Historical Notes

TWO HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS AGO

THE COMMENCEMENT OF 1761

On Saturday last the public Commencement was held in the College of this City, before a vast Concourse of People of all Ranks. Besides the usual Exercises (which gave great Satisfaction to the Audience) there was performed in the Forenoon an elegant Anthem, composed by JAMES LYON, A.M. of New-Jersey College; and, in the Afternoon an ODE, sacred to the Memory of our late gracious Sovereign GEORGE II, written and set to Music, in a very grand and masterly Taste, by FRANCIS HOPKINSON, Esq., A.M. of the College of this City. A Sett of Ladies and Gentlemen, in order to do Honour to the Entertainment of the Day, were kindly pleased to perform a Part both of the Anthem and Ode, accompanied by the Organ, which made the Music a very compleat and agreeable Entertainment to all present.

Besides the Degrees conferred on the Students, the Rev. Mr. ISAAC EATON, and the Rev. Mr. SAMUEL STILLMAN were admitted to the honorary Degree of Master of Arts.

Pennsylvania Gazette
Thursday, 28 May 1761

Tradition and innovation are the very heart and soul of the University of Pennsylvania, but it is rare to find evidence for this understanding of University identity in the events of 250 years ago. The Commencement of 1761, however, provides just that opportunity. The Annual Commencement – simultaneously solemn and celebratory – is the greatest of all Penn’s traditions. Celebrating commencement with music – both instrumental and vocal – is a tradition at the University of Pennsylvania virtually as old as the University itself. Today and for many years, stretching back at least as far as the 1930s, the Academic Procession has marched to Edward Elgar’s magnificent composition, “Pomp and Circumstance, No. 1.” Likewise, the singing of the National Anthem and “the University hymns” has a venerable place at Penn’s commencements. There was a time, however, in early American life, when the performance of music at public ceremonies was a dramatic and newsworthy innovation. The College of Philadelphia – as Penn was then known – not only embraced the change, but was in the vanguard of experimentation. The story began in December 1759, when the following advertisement was placed in the Philadelphia newspapers,
By PERMISSION, and by particular DESIRE, towards the raising a Fund for purchasing an ORGAN, to the COLLEGE-HALL in this City, and instructing the Charity Children in PSALMODY,

At the THEATRE, on Society Hill, this evening will be presented, the tragical and interesting History of

GEORGE BARNWELL

Thorowgood, by Mr. Douglass; Uncle, Mr. Morris; George Barnwell, Mr. Hallam; Blunt, Mr. Harman; Trueman, Mr. Tomlinson; Millwood, by Mrs. Douglass; Maria, Mrs. Love; Lucy, Mrs. Harman.

Before the Play, and between the Acts, several celebrated Pieces of Concert Music will be performed by some Gentlemen of this City, who have kindly consented to promote the Design of this Entertainment; for which Purpose a neat Harpsichord will be provided.

Also, a Prologue in Praise of MUSIC will be spoken by Mr. Hallam; and an occasional Epilogue by Mrs. Douglass.

N.B. As this Benefit is wholly intended for improving our Youth in the divine Art of PSALMODY and CHURCH MUSIC, in order to render the Entertainment of the Town more compleat at Commencements, and other public Occasions in our COLLEGE, it is not doubted but it will meet with all due Encouragement from the Inhabitants of this Place.

To begin exactly at Six o’Clock.

Tickets to be had of Mr. Dunlap, Mr. Hurry, and of several Gentlemen.

