
R. O. Whinton

1883-1960

Professor Robert Oscar Whinton was born in Crockett County, Tennessee, April 6, 1883, and died at Stillwater, Oklahoma, December 19, 1960. He is survived by his wife, Nelle, and five children, now all with families of their own.

Professor Whinton took the A. B. Degree from Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee (1906), where he was president of the senior class. He received the M. A. Degree from the University of Chicago in 1915 and continued his graduate studies at the University of California. His broad educational experience included study under famous men: Professor A. J. Carlson and Dr. Frank Lillie of the University of Chicago and Drs. S. J. Holmes and C. A. Kofoid of the University of California. As a firm proponent of laboratory study, he attended biological sessions at Woods Hole, Massachusetts; Friday Harbor, Washington; and the Rocky Mountain Biological Station, Gothic, Colorado. He represented Oklahoma State University at the 1948 International and Zoological Congress in Paris, France. Upon his retirement in 1949, many of his students and colleagues, some from distant states, met in Stillwater to demonstrate their appreciation of his excellent teachings.

His early biological experience was enriched by service with the United States Biological Survey in New Mexico. His service in the teaching field began in the Dublin, Georgia, High School (1906-1907), was interrupted for graduate study at the University of Chicago (1908-1909) and was followed by two years of high school teaching at Tyler, Texas. From 1911 to 1913, he was Head of the Biology Department of Southwestern State College at Weatherford, Oklahoma. In October, 1913, he was appointed Assistant Professor of Zoology under Dr. L. L. Lewis at Oklahoma State



University (then Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College). When the Department of Zoology became an administrative unit, Professor Whitenton was appointed head, a position he held until his retirement.

Professor Whitenton was a keen observer of birds and developed an uncanny skill in distinguishing species by their song as well as plumage, keeping detailed notes of his observations. During the earlier years of the Zoology Department he developed courses in general zoology, parasitology, genetics and evolution, and embryology. All academic requirements for the Ph. D. degree were completed in the field of protozoology at the University of California, but heavy teaching and administrative duties prevented the completion of his dissertation on ciliates in the sheep stomach.

During later years Professor Whitenton was instrumental in developing general courses in the sciences for non-science majors. The courses in biological science, now offered at OSU, stem from his pioneering efforts.

Professor Whitenton, fond of sports and the fine young men who represented OSU in collegiate competition, was a member of the Athletic Cabinet, a position he had held for many years. Some of his colleagues will remember his sportsmanlike conduct, sense of fair play and his cheery smile of confidence across the net on the tennis court, where he excelled.

For many years Professor Whitenton was active in the affairs of the Oklahoma Academy of Science, serving as president in 1922. At the December Meeting (1960) of the Academy, he was elected to honorary membership. Although he was informed of his nomination for this distinction, he was unable to hear of his election.

Students, colleagues and other friends will long remember "Prof", as he was affectionately known, for his kindly counsel, wise teachings, friendly help in trying times and keen sense of wholesome humor. His contributions to society can be measured not by fruits of his own research as much as by the help and encouragement so freely given to others; and in still greater measure, he contributed to the molding of character in the many young men and women who profited from association with him. Many people from numerous walks of life have called for a chat with their beloved teacher when they returned to the campus for visits. Another great teacher-naturalist has passed on.

—G. A. Moore