

# **Mortier Franklin Barrus**

*March 17, 1879 — January 8, 1962*

After fifty-four years of association with Cornell University as a graduate student, teacher, and Emeritus Professor, Dr. Mortier Franklin Barrus died January 8, 1962, in Warsaw, New York. He had retired from his active service in the Department of Plant Pathology on June 30, 1945.

Dr. Barrus was born at Forrestville, Chautauqua County, and spent his boyhood on the farm. A winter short course at the College of Agriculture in Ithaca stirred his desire for training in agriculture, and later he came to Cornell as an assistant in the newly founded Department of Plant Pathology and for graduate study under H.H. Whetzel. He was advanced to instructor in 1910, became Assistant Professor in 1911, and in 1914 was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the appointment of Extension Professor of Plant Pathology. He was the first official Extension Plant Pathologist in the United States, and in 1911, before New York had any county agents, Professor Barrus lectured at Farmers' Institutes and Granges, staged exhibits at fairs, gave talks and demonstrations on agricultural trains, and taught at winter extension schools.

His skill at interpreting plant disease research and making it understandable and useful to farmers became well recognized and was soon to bring demand for his services outside New York State. He served as a specialist in the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1916 and again from 1917 to 1919, during which time he visited nearly every state, urging the introduction of extension methods in plant pathology. During World War I he served as a First Lieutenant 1918-1919 and later in the Army Reserve until 1929. During 1927-1929 he was again a specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labor in Puerto Rico. In 1934-1936, having been appointed Director of Agricultural Extension there, he helped to initiate the Extension Service in Puerto Rico. The following year he spent in Venezuela as adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture. Other foreign assignments after his retirement included work as agronomist at the U.S.D.A. Rubber Plant Station in Turrialba, CR. (1945-1947) and as extension specialist with the Rockefeller Foundation in Mexico (1947-1949).

Dr. Barrus was the author of numerous articles on plant pathology, both technical and popular. His earlier studies of the bean anthracnose disease were brought together in Cornell Memoir 42 in 1921, which is now a classic. He made the important discovery of the existence of strains of the causal fungus. Among other crops in which he was interested were potatoes, cereals, and ornamentals.

He was affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Mycological Society of America, Phi Beta Kappa, Gamma Alpha, Epsilon Sigma Phi, Sigma Xi, and the American Phytopathological Society. In the latter society he served for many years as councilor, chairman of the advisory board, and vice president, and was president in 1927.

Dr. Barrus' engaging personality and love of life made his circle of friends large; it included students, colleagues, and overseas personnel. Even the little concerns of co-workers seemed always to be of great interest to him. In attempting to characterize Dr. Barrus as a person, we can do no better than to quote from the resolution passed by his College of Agriculture faculty colleagues at the time of his retirement in 1945: "His forthrightness of character engendered respect and confidence among all who knew him, and his genial personality endeared him to a wide circle both in and beyond the Cornell campus. His fine gift of sympathetic understanding made his professional contacts especially effective with farmers and also with his co-workers in the College and with men in other and more distant fields."

He married Delia Wintrode September 17, 1910; she died in January 1948. Their children are a daughter, Mrs. Benjamin C. Craft of Castile, New York and two sons, Benjamin of San Diego and Merton of Santa Anna, California. Other survivors of Dr. Barrus are his widow, Maria O. Barrus; a sister, Mrs. Bessie Hall of Silver Creek, New York; and seven grandchildren.

*Charles Chupp, Ora Smith, Arden Sherf*