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Research Essay
History 420
11/9/23

Western Illinois University's "Unsung" Heroes:

Walter P. Morgan.

Founded in the rolling prairies of Illinois, Western Illinois University (WIU) has a long and storied past in the small rural town of Macomb, Illinois. First opening as the Western Illinois State Normal School at the turn of the 20th century, the school has since grown to include dozens of majors, thousands of students, and remains the educational powerhouse of western Illinois. One of the men who made a massive impact on the history of the school is Walter P. Morgan, the third president of WIU. Morgan still stands as WIU's longest-serving president and made more contributions to the culture of WIU than most students realize. Despite his work and status as the longest-serving president, relatively little research has been completed about him and his contributions. While his history may currently be reduced to a few archival documents, a plaque, and a building, this paper hopes to inspire more history students and historians to spend time researching the individuals who created and sustained WIU. Without the leadership of men such as Morgan, we may have shuttered our doors long before this author ever had an opportunity to walk through the hallowed halls of the Leathernecks. Morgan's impact on WIU's physical, intellectual, and cultural expansions provides the basis for his importance to the history of WIU.

Western Illinois University was founded in 1899 by the Illinois State Legislature. However, the title of University would not come until much later in the institution's history. WIU was founded as the Western Illinois State Normal School. At its founding, the only

majors the institution offered were in education. More specifically, the school provided two-year teaching certificates to future prospective educators. There were several prospective places the legislature looked at placing the institution. However, it was ultimately due to a gift of several acres of land from the local chapter of the Freemasons and some pushing from a particular Speaker of the House that the institution came to Macomb. When the school opened in 1902, Sherman Hall was the only building on the campus. Housing the classrooms, gym, administrative offices, library, training school, and every other facility the fledgling school could need, Sherman Hall served as the focal point of the new institution, and it stood out amongst the less grand buildings of Macomb. Despite being the only school of its kind in the region, the school's student population remained relatively small, with only a little over 200 students during its first year.¹

Additionally, during this time period, most institutions would not have been known as universities. The term University was often reserved for institutions that offered graduate courses and a focus on research. Most institutions were unable to do such a thing in the early days of Illinois's higher education system. Therefore, it would not be until the latter half of the 20th century that many of these institutions would move from normal schools and colleges to full-fledged universities.²

WIU was not exceptional in its founding. At the end of the 19th century, Illinois began opening normal schools around the same time as Western. Illinois State University became

¹ John E. Hallwas, "The Founding and the Formative Years, 1899-1911," in *First Century: a Pictorial History of Western Illinois University*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1999), 8-13.

² John Freed, "The Founding of Illinois State Normal University: Normal School or State University?," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1988-) 101, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 106, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40204724>.

the first normal school in Illinois, founded in 1857. Several other institutions followed Illinois State in being created to teach educators. Southern Illinois University Carbondale was founded in 1869. Eastern Illinois University was founded in 1895. Northern Illinois University was founded in 1895. Beyond the cardinal direction schools of Illinois, there were also a handful of other normal schools that were founded throughout Illinois during the mid to late 19th century.³

With the foundation of Western Illinois State Normal School in 1899, construction began almost immediately, and the process of choosing the school's first administration began. Prior to the arrival of President Morgan, the presidents of the school were referred to as principals. However, the titles of principal and president are often used interchangeably, given their meaning of the same office. According to historian Victor Hicken, the president's initial responsibilities composed a relatively small list; "the president would insure 'efficiency in all of the departments', keep a 'constant watch and care over every school interest' as well as instructional work, select 'competent and right spirited faculty members.' In return the Board of Trustees would expect the president to 'act with perfect freedom within the lines of general policy laid down by the Board'."⁴ However, despite a relatively simple set of responsibilities that seemingly anyone would be capable of fulfilling, politics played a significant role in the selection of the first principal. John Wesley Henninger and Alfred E. Bayliss would become the final two candidates for the position. Governor Richard Yates supported Henninger, while Lawrence Y. Sherman supported Bayliss. Sherman served as

³ Hallwas, "The Founding and the Formative Years, 1899-1911," 8.

⁴ Victor Hicken, "The Beginning," in *The Purple and The Gold*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1970), 16.

Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives and was incredibly influential in pushing for the selection of Macomb as the site of the school. Despite Sherman's influence, Yates ultimately decided on Henninger, who would go on to serve for the first four years after the Western Illinois State Normal School opened its doors for business.⁵

Shortly after his appointment and hiring, Henninger set to hiring the new faculty to lead the school. The faculty comprised nine teachers, one librarian, and three critic teachers. The nine teachers taught the future educators as part of the normal school. The three critic teachers focused on the Training School. The Training School offered classes for students in grades elementary through eighth grade. The teachers offered courses for future educators in Latin, Greek, German, English, Math, Art, Geography, Geology, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Civics, and History. The future educators would then learn teaching pedagogy and practice their skills under the guidance of the critic teachers.⁶

Alongside the hiring of the staff, President Henninger was also responsible for the ordering of furniture, selection of books, and overall preparation for the opening of the institution. After the school opened in 1901, the classes and years progressed smoothly. Despite the limited knowledge of students given their rural upbringing, the students persevered and swiftly completed their studies and received their teaching certification. However, the relative peace and stability of the school would be brought to a temporary end in 1905.⁷

⁵ Hicken, "The Beginning," 16-19.

⁶ Hallwas, "The Founding and the Formative Years, 1899-1911," 11.

⁷ Victor Hicken, "The Henninger Era," in *The Purple and The Gold*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1970), 37-40.

In July of 1905, President Henninger resigned from his position. As with Henninger's hiring, his resignation was politically charged. Governor Yates had been replaced by Governor Charles Deneen, a political ally of Speaker Sherman, in January of 1905. Governor Deneen dismissed the school's Board of Trustees and placed Sherman in charge of creating a new Board. Sherman's Board of Trustees quickly hired Alfred Bayliss, the man Henninger had competed against for the spot as the first president. Bayliss quickly set about making changes to the school that his political rival had once led. His first action was to dismiss several members of the faculty. It is commonly believed that Bayliss wished to hire more educated faculty. However, one of the gentlemen he dismissed held a master's from Yale, so it is more likely to have been a politically charged decision. Bayliss also expanded the Training School through the creation of the Academy, equivalent to a high school, and expanded the course offerings of the normal school. Despite starting with a major upset due to the dismissal of several revered staff members, Bayliss would go on to win the support of the students and community. Under Bayliss, the school saw the introduction of its first two sororities and fraternities. Kappa Phi Gamma joined the group in 1910, Tau Alpha Tau in 1912, Phi Sigma Upsilon in 1910, and Phi Delta Kappa in 1912. While Bayliss attended to the institution, his wife organized Macomb's chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and served as its first regent. Despite a rocky start, Bayliss regained the hearts of the students and townsfolk and continued to make minor expansions and changes to the school during his tenure as president.⁸

⁸ Hallwas, "The Founding and the Formative Years, 1899-1911," 25-26.

During the Bayliss administration, several other changes and expansions were also made to the school. A member of the Board of Trustees named John Keefer set about beautification efforts for the campus. Due to his efforts, a variety of birch trees soon dotted the campus, and a new pond was constructed down the hill from Sherman Hall. The pond came to be called Lake Ruth in honor of Keefer's daughter and as thanks for his efforts in the beautification of the campus.⁹ Alongside these efforts came the creation of a model country school and the Country School Training Course. The model school opened in 1906 and served as a training center to prepare educators for work in rural schools. However, not everyone used the model school for training; the model school was primarily used by those in the Training Course. The Country School Training Course was an alternative one-year program to provide specific preparation for educators to begin their careers in the more prominent rural areas. The model school and program quickly became an important aspect of the school. It was even explicitly named in the 1917 *Sequel*, "Among the many courses offered in this school is the Country School Training Course."¹⁰ The article then continues to describe the class of that year but does not mention any other specific courses by name that were held at the Country School. It was one of the first of its kind and addressed a genuine need for Western Illinois. It soon became the subject of immense conversation as educators from around the area came to see the new system.¹¹

⁹ Victor Hicken, "Bayliss Wins Out," in *The Purple and The Gold*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1970), 44-45.

¹⁰ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1917*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1917), 69.

¹¹ Hallwas, "The Founding and the Formative Years, 1899-1911," 28.

