

## **Posthumous Award: Walter Dill Scott, class of 1891**



University High School has the distinction of having the Walter Dill Scott Chapter of the National Honor Society. Although Scott '91 was a prominent man during his life, this educator and businessman is largely unknown to present day McLean County and U-High.

Scott graduated from Illinois State Normal University in 1891 and from Northwestern University in 1895. To pursue his goal of becoming a college president in China, he collected a Bachelor of Divinity Degree in 1898. Unable to enter China as a missionary (all posts were filled); Scott traveled to Germany and attended the University of Leipzig, where he pursued his interest in psychology. He returned to the States in 1900 with a Doctorate of Psychology Degree added to his credentials.

After five years as a psychology instructor at Northwestern, Scott was named head of the Psychology Department in the College of Liberal Arts. Around this time, he began looking at the practical applications of psychology. Scott created a test for prospective salesmen to forecast if they would be successful. His increasing business knowledge and insights led him to also be named a professor of advertising and applied psychology in the School of Commerce at Northwestern. This work led to a later position with the United States Army during World War I.

While in the Army, Scott convinced the military of the need for classifying personnel and was named director of the Committee on Classification of Personnel in the Army. He originated and implemented a system which has been used to classify over four million service personnel and is still in use today. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for this achievement.

Scott's brother, John, was also a professor at Northwestern. In 1920 he had been quoted as saying:

“Walter and I saw that Northwestern University was compelled to appoint a new president and we decided to secure the position for one or the other of us. Walter agreed to exert his influence for me, and I agreed to exert my influence for Walter. Walter didn't have much influence.”

In 1920, Scott was named president of Northwestern University. During his tenure, he transformed, “a good small college into a great and good university” as stated by his successors. He was a man of vision who looked out for those who could benefit from enhanced and expanded facilities and programs. His term saw the creation of: the medical, dental, and law schools; the Evening and Graduate Commerce Divisions; the Deering Library; and Dyche Stadium. At this same time, Northwestern doubled its

faculty, tripled enrollment, quadrupled assets, and grew its endowment fund by a factor of five.

Scott retired from the presidency in 1939 and passed away in Evanston, Illinois in 1955.