The Mother Lode
The University of Pennsylvania
1740-1940

The present site of the University of Pennsylvania is the third home for this venerable Ivy League institution. More than 100 years ago the University moved its campus from Ninth and Chestnut Streets to the then rural area across the Schuylkill River. The first building at this location was College Hall which was opened for students on September 12, 1872, just twelve years before the first class was accepted in the Veterinary Department. The announcement of the new campus paints a tranquil picture: "... the quietness, the absence of excitement and the pure air which so greatly tend to promise industrious habits, to render profitable and to preserve the health, all of which objects it was impossible to secure in an equal degree while the School remained in the Center of the City."

College Hall has grown old gracefully and along with its counterpart, Logan Hall, it now stands in the midst of new buildings which are evidence of the physical and academic growth of the University. The present campus exudes a robust beauty, and the quiet, serene atmosphere of 1872 is now but a memory of a time when transportation was by horse-drawn street car and the Schuylkill River could be viewed from the knoll on which the original buildings stand.
Before describing the origin and early years of the University of Pennsylvania it is fitting to look at Philadelphia during the eighteenth century since the history of the institution has always been closely interwoven with that of the city. A census in 1749 established that Philadelphia had a population of 12,000. Considered a large and rich city, it was growing rapidly. By 1776 there were about 30,000 inhabitants. After London, Philadelphia was the largest metropolis in the English speaking world. The city was compact and congested, occupying a narrow strip of land stretching for two miles along the west bank of the Delaware River. Built primarily of red brick most of the houses were east of what is now Sixth Street.

There was much intellectual fervor in the city and Benjamin Franklin was in the center of this activity. In 1743 Franklin, who had arrived from Boston in 1723, founded a general society of learned men that later became known as the American Philosophical Society. In 1751, together with Dr. Thomas Bond, Franklin founded the first hospital in America, the Pennsylvania Hospital.

Despite the intellectual climate in the city, little attention was paid to formal education. Most children of the upper and middle classes received private tutoring, but poor children grew up in almost total ignorance.

For some time there was considerable controversy as to the year of origin of the University, 1740, 1743, 1749, 1751 or 1755. All of these dates have some validity for this distinction but it was not until 1875 that the issue assumed some importance. At that time Philadelphia and the nation were preparing for the Centennial Exposition of 1876 and the University was urged to identify its dates of birth. The year 1749 was selected, since it was at this time that the present line of Board of Trustees was established and the recording of minutes was initiated. For these reasons 1749 has been referred to as a “Secretary’s date.” A few years later the trustees reconsidered and voted to change the date to 1740. A trust for a free school was established in that year, and a building which became the first home of the University was erected. By accepting this as the official year of origin the trustees antedated two other Ivy League institutions, Princeton (1746) and Columbia (1754). Harvard had begun in 1636, the...
College of William and Mary in 1693, and Yale in 1701.

The Free, or Charity School, was erected in 1740 by followers of a dynamic English preacher, George Whitfield. The original trust, dated November 14, 1740, described the mission of the school as follows: "For the instruction of Poor Children Gratis in the useful Literature and Knowledge of the Christian Religion." The school stood at Fourth and Arch Streets and occupied a rectangular brick building measuring 100 x 70 feet; it was the largest building in Philadelphia and along with Christ Church it dominated the skyline as seen from the Delaware River. Simply referred to as the "New Building" in its early years, it became a showplace. For a short time the structure was occupied by the Continental Congress and thus served briefly as the Capitol of the emerging nation. Despite the terms of its trust the building was not used for educational purposes until 1749, but served mainly as a site for religious gatherings. Benjamin Franklin had little to do with the activities of this original school, but he did serve on its Board of Trustees, thus establishing his connection with the University.

In 1749, through the influence of Franklin, a group of wealthy and influential Philadelphia citizens purchased the charter of the charity school and created the "Academic and Charitable School of the Province of Pennsylvania," known simply as the Academy. Until 1757, when he left for Europe, Franklin was a major force in the affairs of the Academy and its successor, the College of Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin's educational philosophy leaned to the idea of providing a mixture of practical and classical education, while most of the other trustees wished the curriculum to be devoted exclusively to the arts. In his proposals for the school Franklin queried, "while they are reading Natural History might not a little Gardening, Planting, Gardening, etc. be practiced?" He was a forceful individual and in disputed matters his opinion usually prevailed. However, in the matter of the curriculum he was overruled. Despite these differences, Franklin was elected President of the Board of Trustees.

