The origins of the University of Pennsylvania lie in the intellect and industry of Benjamin Franklin. In the summer of 1749, he printed in his Pennsylvania Gazette a public appeal for the establishment of “an Academy in this province.” In the fall, he published his famous pamphlet, *Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania*, which outlined his educational ideals and how they might be implemented in Philadelphia. He recruited Penn’s first trustees and convened their first meeting. He led them in drafting, debating, editing, and co-signing the “Constitutions of the Publick Academy in the City of Philadelphia.” In the winter of 1750, he negotiated the purchase of the first campus, located on Fourth Street in Philadelphia, by settling a decade-old bankruptcy case which involved a group of devoted followers of the Christian evangelist, George Whitefield. For the remainder of that year, he personally superintended the reconstruction of the large but abandoned building on the property, readying it for the educational functions of the Academy. He presided at the opening exercises in January 1751. Franklin was, in the words of one of his fellow trustees, “the soul of the whole.”

In the spring of 1755, the Penn family proprietors of Pennsylvania granted the trustees of the Academy a corporate charter which gave them the authority to confer degrees. The name of the institution was thereby changed to “The Trustees of the College, Academy and Charitable School of Philadelphia, in the Province of Pennsylvania” and was commonly known as the “College of Philadelphia.” The College of Philadelphia held its first annual commencement in 1757 (which is why today’s commencement is known as the 257th). Just prior, however, to the Commencement of 1757, the popularly-elected state legislature, the Pennsylvania Assembly, sent Franklin from Philadelphia to London to begin his long service there as the Assembly’s ambassador and representative to the King and Parliament. Franklin returned to Philadelphia only once in the next 18 years and that was in the fall of 1762.

Franklin’s achievements in the area of civic engagement were, of course, spectacular. His great fame, however, rested primarily on his intellectual accomplishments. Foremost among them was his eighty-six-page essay titled *Experiments and Observations on Electricity, made at Philadelphia in America*, which was published and released to the public in the spring of 1751. This was the masterpiece of thought and writing which propelled him to the very forefront of the Western intellectual world. As a direct result, a total of five colleges and universities awarded Franklin honorary degrees. Harvard College led the way in July 1753, with the honorary degree of Master of Arts, which it awarded with the following commendation, citing his
great Improvements in Philosophic Learning, and particularly with Respect to Electricity, Whereby his Repute hath been greatly advanced in the learned World, not only in Great-Britain, but even in the Kingdom of France also.

In September 1753, Yale College also awarded Franklin an honorary degree of Master of Arts and in April 1756, the College of William and Mary became the third colonial American college to honor him with an honorary Master of Arts.

Once Franklin was settled in London, he was honored by two of the Old World’s most distinguished universities. In February 1759, the University of St. Andrews, in St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland, the oldest university in Scotland, awarded Franklin the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. Three years later, in April 1762, Oxford University, the oldest and most prestigious university in England, awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law.

Franklin’s honorary degrees all have a bearing on Penn’s Commencement of 1763, because it was the only Penn commencement he was ever able to attend. One wonders, given the several options open to him, which style of cap and gown he was wearing on that occasion. The Philadelphia newspapers, in their report of the Commencement of 1763, didn’t say:

PHILADELPHIA, May 26

On Tuesday, the 17th Instant, a public Commencement was held at the COLLEGE, in this City, in the Presence of a learned, polite, and very brilliant Assembly. Every Part of the public Hall was crowded with Spectators. His Honour the GOVERNOR, who is one of the Trustees of this Institution, was pleased to attend. A great Number of the Clergy, of different Denominations, together with many other Gentlemen from the neighbouring Parts, were likewise present.
Historical Notes (continued)

The Exercises were opened in the Morning with an elegant salutary Oration in Latin, by one of the Candidates. This was succeeded by a forensic Disputation, which gave high Satisfaction to the Audience, as it was on a Subject that was interesting, and the Disputants discovered a great deal of Sprightliness, Wit and good Sense, in the Course of the Debate.

In the Afternoon the Exercises began with a syllogistic Disputation in Latin. The Degrees were conferred by the Vice Provost, and a SOLEMN CHARGE was delivered from the Pulpit to the Candidates. The valedictory Oration was then spoken with great Propriety, and the young Orator met with deserved Applause.

