

# Woodrow Wilson Revealed Qualities Of Leadership as Head of Princeton

Editor's Note—With the centennial of the birth of President Woodrow Wilson only nine days away, the Rev. Albert D. Betts' recollection of the wartime President is of special interest. In the following article Mr. Betts, a South Caro-

lina leader in Methodism, temperance and good citizenship, recalls his observations of Woodrow Wilson, who was then president of Princeton, when Mr. Betts was a student at the University.

By ALBERT D. BETTS

While a student in Wofford College, Spartanburg, I first saw Woodrow Wilson. He came there to lecture in our Lyceum course about a year after becoming president of Princeton University. Later Dr. Henry Van Dyck came on a similar mission.

In 1905 the late Dr. Thos. A. Wharton, then pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, Tenn., (he was a friend of our family) influenced me to go to Princeton for theological study. This I did in September of that year.

On my way to Princeton I called by Norfolk, Va., for a day to visit the late Rev. Dr. Richard D. Smart, pastor of Epworth Methodist Church, but formerly of South Carolina. Dr. Smart was a pupil of the Rev. Dr. Joseph R. Wilson in the Columbia Theological Seminary. Here young Smart was a frequent visitor in the Wilson home, and he and Woodrow (then in his academy or high school days) became very good friends. Other friends have told me that he paid court to Woodrow's sister, but her parents had grave doubts about an alliance with a young Methodist minister.

## LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dr. Smart later married Miss Aiken of Abbeville, sister of the late Congressman Wyatt Aiken. A son of this union—Dr. W. A. Smart, the able Old Testament professor in Emory University, Atlanta, Ga. When leaving Norfolk en route to Princeton, Dr. Smart handed me a letter of introduction to President Wilson, and that without any hint from me.

At Princeton I enrolled in the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. But I also availed myself of the privilege of registering for graduate work in the University, the graduate School being headed by the able Dean West. My contacts with President Wilson were

only occasional, but we students generally greatly respected and admired him.

At the 160th Commencement in June, 1907, President Wilson conferred on me the degree of Master of Arts, a red letter day in my life. This diploma is doubly prized: because it came from Princeton University, and because it bears the signature of President Woodrow Wilson. Among the undergraduates of that time were Judge

Harold R. Medina and Secretary John Foster Dulles. Former U. S. President Grover Cleveland was the first citizen of Princeton in those days and the very valuable president of the University Board.

## PRINCETON REORGANIZATION

Only recently had the College of New Jersey (long called Princeton College) assumed University status. And Dr. Wilson had been president only three years (in 1905). We students watched with keen interest his wonderful leadership as a great administrator. At that time the Princeton Theological Seminary had a larger endowment than the University. But not much longer, for soon millions began to come into the University for both endowment and buildings. There were only 1,500 students then, but entrance requirements were very high.

However, dormitory space was very limited, and most of the students had rooms and boarding places out in town, an undesirable situation. Most of the upper classmen belonged to the well equipped clubs where they got their meals and had much fellowship. (There are no fraternities there, except PBK). President Wilson worked vigorously and successfully to house the students in new dormitories on the campus, and he established the Commons for the freshmen and sophomores. The upper class clubs were too well entrenched to be dislodged. But in the three years I was in Princeton there was a great improvement,

and we recognized that it was the wise and master hand of our Prexy.

## SCHOLARSHIP TIGHTENED

Another problem faced was the easy way men could get through Princeton, once they passed the stiff entrance exams. The student tended to concentrate in the classes of the most popular professors. Thus they knew that their term and examination papers could not get adequate attention from the professor, who had often to give them the benefit of the doubt.

So President Wilson devised, with the help of his faculty, a system of tutors who worked under the professors, meeting the students in small groups. This meant real study and work. I was told that in the winter in 1905-6 forty freshmen fell so low that they could not be conditioned, and so had to go eyewhere or back home. This made a vast improvement in scholarship and morale, and Princeton's example was quickly followed by other universities.

Many of the tutors were fine young men who had come to do graduate work in Princeton, and thus the offer of a tutorship was equivalent to a scholarship. They became members of the faculty and shared in the general faculty meetings.

President Wilson had the faculty meetings in the old historical Nassau Hall, and this beautifully furnished Faculty Room was modeled after the House of Commons in London. The president sat at one end in a suitable chair on a plat-

form, and the professors of all ranks sat on long benches facing each other.

## THE COLLEGE QUADRANGLE

The Proctor donation of \$2,000,000 for the Graduate College boosted Dean West's great dream. President Wilson liked the quadrangle idea all right, but he was opposed to the location of the Graduate College on its own campus detached from the University. (The Seminary campus lies between the Graduate College and the University proper). However Dean West had his way, and a wonderful stone quadrangle was built to house 200 graduate students, and at one corner of same stands the noble Cleveland Memorial Tower. Most of the classes, seminars and laboratory work of the graduate students is necessarily on the University campus.

Under the eight-year Wilson administration the development of the

University was two-fold: (1) the expansion of the endowment and buildings so much needed, and (2) the improved quality of scholarship and work. The morale of the faculty and students was much strengthened. Princeton ranks far down the list of American universities in enrollment, buildings, and financial resources, but it is in the top level in the quality of its scholarship and work.

## THE WILSON FAMILY

The Wilson family resided in the president's house, Prospect, on the campus. The three daughters were away at college most of the time, so we students saw but little of them. President Wilson was a ruling elder in the First Presbyterian Church, which is located on the University campus. He and his family were regular attendants. In church and chapel President Wilson's prayers impressed those who heard with their reverence and utter sincerity. He was truly a religious man, his religion being the foundation of his sterling character.

