

# Notes from the Oesper Collections

## Found Tucked in a Book

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In addition to its collections of antique chemical apparatus and its print and portrait collections, the Oesper Collections in the History of Chemistry house more than 17,000 rare books and journals. Many of these books originally resided in chemistry library, which dates from 1874, and older books are being continuously transferred from the library to the collections as they become outdated and as new acquisitions make increasing demands on the available space.

From time to time, examination of these transfers results in the discovery of some note or photo which was tucked into their pages many decades earlier by either the original owner or by some long forgotten reader. Recently two such discoveries were made which are of importance to the history of the chemistry department at Cincinnati. The first of these involves the discovery of a previously unknown snap-shot of Thomas B. Evans, who served as the third head of the chemistry department and as Dean of the College of Engineering from 1905 until his premature death at age 44 in June of 1907.

Born in Cincinnati in 1863, Evans received his undergraduate training at the Columbia School of Mines and a Ph.D. from the University of Erlangen in 1886 for work done under the famous German chemist, Emil Fisher. From 1888 to 1898 he worked for various



Figure 1. Thomas B. Evans (1863-1907) as he appeared in the student yearbook, *The Cincinnati*.



Figure 2. Snap-shot of Thomas Evans (standing on right) found tucked in the pages of the 1906 edition of Alexander Smith's *Introduction to General Inorganic Chemistry*.

companies, including Procter and Gamble, as an industrial chemist. In 1898 he joined the University of Cincinnati Department of Chemistry as an Instructor in Technical Chemistry, becoming Assistant Professor in 1899 and full Professor and Chair in 1901.

Previous to this accidental find, the only known image of Evans was a small, highly stippled, vignette from the student yearbook (figure 1). Upon his death, Evans' widow gave all of his books to the chemistry library, including the textbooks which he had used as a graduate student in Germany, and most of these now reside in the Oesper Collections. The snap-shot in question (figure 2) was recently found inside the pages of Evans' personal copy of the 1906 edition of Alexander Smith's *Introduction to General Inorganic Chemistry*, which was used as the textbook in the introductory chemistry course at Cincinnati from roughly 1905 through 1940. The faded sepia print shows Evans (standing on the right) with a group of four unidentified colleagues.

The second recent find is a portrait (figure 3) of the American chemist, Samuel Parsons Mulliken (1864-1934), who is best known for his massive reference work, *A Method for the Identification of Pure Organic Compounds by a Systematic Analytical Procedure Based on Physical Properties and Chemical Reactions*, which was published in four volumes between 1904 and 1922, and as being the father of Robert S. Mulliken, who would go on to win the 1966 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work on molecular orbital theory. The analytical scheme developed by the elder Mulliken would form the basis of the courses in qualitative organic analysis which were a standard feature of the chemistry curriculums in all American universities and colleges in the years between roughly 1918 and 1970, when the preparation of derivatives and the determination of melting points and solubilities, on which it was based, were finally displaced by newer instrumental methods of analysis.

The portrait, which shows Mulliken in his army uniform and which dates from his service as a major in the Chemical Warfare Service during the First World War, has obviously been clipped from a magazine. It was found tucked in the pages of the department's copy of Mulliken's *magnum opus* when it was finally transferred from the reference section of the library to the Oesper Collections last December, and where it had been placed more than 70 years ago by someone who obviously not only admired Mulliken's work but who possibly also remembered that Mulliken had been briefly associated with the Department of Chemistry at Cincinnati many decades earlier when he had served as an assistant to Evans' predecessor, Thomas Norton, during the years 1888-1889.

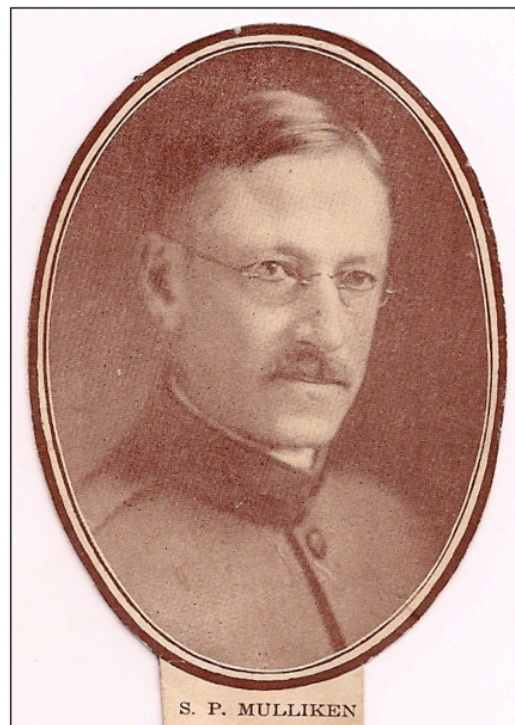


Figure 3. A portrait of Samuel Parsons Mulliken found tucked in the pages of the department's copy of volume 1 of his reference work, *A Method for the Identification of Pure Organic Compounds*.

#### **Publication History**

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