



**Special Collections and University Archives**

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**Willis E. Pratt Collection  
President of IUP, 1948-1968  
Manuscript Group 22**

**For Scholarly Use Only  
Last Modified November 27, 2023**

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**Willis E. Pratt Collection, Manuscript Group 22**  
**Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Special Collections and University Archives**  
**5 boxes; 5 linear feet**

**Biographical Note**

Dr. Willis Everett Pratt (November 25, 1906 – January 16, 1992) was a native of Pittsburgh, his parents were lawyer William Henry Pratt (1876-1932) and Isabelle Lenore Bartholomew Pratt (1874-1965). Dr. Willis Pratt served as President of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) in Indiana, Pennsylvania from 1948-1968.

Serving as president from 1948 to 1968, Dr. Pratt has the distinction of being the last president of Indiana State Teachers College (1927-1959), the only president of Indiana State College (1959-1965), and the first president of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP).

In 1927, he received his BA from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. He earned his MA (1932) and his Ph.D. in Administration (1940) from the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Pratt began his career in education as an assistant superintendent of the Erie County School District. From 1938-1941, he served as Superintendent of Erie County Schools. Dr. Pratt was the President of Mansfield State Teachers College from 1941 until 1943 when he enlists for military service overseas. Visit this website for more information about the [history of Mansfield University](#).

On January 28, 1928, Willis Pratt married Margaret Mary Betz (September 23, 1908 – January 29, 1995) and they had two children Marjorie Ann Pratt Baker (1929-1987) and Marilyn Louise Pratt Fennell.

The advent of World War Two prompted Dr. Pratt to serve in the United States Army. From 1943 to 1945, Captain and later Major Pratt served with the 1675<sup>th</sup> regiment of the American Fifth Army, and later the British Eighth Army in the Mediterranean Theater throughout the Italian Campaign. He first served as a Civil Affairs Officer of Occupation Forces; second as a Military Government Officer; and then he was a member of the Allied Commission before returning to the Occupation Forces. While overseas, Major Pratt continued his work in education while he was charged with the reorganization of schools and universities in 15 Italian provinces, during which time he reopened 11 Italian universities. Major Pratt also supervised and assisted in the preparation of numerous Italian



textbooks. After being discharged from active duty on October 28, 1945, Dr. Pratt accepted the chairmanship of the Department of Education at Pennsylvania State University.

On July 1, 1948, Dr. Pratt became the 16<sup>th</sup> president of Indiana State Teachers College (ISTC) and began his 20-year tenure in Indiana, Pennsylvania. When Dr. Pratt arrived on campus, ISTC had 1,415 full-time students and 105 faculty members. Long-time Registrar Mary Louise Esch, Class of 1916, wrote about Dr. Pratt in 1968, “the growth and expansion of the college during his administration has been unparalleled. The campus now contains 62 acres on which are located 15 principal halls, 25 other buildings, and three athletic fields, the faculty has doubled in size, enrollment increased to more than 9,100 undergraduate students, and Indiana became the seventh largest college in Pennsylvania.”



It was during Dr. Pratt's 20-year tenure as President that the rapid development and evolution of the college into its present status of state university occurred at Indiana. Dr. Pratt has the distinction of being the last president of Indiana State Teachers College, the only president of Indiana State College, and the first president of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). Dr. Pratt continued to serve in the U. S. Army Reserves until 1964, and he was instrumental in bringing ROTC to Indiana in 1957. He remained president of IUP until his retirement on December 31, 1968. According to the Board of Trustees, “The retirement of Dr. Pratt ends the longest tenure of office for any president of IUP since it was established as a Normal School in 1875.” To date, Dr. Pratt is the longest serving and is arguably one of the most influential presidents of Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Constructed in 1969 and named for Dr. Willis E. Pratt, Indiana's longest-tenured and progressive president, Pratt Hall (601 Pratt Drive) on the corner of School Street and Pratt Drive in Indiana was originally constructed to serve as the student union building of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Later, after the college became a university and the Hadley Union Building (HUB) was completed, Pratt Hall has continued to serve students by housing a variety of campus offices and classrooms. Dr. Pratt was an active member of the Indiana community, and he belonged to several civic organizations including the Rotary Club of Indiana and the Shakespeare Club ([Manuscript Group 85](#)).

