

Memorial to Daniel T. O'Connell 1901—1971

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Daniel Trugott O'Connell, second chairman of the department of geology at the City College of New York and the man greatly responsible for its development as a training ground for undergraduate geology students during the 1930s and 1940s, died in Springfield Hospital, Springfield, Vermont, on March 23, 1971. He had suffered a mild stroke in 1968 from which he might have recovered completely. However, the strong feeling that his place, as always, was with his students persuaded him to return to teaching against his doctor's advice.

Dr. O'Connell, of German-Irish ancestry and a direct descendent of the Irish patriot, Dan O'Connell, was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, on November 29, 1901.

He attended Townsend Harris High School (then the preparatory school for the City College), then continued on at City from which he received his B.S. degree in 1924. Even as an undergraduate, he became a member of the staff of the College with his appointment as a library assistant in 1922. His 49-year association from that date to his official retirement one month before his death and his appointment as Professor Emeritus must rank as one of the longest in the history of the College.

Dan earned his M.S. degree in education from the City College in 1926 and his M.S. (1930) and a Ph.D. (1932) in geology from New York University.

Upon receiving his B.S., he was appointed tutor in the geology department and had reached the rank of associate professor at the time of his illness. He served as chairman of the department from 1942 to 1953. Through his efforts this became a period of innovation and marked expansion of the departmental programs. In addition to greatly increasing the geological curriculum, he introduced a summer field course in Vermont where he had a summer home. The fun and experiences enjoyed there are still the subject of fond reminiscence at any alumni gathering. It was largely due to him that the Babor Seismograph and Weather Station at the City College came into being in 1948 and, as its director, he more or less singlehandedly kept it running up to the time of his retirement. Dan had a long abiding interest in weather prediction which had two practical results: the production for the U.S. Weather Bureau of a set of fifty colored slides illustrating cloud types used in the training of weather observers at regional offices of the Bureau and, more important, the introduction and development of a strong undergraduate curriculum in meteorology, presently a major division of the department, which has been the source of many Weather Bureau personnel.

Keenly interested in young people throughout his life, Dan, who himself became a Boy Scout in 1915, was the first leader of a Cub Scout troop in the Bronx as well as a

scoutmaster for many years. He subsequently served as a member at large to the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He was the author, in 1937, of the first merit badge booklet entitled "Rocks and Minerals" which went through many revised printings in the next ten years. In 1967 he was awarded the 50-Year Scouting Veteran's Award.

Though never too well known on the national scene, Dan was an energetic contributor to geological groups of the New York-New England area. He directed both the 1937 New York City field meeting of the New England Intercollegiate Conference and the 1947 Annual Field Conference of the New York State Geological Association, of which he was then president. The New York Mineralogical Club, which he served at various times as secretary, vice president, and president, greatly benefited from his counsel over many years.

Professor O'Connell was a man of many enthusiasms, all expressed in moderate and reasonable terms. His zeal for seismology and meteorology not only led to his persuading Joseph C. Babor (professor of chemistry at the City College) to finance the start of a seismograph and weather station and to his putting into operation the meteorology option in the geology department as noted earlier, but it also led Dan to keep a careful record of all minor earthquakes in the New York area for a period of 45 years and to acquire a valuable collection of meteorites and tektites for the College. He also had hobbies further afield from his professional activities. He is noted for growing the largest sunflowers on record at his place in South Londonderry, Vermont. Another interest in printing resulted in his opening a small printer's shop in Vermont with his sons. This gave him much enjoyment in his later years. However, Dan's prime enthusiasm and joy was in his students and he was far more interested in their growth than that of his sunflowers. He devoted his whole life, not to personal ambition, but to the encouragement and inspiration of his students. He treated even the poorest of these with a warm smile of support and took great pride in the accomplishments of those who later on had a modicum of success.

In 1938, Dan married Margaret C. Kindle, daughter of the well-known Canadian geologist, Edward M. Kindle, and sister of a colleague at the City College. She died in 1962. Dan was remarried in 1968 to Victoria McGee, who survives him, along with two sons, Daniel K. and Ferris K., from his first marriage, and four grandchildren.

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