

Mackay School scholarships honor pioneering mining family

Nevada students enrolled in the Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering have long benefited from the legacy left by a pioneer in western mining, who was also an outstanding philanthropist. Founded by William J. Coulter, the Viola Vestal Coulter Foundation provides four annual scholarships to students enrolled in Mackay.

The story of the Viola Vestal Coulter Foundation began in Murray, Idaho, where William Jesse Coulter was born in 1887. That year, the town was a booming mining camp complete with saloons, brothels and hundreds of miners seeking their fortunes in gold and silver. The son of an Irish immigrant and a shipbuilder's daughter from Maine, Coulter aspired to make his riches from the mountains as well.

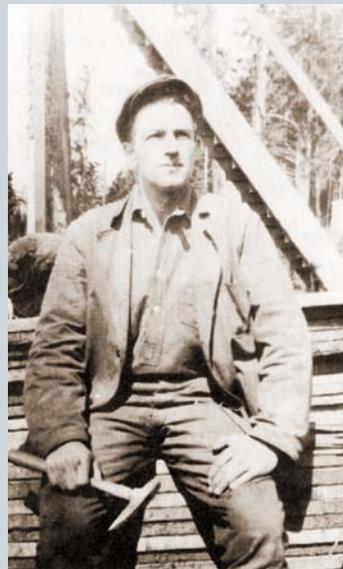
Coulter worked his way through Washington State College, gaining valuable experience as a mucker and jackhammer man in mining camps in Montana, Nevada and British Columbia.

On his graduation day in 1914, he received a bachelor's of science degree in mining and a telegram offering him employment as an engineer with Grandby Consolidated Mining, Smelting and Power Company of Anyox, British Columbia.

The following year, Coulter married Viola Vestal. The couple traveled throughout the country, from Alaska to New Mexico, as Coulter moved up through the ranks of the mining industry.

When he was asked to join the Climax Molybdenum Company as general superintendent in Climax, Colo., in 1927, Coulter found himself in the right place at the right time. Because "moly" was used in making radio tubes, auto and plane parts, as well as in chemical compounds and dyes, the mine would become vital to the war effort.

Viola Vestal Coulter died unexpectedly in 1935, and in 1938 Coul-



William J. Coulter



Viola Vestal Coulter

ter established a foundation to fund scholarships in her honor. Coulter wrote, "Money so invested in the native intelligence of our youth and provision for its full development would bring high returns in human happiness and welfare. . . It is my hope that talents will develop with education, subsequently solving the troublesome questions facing society."

For nearly half a century, the Coulter Foundation has provided financial assistance to undergraduate and graduate students in the Mackay School. The foundation's generous and steadfast support allows the school to build its reputation for excellence by providing the mining, engineering and minerals industries with highly trained graduates, and by its continuous offering of public service to Nevada and the nation.

—Ken Kempcke

For more information on supporting students in the Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering, please contact Char Hagemann, development director for the College of Science, at (775) 682-8791 or chagemann@unr.edu.