

# John Curtis Swan

*November 26, 1917 — October 12, 2008*

John C. Swan, Professor Emeritus of Extension Administration, resident of Longview, Bella Vista Drive, Ithaca, New York, died October 12, 2008. He was born on the family farm at Schroon Lake, New York, and graduated from Schroon Lake Central School in 1936. He earned his B.S. degree in Agriculture from Cornell University in 1943.

Professor Swan devoted his entire 31-year career working for the Cooperative Extension Service (now known as Cornell Cooperative Extension). From 1943-55, he served the agricultural community in Rensselaer County as County Agricultural Agent. In 1955, he moved to Cornell as Assistant State Leader of Country Agricultural Agents.

During his tenure at Cornell, he received a Farm Foundation Fellowship Award in 1959 to study at Michigan State University where he received his M.S. degree. Professor Swan went on to become State Leader of Agricultural Agents, Assistant Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension and Extension Program Leader for Commercial Agriculture and Natural Resources. He retired from Cornell in 1973.

Professor Swan played a major role in coordinating the delivery of research based knowledge from Cornell to the commercial farmers and agribusinesses across New York State through Cornell faculty and Cooperative Extension field staff. While in his position of leadership at Cornell, he helped to organize and served on numerous program development committees composed of faculty, county agents and regional specialists. He was a leader in recognizing the many changes going on in commercial agriculture, such as the decline in the number of farms, much larger and more specialized farms, and the implications of these changes in the organization and delivery of agricultural extension and community development programs. He provided leadership as the chairperson of the College of Agriculture's "Special Task Force" to determine how Cooperative Extension could best meet the needs of the increasingly sophisticated agricultural industry in New York State. He saw the need for and was a strong proponent of specialized staff at the county level. As a result of Professor Swan's leadership, multi-county and regional teams of agricultural specialists were formed in many parts of the state. More than 35 years later, teams of Area Extension Educators serve the farm community today throughout the state. Examples of this are the Regional Dairy and Regional Fruit Teams serving commercial producers in Western New York.

He recognized the need for new extension education programs in public issues, particularly as they pertain to commercial agriculture. Extension programs initiated under his leadership concerned challenges of evolving land use patterns, preserving and improving water quality and tax policy affecting land used in agriculture.

Professor Swan was active in a variety of community, professional and agricultural related organizations. For a number of years, he was responsible for organizing the selection and documentation of individual farm families being recognized as Century Farm Families by the New York State Agricultural Society. The Society awarded him their Distinguished Service Citation in 1974 in recognition of his outstanding service to the agricultural industry.

He and Mary Warren Swan, daughter of the late Professor George Warren (for whom Warren Hall on the Cornell Campus is named) were married in 1943 and had four daughters: Julie, Dorothy (Parrill), Molly (Denison) and Barbara (Lopez) all of whom survive him as well as four grandchildren, one great grandchild, and two sisters, Mary Swan Connell and Rita Hooley. He was predeceased by his wife, Mary, and his brother, Robert Swan.

*William E. Worth, Chairperson; James C. Preston, David T. Smith*