In 1755 the charter of the Academy was amended and the school became known as the College of Philadelphia. Degrees were granted by this institution, known affectionately as the "Colonial College." The first provost was William Smith, a Scotsman, and the school was strongly influenced by the Scottish educational system. Under Franklin's influence the College was non-sectarian, the only such college in the colonies. In spite of this, prior to the Civil War most provosts of the college were clergymen.

On Founders Day, January 17, 1976, the date of Benjamin Franklin's 270th birthday, the university bestowed upon him the posthumous honorary degree of Doctor of Natural Philosophy.

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The Medical Department

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is usually assigned the honor of actually establishing it. As early as 1760 Shippen had serious discussions with influential citizens about creating a medical department, but it was Morgan who ignited the spark. He did this by presenting a classical lecture to the trustees of the College. This was entitled "Discourse Upon the Institution of Medical Schools in America" and it so impressed the trustees that immediately thereafter they elected Dr. Morgan as "Professor of Theory and Practice of Physic." John Morgan was a graduate of the first class from the College (1757) and had gone to Edinburgh, Scotland, for his medical training. At that time Edinburgh was referred to as the "Athens of the West." While there, Morgan met William Shippen, Jr. and the two became good friends only to fall out later in a dispute involving seniority in the new medical school. After Dr. Morgan was elected professor, Dr. Shippen was given the title of Professor of Anatomy and Surgery. At the beginning these two individuals comprised the faculty. In 1768 they were joined by Adam Kuhn as Professor of Botany and Materia Medica, and in 1769 by Benjamin Rush who taught chemistry. Morgan, Shippen and Rush all served in the Continental Army. In 1789, upon the death of John Morgan, Benjamin Rush succeeded to the senior chair.

Medical education was an instant success. The course lasted three years and at the first commencement in 1768, ten men were awarded the degree of Bachelor of Medicine. These were the first earned medical degrees awarded in America. An individual then did not qualify for an M.D. degree until he had been out of school for three years and had written a thesis and offered an oral defense in public.

With the coming of the Revolution the college buildings became prime sites for billeting troops. In 1775, some militia from Chester County, Pennsylvania, stayed here and from June 1777 until January 1779 the College was closed due to occupation of the city by British troops. The British used the college buildings as a hospital.

The school was reopened in 1779 and a strange sequence of events began to unfold. In this year an act was passed by the newly formed state legislature by which the name of the institution was changed to University of the State of Pennsylvania. It was the first institution in America to adopt the title "University." This was primarily a political move brought about by those who came into power after the war. These men viewed the College as an institution which had too strongly reflected the recent past, a time in which British aristocratic influence was the guiding principle. The new breed of patriot politicians wished to introduce more democratic ideas and they started by discharging the faculty and trustees of the old College. A new faculty and board were assembled and were responsible to the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Anti-British feeling was high and the University received part of its income from the sale of confiscated Tory estates. The old faculty and trustees did not readily accept these changes and banded together to agitate for reinstatement. This finally happened in 1789, and as a result there were now two institutions, the old College and the newly created University. This state of affairs continued for two years until 1791 when the two schools joined hands, each contributing twelve trustees to the unified institution which was now known, for the first time, as the University of Pennsylvania. An interesting footnote to this unsettled period of time is that General George Washington received an honorary degree of LL.D. in absentia from the University in 1783. In 1789 Washington rode into Philadelphia to assume his duties as President of the United States.
A Home in Center City

With the growth of the University the original building at 4th and Arch Streets became outdated; in 1797 the trustees purchased a new home on the west side of Ninth Street between Chestnut and Market Streets. This is now the site of a large post office but then it was occupied by a handsome residence that had been built as the official home for George Washington. Unfortunately, it was not completed in time for him to occupy it during his term of office and his successor, John Adams, refused to use it. In essence it was a "white elephant," and the trustees were able to purchase it, along with twelve attached lots, for $41,650. In 1802 all classes, including the Medical Department, were moved to this second home. Despite the advantages of this fine new building, the University fell upon hard times. The State of Pennsylvania withdrew its support; enrollment dropped; serious discipline problems arose among the students and trouble developed between faculty and trustees. The faculty was unhappy with its workload, and since the salary of its members depended upon direct payments from students, the financial situation deteriorated. On the other hand the trustees believed that the low enrollment and discipline problems reflected a lack of dedication on the part of the faculty. Unlike the rest of the institution, the Medical Department continued to flourish and was considered to be the best in the country at that time.

