



39.1981.1 Harvey Washington Wiley, M.D.
Jefferson County
Marker Text Review Report
05/07/2014

Marker Text

Born near Kent, Jefferson County, Dr. Wiley graduated from Hanover College (1867), received his medical degree from Indiana Medical College (1871), and taught at Butler and Purdue universities. As Chief Chemist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture he led the nationwide movement which culminated in the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 and the establishment of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Report

The text of this marker is accurate and supported by primary sources. This review will provide further information on Harvey Washington Wiley's career as a national advocate for safe, unadulterated foods, beverages, and medicine and provide context for his work amidst the Progressive Era reform movements of the early twentieth century.

Harvey Washington Wiley was born on a small farmstead near Kent, Indiana on October 18, 1844.¹ As a young man he attended [Hanover College](#) from 1863-1867, serving in Company I of the 137th Indiana Volunteers in the American Civil War for a few months in 1864.² After graduation, Wiley moved to Indianapolis, where he got his Ph.D. from the Medical College of Indiana and taught Latin and Greek (1870-71) and chemistry (1873-74) at Butler University.³ From 1874-83 he taught chemistry at [Purdue University](#).⁴

During his tenure at Purdue, Wiley developed an interest in [adulterated \(impure or artificially enhanced\) foods and beverages](#), a topic which was also slowly coming to the attention of American consumers. According to historians Clayton Coppin and Jack High, a demographic shift from the farm to the city in the late nineteenth century altered the food industry, encouraging mass production of food and drink and convenience food such as canned goods and condensed milk.⁵ Wiley argued that this mass-produced food, as opposed to food produced locally in small quantity and in a simpler style, contained harmful additives and preservatives and misled consumers about what they were actually eating.⁶ In the coming decades Wiley would become the most visible public face behind the growing pure food movement; as a 1917 advertisement in *The (New York) Sun* put it, "Dr. Wiley it was who, at Washington, first roused the country to an appreciation of purity and wholesomeness in foods. He has been the one conspicuous figure in food betterment and food conservation in the present generation."⁷

In 1883, Commissioner of Agriculture George Loring appointed Wiley Chief Chemist of the Bureau of Chemistry, a division of the United States Department of Agriculture.⁸ While serving in this capacity, Wiley made the establishment of federal standards of food, beverages, and medication his priority. Other reform groups, particularly women's organizations with an eye on national [Prohibition](#) of alcohol, chimed in to present a united front against lobbyists of food and drug companies.⁹ From 1902-1906, Wiley administered governmental testing of food, beverages, and ingredients, most famously in the



“Poison Squad” experiments in which he fed food laced with suspected toxic ingredients to twelve volunteers to test for side effects.¹⁰ According to historian James Young, aided by this publicity, Wiley “consolidated his allies and recruits—segments of business, state agricultural chemists, physicians, women’s club members, reform-minded journalists—into an effective pressure group.”¹¹

The biggest success of Wiley’s career was the passage of the [Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906](#).¹² In 1906, Upton Sinclair published his hugely influential novel [The Jungle](#), which exposed health hazards of the grisly meat-packing industry and provided the final impetus Wiley and his supporters needed to convince Congress to pass legislation on federal control of food, drink, and medicine.¹³ The Pure Food and Drug Act established the mechanism by which the Bureau of Chemistry could exert regulatory control over consumable goods produced or sold in the United States. By requiring that companies clearly indicate what their products contained and setting standards for the labeling and packaging of food and drugs, the Act helped consumers make informed decisions about products that could affect their health.¹⁴ Wiley also helped found the Non-Smoker’s Protective League of America in 1910 to “[conduct] a crusade against smoking in public or semi-public places,” suggesting a public health risk in secondhand smoke nearly fifty years before the Surgeon General [formally recognized the connection](#) between cigarettes and lung cancer.¹⁵ Wiley asserted, “There should be a law, strictly enforced by the authorities, prohibiting smoking and chewing in public places or on the cars where other people are obliged to be.”¹⁶

