

Frank Bonar Howe

June 4, 1887 — July 21, 1976

Frank Bonar Howe, professor of soil technology emeritus, is remembered both for his service to Cornell and the people of New York and for his business and community activities in the Ithaca area. From 1920 until his retirement from Cornell in 1950, Professor Howe devoted his energies to the inventory of soil resources of New York State and to problems of soil use and conservation. His expertise in land use and value developed during this period and was the foundation for a second career in a real estate and insurance business in Ithaca after his retirement from Cornell. During his residence in the Ithaca area, he was active in community affairs.

Professor Howe was born in Nashua, Iowa, the son of John W. and Josephine Bonar Howe. He graduated from the University of Colorado in 1911 with the A.B. degree. In 1912 he married Blendena Fox of Boulder, Colorado. He was awarded the M.S. degree at Iowa State College in 1915.

Professor Howe began his professional career with the United States Geological Survey in land classification and appraisal in western United States. In 1920, Professor T. L. Lyon, head of Cornell's Department of Soil Technology, brought Mr. Howe to Cornell for work on the inventory of soils of New York with the title soil surveyor. He continued in this capacity when the crop production function of the Department of Farm Crops was combined with Department of Soil Technology to form the Department of Agronomy in 1921.

During the 1920s farm abandonment became a serious problem in New York and resources for soil surveys were increased, with Mr. Howe in a leadership role. In 1934 he was promoted to assistant professor of soil technology and soil surveyor in the experiment station, adding teaching to his responsibilities.

Professor Howe had been active as a member of the Water Resources Advisory Committee of the New York State Planning Commission since 1931. He had also established the first soil erosion control project in New York in 1932. By 1934, he was recognized as one of the leading authorities on soil and water problems in the state at a time when the soil and water conservation movement was receiving national attention. Professor Howe was granted leave from the University to serve as regional director for the newly formed Soil Erosion Service of the United States Department of Interior on July 1, 1934. When the Soil Erosion Service became the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture in 1935, Professor Howe was its first coordinator for the State of New York. His leave from the University was extended to September 27, 1935, when he resigned to fulfill obligations to the federal service.

Professor Howe returned to Cornell in his former capacity on January 1, 1936. On July 1, 1937 he was promoted to professor of soil technology, serving in that capacity until his retirement on June 30, 1950, and his appointment as professor emeritus on July 1 of the same year.

On retirement, Professor Howe embarked immediately on a second career in the real estate and insurance business in Ithaca. He was a member of the Ithaca Board of Realtors for twenty-two years, including a term as president of that body.

During Professor Howe's tenure at Cornell, soil surveys of twenty-nine counties were completed and published. At his retirement, the field work had been completed for six additional counties, and the reports were ready for publication. He was author or coauthor of a number of other publications dealing with soil resources of New York and their use and management. His most significant publication was *The Classification and Agricultural Value of New York Soils*, published as Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 619 in 1935. This remained the standard reference on soil resources of New York for twenty years.

Professor Howe was a member of Sigma Nu and Alpha Chi Sigma fraternities. He was a member of the American Soil Survey Association, the Soil Science Society of America, and the American Society of Agronomy. He served as Ithaca commander of Sons of Union Veterans and was a thirtysecond degree Mason. He served as a member of Kalirah Temple Shrine of Binghamton and of the First Church of Christ Scientist of Ithaca.

Professor Howe is survived by a son, Frank B. Howe, Jr.; two daughters, Virginia Howe Fernald and Josephine Howe; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Robert D. Miller, Robert B. Musgrave, Marlin G. Cline