

2/9/22

President

Arthur C. Willard

Betsy Ross Papers, 1967

Oral History Interview, August 30, 1967

3 3/4 IPS

1-14: Charles S. Havens

15-43: Less Construction in Willard Administration. Local boarding house people opposed dormitory construction. Personal benefit, fight for livelihood. Plans were to build additional dorms on Nevada Street near Busey and Evans. Changed.

44-68: Several plans were used in planning the Illini Union. Mr Lavelle of Chicago planned the Union interior. New addition.

69-99: Students loved the building. Miss Irene Pierson was social director. Dances, dress, chaperons. Military Ball was too large and was held in Huff Gym.

100-118: Receptions after band concerts. Friday night affair was held in Womens' Building before the Union was built. Mr. Willard felt graduation was for the parents.

119-129: The university was smaller. Reception now held in Union Baccalaureate has been abolished.

130-143: Social events. Weekends, lectures, smokers.

144-204: Miss Ross's role in entertaining at the President's house. The President's house was the faculty social center. Wives met for tea. Football luncheons. Faculty daughters used as hostesses. May recognitions involved receptions. Leading students. Festive Sunday afternoon (4-6) dress-up occasions. I supervised getting food, kitchen help, ladies who helped, greeted people, floated, helped with traffic janes, kept books, sought to include as many people as we could. Used 10 or 12 girls each time. It was a social training.

205-232: I didn't pour coffee. I was a floater among 250 to 400 people. Faculty wives introduced people. I separated old friends so they could meet new people. I knew many people, but not well.

233-243: Some people came often, e.g. deans, department heads.

244-260: Willard's friends included Roger Adams, William Rose, Loring Provine, Arthur Daniels. Small social group.

261-282: Many musicals. Seated 75 in the drawing room. Military Day reception for the commander. Reception for the Baccalaureate and Commencement speakers.

283-298: House guests had family breakfast with us.

299-349: Willard's advisers included the deans. Dean Carmichael was a great scholar. Dean Harno was provost. Mr. Janata was an assistant who ran the office, but was not an academic adviser. Only the problem cases reached the President. Mr. Janata handled correspondence. "I don't think Mr. Willard ever dictated a letter in his life. He said his secretaries could write a better letter than he could. That's what they were trained for."

350-359: Delegation of authority built morale. They did not change letters he wrote.

360-385: The president gets the money from the legislature in Springfield. The president reviewed budget. Mr. Janata was invaluable in Springfield. We found out what people were thinking. He was a wonderful listener and had a marvelous memory. He wrote nice "no" letters.

386-419: Mr. Havens was young. Mr. Willard discussed plans for buildings. Mr. Willard was very conscious of the architectural features. The fine arts. He felt that this was particularly lacking in the Middle West. Standards of cleanliness.

420-442: Mr. Willard continued Georgian design. He would be unhappy with the present hodgepodge.

443-492: Mr. Willard was never impulsive. He encouraged dissent. Haves was one of the few who did argue with him. Senate handled academic matters. Some decisions were unpopular, especially the press. In retrospect, he felt that they were right. He did not play up advertising, press conferences and press releases. Afterwards, he thought he was a little tough on the press.

493-519: World War II transformed the campus. Men's Old Gym. Signalman's School. Neither soldiers nor students.

520-532: New buildings in the Willard administration.

533-585: University Hall. Badly built. Costly. Ceiling fell. Rickety, ugly building. Strong pressure from alumni to keep University Hall. Golden opportunity to replace it.

586-618: Illini Union at the front door of the University. Willard accepted the accusation that it "was built for the country louts of Illinois." People were amazed at the Union. They tiptoed through. Businessmen feared competition. Bowling, pool, billiards. Union created a social organization. The old Illinois Union organization provided a start.

619-688: Airport dedication. Windy, cold day. Many planes flew in. Many speeches. One building was unfinished. Senator Lucas was very important in getting the airport. The CAA man and the governor were there. Legislators, trustees, band. Speakers. Opera singer from Chicago sang the National anthem.

689-705: President Willard was excited about flying, but was not a pilot.

707-741: Willard's attitude toward students. He would have liked to have continued traditions, but they were breaking down when he took over. One was not smoking on campus. Dr. Chase thought that was antiquated and it was abolished. As a result we had butts and stubs and matches all over campus. "That distressed him very much."

742-752: Homecoming. Hazing.

753-784: He didn't think Greek societies were very democratic. "He was interested in this great mass of independent students that didn't have anything." He was a Phi Kap at M.I.T., but took little interest in fraternity affairs. He thought a lot of it was the bunk.

785-832: Regulations were quite strict. Nothing could be done on Sundays. "This is what is known as the Bible Belt." People walked, visited gardens and museums. Students could not have automobiles unless a permit was obtained. If you were caught having a loving party in a student car, the permit was rescinded. No cars could be used for social purposes. No parking meters or lots.

833-874: World War II took men away. War drives. Bundles. Red Cross. Gave up golf and card parties. President's Office bought first badge and first bond.

875-1049: Trustees who were important. Very dedicated men. No pay. Twelve working days plus committee meetings. Foundation members also contribute time and effort. President of the Board is important. This time - consuming job rotates. James M. Cleary was very active and helpful. A good friend. Merle Trees, Robert F. Carr, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Grigsby, Mrs. Plum, Henry Williamson. Many meetings were held in Chicago.

1050-1095: Medical colleges in Chicago are often forgotten. They needed a lot of help and new equipment. Mr. Willard was very interested in them. Personnel matters and physical plant standards were raised. Dean Davis. Dr. Cole.

1096-1183: Visitors. Amelia Earhart was sponsored by the speech society. Eve Curie, Margaret Bourke-White. Tickets were sold to the auditorium speech. Zeta Phi Eta. Miss Earhart drove in. She was jealous of women's rights. A feminist. She was on a speaking circuit.

1184: Robert M. Hutchins was President at Chicago. He was a very unusual person who had new ideas about everything and a very charming person, but a radical and he liked to get people stirred up.