

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
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**Fall, 2005**

Volume 40, Number 3

Willet M. Hays  
Who Saw 'Shakespeares'  
Among His Plants

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*Stonebridge: The Story of a Lost Estate and  
Oliver Crosby, the Genius Who Created It*

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*Stonebridge, one of Ramsey County's largest and most elegant homes. See article beginning on page 4. Photograph from Dexter Crosby's private collection and used with his permission.*

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 40, Number 3

Fall, 2005

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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## A Message from the Editorial Board

Author Jay Pfaender opens our Fall issue with a fascinating account of one of St. Paul's pioneering industrialists and inventors, Oliver Crosby, and Stonebridge, his lost estate that was located near the Mississippi River in St. Paul from 1916 to 1953.

Because our author was unable to find any color photo or even a postcard of the Stonebridge mansion, the RCHS Editorial Board decided, after much lively debate, to electronically colorize a surviving black and white photo of the famous Crosby home. This colorized version is reproduced on the front cover. The Editorial Board values accuracy and insisted that readers be told what we had done so that there was no deception. At the Board's request, Jay Pfaender systematically pursued examples of the actual colors that might have been seen if a color photo had existed. Thus he found brick from the original building and chased down paints used in other Clarence Johnston-designed buildings that have similarities to Stonebridge. From the landscape architects' plans for the Crosby estate he was able to identify the colors of the trees and shrubs that graced the grounds. The result, we hope, is a color image that conveys Stonebridge as faithfully as careful research and electronic wizardry permit. We, of course, invite you to comment on our decision to colorize and the results.

Two authors, Harlan Stoehr and Forrest Troyer, who have long been associated with the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment Station in St. Paul, conclude this issue of *Ramsey County History* with a biographical profile and tribute to Willet Hays, the first head of agronomic research at the university. Hays served Minnesota between 1888 and 1891 and 1893 and 1904. During his long career as an agronomist, Hays not only conducted major research at the East Bank campus, but he also served for a time in the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. and as Minister of Agriculture for Argentina. Today Hays deserves to be recognized as one of Minnesota's true agricultural leaders.

John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board



Willet Hays at his office in the Farm House, University of Minnesota, St. Paul. Photographs with article are from the University archives.

## *Ramsey County's Distinguished Agriculturist* Willet M. Hays, the Scientist Who Saw 'Shakespeares' Among His Plants

*Harlan Stoehr and Forrest Troyer*

**T**astefully matted and uniformly framed photographs of seven administrative heads, from Andrew Boss in 1912 through Burle Gengenbach in 2005, hang just inside the entrance to Room 306 in Borlaug Hall, seminar room of the University of Minnesota's Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics. Conspicuously absent from the lineup is Willet M. Hays, the first to head agronomic research at the University and arguably the greatest all-time contributor to the advancement of agronomy and agriculture in Minnesota.

Easterly winds in 1885 wafted the fragrance of forthcoming federal grants for agricultural research to the Minnesota legislature. Legislators responded with an enabling act instructing the regents of the University of Minnesota to establish an agricultural experiment station, "... for the

purpose of promoting agriculture in its various branches by scientific investigations and experiments . . ." The regents did so, thus qualifying the University to receive federal funding that came through passage of the Hatch Act by the United States Congress early in 1887.

The regents designated the University's farm at St. Anthony Park as the experiment station and the College of Agriculture faculty as its staff. A department of agriculture was created to coordinate work of the college and station, and William D. Porter was designated to head it, becoming dean of the College of Agriculture and director of the new Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station. Porter had come to the University as its agriculturist after thirty years of teaching science and mathematics at Delaware College, Newark.

The Hatch Act's \$15,000 annual sti-

pend enabled Porter to hire and support six faculty members. His first appointment, arriving in February 1888, was Willet Martin Hays, twenty-nine, associate editor of *Prairie Farmer* magazine in Chicago. Hays, the first agronomist on the scene, was named instructor in agriculture at the University's School of Agriculture and assistant agriculturist of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

Willet Hays was born on a farm near Eldora, Iowa. His father died when he was six; from when he was about twelve, under his mother's direction, he and his older brother took turns working the farm and attending school, Oskaloosa College, and then Drake University, from which he was graduated in 1885. That same year he married classmate Clara Shepperd, of Chariton.

