

Dean Stanley Tarbell (1913–1999)



derick Houghton professor (1960–1967), and department chairman (1964–1966).

During World War II he worked on the detection of mustard gas for the National Defense Research Committee and the synthesis of antimalarial drugs for the Committee on Medical Research. After the war, he helped design a new research laboratory to accommodate the large number of veterans returning to college studies under the GI Bill. He spent sabbatical years at Oxford (1946–1947) and Stanford (1961–1962) on Guggenheim fellowships.

In 1967 Tarbell accepted the offer of a distinguished professorship from Vanderbilt University, where he remained until he retired 1981. He continued to remain active in organic chemical research and developed his second career in the history of chemistry, which he had begun in the 1970s. He became an active member of the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry (HIST), where he served as division chairman (1980–1981). He collaborated with his wife on a number of historical papers as they pursued together a study of the history of organic chemistry in the United States. Two books resulted from this effort: *Roger Adams: Scientist and Statesman* (1982) and *Essays on the History of Organic Chemistry in the United States* (1986).

Tarbell published more than 200 articles on organic chemistry covering a variety of topics including: the Claisen and Fries rearrangements; organosulfur compounds; glycerol derivatives; mixed anhydrides; the structure of natural products and biologically active substances, such as the alkaloid colchicine and the antibiotic fumagillin; kinetics and reaction mechanisms; and carcinogenesis. He was a consultant for the U.S. Public Health Service, the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps, and a number of foundations and chemical companies. A member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, he was a member of various scientific advisory boards and governmental agencies. In 1973 he received the Charles Holmes Herty Medal from the Georgia Section of the American Chemical Society. In 1989 Tarbell won the Dexter award for his historical contributions to chemistry, especially his two major books on organic chemistry.

Tarbell was a book collector, a linguist who taught himself Arabic, Russian, and classical Greek, and a lifelong baseball fan. He died at his home in Bolingbrook, Illinois on May 26, 1999 at the age of 85.

Sources

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George B. Kauffman, "In Memoriam: D. Stanley Tarbell (1913–1999), Chemist and Historian of Chemistry," *The Chemical Educator* 5 (2000): 340–342.

Nelson J. Leonard, "Dean Stanley Tarbell, October 19, 1913—May 26, 1999," *Biographical Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences* 79 (2001): 317–336;
<http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/biomems/dtarbell.pdf>.

For the D. Stanley Tarbell Papers at Vanderbilt University, see
<http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/speccol/tarbells.shtml>.

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Photo courtesy of Marie Zahorick, granddaughter of Stanley Tarbell.