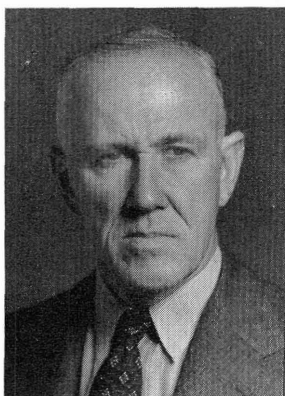


## Paul Howard Cook



MR. COOK

(From 1945 photo)

PAUL H. COOK, outstanding hybridizer, charter member and honorary judge of the American Iris Society, suffered a severe cerebral hemorrhage and died enroute to the hospital, November 7, 1963. His passing is a great loss not only to those closest to him but to the entire iris world.

Paul was born near Poneto in Wells County, Indiana, on January 27, 1891, to John and Elizabeth Howard Cook. He was the oldest of three children. A brother, Wayne, and a sister, Sylvia, preceded him in death. Paul's father was president of the Poneto bank and owned a tile mill near their home. His mother had been a teacher before her marriage.

Both his father and mother stimulated his interest in plants. About 1910, after reading some books by L. H. Bailey, he began his first plant breeding with small fruits, then sweet peas and later a few irises.

World War I interrupted his iris-breeding work but did not lessen his interest in it. It wasn't long after his return from France, that my father, E. B. Williamson, and Paul became acquainted. I remember my father telling of their first meeting. Father was pollinating irises in our backyard when he looked up to see a young man leaning over the fence. He invited him to come in. This was the beginning of a very stimulating friendship for both of them. For Paul's early work with irises see AIS BULLETIN, April, 1946.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Well do many iris critics remember Paul Cook's first iris. They would gaze at his woebegone seedlings with a shake of their heads and pitying look in their eyes, but little did they realize that while they were madly dashing about shaking pollen hither and yon, Paul was quietly organizing, planning, keeping records, and working toward a definite goal. His earliest plan was to cross each two species separately, and from the first hybrids to raise large second-generation progenies, in order to learn something of the inheritance of iris characters. He started with two definite color lines, the red and the blue. After approximately fifteen long years of patiently breeding iris, Mr. Cook introduced in 1937 his first tall bearded iris E. B. WILLIAMSON, a product from his red line. The following year he gave us SABLE from his blue line. Since then there has been a continuous flow of outstanding varieties from those two color groups: CAPTAIN WELLS, COPPER ROSE, ACTION FRONT, FLAMELY, REDWARD, WORTHINGTON, and INDIANA NIGHT. He did not confine his breeding to just these two colors. Gradually he branched out and gave us pinks: LANCASTER, PINK REFLECTION, MAJENICA, ANNA WILLIAMSON and SALAMONIE; orchids: DREAMCASTLE and HARRIET THOREAU; and blues: THREE CHEERS and DISTANCE. These iris have had many awards from the American Iris Society. In fact the high percentage of fourteen out of sixteen iris introduced have received an HM or an AM or both. The Roman Gold Medal was won by E. B. WILLIAMSON in 1938. Mr. Cook's hybridizing extended also to the dwarf bearded iris. KEEPSAKE, TAMPA, ALINDA, VIOLET GEM, four dwarf varieties, were introduced from this work. Intermediates, Siberians, and almost all the iris species became part of his extensive research in hybridizing.—MARY WILLIAMSON, in BULLETIN for April 1946, page 26.

On May 29, 1920, Paul and Emma Carnes were married in Bluffton. Emma was a constant companion, helper, and partner in all of Paul's iris work. About this same time Paul became a rural mail carrier, first out of Bluffton, then Uniondale. It was a most convenient occupation, giving Paul the full afternoon in his garden.

He was a charter member of the American Iris Society. He never took a very active part in the actual business of the Society but did serve on the Scientific Committee. He felt his best field to be in hybridizing, and in the last few years of his life he considered his greatest contribution might be in inspiring and stimulating the new and young hybridizers of irises. I believe those who knew him looked upon him as counselor and adviser. His simplest statements concerning irises were always given after careful judgment.

Paul Cook's iris breeding included not only all the different types (dwarf, median, tall, species) but also hemerocallis, daffodils, tree peonies, and true lilies. His last iris introduction was ECSTATIC NIGHT, in 1963. Along with it he proudly introduced his wife's first iris, COMPLIMENT. Paul also introduced several hemerocallis, the most renowned being Valiant and Reliant.

He received the AIS Hybridizer's Medal in 1945 and the Foster Memorial Plaque for hybridizing, in 1957, from the British Iris Society. His last award, which he received just a couple of weeks before his passing, was a First Class Certificate to GREEN SPOT, awarded the 23d of May, 1963, after the Wisley Trials by the Royal Horticultural Society and the British Iris Society.

One of the awards of which he was most proud was for "Distinguished Service to the Citizens of Wells County," by the Men of Wells County, Indiana, March 16, 1960. To be recognized by one's own community is a gratifying experience.

Following is a list of his most outstanding achievements. From the American Iris Society, the Dykes Medal to SABLE NIGHT in 1955 and to WHOLE CLOTH in 1962; the Hans and Jacob Sass Award to KISS ME KATE in 1960; the Cook-Douglas Award to GREEN SPOT in 1959 and to FAIRY FLAX in 1961; and many AMs and HMs. From the British Iris Society and the Royal Horticultural Society after the Wisley Trials, a First Class Certificate to PRETENDER in 1958 and to GREEN SPOT in 1963; the Louisa Branch Award, small silver cup, to TOLL GATE in 1961; the Garden Club Award, a silver cup, to WONDERMENT in 1961. From the Concorso Internazionale in Rome, Italy, the Roman Gold Medal to E. B. WILLIAMSON in 1938; a First Class Certificate to SABLE in 1938; the Roman Gold Medal to WHOLE CLOTH in 1961.

Paul Cook was a member of not only the American Iris Society but the British Iris Society, the New Zealand Iris Society, the Dwarf Iris Society, the Median Iris Society, the Aril Iris Society, and the Northeastern Indiana Iris Society.

Paul's passing is a great personal loss to me. He was one of those rare individuals who had the ability to inspire yet was practical, intelligent yet humble, frank and honest yet kindly at all times—a gentleman and a scholar in the broadest sense.

Bluffton, Indiana

MARY WILLIAMSON

*Miss Williamson, owner of the Longfield Iris Farm, introduced new irises for Paul Cook, E. G. Lapham, Don Waters, and others. Originated WABASH. Now retired from business but growing irises as a hobby. At present teaching Spanish and biology in high school.*