Greatly interested in scientific agriculture, Hays then enrolled at Iowa State College (later Iowa State University) at Ames. There he earned a master's in agriculture and did research as assistant agriculturist under Seaman Knapp. Clara became the first woman in the United States to earn a master's in domestic science, later known as home economics. The couple then went to Chicago where their daughter, Bessie, was born in 1887.

Willet's editorial position with the Orange Judd family of publications gave him contact with men of high positions in government and in agriculture. Hays had many interests, keen intellect, broad vision and great energy; it was said that he, more than any other individual, brought scientific methods to bear on agricultural research at the University of Minnesota.

Austrian monk Gregor Mendel's papers on the laws of heredity had been published in 1866 and 1869 in the proceedings of the National History Society of Brünn (Austria, now Brno, Czech Republic). The proceedings had only local circulation, and thus were unknown throughout Europe and in America. Mendel's work was not rediscovered until about 1900. Hays, meanwhile, with a keen grasp of the principles of heredity, postulated that, "There are Shakespeares among plants," and quickly set out to select and increase the outstanding among them. He saw the individual plant as the

unit of improvement and had a grasp of the effects of hybridization.

Hays organized the University's farm for systematic field plot tests and set out to test large numbers of plants in order to find the Shakespeares. Within a decade his research plots grew from a few square rods of timothy, where plants were selected and increased individually (other plant breeders bulked seed of selected plants) to a crop nursery of several acres and millions of field crop plants. He began the first systematic pure-line selection—landrace breeding—and progeny tests of oats in the United States at Minnesota the year he arrived. And his 1889 selections of timothy plants are the earliest U.S. records of timothy improvement.

Andrew Boss, raised on a farm near Wabasha, had enrolled in the School of Agriculture's 1889-90 term, its second. Recognizing star quality when he saw it, Hays appointed Boss his farm foreman following his graduation in 1891. (The school then graduated its students in two years.) Meanwhile, in 1889, William Porter had left for greener pastures in Missouri. His successor was N.W. McLain, whose restrictive ways did not endear him to the experiment station faculty.

Likely through a combination of this situation and prospects of new opportunity, Hays left Minnesota late in 1891, leaving his plots in charge of Boss, and spent 1892 and part of 1893 as professor of agriculture at the North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo. Here, as at Minnesota, he was the first professor of agriculture and agriculturist for the agricultural experiment station. There he also established the station's first research plots for field crops and established plant breeding programs that continue to this day. A flax plot and a wheat plot he planted in 1892, which have grown those crops continuously, are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tragedy struck in March 1893. Following the birth of their second child, a son, Myron, Clara Hays was stricken with scarlet fever and died.

Back at the Minnesota Experiment Station, McLain had been succeeded by Clinton D. Smith, whose management style was similar to McLain's; by mid-1893 he, too, was gone. In an attempt to

restore harmony, the Board of Regents appointed William D. Liggett, one of their own, on a part-time basis, as chairman of the station. Liggett had large farm holdings in Swift County, had been secretary of the State Agricultural Society, and was then State Railroad and Warehouse Commissioner and a member of the Board of Regents. One of Liggett's first acts was to offer Willet Hays a position as professor of agriculture and vice chairman of the experiment station. Hays returned to Minnesota in late summer 1893. With Boss as his farm superintendent and assistant, he was quickly back at work.

In 1894 he wrote, "Not content with the best kind of corn, wheat, oats, barley, field peas, timothy, etc., which the world affords, we have well under way numerous new varieties produced by selection and by a combination of crossing and selection." Recognizing the effect of environment on plants and Minnesota's wide range of soils and environmental conditions, he early enlisted the cooperation of farmers in testing varieties and studying cropping practices. Frustrated with the difficulty of controlling field conditions on these farms, he advocated establishing branch experiment stations.

Hays began crops research in 1894 at Coteau Farm, near Lynd, owned by O.C. Gregg, a community leader and early director of the University's Farmers Institutes. Despite opposition of some connected with the University, Hays persuaded the 1895 legislature to establish two branch stations, the Northwest Sub-Station at Crookston and the North Central Sub-Station at Grand Rapids. Impressed by what he had seen of Hays, Empire Builder James J. Hill contributed land for the Crookston station.

