

Wilson College Traditions List – a work in progress

Traditions past

Traditions present

1. All College Picnic

- Annual Faculty-Student Softball Game, Field Hockey Game
- Took place on the first Saturday after all students returned to campus. A chance to introduce the First year students to everyone else. BBQ chicken, corn on the cob, etc. With all kinds of picnic games planned to break the ice. Usually a human pyramid building contest (judged by the faculty??) pitting each class against all others. It was held up on Penn Hall green 76-80. I understand in years previous it was sometimes held at Caledonia. Usually planned by a Sophomore class committee in conjunction with Dean of Student Services. – From an alumna

2. Alumnae Council Weekend

- Now Leadership Weekend, formerly Fall Weekend. During the 1980s this event was held along with Parents' Weekend.

3. Angel/Gremlin Christmas Tradition

- "Gremlins" played tricks on their "Angels" and left trick gifts in their stockings.
- Dorm tradition. Participation was voluntary. Names pulled from a hat. You'd **be** an angel/gremmie. During December you would trick (gremmie) the person you'd chosen, but also provide an equal amount of small treats (angel). At the dorm Christmas party, you'd have a small gift for your person and reveal yourself. Short sheeting was almost guaranteed at least once. Soda machines often found new homes... - From An alumna

4. Athletic Association Sports Day (see Odd/Even Field Day)

5. Athletic Association Sports Award Banquet

6. Aunt Sally/Aunt Sarah Program

- Begun in the mid-1970s and continued into the 1980s, alumnae adopted "nieces" and write to them, send them little gifts, and get to know current students. Back!

7. Big Sister/Little Sister Traditions

- Origins in early 1900s. Big Sisters wrote to their Little Sisters over the summer and helped to prepare them for new college life.

8. *Billboard Ball*

9. Black Weekend

- Sponsored by Wilson's Afro-American Society, included Black Arts festival, "Black Dinner," fashion show, etc.

10. Blue & Silver Dinner –

- Held in late August on the night before classes start.
- Local Alumnae are invited to mingle with students from all classes.
- Involved formal dress in the past

11. Book Contest

- Students submitted a collection of books based on one of their interests and were judged based on the depth of their reading. President Havens judged.

12. Caledonia Day/Mont Alto Day

- Fall? – All campus picnic

13. Cap and Gown Day

- Started in 1923, took place on the first Tuesday of the year and students (seniors?) wore their caps and gowns all day.

14. Cap and Gown Tradition

- Class of 1886 was the first class to wear caps and gowns for commencement

15. Caroling

- Caroling in the Dorm by the Wilson Choir – VERY early in the morning on the last day of classes (I think) in December, the Choir would wander through the dorms singing Christmas Carols to wake us. Imagine – 5:00am...you've been up late studying the night before..and through the stupor of sleep comes those lovely soprano and alto voices singing you awake. – An alumna

16. Charter Day – March 24

17. Christmas Pageants

18. Christmas Vespers (Chaplin's Office)

19. Class Day/Ivy Day (Commencement)

- Ivy was added to the commencement ceremony to honor Bacchus [1895]

20. Classical Club Annual Banquet (Roman banquet)

- The best party of the year! Honey cake, togas, a great deal of wine and delicious food – from An alumna

21. College Day

- For prospective students – a chance to visit Wilson & interact with students

22. Color Ceremony

- Began on October 10, 1905. The senior class gives the freshmen their class colors according to the “color cycle.” Seniors march from South Hall in cap and gown with candles to present the colors to the freshmen who wait by Laird Hall.

23. Color Wars

- Part of Sarah Wilson Week [formerly part of Dummy Rush?]
- Students from Odd and Even classes gather everything they can find in their colors and place it (drive it, whatever) onto the campus green near their respective lamp posts.
- A faculty member judges who has done the best job

24. Convocation

- Probably started as an academic tradition sometime during the Havens’ presidency (1936-1970), prior to a formal convocation, an opening chapel service was held.

25. Daisy Chain

26. Dean’s Day

- Originally President’s Holiday

27. Dinking Ceremony

- Odds and Evens each have a different tradition of where and when they “dink” their Little Sisters. Big Sisters “dink” their Little Sisters according to the way they had been “dinked” by their Big Sisters. Photos of students wearing dinks from the 1950s and 1960s do not show anything but the dinks being worn straight & right-side. Alternative “dinking” styles must be a recent tradition.

28. Dummy Rush

- Originated 1893, rival classes played tricks on each other.