Wiley resigned as Chief Chemist on March 15, 1912, citing attempts by his detractors (whom he alleged represented the special interests of food and drug manufacturers) to weaken or chip away at the Pure Food and Drug Act.¹⁷ In his letter of resignation, Wiley said, “I saw the fundamental principles of the food and drugs act, as they appeared to me, one by one paralyzed and discredited.”¹⁸ Immediately upon leaving the Department of Agriculture, Wiley took up a position with [Good Housekeeping](#) magazine as their Director of Food, Health, and Sanitation, believing he would be more influential if he could communicate his ideas about the pure food movement directly to the public.¹⁹ Wiley wrote feature pieces for *Good Housekeeping* on the importance of the pure food movement; he also answered questions from the magazine’s mostly female readership, advocating that women take responsibility for the health of their households through pure home cooking and reap the rewards of a “peaceful, happy, and unbroken” domestic life.²⁰

Wiley also contributed articles to the Chicago newspaper *The Day Book* in 1912.²¹ Newspaper coverage from this period indicates that Wiley, his young wife ([suffragist](#) Anna Kelton Wiley), and their two sons attained near-celebrity status as an example of a modern, clean-living, white American family.²² Such articles connect the pure food movement to what public health historian Ruth Engs has termed the “Clean Living Movement,” which included [Progressive Era](#) health reform, educational reform, the temperance movement, and the [eugenics](#) movement.²³ Eugenacists sought to “improve” the human race over generations by preventing those they considered degenerate, or genetically inferior (including but not limited to non-white people, those living in poverty, and those with mental or physical disabilities), from reproducing.²⁴ Although Wiley’s beliefs about creating genetically superior, longer-



39.1981.1 Harvey Washington Wiley, M.D.
Jefferson County
Marker Text Review Report
05/07/2014

living Americans through improved public health closely resemble eugenic discourse, more research is required to determine the extent to which Wiley's ideas about purity and clean living extended to race.

Along with his work for the magazine, Wiley published more than a dozen books over the course of his career. His early books, like 1897's *Principles and Practice of Agricultural Analysis*, were mostly intended for academic readership; later books, like *1001 Tests of Foods, Beverages, and Toilet Accessories* (1914), his contributions to Good Housekeeping's *The Pure Food Cook Book* (1914), and *The Lure of the Land: Farming after Fifty* (1915), were intended for consumers or casual readers.²⁵ In 1929, the year before his death, Wiley published *History of a Crime against the Food Law*, airing his grievances about the perceived failure of the 1906 law.²⁶ He continued to lobby for a stronger interpretation of the Act through his old age, writing to President Coolidge in 1925, "It is the crowning ambition of my career, before I die to see these illegal restrictions, which now make a prisoner of the Food Law, removed and the Law restored to the functional activity which Congress prescribed for its enforcement at the time of its enactment."²⁷ Wiley died in 1930 at the age of eighty-five, falling fifteen years short of his stated goal to live longer than a century.²⁸

In 1927 an act of Congress reorganized the Bureau of Chemistry, creating the Food, Drug, and Insecticide Administration to serve as its regulatory arm; in 1930 this was renamed the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA website points out that "although it was not known by its present name until 1930, the FDA's modern regulatory functions began with the passage of the 1906 Pure Food and Drugs Act."²⁹ While it now resides within the Department of Health and Human Services rather than the Department of Agriculture, the FDA continues to regulate and provide federal oversight on food, beverages, and medication produced and consumed in the United States.³⁰

The New York Times accessed digitally via ProQuest. *The Day Book* accessed via [Chronicling America](#). Unless otherwise indicated, all other newspapers accessed via NewspaperArchive.com.

¹Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C., accessed via Ancestry Library Edition; Harvey Wiley, *Harvey W. Wiley: An Autobiography* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1930): 13; "Dr. H.W. Wiley Dies; Pure-Food Expert," *The New York Times*, July 1, 1930, 24; Gravestone of Harvey Washington Wiley in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, accessed via [Find a Grave](#).

