

HARRY FOSTER FERGUSON  
PRESIDENT OF THE ACADEMY, 1932-33

1889-1935

Harry Foster Ferguson was born at Adams, Massachusetts, on March 12, 1889, the son of William Ferguson and Elizabeth (Donaldson) Ferguson. He received his early education in the public schools of his native city, then attended Trinity College, at Hartford, Connecticut, where he was awarded the McKay-Smith Mathematical prize, and, in 1912, was graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (to which he had been also awarded a scholarship), with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. He was a member of the Alpha Chi Rho Fraternity. He was always an able and earnest student as evidenced by his awards.

Following graduation and until May 1917 Mr. Ferguson served as an engineer in the State Water Survey at Urbana, following which he enlisted in the United States Army and was a First Lieutenant in the Engineering Corps, having supervision over water supply and sanitary conditions in camps. He returned to his State Water Survey position in March 1919 and in July of that year joined the sanitary engineering staff of the State Health Department as principal assistant engineer. In May 1920 he was appointed Chief Sanitary Engineer and held that position until the time of his death, January 16, 1935.

In this position he was in charge of the investigations, supervision, and analyses of existing and proposed water supplies, including purification works; investigation and supervision of existing and proposed sewerage projects, including sewerage treatment works, and engineering, bacterial, chemical, and biological studies of stream pollution (in cooperation with State Sanitary Water Board); supervision of the installation and maintenance of swimming pools; review, issuance of approvals, and permits for plans and specifications for water and sewerage projects, including treatment works and swimming pools; supervision of milk pasteurization plants; advice and assistance in rural sanitation, municipal plumbing ordinances, malaria prevention by mosquito control, school and camp sanitation, and various other items involving sanitary engineering that may have directly or indirectly affected the lives of the people of the State of Illinois.

The Illinois Sanitary Water Board came into existence and functioned effectively largely through the efforts and influence of Mr. Ferguson, who drew up the bill and planned its passage in the 1929 session of the Illinois General Assembly. He was chiefly responsible for the law enacted in 1925 which placed under the State Department of Public Health the supervision of pasteurized milk supplies, and principally upon his initiative and efforts laws were enacted which provided for the establishment of local sanitary districts, local mosquito abate-

ment districts, and the sanitary regulations concerning tourist camps, roadside wells, and food establishments at State Fairs. The bill passed in 1931 giving the State Department of Public Health supervision over swimming pools and bathing places were sponsored by him.

After the enactment of the Sanitary Water Board Law, he served as ex officio Technical Secretary of that Board. He was one of the first Trustees of the newly organized Springfield Sanitary District, to which he was appointed on April 24, 1924. He was re-appointed several times by the various succeeding county judges and served in rotation as President and Secretary of that Board. He was a member of the Board of Trustees at the time of his death.

Needless to say, Mr. Ferguson was nationally known as an authority on sanitary engineering. Few men have contributed as much as he did to progress and improvement in the sanitary conditions of Illinois, particularly in relation to water and milk supplies, to the streams and lakes, and to the disposal of sewage. Endowed alike with administrative talent, clear vision, accurate judgment, and a high sense of integrity, he applied his faculties industriously and effectively. His record is one of faithful service; his death at the very prime of life and in the midst of his fine, humanitarian service, is an inestimable loss. His memory will long be sacred to those who knew him intimately and understood his character, purpose, and achievements.

He passed away January 16, 1935, at the Illinois Research Hospital, Chicago, Illinois, after an illness of several months.

In 1920, Mr. Ferguson was married to Zelda Henson, of Villa Grove, Illinois, and she, with one daughter, Nadine, survives him.

He was a member of the American Public Health Association; American Water Works Association; Illinois Society of Engineers (Past-President); Illinois State Academy of Science (Past-President); Illinois Association of Sanitary Districts (Past-President); Conference of State Sanitary Engineers; Central States Sewage Works Association (Past-President); American Chemical Society; American Association for Promoting Hygiene and Public Baths; Izaak Walton League of America; Associate Professor of the University of Illinois, College of Medicine, in Chicago (in this capacity he lectured on problems in the field at public health and sanitation); and of the American Legion.

He was particularly active in the Illinois State Academy of Science, having served as Chairman of the Public Health Section 1931-32 and as President of the Academy in 1932-33, in addition to various papers he read at annual meetings.

He was the author of many articles on sanitary engineering problems, appearing in current periodicals, among which are the following: American Journal of Public Health, Journal of the American Water Works Association, Illinois State Water Survey Bulletins, Illinois Municipal Review, Illinois Medical Journal, Illinois Health News, etc.

CLARENCE W. KLASSEN