

Julius T. Willard--Mr. K-State History!

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Numerous K-State alumni and students on campus today recognize Willard Hall, many having attended classes in the building, primarily chemistry and more recently art. However, it is doubtful that most are aware of the structure's namesake, Julius Terrass Willard, even though he has a longer official association with K-State than anyone in the history of the university, 71 years!



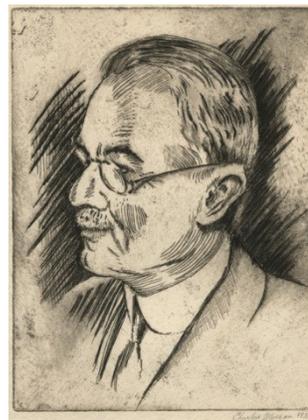
Willard in 1882

Willard was born on a farm in Wabaunsee County, Kansas, in 1862, the same year the Morrill Act establishing the Land Grant College system was passed and signed by President Abraham Lincoln. Willard's father, Julius E. Willard, was a member of the New Haven colony known as the Beecher Bible and Rifle Company that settled in the area.

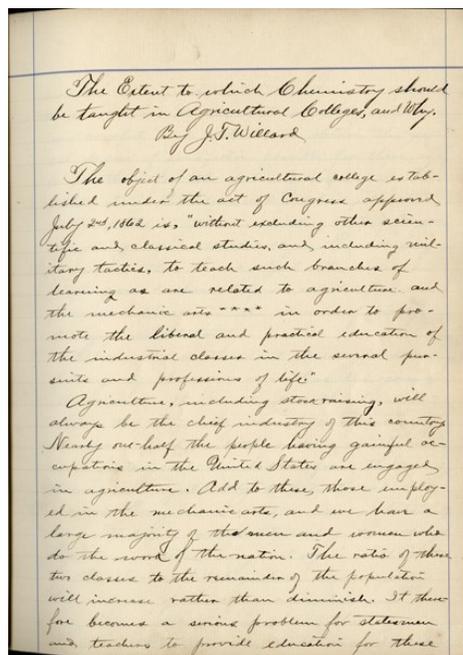
His mother, Mary Elizabeth Terrass, was the daughter of one of the first settlers of Alma. In 1884 he married Lydia Pierce Gardiner of Wakarusa, Kansas; they had one son, Charles Julius Willard, who graduated from K-State in 1908. Willard entered K-State as a student in 1879 and graduated in 1883 with a degree in general science.

In 1886 he was awarded a master of science degree (thesis title: *The Extent to which Chemistry should be Taught in Agricultural Colleges and Why*). The college conferred the doctor of science degree upon him in 1908. Except for ten months of graduate study at Johns Hopkins, he was affiliated with K-State from his freshman year until his death in 1950. During those years, he was a student, instructor, professor, chemist, head of the chemistry department, director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, dean of the Division of General Science, acting president (1914 and 1918), vice president, and college historian. He even built his own house at the southeast corner of the college grounds in 1894.

He published numerous scientific articles related to chemistry and agriculture; many were printed in the *Industrialist*, the college newspaper. A book by Willard published in 1894 on

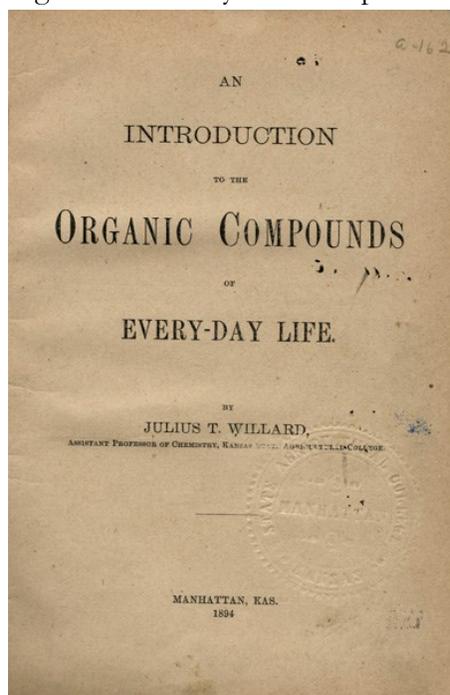


Willard
by Charles Morgan, 1935



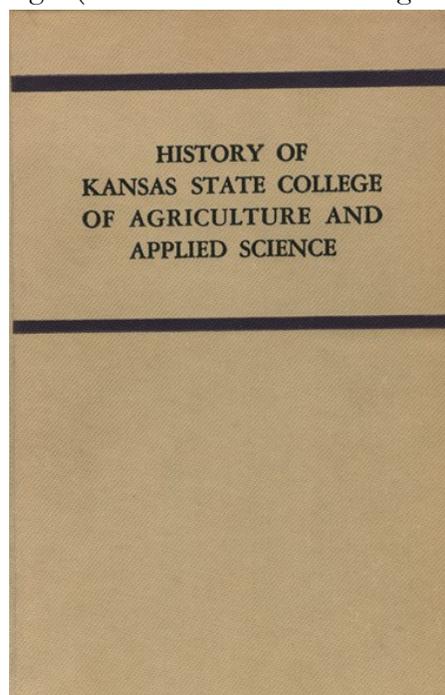
Willard Thesis, 1886

organic chemistry was adopted as the textbook for the college (*An Introduction to the Organic*



Compounds of Every-Day Life). He was very active in the Kansas Academy of Science, serving as president in 1902, and other professional organizations.

