

Louis Melville Massey, 1890-1969

G. C. Kent



Louis Melville Massey passed away at Ithaca, New York, on November 12, 1969. He had retired on June 30, 1958, after completing over 46 years of service to Plant Pathology and the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University. During this period he was graduate student, teacher, investigator, and administrator. He was best known for able administration, curt but helpful advice, and

deep knowledge of his specialities, roses and plant injuries from industrial gases.

Professor Massey was born in West Point, Iowa, August 25, 1890, and received his early education in the public schools in Lima, Ohio. He entered Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana, in 1908, where he became one of the many students under the stimulating influence of Professor M. B. Thomas. Dr. Massey received his A.B. Degree from Wabash in 1912, and in April of that year entered the Graduate School at Cornell University. At that time he was appointed assistant in gladiolus disease studies; in 1914 was promoted to instructor in Plant Pathology. He received the Ph.D. Degree from Cornell University in January, 1916. His duties were expanded at that time to include research on roses and other ornamentals and some teaching, and on July 1, 1917, he was promoted to assistant professor.

From April 1, 1918 to June 30, 1919, Dr. Massey was on leave of absence from Cornell working as a plant pathologist in the War Emergency Program of the USDA. He was assigned to duty in New Jersey as an Extension Specialist at Rutgers.

In the summer of 1919, Prof. Massey returned to Cornell and his research on roses, gladioli, and other ornamentals. He also cooperated in research with other staff members on potato wart, apple scab, peach leaf curl, fire blight, etc.

In 1919 Dr. Massey initiated a course in Advanced Plant Pathology which he continued to teach, with the help of a number of staff members and graduate students, until 1953.

In the summer of 1921, Dr. Massey married Margery Wheldon Leonard, an assistant in plant pathology, and the same summer was appointed acting head of the department. On July 1, 1922, he was named Professor and Head of Plant Pathology. At the time of his appointment as Head, the Department consisted of eight staff members housed in the basement of Bailey Hall, the University auditorium.

Dr. Massey started immediately on a double-barreled program of rebuilding and enlarging the staff and relocating the Department in new, adequate quarters. In 1931, the Department of Plant Pathology moved into the third and part of the fourth floors of

the "new building," later known as the Plant Science Building. Later additions included new greenhouses at Ithaca, an Ornamentals Research Laboratory at Farmingdale, L.I., a vegetable disease unit at Riverhead, L.I., and the Golden Nematode Research Laboratory and farm at Seaford, L.I. By 1950, the staff numbering 24 with 25 assistantships and 12 nonprofessional positions, Dr. Massey realized that many of the staff members who had built the reputation of the department were nearing retirement and rebuilding was again necessary. He requested relief from administrative duties and on June 30, 1950, after 29 years as head of the department, he relinquished these duties.

In 1938, Dr. Massey, with Dr. C. E. Palm, then head of entomology, in response to an expressed need of liaison between the College research staff and industry, initiated the Insecticide-Fungicide Conference. This conference, now in its 32nd year, is held each fall to provide some 400 industry representatives with a preliminary view of the year's research and the recommendations of the Extension staff for the coming year.

In the late 1930's, Dr. Massey initiated some of the earliest studies on the use of air to move pesticides in the liquid form instead of depending on water under pressure. The later use of this principle in many forms of application equipment attests to his foresight.

Over the years, Dr. Massey served as adviser and councilor to many in universities and industries throughout the country. He was one of the pioneers in pollution, and traveled the entire U.S. studying and advising on injuries, real and imagined, from industrial gases. He served for many years as Director of Research for the American Rose Society, and contributed nearly a hundred articles to the Rose Annual.

From 1950 to his retirement in 1958, Dr. Massey continued his research on rose diseases and their control, and from 1950-53 continued to teach a course in advanced plant pathology.

Dr. Massey spent his sabbatic leaves conducting research on ornamentals; in 1925 as research associate at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, Yonkers, N.Y., and in 1932, 1939-40, and 1952-53 at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Massey was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Sigma Xi, a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Botanical Society of America, The American Phytopathological Society, American Society of Plant Physiologists, American Association of University Professors, Mycological Society of America, and American Rose Society. He served as Councilor and Vice-President of The American Phytopathological Society, and as Vice-President and President of the American Rose Society.

Dr. Massey is survived by one son, one daughter, and 5 grandchildren. Louis will be missed by all who knew him for his straightforward nature, the twinkle in his eye, his smile and characteristic chuckle, and as a scholar of the highest caliber.