

# Charles Edward O'Rourke

*January 4, 1896 — January 10, 1947*

In attempting to put down in words a brief record of the life and attainments of Professor O'Rourke, one cannot escape sensing that his death was a most untimely loss. Although that record displays many brilliant attainments as a teacher, consulting engineer, and prolific author of articles and widely used textbooks on structural engineering, there is the feeling that here is an important page in the record of Cornell teachers cut short of final fruition.

Many classes of civil engineering students profited from his friendly and excellent teaching over the years and this is perhaps the best memorial that a teacher might hope for. Professor O'Rourke was also a man who attracted the friendship and respect of his Faculty associates, all of whom were proud of his attainments in civil engineering and his exceptional ability as a teacher.

"Pat" O'Rourke, as he was called by his many friends, was graduated from Cornell in 1917 and served as a member of the Civil Engineering Faculty from 1919 until the date of his death in the Cornell Infirmary on January 10, 1947. He became an Assistant Professor in 1923, Professor of Structural Engineering in 1934, and was Head of that Department at the time of his death. His teaching experience was broadened and enriched elsewhere during leave of absence periods. In 1921 he was Visiting Professor of Structural Engineering at the Carnegie Institute of Technology; during the years 1926-27 was in charge of the Structural Engineering Department of the Imperial University at Tientsin, China; and in 1941 he was Visiting Professor of Structural Engineering at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

His active and keen mind was also attracted to the practical side of civil engineering. He successfully combined his teaching career with private practice, acting as designer or structural consultant on many steel, concrete, and timber buildings, bridges and other structures. He also served as a second lieutenant in the Army during the First World War. From 1920 to 1928 he was designer for the Concrete Steel Company of New York City, and in that capacity helped design the well known Thayer Hotel at West Point. Since 1937 Professor O'Rourke had been consulting engineer for the Cooperative Grange League Federation on various stores, grain elevators, and freezer locker plants erected by that concern in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. He was a consultant for the American LaFrance-Foamite Corporation of Elmira, N. Y. in charge of a project involving the re-design of their 85 and 100 foot aerial ladders. In 1938 he was a member of the Jury of Award for the \$200,000 awarded by the James F. Lincoln Arc Welding Foundation, and in 1944 served on a special committee to formulate rules for the

1946 textbook award program. The widely publicized reinforced-concrete flight hanger for the Curtiss-Wright Company of Buffalo, N. Y. is probably the best known testimony to his skillful knowledge of design.

As a third facet to a well rounded career, Professor O'Rourke attained eminence and distinction as an author and editor in civil engineering fields. He had a gift for sensing the kind of textbooks that were needed and welcomed in the structural departments of engineering schools throughout the country. He was co-author of several such books, including "Design of Concrete Structures," "Stresses in Simple Structures," "Design of Steel Structures," "Handbook of Formulas and Tables for Engineers," and "Elementary Structural Engineering." The positions of Editor-in-Chief of the "General Engineering Handbook," and Consulting Editor of the Civil Engineering Series of the International Textbook Company of Scranton, Pa., were among his editorial activities.

Professor O'Rourke's students often remarked that he seemed to have the quality of "living" bridges and buildings. His teaching and his publications were imbued with much of this same feeling.

In spite of his busy professional career and honors achieved, Professor O'Rourke always remained a modest and friendly man who participated actively in many phases of the life of the community. He and his charming wife, the former Miss Hilda Julia Mullon of Patton, Pa., were familiar figures at social affairs. A son, Robert Edward, and a daughter, Patricia Ann, completed the family. While in college, Professor O'Rourke joined Sigma Phi Sigma Fraternity and was elected to Chi Epsilon and Tau Beta Pi, honorary engineering societies. He was also a member of Pyramid and Gargoyle, honorary architectural society.

The death of Professor O'Rourke cut short a career that all had hoped might bring forth still further achievements in the engineering profession. It is a loss to that profession, a loss to Cornell, and the civil engineering students will miss one of their best and most popular professors.

*Carl Crandall, H. B. Meek, George Winter*