Willard was released from his duties including those of vice president to become the college historian beginning January 1936. For many, this would have meant being put out to pasture but not in Willard's case! For years



he had collected historical materials related to K-State as its unofficial historian, and written pieces about the history of the college. His new assignment allowed him the time to write a history of the college which was published in 1940 (*History of Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science*). The book is now part of the K-State Libraries digital collections.



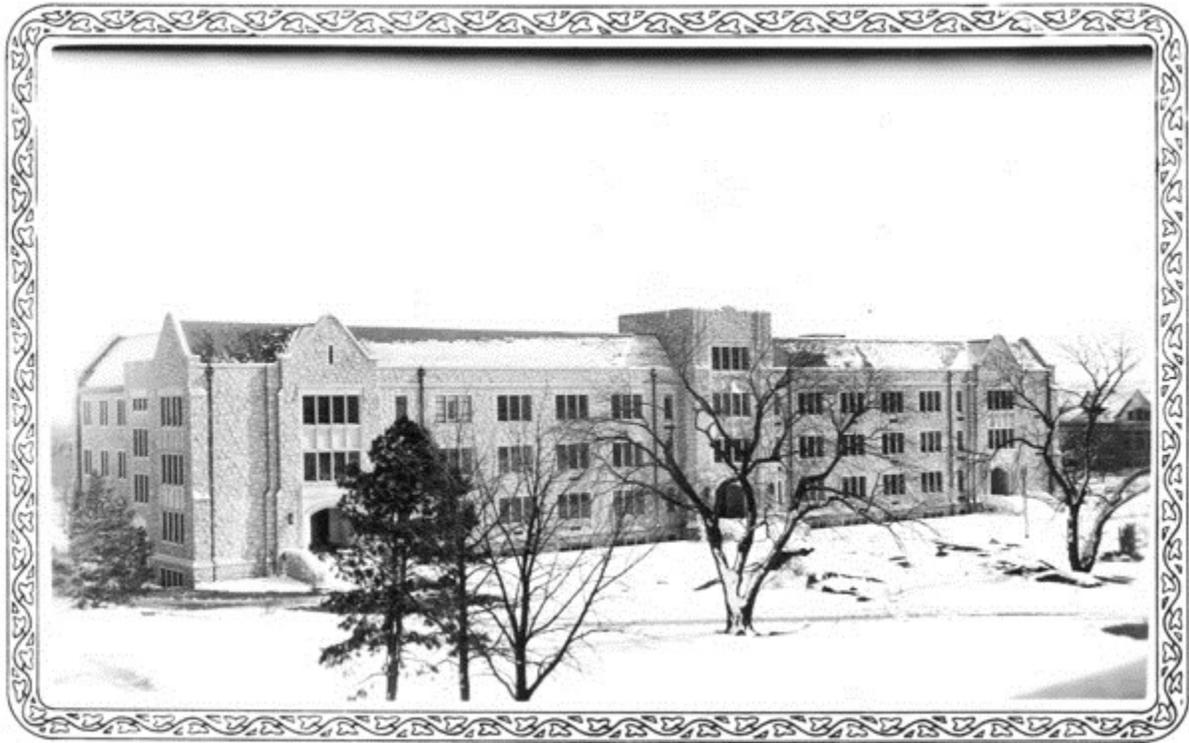
Willard Hall cornerstone

Willard was revered by the students. For example, when Acacia fraternity established a chapter at K-State in 1913, Willard was the first to be initiated into the fraternity. In June 1936, Acacia presented a portrait of Willard to the college painted by David Overmyer, the artist who painted the murals in Farrell Library, now Hale. The portrait hangs in Willard Hall.

After a 1934 fire destroyed Denison Hall (which housed the chemistry and physics departments), construction of a new physical science building began in 1937. The next year the Board of Regents approved naming the building after Willard and a cornerstone was laid April 20, 1938.

Although Willard's academic and administrative accomplishments, including the significant role he played in the development of K-State in the first half of the twentieth century, are immeasurable, to the staff of the University Archives it is his contributions to preserving the history of K-State that remains his legacy. Willard's passion for the history of the

college allowed him to save so much of its history through his book



Willard Hall 1939

and other means. He rescued countless archival records from departments and individuals on campus, wrote pieces on historical aspects of the college, many unpublished, and created a card index (approximately 100,000 slips filed alphabetically by person, place, and subject!) to the contents of the college newspapers, faculty and Board of Regents minutes, and other items. The index, and a variety of other sources Willard is responsible for creating and collecting, is available to everyone. Not a day goes by that the staff of the department and/or researchers do not consult a resource attributable to Willard's efforts.



Willard in 1901

In July 1950, Julius Willard died at his desk in Anderson Hall delving into K-State's history. As the university prepares for its sesquicentennial celebration in 2013, a large portion of K-State's history for its first 100 years would be lost and impossible to recreate without the dedication of Julius Willard, after all, he was here for 71 of those years! It is easy to understand why Julius Willard can be considered Mr. K-State History!

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Sources. University Archives: Vertical File Photographs, Willard, Julius T. and Willard Hall; Vertical Files, Willard, Julius T. and Willard Hall; Willard's master's thesis and publications.