[Dr. Willis Pratt](#), his wife Margaret Mary Betz Pratt (1908-1995), and their daughter Marjorie Ann Pratt Baker (1929-1987) are interred at the Oakland Cemetery in Indiana, Pennsylvania ([Manuscript Group 247](#)).

### Scope and Content

The Willis E. Pratt papers are housed in five archival boxes. The collection includes Dr. Pratt's personal effects, including his diplomas, plaques and special awards that he earned or received. The collection also contains two scrapbooks documenting his military service during World War Two.

Information and correspondence from his 20-year tenure as President of ISTC, ISC, and IUP (1948-1968) are housed in Record Group 11: President's Office Files, Series B.

Photographs from this collection were removed and placed in Record Group 81 Series I (Presidents – Dr. Willis E. Pratt) see end of finding aid for more detail.

### Provenance

This collection of personal papers was donated by Dr. Pratt and his family.

### Restrictions

None.

### Processor

Records rearranged and inventory rewritten by Special Collections in 2022.

### Container List

#### Box 1 Dr. Willis Pratt (6 folders)

1. Publication: Nicholson, Arthur F. (1966). *The Story of a Man: Dr. Willis E. Pratt*. Indiana, PA: Henry Hall, Inc. Courtesy of the General Alumni Association of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Call Number: LA 2317 .P73 N53 1966 (Special Collections)
2. Publication: Dr. and Mrs. Willis E. Pratt – President and First Lady of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) edited by Samuel F. Furgieuele, no date (1968-1969) scanned
3. Tributes and Biographical Information
  - a. *IUP Illustrated*, “The making of a university: Dr. Willis E. Pratt, a leader with vision,” November 1985 (Volume 1, Number 2)
  - b. Dr. Pratt, Tribute Memorial, written by Dr. S. Trevor Hadley – January 19, 1992
4. Publications by Dr. Willis Pratt
  - a. Unique Functions of a Teachers College
  - b. A Guide to Curriculum Improvement in Elementary and Secondary Schools: A Handbook for Teachers and Administrators
  - c. Character Education in Public Institutions of Higher Learning
  - d. A College President Looks at Art Education
  - e. An Evaluation of Bulletin 243 Curriculum Improvement by a Secondary School Faculty
  - f. Should Alumni Support a State Teachers College?

- g. A College Looks at Its Student Personnel Program
  - h. Remedial Services for Prospective Teachers
  - i. The Critical Problem of Science Preparation in the Public Schools
  - j. A College and a Community Work Together
  - k. The New Teacher-Education Curricula in Pennsylvania
  - l. Teachers in the 1950's for Children Born in the 1940's
  - m. How Can Teacher and Administrator Cooperatively Build an Effective Reading Program
  - n. What can the School Administrator do about the Reading Program
  - o. Administration of the Reading Program
  - p. Can College Teachers Improve Instructional Practices
  - q. How can we select, recruit, and retain good teachers
5. Binder: Erie County Public Schools, Course of Study for Elementary and Secondary Schools, Erie, Pennsylvania, 1941
  6. Folio Binder: University of Bologna, May 31, 1945 (Effects of World War II) printed in Italian: R. Università di Bologna, Referimento di Massima Sui Danni Subiti per Cause di Guerra. I. Rassegna Retrospettiva e Principali Dati Relativi all'Università di Bologna; II. Relazione Descrittiva ed Estimativa dei Danni di Guerra; III. Planimetrie Dimostrative dei Danni per Bombardamento; IV. Documentazione Fotografica (Photographic Documentation) see Scrapbooks in Box 3

### **Box 2 Dr. Willis Pratt Plaques and Awards (10 plaques and 1 envelope)**

#### **Plaques**

1. Distinguished service award, United States Junior Chamber of Commerce, no date
2. Pittsburgh Curbstone Coaches, College President of the year, Indiana State College, Dr. Willis Pratt, Pittsburgh National Bank, 1965
3. Dr. Willis E. Pratt, presented on this first day of May 1966 in recognition of the great assistance you have given in promoting the Greek system on the Indiana campus
4. Willis E. Pratt, Boss Cum Laude, IUPAES, May 21, 1966
5. For service to Youth, Willis E. Pratt, Indiana County YMCA, 1967
6. Presented to Willis E. Pratt, the Research Committee, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, in recognition of service to research, May 1968
7. The National Council of Industrial Management Clubs, presented to Dr. Willis E. Pratt, for outstanding contributions to the industries of Western Pennsylvania, WPIMC, 1969
8. Dr. Willis E. Pratt, President, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, in recognition of 20 years outstanding contribution to the Indiana community, Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, no date (1968-1969)