The poor situation of the University continued until 1828 when the trustees took some drastic action; they dismissed both the provost and faculty. The installing of a new provost, the Reverend William H. Delancey, and a new faculty produced some immediate beneficial results. Courses in the College were rearranged under four headings, Ancient Languages, Moral Philosophy, Natural Philosophy, and Mathematics. These changes improved student moral; enrollment increased and discipline improved. However, this was a temporary respite since students soon rebelled at the new academic and behavioral standards. Once again the trustees responded by electing a new provost, Dr. John Ludlow. This move,
along with demolition of the old presidential mansion and erection of new, more functional buildings, finally restored some stability. Another healthy development was the creation of an Alumni Association in 1835. Largely through the efforts of this group, two new departments were created, the Law Department and the Department of Mines, Arts, and Manufactures. Fairman Rogers, a graduate of the College in 1853, became a professor in the latter school and it was he who later assembled the famous Fairman Rogers Collection on Equestrianism which now resides in the Veterinary School Library, at New Bolton Center.

On April 12, 1861 Fort Sumter was fired upon and the Civil War began. In accordance with state law the trustees instructed the faculty to form the students into a military unit and a Department of Military Science was created. Many southern students, especially those from the Medical Department, followed their conscience to the Confederacy. During the battle of Gettysburg, in July of 1863, earthworks were erected south and west of Philadelphia, just outside the grounds of the present botanical gardens and the present Veterinary School. Nineteen students from the University died in the Civil War.

Following the Civil War there occurred what is regarded by some to be the greatest loss ever suffered by the University in financial and educational matters. In 1862 the federal government, through the Morrill Act, made munificent land grants to states for the purpose of developing colleges which would provide instruction in general cultural subjects and in agriculture and the mechanical arts. Pennsylvania's share amounted to 780,000 acres or its equivalent in money. The University applied for this and even created a department called the "College of Agriculture, Mines, Manufactures and the Mechanic Arts" to bolster its claim. However, at the same time the State Agricultural Association had chartered and organized what was originally known as the "Farmers School" and then as the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania. Located in Center County on land that had been provided by the state, this school was awarded the Federal Land Grant after much deliberation; what was to become Pennsylvania State University was established.
carried the road to Darby (Woodland Avenue) and the swampy terrain along the Schuylkill River.

The first building erected at the new site was College Hall. Collegiate Gothic in design, the structure originally had two slender clock towers at either end. With a basement and three stories, it dominated the open plain that rose in a gentle slope from the Schuylkill River. Initially, College Hall served many functions, housing the library, chapel, assembly rooms, the Towne Scientific School, the Department of Liberal Arts, and a lecture hall for the Law Department.

Soon after College Hall was built, three other buildings arose on the new campus: Medical Hall (now Logan Hall), the Robert Hare Laboratory of Chemistry, and the original section of the University Hospital, the first hospital in the United States originating as a part of a university. The Hospital Building stood in the area of 34th and Spruce Streets, and was soon dwarfed by other larger buildings begun in 1883. All of the original buildings on the new campus were constructed of green serpentinite stone, native to Chester County, Pennsylvania.

In 1872 the University began its migration to its third and present home in West Philadelphia. Dr. Charles J. Stille, professor of English, had been appointed provost in 1870. Despite the fact that the Board of Trustees offered him little help, he was able to achieve some important accomplishments in his years as provost (1870-1880). First he recognized that the buildings on Ninth Street were antiquated and that the campus was in "a vile neighborhood." He convinced the trustees that a move should be made. Also, during Dr. Stille's term as provost the Towne Scientific School was established and the Departments of Music and Dentistry were organized.

After it was decided to move the campus, the trustees were able to purchase ten acres from a 200 acre tract, known as Blockley Farm or Almhouse Farm, in West Philadelphia, for $80,000. This strip of land was located between the high ground that
The Builders of Departments and Buildings

The move to the new site reflected a major change in the image of the University of Pennsylvania. Until this time it was viewed as a provincial and little-known institution of higher learning, and had a total enrollment of approximately 1,000 full-time students. The pace now accelerated with the addition of new departments and other facilities, and the acquisition of more land.

