

George Hall Ashley (1866-1951)

George Hall Ashley, retired Director of the Bureau of Topographic and Geological Survey, Department of Internal Affairs, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Past President of the Association of American State Geologists, passed away May 28, 1951, at the age of 84 years, 9 months, and 19 days.

Dr. Ashley was born in Rochester, New York, August 9, 1866, a son of Roscoe B. and Anna (Hall) Ashley and the oldest of four brothers. He belonged to the seventh generation born in this country, having descended from Robert Ashley, who came from England to Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1638. He married Mary E. Martin, July 11, 1896, and to them a son, Carlyle Martin, and a daughter, Dorothy (Mrs. E. H. Ross), were born.

Dr. Ashley received the M.E. degree from Cornell University in 1890, an A.M. degree from the same institution in 1892, and the first Ph.D. granted by Stanford University, in 1894, where he studied under Professor J. C. Branner. In 1937, Lehigh University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Dr. Ashley enjoyed a career of distinction in geology. His first position was that of Paleontologist at Rochester, New York, 1889-91; then he served successively as Assistant Geologist, Geological Survey of Arkansas, 1891-93; teacher in California, 1894-96; Assistant State Geologist of Indiana, 1896-1900; Professor of Biology and Geology and Curator of Museum, College of Charleston, South Carolina, 1900-03; Professor of Pharmacognosy, Medical College, State of South Carolina, 1901-03; Assistant Geologist, 1901-05, Geologist, 1905-12, Administrative Geologist, 1912-19, U. S. Geological Survey; State Geologist of Pennsylvania, 1919-46; and Consulting Geologist since 1946. He served as Acting Professor of Geology, Vanderbilt University, in 1927. He retired from the Directorship of the Pennsylvania Survey at the end of the month of his eightieth birthday.

In his profession Dr. Ashley was known for his extensive investigations of coal and coal resources, work which he continued after his retirement. More than half of his 116 publications deal in part or in whole with the subject of coal or coal resources. However, other geological subjects had his interest: in his early days, the Neocene of California, then later, oil and gas, stratigraphy, structure, and other subjects. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, and a member of the Society of Economic Geologists, of which he was President in 1948, American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Pennsylvania Academy of Sciences, Honorary Member of the Tennessee Academy of Science and of the Indiana Academy of Science, and other societies.

He was devoted to the development of the mineral resources of Pennsylvania throughout his tenure of office as State Geologist. His comprehensive knowledge, affableness, high degree of integrity, and frank appraisal of geological problems gave him a large following of admirers. In the councils of the Association of American State Geologists, he won affection for his persistent poise, constructive discussions, devotion to worthy standards, and kindness.