

John H. Melvin, 1906-1977

John Harper Melvin, State Geologist of Ohio from 1947 to 1957, died June 19, 1977, at Riverside Methodist Hospital, Columbus, Ohio. Jack, as he was generally known, was 71 years of age at his death. Born in Chillicothe, Ohio, on December 11, 1906, he was a 1931 graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and received a masters in geology from The Ohio State University in 1933. He was also a registered professional engineer. Jack's career included employment with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in Zanesville, Ohio, Little Rock, Arkansas, and Omaha, Nebraska; the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, Ohio; the Pennsylvania Drilling Company, of which he was General Manager and Director from 1957 to 1961; the Ohio Academy of Science; The Ohio State University; and the Ohio Geological Survey.

During his tenure as State Geologist, Jack affected the whole geologic community. He transformed an essentially moribund entity into a vital organization. He went beyond the actual building of a new organization in that he influenced leaders of industry, commerce, and government to recognize the need for geologic investigations in the state and the benefits that could be derived from an aggressive geological survey. He launched the Survey into a new era of geologic investigations.

One of the first programs started by Jack was the mapping of several counties in the coal measures. In fact, many of the new geologists who joined the staff during this period were specialists trained in coal geology and Carboniferous stratigraphy. The evaluation of coal resources ranked high on Jack's priorities and a major program was started during his tenure. Jack also formed a subsurface geology unit to create an oil and gas well data file and to carry out research in subsurface geology. This unit has provided information and assistance which has had a major impact in continued growth of the state's oil and gas industry.

Undoubtedly one of his most noteworthy achievements was to introduce engineering geology to Ohio in that he fostered the study of the engineering geology of the Lake Erie shoreline. These early studies eventually led to the creation of an independent agency to address the problems of shore erosion.

Jack also recognized the need for initiating a cooperative project with the U. S. Geological Survey to remap Ohio on the new 7.5-minute topographic

quadrangle scale. Although this work was finished after Jack had left the Survey, he should be credited for seeing the need and starting the program. As a result of this foresight Ohio was the first state to have complete 7.5-minute topographic coverage.

In addition to his work as State Geologist, Jack received widespread recognition for other scientific and conservation activities. Most outstanding of these was his leadership as Executive Officer of The Ohio Academy of Science.

Under Jack's persistent and persuasive leadership the Academy has grown to the third largest state academy of science in the Nation. Jack was also widely recognized as a conservationist. He served as a trustee of the Ohio Forestry Association and was inducted into the Ohio Conservation Hall of Fame by the Department of Natural Resources. He was active in many scientific and engineering associations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Ohio Academy of Science, the Association of Academies of Science, the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Society of Economic Geologists, the Geological Society of America, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the Ohio Forestry Association, The American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, the Appalachian Geological Society, Sigma Xi, and the Association of American State Geologists. Jack always held this latter institution, of which he was President in 1956, in high esteem.

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