



When Florence Bascom (1862-1945) attended Johns Hopkins University, to pursue a doctorate in geology, she had to sit behind a screen so male students in the class wouldn't have to know that she was there.

Such was life in the nineteenth century.

Despite such obstacles, Bascom received her PhD in 1893. She was the first woman to do so at Johns Hopkins. When Bascom taught geology at Bryn Mawr, she was part of the first women's college in America to offer a PhD program for female students. It was her program, at Bryn Mawr, which educated most of America's female geologists for the first third of the 20th century.

In addition to her academic work, Florence worked for the USGS (U.S. Geological Survey) - the first woman to do so. Her contributions to the study of geology were enormous.

A Bascom contemporary, who also made huge contributions to academia, Annie Montague Alexander (1867-1950) is remembered most for her work with fossils and the study of paleontology.

Born in Hawaii, to wealthy parents, Annie studied at Lasell Seminary for Young Women (in Massachusetts) where girls learned more than what was expected of them at the time (just the "Three Rs" - reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic).

Attending classes by paleontologist John C. Merriam, at UC Berkeley, Annie developed a deep interest in fossils.

Soon she began funding Merriam's expeditions and traveling with his team. That led to another major breakthrough for Berkeley when Annie decided to establish and fund the University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP) in 1920.

In this image, we see Annie Alexander on a fossil-finding field trip at Berlin-Ichthyosaur National Park. She penned these words on the photo:

For two days I watched with fascinated eyes the work of excavation.

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Credits:

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Pioneering Female Geologists

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