Pennsylvania Gazette
Thursday, 27 December 1759

Philadelphians did, indeed, support the “Benefit for improving our Youth” and the play produced at the “THEATRE, on Society Hill,” must have sold out, because a fine organ was soon thereafter constructed in the first College Hall – located on a campus at Fourth and Arch Streets in Philadelphia – and was both introduced to the public at the Commencement of 1760 and reported in the Philadelphia newspapers as follows,

… The Orations, Disputations, and other Academical Exercises, were agreeably intermixed with sundry Anthems and pieces of Psalmody, sung by the Charity Boys, attended with an Organ, which the Liberality of the Town lately bestowed. At the Close of the whole, the Audience was most delightfully entertained with two Anthems sung by several Ladies and Gentlemen, who have not been ashamed to employ some of their Leisure Hours in learning to celebrate their Maker’s Praises with Grace and Elegance. …

Pennsylvania Gazette
Thursday, 15 May 1760

Innovation and tradition. The College of Philadelphia’s first two Commencements – those of 1757 and 1759 – brought to Philadelphia the best traditions of five hundred years of higher education in the Anglo-American world. The next two Commencements – those of 1760 and 1761 – presented Philadelphians with an extraordinary innovation, the public performance of music, both instrumental and vocal. The celebration of Commencement with music has continued from that day to the present time. At today’s Commencement both the participants and the audience will think of the music as one of the hallowed traditions of the graduation ceremony. And so it is. True to its essential nature, the University of Pennsylvania has nurtured and developed the innovation of music until it has become one of Penn’s most outstanding traditions.

ONE HUNDRED FIFTY YEARS AGO

Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) was one of the most talented and most distinguished of Penn’s 18th century graduates. A member of the first graduating class, that of 1757, he afterwards trained in the law, served in the Continental Congress, and signed the Declaration of Independence. He was also an accomplished artist, musician, and playwright. Engraving by James Barton Longacre from a painting by Robert Edge Pine.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

During a period of over a century, the influence exercised throughout our country by the University of Pennsylvania has been acknowledged. Its varied departments have been conducted very successfully as schools of instruction, and are renowned for their talent. In the catalogue published for this year, we note that there were in the Department of Arts, one hundred and forty pupils, in that of Medicine, four hundred and sixty-five, and in that of Law, seventy-one. The Charity (English) Schools number one hundred and fifty pupils, thus making a total of eight hundred and twenty-six
scholars, a number that will compare favorably with Yale College, or any other of our distant educational establishments.

The continued prosperity of the Medical Department, which this year shows a larger class of pupils than any other medical school in the United States, is especially gratifying, the large number of four hundred and sixty-five students being truly remarkable, in view of numerous and powerful rivals, the commercial distress of the country, and a political excitement hitherto unknown.

Of the Medical Class, there were from Pennsylvania, two hundred and twenty-two students; from North Carolina, forty-four; from Virginia, thirty-six; from Mississippi, nine; from Tennessee, eight; from Florida, five; from South Carolina, four; from Texas, three; from the United States Army and Navy, seven; from Nova Scotia, six; from England, one; from the West Indies, two; as well as some from Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, Massachusetts and New York. The latter state furnished five. With all the pre-eminence claimed by the metropolis in commerce, Philadelphia has always maintained the lead in medical instruction, and it is a subject of congratulation to many of our citizens, whose interests are closely identified with our medical schools, to learn that this prosperity is so well maintained by the University, under existing conditions.

The medical commencement is to be held at the Musical Fund Hall, on Thursday next, at noon, when we may expect to see a large graduating class, who, in returning to their homes, will carry with them agreeable recollections of their residence in our city.

Philadelphia Inquirer
Tuesday, 12 March 1861

By March 1861, as these clippings from the Philadelphia newspapers make clear, the national political crisis loomed, dark and threatening, over much of the local news. South Carolina had seceded from the Union on 20 December 1860 and six Southern states – South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana – joined to form a provisional Confederate government on 8 February 1861. Those six states, plus Texas, adopted the “Constitution of the Confederate States” on Monday, 11 March 1861. At the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Medicine, nineteen members of the graduating class were permanent residents of these first seven states of the Confederacy. An additional forty-eight were residents of four other Southern states – Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina – which, just a few weeks later, after war broke out at Fort Sumter, would also secede from the Union. Residents of the eleven Confederate states made up a total of 38% of the graduating class. In retrospect, it was remarkable that there was no incident at the School’s Commencement.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The Annual Commencement of the University of Pennsylvania took place yesterday morning, in Musical Fund Hall. The procession moved from the College, at ten o’clock, and reached the hall half an hour afterward, in the following order: -- The Provost, Dr. GOODWIN, at the head, in cap and gown, followed by Professors KENDALL, JACKSON, ALLEN, FRAZER and COPPÉE, the Trustees of the University, and the graduates, in order of rank. Professors and graduates were all gowned.