²Wiley, *Autobiography* 67, 73; Harvey W. Wiley, "The Education of a Backwoods Hoosier," *Indiana Magazine of History* 24 (June 1928): 82-88; W.L. Fox, "Corporal Harvey W. Wiley's Civil War Diary," *Indiana Magazine of History* 51 (June 1955): 139-162. Wiley's military service was cut short when he became very ill with what he later believed to be hookworm. He received medical discharge and returned to school in Indiana, graduating from Hanover in 1867.

³Untitled graduation announcement, *Indianapolis Journal*, February 25, 1871, 8; Wiley, *Autobiography* 95, 97; James Harvey Young, *Pure Food: Securing the Federal Food and Drugs Act of 1906* (Princeton: Princeton University



Press, 1989): 100. Wiley took a year off between his two terms at Butler to get a B.S. at Harvard University in Massachusetts.

⁴ *Ninth Annual Report of Purdue University For the College Year Ending June 30, 1883* (Indianapolis: Wm. R. Surford, 1884); Wiley, *Autobiography* 122; Young, *Pure Food*, 101; Oscar E. Anderson, *The Health of a Nation: Harvey W. Wiley and the Fight for Pure Food* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958): 16, 30.

⁵ Clayton A. Coppin and Jack High, *The Politics of Purity: Harvey Washington Wiley and the Origins of Federal Food Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999): 18-19.

⁶ "Something About Our Sugar," *The Chautauquan: A Weekly Newsmagazine* 15 (June 1892): 290, accessed via Proquest American Periodicals; "Studying the Effect of Preservatives on Health," *Christian Advocate* 78 (August 20, 1903): 1358, accessed via Proquest American Periodicals; "Simple Fare is Best," *Jeffersonville Reflector*, April 27, 1906, 4; "Branded as Felons," *Brownstown Banner*, June 20, 1906, 2; "New Doctrine of Life Promulgated By the Chief Chemist of the United States," *Greensburg New Era*, June 6, 1907, 6.

⁷ "If I Were Food Dictator," Advertisement for *Good Housekeeping Magazine* in *The [New York] Sun*, May 29, 1917, 4.

⁸ Snell Smith, "Dr. Wiley, Government Chemist," in the *American Review of Reviews* 37 (Jan-June 1908): 552-554, accessed via [Google Books](#); Young, *Pure Food*, 5; Coppin and High, 35; Anderson 29-30; Kimberley S. Johnson, *Governing the American State: Congress and the New Federalism, 1877-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007): 96, accessed via [Google Books](#).

⁹ *Journal of Proceedings of the National Pure Food and Drug Congress* (Washington, D.C., 1898), accessed via [Google Books](#); "Third Annual Pure Food and Drug Congress," *Science* 11: 273 (February 9, 1900), accessed via the [Internet Archive](#); "Whisky, Five Minutes Old," *The New York Times*, February 28, 1906, 3; "War on Whiskey Blenders," *Bedford Daily Mail*, December 27, 1906, 1; "Roosevelt Decided What Whisky Is," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1907, 1; "Woman's Great Power," *Connorsville Evening News*, March 14, 1908, 2; "Wiley Favors Prohibition," *The New York Times*, June 4, 1917, 18; Ernest H. Cherrington, *The Anti-Saloon League Year Book* (Westerville, OH: The Anti-Saloon League, 1917): 359, accessed via [Google Books](#); Johnson 98. For a full account of the role of women in the Pure Food movement, see Lorine Swainston Goodwin, *The Pure Food, Drink, and Drug Crusaders, 1879-1914* (London: McFarland and Company, 1999).

Wiley remained circumspect about his personal feelings toward the Prohibition movement while employed by the U.S. government. After his resignation from the Department of Chemistry, he publicly came out in favor of national Prohibition, serving as a Vice President for a local chapter of the Anti-Saloon League. During his tenure as Chief Chemist, he did focus considerable effort on the regulation of whisky, arguing that most whisky sold in the U.S. was mixed with lower-quality alcohol (or even water) to keep production costs low.