The whole Performance was closed by a Dialogue, and an Ode to Peace, set to Music, which was well performed by a Sett of Gentlemen and Ladies, who kindly and generously employed their agreeable Talents, to do Honour to the Occasion.

The following Gentlemen were admitted to Degrees at the Commencement, viz. James Anderson, John Davis, Isaac Hunt, Robert Johnson, James Lang, William Paxton, Stephen Porter, Jonathan Sargent, of Nassau Hall, and John Stewart, to the Degree of Batchelor of Arts; Patrick Alison, Thomas Bond, and Thomas Mifflin, to the Degree of Master of Arts.

Also the Reverend Mr. John Rogers, the Reverend Mr. John Miller, and Thomas McKean Esq; were admitted to the Honorary Degree of Master of Arts.

Everything was conducted with the utmost Decency and Order. The Candidates acquitted themselves in their Exercises to the Satisfaction of all present, and have thereby derived considerable Honour to themselves, and to the Institution.

Pennsylvania Gazette
for Thursday, 26 May 1763
at page three

200 YEARS AGO:

The Commencements of 1813

Throughout Penn’s academic year of 1812-13, the United States of America was at war with Great Britain. This was a national emergency of such immediate concern and enormous proportions that it might reasonably be expected that the University would not have been able to maintain its customary academic calendar and its courses of instruction (Penn had closed for an extended period of time during the Revolutionary War). In 1812-13, however, the Trustees and faculty were successful in keeping the University open and in full operation. The War of 1812 was being fought for the most part in the Great Lakes region; Philadelphia – and the Delaware Valley generally – was spared. There was an alarm in March and April 1813, when British warships blockaded the Delaware Bay, bombarded Lewes, Delaware, and then began to sail up the Bay towards Philadelphia, but the squadron stopped before it reached the City of Wilmington and turned back to sea.

The University of Pennsylvania held two Commencements in the spring of 1813. The “Medical Department,” as it was then known, followed a much shorter academic calendar than the College and its commencement was held on Thursday, 1 April, in the “Hall” of the University on the Fourth Street campus. The Philadelphia newspapers reported the next day:

At a public Commencement held in Philadelphia, yesterday, the 1st of April, 1813, the following gentlemen received the degree of Doctor of Medicine, in the University of Pennsylvania, having previously passed their respective examinations, and defended the Theses, [as] attached to their names, viz.

[Here followed sixty-one names of graduating students and the titles of their medical theses. The geographical distribution of the graduates was also stated: Massachusetts, three; New York, two; New

250 YEARS AGO: Penn’s First Campus: West side of Fourth Street, just south of Arch Street. The building with the bell tower was College Hall. The Commencement of 1763 was held here. The building on the right was designed as a dormitory and was under construction in 1763. It was completed a year later. This popular but romanticized view of Penn’s first campus was painted in 1913 by Charles M. Lefferts.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.
Nearly four months passed before the College or “Department of Arts,” as it was then known, advertised its upcoming commencement in the Philadelphia newspapers. The order of the “Procession,” as transcribed below, was most interesting:

A public commencement, for conferring Degrees in the Arts, will be held in the University of Pennsylvania, on Friday next, the 30th inst.

The Procession will be formed at the University in Ninth street, at 10 o’clock, & will thence move to the Hall in Fourth street, where the exercises will commence at half after ten.

The following Characters are most respectfully invited to join in the Procession.

The Alumni of the University;
The Rev. Clergy of Philadelphia;
The Mayor and Aldermen of the City;
The members of the Select & Common Councils;
The Gentlemen of the Bench and of the Bar;
The Members of the Philosophical Society;
Citizens.

At the Commencement of 1813 the Trustees authorized Vice Provost Robert Patterson to confer the Bachelor of Arts degree upon 13 candidates (a number not significantly greater than that of half a century earlier). The Trustees also authorized the Vice Provost to confer the semi-honorary Master of Arts degree upon an additional 12 (this degree was conferred upon all graduates of three years standing who submitted an acceptable thesis and paid the diploma fee; no attendance at class or any course work was required). There were three recipients of honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees.

