published later in this volume.

Bob Thompson was a Fellow or Member of the Mineralogical Society of America, the Mineralogical Society (of London, England), the Geological Society of America, and the Mineralogical Association of Canada of which he was a charter member and President in 1961 and 1962. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, in 1965. As a member of the Association of 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 B.C.

Few mineralogists have been more interested in, and rendered more service to, the amateur "rockhound" and the prospector. For nearly 20 years Bob Thompson has been giving a popular night school course in Rocks and Minerals under the sponsorship of the British Columbia and Yukon Chamber of Mines; he has carried out innumerable examinations

of minerals, rocks, ores and meteorites for individuals and for nonprofit organizations; and he has been a long-time member of Canada's leading and oldest rockhound organization, the Walker Mineralogical Club of Toronto who, in recognition of his service to the amateur mineralogist, conferred an Honorary Membership on him in 1966. Similarly, when by chance Bob and his wife Dorothea won, at a recent meeting of the B.C. Rock & Mineral Club, the door prize of a coffee table beautifully inlaid with B.C. minerals, there was general jubilation that it should have gone to the Thompsons.

Such a description of Bob Thompson's professional achievements conveys little of his warmth of personality, but all who knew him were attracted by this quiet-mannered man with his willingness to help, his enthusiasm for the latest prized specimen, and his infectious laugh. His sense of humor never failed him, and he was particularly amused in retrospect at having been caught red-handed in Yellowstone Park at the top of the obsidian talus slope with big axe in hand (in lieu of a hammer) working assiduously at the forbidden treasure!

Deep is the loss suffered by Bob's wife Dorothea and his children Colin and Mary of a devoted husband and father, and our sympathies are with them as we dedicate this number of the Journal he helped to found, to Robert Mitchell Thompson, our respected colleague and warm-hearted friend.

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