

John Henry Tanner

March 1, 1861 — March 11, 1940

John Henry Tanner, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, died on March 11, 1940, fourteen years after his retirement in 1926 had concluded a period of more than a third of a century of distinguished active service at Cornell University.

Professor Tanner was born at Fort Plain, N. Y., on March 1, 1861. After completing his secondary school education he taught for several years in the Clinton Liberal Institute before coming to Cornell, where he was graduated in 1891 with special mention for proficiency in Mathematics and was at once appointed instructor in that subject. During the following thirty-five years he showed unflinching zeal and loyal devotion in all his academic and professional activities. He was author or joint author of four widely used textbooks, and in these, as in his teaching, he showed his ability to present mathematics in such a way that the student would not merely accept but would understand. He gave his full share of time to the usual committee work, and from 1897 to 1904 he served as secretary of the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences. He was one of the early members of the American Mathematical Society and took a keen interest in its problems of organization, and as its treasurer for more than a decade he succeeded in placing the society's finances on a secure foundation.

The permanence of his interest and faith in Cornell University is impressively attested by the gift which he and Mrs. Tanner have made for the eventual establishment here of a Mathematical Institute. Throughout his career his generous and unselfish spirit found innumerable ways of sympathetic assistance, always rendered with his characteristic unobtrusive graciousness, whenever a student or a friend or a cause was in need.

The noble life of John Henry Tanner will remain a living inspiration to all who knew him, and his colleagues in the University Faculty would record this expression of their love and admiration for him and of their respect for his memory.