Most of the commencement program was given over, as it had been in 1763, to a virtual parade of the talents and skills of the graduating students. The graduates addressed the audience in English, Greek, and Latin; for the benefit of the audience, they conducted debates, both humorous and learned; there was poetry and music as well. The Philadelphia newspapers described the ceremonies as both satisfying and successful:

COMMENCEMENT.

At a Commencement, held on the 30th ultimo, in the University of Pennsylvania, (Philadelphia) the following Degrees were conferred, viz.

The degree of Bachelor of Arts, on Messrs. John H. Gibbons, John R. Goodman, Coulter Goodwin, Andrew E. Hanckel, Richard P. Lardner, Richard Robinett, and George W. Warder, of Philadelphia; Andrew C. Bullitt, Theodore R. Lockerman, and James Tilghman, of Talbot County, Maryland; James B. Steele, and John N. Steele, of Dorchester County, Maryland; and Samuel J. Withy, of Delaware county, Pennsylvania.
The Degree of Master of Arts, on the following gentlemen, Alumni of the University, viz.

Messrs. FRANKLIN BACHE, SAMUEL CHEW, BENJAMIN CHEW, JR., JOSEPH S. COHEN, EDWARD D. COXE, CHRISTIAN HANCKEL, WILLIAM J. HAY, JOHN C. HEBERTON, JAMES P. LOFLAND, and WILLIAM SHIPPEN, of Philadelphia, ANDREW PROUDFIT, of Washington County, New York, and GEORGE W. GRAY, Midshipman in the Navy of the United States.

The degree of Doctor of Divinity, on the Revd. FREDERICK DAVID SCHAFFER, Pastor of the German Lutheran Congregation, of Philadelphia, the Rev. NATHANIEL BOWEN, Rector of Grace Church, New York; and the Revd. JOHN SYLVESTER, JOHN GARDNER, Rector of Trinity Church, Boston.

Among the exercises on this occasion, were –

A salutatory oration, in Latin; principally on the advantages of a public over private education, by Mr. Bullitt.

A humorous conversation on the Perpetual Motion, by Mr. Withy, Mr. Goodman and Mr. Robinett.

An Oration on Nothing, by Mr. Gibbons.

The Valedictory Oration, chiefly on the advantages of a Classical education, by Mr. Loockerman.

All the exercises of the day were received by a numerous and respectable audience, with universal applause.

Poulson's American Daily Advertiser for Tuesday, 3 August 1813

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150 YEARS AGO: Daniel Raynes Goodwin (1811 – 1890) was the ninth Provost of the University of Pennsylvania and the last of Penn's Provosts who was also an ordained clergyman. Goodwin was a thorough New Englander: born in Maine; an 1832 graduate of Bowdoin College; Professor of Modern Languages at Bowdoin from 1835 to 1853; ordained a priest in the Episcopal church in 1848; President of Trinity College, in Hartford, Connecticut, from 1853 to 1860. He came to Philadelphia in 1860 and served as Provost from 1860 to 1868 and then for many years as Dean of the Episcopal Divinity School in Philadelphia. This rare, early photograph of Provost Goodwin in his academic cap and gown was taken in 1862 or 1863 by O. H. Willard, a Philadelphia photographer.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

After prayer Rev. Daniel R. Goodwin, D.D., conferred the degree of Doctor of Medicine upon the following named graduates:

[The names and states of residence of seventy-eight graduates followed in the column of text at this point.]

Of the above there were from Pennsylvania, 53; Ohio, 3; New Jersey, 10; District of Columbia, 2; Massachusetts, 2; New Mexico, 1; Maryland, 1; Kentucky, 1; Tennessee, 1; Delaware, 1; United States Army, 1; New York, 1; Nova Scotia, 1. Total, 78.

WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine, delivered the valedictory charge to the graduates.

[The text of Professor Pepper's address followed.]

At the close of the address the benediction was pronounced by the Provost, when the audience withdrew, during which the band played several popular airs.

Philadelphia Inquirer for Monday, 16 March 1863
In 1862-63, the academic year for the undergraduates in the College did not end until Friday, the third of July. As was customary, the University Trustees scheduled commencement for the morning of that final day. Then, as fate would have it, on Wednesday, the first of July, the Confederate and Union armies collided and began their epic battle at Gettysburg. By Friday morning, the entire city of Philadelphia was aware of the danger should the Confederates break through the Union’s defenses. Even as soldiers massed for Pickett’s Charge, Penn’s Trustees and faculty conducted the Commencement of 1863 and the candidates for degrees demonstrated their well-earned mastery of the liberal arts and sciences. It was an incredible moment in the history of the University of Pennsylvania.