Dr. William Pepper, provost, University of Pennsylvania, 1881-1894.

Within twenty years, the campus quadrupled in size. Dr. William Pepper succeeded Dr. Stille as provost, and served from 1881 to 1894. In addition to his position as provost, the Board of Trustees appointed him as President pro tempore of the Board, and he was therefore presiding officer of the University.

Dr. Pepper, a physician, was a dynamic personality who had a great love for the University. Some time after he became provost he reflected: “After the days of Benjamin Franklin, the University went to sleep. It slept in peace until I came 100 years later. When I came there was trouble, and there has been trouble ever since.” In almost every instance the “trouble” generated by Dr. Pepper was reflected in new growth for the University. A few years prior to his election, the Department of Science (Towne Scientific School) was created (1875), the Department of Music came into being in 1877, and the Dental Department was established in 1878. During Dr. Pepper’s term of office, thirteen new departments were added. These included the Wharton School (1881), the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1882), the Veterinary Department (1884), and the Department of Physical Education (1885). Almost entirely through Dr. Pepper’s individual efforts the University Museum was created in 1887, followed by the Wistar Institute in 1892, and the School of Chemical Engineering, and the Graduate School of Education in 1893. This was a breathtaking period that saw other important changes in the character of the University. In 1880 the first doctorate degree was awarded to a woman, Mary Alice Bennett, and in 1883, Caroline B. Kilgore was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Laws. Black students began to attend the University and in 1882 Nathan F. Mossell was awarded an M.D. degree from the Department of Medicine. Forty years later, Dr. Mossell’s daughter, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander, became the first black woman in the United States to earn a Ph.D. (Wharton School, 1921).

Provost Pepper supported many causes, including the work of pioneer photographer Eadweard Muybridge. It was Muybridge who took vast numbers of still pictures of animals and humans in motion and projected them with an instrument known as the “zoopraxiscope.” This was set up in temporary buildings at 36th and Spruce Streets, now the site of the Maloney Building of the University Hospital. Muybridge’s work gave technological impetus to the development of motion pictures. At one time he was assisted by Dr. Rush Shippen Huidakoper, the first dean
of the Veterinary Department. The famous Rose Tree Hunt Club, near Media, Pennsylvania, once housed, photographs of Dr. Huidekoper riding, more-or-less nude, on his mare, Pandora!

Before he retired, Provost Pepper donated funds to establish the William Pepper Laboratory of Clinical Medicine, named for his father. This laboratory was the first of what was to become an outstanding group of special medical and surgical units that are part of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. The development of the hospital as a teaching facility led eventually to the lengthening of the medical course to four years in 1892.

If Provost Pepper was a builder of departments, his successor, Charles C. Harrison, M.D., was a builder of buildings. Under Harrison thirteen new and major buildings were constructed to complement the thirteen departments created in Provost Pepper's time. In addition to the new building for the Veterinary Department, these included the University Museum, the Chemistry Building, the Law Building, Wistar Institute, Franklin Field, the Observatory, the Laboratory of Anatomy and Physiology, Houston Hall, the Quadrangle Dormitories, and the Dental and Zoological Buildings. Parallel to this remarkable surge in building activity, there were some important changes in the academic structure. The program that was to eventually become the College Collateral Courses was started in 1894 when the University began to offer College Courses for Teachers. These courses were designed to better prepare elementary and high school teachers for their professions. In 1904 a Summer School was opened for those who wished to continue their education during the vacation period, and the Evening School of Accounts and Finance was begun. The response to this was so enthusiastic that in 1913 Extension Courses in Accounts and Finance were offered in various cities of the Commonwealth.

Problems in the Medical School

While the University was making giant strides in establishing its image, the Medical School was losing its leadership position. Throughout the 19th century the Medical School had been a national and world leader but Provost Charles C. Harrison had expressed the fear that the school was not maintaining its place among the rapid changes in basic medical sciences. The professors in the Medical School had always had a reputation as superb clinicians whose aim was perfection in practice rather than advancement of knowledge through research. At the turn of the century the faculty was dominated by practitioner-teachers, and there was a high degree of promotion from within.

