

Eugene D. Montillon

October 18, 1886 — September 24, 1973

A life that spans a period of ninety years is difficult to summarize and assess — when all of those years were active ones the difficulty is compounded.

Eugene Montillon was born in Buffalo, New York, and attended primary and secondary school there. In 1900 the family moved to Fort Erie, Ontario, and for the rest of his schooling Eugene claimed to have established an all-time record in international border crossings.

At an early age he developed a lasting interest in the design of buildings and thus his choice of a career in architecture was a simple and natural one. He matriculated at Cornell in September of 1903, leaving in 1907 without a degree. For two and a half years he worked in the landscape architecture offices of Townsend and Fleming in Buffalo. When Bryant Fleming was asked by the late Liberty Hyde Bailey to undertake a lectureship in landscape architecture at Cornell, he encouraged Eugene to return to the University to act as his assistant and to complete the work for his degree. The degree in Architecture was received in 1912 and, at the same time, the offer of an instructorship in the new department of Rural Art, then in the College of Agriculture. Except for a year's leave of absence in 1928-29, to work with the Westchester County Park Commission, this marked the beginning of a continuing relationship with Cornell University which lasted until 1952. He was promoted to assistant professor in 1917 and to professor of landscape architecture in 1934.

Eugene saw the development of studies in landscape architecture through the full circle — birth to death. Beginning with a fledgling department in Agriculture, through the transfer to Architecture in 1923 and the development of a strong and viable program to its ultimate demise - a victim of the depression. Upon the death of Gordon Davis in 1930, he became chairman of the department. He was involved in the establishment of the program in City and Regional Planning within the College of Architecture and during the war years taught on loan in the School of Mechanical Engineering. On July 1, 1951, at the age of sixty-eight, he was appointed professor of landscape architecture, emeritus, returning the following year to teach part time.

To Eugene the shift to emeritus status did not mean comfortable and well-deserved retirement, far from it — it merely signaled the beginning of a new career that was to unfold through the next two decades. He moved to Binghamton, New York, where he performed distinguished service as consultant in design to the Broome County Planning Board. He worked on many projects, the last being a guide to the historic architecture of the region.

He was a member of Gargoyle, Alpha Phi Omega fraternity, Phi Kappa Tau fraternity, and the American Institute of Architects, as well as a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, a registered architect in the state of New York, and a member of the Cornell Club of New York. While University work absorbed the bulk of his energies he was able to do independent work in the practice of both architecture and landscape architecture.

He was an able and sympathetic teacher, a kindly and compassionate friend and compatriot. His life was long and full and we who were privileged to know and work with him will forever treasure his memory.

Burnham Kelly, Stephen Jacobs, Thomas Canfield