Sadly, President Bayliss passed away while still serving as president in 1911. While riding his horse one evening, President Bayliss suffered a blow to the head after falling off his horse. He managed to linger for 11 days but ultimately died from the injuries. President Bayliss was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in Macomb, and the Board of Trustees quickly set about finding and picking a new leader for the school.¹² They ultimately settled on John McGilvery as the next president. However, McGilvery had already agreed to serve as President of Kent State in Ohio. Agreeing to serve in the role for a year while a new president was selected, McGilvery bought the University the time it needed to choose a new president who could help guide the still-young school. The Board of Trustees would then select Walter Piety Morgan as the third president of the Western Illinois State Normal School.¹³

Walter Piety Morgan was born in 1871 in Prairie Creek, Indiana. A lifelong educator, Morgan started his educational journey in 1884 as a teacher in the schoolhouses of rural Indiana. From those early days at the ripe old age of 13, Morgan would fall in love with education and continue to pursue higher forms of it. A year after he began teaching, Morgan graduated from Indiana State Normal School and found his place as a mathematics teacher at Terre Haute High School in Terre Haute, Indiana. After spending a few years as a math teacher, Morgan grew restless and left for a brief stint while he pursued his bachelor's degree at Indiana University. After completing his bachelor's degree in 1900, Morgan returned to Terre Haute and was eventually chosen to serve as the Superintendent of the Terre Haute school system from 1906 to 1908. As Morgan's knowledge and experience grew, so did his recognition across the region. After the death of President Bayliss and the rise of McGilvrey,

¹² "Alfred Bayliss Dead," *Macomb Journal*, August 28, 1914.

¹³ Hicken, "Bayliss Wins Out," 61.

Morgan arrived in Macomb in March 1912 to serve as the new director of the Training School. However, Morgan's place in this role was short-lived as the Board of Trustees chose to hire Morgan as the third President of WIU in June 1912. In the span of just a few months, the institution witnessed the end of Bayliss and the start of the Morgan Era.¹⁴

Similar to his predecessors, Morgan quickly began making changes and expansions to the school. Morgan's shift in positions once again left the Director of the Training School position vacant. Morgan swiftly hired Rupert R. Simpkins to fill the position. He graduated from Indiana University with Morgan in 1900 and continued to pursue a master's degree. He was in the finishing stages of his doctoral degree when he arrived on campus in 1912. Alongside hiring a new director, Morgan also continued to make strides for the school on a state and national level. During his first year, Morgan managed to secure national accreditation for the institution, ensuring that the students at the Western Illinois State Normal School could search elsewhere for a job after graduation. Additionally, Morgan managed to secure additional funding through the Illinois legislature for the creation of a women's dormitory for the campus. Lastly, Morgan would also swap the title of "principal" for "president" and oversee a growth of the student body. In less than one year, Morgan made sweeping academic changes for the campus. However, not all his changes would be viewed as beneficial.¹⁵

¹⁴John E. Hallwas, "From Normal School to Teacher's College, 1912-1927," in *First Century: a Pictorial History of Western Illinois University*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1999), 38.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Alongside these sweeping academic successes, Morgan also made several changes to the social climate of the school during his first year on campus. During the fall of 1912, Morgan banned all fraternities and sororities from Western's campus. It was believed that these organizations "fostered divisiveness and, sometimes, improper behavior."¹⁶ Additionally, Morgan quickly moved to ban smoking, drinking, and dancing from the school's campus. However, he would eventually lift the ban on dancing in 1920. Morgan strived to ensure Western students remained a shining example of Christian values and strongly encouraged a return to traditional values. Morgan oversaw the expansion of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) to help replace the fraternities and sororities for Western's student body. Due to these changes to the social atmosphere of Western, many students became frustrated with President Morgan. Even going so far as to write in the 1913 edition of the school's yearbook, the *Sequel*, "It must be fierce to have the name 'Piety' and have to live up to it."¹⁷ This and similar jokes would continue to follow President Morgan throughout his tenure as president. Despite feeling a need to largely control many aspects of student life, Morgan remained popular with the students and faculty. President Morgan was known to offer a few jokes and was even known to wear a normal school uniform to play on the faculty baseball team. By the end of his first year, Morgan had already made great strides, like his predecessors before him,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1913*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1913), 129.

to turn the Western Illinois State Normal School into their own paradise, molding the students and faculty into the individuals they believed would be best for the school and its future.¹⁸

The first physical change to the campus under President Morgan was completed in 1913. Since its opening, Western lacked residential facilities on its campus. Any student who came to study at the institution was required to find lodging in Macomb or commute to campus from their hometown. However, in 1913, the school welcomed Monroe Hall into its growing list of on-campus structures. Monroe Hall served as the women's dormitory. It was designed as a stately home with multiple floors, reception rooms, bedrooms, a formal dining room, parlors, and several other rooms and features to help serve the 85 women who lived there. Caroline E. Grote oversaw Monroe Hall and shared President Morgan's more traditional mindset and viewpoint. Several rules were established and maintained throughout much of President Morgan's tenure. "Gentleman may call on week-end nights but may not stay later than ten o'clock. Permission to attend parties, plays, dances, and other events must be obtained from the Dean. Ten o'clock is the retiring hour, and all lights must be out unless permission to stay up has been given by the Dean."¹⁹ These types of rules furthered the strong traditional values and Victorian mindset that President Morgan and his staff wished to instill into both the students at the Western Illinois State Normal School and the Training School.²⁰

