

Memorial to Mary Welleck Garretson

1896-1971

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Mary Welleck Garretson (Mrs. William Melvin Garretson) died in White Plains, New York, on May 8, 1971, after a long illness. As a teacher of general geology and a consultant in the field of paleontology and stratigraphy as well as in certain aspects of economic and engineering geology, she endeared herself to many students and colleagues by her careful work and her uniformly cooperative attitude.

Born in Cincinnati, December 16, 1896, Mary spent her early childhood there. Her father, Ernest Welleck, was born in Vienna and came to the United States in 1872, where he became a journalist. Her mother, Mary A. Noble, was a Cincinnati, daughter of the artist Thomas Satterwhite Noble. Mary went

to Boston as a student in the Girls Latin School from 1909 to 1914, and then to Barnard College in New York where she received the A.B. in 1918. She followed a widely diversified academic curriculum which served well in her later career and was largely oriented toward the sciences. While at Barnard, she came under the stimulating and enthusiastic teaching of Professor Amadeus W. Grabau, who gave courses at Barnard and Columbia. Later she assisted him in research and publications. She also studied under Professors C. P. Berkey and F. K. Morris. She continued her studies in geology at Columbia, specializing largely in invertebrate zoology, stratigraphy, and sedimentation, and received the M.A. degree there in 1919.

While continuing graduate work, Mrs. Garretson met her future husband, whom she married on September 27, 1922. She served as a graduate assistant at Columbia while studying there. She later accepted a position as teacher at the Young Men's Christian Association, where she planned and taught (from 1921 to 1923) what was, perhaps, the first correspondence course in geology for the YMCA. In 1920 she was assistant, under Miss Gallup, at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. It is a tribute to her energy and many accomplishments that she actively pursued her chosen career in geology while simultaneously serving as a devoted wife and mother to her two children, Mary Louise, now Mrs. Robert W. Glass, and William Welleck Garretson.

As sidelines to Mrs. Garretson's scientific and domestic activities, she was called into personnel work by airlines and several industrial enterprises in 1943 to 1945 during World War II, and she did a good deal of writing on popular science. About 1924 she wrote a series of articles for the *New York Tribune* on the geology of New York City. In 1946 she served as research assistant in the Columbia University School of Mines, and from 1946 to 1951 was instructor in geology and a student adviser at

Hunter College in New York City. Thereafter, her many roles included consulting on several fronts, especially in mining geology and in certain phases of engineering, notably in construction. She was vice president for technology of the Haitian-American Resource Company from 1956 to the time of her death. From 1957 on, she was called on to serve (largely gratuitously) as consultant and adviser on mineral economics and development by the Haitian Government.

In Scarsdale, Mrs. Garretson was a highly regarded perennial election inspector; she was on the board of directors of the Westchester County Conservation Association from 1933 to 1950 and, indeed, was one of its founders.

In 1966 Mrs. Garretson became a Fellow of The Geological Society of America. She was also a Fellow of the Geological Society of London, a member of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, the International Society of Economic Geologists, the American Geophysical Union, the Geological Society of China, and the New York Historical Society.

This account would not be complete without a special tribute to the outstanding aid, previously mentioned, that Mrs. Garretson gave to Professor Grabau. In the introduction to his *Textbook of Geology*, Professor Grabau said of her: "My former student, Miss Mary Welleck, A.M., has been my assistant throughout the arrangement of this text for the press, and has been of the greatest service in securing illustrations." She was for many years not only his admiring student and understudy but might almost have been referred to as his "right-hand organizer." Grabau went to Peking as chief paleontologist to the Chinese Geological Survey, and Mary graciously represented him in the United States until his death in 1936. With this, as in all her professional career, she remained modestly in the background—helpful to the many who came to her for assistance and generous with time and efforts almost to a fault. She will be long remembered by all who knew her well for her sterling human qualities, her intelligence, her industry, and her conscientious completion of work.

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