

Reginald C. Collison

May 3, 1884 — June 25, 1983

Reginald “Rex” Collison’s life span was ninety-nine years.

Reginald C. Collison was born in Prospect, Ohio, on May 3, 1884, and died in Geyserville, California, on June 25, 1983. He received his B.S. degree in agriculture from Ohio State University in 1908 and his M.S. degree in 1909. He had a year of graduate study in chemistry and plant physiology at Columbia University in 1917. He was appointed an assistant in agricultural chemistry at Ohio State in 1907, instructor in 1908, and assistant in animal nutrition at the Ohio Experiment Station in 1909.

Professor Reginald Collison’s entire career in New York was in research in soils, with emphasis on their selection and management for fruit crops. That research was centered at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, New York. After his appointment in 1912 as an assistant chemist, he was project leader with the title of chief in research, first, in the Division of Agronomy, until it was discontinued in 1929; then in the Division of Horticulture; and last, in the Division of Pomology. From 1943 until his retirement, in August 1945, he was a professor of pomology.

His New York career in agronomic and pomological research from 1912 to 1945 had many projects, including such unusual ones as development of high-nicotine tobacco for insecticides and the preparation of artificial manure from straw. But his three major projects involved (1) lysimeter research from 1914 to 1942; (2) experiments on fertilization and the nutrition of New York’s major tree fruits, small fruits, and grapevines; and (3) soil management of fruit plantings with emphasis on control of runoff and erosion by tillage, cover crops, sods, and mulches.

Professor Collison’s research was enriched by his awareness of advances he could apply to his projects. Examples are his use of Russian lysimeters beneath apple trees, his use of randomized blocks and the analysis of variance in his 1927 experiments on tree fertilization, and the 1929 use of direct tree injection in the study of tree nutrition problems.

Professor Collison’s research was a major part of the foundation for the decisions on soil management and fertilization of New York’s plantings of tree fruits and small fruits, such as strawberries and blueberries. He traveled throughout the United States studying and observing soil management practices and research in the various states.

Professor Collison was a member of Alpha Zeta, Sigma Xi, Acacia, the American Society of Agronomy, the Soil Science Society of America, and the American Society for Horticultural Science. He was a member of the Regional Advisory Committee, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and technical project leader, Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

He married Mary E. Gates of Geneva. They had two daughters. Mrs. Collison died on August 11, 1970. Professor Collison is survived by one daughter, eight grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.

For many years the Collisons were leaders in the Bahai community of Geneva. It emphasized the spiritual unity of mankind. When Professor Collison retired from the station, he and Mrs. Collison moved to Geyserville, California, where he began a training in lay missionary work. In his three decades of missionary endeavors they traveled extensively, primarily in Africa, finally returning to their home in Geyserville.

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