A second location was also redone under the guidance of President Morgan. Nearby Sherman Hall and the Lincoln, Washington, and Grote Residence Halls, one can still find the

¹⁸ Hallwas, "From Normal School to Teacher's College, 1912-1927," 38.

¹⁹ Hallwas, "From Normal School to Teacher's College, 1912-1927," 43.

²⁰ Ibid.

concrete slabs of the old Ravine Theater. Initially built in 1911 by John M. Keefer, the same gentleman who designed Lake Ruth, the Ravine Theater was redone and had new concrete slabs poured for folding chairs in 1913. President Morgan, a prominent supporter of plays and other traditional forms of entertainment, viewed theater as a way to keep the students from wanting to host open-invitation dances and other morally promiscuous social functions. Therefore, he oversaw the expansion of the Ravine Theater and was excited to host traditional Shakespearean plays such as *Othello*, *Henry V*, and *A Comedy of Errors*. The first student production held in the newly redone outdoor theater was a 1913 production of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* by the students at the Training School. In 1917, an English teacher named Eloise Ramsey formed the Western Stage Players, the first official theater club at Western. The continued growth of the fine arts eventually came to overshadow the literary societies that had once dominated the campus during its early days. Despite Morgan's attempts to hold onto the past, the 1918 edition of the *Sequel* reported that the theater troop "took the place of the former old-time rivals – the Emersonian and Platonian literary societies"²¹ The traditional debate organizations had largely dwindled and were eventually discontinued before being replaced by the drama organizations. While the disbandment of the debate societies may have been seen as a movement away from traditional values, Morgan remained largely supportive of the Western Stage Players as they continued to provide a safe and moral outlet for the students at the school.²²

²¹ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1918*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1918), 112.

²² Hallwas, "From Normal School to Teacher's College, 1912-1927," 44-45.

Under Morgan's watchful gaze, enrollment on campus continued to grow, and a new building was required to house the additional students. Morgan drafted a proposal for the Illinois Legislature to approve a building project for a new School of Arts building in 1915. Despite Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination and the U.S.'s looming entrance into World War I, the State Legislature approved the legislation and began designing the new building. Finally completed in 1918, the building was dedicated in the summer of 1919 in honor of those students who had served in the war effort during the Great War. Designed in a style similar to the grandeur of Sherman Hall, the new building offered a cafeteria, reception rooms, classrooms, a museum, and a model apartment. Eventually renamed Garwood Hall in honor of an English professor in 1968, the new building was attached to Sherman Hall via a covered walkway and helped provide new space for the Household Arts, Domestic Science, and Manual Training classes. Achieved due to President Morgan's petition and built under his guidance, the new building helped to accommodate the growing number of students and would provide additional space for the continued expansion of the school after an important name change.²³

In 1917, an extremely significant change to the structure of Western and the other normal schools occurred. Governor Frank Lowden and the General Assembly of Illinois enacted a new Civil Administration Code that greatly affected the structure of the educational system in Illinois.²⁴ The five boards of the normal schools were disbanded and replaced by a

²³ Hallwas, "From Normal School to Teacher's College, 1912-1927," 52-53.

²⁴ "Clarence Buck to Walter Morgan, March 13, 1917," Box 5, "Illinois, State of – General Assembly," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1916-1917, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

singular Teachers College Board that oversaw all five Illinois normal schools.²⁵ In 1921, the Western Illinois State Normal School came to be known as the Western Illinois State Teachers College.²⁶ While a seemingly minor detail, this new distinction allowed the institution to begin offering four-year bachelor's degrees. According to the 1922 edition of the *Bulletin*, "In order that the Western Illinois Teachers College may follow the plan ... four year curriculums leading to the degree, Bachelor of Science in Education, are being given. ... The first two years ... may be taken so as to be identical with the two-year curriculum for High School graduates. The last two years will then offer opportunity for much specialization."²⁷ Morgan would be tasked with addressing the shift and expansion of the school's curriculum. Ultimately, it would prove to be successful as the school continued to expand its course offerings, physical spaces, and addressed the social changes that came with the 1920s.²⁸

Despite the immense growth and change during 1917, the Western Illinois State Teachers College would soon be shaken to its core with the entrance of the United States into World War One. During this time, many of the male students enlisted in the armed forces and left the school to serve in the war effort. The female and the remaining male students

²⁵ "Clarence Buck to Walter Morgan, February 28, 1917," Box 5, "Illinois, State of – General Assembly," Morgan Papers 1916-1917, WIU.

