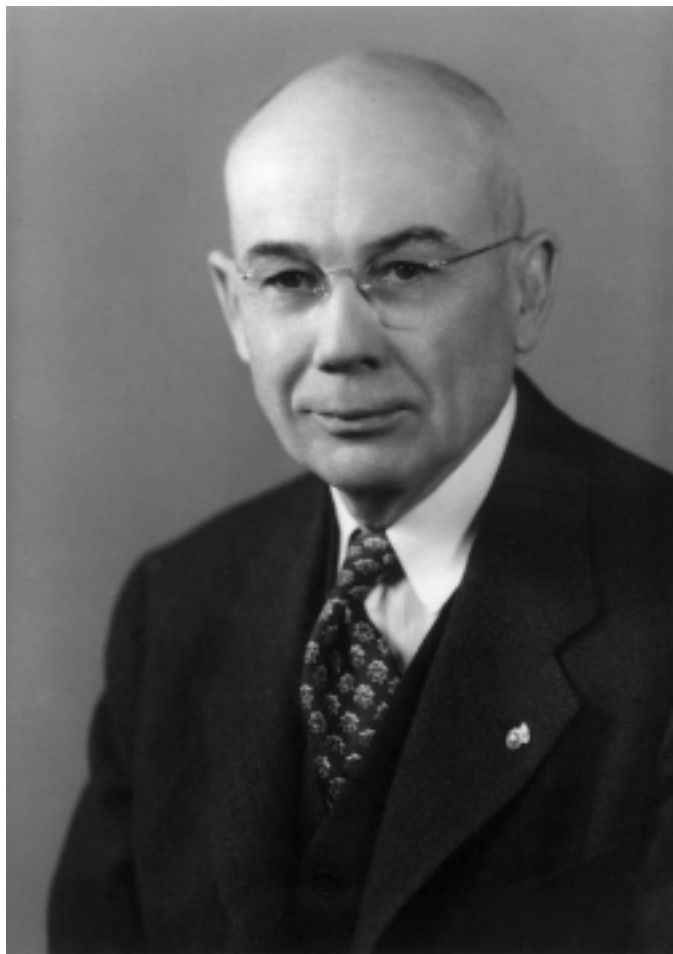


John Arthur Hill, 1880–1951: A Brief Biography

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John Arthur Hill was born on a small farm near Carrollton, Ohio, on June 10, 1880. The eldest of eight children, Hill went to Wyoming as a youth in 1901 and worked on his uncle's ranch near Cody. In 1902, he enrolled at the University of Wyoming (15 yr after the founding of the University) and played varsity football. He was named special wool technologist and head of the University of Wyoming's new wool department following his graduation in 1907. He had studied wool and wool scouring in Philadelphia before graduation. He immediately began sheep and wool research and established a wool scouring laboratory on the University of Wyoming campus. His pioneering work on the

strength, measurement, and scouring of wool brought him national attention. His early articles and bulletins on the subject are classics. One on the strength of wool fiber was among the first agricultural research bulletins that incorporated statistical analysis. In addition to research publications, he wrote for farm magazines and farm dailies. His weekly wool letter was of inestimable value to woolgrowers.

In 1911, he married Evelyn Corthell, and they became the parents of five children. Hill's 44 yr of service as member of the faculty of the college of agriculture was interrupted by his service as an infantry captain during World War I. He was named dean of the college and director of experiment stations in 1923. While dean, he continued to teach a course in wool production and marketing. When university President Arthur Crane was dismissed in the spring of 1941, the university trustees appointed John Hill as chairman of a committee of college deans who served in place of an interim president until October when President J. Lewis Morrill was inaugurated. Fay Smith, university comptroller, reported that things were running "quietly and smoothly" under the guidance of the deans.

Dean Hill influenced the lives of many students who came to study wool production and processing from the United States and throughout the world. Curtis Rochelle herded sheep for \$1.00 a day before becoming Dean John Hill's student from 1937 to 1941. In 1993, Curtis and Marian Rochelle donated \$1.2 million to establish a chair in animal science in memory of John A. Hill, who Curtis called one of the most influential people in his life.

