

Extraordinary People for an Extraordinary Museum

John A. Jaszczak, Director & John and Phyllis Seaman Endowed Curator

By all accounts, museum founder Professor Arthur Edmund Seaman (1858-1937) was an extraordinary person. He came to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan as a skilled outdoorsman and timberman in his mid-20s. Thanks to his skills, integrity and “almost unfailing memory,” he was soon led to work with the Michigan Geological Survey and transitioned to becoming a geologist. In 1890 he joined the Michigan College of Mining as a full-time instructor. While teaching, he earned a B.S. degree in Geology in 1895, and eventually earned his M.E. degree in 1916. During his impactful career, he served as Professor of Geology and Mineralogy, head of the Geology Department, and was the first curator of the museum, which he founded in 1902. Even after retiring in 1928 he continued to devote his time to the museum until his death in 1937. He was beloved by his family, students, and the community—and his legacy lives on! In particular, it’s my pleasure to announce an extraordinary gift by A.E.’s grandson John (Jack) Seaman and his wife Phyllis, whom I have been privileged to meet on several occasions over the past several years. Jack enjoys telling stories of growing up in Houghton and sharing fond memories of his grandfather, especially the times he spent with him at the museum when it was in Hotchkiss Hall.

On the occasion of Jack’s 103rd birthday this past March, Jack and Phyllis made a remarkable gift to Michigan Tech. They established The John and Phyllis Seaman Endowment for Curation of the A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum. This endowment will provide perpetual support for a museum curator and enable the A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum to continue to expand its impact on students, scientists, and the public. The endowment is a fitting honor to both Jack’s grandfather, A. E. Seaman, who founded the museum 120 years ago and served as its first curator, and Jack’s father Wyllys A. Seaman (1886-1972), who taught at Michigan Tech and served as the museum’s third curator. As the Museum’s current director and curator, I’m honored to have been named the inaugural appointee to the newly endowed position. I endeavor to continue their legacy and the legacy of the curators who followed.

In addition to the Endowment for Curation, the Seamans have established a Student Support Fund in honor of Jean

Petermann Kemp Zimmer '39, who served as curator from 1975 to 1986, and Jack's sister Jeanne Seaman Farnum. These two pioneering women studied geology under Wyllys Seaman. The Fund will provide support for students involved with the Museum.

We are most grateful to Jack and Phyllis for their visionary support, and for partnering with us in pursuit of continued excellence as we work together to share and discover the wonders of minerals from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Great Lakes Region, and the world. We are also thankful to all of you, our museum friends, for your continued support of the museum and its mission.



From left to right: Jack Seaman, John Jaszczak, Phyllis Seaman, and Bill Roberts (Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Engagement) celebrating Jack’s 103rd birthday and their establishment of the endowment in support of curation of the A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum. Photo courtesy of Katherine Jaszczak.