

From the Archives



President Henry E. Thayer, circa 1908

Henry E. Thayer, the university's second president, was no stranger to Fairmount College or to Wichita. He became a trustee of the college in 1896 and served as the minister of the city's Plymouth Congregational Church from 1896 to 1902. His two children grew up in Wichita and attended Fairmount College. In 1907, shortly after the deaths of President

Nathan Morrison and Dean W. H. Isely, the college trustees and the Congregational Education Society tapped the well-known Thayer to lead Fairmount. He assumed his presidential responsibilities by September 11, the opening day for the fall 1907 term.

President Thayer holds a unique place in the history of libraries at Wichita State University. During his inauguration on March 10, 1908, he helped lay down the cornerstone for the campus' Carnegie library. On this special day, classes were dismissed and speeches, sermons and music marked the festivities held both on campus and at Fairmount and Plymouth churches.

President Thayer inherited a college deeply in debt.

Under his leadership, the college mounted several capital campaigns without much success and considered merging with the College of Emporia to stay afloat. Like President Morrison, he spent much of his time away from campus on fund-raising trips in the East.

Despite the harsh economic times, the modern world made its way onto campus during Thayer's seven years in office. Natural gas for heating and lighting was installed in 1907. In 1908, the first college bookstore was established and a connection to the city water supply was made. By 1909, Fairmount College had its own soda fountain. While class offerings began to swing away from classics and religion toward practical coursework, the ideals and principles of a Christian college were firmly in place on the campus, evidenced by the requirement of a year's study of the Bible, mandatory chapel attendance and, according to the college catalogs, an expectation for students to attend church services "at least once" every Sunday during the school year.

In 1914, President Thayer's health began to fail, and he left the presidency to go into ranching near Mulvane with his son. A few years later with improved health, he returned to the ministry at Congregational churches in McPherson and Athol. On November 20, 1921, following services in Athol, he died of a heart attack as he began to drive home. His widow Louise later reflected that the fund-raising tasks undertaken by President Morrison and her husband were "heart-breaking and man-killing."

University Libraries
1845 Fairmount
Wichita, KS 67260-0068
316-978-3586
Libraries.wichita.edu/ablah/

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InfoShock

A newsletter for the WSU
Libraries Employees by the
Employees
This edition: Stephanie Sauls,
Kathy Downes, Mary Nelson,
Robyn Tiemeyer

Special articles: Nancy Deyoe,
Angie Paul

Congratulations!



Jordan Poland (center), has been awarded the 2012 Charlotte and Ken Lunt Distinguished Graduate Assistantship. Pictured with Dean Don Gilstrap, left and Dr. Lorraine Madway, right

Ramesh Devineni (center), has been awarded the 2012 Lee and Carolyn Riley Distinguished Graduate Assistantship. Pictured with Dean Don Gilstrap, left and Cathy Moore-Jansen, right

