

## Donald Folsom, 1891-1973

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Dr. Donald Folsom died on November 17, 1973 after a long illness. He was born October 23, 1891 at Henderson, Iowa, although his youth was spent in Lincoln, Nebraska. In 1912, he received the A.B. degree in Botany from the University of Nebraska, and obtained his M.A. in 1914 and his Ph.D. degree in 1917 from the University of Minnesota in

Plant Physiology. He was Instructor in Botany at North Carolina State College during 1917-18. Dr. Folsom came to the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station as an Assistant Plant Pathologist in 1918 and immediately began working on degenerative diseases of potato, in association with E. S. Schultz of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. From 1920-23 he was Associate Plant Pathologist at the Maine Station and became Chief Plant Pathologist in 1923, a title he held until his retirement in 1957.

When Folsom began working with E. S. Schultz in 1918 on the degenerative diseases of potato, these diseases were thought to be physiological in nature. Working with Schultz, and others, in 1919, he published that potato mosaic virus was transmitted by aphids. This discovery established Folsom among that early group of research workers who developed the idea that plants could be affected by virus diseases.

During the remainder of a career that encompassed

almost forty years, Folsom continued to study diseases that affected potato and other crops, authoring 124 research papers. Some of these problems were: the differentiation of potato mosaics; transmission and spread of leafroll; spindle tuber; relationship between leafroll and net necrosis; differentiation of stem-end browning from net necrosis; control of virus diseases; causes of potato rots; Botrytis rot; Verticillium wilt; pink-eye; and mahogany browning. In addition to the published research on the diseases of potatoes, he also published on diseases affecting apples, beans, blueberries, raspberries, cucumbers, and other vegetables. Outstanding in his long list of accomplishments was the research on virus leafroll and net necrosis of potatoes, and the development of methods for testing Maine seed stocks in Florida. This latter contribution has proved to be one of the key factors in modern potato seed improvement.

He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, The American Phytopathological Society, the Botanical Society of America, and the Canadian Phytopathological Society. He was honored by the Potato Association of America in 1954 by election as Honorary Life Member. In 1914, he married Alma F. Schultz of Minneapolis, Minnesota and from this union came three children. His first wife died in 1936 and the following year he married Olive Keller of Lincoln, Nebraska. Besides his wife, he is survived by three children, Marie (Mrs. Hugh) Clark of Aiken, South Carolina; Robert Folsom of Reston, Virginia; and Helen (Mrs. Robert, Jr.) Parker of Bangor, Maine; and six grandchildren.