GEOLOGIC PAST

Highlighting Articles from past issues of *GSA Bulletin*

1928 *GSA Bulletin* Rocks!

Forty years after The Geological Society of America was formed, *GSA Bulletin* was rocking with papers of interest and substance by some of the best in the field. The following are highlights from the 1928 volume (v. 39).

First, **Happy 100th Birthday to the Paleontological Society!** The society was formed in 1908 as a GSA Section, and in 1928 was still publishing its Presidential Addresses in *GSA Bulletin*. In his 30 Dec. 1927 address (published in the March 1928 *GSA Bulletin*, p. 387–402), Paleontological Society President **William A. Parks** first attempts to define geology and paleontology in their relationship to each other. He describes time as the "motif of geology" (p. 388)—stating geology should be regarded as a form of history. He then writes, "If it be admitted that time is the outstanding principle of geological science, then paleontology, which is undoubtedly our best means of determining relative time, rises to the first rank among the manifold phases of geology." This, he says, is in opposition to the common reduction of paleontology at that time to the role of "handmaid of geology." Parks describes "the ideal geologist as a man equipped with every means of solving the problems involving time, as nearly all geological problems do," and decried the attitude of specialization, "I have heard paleontologists disclaim with equanimity any knowledge of mineralogy … and mineralogists and economic geologists similarly renounce the devil and all his works, including fossils. I think there is grave error in that attitude" (p. 389). Parks' remarks include his view of how an academic program for geology and paleontology should look in the university system. He finishes with a call for a better understanding of "the chain of life" (p. 400) in a section titled "Paleontology and Evolution."

"Dead Sea Problem: Rift Valley or Ramp Valley" (June 1928, p. 490–542) by 1928 GSA President **Bailey Willis** introduces the term "ramp valley" as opposed to "rift valley" to describe "a trough that has been produced by the upthrust of two masses forming escarpments which face one another across the intervening lowland" (p. 501). Much of the paper centers on comparing this "Rift versus Ramp" as observed in the Dead Sea Trough (p. 510). Willis, who was president of the Seismological Society from 1921 to 1926, supplies "earthquake evidence" for his argument, writing, "It is not often that the geologist is favored with direct evidence of the dynamic activity of the structure which he is investigating. … A severe earthquake shook Palestine and Transjordania on July 11, 1927. I happened to arrive in Jerusalem on July 12, and … was afforded the opportunity to investigate" (p. 541). Willis then relays his observations and ends his paper by noting that "conclusions drawn from the geologic evidence" of the 11 July earthquake indicate "that the Dead Sea lies in a Ramp valley" (p. 542). Willis was awarded the GSA Penrose Medal in 1944.

In the September 1928 *GSA Bulletin* (p. 643–701), **J Harlen Bretz** continues his quest to have the channeled scablands understood by the geologic community and his "Spokane Flood hypothesis" accepted. Bretz' writing in "Bars of Channeled Scablands" conveys his conviction as well as his frustration, "Gravel deposits in which the combination of topography,

The Columbia Plateau. Image courtesy Jacques Descloitres, Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) Land Rapid Response Team, NASA, http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/view_rec.php?id=2011.