

1942

## In Memoriam: John Alexander McGeoch; Edgar W. Timm; Oliver W. Muelder; Maria M. Roberts

Carl E. Seashore  
*State University of Iowa*

E. W. Lindstrom  
*Iowa State College*

Ben H. Peterson  
*Coe College*

Gertrude A. Herr

Helen F. Smith

Copyright © Copyright 1942 by the Iowa Academy of Science, Inc.  
Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias>

---

### Recommended Citation

Seashore, Carl E.; Lindstrom, E. W.; Peterson, Ben H.; Herr, Gertrude A.; and Smith, Helen F. (1942) "In Memoriam: John Alexander McGeoch; Edgar W. Timm; Oliver W. Muelder; Maria M. Roberts," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*: Vol. 49: No. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol49/iss1/6>

This General Interest Article is brought to you for free and open access by UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science by an authorized editor of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

---

## In Memoriam

---



JOHN ALEXANDER MCGEOCH  
1897—1942

Professor McGeoch came to Iowa as professor and head of the Department of Psychology in the fall of 1939. He came to an untimely death on March 3, 1942, as a result of a cerebral hemorrhage. He came to us recognized as one of the outstanding psychologists of the present generation and during his brief stay here gained recognition for his scholarly activities, his wise administration, and his winsome personality in all his associations on the campus.

He was born in New York but was educated in the middle west. Before coming to Iowa he had held responsible positions in Washington University, the University of Missouri, and Wesleyan University, where he held a research professorship.

His principal field of investigation centered around the analysis of the learning process and just before his death he had finished his magnum opus "The Psychology of Human Learning," which is being published by Longmans, Green.

Iowa mourns the loss of this distinguished scholar.

CARL E. SEASHORE  
State University of Iowa



EDGAR W. TIMM

1916—1942

EDGAR W. TIMM, Research Assistant in Genetics at the Iowa State College, a brilliant young scientist, died very suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage on March 26, 1942 at the age of twenty-six. Born in Muscatine, Iowa, where he is survived by his father and two brothers. Timm had his secondary education at the Muscatine High School (1928-1932). He entered Iowa State College in 1932 and graduated with honors in 1936 with the B. S. degree in chemical technology.

As a result of his exceptional academic career and his fine personality, he was the unanimous choice for the Rhodes Scholarship, the first from Iowa State College. He spent two years at Oxford University, Trinity College, receiving a B.Sc. degree there in 1938. From this study, he published two papers in reaction kinetics, one with the noted head of his department, Dr. C. N. Hinshelwood. As a reward for this accomplishment, he was granted a third year at Oxford which was devoted largely to work in biology and genetics. He spent six weeks at the famous John Innes Institution for Genetics at Merton; and traveled widely during vacation periods. A third publication on hybridity and polyploidy of an Oxford rush, *Juncus*, resulted from this final year of work in England. By this time, Timm had decided on a career in Genetics and was offered a graduate assistantship in the Genetics Department of Iowa State College. In the fall of 1939, before returning home, he was a delegate at the International Congress of Genetics at Edinburgh, Scotland.

From 1939-1941 Timm served as graduate assistant in the Genetics Department of Iowa State College, maintaining the same 'straight A'

record of his former years. He was an unusually keen observer and thinker, with a marked flair for mathematical applications. His researches dealt with bacterial genetics, particularly the mutation aspect of virulence in the bacterial wilt pathogen of maize. Timm possessed rare ability in planning experiments. His colleagues and graduate students of the department leaned on him for direction and his profound influence on their ideas will remain as a heritage for long.

In 1940, Timm married Helen Waldron of Des Moines, a graduate of Iowa State College in the class of 1940. She proved to be a devoted collaborator in Timm's research. At this time, when Timm's Ph.D. research was practically complete, he was appointed as full time Research Assistant on a Rockefeller Foundation project, continuing with the bacterial genetics work on a larger scale. He was blazing new paths in critical studies of bacterial variation and mutation when, without warning he was stricken at the end of a day's work.

*Publications.*

1. Hinshelwood, C. N., K. J. Laidler, and E. W. Timm. The activation energy of organic reactions. Part I. Electronic theories of organic chemistry from the standpoint of chemical kinetics. *Journal of the Chemical Society*, 1938:848-858.
2. Timm, E. W. and C. N. Hinshelwood. The activation energy of organic reactions. Part III. The kinetics of acid hydrolysis of esters. *Journal of the Chemical Society*, 1938:862-869.
3. Timm, E. W. and Clapham, A. R. Jointed rushes of the Oxford district. *New Phytol.* 39:1-16. 1940.
4. Timm, E. W. Theoretical Genetics. *Iowa Academy Sci. Proc.* 48:51-58. 1941.

E. W. LINDSTROM  
Iowa State College,  
Ames, Iowa



OLIVER W. MUELDER  
1912—1941

Oliver W. Muelder passed away on April 11, 1941 after a long illness. He was born in Peoria, Illinois, on June 9, 1912.

He attended the Public Schools in San Jose, Illinois, Burlington, Iowa, and Minonk, Illinois. After graduation from the Kenosha, Wisconsin, High School, he attended Berea College, Berea, Kentucky, receiving an A. B. degree in 1935. Continuing his studies he was awarded the Master of Science degree by the University of Wisconsin where he did his graduate work in Chemistry.

