

# **Rolland Maclaren Stewart**

*November 27, 1878 — June 12, 1963*

Dr. Rolland M. Stewart was born in Winslow, Illinois. His early education was in Winslow, and his preparatory school training was at Western College (now Coe College) in Iowa. He began his teaching career in the rural schools of Wisconsin and Illinois at the age of seventeen. The A.B. degree was earned at the University of Iowa in 1904, where he was one of four men among fourteen students elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Following graduation he became Professor of Greek, English, and Education at Graceland College in Iowa; later he became president of the college. In 1908 he resigned from the college to reenter the University of Iowa to pursue candidacy for the Ph.D. degree and to serve as a teaching assistant. The degree was granted in 1912, whereupon Dr. Stewart remained at the University as a member of the faculty in education, teaching courses in psychology and education.

In 1918 he accepted the invitation of Cornell University to become a member of the Department of Rural Education, which was then in a formative stage in the State College of Agriculture.

Coincident with the beginning of Dr. Stewart's tenure at Cornell, the National Vocational Education Act was enacted by Congress, creating an immediate need for teachers of vocational subjects, including agriculture, for the secondary schools. It was due largely to Dr. Stewart's influence and leadership, with the support of other early members of the Department of Rural Education, that Cornell University rapidly became the leading institution in two phases of agricultural education. The first phase was to develop an undergraduate program for the preparation of teachers of agriculture for the secondary schools; the second was to develop a graduate program to educate leaders in the field of vocational education in agriculture. Cornell's position of prominence was maintained during the 28 years of Dr. Stewart's tenure at Cornell, during which period well over a hundred graduate students studied under his direction and subsequently attained positions of leadership in vocational education throughout the United States and abroad.

Dr. Stewart was in the vanguard of those who recognized that the proper direction and growth of any new venture in education must depend upon constant appraisal and evaluation. Consequently, as he sought to promote vocational education throughout the state and nation, he insisted upon a continuous program of research as the basis for charting growth and development. He was instrumental in the organization of a research committee for the agricultural education section of the American Vocational Association and served as a member for more than

25 years, the last eleven as chairman. He edited and contributed to the first publication of the committee, which listed over 800 studies completed throughout the country, many of these under his direction.

In 1944, Dr. Stewart became head of the Department of Rural Education and acting director of the School of Education in 1946, immediately preceding his retirement. From 1927 through 1934 he was director of the summer session for the state college units at Cornell. He also taught in summer sessions at Purdue University, the University of Kentucky, and Hampton Institute.

Dr. Stewart's published works have been extensive. Included was one of the earliest and most widely used text and reference books in his field, *Teaching Agricultural Vocations*, with A. K. Getman as co-author. In addition to the many bulletins and papers he published, he was contributor to or editor for other publications, including an early encyclopedia entitled *Book of Rural Life*.

He held membership in the professional organizations of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Delta Kappa, Kappa Phi Kappa, American Vocational Association, National Education Association, National Society of College Teachers of Education, National Society for the Study of Education, Society for the Advancement of Education, and the American Association of University Professors.

Following his retirement in 1946, Dr. Stewart conducted a survey of the Negro institutions of higher education in the South at the request of the General Education Board. This gained for him much commendation from both the institutions served and the Board for his assistance and advice in upgrading standards and programs. The sincere, conscientious, and knowledgeable manner in which he approached and conducted this assignment was characteristic of the relationships that he had established earlier in the University and the profession.

Dr. Stewart was always active in matters related to the public welfare of the community. He was identified with the local chapter of Red Cross for about 25 years, serving as chairman during the last eleven years preceding retirement. Another example of his community service was his important work on a Mayor's Committee on Revision of the Assessment Plan for the City of Ithaca. He was a member of long standing in Rotary and St. Paul's Methodist Church.

Death came to him June 12, 1963, at his residence in Williston Park, Long Island, where he and Mrs. Stewart, the former Hattie R. Philips, had resided since his retirement. In addition to Mrs. Stewart he is survived by a son, Harold P. Stewart of the same address, and a brother, Oliver M. Stewart of Winslow, Illinois.

*Charles W. Hill, Frederick H. Stutz, William A. Smith*