#### **Envelope**

9. Dr. Willis Pratt: World War Two medals and insignia (1943-1945) donated by his grandson Randy Baker in 2021

### **Box 3 Dr. Willis Pratt – World War Two Scrapbooks (2 scrapbooks)**

1. U. S. Army, World War II, 1943-1944 including certificates, photographs, and documents
2. U. S. Army, World War II, 1945, Major Pratt was awarded the Bronze Star

**Box 4 Academic Regalia worn while Dr. Pratt was IUP President (1948-1968)**

1. Academic Gown
2. Mortar Board and Tassel
3. Doctoral Hoods (3)

**Box 5 Awards, Citations, Diplomas, and Oversized Plaques (4 Folders and 2 Plaques) Folders (4)**

1. Awards and Citations received by Dr. Willis E. Pratt
  - a. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Public Education, presents this citation to Willis E. Pratt, a Distinguished Educator for providing outstanding leadership in public and higher education in the Commonwealth, awarded and presented August 19, 1962
  - b. Certificate: Department of the Army, Willis E. Pratt, is awarded the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal, for outstanding service to the United States Army during the period July 10, 1948 to May 11, 1964, the activation of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at Indiana State College on April 3, 1950, 1964
  - c. The Association of the United States Army, Citation for Exceptional Service in Support of National Defense, awarded to Dr. Willis E. Pratt, support of the ROTC Program from October 12, 1948 to May 9, 1968, awarded May 9, 1968 (Citation and Award Letter)
  - d. Honorary Life Membership, General Alumni Association, Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), Dr. Willis E. Pratt, May 25, 1968
  - e. Handwritten Citation (IUP): In Appreciation of Dr. Willis E. Pratt, the Board of Trustees, past and present, of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, desire to pay tribute to Dr. Willis E. Pratt upon his forthcoming retirement as President of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, no date (1968)
2. Diplomas earned by Dr. Willis E. Pratt
  - a. Undergraduate Degree: Allegheny College (Meadville, Pennsylvania) – Willis Everett Pratt, Bachelor of Arts, 1927
  - b. Graduate Degree: University of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) – Willis Everett Pratt, Master of Arts, August 19, 1932
3. Photograph and Signature, no dates (see Record Group 81)
4. Citation conferred by the All Pennsylvania College Alumni Association of Washington, D.C. to Willis Everett Pratt for outstanding contribution toward preserving and extending the American Ideals of Education, February 3, 1962 (2 copies)

**Laminated Plaques (2)**

1. Association of the United States Army awards a certificate of appreciation to Dr. Willis E. Pratt for outstanding services to the United States Army, October 12, 1966 (Citation and Award Letter)
2. Department of the Army, Dr. Willis E. Pratt, is awarded the Decoration for Distinguished Civilian Service, for distinguished service to the United States Army during the period May 12, 1964 to May 9, 1968, Reserve Officers' Training (ROTC) Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), 1968



**Photographs of Dr. Willis Pratt in Record Group 81 Series I (scanned)**

1. Dr. Willis E. Pratt, IUP President, 1948-1968 (portraits and group photographs)
2. Photographs of Dr. Willis Pratt, including photographs with his wife Margaret Mary Betz Pratt (1908-1995); Eleanor Roosevelt (1956); former British Prime Minister Clement Attlee (1883-1967) Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1945-1951), speaker at Indiana on November 30, 1959; Pennsylvania Governor Bill Scranton (1917-2013), Governor of Pennsylvania (1963-1967); and IUP President John Welty (1985-1991) – these photographs were donated by Dr. Pratt's granddaughter Sharyn Fennell in 2021
3. IUP Tribute to Dr. Willis E. Pratt, group photographs in the Blue Room with newly dedicated Bronze Bust of Dr. Pratt, December 16, 1990

**Items not in the Collection (on display in John Sutton Hall)**

1. Bronze Bust of Dr. Willis E. Pratt (Blue Room), a tribute to Dr. Pratt, dedicated on December 16, 1990
2. Portrait of Dr. Willis E. Pratt on display (Sutton Hall Room 218)

