

ROBERT H. DOTT

1896-1988

Robert Henry Dott, director of the Oklahoma Geological Survey from 1935 until June 30, 1952, was born January 8, 1896, in Sioux City, Iowa. He died February 2 of this year at his home in Tulsa.

Ninety-two years. That is a long time. Surely his death was not untimely, but I had the feeling that this fine man would go on forever. Certainly he will in the hearts of those who loved and admired him and in the science he served.

Robert Dott's career before coming to the OGS was varied but always focused on petroleum geology. He completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Michigan, receiving a B.S.F. in 1917 and an A.M. in 1920. His academic pursuits were interrupted by World War I while he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps from 1918 to 1919. Following receipt of his master's degree, he worked as a geologist for Empire Gas and Fuel Co., Standard Oil of New Jersey, Carter Oil Co., and Mid-Continent Petroleum Corp. He was chief geologist for Sunray Oil Co. from 1929 to 1931, then worked as a consulting geologist until becoming director of the Survey in 1935.

What Mr. Dott accomplished as director and what the Oklahoma Geological Survey accomplished under his directorship is history (see *A History of the Oklahoma Geological Survey, 1908-1983*, OGS Special Publication 83-2). As it says in the history book, he built on a foundation already laid, but he built a strong structure. A lot of basic research was published during his administration- mapping, stratigraphy, structural geology, paleontology, results of chemical analyses, etc.- and some work was done on petroleum and coal. A considerable amount of information was disseminated on water resources, partly because of the close association with USGS hydrologists, who at that time were in residence with OGS, partly because of work done on water resources by the State Mineral Survey of the WPA (Works Progress Administration), but mostly because there was a need for it

But more significant than any of these during that period was the work done on mineral resources- industrial minerals like limestone, dolomite, glass sand, salt, clays, gypsum, volcanic ash, and tripoli; even lowly materials like plain sand and gravel and aggregates. Work was done on lead, zinc, titanium, cadmium, manganese, and phosphates. There was some work done on copper, and a little on iron ores. Mr. Dott initiated the OGS Mineral Reports series to publish the acquired information, although much of the information on deposits also was passed along, as it still is, person-to-person in response to inquiries from producers or would-be producers. Thirty- six of these reports were issued before the series was terminated in 1959; 22 were published while Dott was director.

Beyond that, experiments were conducted on these materials to make them more valuable to the economy of Oklahoma. Dott established the Industrial Research Laboratory as part of the Oklahoma Geological Survey, and he hired an experienced chemical engineer, Albert L. Burwell, to supervise. Some remarkable developments resulted: a process of making rock wool (an excellent insulating substance) from dolomite, which led to the opening of a rock-wool plant; experiments to find good coals for coking (a good source was found by mixing an Oklahoma coal with an Arkansas coal); experiments to see if brines would provide a source for magnesia-and so forth. Remarkable.

And again beyond all this, Dott was a first-class promoter of manufacturing in Oklahoma. Oklahoma needed manufacturing. So he involved the Survey in out-of-state "Made in Oklahoma" tours and in-state Industrial Minerals Conferences. He sent staffed exhibits to Oklahoma State Fairs. The OGS was much in evidence with potentials for developers. He made the state's resources known.

He led the Survey through two disruptive periods- a massive depression and a second world war- and it came through. There was a county-by-county State Mineral Survey, a kind of a make-work program of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) that contributed masses of data during the Depression. During the war there were investigations of strategic minerals that added knowledge of resources. He supervised and encouraged all of this. Another thing- he started our Core and Sample Library to preserve some of the material the drillers were bringing up from the depths; it is one of the best such repositories that there is. He also began publication of the periodical, The Hopper, which in 1956 became Oklahoma Geology Notes. He authored or co-authored 16 publications for the Oklahoma Geological Survey, plus articles for field-trip guides, AAPG Bulletin, Oil Weekly, the Chronicles of Oklahoma.

He was a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the Association of American State Geologists, the Tulsa Geological Society, and Sigma Xi, and was a fellow of the Geological Society of America. He was named an honorary member of AAPG and AASG. He was three times a member of the International Geological Congress- in 1933, 1956, and 1960. He was twice a visiting Distinguished Lecturer for AAPG, speaking widely on "The Stratigraphy of Oklahoma" in 1951 and on "The AAPG and How It Functions" in 1957.

Robert H. Dott did and was all these things.

But that isn't the person I can't say too much about that, because there is too much to say. Robert and Esther Dott were two of the absolutely best people I have ever known, and they were very much a part of our lives for so many years. I think of the time they took our family into their home when our house was sold from over our heads, and there was no place to live because there were 30,000 sailors in Norman. I think of too many things.

Bobby (Dr. Robert H. Dott, Jr., a professor in the Department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and one of the top geologists of his time) and Bobette (creator of beautiful paintings and wife of Fred Bird, of Portland, Oregon) have a fine heritage, as do the Dott's seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

We shall all miss Bob Dott.