

Legacy

IRENE McCULLOCH, 1940

When Irene McCulloch joined USC in 1924 as a professor of zoology, the marine research department consisted of a single 14-foot skiff, as well as a decades-old laboratory and lecture room. She quickly began efforts to update and expand the department.

Fewer than two decades later in 1940, McCulloch ultimately persuaded Capt. G. Allan Hancock, oilman, banker, ocean explorer and president of the USC Board of Trustees, to bring the Allan Hancock Foundation for Scientific Research to USC.

Dedicated in January 1941, the Allan Hancock Foundation Building, where the Hancock Institute for Marine Studies is still housed, contained modern laboratories, a library, a museum, a radio station, a campus television studio, an auditorium and an herbarium. The foundation profoundly elevated oceanographic research at USC.

A few years later, when the Boston Society of Natural History was forced to sell its collection of research materials for financial reasons, Hancock purchased it. His one proviso: McCulloch and her students would travel to Boston to personally inspect, wrap and pack each of the 80,000 items, some of which are valued in the millions of dollars today.

She retired from teaching in 1952, but McCulloch — for whom a mantis shrimp species, *Tetrasquilla mccullochae*, is named — continued to do research at USC.

"Irene McCulloch still came to her office on the first floor of the Hancock Building when I was a graduate student," recalls Mary Wicksten (Ph.D., biology, '77), a professor at Texas A&M University. "I remember Dr. McCulloch as a



bent, white-haired lady who often seemed to keep to herself, but impressed everyone with her dedication to her studies."

McCulloch spent 25 years writing her final book on a single-celled ocean organism. At age 94, she saw it to publication.

"She had published a

massive monograph on the *Foraminifera*," remembers Wicksten. "She was asked what she planned to do next. Her answer? 'Write a sequel!'"

A trailblazing woman who in 1916 earned her doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley, McCulloch continued to conduct research at USC until a few months before her

death in 1987 at age 101. Thanks in large part to McCulloch's persistence and determination, more than 70 years after Hancock's initial donation, marine science research continues to thrive at USC with its state-of-the-art laboratories and impressive research library, as well as numerous marine specimens. —D.K.

On Irene McCulloch's 100th birthday in 1985, then-USC Vice President for Financial Affairs Carl Franklin described the zoologist as a "star of this university."

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