

Edgar Fahs Smith (1854–1928)

HIST Chair, 1920–1921



Cofounder of HIST (with Charles A. Browne), Smith studied with Friedrich Wöhler at Göttingen, receiving his Ph.D. in 1876. Although he spent brief periods on the faculty at Muhlenberg and Wittenberg Colleges, his primary professional affiliation was as a chemistry professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where he also served as provost from 1911 through 1920. Three times president of the American Chemical Society (1895, 1920, 1921), Smith had a primary research interest in electrochemistry and was a Ph.D. mentor to 87 students. Smith's "hobby," as he called it, was the history of chemistry, and even as a young man he began collecting books, portraits, letters and other ephemera which eventually became one of the finest collections of its kind in the world. Still preserved at the University of Pennsylvania as part of their rare book collection, it remains a significant resource in the history of chemistry. His historical writings numbering 32 articles, 15 brochures and seven books include *Chemistry in America*, *Chemistry in Old Philadelphia*, and biographies of Robert Hare and James Woodhouse.

See H. S. Klickstein, "Edgar Fahs Smith—His Contributions to the History of Chemistry," *Chymia*, 5 (1959):11–30 and "The Edgar Fahs Smith Memorial Number," *Journal of Chemical Education*, 9 (1933): 707–750.

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