

# Howard Bagnall Meek

*October 30, 1893 — July 16, 1969*

Howard Bagnall “Don” Meek, E. M. Statler Professor, emeritus, founder and first dean of the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University, was internationally known as the leading educator in the hospitality industry, which today ranks as the foremost industry worldwide. In 1918 he initiated collegiate education in this field with two courses at Boston University, which led the American Hotel Association to propose him as head of a new program sponsored by that organization at Cornell University in 1922. Professor Meek built the Cornell program from four courses, for which he was the sole instructor, into an independent college with its own building and a full-time faculty of twenty-one, with an equal number of lecturers drawn from industry.

“Prof,” as he was affectionately known by the School’s three thousand alumni, interested Ellsworth M. Statler, America’s foremost hotelman of the 1920s, in giving financial support for the establishment of Statler Hall, a \$10 million complex devoted to the professional training of future hotel executives.

After his retirement in 1961, Professor Meek directed his energies toward broad educational service for the hospitality industry as executive director of the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education (CHRIE), and was actively engaged in such activities at the time of his death.

Professor and Mrs. Meek traveled widely around the world, often visiting with School alumni who managed major hotels in countries abroad. Today, the Cornell school is acknowledged to be the major collegiate institution of its kind in the world and it draws about 15 percent of its five hundred full-time students from outside the United States. Summer short courses for industry employees were initiated in 1928 and executive educational seminars in 1955. Both attract worldwide attendance. Shortly before Professor Meek’s retirement as dean, he established a research department to serve the hotel and restaurant industries and also a publications department which provides a quarterly magazine, training manuals, and textbooks.

Professor Meek was past president of the New York State Minimum Wage Board for the Hotel Industry, consultant to the OPA, Point IV, AID Programs, and past president of the Tompkins County Hospital and the Ithaca Reconstruction Home. Among his professional affiliations were the American Statistical Association, the American Economics Association, Cornell Society of Hotelmen, Ye Hosts, and life memberships in the National Restaurant Association and the Club Managers Association of America. His publications include *A Theory of Hotel Room Rates* (1938), *Hospitalities Around the World* (1938) and *Hotels of Latin America* (1952).

Professor Meek was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, on October 30, 1893, the son of Warren Lee and Eliza Fowler (Reed) Meek. He obtained his B.S. degree in mathematics from Boston University in 1917. This same institution conferred on him an honorary Doctorate of Education in 1949. He earned his M.S. degree in mathematics from the University of Maine in 1920, where he was also a member of the faculty; and his doctorate in economics from Yale University in 1933.

In 1924 he married Lois Ann Farmer, a member of the faculty of the College of Home Economics, who taught food management courses in hotel administration for several years following their marriage. Professor Meek is survived by his widow and by two children, Lois Jean Meek, who is a designer with Erio Saarinen Associates in New Haven, Connecticut, and Donald Bagnall Meek, a commander in the U. S. Navy now stationed in England.

In May 1969, Professor Meek received two honors in recognition of his fifty years of service to the hospitality industry. The School's library, the first and largest library collection of hotel and food service titles, was named the Howard B. Meek Library. The Cornell Society of Hotelmen also established the Howard B. Meek Visiting Professorship at Cornell University.

The community's awareness of his contributions is best exemplified by an *Ithaca Journal* editorial :

"It is not given to many men to found a school. Dean Meek did—the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University, rightly famed throughout the world. In 1922 he became a one-man faculty of what was then a department in the College of Home Economics. It included twenty-one students, four courses, and the sole instructor, Professor Meek. Today, the School of Hotel Administration occupies its own home, Statler Hall, with a faculty of twenty-one and five hundred students. He was the School's first dean. His accomplishments earned him the esteem of the entire hotel industry. "Dean Meek did not confine himself to his school and the University. He found time to work on behalf of Tompkins County Hospital and the Reconstruction Home, as well as the Rotary Club. He was town as well as gown.

"His colleagues and friends will miss him, but he will not be forgotten. The School of Hotel Administration is his monument."

*Gerald W. Lattin, Charles I. Sayles, Robert A. Beck*