Willet Hays was the nineteenth century's strongest advocate for scientific plant and animal breeding. He is credited with using the first progeny test in America at the University of Minnesota. His progeny test is a bottom-up progeny-affects-parents procedure that judges the parent based on its progeny. If progeny tests were applied to humans, we would each be judged by the achievements of our children.

In 1891, Hays initiated pure-line

(landrace) breeding, where new varieties are selected from older heterogeneous varieties. From testing plants grown a foot apart each way, Hays went to a centgener (a word he coined to denote 100 offspring of a selected plant) system of 100 plants planted four inches apart each way by a machine he designed. He applied his centgener method to several field crops, devising equipment to plant seed at a uniform depth and spacing so he could compare individual plants within as well as among rows. His centgener method grew 100 plants per generation from a single selected plant, then selected the single best plant from the best row and repeated, emphasizing individual plant selection from many plants. Hays later saved plants from five heads or ears per centgener, which was the first grid or replicated-parent system of selection.

He started flax selection improvement in 1894 and used the centgener method to develop Primost, the first pure-line flax variety developed and distributed in the United States. Hays also developed and released Minn. 105 barley and Minn. 281 and 295 oat varieties. All offered considerable yield advantage and were commercially important to Minnesota farmers. As early as 1904, he was listed among the first four pioneers in barley breeding and tested barleys of hybrid origin, but none was released for farm planting.

In Minnesota in the late 1800s, wheat was the king of crops. In 1899, when Hays introduced his Minn.163 variety, 6.4 million acres of wheat were grown, more than twice the acreage of corn, oats, barley, and flax combined; soybeans were decades away. Hays's new wheat outyielded other varieties by 1½ bushels per acre. Market price then was about 67 cents per bushel. In a single year Hays's new variety had the potential to generate \$6.4 million of additional Minnesota farm income, equivalent to about \$128 million today. His Minn. 169 wheat, released in 1902, yielded still more.

Shortly after his return to Minnesota, Hays asked Boss to buy a yellow dent corn variety from DeCou & Co. in St. Paul. For three years Hays selected the variety for mature ears and drier shelled grain, then distributed it as University 13 in 1896, recommending it for

southern Minnesota, south of St. Paul. The name was changed to Minn. 13 in 1899.

Minn. 13 became the most popular variety in the northern U.S. Corn Belt, pushing corn growing northward fifty miles in a decade. Fewer than a million acres of corn were grown in Minnesota in 1893 when Hays began work with Minn. 13; acreage grew steadily to 5 million acres in 1932. More than forty years later, in 1936, Minn. 13 corn was recommended by the Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Wyoming experiment stations. It accounts for some 13 percent of present-day U.S. hybrid corn background, contributing an estimated \$2.6 billion to the annual crop value.

In 1900, at a Grange Picnic at Lake Minnetonka, Hays met Arthur B. Lyman, a schoolteacher, who told him of a winter hardy alfalfa growing in Carver County. Shortly thereafter Hays and Boss packed their bags, hitched a team of horses to a wagon and drove thirty miles to Excelsior. They spent three days with Lyman examining fields, talking with area farmers, digging up plants and obtaining seed for increase at the experiment station. Hays demonstrated the variety's winter hardiness and named it "Grimm," for the farmer who had brought seed in his immigrant trunk from Germany and carefully selected and increased the seed of winterhardy plants. The U.S. Department of Agriculture began tests of Grimm alfalfa in 1905; widespread distribution of Grimm alfalfa seed began in 1910. Grimm became the most popular alfalfa variety in the northern United States and a landmark in the development of forage plants for North America. With 25 million acres grown, alfalfa is the fourth largest U.S. crop; its annual value exceeds \$10 billion.

Early in his work at Minnesota, Hays gained the cooperation of agronomists in neighboring states and the USDA. Plant stocks were exchanged, conferences were held, and Hays frequently visited other experiment stations and the USDA to benefit from interchanges with those doing similar work. Largely through his efforts, investigators in the spring-wheat

states came into a cooperative agreement for the promotion of plant breeding and use of improved procedures. Through Willet Hays's plant-breeding work, the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station became known worldwide. Hays traveled extensively in England and Europe in 1899, becoming widely acquainted with plant breeders and experimental methods used elsewhere. He initiated cooperative research with North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, fostering greater standardization of methods and joint analysis of research problems.

