an honorary Doctor of Science degree by Earlham College, and in 1952 he retired from government service to teach and direct soil research at Earlham College. He retired from Earlham in 1961, but continued to study and write, and occasionally teach.

Dr. Thorp did a number of things well. He was an expert gardener, worked with wood and made beautiful furniture, and painted landscapes and still life. He was also a photographer. He collected works of art and craftsmanship from his travels to four continents and 12 countries. He acquired over 200 separate pieces of art in his 3 years in China. These art pieces included porcelain vases, ancient statues, bronze mirrors, silk robes, and many other items, ranging in age from the 5th century B.C. to the 19th century A.D. Dr. Thorp was in the process of turning his Chinese art works over to Earlham College as a teaching collection when he died. He would have been astounded to learn that his collection, gathered 50 years earlier in the fields and villages of China, was recently appraised at a value of more than $175,000.

One of Dr. Thorp’s last public appearances was in October 1983 at the annual meeting of the Missouri Association of Professional Soil Scientists (MAPSS). The MAPSS had planned a program commemorating Dr. Marbut, a Missouri native and onetime professor of geology at the Univ. of Missouri. Dr. Thorp, as a former employee and friend of Dr. Marbut, spoke about Dr. Marbut’s leadership in the early soil surveys of the USA. He spoke a second time about his soil survey experiences in China. It was in preparation for this Marbut memorial program that the taped interview of James Thorp (which will appear in the Summer 1985 issue of Soil Survey Horizons) was made.

Impressions of Dr. Curtis Fletcher Marbut, 1921–1935

Dr. James Thorp

Early in my career as a soil scientist, I had an opportunity to meet Professor C. F. Marbut, chief of the Soil Survey, then a part of the USDA-Bureau of Soils. After an appointment effective Aug. 1, 1921, my first assignment was to assist Linwood Lee of Rutgers University on the soil survey of the Trenton Area, New Jersey. As party chief, Mr. Lee would teach me the “tricks of the trade” and I would be his “muscle man.”

Soon after I began work, Mr. Lee received word that Professor Marbut, Dr. Jacob Lipman, and two other faculty people from Rutgers were to accompany H. H. Bennett on a progress inspection of the Trenton Area survey. This area included parts of two or three counties, including most of Burlington County, and extended from the southeast edge of the Piedmont Plateau all the way to the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Mr. Lee told me that I was to be on the inspection trip, but that I was to “be seen and not heard”. I obeyed his instruction most of the time.