The hall was two-thirds filled, chiefly by ladies, whose gay bonnets presented the coup d’oeil of a gorgeous flower-bed.

The proceedings were opened by a prayer by the Provost, followed by a Greek salutatory oration, by Mr. RICHARD H. DOUGLASS.

After this came the following orators: -- The Parallax of Human Vision, EDWARD J. HEYL. Puritanism in America, MARTIN P. JONES. The Moral Pendulum, CHARLES A. SCHAEFFER. The Threefold Future, SAMUEL WAGNER, JR. Louis Philippe, JOHN FORBES, JR. The Effect of Truth upon its Advocates, CHARLES J. LITTLE. Dogmatism, CHESTER D. HARTRANFT.

150 YEARS AGO: Medical Hall on the Ninth Street Campus. In 1828 the faculty of the School of Medicine engaged a prominent Philadelphia architect, William Strickland, to design a new Medical Hall. Construction began in February 1829 and was completed in October of that year. Medical education at Penn was conducted in this building until the School moved to West Philadelphia in 1873. In this view, which dates to ca. 1870, the photographer stood on the east side of Ninth Street and turned his camera southwest in order to document the east and north facades of the building. Photograph by Robert Newell, Arch Street, Philadelphia.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.
Historical Notes (continued)

150 YEARS AGO: Daniel Raynes Goodwin (1811 – 1890) (A.B., Bowdoin College, 1832; LL.D. (hon.), University of Pennsylvania, 1868) was Provost of the University of Pennsylvania in 1861 and presided at both the Medical Commencement in March and the University Commencement in July. These were his first Penn commencements; he had come to Philadelphia just a year earlier from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, where he held the presidency from 1853 to 1860. He was also an ordained Episcopal clergyman and very active in the national Episcopal church. In 1868 he left Penn to become Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Philadelphia. Goodwin was the seventh and last clergyman to hold the Penn provostship. This early photograph of Goodwin dates to ca. 1861. Oliver H. Willard, photographer, 1628 Market Street, Philadelphia.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

The valedictory address was very well delivered by GREGORY BEDELL KEEN, who spoke first to the audience and then to the Trustees of the University, afterwards to the Professors, then to the Juniors, and finally to the graduates.

The music which interspersed the exercises was by HASSLER’s Orchestra. The proceedings closed at half-past one o’clock.

Philadelphia Inquirer
Thursday, 4 July 1861

The most striking feature of the University Commencement of 1861 was its adherence to tradition. The ceremony of July 1861 was virtually indistinguishable from that of a century earlier. The public procession in academic garb, the entrance into a grand auditorium, the accompanying music, the initial student address in Greek, the six student addresses in English, the conferring of degrees, and the valedictory were all borrowed directly from Penn’s first commencements. Likewise, the undergraduate curriculum in 1861 was little different from its counterpart in 1761. While professional education – led by the School of Medicine, but by 1861 also including the Law School and the School of Engineering and Applied Science – was transforming the landscape of American universities, the liberal arts and sciences were mired in the past. Another generation would pass before this too would change.

150 YEARS AGO: Robert Empie Rogers (1813 – 1884) (M.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1836) was the School of Medicine’s Commencement speaker in March 1861. He was then concluding his ninth year as Professor of Chemistry and his fifth year as Dean of the School. He would continue another sixteen years in both positions, resigning both in 1877, at the age of sixty-four. Though trained as a physician, he did not practice; he was a scientist who greatly expanded the field of chemistry as applied to medicine during his years at Penn. Rogers introduced, among several other notable innovations, the study of organic chemistry at Penn. This early photograph of Rogers dates to ca. 1861. Photographer unknown.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

It is interesting to speculate upon the future of these youths; whether their lives will be a prolonged march of victory, of the nobleness of which their speeches give the keynote, or whether their intellectual manhood will slip into the slough of money-getting, or many of the frivolities of fashionable life.

