
Obituary

George Dunlap McLaughlin

1887-1945

George D. McLaughlin, director of the B. D. Eisendrath Memorial Laboratory, Racine, Wisconsin, and a leading scientist in the field of leather chemistry, died suddenly on 15 October 1945. His death at the age of 58 ended an unusual career.

He was born at the little town of Retort, Center County, Pennsylvania, in 1887. After finishing high school at Buena Vista, Virginia, young McLaughlin, who, as a boy, had been fascinated by the work of a chemist in a near-by plant, served first as chemist's helper and later, at 19, despite a slender academic background, was given the responsible position of chief chemist of the Leas and McVitty plant in Buena Vista. In 1912 he moved to Benicia, California, where he was chief chemist for Kullman, Salz and Company.

In 1919 McLaughlin dropped industrial work and went to the University of Cincinnati, where he felt he could find opportunity for study and research as a means for seeking answers to many problems that he had found in practical work. At Cincinnati he held a research associateship in physiology. This two-year period of study brought an unexpected reward. The leading tanners of the country had, for several years, maintained a central research laboratory in New York City. They wished to expand this activity and were in need of a director who possessed enthusiasm, scientific curiosity, practical knowledge, and the ability to work with people. McLaughlin accepted the offered position after the tanners had agreed to an unusual proposal from him. The laboratory was to be moved to Cincinnati, was to be associated with the University there, and, when so located, was to deal with fundamental research rather than "plant problems."

A separate laboratory building was designed, built, equipped, and staffed under McLaughlin's direction and was soon producing basic and fundamental scientific findings for both science and industry. Young men were added to the staff from time to time. Many of them later went out into work elsewhere, carrying the benefits of McLaughlin's training and stimulating approach.

Moreover, he held a post in the University—as one of his friends said, that of "dean without portfolio," for his administrative skill and understanding of personnel questions, coupled with his close friendship with the deans of the Engineering and Graduate

Schools, Dr. Herman Schneider and Dr. Louis T. More, drew him increasingly into the role of adviser on university problems. Thus, his influence was widespread in the local community and was extended, with his wife's, pianist and painter, to the artistic and intellectual life of the city.

By 1931 administrative duties had pyramided, leaving little time for research work. Again opportunity and the chance to create another research group was at hand. The result was the B. D. Eisendrath Memorial Laboratory at Racine, unique in the tanning industry and made possible by his friend, David B. Eisendrath, president of the B. D. Eisendrath Tanning Company. More research and further contributions to science and industry followed. His last work was as senior author of the recently published American Chemical Society Monograph, *The chemistry of leather manufacture*, into which he poured his unusual combination of practical but well-considered experience and keen and painstaking research.

In recognition of his work and contributions he was awarded the honorary degree of Master of Science by the University of Cincinnati in 1924. In 1937 he became the first recipient of the Fraser Muir Moffat Gold Medal, awarded by the Tanners' Council Research Foundation. He had served as president of the American Leather Chemists Association, of the Cincinnati Section of the American Chemical Society, and of the Cincinnati Chapter of Sigma Xi.

Despite his deep and active interest in his studies, his thoughtful mind ranged far beyond his scientific work. Enthusiastic over history, widely read in philosophy, a lover of music and the graphic arts, he was serving as chairman of the Racine Art Association at the time of his death. A special fund, set up in his name by contributions from friends and admirers, has been established to further the work of the Wustum Museum of Fine Arts in Racine.

Such men as George McLaughlin, beginning as apprentice chemist and rising through his ability, probity, and energy to leadership in his profession, reaffirm in practice the very best traditions of the American democracy to which he was so devoted.

CHARLES H. BEHRE, JR.

Department of Geology, Columbia University

DAVID B. EISENDRATH

B. D. Eisendrath Tanning Company
Racine, Wisconsin