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Book Reviews

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Osburn, R. C. 1901 The fishes of Ohio. Spec.

BOOK REVIEW


Review of a diary, published in limited quantity (250) and generally unavailable for sale, certainly is abnormal. The purpose of reviewing this book is twofold: to encourage the search for and reproduction of other geological diaries or field notes, and to reveal some of the delightful comments on the West that are contained in this book. About a dozen copies are in earth science libraries already; its availability might prove to be a useful teaching and research tool.

The book describes one summer in the life of geologist J. W. Goldthwait, following his graduation from Harvard in 1902. The adventure begins with the June AAAS meeting in Pittsburgh (industry and smoke) and continues as Goldthwait travels westward by train to Chicago (streets and sidewalks, . . . buildings are exceedingly dirty), Utah and Montana. In addition to brief notes on meetings with scientists of the day (Florence Bascom, Herman Fairchild, Henry Gannet, William Herbert Hobbs, William J. McGee, Charles Palache, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, Charles Van Hise, Israel C. White and George Frederick Wright), the book contains brief comments on William Morris Davis. Davis, for whom Goldthwait worked, comes across as a friendly, entertaining, and respected scientist. During the AAAS field trip in Ohio, "Prof D was looked up to by all the rest with very evident respect, though his sharp criticism (while well placed and kindly offered) caused more or less uneasiness on the part of . . . (the leaders)."

Comments on the geology include a description of a flash flood "... tumbling about over bushes, tearing them up and sweeping them along downstream," work in the vicinity of the Hurricane Fault, and the triangular fault facets at Spanish Fork. The young geologist also noted that there was an abundance of tin cans along the railroad tracks. Of course litter is nothing new, but it seemed to surprise the young scientist.

The joys and problems of working in the field and traveling through the West occupy much of the diary. These comments on everyday life are most interesting. Apparently "Utah people" at that time could not cook baked beans properly (for a Yankee), but they really enjoyed dancing. The July 24th celebration of the settlement of Utah was as important then as the July 4th celebration. One of the former began with the explosion of 5 kegs of powder at 4:45 in the morning! Apparently Goldthwait was impressed with the definition of a spring in Utah, "a hot dusty place, trampled all down by cattle, with a little muddy water, several dead cows and a flock of vultures."

Not everyone will be interested in publications of this type, but there is a place, both in research and in teaching, for material that describes the lives of famous geologists, early geological observations, and field conditions of the past. Those with access to these historical documents should be encouraged to spread the "word." They make excellent reading.

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