



George Will

Class of 1902

George Francis Will was born on November 8, 1884 in Bismarck. After graduating from Bismarck High School in 1902, he attended Harvard University. There George studied anthropology, archaeology, and botany, graduating in 1906. As a college student, he examined the ancient villages sites called Double Ditch on the Missouri River north of Bismarck. George returned to Bismarck where he worked for the nursery and seed firm his father had founded, Oscar H. Will and Co. He worked with the Mandan and Arikara tribes to learn about crossbreeds of corn for his seed business. George became an acclaimed corn breeder and authored numerous articles for trade journals on that and related subjects. His avid interest in the history and prehistory of North Dakota led him to write a variety of books, speeches and articles on the folklore, agricultural-lore, languages and customs, and archaeological remains of Indian groups living along the Upper Missouri. In all, George wrote 117 published books, articles and reviews on the topics of history, prehistory, and botany.

Active throughout his life in community affairs, George was a member of the Bismarck School Board 39 years. He also served on the Bismarck Zoning Board, the Bismarck Public Library Board and the State Park Commission. He belonged to Rotary, Sons of the American Revolution, the American Association of Advanced Sciences, the American Anthropological Association, the Society for American Archaeology and the American Newcomer Society. George was president of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, a position he held from 1942 until his death in 1955. In 1940 he received an honorary doctorate from the North Dakota Agricultural College, in recognition of his many contributions to modern agriculture.