²⁶ "Report of the Western Illinois State Teachers College – June 20, 1922," Box 2, "Western Illinois State Teachers College - Reports," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1921-1922, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

²⁷ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *1922 Bulletin*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1922), 27.

²⁸ Victor Hicken, "Morgan Takes Command," in *The Purple and The Gold*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1970), 71.

continued their studies, and the school was moved into a pro-American frenzy. On November 23, 1917, the school canceled its afternoon classes to allow the students to attend a rally

hosted in Macomb. The *Western Courier* reported,

On last Thursday there was no school in the afternoon, due to the celebration in honor of the soldier boys who have gone from McDonough county. The whole Normal School, Academy, and Training School, headed by the band, formed by classes at one o'clock and marched up town and joined the other participants. ... During chapel time about sixty-five of the soldier boys visited us. ... Everyone then adjourned to the football field, where the Camp Dodge boys gave a fine drill, which showed the good training they have been receiving.²⁹

Alongside these rallies, the school also began hosting yearly pageants to express their support.

The 1918 *Sequel* described "The Pageant of the Allied Nations" and wrote,

In the processional the Allied Nations came, bringing their gifts to the Court of Democracy, upheld by Truth, Love, Justice, and Hope. In the first movement the dawn of liberty was symbolized by Joan of Arc; the voice of the people was heard through the Wat Tyler Rebellion; the freedom of the mind was shown through the trial of Galileo. The second movement symbolized the beginning of Republican institutions through the Declaration of Independence and the Fall of the Bastille. In the third movement the sinister figure of Militarism threatened to destroy the Court of Democracy but in the end Truth, Love, Justice, and Hope whose crown was Democracy, overcame Militarism and America led the world in the cause of peace and brotherly love.³⁰

This drastic shift in education and pageantry was accompanied by a service flag adorned with stars representing the 167 students who had left for military service and seven gold stars that distinguished those who died in the war. Alongside these more passive actions, the female students often wrote to soldiers on the front lines, the YMCA helped create packages to send to servicemen, and the faculty wives helped make candy to send to those students serving in the war effort. Guided by Morgan, the institution continued moving steadily ahead in its

²⁹ "Patriotic Day," *The Western Courier*, November 23, 1917.

³⁰ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1918*, 110-111.

efforts to educate new teachers despite the setbacks and changes brought on by the war. However, as quickly as the high levels of patriotism spread through the campus, they quickly diminished with the end of the war and the return of the male students.³¹

With the end of the Great War, Western entered a period of stability. No major new buildings were constructed, nor were any significant new faculty members hired throughout the early 1920s. However, the first significant change to the campus under President Morgan during the 20s was the hiring of Colonel Ray “Rock” Hanson.³² Hanson was hired in 1926 as the new head of the Physical Education Department for Men. In his duties, Hanson was charged with serving as the head coach for the school’s basketball, baseball, and, most famously, football teams. Before arriving at Western, Hanson had served as a Marine during World War I and earned a Navy Cross, Silver Star, Purple Heart, and French Fourragere. While serving at WIU, he would go on to become the Director of Athletics and serve the school until his retirement in 1964. The 1929 *Sequel* wrote, “In the past three years Coach Hanson has done more for Western’s athletics than any other coach has ever done. He has placed our college in athletic columns all over the state. Mr. Hanson is a friend to every fellow in college; he is never too busy to help a student, and there is not a fellow that would not fight for our coach, a real man, a real friend, a real coach.”³³ Alongside the outstanding achievements mentioned in the *Sequel*, Hanson’s most significant addition to Western was his

³¹ Hicken, “Morgan Takes Command,” 80-82.