As early as 1894 Hays was giving instruction in farm management. Concerned by the problem of low farm income, he tried to solve it by improving cropping systems and studying net returns through labor and expense records on rotation plots at the Minnesota and North Dakota Experiment Stations. Deciding that costs and income from the plots were artificial and that the only useful information would come from the business records of actual farms, he and Boss hitched up their horses again in 1901 and went to visit farmers in the Northfield area. With their cooperation, he established the first U.S. farm business analysis, or "Cost of Production" route. Similar routes were established at Marshall and at Halstad, in the Red River Valley, to gain a broad grasp of farming costs and returns in Minnesota.

Hays established cooperative relationships with the USDA's Bureau of Statistics, gaining both technical and financial assistance for the Minnesota studies and fostering interest that led several other states to begin studying the business side of farming. Consequently, the Office of Farm Management was established in the USDA and the subject-matter field of agricultural economics was developed.

Of this early work, Sigmund von Frauendorfer, a distinguished authority, was quoted in the *Journal of Farm Economics* of July 1928, "It required the initiative of energetic and far-seeing men to raise farm management to the rank of clearly defined and generally recognized science. The first of these men who can be called pioneers of agricultural economics was W.M. Hays of the University of Minnesota."

Always interested in livestock im-



*The Farm House, University of Minnesota St. Paul. Authorized by a \$25,000 appropriation and built in 1883, it was one of the first buildings on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus. Willet and Ellen Beach Hays lived here in the east wing from their marriage in 1897 through 1904; Professor Hays had his office, seed laboratories and classroom in the south wing. The Farm House was torn down during the 1940s.*

provement, Hays was a leader in organizing breeding circuits in which the progeny of sires were studied and desirable sires were maintained for rotation among the circuit's members. A Milking Shorthorn breeding circuit he organized became the foundation for many of the state's good Milking Shorthorn herds.

By 1903 Andrew Boss had become an associate professor in agriculture and was in charge of animal husbandry work, which earlier had been under Hays. Hays's new assistant in agriculture was another former student, Coates P. Bull, who returned to Minnesota after serving briefly on the faculty of the University of Illinois.

Beginning in the early 1890s, Hays had issued certificates with seed of barley, corn, oat, wheat, and grasses to farmers, certifying that the seed was purchased from the experiment station. The farmer-purchasers, who were asked to report on the performance of the crop, could use these certificates as proof of origin when offering seed for sale. Few farmers were careful to grow and harvest their seed crops in isolation to maintain the variety's purity; in a year or two the crop became so mixed as to be of little value for seed.

In the summer of 1903 Hays decided to organize Minnesota seed growers to address the problem. On August 2 he sent

a letter, co-signed by Bull, to "those who have been chosen by the State Experiment Station as its cooperators in growing superior and improved varieties of field seeds, and others who make a specialty of growing seed for sale." The letter asked that they meet "on Wednesday, September 2nd, third day of the State Fair, at Hamline, Minnesota, in Institute Hall."

At meeting time, Institute Hall was still occupied by a meeting of the Territorial Pioneers, whose agenda still had a ways to go. Hays's small group was offered the second floor of the Territorial Pioneers Log Cabin as meeting space. There the Minnesota Field Crop Breeders

Association was formed, with Hays as its first secretary. In 1913 the organization's name was changed to Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA), and it became one of the nation's highest-volume U.S. seed certification agencies. After operating for many years under the wing of the experiment station, MCIA became a grower-owned organization, which continues operations today from the University's St. Paul campus.

While attending the Hybridizers and Genetics Congress in London in 1899, Hays had decided there was need for an organization for those interested in crop and animal improvement through genetics. On returning to America, he suggested the need to James (Tama Jim) Wilson, an old friend and mentor from Iowa, then serving as U.S. secretary of agriculture. Wilson recommended that an organizing committee be formed and named Hays chairman. Hays eventually chaired a meeting of academicians and business people interested in improving plants and animals at Central High School, St. Louis, Missouri, on December 29-30, 1903. At this meeting, sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the American Breeders Association (ABA) was formed. Its purpose was to study the laws of breeding and to promote the improvement of plants and animals by the development of expert methods of breeding. Hays was secretary of the ABA from 1903 through 1912, founded *The American Breeders Magazine* in 1910, and was its editor until 1913. During 1913 and 1914 the publication's name became *The Journal of Heredity* and the organization's name became the American Genetic Association.

