

Burton Aaron Jennings

March 12, 1895 — March 18, 1964

Burton Aaron Jennings, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Engineering, died suddenly of a heart attack on March 18, 1964, at his home near Ithaca. He was sixty-nine years old.

Professor Jennings, a native of New York State, was born in Killawog on March 12, 1895. His early years were spent on Long Island and in near-by Cortland County. After graduating from Cincinnatus High School and before enrolling in the New York State College of Agriculture, he came to Cornell as an employee of the Department of Farm Practice. During World War I, while still an undergraduate at Cornell, he was an instructor for the New York State Food Commission. In that capacity he conducted special tractor repair schools and operated a power-ditching machine for tile drainage systems on many New York farms. He served also as an assistant instructor in the Department of Agricultural Engineering before receiving his Bachelor of Science degree in February, 1921.

Immediately following graduation from Cornell, Professor Jennings was employed as farm manager at the George Junior Republic, Freeville. He returned to Cornell, April 1, 1922, as an instructor in Agricultural Engineering Courses 2, 3, and 10. On July 1, 1924, he became an extension specialist with primary interests in drainage and farm machinery. He was made an Assistant Professor July 1, 1926. He continued work in the field of extension until July 1, 1939. Professor Jennings became well known and highly respected by New York State farmers for his thorough understanding of the operation and adjustment of a multitude of farm machines. He pioneered in teaching farmers how to properly adjust, repair, and operate farm machines and also conducted many tractor repair schools throughout the state. He has surveyed and planned hundreds of drainage systems, both tile and open ditch, for farms throughout the state.

On July 1, 1939, Burton A. Jennings was made a full Professor and in the fall of that year started his career on the teaching staff. From 1939 to 1951 he was responsible for the courses in farm power, Agricultural Engineering 102, and farm machinery, Agricultural Engineering 103, and from 1946 to 1958 the farm mechanics course, Agricultural Engineering 1. In the many years of teaching, Professor Jennings continued to seek better ways to illustrate the many new concepts that he introduced to his students. He wrote and made available to his students at cost an offset printed textbook for his farm mechanics course. He is remembered by his colleagues and students as an outstanding teacher.

His publications include numerous extension bulletins, departmental mimeographed bulletins, and *Farm Research* and *Agricultural Engineering Journal* articles. In 1945 he received an award from the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, of which he was a member, for a paper, "Mow Curing of Hay."

His research activities were in milk house design and construction, air blast sprayer development, both field and mow curing of hay, and corrosion tests of farm fencing and metal roofing materials. The work with fencing and roofing materials was conducted under the auspices of the American Society for Testing Materials. Professor Jennings was an energetic and stimulating cooperater in interdepartmental research. His approach to problems was basic and original. In addition to contributing a practical viewpoint, he always asked himself and his co-workers: "Why?" During hay-curing studies he invented an ingenious method of labeling plants in the swath so that it was possible to learn just what the side-delivery rake did in windrow "positioning" of hay. Those of us who shared research projects with him could not avoid some feeling of professional improvement.

One of his rare gifts was the ability to explain even the most complicated subject in crisp, concise English, which made it both attractive and simple to every listener. This helped to establish Professor Jennings as one of Cornell's outstanding teachers, both among farmers and resident students.

When the United States entered World War II, Professor Jennings trained the fifteen agricultural engineers who were sent throughout the state on the War Emergency Farm Machinery Repair Program to keep farm tractors and machinery going. This special training in the fundamentals of tractor and machinery operation proved to be a most important factor in the success of this program.

Professor Jennings saw the Department of Agricultural Engineering grow from cramped quarters in the basement of Stone Hall to the modern, well-equipped Riley-Robb Hall it now occupies. He took the lead in the planning of this building, working persistently for many years preparing plans and incorporating many of the best features of other buildings until the existing building evolved.

His activities were never limited to those in connection with Cornell University. He was an outdoorsman, and his hunting and fishing expeditions took him into the hinterlands of the United States and Canada. Other sports and hobbies included photography, fly tying, bowling, golfing, and the building of bamboo fly-rods. In these, as in all others of his activities, Professor Jennings persistently aimed for perfection.

Professor Jennings retired from the faculty of Cornell University on June 30, 1958. He had served Cornell for thirty-six years. After retirement he added to his many hobbies the task of remodeling and modernizing an old farmhouse on Applegate Corners Road. This, as was true with all his endeavors, was done with perfection.

His many friends, colleagues, and former students have recognized his contribution to agriculture by establishing a scholarship fund called the Burton A. Jennings Scholarship for Agricultural Engineering students.

Professor Jennings is survived by his wife, Clara Jennings; a son; two daughters; nine grandchildren; and two brothers.

H. B. Hartwig, E. D. Markwardt, W. F. Millier