

Charles Homer Arndt, 1892–1986

W. M. Epps



Charles Homer Arndt, plant pathologist and professor of botany, emeritus, of Clemson University, died February 16, 1986, at the home of his daughter at Sumter, SC. He was born at Jonestown, PA, October 14, 1892, the son of Robert S. and Ellen F. Arndt. He received the A.B. degree in botany at Lebanon Valley College in 1914, the M.S. at Purdue University in 1916, and the Ph.D. in plant physiology at the University of Pennsylvania in 1921. After he received the M.S. degree he served as

acting professor of biology at Lebanon Valley College for one year, 1916–1917. He then served as inspector for the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture for two years, 1917–19, during which time he mapped the area in Texas that was infested by the sweet potato weevil and determined the native hosts of the weevil.

After he received the Ph.D., he remained at the University of Pennsylvania until 1925 as instructor of plant pathology and physiology. He then served five years as resident director, Coffee Experiment Station, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. In 1930, he joined the staff of the Botany Division of Clemson College as associate botanist with the South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station. He retired in 1957 as plant pathologist and professor of botany, emeritus. After retirement he made his home at Clemson and later with his daughter at Sumter, SC. He maintained a vacation home in the mountains at Cashiers, NC, where he spent much of his time after retirement as long as his health permitted.

In his early life, Dr. Arndt was primarily a teacher, but after he left Pennsylvania in 1925 his work was almost entirely research. During his five years in Haiti he studied the physiology, diseases, and insects of the coffee plant. He made the first extensive collection of marine algae in the Caribbean area. When he arrived at Clemson, the major research interest of the plant pathology group there was the diseases of cotton. He began to study the seedling diseases of cotton and corn and the treatment of seeds of these two crops. Cotton, at that time, was in the midst of a major revolution that resulted from the introduction of the boll weevil into South Carolina about 10 years earlier. The boll weevil forced

farmers to change drastically their methods of growing cotton. Disease problems also changed as the tall cultivars that were widely spaced in the row were replaced by short types that were spaced much more closely. Dr. Arndt pioneered in the promotion of cotton seed treatment in the South and kept cotton farmers up-to-date in their efforts to control diseases during this period of change. He initiated the use of standardized regional plantings of uniformly treated cotton seed in the South. He was author or coauthor of about 30 scientific articles, mostly dealing with cotton seedling physiology and diseases and their control.

During World War II, when many of the younger faculty members throughout the college were called to military service, he taught physics for a brief period. Later, just before his retirement and as the graduate program in plant pathology was being developed, he taught a graduate-level course in plant pathology to the first students to enroll in that field in the graduate program. His students indicated that he was a thorough teacher who expected and received a high standard of work from his students. His love was research, however, and he entered the classroom rather reluctantly.

After his retirement, he was active for more than 10 years as a consultant to the Tennessee Corporation in reported instances of possible damage to vegetation by chemical effluents from the stacks of industrial plants. Throughout his life he maintained an interest in wild plants and especially in the wild flowers of the southern mountains. Until his death he maintained a regular correspondence with his former associates and continued to show interest in a wide variety of subjects.

He was active in the American Phytopathological Society, serving as president of the Southern Division in 1940 and as councilor from the Southern Division from 1944 to 1947. He served as chairman of the APS Committee on Seed Treatment and as chairman of the Cotton Disease Council Committee on Seed Treatment. He was a charter and C. A. Shull Life Member of the Society of Plant Physiology. He was a member and fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the American Botanical Society.

Dr. Arndt was married twice, first in 1920 to Miriam R. Ellis (1894–1929), and second in 1933 to Anne H. Cooley (1891–1964). He is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Robert S. (Janet) James of Sumter, SC, and Mrs. Gail (Mary) Slocum of Albany, NY, six grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.