³² “Guy Temple to Walter Morgan, February 14, 1927,” Box 1, “Athletics,” Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1926-1927, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

³³ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1929*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1929), 119.

change in the nickname of the school's athletic teams. Prior to the arrival of Hanson, Western's athletic teams were nicknamed the "Fighting Teachers." However, in 1927, Hanson petitioned the U.S. Marines to allow the school to take on the nickname the "Leathernecks." The term "Leatherneck" refers to a member of the U.S. Marines. Hanson's successful petition made Western the only non-military affiliated school that can use the title. He also petitioned to use the English Bulldog as the school's official mascot, which is also a symbol of the Marines.³⁴ Hanson's lasting impacts would never have been possible if President Morgan had decided to hire someone else. Therefore, while Morgan's contribution may seem minimal, it is because of his decision that Western stands today as the home of the "Fighting Leathernecks."³⁵

Alongside the hiring of Hanson, the Western Illinois State Teachers College saw an expansion of its property and an addition to the ever-growing collection of buildings. In 1925, President Morgan began petitioning the Illinois legislature to provide the funds to purchase an additional ten acres for the institution.³⁶ Morgan was successful; the legislature approved \$15,000 in 1927,³⁷ which went to purchase the land on which the Corbin and Olson Residence

³⁴ Western Illinois University, "The Leatherneck Nickname," Western Illinois University Athletics, accessed December 1, 2023, https://goleathernecks.com/sports/2014/6/3/athletics_0603144136.aspx?id=11.

³⁵ Hallwas, "From Normal School to Teacher's College, 1912-1927," 61.

³⁶ "Request for Appropriations," Box 1, "Budget," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1925-1926, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

³⁷ "Western Illinois State Teachers College," Box 1, "Western Illinois State Teachers College," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1927-1928, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

Halls, Brown Hall, Simpkins Hall, and the future Performing Arts Center are located today. Alongside the purchase of new land, the Illinois legislature also approved the building of a new gymnasium³⁸ and powerplant. The gymnasium was completed in 1928 and built to the east of present-day Garwood Hall. With the completion of the gymnasium, Western now owned the second-largest gymnasium in Illinois; the largest, by 10 feet, was owned by the University of Illinois. The gymnasium was named the Walter Morgan Gymnasium in honor of Morgan's efforts in expanding the institution and nurturing it into the institution it had become. The new powerplant was built in 1925 to replace the aging one located directly behind Sherman Hall.³⁹ With the introduction of these two buildings, the institution suddenly had room to expand and ease the cramped conditions of Sherman Hall. The old power plant building, the modern Art Gallery, was redesigned as an addition to the school and was designated as the Academy Building. This repurposed building served to help remove some students from the overcrowded Sherman Hall.⁴⁰ The Morgan Gymnasium allowed for the redesign of the old gymnasium, located inside Sherman Hall, into a new and expanded library for the students' use. Despite this necessary expansion, Sherman Hall remained extremely

³⁸ "Walter Morgan to A. Shelton, February 16, 1926," Box 1, "Illinois, State of – Department of Registration and Education," Morgan Papers 1925-1926, WIU.

³⁹ "Walter Morgan to Mr. Christensen, December 5, 1925," Box 2, "(New) Power Plant," Morgan Papers 1925-1926, WIU.

⁴⁰ John Knowles, *The History of Western Illinois University Laboratory School: The School of Many Names*, Revised edition, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 2008), 8.

crowded until the arrival of one final building under the guidance of President Morgan during the 1930s.⁴¹

By the end of the 1920s, Western had seen several expansions as it had throughout the 1910s under President Morgan. Due to Morgan's insight and prowess, he was named secretary-treasurer of the American Association of Teacher's Colleges from 1926 to 1928. It was from this position that Morgan got several of his ideas and helped raise Western to be recognized as one of the top twenty of the 145 member schools of the Association by 1928. The same year, he was elected president of the Association.⁴² In 1929, he was also elected president of the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges.⁴³ These positions and his work at Western helped him gain an appointment to an educational board within the Department of the Interior in 1930 under President Herbert Hoover.⁴⁴ Despite being engaged in many national education organizations, Morgan remained attached to Western and continued to lead with the same Victorian mindset and iron hand that he had in his early days at the school. He continued to make relatively small advancements, such as the

⁴¹ John E. Hallwas, "Hard Times and High Achievements," in *First Century: a Pictorial History of Western Illinois University*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1999), 70-74.