By 1904 Hays had built a wide reputation as teacher, researcher, and scholar. Keenly interested in education for children in rural Minnesota, he advocated the consolidation of rural elementary schools, establishment of many secondary schools of agriculture and home economics, and a curriculum reaching from the elementary schools through the high school to college. He had much to do with establishing the system of secondary agricultural schools in Minnesota, believed that

the study of nature, agriculture, and home economics should be carefully correlated with cultural subjects, and saw the state university as the pinnacle of the state's educational system.

A prolific writer, Hays was the author of more than 100 books, pamphlets, agricultural bulletins, and articles for publications. While not regarded as a great lecturer, he was known as an excellent teacher. Outgoing and friendly, he made his students companions on intellectual adventures. When he could not crowd all he wanted into the then-standard 10-hour day, he would organize a morning or evening seminar. He and his students often could be seen out among the field plots or in the plant-breeding nursery in the dewy hours of early morning or in late evening dusk when some interesting phenomena were to be observed.

While proverbially late for classes, oblivious to meal times and often tardy for appointments, Willet Hays was at the forefront in promoting new ideas, initiating new methods and stimulating his students to give their best to the cause of agriculture. It was said that others sometimes were antagonized by his aggressiveness and vision, but it also was said that he usually gave more than he received.

While many of the scientists of his day were individualists, jealous of their research and largely secretive of their methods and objectives, Hays sought advice from every side. His researches and his methods were open to all, and anyone was welcome to draw from them. He was quick to adopt the ideas of others; equally quick to give them credit.

\* \* \*

Through Spencer Beach, a former classmate in Iowa who later headed the horticulture department there, the widowed Willet Hays had met Spencer's sister, thirty-three-year-old Ellen Beach, daughter of a New York State physician and school principal at Courtland, New York. They married in 1897 and moved into the east wing of the Farm House on the St. Paul campus, located between where Hayes Hall and Gortner Laboratory of Biochemistry now stand. Their daughter

Doris was born there in 1899, and son Silas in 1902.

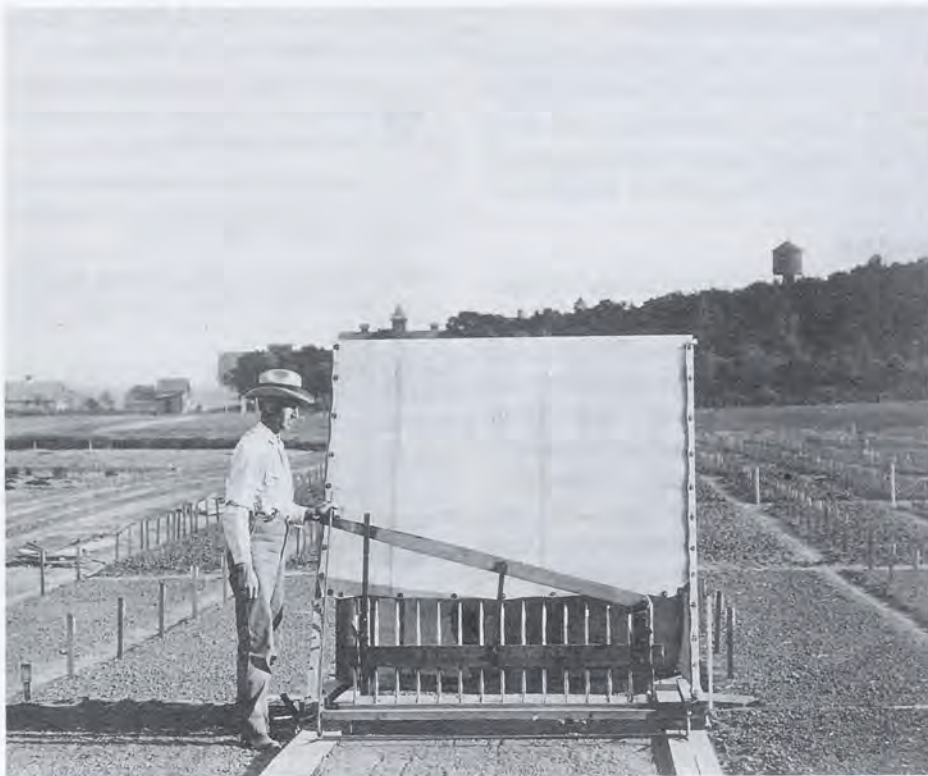
Partly through a strong belief in its concept and partly to spare his oldest child, Bessie, the long trolley ride into St. Paul or Minneapolis to high school, Hays enrolled her in the academic high school at the University's School of Agriculture. Bessie, tall and attractive at fifteen, became attracted to the twenty-five-year-old son of a rural legislator attending the school. Hays told the young man he was much too old for Bessie and to leave her alone. The young man responded by taking Bessie to his sister's home, stating that she was eighteen, marrying her and taking her to Colorado. Willet and Ellen were crushed; Bessie was happy. She became the fine mother of a large family, living through hard times on an Idaho ranch and, during the depression years, in California.

