

Frederick Adolph Wolf 1885-1975

Frederick T. Wolf



Frederick A. Wolf died at his home in Durham, North Carolina, on November 7, 1975. The son of August and Wilhelmina (Kracht) Wolf, he was born in Odell, Nebraska, on June 25, 1885. Upon graduation from high school, he taught high school for a year, in order to earn money with which to attend college. He graduated from the University of

Nebraska in 1907, and obtained his Masters degree there in 1908. He did graduate work at the University of Texas for two years, under the guidance of F. D. Heald, and obtained the doctorate from Cornell University in 1911. His dissertation dealt with the development of the perfect stage of the fungus *Diplocarpon rosae*.

From 1911 to 1915 he served as plant pathologist with the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, Auburn, Alabama. He married Wynette Taylor, of Montgomery, Alabama, in 1914. In 1915, he moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, where he was a plant pathologist with the Agricultural Experiment Station at N. C. State College for ten years, except during World War I. As a First Lieutenant in the Sanitary Corps, U.S. Army, he was assigned to bacteriological laboratory work in the hospital of Camp Greene, near Charlotte, N. C.

He became interested in diseases of tobacco, and maintained that interest for the remainder of his life. With A. C. Foster, he described the organism of tobacco wildfire, *Bacterium tabacum*. Studies of Granville wilt, bacterial leaf spot, and of diseases of soybeans were made during this period. From 1925 to 1927 he was a plant pathologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry laboratory in Orlando, Florida, where he worked primarily with diseases of citrus.

In 1927, he became professor of botany at Duke University, Durham, N. C., a position he occupied for twenty-seven years. For a number of years his primary research interest was centered on the downy mildew or "blue mold" disease of tobacco caused by *Peronospora tabacina*, a pathogen which caused large losses in this crop during the early thirties. These studies included the use of volatile fungicides for control of the disease in the seed bed.

He spent the year 1933-34 on sabbatic leave at Harvard University. The first edition of his book, Tobacco Diseases and Decays, appeared in 1935, and he was co-author of Fungi of the Duke Forest, which was published in 1938. During World War II, he was engaged in an

investigation for the War Production Board of the possibilities of obtaining agar from seaweeds along the Atlantic coast. His two-volume textbook of mycology appeared in 1947. In that year he again took a sabbatic leave, working for the Ministry of Agriculture in Venezuela to improve the tobacco cultivation practices in that country. He was invited to return ten years later, and was shown how his recommendations had borne fruit. He made a brief trip to Colombia with the same general objective.

His classes included mycology, bacteriology, and forest pathology. Some thirty students obtained graduate degrees under his direction during his years at Duke. He was made a James B. Duke Professor several years before his obligatory retirement in 1954.

Retirement from teaching gave him additional freedom for research. A second revised edition of the book, Tobacco Diseases and Decays, was published in 1957. For several years he was involved in efforts to grow Turkish or aromatic tobacco in this country, a project which was scientifically successful, but economically impractical. In 1959, he made a trip to Greece, the Dodecanese Islands, and Turkey, in preparation for writing his book, Aromatic or Oriental Tobaccos, which was published in 1962. In 1963, he participated in the Third Tobacco Congress in Salisbury, Rhodesia.

During his latter years, he studied cores obtained from Lake sediments in East Africa, examining them for fungus spores thousands of years old. This required only a microscope, and could be carried on intermittently, as time and inclination permitted. He was active in research until a year prior to his death.

Dr. Wolf was a member of a number of professional societies, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Botanical Society of America, the Mycological Society of America, the American Phytopathological Society, the Torrey Botanical Club, the British Mycological Society, and the North Carolina Academy of Science. He was a charter member of both the American Phytopathological Society and the Mycological Society of America, and had served as president of the North Carolina Academy of Science. In 1965, he was recipient of the North Carolina Gold Medal, presented by the Governor, for devoting "a great measure of his scientific talents and gifts" to research. He is survived by his wife of over 61 years, a daughter, a son, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

A list of his publications may be obtained from the Department of Botany, Duke University, Durham, NC 27706.