

Memorial to Clifton Sherwood Corbett

1891–1984

HORACE WINCHELL

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Clifton Sherwin Corbett was born August 11, 1891, at Edwardsville, Illinois. He graduated from Edwardsville High School in 1908 and continued his education at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Graduating with honors (Phi Beta Kappa), he received a B.A. in 1912 and an M.A. in 1913. Corbett served in the U.S. army during World War I (1914–1918), then continued his geologic studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he earned the Ph.D. in 1921.

In 1922, he joined a family with many geologists in it by marrying Vira F. Winchell, the eldest daughter of one of his professors at Wisconsin and a niece of U. S. Grant, one of his professors at Northwestern. Their first son was born in Madison, where Corbett was an instructor. After leaving Madison, he taught geology at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, then joined Standard-Vacuum Oil Company as a petroleum geologist. He spent three years in Batavia, Java, with a Dutch subsidiary, the Netherlands Petroleum Company. In the 1930s he traveled extensively, including trips to England, Colombia, and Venezuela for Gulf Oil Company. Around 1939, Corbett joined Mobil Oil Company in New York, and in 1943 was sent with his family to Calgary, Alberta. There he became head of Mobil's office for western Canada, and was responsible for much of that company's early success in the area. He was brought back to New York in 1952, and retired in 1956 after 19 years of service with Mobil.

Corbett's first wife, Vira, died in 1957, and he remained for a time in Westfield, New Jersey. In 1967, he married Adelaide Knuble and moved to Scotch Plains, New Jersey. She died in 1979, and in 1981 Corbett moved to Meadow Lakes Retirement Community near Hightstown, New Jersey. There he enjoyed excellent health, even driving his automobile until he was 90. Complications resulting from a broken hip caused his death in January 1984. He is survived by three children and six grandchildren.

Clifton Corbett belonged to the Free Masons; he was a constant attendant and loyal member of the Methodist Church. He became a member and Fellow of the Geological Society of America in 1925. He was a conservative Republican who supported business causes (especially those deemed favorable to free enterprise and *laissez-faire* economics). His major interest after retirement was in the stock market, with special attention on mining and energy issues. He enjoyed games such as golf, bridge, and Scrabble, and played all of them with serious concentration. Petroleum geologists will remember him particularly for his espousal in 1955 of an *in situ* origin for the McMurray oil of northeastern Alberta.

Published work by Corbett includes a paper in *Economic Geology* on projecting structure through an angular unconformity (1919); two papers in the *American Journal of Science*, one on the mineral leverrierite (1925), and one on a Kansas meteorite (1926);

a paper in the *Journal of Geology* on determinations of cross-bedding and formation thickness (1937); and the previously mentioned paper on McMurray, along with a reply to a discussion of the paper, both in the *AAPG Bulletin*. Corbett prepared a memorial to Alexander Newton Winchell which appeared in the *Proceedings of the Geological Society of America for 1958* (1959), and his 1912 measurements of stratigraphic sections were cited by Clyde P. Ross in a U.S. Geological Survey paper on the geology of Glacier National Park (1959).

Corbett's contributions to oil exploration in western Canada and elsewhere, as well as to the AAPG, his church, and political causes, will be remembered.

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