Willet Hays's career in Minnesota ended when his old friend and mentor U.S. Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson asked him to come Washington, D.C., as assistant Secretary of Agriculture. Hays completed the year 1904 at Minnesota and he and his family left for Washington, D.C., in January 1905.

## Epilogue

Willet Hays served the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the Theodore Roosevelt and Taft administrations. As assistant Secretary of Agriculture he introduced the project system for agricultural research, which the USDA later extended to state experiment stations. He played a large role in formulating and advocating the Nelson Amendment passed by Congress in 1907, which provided funds to each of the state land-grant colleges for more adequate "instruction for teaching the elements of agriculture and the mechanic arts." He is credited with arranging for the transfer of the former U.S. Indian School farm at Morris, Minnesota, to the University of Minnesota, where it later became the West Central Experiment Station.

Always interested in the development of improved roads for rural areas, Hays wrote the Good Roads Amendment of the Minnesota statutes. In Washington he helped organize the U.S. Bureau of



*A centgener planter and tracks, devised by Willet Hays for planting grain at even spaces and uniform depth, crucial in mass production of individual plants for research. The planter is covered to prevent wind from blowing light seeds from the seed cups. Each stake in the field marked a centgener planted. The card label on the stake gave the centgener number, the stock, key to the ancestry of the stock, and the date of origin.*

Public Roads and Rural Engineering. He worked with Seaman Knapp, another old friend from Iowa, in drawing up the Smith-Lever Act, foundation for the Agricultural Extension Service, which finally passed early in the Wilson administration. Hays also wrote the original draft of the vocational education bill that came up in Congress under the names of various sponsors, finally passing as the Smith-Hughes Act later in the Woodrow Wilson administration. Hays also wrote the protocol for the New International Institute of Agriculture, organized in Rome in 1913 by David Lubin. It was the forerunner of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, which has its headquarters in Rome.

Following President Wilson's inauguration in 1913, Hays was asked to serve as adviser to the Minister of Agriculture of the Argentine Republic and to help organize agricultural instruction and an experiment station at the University of

Tucuman. Delayed for several months because of Willet's severe headaches, Willet and Ellen finally left for Argentina in October 1913, leaving Doris and Silas in the care of their grandfather and an aunt in Washington, D.C. On their return voyage on the S.S. *VanDyck* a year later, the *VanDyck* was captured by a German cruiser. Its passengers eventually were put ashore at Para, Uruguay, and Willet and Ellen Hays finally reached Washington in mid November.

That winter the headaches Willet had suffered before going to Argentina returned; he became ill and with his judgment impaired, he decided to return to the land to regain his physical and mental health. He and Ellen bought a 100-acre farm near West Chester, Pennsylvania, from where Willet offered his services as an agricultural consultant. He never regained his health. When in 1920 son Silas chose to attend Iowa State College in Ames and daughter Doris, a Swarthmore

graduate, landed a position teaching English there, Ellen and Willet chose to also move to Iowa. When Ellen secured a position as housemother for a Greek sorority in Ames in 1922, Willet moved to Eldora to live with his widowed attorney brother, Charles. In July 1927, his health further deteriorating, Willet Hays entered the State Mental Hospital at Cherokee, Iowa. He died there Jan. 15, 1928.

