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HORACE LA FAYETTE WILGUS*

HORACE LA FAYETTE WILGUS, Professor of Law, Emeritus, died in Ann Arbor on October 8, 1935. He was born April 2, 1859, near Conover, in Miami County, Ohio. He received his early education in the public schools in and near Conover, and became deputy county surveyor of Miami County in 1875. Later he studied civil engineering in the National Normal University at Lebanon, Ohio. He afterwards entered Ohio State University, from which he was graduated in 1882 with the degree of B.S. In 1889 he received the degree of M.S. in Political Science from the same institution. During this period he also read law; he was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1884. He opened a law office at Troy, Ohio, in 1886. One year later he moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he continued the practice of law till 1895.

His career as a teacher began in 1878 when he became an instructor in mathematics and later in physiology, while still a student at Ohio State University. In the years 1881-1885 he was chief clerk in the office of the Commissioner of Railroads and Telegraphs for the State of Ohio. In 1885 and 1886 he was the private secretary and assistant to the Receiver and General Manager of the Cleveland and Marietta Railroad. It was in these positions that he laid the practical foundation for his later brilliant success as a professor and writer on the law of corporations.

In 1891 he took an important part in the organization of the Law Department of the Ohio State University and acted as secretary of the faculty and professor of elementary law until 1895. In that year he accepted a call to the Law School of the University of Michigan, where he remained until his retirement in 1929.

He achieved an outstanding position as a legal scholar and teacher of law. In the field of corporation law he had a national reputation, both with legal scholars and with corporation lawyers. His books

*This is an abstract from a memoriam to appear in the University of Michigan Council and Senate Records.—*Ed.*

and numerous articles in legal reviews upon many aspects of corporation law have attracted wide attention. He taught Evidence in his earlier years at the University of Michigan and published a book of *Cases on the Law of Evidence*, in 1896. But his chief interest was in the subject of corporations. He published, in 1892, two volumes of *Annotated Cases on the Law of Corporations*, which became a standard work on this subject. In 1901 he published *A Study of the United States Steel Corporation in Its Industrial and Legal Aspects*.

Besides his major works above discussed, Professor Wilgus wrote many articles for the *Michigan Law Review* and other periodicals. His *The Tragedy of the Thirteen Days in 1914* is a masterpiece of exposition of the troublous times that are discussed in the Diplomatic Correspondence of Europe from July 23 to August 4, immediately preceding and ending in the commencement of the World War.

Professor Wilgus' intellectual activities did not cease with his retirement from his professorship. The Michigan State Bar Association appointed a committee in 1930 to study the General Corporation Act and to draft a new one. Professor Wilgus was a member of this committee at its origin and continued in that capacity until his death.

After the act drafted by this committee became a law in 1931, Mr. Burritt Hamilton, who had put out an annotated edition of the old General Corporation Act in Michigan, asked Professor Wilgus to collaborate with him in annotating the new act. These annotations are almost unique in their thoroughness and their scholarly comprehensiveness. They were published in 1932 under the title *Michigan General Corporation Act with Comments, Annotations and Forms*, by Horace L. Wilgus and Burritt Hamilton. In 1935 there were a number of amendments to the Act of 1931. Just before his death Professor Wilgus had completed annotating these new sections, and these annotations were as completely and carefully done as those to the original act itself.

Very few men have the sweetness of nature and the gentleness of manner, combined with firm strength, to enable them to win so universally the affection, the respect and the admiration which his qualities commanded, among his colleagues, his students, and the community in which he lived. It does not seem possible that anyone who knew Professor Wilgus could have failed to have for him warm affection and admiration.