[The reporter then listed the names of the fifty-nine graduates, beginning with the names of the twenty-three recipients of the degree of Bachelor of Arts, continuing with the names of the sixteen recipients of the semi-honorary degree of Master of Arts, the names of the eighteen recipients of the degree of Bachelor of Laws, the names of the two recipients of the degree of Doctor of Medicine, and concluding with the names of the three recipients of honorary degrees, two Doctors of Divinity and one Doctor of Laws.]

The various gentlemen here mentioned formed upon the platform in front of the Provost, and were addressed in Latin by him, with good advice and compliments upon their diligence, ending by conferring their various degrees upon them by name.

The Provost then announced in English various prizes, as follows:

Intellectual and Moral Philosophy – ED S. HARLAN and JOHN S. JONES.
Greek and Latin – RICHARD H. DOUGLASS.
English Language and Literature – RICHARD H. DOUGLASS.
Essay on the Colonial Principle – GEORGE D. BUDD.
Declamation – JAS. W. ASHTON and CHAS. G. RUMFORD.
The “Henry Reed Prize” – RICHARD H. DOUGLASS.
FIFTY YEARS AGO:

THE COMMENCEMENTS OF 1961

During the middle years of the twentieth century, Penn held two, regular graduation ceremonies: the Mid-Year Convocation and the annual Commencement. The University typically conferred several hundred degrees at the Mid-Year Convocation, which permitted it to be held in Irvine Auditorium. The annual Commencement was much the larger of the two – the University typically conferred more than 2,000 degrees – and it was held in the Municipal Auditorium (where the Ruth and Raymond Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine now stands). The traditions observed at both events were similar in several respects to those held by the College a century and two centuries earlier – the participants still dressed in academic regalia; the procession, accompanied by music, was still an extraordinary parade; the awarding of degrees still symbolized the achievement of a lifelong credential of enormous importance – but the program was now focused – like that of the School of Medicine in 1861 – on the inspirational leadership of the speaker and the recipients of honorary degrees. Student “orators” had given way to those who had been successful and become prominent in American and international life. In 1961 Penn’s Mid-Year Convocation and its annual Commencement adhered closely to this new statement of educational values. It is the model that continues to the present day.

Penn Graduates 600 at Mid-Year

The University of Pennsylvania graduated a mid-year class of about 600 and conferred honorary degrees on an educator-physicist and a clergyman Saturday.

Dr. Arthur S. Adams, president of the American Council on Education, delivered the convocation address and received an honorary degree of Doctor of Science. The Rev. Edward G. Harris, chaplain of the University and lecturer in Christian ethics since 1950, received an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. He recently was named dean of the Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, and will leave Penn June 30.

In the graduating class were students from 32 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 22 foreign lands.

Philadelphia Inquirer
Sunday morning, 5 February 1961

In February 1961 Arthur Stanton Adams (1896 – 1980) was completing his eleventh and final year as President of the American Council on Education (ACE). In May 1950, when Adams was elected to the presidency of ACE, the New York Times described the privately-supported, non-profit in these terms, “The Council, with more than one thousand affiliated colleges, universities, and national educational organizations, is considered the most influential school group in the country. It cuts across all educational levels, from elementary school through graduate and professional schools.” During his tenure, Adams maintained and perhaps enhanced the Council’s national stature. In February 1960, when Adams announced his retirement, the Chicago Tribune said, “The Council presidency is regarded as one of the top positions in education in the United States.” A year later, the University of Pennsylvania joined in praising Adams and his work with ACE by awarding him its honorary degree of Doctor of Science.

Today, fifty years later, the American Council on Education is located on Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C., where its work is carried forward under the presidency of Molly Corbett Broad. The ACE web site summarizes its current strategic plan as follows, “ACE, the major coordinating body for all of the nation’s higher education institutions, seeks to provide leadership and a unifying voice on higher education issues and to influence public policy through advocacy, research, and program initiatives.”

