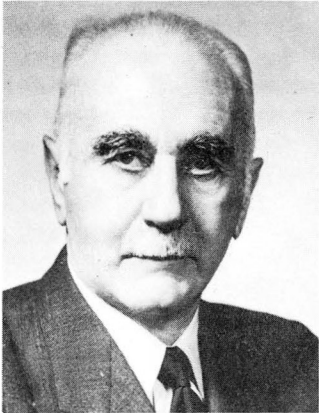


Memorial to Otto Heinrich Haas

1887-1976

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Soldier, attorney, paleontologist, teacher—the remarkable career of Otto Haas ended three months short of his ninetieth birthday in Reno, Nevada. Otto Heinrich Haas was born on March 28, 1887, in Brunn, which was at that time in Austria and since World War I a part of Czechoslovakia. His father Gustav Haas was an attorney, and his mother Gabriele was the daughter of a family which had manufacturing interests, first in cloth mills and later in sugar refining. An elder brother and later a sister completed the family. Otto attended local schools through the Staatsgymnasium.

In the summer of 1905 the Haas family moved to Vienna where Otto entered the University of Vienna in the faculty of philosophy studying geology. At the insistence of his father, Otto switched to the law school which he completed early in 1910, receiving the Doctor Juris. His first publications, two communications on ammonites to the Geological Society of Vienna in 1908, initiated a 68-year span of contributions to the literature. That fall Otto entered the military for one year, serving first with the Sixth Dragoons at Brunn and later in the Fourth Dragoons at Wels and Enns.

Upon completion of this first military interlude, Otto joined his father in the practice of law in Vienna. But his thoughts were with his first love, geology, and he worked his classes in along with his legal duties. He was strongly influenced by Carl Diener, who steered him toward what was to become his principal life's work: the study of ammonites. He began the research for his dissertation "The Fauna of the Middle Lias of Ballino in the Southern Tyrol." Geological studies first under Victor Uhlig and later under Franz E. Suess comprised his principal course work, while his research continued under Diener. In March 1914 he received his Ph.D.

With the outbreak of World War I later that year, Otto Haas once again joined the army of the Emperor Franz Joseph. Commissioned a lieutenant, he was assigned to the Second Dragoons, serving against the Russians in Galicia and Roumania, and against the Italians in Italy. He saw continuous, arduous action against the enemy, usually at "the point" during advances, and the last one out when the retreats were necessary. Unexpectedly he was transferred to the General Staff and assigned to the Kaiser Jager Division in Italy, where his life suddenly found a sedentary pace in division headquarters.

Otto secured a compassionate discharge shortly before the end of the war, and he returned to Vienna where he studied for the Austrian Geological Survey examination which he passed in March 1919. For the next two decades he practiced law in Vienna, succeeding to his father's practice.

In September 1919 Otto and Margarete Franziska Hirsch were married. Three children, Gabriele Helene Marie, Dorothea Renate Margarete, and Adolf Gustave Friedrich, were subsequently born.

With the rise of the German National Socialist party and its seeking the unification of the German-speaking peoples, Otto and Margarete decided Europe was heading for a dismal future. Their eldest daughter was sent to the United States in 1938, and the two younger children were sent to England. In April 1939 Otto and Margarete became refugees, abandoning most of their possessions and joining the younger children in England. Otto obtained a temporary appointment with the British Museum and worked on Eocene nautiloids from British Somaliland, while arrangements were being made to join Helene in the United States.

On December 30, 1939, the Haases were reunited in Boston. Otto became associated with the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. He spent September 1940 with the Field Museum in Chicago, and in October joined the staff of the American Museum of Natural History in what was to become his major employment. Here, initially as a research associate and then as Assistant Curator of Fossil Invertebrates, Otto was able to devote his full time to research in the Mesozoic ammonites. During this period, 1940–1955, approximately seventy papers were printed in a wide variety of publications ranging through the Museum *Novitates*, the Geological Society of America *Bulletin*, the *Journal of Paleontology*, *Science*, and *Nature*.

Otto never lost sight of how his present investigations fitted into the larger picture of evolution. We find also papers on problems in cephalopod evolution, and, considering his legal training, one is not surprised to find papers treating opinions of the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature and problems of both stratigraphic and paleontologic nomenclature. Infrequent coauthors included A. K. Miller, G. G. Simpson, and H. E. Vokes.

Although he reached the Museum's retirement age in 1955, Otto remained there through the spring of 1956 to complete some works in progress. Then, from New York he moved to Colombia, where at first he was with the International Petroleum Company of Colombia, and he soon received an appointment to the faculty of the National Mining School at Medellin. After returning to the United States in the fall of 1956, Otto did research at the American Museum, but also continued his teaching, spending one term as Visiting Professor at Vassar College, and then three years at Hofstra University on Long Island.

In 1960 Otto and Margarete went to Reno, Nevada, where Otto was appointed Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Mackay School of Mines. His principal duty between 1960 and 1966 was teaching; then he was appointed Curator of Paleontology and devoted his energies to fossil collections. He rendered a very important service when he undertook to revise the fossil catalog to a punched card system that he designed and subsequently executed. Otto and Margarete enjoyed Reno, but Otto was frustrated by the reduced research equipment in the mining school and especially by the limitations of its library with respect to paleontologic holdings. He turned to inter-library loans from the American Museum in New York and established a very broad international correspondence which brought him the latest separates directly from the authors. Each was meticulously acknowledged. When *Volume L* of the *Treatise of Invertebrate Paleontology* appeared in 1957, Otto found a new project. He undertook to maintain an annual survey of the literature on Mesozoic ammonites, the first appearing in 1958 in the *Journal of Paleontology*, and the seventeenth in the same journal

one month prior to his death in 1976. This series of papers was more than a catalog of papers, for there were comments and opinions spread throughout the annotations. About the time Otto was appointed Curator Emeritus in 1971 (at age 84), his eyesight began to diminish and he continued to lose visual acuity the rest of his life. Those of us who knew him in his last years marvel that he was able to publish parts XVI and XVII at all.

In 1969 Margarete and Otto suffered a severe tragedy when their younger daughter Dorothea was killed as she slept. As Little Sister Dorothea of Jesus, she had worked with the members of her order in the ghettos of Chicago, living among those to whom she ministered. On her last night in Chicago prior to a transfer to administrative duties in Washington, D.C., a stray bullet from a street gang war entered the nun's quarters, striking Little Sister Dorothea.

Otto was a member of the Geological Society of Vienna, a corresponding member of the Austrian Geological Survey, a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, and a member of the Paleontological Society, the New York Academy of Sciences, the Swiss Paleontological Society, and the Society for the Study of Evolution. In 1941 he was awarded the A. Cressy Morrison Prize for his paper "The Vernay Collection of Cretaceous (Albian) Ammonites from Angola." In 1946 the University of Vienna recognized his fifty-year record of contributions and accomplishments by awarding him its "Golden Doctoral Diploma."

Otto Haas was an example of what man can be. Soldier, attorney, paleontologist, teacher—there are few of us who are able to perform in so many fields, and fewer yet who could do it with the distinction that Otto did. He was a devoted family man. In his younger days he excelled in skiing. He was widely admired and had a host of professional and social friends. He was always immaculately turned out, and in later years when he and I were associated, even in his field clothes he possessed an air of distinction. His love of good food and fine wine was well known, yet he maintained a trim, athletic figure through constant exercise all his life. In manner he was courteous and somewhat formal, but never sufficiently so to scare away a young and timid student. Although in recent years he confessed difficulty in keeping their names straight, he was ever pleased to be of service and enjoyed his association with the students.

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