John A. Hill was a national leader in animal science. In 1930 and 1931, he served as president of the Western Section of the American Society of Animal Production, and, in 1932, he served as the national president. In 1949, the American Society of Animal Production honored Dean Hill in Chicago when his portrait was formally presented to the Saddle and Sirloin Club for its portrait gallery. Excerpts from the Saddle and Sirloin Club citation read as follows: "A noted authority on wool, he was considered one of the most influential men in the industry." "Honored as the Outstanding Livestock Man in the U.S. in 1949; voted Wyoming's Outstanding Citizen in 1942, and presented an honorary LLD degree by the University of Wyoming in 1947."

Quotes from those who knew John A. Hill give some additional insight about the man. One of his children,

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John M. Hill, now associate professor emeritus at the University of Wyoming wrote: "When Dad was late for lunch, Mom would say, 'Go toss some gravel up against his office window.' We did, and he'd come." John M. Hill still lives in the family home, which is across Ninth Street from the original agricultural building. His son continues, "The big thing outside of school was 'the farm'—the struggling, ever-hoping, underachieving dairy farm three miles [4.8 km] west, owned and managed by Mom's father and brother. We boys learned to do our share of working, worrying (and thriving) on its 50 Holstein cows, seven horses, old Fordson tractor, and balky milking machine.

The pay was low but well appreciated. None of us quite perceived that we were heading into the Great Depression and an accompanying 14-yr drought, when milk would sell for two cents a pound [.454 kg] wholesale. While hay and grain were scant and insufficient to last through the winter, Dad and his in-laws hit upon sunflower silage as an answer. Both our farm and the University experimental farm filled huge twin silos with chopped sunflowers. We hauled 'em, run 'em through the cutter-elevator, and tramped 'em, in the great harvest rush.

That didn't stop us from eating sunflower seeds, both green and dry, and throwing the 12-inch [30.5 cm] heads at each other for fun. This was 60 yr before sunflower seeds and oil would capture the fancy of American health-enthusiasts, at prices a thousand times ours."

Francis E. Warren, of Warren Livestock Company, wrote (Cheyenne, 1951), "When Dean Hill first started working with us, our greasy fleeces averaged between 7 and 7 ½ pounds [3.2 and 3.4 kg] per ewe, and about 50 to 55 percent of our clip would grade half-blood. Of late years the clip has been running between 11 ½ and 12 pounds [5.2 and 5.4 kg] per ewe and grading 85 to 90 percent half-blood. The economic

value of this, to my company, is self-evident." [Dean Hill developed the Warhill breed of sheep in conjunction with Warren Livestock Company.]

The intangible things that we received from association with Dean Hill are probably of even greater value to us. He always kept foremost in his mind the fact that, to be acceptable and successful, a program had to be practical and economically feasible. By this he was able to form relationships with the rancher businessmen, which led them to trust him and want to cooperate with him. "All of our men became very fond of Dean Hill because of his horse sense and because of his ingrained sense of dry humor, which always came through when everyone was tired and needed a lift."

Albert E. Bowman, Director of Agricultural Extension at the University of Wyoming from 1913 to 1951, offered the following memorial: "One of Dean Hill's most valuable attributes was his ability as a counselor. As such, he stood preeminent among his colleagues. Presidents of the University of Wyoming turned frequently to him for counsel. [Dean Hill served as vice president until his death while on limited service following his service as dean of the college.] John A. Hill was a clean, steadfast, honest gentleman with a sharp sense of right and wrong. He had an unquestionable high code of personal morals and ethics, coupled to an integrity that never faltered."

Arvil Ashment, assistant county agent leader at the University of Wyoming, said that on the day before his death, Dean Hill had worked sheep at the Grabbert Ranch near Emblem, Wyoming. John A. Hill died at the age of 70 in March 1951. "A little man with twinkling eyes and a perpetual smile," wrote the *Laramie Boomerang*, "Above all else, he was a man who enjoyed life to the fullest." He truly was a pioneer in his field who helped in the expansion and development of range sheep production in the west.