Wise Choice of Values Urged on Penn
Greenewalt Warns of Conformity

Adjustment to an organizational environment requires “neither brash self-assertion nor unquestioning compliance,” Crawford H. Greenewalt, president of E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., declared Monday at the 205th commencement of the University of Pennsylvania. Greenewalt told more than 2,400 members of the graduating class that adjustments call for a choice of values which recognize that individual aims and organizational goals are “thoroughly compatible and may be achieved with honor both for the individual and for the organization.”

50 YEARS AGO: Mid-Year Convocation in Irvine Auditorium. In 1961, Penn’s distinguished Professor of Anthropology, Loren Corey Eiseley, was Provost of the University and as Provost he presented the Convocation speaker, Arthur Stanton Adams, to President Gaylord Probasco Harnwell for the conferring of the honorary degree of Doctor of Science. In this view, Eiseley, in glasses, is at the left; Adams, is in the center; and Harnwell, holding a rolled copy of the citation which accompanied the degree, is at the right. The 1961 Mid Year Convocation was Penn’s last. The Trustees had already acted to adopt the modern calendar of semesters and in the fall of 1961, the new calendar went into effect. This photograph was taken on Saturday, 4 February 1961; the photographer is unknown.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.
Historical Notes (continued)

“The organization which disregards individual development does so at its own peril,” he said. “And in this day and age it is equally dangerous for an organization to become the victim of a ‘conformity complex’ among its people. No organization can be anything more than a cross-section of the individuals it comprises.”

Dr. Gaylord P. Harnwell, president of the university, conferred the degrees in course and also nine honorary degrees at the exercises, which opened at 10:15 a.m. in the Municipal Auditorium. A special citation was given Dr. Eugene B. Ormandy, conductor and music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra for 25 years. He already holds an honorary degree of Doctor of Music from the university.

Honorary degrees of Doctor of Laws were conferred on Greenewalt; Mayor Richardson Dilworth; Judge William H. Hastie, of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit; Dr. Arnold J. Toynbee, historian and visiting professor at Penn; Dr. Hugh Borton, president of Haverford College; and Francis Boyer, chairman of the board of Smith, Kline & French.

Two professors received honorary degrees of Doctor of Science, Dr. Eugene P. Wigner, holder of the Thomas D. Jones professorship in mathematics and physics at Princeton University, and Dr. Henry LeRoy Bockus, emeritus professor of medicine and gastroenterology in Penn’s Graduate School of Medicine. The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred on Dr. Albert C. Baugh, who is Felix E. Schelling memorial professor of English literature at the university.

Presenting the candidates for honorary degrees were Dr. Loren C. Eiseley, provost of the university; Dr. I. S. Ravdin, vice president for medical affairs; and Dr. Alfred H. Williams, chairman of the university’s trustees. Deans of the respective schools presented their graduating classes, the members of which come from 43 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 38 foreign countries.

Cash awards of $500 to $1,000 were announced for five members of the faculty in recognition of “distinguished teaching.” The awards were made possible through funds from the Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation. Recipients were Dr. Baugh; Dr. W. Carlton Harris, professor of finance; Dr. Merck H. Jacobs, emeritus professor of physiology; Dr. Edward Rose, professor of clinical medicine; and Dr. Roy G. Williams, professor of anatomy.

Fifty years ago, the University of Pennsylvania held its annual Commencement ceremony at the Municipal Auditorium, which was located on South 34th Street, where the Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine now stands. In 1961, Penn President Gaylord P. Harnwell presided at Commencement and conferred forty-eight different degrees, recommended by the faculties of nineteen different schools, to 2,246 graduates. He also conferred 137 certificates of proficiency, 106 diplomas, and seventy-five military commissions. The University’s guests of honor were the nine recipients of honorary degrees, led by the Commencement speaker, Crawford H. Greenewalt.

