

Charles Leopold Walker

July 1, 1879 — January 15, 1975

Charles L. Walker, emeritus professor of sanitary engineering, was born and grew up in North Evans, Erie County, New York. After graduation from the Buffalo Center High School in 1900, he enrolled in the Cornell College of Civil Engineering and received the degree of Civil Engineer in 1904. He worked with the United States Lake Survey before returning to Cornell as an instructor in civil engineering in 1905. He married Maude Coleman in 1910 at Piermont, New York. There were no children. Professor Walker's association with Cornell, as student and teacher, spanned a half century, the last thirty years as a professor of sanitary engineering. He retired in 1948 but was called back to teach, retiring a second time in 1952.

Charles Walker will be remembered for his impact both on his students and on the engineering profession. As one of the early researchers in what has come to be known as environmental engineering, he recognized the necessary relationship between researching or understanding practical environmental problems and solving them. He was among the first to bring an academic approach to bear on some of the practical problems that faced a still young sanitary engineering profession. An inquiring mind, an inclination toward research methodology, and research "know-how" enabled Professor Walker to carry out some of the pioneering field studies on such industrial wastes as paper wastes, milk wastes, and meat wastes in Florida, Maine, and Virginia. This early experience with field problems led Professor Walker to graduate student research that not only produced a series of published articles on the treatment of sewage sludges and industrial wastes but, more importantly, helped to develop a next generation of sanitary engineers who carried on Professor Walker's approach to applied research. This research resulted in his receiving the Kenneth Allen Memorial Award from the New York State Sewage Works Association in 1937.

Generations of students remember Professor Walker for his complete dedication to their education, as a painstaking teacher who worked tirelessly with and for them and as one who felt personal concern for each of them, as well as for their education and their careers. His teaching reflected his intense desire to develop professional engineers in whom he had instilled both intellectual integrity and a respect for detail. His profound interest in students as individuals generated loyalties that led to correspondence and visits to his home that continued until the end.

Somehow Professor Walker found time to serve the community, particularly the young people, through his Congregational Church, Masonic, and YMCA affiliations. Very active in the latter two, he rose to the presidency of the YMCA and became commander of the St. Augustine Commandery in the Masonic Lodge.

Always cognizant of his obligations to his colleagues and to Cornell, Charles Walker served the faculties of both the College of Engineering and the School of Civil Engineering as secretary, with the same conscientious attention to detail that characterized his teaching and research.

Colleagues and friends remember Charlie Walker as a person whose complete devotion to his students, total commitment to Cornell University, and continuing concern for young people benefited all three.

S. C. Hollister, G. B. Lyon, C. D. Gates