

Distinguished Achievement Citation

Elijah A. Levitt

Class of 1913

As a retired businessman and philanthropist, Mr. Levitt embodies the American mystique of personal success which has drawn people from every nation to our land for more than 200 years. An immigrant who has attained material success by applying himself at school in the business world, he has continued the Ohio Wesleyan tradition of service to others by sharing his wealth and leadership abilities with those around him. In doing so, he has generously returned the gifts of friendly support and guidance which were extended to him upon his arrival in America.

Mr. Levitt left his family in Russia at the age of 12 for the garment district of Philadelphia. At his request, the young man's employer brought him to Ohio Wesleyan. With the encouragement of Bishop Herbert Welch, then President of Ohio Wesleyan, Mr. Levitt completed the equivalent of eight years of high school and college in five years. He received his diploma from Ohio Wesleyan in 1913.

Upon graduating, Mr. Levitt moved to York, Nebraska, where he still resides. With his enterprise and resourcefulness he soon moved from being an employee at a lumberyard to being its owner. From there he expanded into the construction and building supplies business, and then into banking.

Not content to limit his interests to business, Mr. Levitt took an active interest in supporting and improving the town in which he lived. Over the years he has held leadership positions in the Chamber of Commerce, First National Bank, York General Hospital and the local Red Cross. He was one of the moving forces behind York College, which granted him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in 1949. In 1968 he received the "Nebraska Builder Award," the University of Nebraska's highest award for distinguished service.

He has also remembered Ohio Wesleyan, which he credits with giving him most of the impetus for his success. His interest aided in the development of Beeghly Library, among other projects.

Throughout his long life, Elijah Levitt has had the confidence to take advantage of the opportunities offered him by his adopted country. His adherence to the traditional American work ethic has resulted in enrichment of his personal life and also in the lives of those around him. The town of York, Nebraska, owes Mr. Levitt and enormous debt for his interest and generosity. We admire and thank him for exemplifying the Ohio Wesleyan tradition of service to others.

