

Oskar Augustus Johannsen

May 14, 1870 — November 7, 1961

The passing of Professor Oskar A. Johannsen causes us to pause and to reflect on the contributions of this lovable pioneer to the field of entomology and to mankind. During his academic career he served Cornell as a teacher for nearly forty years and continued to inspire young people in the Department of Entomology for another twenty years. His service actually extended beyond Cornell, as with his command of several languages he added greatly to the prestige of American scientists in foreign countries.

Born in Davenport, Iowa, of parents who had emigrated to the United States from Denmark, Professor Johannsen attended high school in State Center, Iowa. After graduation in 1890, he entered the Agricultural Engineering Department of the University of Illinois. There he was a member of the Adelphi Society and the editor of *Technograph*. After receiving an engineering degree in 1894, he was a draftsman and designer of structural steel (1894-1899). He next joined the Department of Civil Engineering at Cornell University, where he served as instructor, 1899-1904.

Professor Johannsen developed such an interest in biological subjects that while an instructor in engineering he completed the requirement and was awarded two Cornell degrees in entomology, A.M. in 1902, and Ph.D. in 1904. He then continued his teaching in civil engineering as an Assistant Professor, 1904-1909.

The field of biology, in which he was to spend the rest of his life, beckoned. He went to the University of Maine, where he filled the position of Professor of Entomology from 1909 to 1912. Then he returned to Cornell, where he served as an Assistant Professor of Entomology, 1912-1914, and as Professor of General Biology, 1914-1920. During the fruitful years 1920-1938, he was Professor of Entomology at Cornell where he taught courses in insect morphology, anatomy, and embryology. After guiding entomologists during the years 1936-1938 as department head, he retired on June 30, 1938. Retirement to him meant freedom from administrative obligation to continue his excellent works on aquatic Diptera.

Professor Johannsen was not only active in teaching, but his contributions in the research field were numerous. Beginning in 1903 and extending to 1950 he published over one hundred articles in scientific journals and several monographic works in which he described many insects new to science. He was a co-author of three books: *Medical Entomology*, *Histological Technique*, and *Embryology of Insects and Myriapods*. He gave his extensive scientific library and his large insect collection, which contained several hundred type specimens, to the Cornell

Department of Entomology and Limnology. Membership in the honorary societies of Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, and Tau Beta Pi documented his research ability and scholarship.

In 1896 Professor Johannsen married Harriette Alice Fuller. He is survived by his wife and their children, Dorothea Elizabeth (Dr. Dorothea J. Crook), Laurence, and Albert.

Professor Johannsen helped develop entomology, an infant field when he started his life's work. Throughout his career he was sympathetic towards the broader aspects of natural history. He was always kindly and helpful; the twinkle in his eye and the contagious smile won him many friends. His very gracious manner endeared him to both his students and his colleagues. We will always remember him as a friend and as a scientist. It is also a pleasure to acknowledge his excellent scientific contributions that have added so greatly to the stature of the Cornell Entomology Department.

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