

ROBERT EDOUARD MORITZ—IN MEMORIAM

The sudden death of Professor Moritz in Seattle on December 28, 1940, not only marked the close of a life that had measured the allotted span, but terminated an honorable career of nearly half a century in the service of mathematics and higher education. Retired to half time two years before, he had taught through the fall quarter and had made plans to spend the winter in California. He occupied the position of head of the department of mathematics at the University of Washington for over thirty years, at various periods of which astronomy was included. He witnessed the growth of the university population from a total of some eight hundred for the academic year to approximately eleven thousand, including one thousand graduate students, in a single quarter. It was largely due to his high standards, energy and vision that the department of mathematics was competently manned and adequately equipped with library and other facilities to keep pace with this development.

Robert Edouard Moritz was born at Christianstahl in Schleswig-Holstein, the son of Karl R. and Maria Stahlhut Moritz on June 2, 1868. His early education was received in the public schools of Germany. At the age of twelve he came to the United States with his parents who settled on a farm in Nebraska. On the casual advice of a friend, young Moritz entered Hastings Academy in 1885, expecting to spend only a single term. But one term sealed his fate. By dint of the utmost frugality, of doing his own cooking, of sharply curtailing the normal hours of sleep, he was able to eke out his meagre earnings to cover the bare necessities and to remain in school—remain for seven years, at the end of which he was graduated from Hastings College in 1892. "He worked his way through college" has become a commonplace in American biography. It sounds like a simple formula, and there are of course many versions. But anyone lacking the actual experience can have only a faint conception of what those few words might connote in the short-grass region of Nebraska in the late eighties and early nineties—those years of acute and prolonged distress in the prairie states, under the scourge of hot winds, crop failures and mortgage foreclosures.

After a year spent in graduate study at the University of Chicago he returned to his Alma Mater where he held the chair of mathematics and physics from 1893 to 1898. In the meantime he attended the University of Chicago during two summer quarters, completing the requirements for the master's degree in 1896. That same summer he married Miss Cassia L. Kennedy of Aurora, Nebraska, who with two