

Benjamin Dunbar Wilson

October 14, 1889 — September 5, 1940

On September 5, 1940, occurred the untimely death of Benjamin Dunbar Wilson, Professor of Soil Technology, from injuries received four days before in an automobile accident at Warren, Ohio. Dr. Wilson was at the full tide of his career and in his passing Cornell University loses a most valuable member from her staff of research. His wide circle of friends attests his kindly nature and whole-hearted friendliness, while his scientific publications are a partial measure of his industry and ability.

Benjamin Dunbar Wilson was born on October 14, 1889, in Lexington, Kentucky, of ancestry that can be traced to the sturdy colonial stock of Virginia and South Carolina. He was educated in the secondary schools of Lexington and in 1906 entered the University of Kentucky where he specialized in chemistry. Graduating in 1909 with the degree of Bachelor of Science, he accepted a position as assistant chemist in the Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station, at the same time pursuing graduate work in chemistry at the University. In 1914 his alma mater awarded him the degree Master of Science.

In September 1914 Professor Wilson came to Cornell University as an assistant and graduate student in the Department of Agronomy, and after three years he was granted the degree Doctor of Philosophy. By this time his ability was so manifest that he was offered an instructorship at Cornell, and two years later was made an assistant professor. During these years Dr. Wilson worked on various research projects and in close association with Professor Thomas Lyttleton Lyon. In 1934 he was made Professor of Soil Technology, a recognition of his research ability and his efforts in his chosen line of endeavor. His value in a more general way must not be overlooked, as he took a keen interest in university affairs and gave his time fully and freely to those activities that round out a faculty member's contribution to the administration and intellectual life of the institution of which he is a member.

Benjamin Dunbar Wilson was a modest, friendly man who gave Cornell University twenty-three years of unstinted service. His scientific contributions to the chemistry of soils are noteworthy especially in respect to the peat deposits of New York and their successful utilization. Not only this, but he had the knack of encouraging other people. Many faculty members and especially graduate students will long remember his kindly interest in their progress and his solicitude for their welfare and advancement. No written words can fully record the grateful memories he left in the hearts of his friends and associates.