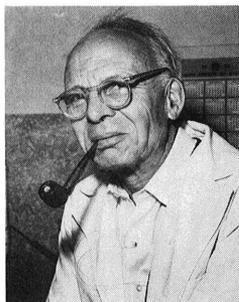


William Newton, 1893-1973

R. Newton



Born in Montreal, April 25, 1893, William Newton died at Sidney, B.C., August 17, 1973.

Bill began his schooling in Montreal, but at age 10 moved with the family to Plaisance, Quebec, where he attended the traditional little red schoolhouse and gained as well a solid background of practical experience in farming. To this he added in due course a more

scientific training at Macdonald College of McGill University, where he graduated in 1914. He was appointed at once to the staff of the British Columbia Department of Agriculture but shortly was given leave for war service in France. He returned from the war in 1919, and after a very short time went to the University of California at Berkeley. In 1920 he obtained the M.Sc. degree and returned to his former position with the British Columbia Department of Agriculture.

In 1921 he married Nora Evans and the two of them went to Berkeley in 1922 where Bill studied for the doctorate in plant physiology, receiving this degree from the University of California in 1923. They remained in California five years longer, Bill filling the positions first as assistant professor of botany at Pomona College, Claremont, then as research associate at the photosynthesis laboratory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, Carmel, and finally as assistant professor of botany at the University of California, Los Angeles.

When their family began to come along they felt a desire to bring them up as Canadians, and returned to British Columbia in 1928, when Bill became plant pathologist with the Federal Department of Agriculture. He established the laboratory of plant pathology, first in space provided by the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, but moved it in 1929 to the Dominion Experimental Farm at Saanichton, on Vancouver Island. He continued in charge until his retirement in 1958.

Towards the end of his active service, Bill and his wife and youngest son spent a year in Ceylon on work for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Scientifically, he made his reputation for work on virus and nematode diseases of plants, particularly

those affecting bulb crops. His initiative and progress with the virus research prompted the Federal Department of Agriculture to send him to Britain in 1935 for a year as exchange plant pathologist. There he divided his time between Cambridge and Rothamsted. At home he was known throughout British Columbia as an authoritative and willing guide to the farmers in dealing with all kinds of plant disorders.

Bill was essentially a child of nature, loving the outdoors. As a teen-ager on the farm he built himself a rude bunk of cedar fence rails, in which he slept under the open skies in any reasonable weather. Fifteen years in very active "retirement" on a 9-acre, heavily wooded lot overlooking Swartz Bay and the inner islands of the Gulf of Georgia, he and his wife made it a Mecca not only for their own family but for a host of congenial friends. Bill often forsook his comfortable house in favour of a hut he had built for himself in the deep woods. Bricks for the fireplace and glass windows were the only materials he did not find on his own place. The chimney is of stone, the mortar of his own contriving with local clay and only a trace of cement. Shakes for the roof he split from blocks of cedar. The cedar bark he used to chink the log walls. And no sooner was this hut complete than he started on another, all of stone, further to satisfy his urge to build with native materials. Almost to the very end, he was in great demand as a popular speaker, much as he would have preferred to devote himself to his other hobbies of wood-carving, gardening, collecting native plants, and fishing with his grandchildren.

In wood-carving he attained great skill in fashioning necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and other jewel-like wood products, figures of birds and animals, mugs carved in bas-relief, bowls and other objects, all of carefully seasoned wood selected with an eye to beauty of grain and texture. He enjoyed, too, making unique tables and chairs for his own home. But in his latest years, his plant-collecting hobby became increasingly dominant. Two expeditions to the Canadian Arctic, in company with his sister, Dr. Dorothy E. Swales, another avid collector, he described as "red letter" events in his career.

Bill had a genius for friendship, and died greatly beloved not only of his family but of the entire community he had served so well and so long. He is survived by his wife, three sons, two daughters, and nine grandchildren.