¹⁰ "The Man Who Is Leading the Fight for Pure Food," *The Washington Times*, November 20, 1904, 5, accessed via [American Memory](#); "Dr. Wiley's Poison Squad Enlisted from Expert Topers," *The St. Louis Republic*, December 6, 1903, 12, accessed via [American Memory](#); "Department of Agriculture Ready for Its Novel Test," *Logansport Reporter*, October 28, 1902, 9; Young 125-127, 152-154; Anderson 149-152.



¹¹ Young, *Pure Food*, 5.

¹² United States Congress, House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Pure Food*, Report 2118 of the 59th Congress, March 7, 1906, accessed via the [Internet Archive](#); "The Pure Food Bill," *Science* 24: 606 (August 10, 1906): 185-189, accessed via the [Internet Archive](#); Young 262-263; Anderson 197-199. For a brief summation of the legislative history of pure food before 1906, see Johnson 101-108.

¹³ Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: The Jungle Publishing Co, 1906), accessed via [Project Gutenberg](#); "How the Beef Trust Has Poisoned the Peoples' Food," *The Commoner*, June 8, 1906, 7; "Upton Sinclair Tells About the Sufferings of the Women in Packingtown," *The New York Evening World*, June 9, 1906, 3; "Beef Trust is Bad," *The Chicago Eagle*, April 7, 1906, 6; Johnson , 103.

¹⁴ United States Congress, House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Pure Food*, Report 2118 of the 59th Congress, March 7, 1906, accessed via the [Internet Archive](#); "For Pure Food Law," *Covington Republican*, April 27, 1906, 6; The Food Law Institute, *Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Law Administrative Reports, 1907-1949* (New York: Commerce Clearing House, Inc, 1951).

¹⁵ "Form Non-Smokers' League," *The New York Times*, May 10, 1910, 18; "Tobacco Using Doomed," *Monon News*, July 14, 1911, 1; "Anti-Smokers Incorporate: Dr. Wiley One of Directors of the Protective League of America," *The New York Times*, August 3, 1911, 16; Ruth Engs, *The Progressive Era's Health Reform Movement* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003): 391.

¹⁶ Untitled article, *Swayzee Press*, July 14, 1911, 4.

¹⁷ "Dr. Wiley, Government Food Expert, Resigns, After Years of Fighting for the People," *The (Chicago) Day Book*, March 15, 1912, 26-27; "Dr. Wiley to Resign to Become Editor," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1912, 1; "Dr. Wiley is Out, Attacking Enemies," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1912, 1; "Dr. Wiley's Resignation," *Outlook* , March 30, 1912, 717, accessed via Proquest American Periodicals; "Adulterated Food Trust Throws Bricks at Him," *Fort Wayne News*, December 17, 1906, 1; "War on Wiley May Succeed," *Shelbyville Democrat*, March 16, 1908, 3; "Wiley May Resign," *Bedford Daily Mail*, December 29, 1908, 4; Coppin and High, 165.

¹⁸ "Dr. Wiley is Out, Attacking Enemies," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1912, 1.

¹⁹ "Dr. Wiley to Resign to Become Editor," *The New York Times*, March 12, 1912, 1; "Dr. Wiley's Debut as Editor," *The New York Times*, April 26, 1912, 9; Wiley, *Autobiography* 302-306.

²⁰ Harvey W. Wiley, "Good Cooking," in *Good Housekeeping's The Pure Food Cook Book*, ed. Mildred Maddocks (New York: Hearst's International Library Co., 1915): 5; "Dr. Wiley's Question-Box," *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, February 1926, 90, accessed via [American Memory](#); "The Next War," *Good Housekeeping Magazine*, January 1919, 44-45, accessed via Gale.

