

Louis Michael Roehl

October 21, 1881 — September 16, 1956

Louis Michael Roehl, for 30 years an active member of the staff of the Department of Agricultural Engineering and Professor Emeritus since 1948, died in Ithaca on September 16, 1956 after a long illness. He was born on October 21, 1881 at London, Wisconsin to Christian and Sophia (Albrecht) Roehl.

As a boy he attended a country school at Helenville, Wisconsin, then did preparatory work at both Whitewater Normal, Whitewater, Wisconsin, and Stout Institute, Menomonie, Wisconsin, from which Institute he received the B. A. degree in 1919.

On August 3, 1910 he married Minnie Barbara Kaercher at Minneapolis, Minnesota. He and the late Mrs. Roehl are survived by their two sons, John and Harvey, and by two grandchildren.

Professor Roehl had a long and distinguished career as a teacher. This career began in the years 1903-1904 when he taught at Helenville, Wisconsin. From 1904 to 1908 he was principal of a grade school in Madison, Wisconsin. He then turned to the technical field where he was to find his main life work, holding in turn the following positions: teacher and Director of Industrial Arts at Negaunee, Michigan (1908-10); teacher of Farm Mechanics in the Dunn County Wisconsin School of Agriculture (1911-12); and teacher of Farm Mechanics at the Wisconsin School of Agriculture in Milwaukee (1912-18).

On February 1, 1918 Professor Roehl came to Cornell to teach Farm Shop in what was then the Department of Rural Engineering. This last position he held until his retirement, as full Professor, in June of 1948.

During his 30 years of service at Cornell, Professor Roehl spent many of his summers and sabbatical leaves giving special short courses in Farm Shop in other institutions, this work taking him into fourteen other states of the nation. A sabbatical leave of 1927-28 was spent in England, where he organized and taught farm shop courses at Dartington Hall, the Elmhurst School, in Devonshire.

In addition to being a teacher, Professor Roehl was an inventor and a writer. He acquired several patents on shop equipment, prepared a number of Cornell Extension Bulletins, and contributed numerous articles to professional magazines. His most outstanding effort in writing was his "Farmers' Shop Book", first published in 1923 by the Bruce Publishing Company. This textbook has gone through 10 editions and 17 printings, having grown to be the standard shop text throughout the country.

Professor Roehl was a good teacher in every sense of the word—expert at presenting his subject matter and possessing a skill in relating the subject matter to life and its problems that not only added interest but also inspired his students. He was first and foremost a teacher of men. Everywhere he taught he acquired friends and enthusiastic disciples. He has probably done more than any other man to raise the standards of shop work and to give it a place of dignity in the halls of learning. He was affectionately known as “The Father of Farm Shop Work.”

Aside from his professional duties, Professor Roehl was very active in church work and was for many years an active member of the Ithaca Rotary Club. He was a writer of poems, the printing of a collection of which, entitled “Poems of Farm, Home and Friendship”, was arranged for by his friends at the time of his retirement in order that they might have at hand a clear and helpful portrayal of his unique and philosophical outlook on life.

He was a kind and considerate neighbor, a loyal friend to all his acquaintances. His influence will be missed on the Cornell Campus, particularly by those colleagues who have had the privilege of working closely with him.

Harley E. Howe, W. A. Smith, Forrest B. Wright