

field briefs

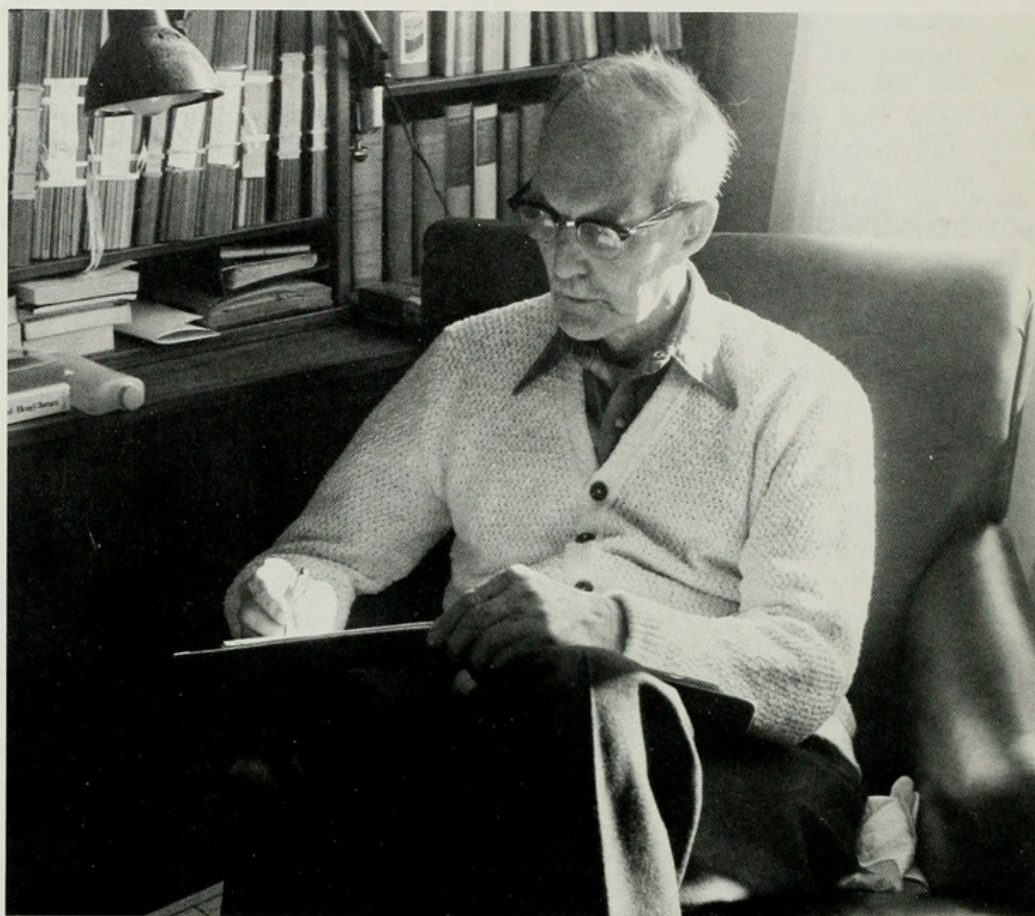
James Marvin Weller, 1899-1976

James Marvin Weller, a field associate of Field Museum since 1963, was born on August 1, 1899, to Stuart and Harriet Weller. His interest in geology was well defined when he was still a young boy, as he joined his father, a University of Chicago invertebrate paleontologist, on field trips to the Missouri Ozarks. All of his undergraduate and graduate work in geology was done at the University of Chicago, where he received his B.S. (1923) and Ph.D. (1927).

Weller's first formal employment—while still a high school student—was as an assistant geologist, for four summers, with the Illinois State Geological Survey. During this period he mapped the Carboniferous rocks of Illinois. From 1920 to 1922 Weller took time out from college to work in India as an exploration geologist for a British oil company. In 1923 he married Phyllis Vincent Gothwaite, a childhood sweetheart.

In 1925 Weller's career as a survey geologist resumed as he rejoined the Illinois State Geological Survey, remaining there for twenty years. In 1936 and 1937, while still with the Survey, Weller was appointed assistant professor of geology at the University of Illinois. The Survey period was a prolific one for Weller, as he produced more than 90 technical articles. His work at that time was divided equally between stratigraphy (the study of rock strata) and paleontology, and his more important papers in stratigraphy dealt with cyclic deposition; his classic deciphering of the complexities of the coal cycle—which he called cyclothems—also appeared then and he wrote on sponges, crinoids, brachiopods, snails, and his special interest—trilobites.

He left the Illinois Survey as head of stratigraphy and paleontology in 1945 to return to the University of Chicago, where he was named professor of invertebrate paleontology and director



James Marvin Weller in his study

of the Walker Museum of Paleontology. He spent 1952 to 1954 in the Philippines with the U.S. Geological Survey, searching for coal deposits.

Weller retired in 1965; in 1971, with the onset of ill health, he and his wife moved from Chicago to the milder climate of California. There, on July 21, 1976, he died. Weller is survived by his wife, his daughter Harriet, and a brother, Professor Allan Weller, of the University of Illinois.

Weller held membership in a number of academic and professional societies, including Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi, which he served as president in 1950-51. He was an honorary member of the Society of Economic Geologists, which he also served as president. He was also editor of the *Journal of Paleontology* and the *Journal of Geology*, and was a member of the Commission of Stratigraphic Paleontology.

His technical papers number more than 160, many of which have been translated into foreign languages, including Russian. His books include *The Geology of Edmonson County* (his doctoral dissertation, published in 1927), *Stratigraphic Principles and Practice* (1960), and *The Course of Evolution* (1969), which synthesized the existing knowledge of fossil plants and animals. The latter two works, still in print, are classic textbooks.

Weller's life work, his teaching, and writings have contributed immeasurably to our understanding of the geology of Illinois and neighboring regions, and his association with Field Museum is one that will be permanently cherished by his former colleagues in the Department of Geology.

—Matthew H. Nitecki
Curator of Fossil Invertebrates



Nitecki, Matthew H. 1977. "James Marvin Weller, 1899-1976." *Field Museum of Natural History bulletin* 48(2), 18–18.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/29653>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/376024>

Holding Institution

University Library, University of Illinois Urbana Champaign

Sponsored by

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with permission of the Field Museum of Chicago.

Contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu for information. Contact dcc@library.uiuc.edu for information.

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.