

Samuel Andrew Wingard, 1895–1980

R. G. Henderson and C. W. Roane



Samuel Andrew Wingard died November 16, 1980, at his home in Auburn, Alabama, after an extended illness. He is survived by two sons, Richard M. Wingard, Auburn, Alabama, and Leonard A. Wingard, Bristol, Tennessee, four grandsons, one great-grandson, and two brothers.

Dr. Wingard was born September 22, 1895, in Grady, Alabama and was reared on a farm in that area. His early education was obtained in public school at Center Point, Alabama, where he was willing and able to learn under adverse conditions. His first 10 years of schooling were in a one-room, one-teacher school. He never attended an organized high school, but did receive some supplementary tutoring from one of his teachers. He was granted a conditional entrance to Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University) in 1912. Prior to his graduation in 1916, the Dean checked his records and found that even though he was an honor student and about to be graduated he had never officially entered college. The Dean permitted him to complete the entrance examinations and to make up needed high school credits. He was granted the B.S. degree with Honors on schedule in June, 1916. The M.S. degree also was earned at the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, and the Ph.D. degree with majors in cytology and mycology was granted by Columbia University in 1925. He married Mildred Baker on September 15, 1927. Three sons were born to that marriage, one of whom died in 1951.

At Columbia University he studied under the direction of Dr. R. A. Harper, who influenced him not only in his studies, but also through close friendship that continued during the years that followed graduation. Two other people that influenced his life work were Dr. F. D. Fromme, Head, Department of Plant Pathology and Botany, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and Dr. A. W. Drinkard, Jr., Director, Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station.

Dr. Wingard was employed in 1916 by the USDA, Bureau of Plant Quarantine, to inspect citrus groves and nurseries for diseases. In 1917, he accepted employment as Assistant Plant Pathologist, Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, Blacksburg, to study diseases of tobacco and other crops. He continued in this work until 1929 when he was appointed Head, Department of Plant Pathology and Botany. Although there were some changes in departmental designations over the years, he continued to administer research and graduate studies in the fields of plant pathology and plant physiology until his retirement in 1964. In 1950, when the Department of Plant Pathology and Physiology was organized for teaching, research, and extension at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Dr. Wingard was named Head. He was a most capable administrator as evidenced by the rapid growth in staff and organization of this new department that granted graduate degrees in the fields of plant

pathology, plant physiology, and weed science. The number of professional staff members in the Department had grown to 27 at the time of his retirement.

Dr. Wingard was recognized nationally and internationally for his cooperation in regional studies, especially on diseases of tobacco. He was a major contributor to the first conference on tobacco diseases held in Washington, DC, in 1929, served as Chairman of the Tobacco Disease Council at its organization in 1932, and continued in that capacity until 1944. He was also instrumental in initiating state and regional programs of study on fruits and peanuts.

One of Dr. Wingard's greatest loves was his studies in the control of bean rust through the use of resistant cultivars. He developed a number of rust resistant pole beans that became known by the general name of "Wingard's Wonder Beans." A part of his early research was devoted to incorporating rust and smut resistance into small grains. In cooperation with the Department of Agronomy, a wheat cultivar, 'Vahart,' with superior qualities for Virginia growers was released in 1946.

Reflecting his interest in disease resistance in farm crops, Dr. Wingard published a review article, *The Nature of Disease Resistance in Plants*, in the *Botanical Review* for 1941. He encouraged staff members to conduct research, especially in relation to disease resistance. He was always available for consultation, not only to his staff, but to friends in other departments and in other institutions.

Dr. Wingard was an active participant in community affairs and in church work. He was a member of the Blacksburg United Methodist Church, Hunter's Masonic Lodge and Blacksburg Royal Arch Chapter. He loved outdoor activities and was an excellent fisherman and hunter. He was honored by election to membership in Phi Kappa Phi, Gamma Sigma Delta, Sigma Xi, and Alpha Zeta. He was a member of the Virginia Academy of Science, the American Phytopathological Society, Botanical Society of America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1925 and received the Virginia Academy of Science Horsley Research Award in 1933.

Following his retirement, Dr. and Mrs. Wingard took up winter residence at Port Salerno, Florida, and summer residence in Blacksburg where they spent many happy hours fishing in the St. Lucie River and Claytor Lake. As Mrs. Wingard's health waned, they moved to Auburn, Alabama, to be close to the family of their son Richard. Mrs. Wingard died in 1977.

We will long remember Sam Wingard as a traditional, even-tempered, southern gentleman. We enjoyed fishing with him many times. He had a trait that even now causes us to chuckle. When he tried to tell a story, he would get so carried away by the humor of it that we were all shaking with laughter before the punch line was delivered—if it was! Thus, he endeared himself to many friends, professional and otherwise. Everyone was happy to see Sam Wingard.