Of President Wilson's subsequent career there is no need for me to write, as his able public service as Governor of New Jersey and President of the United States is well known, and now fully recorded in the history of our Nation.

In these later years it has been a privilege to visit the Wilson Home here in Columbia where the Rev. Dr. Joseph R. Wilson and his family lived. I have visited President Wilson's birth place in Staunton, Va., the Presbyterian manse where Dr. Joseph R. Wilson resided. Then the First Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Ga., had Dr. Wilson as pastor for several years when his son, Woodrow, was a lad in grammar school. (It was the writer's privilege to supply that pulpit for four Sundays in August thirty-five years ago). And I have visited the tomb where they laid the body of our beloved President in the Washington Cathedral on Mt. St. Albans.

In the perspective of history Woodrow Wilson will loom large as one of the very greatest of the Presidents of the United States,

## AT BOYHOOD HOME

# Wilson Centennial Reception Set Friday

Friday afternoon, December 28, the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of South Carolina, will observe the Woodrow Wilson Centennial with a reception from 3:30 to 5 o'clock, at the boyhood home of President Wilson, 1705 Hampton Avenue in Columbia.

Mr. Wilson lived in Columbia when his father was associated with the Presbyterian Seminary and it is believed that the scholarly youth spent his formative years here. The treasured possessions of the Wilson Home are the bed in which President Wilson was born, and the desk used by him when he was governor of New Jersey.

The Bible in four separate books used by President Wilson's mother and donated to the home by the Rev. Joseph Wilson, brother of the president, has been rebound and may be seen by visitors there.

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary all over South Carolina have been invited to attend this reception, also heads of the various patriotic organizations over the state and in Columbia. The many citizens who played a part in saving the Wilson Home in 1928 and 1929 are cordially invited to attend the reception; no further personal invitation is being sent to them.

The strenuous effort in publicity, legislation and financing to save the boyhood home of Woodrow Wilson in 1928 and 1929 will be remembered by the many volunteer workers. Columbia Unit of the American Legion Auxiliary started the movement to save the home after its purchase by the city of Columbia for an auditorium site. Hundreds of newspaper articles, resolutions from patriotic organizations, interviews and telephone calls culminated in securing the passage of a bill in the legislature appropriating one half of the purchase price, or \$17,500. The remaining \$17,500 was raised by public subscription, with The State daily carrying a list of donors. William E. Gonzales, who was editor then, offered to underwrite the purchase price if the public subscription fell short. However, with a group of Columbia Unit Auxiliary women working untiringly many months with all patriotic groups, business men and legislators the necessary amount was oversubscribed. It was at this time that the Wilson bed was purchased from a member of the

President's family. This was accomplished through the offices of Fitz Hugh McMaster. Henry Johnson served as treasurer of the fund throughout the campaign, and A. S. Salley Jr., aided greatly with his wise counsel.

The Woodrow Wilson Home is now owned by the State of South Carolina and the Legion Committee in charge of the home is Cooper Edwards, Columbia, chairman;

Claude Ruff, Columbia, and R. E. Womble of Lexington.

The Department President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. R. E. Lipscomb of Mullins, has been very active in planning the reception next Friday afternoon. The general chairman of the reception is Mrs. E. Henry Chappele, Columbia, and her committee in charge of the home is composed of Miss Etta Skipper, Lancaster, Mrs. E. J. Brennen, Jr., Columbia; and Mrs. Brown Hamer, Dillon. Mrs. James Cathcart is serving as chairman of hostesses with Mrs. A. C. Clarkson and Mrs. John S. Reynolds assisting her.

In the receiving line with Mrs. R. E. Lipscomb will be Mrs. Herbert D. Black, wife of the Legion Department Commander; Mrs. George Bell Timmerman, Jr., wife of the governor; and Mrs. James F. Byrnes, wife of the former governor. All department presidents of the American Legion Auxiliary have been asked to serve as hostesses during the reception. Mrs. Walter F. Going is planning the decorations in the home. Mrs. E. J. Brennan, Jr., is in charge of the refreshments and Mrs. Gary Paschal will arrange the tea table. During Centennial Week, Mrs. Douglas Faunt will serve as publicity chairman.

DECEMBER 22, 1956 The State:

## Woodrow Wilson's Papers To Be on Exhibit at USC

A valuable collection of Woodrow Wilson's personal and family papers will be exhibited at the Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina on Friday.

The exhibit will be in connection with the Woodrow Wilson Centennial celebration, which will be climaxed with a dinner Friday night at the Hotel Columbia, when James F. Byrnes will speak.

The manuscripts, which will be on exhibit in the lower hall of the library from 11 o'clock until 5 o'clock, will include personal letters and papers of Woodrow Wilson and of his mother's family—the Woodrows.

Papers of James Woodrow, Mr. Wilson's uncle, will also be shown.

He was president of the University from 1891 to 1897 and taught prior to that at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary here. His papers were presented to the library by Miss Marian Woodrow, and the McMaster family.

Pictures and papers of Dr. George Howe, who married Woodrow Wilson's sister, will also be displayed. His papers were presented to the library by the Flinn family.

These papers all cover Woodrow Wilson's youth in Columbia—and are of a family and personal interest.

Dr. Robert L. Meriwether, director of the Caroliniana Library, and Mrs. Meriwether, librarian, are preparing the exhibit.

DECEMBER 25, 1956 The State:

DECEMBER 19, 1956 The State