

Paul Halladay Underwood

December 29, 1881 — March 17, 1963

Professor Underwood passed away March 17, 1963, at the home of his son in Nashville, Tennessee. He was eighty-two years old and had been Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering since 1949. Professor Underwood's death closed a full lifetime of service to Cornell University. He was born in the near-by town of Ludlowville, and most of his childhood and adolescent years were spent in the environs of Ithaca. He entered Cornell as a student of civil engineering, receiving the C.E. degree in 1907. Upon graduation he was immediately employed as an instructor, which started his career of forty-two years at Cornell as an engineering educator. He rose through all the faculty ranks and became a full Professor in 1922, Professor Emeritus in 1949.

Basically he was a modest, kind, home-loving man, and a dedicated scholar. The book shelves of his office and home were crammed with books, magazines, and papers that he used to keep abreast of his educational field and the social and political events from day to day. Broad, selected reading made him a man of wisdom and sound judgment, to whom the faculty members and students alike would turn for sympathetic advice and moral counsel. He never sought public office, but because of these fundamental qualities he was asked to serve successively as Deacon and Elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca, and the high regard of his educational associates was manifested when he was asked to serve as acting director of the School of Civil Engineering during the years 1937-1938 and once again in 1945.

For many years he served as head of the Department of Surveying and Mapping of the School of Civil Engineering, but his former students and faculty associates have their fondest recollections of him in his capacity as director of the Cornell Summer Surveying Camp during the period 1917 to 1948. The surveying camp was the oldest in the United States and a large and important part of civil engineering training in the days of railroad, highway, and waterway expansion, when Professor Underwood first took up his duties as an engineering educator. Each year a new campsite was selected, and progressively topographic maps were prepared for the Cayuga, Seneca, and other Finger Lakes areas. Many of these camps were big—more than a hundred students might attend. Work of professional quality was insisted upon and was so well done that the United States Geological Survey accepted it as a basis for their topographic maps. Both students and faculty took pride in the work, and, since graduation, many an alumnus at reunion time has recalled the strenuous but pleasant experience of the survey camp projects. The maps produced have become collector's items to the riparian owners on the shores of the Finger Lakes.

Professor Underwood was generous in his service to the societies in his profession; for many years he was a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and once acted as president of the Ithaca Section. For several years he was chairman of the Committee on Surveying and Mapping for the American Society of Engineering Education. He was vice president of the Geodesy Section of the American Geophysical Union and an active member of the American Society of Photogrammetry and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Professor Underwood became widely known for his work as an engineer when employed by the Isthmian Canal Commission in Culebra, Panama. Most of his extra collegiate services, however, were given without charge, commanding the respect of his colleagues, his profession, his church, and his community.

Professor Underwood is survived by his wife, Frances Humphreys Underwood, A.B., Class of 1903, Cornell; a son, Robert H. Underwood, A.B., Class of 1942, Cornell; and three grandsons.

N. A. Christensen, S. C. Hollister, John E. Perry, George B. Lyon