Howard J. Gramlich, 1889–1985: A Brief Biography

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Howard John Gramlich was born January 26, 1889, in Omaha, Nebraska and died November 30, 1985, in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. His funeral services were conducted December 2, 1985, in Ontario, Canada. He graduated from the Nebraska School of Agriculture in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1908 and in 1911 he received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from the University of Nebraska. In 1911 he began his career in agricultural extension work at the University of Nebraska and was also in charge of the Farmers Institutes in the School of Agriculture. He was later appointed an Assistant Professor of Animal Husbandry and Associate in the Experiment Station at the University of Nebraska and continued those duties from 1913 to 1916. In 1915, he married Mabel Daniels, who had graduated in 1914 from the University of Nebraska and who became an Associate Professor in the Department of Home Economics. In 1917 he was promoted to Head of the Animal Husbandry Department. The title of that position was changed to Chairman of the Department in 1919 and he retained that title until he took a leave of absence in 1938 when on November 1, 1938, he became the Secretary for the American Shorthorn Breeders Association. On January 1, 1940, he resigned from his position in the Department of Animal Husbandry. It should be noted here that Professor Gramlich was one of the few heads of a major department in any higher educational institution with only a bachelor of science degree.

While in the College of Agriculture at the University of Nebraska, he had many interesting experiences, activities, and pursuits. In the fall of 1908, as a sophomore, he was on the first University of Nebraska Dairy Judging Team at the National Dairy Show in Chicago, where he was the second-highest man in the contest and the team placed second. One of his teammates was Karlis August Ulmanis, who later became Premier of the Republic of Latvia. That same year he was on the first University of Nebraska Livestock Judging Team and was the third-highest man in the contest, and the team placed second at that International Contest in Chicago. A newspaper clipping gave this report about Gramlich: “He is a South Omaha boy who graduated from the Nebraska School of Agriculture last year and is now in the University of Nebraska on an Armour Scholarship and is specializing in Animal Husbandry.” It should be noted here that also in that same International Livestock Judging Contest were H. H. Kildee, who later became Dean of the Iowa State Agricultural College and President of the American Society of Animal Production in 1935, and also C. W. McCampbell, who became Head of the Animal Husbandry Department at Kansas State Agricultural College and President of the American Society of Animal Production in 1931. Professor Gramlich also served as Vice President of the American Society of Animal Production in 1928 and as President of the Society in 1929. At this point, we should note that Gramlich was the coach of the livestock judging teams at the University of Nebraska from 1912 to 1919 with the following results of the team placings at the International in Chicago: 1912, 5th; 1913, 12th; 1916, 9th; 1917, 1st; 1918, 3rd; and 1919, 2nd. We should also report that while he was a

1Professor Emeritus of Animal Science and former Assistant Dean, College of Agriculture.
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student in the University that in March, 1911, he was
the first editor and business manager of a new student
magazine, Agriculture, in the College of Agriculture.
Agriculture ceased publication in May 1921.

Gramlich worked his way to Europe in 1911 on a
cattle boat by helping care for the cattle. While in
Europe, he visited England, Scotland, Holland, Jersey,
and Guernsey Islands. On the return trip he worked
on a draft horse boat and helped deliver the horses to
the Wood's Brothers horse lots just south of the
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture campus
in Lincoln. Later on in 1918, he started the first high
school vocational agriculture livestock judging con-
tests on campus, which still continue as an annual
event.

During the drought years of 1934–35, Professor
Gramlich served as the Government Advisor on Feeds
for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration,
Washington, D.C. He also headed the Federal Emer-
gency Drought Cattle Buying Program in Nebraska in
1934. It was reported that he was instrumental in
getting an excise tax put through Congress on coconut
oil. Also during the 1930s he became an advocate for a
change from big cattle to baby beesves, for the use of
substitutes for corn in fattening rations for cattle, and
for the utilization of sorghums and silage, and he
predicted the production of these “camel crops” would
increase in Nebraska in the future. Gramlich was a
strong booster of Shorthorn cattle, and the University
of Nebraska College of Agriculture gained national
prominence when Ashbourne Orange, a Shorthorn
steer bred at the University, was named grand
champion at the 1937 International Livestock Show in
Chicago. The University had discontinued showing in
Chicago; the steer had been sold to Dean Blizzard at
Oklahoma A&M, who showed the steer at the
International. During his career, Gramlich judged
cattle at the International Livestock Exposition at
Chicago, the American Royal at Kansas City, and the
Interstate Baby Beef Show at San Francisco.

Professor Gramlich served as Secretary of the
American Shorthorn Breeders Association from 1938
until 1942, when he became the General Agricultural
Agent for the Chicago and Northwestern Railway
System. Later his title was changed to Director of
Agricultural Development. While in this position he
returned to the University and to Nebraska to be the
guest speaker on the annual Feeder's Day programs,
for Pasture-Forage-Livestock meetings, at Nebraska
Livestock Feeders Association meetings, for Nebraska
State Bankers Association, and for many
other livestock and business meetings throughout the
northwest.

On December 31, 1954, he retired from the Chicago
and Northwestern Railway System after having lived
in Oak Park, Illinois, during those years with the
railroad. He had become widely known as a speaker
on agricultural problems. He acquired a reputation for
the accuracy of his national crop forecasts, predicting
the final crop yield within a few bushels of the final
Department of Agriculture figures.

He worked closely with 4-H club groups and was
made an honorary member of the Nebraska
4-H club. His memberships included Chicago Farmers
Club, National Safety Council, Chicago Association of
Commerce, and the Illinois State Chamber of Com-
merce. After retirement, he joined a lecture bureau in
Chicago and continued for several years giving talks to
teacher's association meetings in Illinois, Wisconsin,
and Indiana.