He was appointed instructor in Chemistry at Coe College, a position he held until failing health forced him to relinquish his duties and return to his home in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

His stay in Iowa was quite brief but in that time, he made his presence a valuable contribution to his associates and to the students with whom he came in contact.

BEN H. PETERSON  
Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Ia.



MARIA M. ROBERTS

1867—1942

On April 12, 1942 at Ames, Iowa, occurred the death of Maria M. Roberts, long time member of the Iowa Academy of Science and for 51 years closely associated with the teaching and progress of Mathematics in this state.

The essential facts of her life history were recorded by Dean Roberts herself at the request of her friends at the time of her fiftieth class reunion. Concerning her birth place she wrote: "I always give the date and place of my birth as June 29, 1867, Dunlap, Iowa, but as a matter of fact the Northwestern Railway completed construction across Iowa that summer, and the town of Dunlap and I were born about the same time in the northeast corner of Harrison County".

Her father came to Iowa in 1857 from Connecticut, traveling by covered wagon from Iowa City, which was the western end of the Rock Island railroad. Iowa land was then selling at \$1.25 an acre. In due time Mr. Roberts owned an Iowa farm and was one of the pioneers in accepting improved farming methods.

Her mother, Ellen Rogers, came from Michigan to Clinton County as a young girl, moving to Harrison County when she was sixteen. She taught school there during the war and was married to Mr. Roberts in 1866 after his return from four years of service in the Civil War. Maria was the eldest child of this union. She wrote of her home with deep appreciation, saying, "I have always felt that I was most fortunate in being surrounded with a delightful home life. Both my father and

mother were great readers; by reading, and particularly by *thinking*, they became truly cultured people."

Maria attended country school then went to the Dunlap high school, being graduated when she was 17. Upon the advice of a neighbor Mr. Roberts decided to give his daughter a year of college at Ames. To provide the necessary \$180.00 for expenses was a big problem but what a high dividend that investment has paid in service to the State of Iowa.

One year of college was followed by three others financed by rural school teaching in the "long vacations". Upon graduation in 1890 Maria Roberts was elected to teach in the then new high school in North Des Moines. In the meantime she consented to fill a sudden vacancy in the fourth grade in Des Moines, but before she had had two weeks of experience in that work she was offered a position at Iowa State College. This offer came to her from Professor Stanton by way of the private telephone wire which then connected the college with Des Moines. Because Maria had never used a telephone this conversation with Professor Stanton was by proxy. As a result of this three way conversation Miss Roberts was assured an instructorship in Mathematics at Iowa State College beginning February 1891 at a salary of \$400.00 to be increased by \$75.00 if she acted as assistant to the preceptress. Her following promotion to assistant professor, to associate professor, to full professor of Mathematics (1913), to acting Head of the Mathematics department, then to Head, then to Dean of the Junior College—gave official recognition to the success of a remarkable woman,—a truly great teacher and executive.

It was a matter of regret to Miss Roberts that she was unable to take the time and money for a doctorate. She did graduate work several summers at Cornell University and the University of Chicago and kept contact with the progress of science by frequent attendance at scientific meetings.

She and her colleague, Miss Julia Colpitts, wrote a very favorably received textbook in Analytic Geometry.

She was a member of the Mathematics Association of America, the American Mathematical Society, Iowa Academy of Science, American Association of University Women, Sigma Delta Epsilon, Pi Mu Epsilon, Phi Kappa Phi, Mortar Board, P. E. O. and Pi Beta Phi.

When she retired from executive work as Dean of Junior College, Miss Roberts took charge of the loan funds of Iowa State College, a position in which she continued to render vital service to the youth of the college. After the death of Miss Colpitts she started with a generous gift the Julia Colpitts loan fund.

At the time of her fiftieth class reunion the college conferred upon Dean Roberts the honorary Doctor of Law degree. At the same commencement her portrait was presented to the college by her many friends. One of the dormitories for women on the campus was named Roberts Hall in her honor. She was given the Chicago Alumni Service award as one of those whose contribution to the college had merited outstanding recognition. There is a Maria Roberts loan fund to which

she gave generously, and to which her many friends are making contributions in her memory.

In her student days Miss Roberts served as the first president of the college Y. W. C. A. Her active interest in the work of the organization continued throughout her life. She served many years on its advisory board and gave generously of her time and money to its support. She was an active member of the Congregational Church of Ames.

As a capable, fair, far-seeing executive she made a lasting contribution to education in this state. As a great teacher she inspired thousands of young men and women with a deep respect for thoroughness and truth, she stimulated them to undertake the high adventures of hard work and straight thinking, she motivated them to live on a high plane of eternal values, she gave to each the precious gift of a wise, loyal, helpful, never-to-be-forgotten friend.

She was known personally to many members of the Iowa Academy. To these her death is a sad loss. In the policies of a great college, in the respect and affection of her colleagues and students her influence carries on. Maria M. Roberts has a place among the outstanding educators of her day.

GERTRUDE A. HERR

HELEN F. SMITH