- Dummy Rush was more than playing tricks. It was a competition between the freshman and sophomore classes, on the Saturday just before Thanksgiving break. Students dyed their bedsheets in their class color and hung them out the dorm windows at the sound of the Edgar bell, the first event of the day. A committee of the president of the college ("Prexy" Havens in my day) and faculty judged. The winner was whichever class showed the most color. Each class made a dummy which was the object of a treasure hunt. The dummy was hidden somewhere on campus and clues were provided for the opposite class. The class who found the other's dummy first won. That was the "dummy rush". (I also heard that it was meant to be a parody of "rushing" sororities at other colleges - a fake or dummy rush.) In the afternoon there was a freshman-sophomore hockey game. There might have been a bonfire at night - not sure about that. My sophomore year Dummy Rush was cancelled because it would have occurred the weekend following the JFK assassination. – From Sue Ross '66

29. Fall Dance Weekend

30. Fall Play

31. Father-Daughter Softball game

- Took place in the fall

32. Flag Raising

- Started in 1920, died off and came back in 1923. Each senior took a turn raising the flag at 7:30am and lowering it at sundown.

33. Food for Finals

- Run by WCGA originated by the Franklin County Club in the 1980s.

34. Founders Day

- First celebrated on October 9, 1922 with a speech about Sarah Wilson given by Judge Gillian (distant relative of Sarah – Archives has a copy of speech) and a trip to Rocky Springs Church.

35. French Club Tea

- Held in South Parlor each Thursday. All campus members invited. There would be a cake and hot tea in lovely china cups. Madame Blumenthal presided and asked a student to pour (what an honor!). French was spoken, but everyone was made welcome. *Paris Match* was available to read. – From An alumna

36. Freshman Stunt

- Took place in February.

37. George Washington's Birthday/Minuet

38. "Going Home" sung by Ten Tones

- During one of the last days of exams the Ten Tones would stand up near the end of dinner one evening and sing their haunting *a capella* version of *Going Home* followed by the Alma Mater. You'd forget it was coming... such a moving way to end the year. – From An alumna

39. Halloween

- bonfire & pumpkin carving contest (judged by faculty) – from Sue Ross '66
- costumes & refreshments in the Old Gym, 1800s-early 1900s

40. Honor Principle Signing (Student Development, WCGA)

- Adopted at the urging of the student body in 1905.
- Students are introduced to the Honor Principle at Orientation, formerly signed at that time.
- Signed in public during Convocation, either fall or spring, by all new members of the Wilson community.

41. *La Maison* annual dinner

- French Club

42. May Day (CAB, WCGA)

- First May Queen was named in 1902. The May Queen was traditionally chosen from amongst the senior class because of her beauty and grace. She is attended by representatives from each class.
- Elaborate pageants and dances were traditionally part of the May Day weekend

43. Odd/Even Field Day (Athletics)

- Formerly the Athletic Association Sports Day
- Includes Odd/Even Color Wars
- Late spring, after the athletic banquet

44. Odd/Even Rivalry

- Around since the early 1900s, esp. in sports

45. Palladium

- Secret tradition of the Odds/Even rivalry. Palladium (probably a statue) belonged to the Odds, but was “stolen” by the Evens during the first half of the 20th century (probably 1920s). The Evens are supposed to bring Palladium back to campus every four years for 12 hours so that all Even students can see her. During that 12 hour period the Odds are supposed to try to steal “her” back.

46. Parents Weekend

- First held with that name in 1941

47. Poor Green Frosh

48. Pop Calls

49. Promenade

- First Prom was held in 1905 and started off as a one day affair. Later the event turned into a Prom Weekend.

50. Queen Bess (CAB, WCGA)

- Every 4 years Queen Bess joins the May Day celebration. She first appeared in 1908 and must be a red head.

51. Ring Ceremony

52. Sarah Wilson Week

- Held during the fall semester, Sarah Wilson Week encompasses a variety of traditions including: hazing, visiting Sarah Wilson’s Grave, Dummy Rush, Color Wars, Dinking, banner stealing, etc.

53. Senior Class Gift

- Presented to the president of the college at commencement.

54. Senior Night

- Happens in May

55. Senior Stunt

56. Sister Classes

- Pre-dates 1902

57. Sophomore Buddies

- Like Big Sisters, but secretive and more gag gifts.

58. Song Wars

59. Step Sings

- Held on the stairs of Thomson Hall as a way for students to practice Wilson songs. Weekly Step Sings were held in the 19??s.
- *Pharetra* June 1905, "Step Singing"

The original Class of 1905 changed many of the customs dear to the hearts of Wilson girls. . . On Tuesday evening, June sixth, a precedent was established by the Seniors, for they started the custom of step singing by the Senior and Junior classes on the steps of South.

60. Thanksgiving (CAB)

- Religious services were held in the morning followed by a basketball (or later hockey) game, a dinner hosted by the president and his wife, and finally a play in the evening. Students did not have a Thanksgiving break until ????.

61. Week of Prayer/Devotional Week

- Begun on March 2, 1921

62. White Dinner (CAB)

- The first White Dinner was held on the last Saturday before Christmas vacation in [1921] and was created to raise money for home and foreign military missions. All students originally wore white dresses.