⁴² "Untitled Manuscript," Box 1, "American Association of Teachers Colleges (Folder #1)," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1928-1929, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

⁴³ "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Chicago, Illinois, November 30, 1929," Box 2, "North American Association (Folder #2)," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1929-1930, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

⁴⁴ "D. Thomas to Walter Morgan, June 28, 1930," Box 2, "United States Department of the Interior – Office of Education – National Advisory Council on Education," Morgan Papers 1929-1930, WIU.

creation of Freshman Orientation in 1928 and Guest Day in 1937.⁴⁵ Guest Day was used to recruit new students for the school by inviting them to come see the facilities.⁴⁶ He even went so far as to write a song for the school entitled “Western Loyalty.” This new song became the Alma Mater of Western Illinois University and is still sung during important ceremonies at the institution today. As the 1930s and the Great Depression arrived on Western’s doorstep, Morgan remained in the presidency and continued to guide the institution through the troublesome decade.⁴⁷

Despite the economic strain brought on by the Great Depression, Western Illinois State Teachers College continued to see growth in the student body. However, the school also witnessed a rise in students with part-time and full-time jobs to help cover the cost of their schooling. In response, President Morgan helped organize a Committee on Student Employment to help students find work opportunities throughout Macomb and the surrounding area. Despite the economic challenges brought on by the Depression, the organizations and Student Life continued to flourish on campus. The YMCA and YWCA continued to offer events and programs, and newer clubs such as the Sociology Club, Rural Club, and Women’s Athletic Association (WAA) continued providing additional spaces for the students to escape. The WAA quickly became one of the institution’s largest organizations during the 1930s. The organization offered opportunities for the female students at the school

⁴⁵ “Program Second Annual Guest Day, March 18, 1938,” Box 2, “Guest Day,” Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1937-1938, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Hallwas, “Hard Times and High Achievements,” 70.

to play organized sports such as Hockey, Basketball, Volleyball, Baseball, and Tennis, as emphasized in the 1937 edition of the *Sequel*.⁴⁸ The group also offered social events such as the Adamless Dance. At this event, women would go in pairs, one dressed as a man and the other as a woman. The dance had a different theme every year and was always “the crowning event of WAA’s social year.”⁴⁹ Despite the hardships of the Depression, the student body continued to thrive and entertain themselves. However, this remarkable achievement would quickly be outshined as President Morgan managed to do the unthinkable during the hardest economic period in American history.⁵⁰

Prior to the start of the Great Depression, Morgan had been working with the Illinois legislature for the approval of additional funds to help create a new building for the Training School. However, President Morgan’s request would be put on hold due to a lack of funds because of the impact of the Great Depression. However, in 1935, the legislature was able to collect some funds and approved \$350,000 for the construction of a new Training School building.⁵¹ With the assistance of the Works Progress Administration, the building’s cornerstone was laid in 1937 and was completed the following year. The cornerstone ceremony was attended by several educational leaders from across the state, including Bryant

⁴⁸ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1937*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1937), 114-119.

⁴⁹ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Sequel 1932*, (Macomb: Western Illinois State Teachers College, 1932), 141.

⁵⁰ Hallwas, “Hard Times and High Achievements,” 76-77.

⁵¹ “Appropriations and Budget for Western Illinois State Teachers College,” Box 2, “Illinois, State of – Appropriations Committee,” Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1934-1935, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

Hadley from the Illinois Division of Architecture and Engineering⁵² and John Hallihan from the Illinois Department of Registration and Education.⁵³ By 1938, the building was housing its first classes and was officially dedicated in 1939. With the building's completion, the Academy classes were rehoused to the fourth floor, and the junior high and elementary classes were moved to the first through third floors. The new building also featured a study hall, auditorium, gymnasium, and two libraries. With nearly everything relocated into a new building, Sherman Hall, Morgan Gymnasium, and the Academy building facilities were designated for use by the college students, faculty, and staff. The Training School continued to be led by Simpkins, who remained on staff until his retirement in 1946. The Training School Building would go on to be renamed Simpkins Hall and continues to serve Western Illinois University as an academic building after the Training School was moved to Horrabin Hall in 1968. The addition of Simpkins Hall would be the final major expansion during the tenure of President Morgan. Morgan was growing older and approaching the end of his time as president. However, he laid the foundation for one final important organization on campus during the last years of his tenure.⁵⁴

A fundamental piece of Morgan's presidency was that he largely controlled every aspect of the school. He did the majority of the hiring, picked textbooks, and managed all the mundane details for the entire institution. His extensive collection of personal files evidences

⁵² Walter Morgan to Bryant Hadley, July 14, 1937," Box 1, "Board Meeting and Cornerstone Laying of Training Building," Morgan Papers 1937-1938, WIU.

⁵³ "Walter Morgan to John Hallihan, July 14, 1937," Box 1, "Board Meeting and Cornerstone Laying of Training Building," Morgan Papers 1937-1938, WIU.

