

# **J. Randall Livermore**

*December 16, 1890 — April 22, 1982*

J. Randall Livermore was appointed professor of plant breeding emeritus on February 1, 1955. He retired after thirty-three years of service in extension, teaching, and research at the New York State College of Agriculture and Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station. He was born on December 16, 1890, at Watertown, Massachusetts, and received his B.S. degree from Cornell University in 1913. Following graduation he was engaged in farming, returning to Cornell in 1921 as a graduate student in the Department of Plant Breeding with an additional interest in plant physiology and agronomy. He received his Ph.D. degree in 1927.

Dr. Livermore's first professional assignment was as an assistant in extension, a position he filled from 1922 to 1928. He was made an assistant in research the following year, and in 1929 he was appointed assistant professor of plant breeding. In 1939 he was promoted to associate professor.

His principal interests for the following quarter of a century were research on the Irish potato and teaching biometrics. In his efforts at plant breeding he endeavored to produce potatoes with excellent eating and cooking qualities as well as high-producing, disease- and insect-resistant types. He was particularly successful in obtaining a high percentage of potato seed set, a problem that at that time required specialized techniques. For a while he gave attention to the study of mutations in the potato and to the isolation of superior strains of the then common varieties of potatoes. Selection work was done directly with potato growers in various parts of the state.

For about twenty years Professor Livermore taught a graduate course in biometry, the organization and teaching of which was pioneering work in the application of statistical method to the analysis of biological data. During that period graduate students from most departments of the College of Agriculture other than those in the social sciences regularly received their initial instruction in statistical methods in Dr. Livermore's course. They numbered well over one hundred a year during the years when the writers were among the students. It is likely that Professor Livermore's most lasting contribution was the training of students from many fields in the proper use of statistics as an aid in the interpretation of experimental results.

In all his work Professor Livermore showed keen analysis and sound judgment, all of which led to numerous publications on his potato-breeding results and on the methodology of experimentation and plot technique.

Dr. Livermore twice served as president of the Potato Association of America. He was a member of Phi Kappa Phi and Sigma Xi and a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

One extracurricular activity should be mentioned. Dr. Livermore was a longtime member of the Ithaca Bowling Association and an efficient secretary for a period of time. He was a member of the self-styled university team that topped the league for six years. Two cups in the Cornell trophy room testify to this effort.

Following his retirement in 1955 Professor Livermore lived in Melbourne and Altoona, Florida, until his death, on April 22, 1982, in Eustis, Florida. He was married to Helen Myers Fraser, who died on February 4, 1985.

*Henry M. Munger, Royce P. Murphy, Robert L. Plaisted*