A eulogy in *The Farmer* magazine attributed to Andrew Boss, his former student, farm foreman and associate, and steadfast friend, said, in part:

Prof. Hays first came into national prominence as a result of his cereal investigations at Minnesota University Farm. A pioneer in systematic plant breeding and selection, Prof. Hays accomplished the most noteworthy results in plant improvements up to that time. Plant breeding and selection methods in Minnesota as well as in many other states were founded on the work of Prof. Hays. His "fooling with the breeding of plants" was barely tolerated until the great value of his work was proved. Anticipating the future by years is rarely popular to those who think chiefly of the present. Prof. Hays thought of things that should happen for the benefit of agriculture in future years, and then burned out his energy to bring them about.

In February 1944 the U.S. Liberty ship *Willet M. Hays* was launched at Permente Metals Corp., Shipbuilding Division, Yard No. 2, Richmond, Calif. The *Willet M. Hays* was later purchased by the French government and sailed under the French flag in the early 1960s.

His son Silas transferred to the State University of Iowa, where he earned a doctor of medicine degree under the ROTC program in 1928 and later graduated from the Army Medical School and the Medical Field Service School. In 1942 he was given complete jurisdiction of the storage and issue of army medical supplies in the continental United States. He later was in charge of the medical supply program for the invasion of Europe and in 1950 became Surgeon of the U.S. Army in the Pacific. In March 1955 he was named Surgeon General of the Army. General Hays died in 1964 at Arlington, Virginia. His daughter lives in Texas, his son in Florida.



Daughter Doris Hays married Fred Fenton, an agricultural engineer at Kansas State University. She returned to teaching when her children were grown, this time as a member of the English department faculty at Kansas State. She had a son, who lives in New Mexico, and two daughters, one of whom lives in New York, the other in Oregon.

Bessie Hays died in California several years ago; the whereabouts of her children is unknown. Myron Hays married and was last known of in Iowa. He drove away one day, never to be heard from again.

Willet Hays was honored posthumously at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., July 12, 2005, hosted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Services. As assistant secretary of agriculture in 1905 Hays was temporarily assigned to head the agricultural statistics program. One person with inside knowledge of the then Crop Reporting Board's operations had decided to profit on cotton estimates. Hays moved quickly to implement changes in the estimates process to prevent a recurrence of insider trading.

He developed a concept of identifying eight qualified individuals, four in Washington and four state agents, who would bring statistical and agricultural knowledge to the crop estimating work. His approach was to have four of the eight participate in setting the estimates for each major report, the state agents bringing firsthand knowledge of current crop and market conditions.

Hays's concept was adopted immediately. By August, 1905, reports were shown as released by the Crop Estimating Board of the Department of Agriculture. In November, 1905, "Crop Reporting Board" became the standard designation.

*Harlan Stoehr, Shoreview, was assistant professor and agricultural bulletin editor at the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station in the early and mid-1960s; Forrest Troyer, DeKalb, Ill., an authority on the origins of corn, earned a Ph.D. in agronomy at the University of Minnesota in 1964 and is retired from a career in plant breeding.*

## Acknowledgments

The authors appreciate a great deal of assistance by Lois Erickson, University of Minnesota Archives, Minneapolis, and Ruth Fenton Bascom, Eugene, Oregon, a granddaughter of Willet and Ellen Beach Hays.

## Notes

Although he headed agronomic research at the University of Minnesota from 1888 through 1891 and from 1893 through 1904, the agronomy department does not recognize Willet Hays as a head. From 1888, plant, livestock and farm management research was under "agriculture," headed by Hays, except from 1892 into 1893 while he was at North Dakota. Dairy and other livestock units were given division status in the early 1900s.

A division of agronomy and farm management was created in 1909 and Andrew Boss was named its "chief," as division heads were then called.

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*Top: In 1937, the South Mississippi Boulevard entrance gate was moved to Hamline and Midway Parkway as the west entrance to Como Park. E.E. Engelbert donated the gate and WPA workers installed it.*

*Below: The wrought-iron pedestrian gates were moved to near Lake Como and are frequently used for wedding pictures. Photos by the author.*



**R.C.H.S.**  
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