

Frederick Lovejoy Wellman, 1897-1994

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Frederick L. Wellman was born while his parents lived in the village of Kamundongo, Angola (Portuguese West Africa). After spending part of his boyhood years in Angola, his family moved to Wichita, KS, where he completed his grammar and high school education. He received his BA degree with honors at Fairmount College (now Wichita State University, KS), remained away from school a short while, and began graduate studies at the University of Wisconsin,

Madison, which culminated in his Ph.D. degree in 1928. Dr. Wellman was always proud of being the first graduate student of J. C. Walker at the University of Wisconsin.

Although most of Dr. Wellman's work was on coffee diseases, he began his career as principal plant pathologist for the United Fruit Company at La Lima, Honduras, working on penetration and histology of *Fusarium oxysporum* var. *cubense*, the causal agent of Panama disease of banana.

Most of his distinguished professional life was spent in the American tropics, but he also served for short terms as pathologist and plant explorer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in places such as the Middle East and northern Africa. Dr. Wellman initiated and gave technical support to coffee research programs at Interamerican Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IICA) in Turruialba, Cost Rica. His presence at IICA had a strong, positive influence on teaching and research and strengthened the coffee program already in existence at Turruialba.

The need for effective measures to keep coffee rust away from the Western Hemisphere was always of concern to Dr. Wellman. Therefore, in the early 1950s, he traveled to coffee-producing countries in Africa and Asia to learn about the latest control measures for coffee rust, as well as to collect coffee material resistant to rust. Shortly after this trip in 1952, he visited the Centro de Investigacao das Ferrugens do Cafee in Oeiras, Portugal, and made arrangements with the Center to provide

technical assistance to coffee-producing countries in the Western Hemisphere if coffee rust was ever established. As we now know, these efforts were rewarded handsomely during and after the establishment of coffee rust: first in Brazil in 1970 and later in other coffee-producing countries in the Western Hemisphere. Perhaps one of Dr. Wellman's greatest contributions was the 1961 publication, *Coffee: Botany Civilization and Utilization*. This outstanding book has been a standard text on coffee production for many years.

Dr. Wellman was also a notable teacher. Many students who trained under him at IICA went on to pursue careers in Latin American countries as well as other parts of the world.

In 1957, Dr. Wellman became head of the Department of Plant Pathology and Botany, Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras. When he retired from this position in 1963, he was appointed Visiting Professor, and in 1971, he was appointed Professor Emeritus of North Carolina State University, Raleigh, where he continued to be an active writer.

Dr. Wellman was the founder of the Caribbean Division of the American Phytopathological Society and served as its first president. He also served as councilor of the division and chairman of the APS Committee on International Cooperation. He received the Award of Merit from the Caribbean Division for distinguished service to tropical plant pathology and in 1974 was designated a Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society.

We can say without a doubt that Dr. Wellman's second career, following his retirement, has been an inspiration to his colleagues. During this time, he wrote and published three books: *Plant Diseases, An Introduction for the Layman* in 1971; *Tropical American Plant Diseases* in 1972; and *Dictionary of Tropical American Crops and Their Diseases*, published in 1977.

Dr. Wellman died Thursday, 21 April 1994 at the age of 97 at Rex Hospital in Raleigh, NC, following a short illness. He was preceded in death by his wife of 72 years, Dora U'Ren Wellman, who passed away 24 December 1992. Surviving is his son, Frederick Creighton Wellman IV.