

# Roy Glen Wiggans

*May 12, 1891 — August 19, 1971*

Roy Glen Wiggans, professor of plant breeding, emeritus, died on August 19, 1971, bringing to a close more than fifty-six years of association with Cornell University. He was born in Mercer County, Missouri, in 1891, and after receiving his B.S. degree in agronomy from the University of Missouri in 1914, he came to Cornell to do graduate work. He received the M.S. degree in 1915 and the Ph.D. in 1919, both in the field of plant breeding at Cornell. Except for one year in 1916-17, when he was assistant professor in agronomy at Ohio State University, he spent his entire professional career at Cornell. He was promoted to assistant professor in 1919 and to professor in 1934. He retired in 1958.

The early work of Professor Wiggans was concerned with strain testing and seed sources of alfalfa and clovers. His research clearly established the superiority of local clover seed sources and the variegated types of alfalfa. Use of these adapted legumes did much to increase farm yield and reduce seeding failures with clover and alfalfa. Wiggans added soybean breeding and variety testing to his program in the late 1920s. The variety Cayuga, released in 1934, was the first of several early maturing grain soybean varieties he developed for use in New York.

Professor Wiggans was one of the early hybrid corn breeders. Though far removed from the Corn Belt and its intensive corn breeding research, the New York farmer has enjoyed the full benefit of corn hybridization because of the scope and success of Dr. Wiggans's efforts. His early concern was with improved quality of corn silage. He showed that early hybrids with relatively well-matured ears produced better quality silage and as much tonnage of dry weight as the tall, late-maturing open-pollinated varieties then popular among farmers.

As dairymen became more interested in corn for grain, Wiggans developed varieties that would mature under New York conditions. He tested his first successful hybrid, Cornell 29-3, in 1929 and released the earliest maturing Cornell hybrid, NE310, just weeks before his retirement in 1958. Several other hybrids developed by Professor Wiggans have been widely used by farmers in the Northeast and have served as pace-setters for hybrids introduced from other breeding programs.

Dr. Wiggans taught, conducted research, and trained young scientists at the University of Nanking in 1927 and 1930 as a part of the Cornell-Nanking Wheat Improvement project sponsored by those universities with aid from the International Education Board.

Professor Wiggans was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Genetics Association, American Society of Agronomy, and the Rotary Club of Ithaca. He was treasurer of the Westminster Foundation of New York and director of the Ithaca Westminster Foundation. He had served as an elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca since 1932.

His late wife was Edna Landon Wiggans, with whom he observed a golden wedding anniversary in 1967. He is survived by a son Robert, eleven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

The work of a plant breeder lives on indefinitely after active research has been completed. Superior corn genes identified and isolated in inbred lines will reappear time and again in new and even better varieties yet to be developed. Likewise, training imparted to younger men will reappear and bear fruit. Each will be a lasting monument to the long and fruitful career of Professor Roy Wiggans.

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