

# Margaret Wylie

*December 7, 1889 — October 29, 1964*

Margaret Wylie was associated with Cornell University, with the New York State College of Home Economics, and—through the Cooperative Extension Service—with families of New York State for more than thirty years.

During that period she literally *made* an extension program in family life, building the program from nothing to one requiring a staff of four college specialists, and using in the building of it a sturdy academic competence and a remarkable talent for working with people.

Professor Wylie came to the New York State College of Home Economics in the fall of 1925, following the establishment of the College of Home Economics in February of that year. Resident and research programs were then under the direction of Nellie L. Perkins, and Professor Wylie's responsibility was to establish a program in extension. From 1925 to 1927 she initiated intensive institutes and follow-up programs in eight counties of the state. Then for three years (1927-30) Miss Wylie was away from New York, completing her doctorate in psychology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She spent a year of postdoctoral study at the Illinois Institute of Juvenile Research under the Behavior Research Fund, studying negativistic behavior of preschool children. In the fall of 1930 she returned to Cornell, to remain until the fall of 1957.

She was a scholar—part of the national and international academic world. Her studies took her to Austria, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. She participated in national and international conferences and organizations. For example, she presented a paper at the International Congress of Psychology, Copenhagen, Denmark; attended the International Progressive Education Association Conference, Nice, France; was representative to two White House Conferences on children and youth, Washington, D.C.; served on the Board of the National Committee on Parent Education; was chairman of the Family Relationships and Child Development Committee of the American Home Economics Association; and was part of the New York State Regents Parent Education Committee, and of the National Film Excerpting Committee of the Joint Council of the American Home Economics Association. She was an active member of and held offices in honorary societies: Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, Sigma Delta Epsilon, Epsilon Sigma Phi. She was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Psychological Association, and belonged to the American Home Economics Association and the International Council of Women Psychologists.

She was recognized for her superior achievements by a national award at a special ceremony in Washington June 1, 1955. Dr. Wylie was presented the Superior Service Award of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in a presentation made by the then Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra Taft Benson, and was cited “for developing a child development and family relations program that has helped families to become more resourceful in solving their own as well as community problems.” A citation honoring Dr. Wylie when she became Professor Emeritus noted, “Professor Wylie has friends all over New York State that she made in course of her professional activities, and she has been one of our best beloved and most valued faculty members. She has received national recognition for her outstanding work. No one could be more deserving of the honor.”

She was interested in people of all ages. After being graduated from Buffalo Normal School she taught fifth and sixth grades for several years before undertaking undergraduate and graduate work in psychology, sociology, and psychiatry.

During her graduate study, she assisted in experimental laboratories with college students, did psychological testing with men and women, boys and girls. Her early work at Cornell (1925) was with mothers, centered in their interaction with young children. By 1936, the program included teaching youth as well as adults.

She was deeply devoted to families and friends—to her sisters, to her nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews; to her professional colleagues; to the families of community leaders with whom she worked.

To all of her activities she brought a priceless gift: the vigor of mature, disciplined intelligence together with childlike freshness of vision and openness to the experience of the moment.

*Mary Ford, Orrilla Butts, Helen Bayer*