

Memorial to Paul Holland Price

1898-1980

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Dr. Paul H. Price, former state geologist and director of the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey, died September 26, 1980, at his home in Morgantown, West Virginia. He had been state geologist for 35 years, from 1934 to 1969.

A West Virginia native, Dr. Price was born September 1, 1898, at Uffington in Monongalia County. He attended West Virginia University, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1923; he married Helen Tapp that same year. He earned a master's degree from West Virginia University in 1926 and his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1930.

Dr. Price joined the West Virginia Geological Survey in 1923, and with the exception of military service during the Second World War as a lieutenant-colonel and solid-fuels expert, he served the Survey continuously until his retirement. During these years he was also affiliated with West Virginia University, holding consecutively the positions of instructor, associate professor, professor and head of the Department of Geology, and professor emeritus.

Soon after his appointment as director of the Survey, Dr. Price set out to improve the organization's facilities, which were inadequate for effective work. He played a leading role in planning for and acquiring White Hall on the West Virginia University campus, which became jointly occupied by the Survey and the WVU Geology Department in 1942.

During his administration, the Survey examined in detail the physical and chemical properties of West Virginia's resources, particularly coal, oil, and gas. His investigations also included a study of landslides affecting roads in West Virginia. To study the ground-water resources of the state, Price in 1941 initiated a cooperative study between the West Virginia Geological Survey and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Under his administration, the Survey also published several valuable State maps, including a geologic map, a relief map, a mineral resources/industries map, oil and gas maps, a limestone map, and 278 topographic 7.5-minute maps (which were issued under a cooperative mapping program with the Federal Government).

Dr. Price took particular interest in information dissemination and the expansion of the Survey's educational services. During his administration, approximately 150 volumes and publications were issued by the Survey, including four volumes on the Silurian, Devonian, Cambrian, and Ordovician systems. He personally added considerably to the literature of coal, oil, and gas, and in 1946 was selected by the American Association of Petroleum Geologists to make their annual Distinguished Lecture Tour of the United States and Canada. (In 1960, because of his knowledge of petroleum geology, he investigated and reported on the gas and oil potentials of the Republic of Ireland.)

In 1960 he was successful in adding an Archeological Section to the Survey to investigate the State's archeological treasures. This section has made archeological surveys and excavations and has cataloged and preserved recovered artifacts.

Price also devoted much time and effort to numerous scientific societies and was an official delegate to the International Geological Congress in 1960 (Copenhagen) and 1968 (Prague). He served as president of the Association of American State Geologists, the Southeastern Section of the Geological Society of America, the West Virginia Archeological Society, and several others. He was chairman of the West Virginia Antiquities Commission, chairman of the public relations committee for the American Geological Institute, and a Fellow of the Geological Society of America. He was also a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and the West Virginia Academy of Science.

Among his many honors were receipt of the Highway Geology Symposium's Medal for Distinguished Contribution in 1970 and West Virginia University's highest award, the "Order of the Vandalia," in 1971. He was named Morgantown's "Man of the Year" for 1951 by the Business and Professional Women's Club.

Dr. Price is survived by three daughters and a son.

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