

Albert Hazen Wright

August 15, 1879 — July 4, 1970

The death of Albert Hazen Wright in his ninetieth year brought to a close more than sixty-five years of dedicated service to Cornell.

Professor Wright was born in Hamlin, Monroe County, New York, and his interest in natural history was evident at an early age. When he was fourteen he met Professor Samuel H. Burnett (veterinary science) who encouraged him to learn to identify the local spring flowers and taught him the derivations of their Latin names. In 1899 he was graduated from Brockport State Normal School, where he worked with the herbarium.

He taught public school for one year before entering Cornell in 1900. At that time he was interested in law, history, library work, and botany. He concentrated on botanical studies for three years before changing his major to zoology during his senior year. He received an A.B. degree in 1904, the M.A. in 1905, and his Ph.D. in 1908. In 1910 he married Anna Allen (Cornell '09) and together they traveled throughout the United States, collecting and photographing every available species of fish, amphibian, and reptile. Many of their twelve thousand photographs of live animals have been used in the five-volume *Handbook of Natural History* (Comstock Press).

Professor Wright was associated for fifty years with the well-known course in vertebrate zoology which was begun by Professor Burt G. Wilder (comparative anatomy) in 1898 upon the recommendation of Professor David Starr Jordan. Professor Wright's course, fondly remembered as "Zoo 8," used a manual written by Jordan and for over half a century served as an introduction to the world's fauna, naturalists, and natural history literature.

Professor Wright was the author of many papers on Revolutionary history, early Cornell, and local genealogy. To each he applied his thorough scholarship and bibliographic research. He was able to recreate the excitement of past discoveries and transmit an appreciation of scholarly monographs to several generations of Cornellians. He published a series of sixteen *Studies in History* dealing with early Cornell, the People's Colleges, and Colonial New York. His reputation as a zoologist rests on such comprehensive works as *North American Anura* (1914), *Life Histories of the Frogs of the Okefinokee Swamp, Georgia* (1931), *Handbook of Frogs and Toads* (1942), and the two-volume *Handbook of Snakes* (1957).

Dr. Wright had many other avocations. He made a collection of 150 varieties of peonies and 300 varieties of dwarf bearded iris and was a member of the Bailey Hortorium board from its inception. His explorations and publications on the Great Okefinokee Swamp of Georgia contributed to its establishment as a national park.

He was named a fellow in several of the twenty biological, historical, and geographical societies to which he belonged. He was a member of the Conservation Committee of the Division of Biology and Agriculture on the National Research Council, a past president of Gamma Alpha Scientific Society, and he served on the editorial board of Ecological Monographs.

Professor Wright was made an honorary member of the American Ornithologists Union, the Herpetologists League, the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, and the Academy of Zoology in India. He was named an emeritus professor of zoology at Cornell in 1947.

As one of the great pioneers in the science of ecology, several decades before the term became a household word, he was awarded the title of Eminent Ecologist in 1955 by the Ecological Society of America.

A man of great enthusiasm, he was always regarded warmly by his students. He was an inspiring teacher with an astounding grasp of the entire field of natural history, who gave unstintingly of his time and energy, resulting in an impressive roster of former students and scientists throughout the world.

H. E. Evans, E. C. Raney, W. J. Hamilton, Jr.