In 1961, Crawford Hallock Greenewalt (1902 – 1993) was one of the leading corporate executives in the nation. Born in Massachusetts, raised in Philadelphia, educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Greenewalt returned to Philadelphia in 1922 and began his forty-five-year career with E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company. In 1948 he was elected President of the du Pont Company and served in that position for fourteen years. In 1962, he would be elected Chairman of the Company’s Board of Directors and he would hold that position for five years, until his retirement in 1967. In 1951, Time magazine had honored Greenewalt by placing him on the cover of its weekly publication. A decade later, the University of Pennsylvania honored him in similar fashion, by awarding him its honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

TODAY

Penn in 2011

Excerpts from
“A Vibrant Intellectual and Professional Home at Penn”

Almanac for 11 January 2011

Happy New Year and welcome back to Penn! Returning to my office from home after winter’s break, I watch our community assume a familiar rhythm, and see our campus come alive with the activities and excitement of a new semester. I feel fortunate to have a vibrant intellectual and professional home to return to after the holidays. That Penn is truly a home was foretold by our founder, Benjamin Franklin, when he noted that, “A house is not a home unless it contains food and fire for the mind as well as the body.”

Of course, the strength of any home depends on the strength not only of its members, but also of its community. Penn is stronger when we engage with our neighbors. Last fall, Penn received a well-earned national recognition for our local engagement efforts when we were named “Best Neighbor” among national colleges and universities. Since a New Year is often a time for reflection, I thought this the perfect opportunity to reflect on our ongoing engagement and its impact on our local community.
To survive and thrive, a neighborhood, like a home, must first be built on a strong economic foundation. Our economic commitment to West Philadelphia has produced a robust micro-economy on and around campus, resulting in increasing retail sales, employment, homeownership, and small business development. In fiscal year 2010 alone, we purchased more than $100 million in products and services from local businesses in our own backyard.

Penn’s purchasing power creates job opportunities for members of the community and stimulates growth. To cite just one example, despite the Great Recession, Telrose Corporation, a West Philadelphia-based business that supports many of our offices, has grown over four-fold, profiting from more than $4 million in Penn business last fiscal year.

Our wider economic impact is also evidenced in our most recent economic impact study, commissioned this past fall and released just this month. In the City of Philadelphia, we are the largest private employer, generating $9.5 billion in total expenditures, up more than 45 percent over the past four years! We also support 57,000 jobs and $4 billion in earnings, and contribute $170 million in taxes. We remain an economic, as well as an intellectual, powerhouse. …

The most visible and transformative project currently underway through Penn Connects is the soon-to-be-completed Penn Park, our University’s “front lawn.” At the foot of the Center City skyline, along the west bank of the Schuylkill River, this 24-acre urban park will offer exceptional recreational and athletic expanses…

To complement Penn Park, we will soon begin work on Shoemaker Green, our college commons next to the Palestra. Shoemaker Green will be a welcoming space of lawns, trees-lined walkways, and sitting areas. Both a destination and a pedestrian route from Locust and Smith Walks to Penn Park, it will provide additional green space for recreation and relaxation for the Penn community and our local community. Taken together, Penn Park and Shoemaker Green will add 25 percent more green space to our campus home, already one of the greenest and leafiest urban campuses in the country.

Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote that “Where we love is home … ” For me, and for all of us who are part of the Penn community, I know that this is why we think of Franklin’s University as home. As we return to Penn and begin another semester with the members of our Penn family, as we again engage the, “food and fire for the mind” we find here, let me wish each of you a New Year filled with health, hope, and happiness.

Amy Gutmann
President
and Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Political Science

In 2011 the Penn Compact with its threefold theme – increasing access, integrating knowledge, and engaging locally and globally – leads the University of Pennsylvania into the future. It does so in partnership with the campus building plan, Penn Connects, and the $3.5 billion capital campaign, Making History. Working together these three initiatives promise to achieve President Gutmann’s objective for Penn: from excellence to eminence. Today, as the University community celebrates the Commencement of 2011, it is useful to reflect on the institution’s oldest traditions and to recognize that Penn is keeping faith with the best of its past.

Mark Frazier Lloyd
Director
University Archives and Records Center