

THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA—LIFE HISTORY OF A LEARNED SOCIETY By Edwin B. Eckel (Editor). The Geological Society of America Memoir No. 155 (1982) pp. 167.

Two events stand out prominently in the history of the Geological Society of America. The start of the Society in 1888 and the bequest of nearly \$ 4,000,000 by a wealthy 67 year old bachelor, Alexander Fullerton Penrose, midway in its history around 1931.

The founding of the Society is described in part 1 and is followed up by part 2 which traces the growth of the Society. Part 3 summarizes the activities, aspirations and accomplishments of the Society and Part 4 attempts to forecast the future of Geology. There is a brief biographic account of Richard Alexander Fullerton Penrose and how he came to leave almost his entire fortune to the Geological Society of America. The rest of the book is devoted to the story of how the Society adjusted to its sudden change from a state of mere existence to one of wealth and how it managed to use the income to the advancement of Geology. Till 1931, we note that the only paid employee was a lady secretary and that there were no travel expenses paid for officers. A move was made to acquire a building to house the offices only in 1972. Penrose, it seems, had made the remark that 'no Society could impress even its own members with its dignity without having a house of its own'. There appears to have been a widespread objection to the establishment of a permanent home and employment of an extensive headquarters staff. We find the following statement in one of the annual presidential reports: 'The objective of the Society is not prestige for its Fellows but the advancement of the science'. The degree of involvement of Presidents in the affairs of the Society is indicated as 'having run the gamut from limelight basking to providing genuine leadership and initiative'. Most decisions of the Council, we learn, were made by voice votes, but that appointments, nominations, appointment to committees, selection of medallists and honorary fellows were made by secretly written ballots. There is a whole Chapter devoted to investment management which is worth reading by all those engaged in the financial management of funds of learned societies.

Chapter 10 is devoted to an account of the Society's publications. Who can deny the fact that the Society's publications are most impressive and constitute important contributions to geological knowledge?

About the capabilities of the first editor W. J. McGee it is stated: 'As Minerva sprang full grown and completely armoured from the brain of Jupiter, so was the Society's publications created—a model of form and efficiency by the sole efforts and peculiar genius of the most competent and brilliant scientific mind the West has produced'.

One or two other features of the Bulletin of the Society may be mentioned. The Bulletin does not carry editorials. The Society has preferred to record the results of research rather than influence its directions. The Society has not accepted advertisements. In 1973, the Society started publishing a monthly journal—'Geology', aimed at quick publication of brief but timely articles on any facet of geology. Quality, interest, timeliness and diversification of material are primary considerations in the new journal. Since 1934, the Society has issued more than 150 memoirs and nearly 20 special papers. Some of the publications are among the most lasting

and significant contributions to the literature of Geology. These are achievements of which any Society can feel proud.

The 100th birthday of the Society is being planned for 1988. It will not just end in celebration on a grand scale. Far more significant is the resolve to attempt a grand synthesis of the regional geology and geophysics of North America and adjacent oceanic regions. A large number of synthesis volumes on all parts of the North American continent are planned. This is expected to set the stage for a quantum leap in the Earth Sciences! A noble way indeed of commemorating the 100 years of existence of a learned Society. The Society has more than once realised that in its publication activity depends its worldwide prestige and longevity.

The publication under review is a true and admirable record of the magnificent achievements of a great Society. A perusal of this volume is a rewarding experience and we commend it to the attention of all our readers.

Geological Society of India

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PALAEOZOIC SALT-BEARING FORMATIONS OF THE WORLD Michail A. Zharkov, Springer-Verlag. 1984, 427 pp. price \$ 62.10.

M. A. Zharkov's 'Palaeozoic salt-bearing formations of the world' has been translated from the Russian language by Sorkina, Fursenko and Vasilieva. The original Russian edition of the monograph-Palaeozoic Salt Formations of the World – was published in 1974.

This book provides a description of all known basins of Palaeozoic salt accumulations. The book consists of seven chapters detailing Precambrian, Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous and Permian salt deposits. Each chapter, in turn, deals with the stratigraphy of halogenic strata, their thickness, mode of occurrence, internal structure and the pattern of areal distribution. The advantage of this compilation on salt deposits is that it provides a global perspective on the subject. Apart from that, it serves the purpose of being a ready and exhaustive reference on Palaeozoic salt accumulations.

For Indian geologists, Chapter II on the Cambrian salt deposits is of special interest, as it contains a *nine* page account of the Iran-Pakistan basin. The approach in depicting these deposits is largely one of providing stratigraphic information on the salt deposits and the host sedimentary rocks.

Data in this book has been accumulated from several widely scattered publications. However, the author has found it 'impossible to characterize all the recognized salt formations in the same way'. This is because of the problem of differing states of knowledge in individual basins.

In summary, the book is a compilation of stratigraphic and basinal information on Palaeozoic salt deposits. A chapter at the end of the book summarizing trends in various basins would have enhanced the value of the book. At a price of US \$ 62.10, *Palaeozoic Salt-Bearing Formations of the World* can only adorn library shelves; very few individuals can afford to purchase it.

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