²¹ "Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, U.S. Food Expert, Will Write for the Day Book Only," *The Day Book*, February 29, 1912, 3; "Cold Storage a Danger to Public Health, Writes Dr. Wiley, and He Tells Why," *The Day Book*, March 14, 1912, 21; "Dr. Wiley Pleads for Efficiency and Palatability in Diet," *The Day Book*, March 30, 1912, 21; "How These Foods are Adulterated," *The Day Book*, April 16, 1912, 18.



²² “Wiley Household is Scene of Joy as Stork Arrives,” *The Washington Times*, May 16, 1912, 1; “Daddy Wiley Talks on Child Raising,” *The Evening Herald* [Klamath Falls, Oregon], May 23, 1912, 2; “Here’s a Little Pure Food Expert,” *The Day Book*, May 22, 1912, 26; “Try it on the Baby,” *The Day Book*, May 23, 1912, 18; “Wiley Baby’s Future Bride,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 1912, 7; “J.P. Wiley, Ideal Baby,” *The New York Times*, March 19, 1914, 1; “Mrs. Wiley Loves Home and Babies But She’s Ardent Suffrage Worker,” *The Day Book*, December 8, 1915, 9; “Pure Food Baby in Suffrage March,” *The Day Book*, January 28, 1913, 20; “66-Year-Old ‘Dad Wiley’s’ Eugenic Babies Now Romping, Husky American Youngsters,” [Philadelphia] *Evening Public Ledger*, October 19, 1922, 18.

²³ Ruth Engs, *Clean Living Movements: American Cycles of Health Reform* (Westport: Praeger, 2000): 9-14.

²⁴ Alexandra Minna Stern, “Making Better Babies: Public Health and Race Betterment in Indiana, 1920-1935,” *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (May 2002): 742-752; Anne-Emanuelle Birn and Natalia Molina, “In the Name of Public Health,” *American Journal of Public Health* 95 (July 2005): 1095-1097; Martin S. Pernick, *The Black Stork: Eugenics and the Death of “Defective” Babies in American Medicine and Motion Pictures Since 1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 6.

²⁵ Harvey W. Wiley, *Experiments with Sugar Beets in 1893* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), accessed via [Google Books](#); Harvey W. Wiley, *Foods and Food Adulterants* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898) accessed via the [Internet Archive](#); Harvey W. Wiley, *The Lure of the Land: Farming After Fifty* (New York: The Century Co., 1915) accessed via the [Internet Archive](#); Harvey W. Wiley, *Beverages and their Adulteration*, (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston and Sons, 1919) accessed via [Internet Archive](#); Harvey W. Wiley, *Not By Bread Alone: The Principles of Human Nutrition* (New York: Hearst’s International Library Co, 1915) accessed via [Google Books](#); “Dr. Wiley’s Book on Pure Food,” *The New York Times*, June 22, 1907, BR404.

²⁶ Harvey W. Wiley, *History of a Crime against the Food Law: The Amazing Story of the National Food and Drug Law Intended to Protect the Health of the People, Perverted to Protect Adulteration of Foods and Drugs* (Washington, D.C.: Harvey W. Wiley, 1929); Anderson 276.

²⁷ Letter from H.W. Wiley to President Calvin Coolidge, reprinted in *Good Housekeeping* in September 1925, accessed via [American Memory](#); “Dr. Wiley Charges Food Law Violations,” *The New York Times*, June 7, 1925, 16.

²⁸ “Dr. H.W. Wiley Dies; Pure-Food Expert,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 1930, 24; “Tribute to Dr. Wiley,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 1930, pN8; “Must Live 100 Years,” *The New York Times*, May 30, 1907, 3; *District of Columbia, Select Deaths and Burials, 1840-1964* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA, accessed via Ancestry.com.

²⁹ U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “History,” accessed via [FDA.gov](#).

³⁰ Per [the FDA’s website](#), its current duties include “agency testing of insulin and antibiotics; regulation of chemical pesticides and food and color additives; distinction between prescription and nonprescription medications; regulation of drug efficacy; ensuring of good manufacturing practices; control of prescription drug advertising; regulation of therapeutic agents of biological origin; and oversight of nutrition labeling.”