Wills, George Stockton [1]

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by Brenda Marks Eagles, 1996

3 Apr. 1866–27 Feb. 1956

George Stockton Wills, educator, was born in Halifax County [2], the son of Richard Henry and Ann Louisa Norman Wills. At The University of North Carolina [3], where he was a member of the Philanthropic Society, he received a bachelor of philosophy degree magna cum laude in 1889 and was honored at his graduation with a special certificate in English. Afterwards Wills became an instructor of English at Oak Ridge Military Institute [4]. Returning to Chapel Hill in 1894, he taught English until 1896, when he was awarded a master of philosophy degree in English; his thesis was entitled "William Cullen Bryant as a Poet." He received a master of arts degree from Harvard University in 1898.

From 1898 to 1900 Wills was professor of English at Western Maryland College in Westminster, and the next year he taught English at Battle Ground Academy in Franklin, Tenn. From 1901 to 1904 he was head of the Department of English at Western Maryland College.

In 1904 Wills became professor of English at Greensboro Woman's College [5]. Three years later he left Greensboro for Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, where he was instructor of English (1907–12, 1914–22), acting head of the Departments of English and German (1911–12), and head of the Department of English (1914, 1920–22). From 1918 to 1920 he was a special instructor in English at the University of Maryland. He returned once again to Western Maryland College in 1922 to become head of the Department of English, a post he held until his retirement in 1944, when he was made professor emeritus. The college awarded him an honorary doctor of letters degree in 1935.

Wills was the author of numerous articles on southern history and literature. An early and important contribution to the Southern History Association's publication was a biographical sketch and complete, annotated bibliography of the works of the poet Sidney Lanier (1899). He also prepared biographies for Samuel A. Ashe [6] and Charles L. Van Noppen [7]'s *Biographical History of North Carolina* [8] and was a joint author of the *Freshman Handbook in English*. He wrote a *History of Western Maryland College, 1866–1886* (1949) and a *History of Western Maryland College, 1886–1951* (1952).

On 24 June 1903 Wills married Georgia M. Chidester. They had three children: Katharine Walker, Richard Norman, and Merillat Chidester Wills Frost. After a protracted hospital stay, Wills died of a stroke one month before his ninetieth birthday. His funeral was conducted at Ascension Episcopal Church in Westminster, Md., and he was buried in Druid Ridge Cemetery in Pikesville, Md.

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Eagles, Brenda M. [11]
Origin - location:
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