By 1910 its dean, Dr. Charles Harrison Frazier, said that the school's atmosphere had become one of "self satisfied complacency and scientific stagnation." In an effort to change this Harrison and Frazier set about to add younger men who were firmly grounded in the research tradition to the faculty. Unfortunately most of the new additions left within a short time.

One who stayed was Dr. Alfred Newton Richards; he was to have a profound effect on the renaissance of the School of Medicine over the next several decades. Dr. Richards was not a physician, but when he arrived at the school as a young man he already had earned high marks as a researcher in pharmacology. About the time Dr. Richards arrived, the Flexner Report on American Medical Education was published. This study eventually revolutionized the teaching of medicine in the United States, but it is reported that the School of Medicine received it with an air of complacency. Dr. Richards had much to do with changing this picture. By his personal strength and his brilliant research he began to alter the character of the Medical School.
Most important, his presence attracted other established scientists and eventually a solid research program was established. Dr. Richards' work on renal physiology is a medical classic. During World War II he served as director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development and he was personally responsible for seeing that penicillin production was sufficient to meet the extraordinary needs of the times. In 1939 Dr. Richards became Vice-President for Medical Affairs in the University, and after the war he returned in this capacity. Prior to this time the Medical School had been reluctant to accept outside funding for research, but in the post-war years Dr. Richards recognized the great benefits that could accrue from the funds then available from the federal government. As a result of this approach there was a great surge in research at the School. In 1960 the most important work of modern architecture on the University campus was dedicated in his memory, the Alfred Newton Richards Medical Research Building.

During the period 1910 to 1930 some noteworthy changes occurred at the University but they were not as spectacular or fundamental in the University's development as those of the previous thirty years. Just before World War I the University enrollment was approximately 9,000, immediately following the conflict it was 11,000. With this increase and the involvement of the University in a variety of new activities a segment of the alumni became disturbed by what they considered to be a trend to "education of the masses." It was felt that this approach, along with an increasing dependency on state appropriations, would tarnish the prestige of the institution. This group of alumni expressed their dissatisfaction through the medium of the Associated Pennsylvania Clubs, a federation of local alumni groups. Essentially, they wished to see a restricted enrollment, curtailment of the Extension Courses and the Evening School, and a better representation of alumni on the Board of Trustees. The last of these wishes came about, the Board was increased from twenty-four to forty-one members and allowed ten trustees to be elected by alumni. However, enrollment continued to grow, reaching 16,000 in 1938-1939. The same group of alumni who wished to control enrollment also advocated moving the University to a rural environment. This move was the focus of serious discussion for several years and in 1926 a tract of 178 acres was purchased in the Valley Forge area. However, the move was never executed and the University eventually engaged in a major development of the West Philadelphia campus.

With the addition of many new departments and the growth of the student body and faculty, the academic program of the
Aesculapius, Plato and Chiron, the Centaur, symbolic of the beginnings of the healing arts, 11th century.

(Burroughs, Welcome & Company: Anglo-Saxon Leecheat)
University outstripped its administrative structure. Beginning in the 1920's some moves were made to correct this imbalance. In 1926 three vice-provosts were installed to oversee affairs related to faculty personnel, student government, and public relations. In 1928 the office of Vice-Provost for Medical Affairs was established. Later these vice-provosts assumed the title of vice-president. Even with these improvements, the duties of the provost became too complex and demanding. The University had become a large concern and there was a need for an individual with executive ability and business experience. To meet this need Thomas Sovereign Gates was elected as the first full-time president of the University in 1930. This election occurred at the beginning of the Great Depression when there was a special need for someone to carefully oversee the affairs of the large University. Gates, a financier, was the man. Through his deft management the University weathered the Depression, and in 1940 celebrated its Bicentennial in a grand manner.

Since 1940 the University has continued to grow in many dimensions, all of which have contributed to a growing influence on the quality of life in the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Nation. The campus in Philadelphia has grown to over 260 acres and the University, with an annual payroll of over $230 million, is a vital part of Philadelphia's economy. In 1890 there were 1,600 students; by 1976 the total student body had grown to 16,000, and now stands at over 22,000. Full-standing and associated faculty now exceed 2,600 and there are over three million books in the University Library System.