⁵⁴ Knowles, *The History of Western Illinois University Laboratory School: The School of Many Names*, 12-13.

this, specifically the 14 files of teacher applications he collected in the 1916-17 school year.⁵⁵ Like both presidents before him, Morgan hosted faculty meetings. However, unlike his predecessors, Morgan's meetings typically lasted several hours, and he predetermined many of the decisions approved in the meetings before the start of the meeting. A rather authoritarian figure, Morgan expected his faculty to attend these meetings and often reprimanded those who did not attend. In the early years of his presidency, Morgan offered several committees that the faculty could sit on. However, anything dealing with salary, curriculum, or anything the faculty actively wanted to discuss and debate was handled by Morgan. However, during the late 1930s, President Morgan finally caved to the growing unrest of the faculty and wrote *The Faculty Handbook, 1939 – 1940*.⁵⁶ Within the *Handbook* was the first outline of the organization known today as Faculty Senate. The Senate would continue to undergo changes in the following presidencies, including removing staff members granted seats in the Faculty Senate under President Beu. Although Morgan would never see the organization as it is seen today, his final relent allowed the step toward the Senate's creation.⁵⁷

As American involvement in World War II loomed overhead, President Morgan prepared for his retirement. In 1934, the school adopted a retirement plan for its faculty and

⁵⁵ "Correspondence," Box 1-2, "Applications," Morgan Papers 1916-1917, WIU.

⁵⁶ Western Illinois State Teachers College, *Faculty Handbook 1939-1940*, Archival number 1/00/4/2, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

⁵⁷ Victor Hicken, "The Morgan Era: Phase II," in *The Purple and The Gold*, (Macomb: Western Illinois University, 1970), 100-106.

staff.⁵⁸ The new retirement plan mandated Morgan's retirement when he turned 70⁵⁹ and 1941 brought about the onset of American involvement in World War II and Morgan's retirement during the summer of 1942. However, before Morgan left, he oversaw the creation of a Civil Aviation Administration flying course in early 1941⁶⁰ and delivered speeches trying to encourage male students to remember their education and not immediately leave for military service. Through these speeches, Morgan attempted to prevent a mass departure of the school's male students. However, he was ultimately unsuccessful, and, as with World War One, Western saw a significant drop in their student body. The *Western Courier* wrote, "He said he could not impress Western students too much with the idea that it is just as important for them to continue their training as to rush into the military service."⁶¹ However, despite the crisis on the hands of the school, Morgan was forced to depart from the institution he had spent the last 30 years of his life leading. Despite this great separation and change, Morgan would continue to live on in his retirement and pass away in 1958.⁶²

Despite his death, President Morgan has continued to live on at Western Illinois University. Many of the buildings and organizations he helped to create or influence still exist today. He was even honored with a building, now home to numerous academic departments

⁵⁸ "Regulations for Emeritus Service, November 19, 1934" Box 1, "Emeritus Service," Morgan Papers 1934-1935, WIU.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Certificate of Approval for Western Illinois State Teachers College to serve as a Basic Ground School," Box 4, "Pilot Training Course," Walter Morgan, Presidential Papers 1940-1941, WIU Archives and Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.

⁶¹ "Morgan Stresses Need of Cool Thinking, Staying in College," *The Western Courier*, December 10, 1941.

⁶² Hallwas, "Hard Times and High Achievements," 102.

and seat of the College of Arts and Sciences. During his presidency, Morgan oversaw the construction of six significant buildings and major changes in Student Life across the 1910s, 20s, and 30s. He hired Ray Hanson, who would bring about the “Leathernecks,” and laid the foundation for the Faculty Senate. He helped foster the student body’s significant growth and steered the school through World War One, the Great Depression, and the start of World War II. However, despite these accomplishments, he is a largely unknown figure on WIU’s campus today, hence why the writing of this essay became necessary.

Through the consolidation of 30 years of achievements, one can see the immense impact that President Morgan had on Western Illinois University. Without his guidance, the school may not have risen to prominence, and the “Fighting Leathernecks” may still have been known as the “Fighting Teachers.” These accomplishments show that President Morgan is not a man that should be forgotten. Instead, his story and contributions should be embossed in the pages of history. By telling his story, his memory lives on; he lives on. “Hail to Western, Alma Mater, May we honor thy fair name. Hail to Western, ever greater, on to conquest and to fame.”⁶³

⁶³ Walter Morgan, “Western Loyalty,” (1930).

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