JOHN LAWRENCE GARLOUGH
(1891-1983)

By Larry J. Richardson
Wichita, Kansas

John Lawrence Garlough of Wichita, Kansas, an independent geologist, passed away at his home on May 22, 1983, at the age of 91.

John was born to Oliver and Mary B. Garlough on May 23, 1891, on a farm 1/2 mile south of Clifton, Ohio. John grew up on the farm and attended grade school and high school in Clifton where he graduated with honors in 1909. In September of that year, he entered Wooster College and he attended there through 1911. He worked on the farm from then until September 1913 when he enrolled in Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan, Kansas, where he received a B.S. degree in agriculture with a geology emphasis in June 1916.

After graduation, John returned to Ohio to manage the 190-acre farm owned by Keller Bell near Urbana, Ohio, named Augusta Farm. In September 1917, he was drafted into the military to fight Germany in World War I. Originally assigned to an artillery unit, he was transferred to aviation in October 1917, and he attended ground school at the University of Ohio. In December of that year, he was sent to San Diego, California, where he “soloed” that same month. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in February 1918 and was sent to England and then to France to fight. His first assignment at the front came in September 1918 where he piloted bombers behind enemy lines in the Argonne Forest and Meuse River areas. It is believed that John was one of the first Americans to fly beyond German lines in the war.

After his discharge from the Army, John returned to Urbana, Ohio, and the Augusta Farm until November 1920. During this time, he learned of the budding profession of petroleum geology. Traveling to Wichita, Kansas, he sought a position as a geologist with the Indian Territory Illuminating Oil Co. (ITIO). While with ITIO, John learned the basics of the new methods of searching for oil in Kansas, which consisted of long days spent plane-table mapping large areas of Pennsylvanian and Permian rocks in advance of competing field parties. During this time, he met Miss Kathryn Adams and they were married in 1921. Kathryn and John were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Janet Merle, in March 1922. Janet, an executive with Trans World Airlines, preceded him in death in 1982.

In 1923, John formed a partnership with geologist Marvin Lee, which lasted until 1932. As John wrote in an AAPG memorial to Marvin Lee in 1954, “These years witnessed the change of major oil exploration and development in Kansas from the eastern part of the state to the ranges west of the Sixth Principal Meridian. This followed the discovery of the Fairport oil pool in Russell County. It was made possible largely by the introduction of the core drill and, to a less extent, of geophysical instruments to exploratory work.”

Along with Marvin Lee, John was instrumental in starting the Wichita Geological Club, which became the Kansas Geological Society (KGS) in 1924. John, one of the 53 original charter members, was very active in the fledgling group, having served as secretary-treasurer in 1927-28, director in 1928-29, and president in 1929-30. During his year as president, the society established a foundation of activities that persist today. Among these were a committee to investigate the collecting and distribution of well samples, the collection and distribution of driller’s logs in Kansas and surrounding states, the first KGS golf tournament, the first distinguished lecture speaker, the first KGS family dinner, and the first annual review of Kansas development and production. In 1944, John served as chairman of a committee investigating the possibility of a service to distribute electric logs. In addition, he served on the KGS Advisory Committee in 1945, the Housing Committee in 1948, the Student Awards Committee in 1952, and the Goodwill Committee in 1957. In recognition for his contributions, he was recognized as an Honorary Member of the Kansas Geological Society in 1957. John joined AAPG in 1928 and was listed as a trustee associate of the AAPG Foundation at the time of his death.

In addition to his work in Kansas exploration, John contributed to the body of geologic literature with his paper, “Gas Fields of Kansas West of Nemaha Granite