

# Wallie Abraham Hurwitz

*February 18, 1886 — January 6, 1958*

Wallie Abraham Hurwitz, Emeritus Professor of Mathematics, died January 6, 1958, in Raleigh, N. C. after suffering a heart attack while enroute to Florida. Professor Hurwitz was born February 18, 1886, in Fulton, Mo. He received A.B., B.S., and A.M. degrees from the University of Missouri in 1906, the A.M. from Harvard in 1907 and the Ph.D. from Göttingen in 1910. From 1910 to 1958, he devoted his keen mathematical and other talents to Cornell.

He became Instructor in 1910, Assistant Professor in 1914, Professor in 1924, and Professor Emeritus in 1954.

Few men have the broad knowledge and appreciation of the whole field of mathematics that Professor Hurwitz had. He made substantial contributions to mathematical research in several subjects, and is best known for his pioneering work in the theory of divergent series. He was a member of many American and foreign scientific societies. He served for many years in various editorial capacities, and habitually gave valuable ideas and advice to students and scientific investigators at Cornell and elsewhere. He was a superb teacher who believed that everything should be rigorously proved and thoroughly understood. His lectures, which were always meticulously prepared and vigorously delivered, exemplified careful planning and clear thought in developments of theories and attacks upon problems.

Apart from mathematics, his principal intellectual interests were music, drama, and literature. He was an enthusiastic violist. He attended almost every concert and play on the campus and frequently went to New York City to attend a dozen or more in a few days. His library included remarkable collections of Gilbert and Sullivan scores and memorabilia, and of cryptography and cryptanalysis, which he bequeathed to Cornell. He was a public-spirited man, and generously gave his time and money to worthy organizations. These organizations, including Cornell, profited by the fact that Professor Hurwitz was a sagacious man. In the summer of 1929 he thought the stock market had gone so high that he should sell every share of stock that he owned, and he did it.

His personal qualities included an uncompromising integrity which was always recognized and admired. His opinions, which were sometimes expressed in stirring speeches, very often influenced the decisions of his department and of the committees and faculties of his College and the University.

In his social relationships, he was a friendly bachelor. Many a young man, new to the University, found that Professor Hurwitz took a kindly interest in him, talked about University affairs, invited him to concerts and plays, and made him feel welcome. As the years passed, Professor Hurwitz maintained these friendships and the families of his friends became his friends. He took special delight in assembling friends, old and young, to read passages from humorous literature. All through his long career his social, as well as intellectual, value to the University was tremendous.

*R. P. Agnew, Harry Caplan, W. H. French*