
John Willis Stovall—Vertebrate Paleontologist

John Willis Stovall died of a heart attack in Norman, Oklahoma, on July 24, 1953.

Born in 1891 at Montague, Texas, he was educated in Tennessee and was named instructor in Geology at Vanderbilt University. Coming to the University of Oklahoma in 1930 as a special instructor, he was soon appointed as an assistant professor. After completing his Ph.D. degree at the University of Chicago in 1938, he was made a full professor of Geology at the University of Oklahoma in 1940.

J. Willis Stovall occupied himself with teaching, museum work, and field work. He was named director of the University of Oklahoma museum, and from this post actively directed the study of the younger rocks of Oklahoma and their vertebrate records.

Probably his major contribution to the vertebrate paleontology record of Oklahoma was the discovery, description, and exhibition of the remarkable pelycosaur, *Cotylorhynchus romeri* Stovall, from the Hennessey shale of central Oklahoma. His continuing field work located a remarkable number of these specimens, in addition to a new well known Permian reptile, *Labidosaurikos*.

In 1922, while at Union College, he published his first paper on the growth of the human brain. He labelled this as "not an important paper". In 1929 he wrote on the geologic history of horses in North America. Following this date he published a total of 46 papers mostly on vertebrate paleontology, interspersed with field trip guide books, teacher hand books, and popular manuals for the average man. These papers cover a wide range of topics, from vertebrate paleontology to stratigraphy, from

studies of the Pennsylvanian rocks to the Tertiary rocks of Oklahoma and adjacent areas.

All the while he was available for lectures, popular and scientific; he wrote for and participated actively in many organizations: Paleontological Society, Geological Society of America, Oklahoma Academy of Science, and Society of Sigma Xi, as well as the Lions Club and the Oklahoma City Men's Dinner Club.

Some of the research "hanging heavily" at the time of his death were, according to his notes: a complete study of *Cotylorhynchus romeri* Stovall; a report on the dinosaurs of Cimarron County, Oklahoma Panhandle; a Pleistocene map of Oklahoma, so important to the water resources of the state; and a survey of vertebrate fossils in the state. Such an imposing array of projects attests to the energy and enthusiasm of J. Willis Stovall. He encouraged students to work in the field with him and to be either junior author or co-author on many papers.

The museum, now named in his honor, and the many specimens which he collected, will carry on the work and the plans of J. Willis Stovall whose loss is so keenly felt by those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

—CARL A. MOORE, University of Oklahoma, Norman.
