Charles Bovette Sayre

January 3, 1891 — January 8, 1979

Charles Bovette Sayre, professor of vegetable crops emeritus at Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, New York, died on January 8, 1979, following an extended illness.

Professor Sayre, "Charlie" to his friends, was born in Chicago on January 3, 1891. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois in 1913. He was an accomplished fencer, and as an undergraduate, held the Western Intercollegiate Saber Championship.

Professor Sayre began his scientific career as an assistant professor of vegetable gardening at Purdue University in 1914. However, in 1917, just four days before the outbreak of World War I, he was commissioned a lieutenant in the field artillery in the United States Army. After serving as commander of the Second Battery of the 6th Field Artillery at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis, he was promoted to the rank of major and was sent to Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, where he served as commander of the First Battalion of the 326th Field Artillery. His next assignment was as a student and, after serving in France, as an instructor in aerial observation at the Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Artillery School of Fire. While at Fort Sill, former President Harry S. Truman and former presidential nominee Wendell Wilkie were both students of Professor Sayre. Shortly thereafter, Sayre was promoted to lieutenant colonel and became a permanent staff member at the School of Fire until the end of World War I. He later became one of the founding members of the American Legion, an honor he greatly cherished. There are only a few living members of this group remaining.

At the end of the war, he resigned his commission to become an associate professor at the University of Illinois, where he received his Master of Science degree in 1924. He moved to Geneva in 1925, joining the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station as an associate horticulturist. In 1928 he was promoted to the rank of professor, and in 1930 was appointed head of the newly formed Department of Vegetable Crops. He remained head of that department until his retirement in 1959.

During his long scientific career, Professor Sayre published almost one hundred scientific articles. Many of these dealt with proper rates, ratios, and placement of fertilizers for obtaining maximum yield and quality of processing vegetables. He worked on methods of producing strong healthy transplants of crops such as tomatoes. He also did a lot of work studying physiological factors affecting quality and yield. Major contributions to New York agriculture included his development of effective starter solutions for transplanted crops and his development of

a heat unit method of scheduled planting for peas. The latter was a system for forecasting maturity of peas so that growers could schedule their plantings, thus avoiding a glut at harvest.

With the strong orientation of the research of his department toward vegetables for processing, Professor Sayre became closely acquainted with many food processors. The Fieldmen's Conference, held for many years at Geneva, was a highlight at which he expected his staff to report on their research.

He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Society of Agronomy, the American Society for Horticultural Science, the New York State Horticultural Society, the New York State Vegetable Growers Association, and Sigma Xi.

Upon his retirement, Professor Sayre was awarded the title of professor emeritus of vegetable crops by Cornell University. He remained active for a number of years, serving as a special consultant on vegetable problems in the food processing industry of New York.

In local affairs, Professor Sayre was an active member of the Geneva Rotary Club and the Geneva Torch Club and was a past president of each. He was also active in the North Presbyterian Church. He is survived by his wife, who resides at the family home, 563 West North Street, Geneva, New York 14456.

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