

# William Thorpe Tapley

*October 5, 1893 — December 18, 1977*

William T. “Bill” Tapley, professor of vegetable crops emeritus at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, died December 18, 1977, at his home in Gulfport, Florida. Professor Tapley was born October 5, 1893, at Revere, Massachusetts. A graduate of the University of New Hampshire in 1916, he spent a year in the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota before embarking on twenty-three months of service in France in World War I, serving with the American Field Service and the U.S. Army. He returned to Minnesota in 1919, received his M.S. degree in 1920, and stayed on as instructor in vegetable gardening and then as assistant professor and head of the department. He moved to Pennsylvania State University in 1923, serving as assistant professor and head of the Department of Vegetable Crops at that institution. In 1928 he joined the Francis C. Stokes Seed Company in Philadelphia as a plant breeder, leaving in 1929 to operate the family vegetable farm in Revere. In 1930 he joined the staff of the experiment station at Geneva as assistant professor of vegetable crops. He was promoted to associate professor in 1947 and to professor in 1955. He retired December 31, 1959, after almost thirty years of service to the New York vegetable industry.

Professor Tapley’s first duties at Geneva were to assist in growing and describing varieties of vegetables, and in publishing these descriptions in three of the books in the Vegetables of New York series: beans, sweet corn, and cucurbits. He spent the rest of his career developing new and improved varieties by breeding, working particularly with tomatoes, squash, and snap beans for processing. Three of his tomato originations, Gem, Red Jacket, and Longred, constituted the major varieties grown for processing in New York State at the time of his retirement. Another tomato introduction, Red Top, a paste-type tomato, enjoyed wide acceptance by both growers and processors and is still a popular variety in many parts of the world. He collaborated closely with station plant pathologists in developing Geneva 11, a verticillium wilt-resistant tomato. A processing squash named Red Skin culminated many years of effort to develop a superior squash for use in pumpkin pie mixes and baby foods to replace the standard Boston Marrow type, which has many faults from the standpoint of the grower and the processor.

Because of his wide knowledge of vegetables and a keen eye that could detect minor differences in plants and produce, Professor Tapley was frequently asked to judge vegetable and Grange exhibits at the state and county

fairs. For several years, starting in 1938, he served as secretary-treasurer of the New York State Vegetable Growers Association as well as editor and manager of the *Bulletin*, which at the time was the association's official publication.

Professor Tapley was a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist, Boston, Massachusetts, and was former first reader of the Geneva church. He was active in the Seneca Yacht Club for many years, serving as fleet captain and race official. He was also active in the Central New York Racing Association.

Surviving are his wife, Pauline Russell Tapley; two daughters, Mrs. John R. (Helen) VanFleet of Canandaigua, New York, and Mrs. Jack (Suzanne) Howard of Greenville, South Carolina; seven grandchildren; a niece; and a nephew.

*James C. Moyer, Nathan H. Peck, Morrill T. Vittum*