**DEPARTMENT OF ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.**

The Annual Commencement of the Department of Arts belonging to this institution took place yesterday morning, at the Musical Fund Hall. The attendance was not large, owing, it was thought, in part to the warm weather and in part to the war excitement.

The proceedings were opened with a prayer by the Rev. Dr. Goodwin, Provost of the University, when the following exercises took place:-

- **Greek Salutatory**, FRANK W. WINSLOW.
- **Oration** – “Agitation,” SAMUEL YOUNG.
- **Oration** – “Aristocracy,” WILLIAM LAURIE.
- **Oration** – “Historical Enigmas,” GEO. W. PAULY.
- **Oration** – “Pride of Scholarship and Pride of Country.”
  - JAS. M. ASHTON (Lieutenant in the service of the United States).

The oration which was to have been delivered by Mr. GEORGE STRAWBRIDGE was omitted, owing to his absence, he having volunteered his services in aid of the State.

The degrees were then conferred as follows:-

[Here followed the names of the graduates.]

After a Valedictory Oration by Mr. THEO. R. WILLIAMSON, the exercises closed.

There was a fine Orchestra in attendance, which contributed materially to the interest of the exercises.

*Philadelphia Inquirer*

for Saturday, 4 July 1863

at page eight

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**150 YEARS AGO: Penn’s Ninth Street Campus as it appeared from 1829 until 1872.** The Trustees of the University demolished the great mansion house on this site in 1828 and replaced it with two new buildings: Medical Hall (on the left) and College Hall (on the right). The faculty of Medicine delivered their lectures here, on Ninth Street, but conducted their clinical instruction and demonstrations at the Pennsylvania Hospital, which was three city blocks distant. The faculty of Arts shared College Hall with the faculty of Law (beginning in 1850) and the faculty of Mines, Arts & Manufactures (beginning in 1852). This view is from an 1842 lithograph by J. T. Bowen.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.
The Commencement of 1913

In the half century between 1863 and 1913, the Commencement ceremony itself underwent fundamental change and Commencement-related programs and activities greatly expanded until the event was effectively extended from a single day to a week-long celebration. 1895 was the final year in which graduating students were the featured speakers at Commencement. Their place in the ceremony was given over to the honorary degree recipients, including, in particular, the “Orator of the Day” (the person known today as the Commencement speaker). During this same period, Commencement also became the centerpiece around which several days of observances, celebrations, and traditions was organized and carried out.

Commencement itself was held on Wednesday morning, the 18th of June, at Philadelphia’s newest grand auditorium, the Metropolitan Opera House, which was (and is) located at the southwest corner of Broad and Poplar Streets. The candidates for degrees and certificates – 775 to receive degrees in course and 84 to receive certificates of proficiency – assembled some five and one-half city blocks to the north, in the hall of the Mercantile Club. There they dressed in caps and gowns and a little after 10 o’clock, began marching in procession south on Broad Street to the Opera House. The graduating students entered the building by the stage door, walked in pairs across the stage proper, and down a set of stairs to reserved seats at the front of the great auditorium. The faculty, trustees, candidates for honorary degrees, the chaplain, the “orator of the day,” the Vice-Provost and the Provost followed and took seats on the stage.

The Commencement ceremony of 1913 was composed of just 10 distinct elements and was therefore greatly simplified from its predecessors of 1763, 1813, and 1863. The candidates for degrees and certificates – 775 to receive degrees in course and 84 to receive certificates of proficiency – assembled some five and one-half city blocks to the north, in the hall of the Mercantile Club. There they dressed in caps and gowns and a little after 10 o’clock, began marching in procession south on Broad Street to the Opera House. The graduating students entered the building by the stage door, walked in pairs across the stage proper, and down a set of stairs to reserved seats at the front of the great auditorium. The faculty, trustees, candidates for honorary degrees, the chaplain, the “orator of the day,” the Vice-Provost and the Provost followed and took seats on the stage.

The Commencement ceremony of 1913 was composed of just 10 distinct elements and was therefore greatly simplified from its predecessors of 1763, 1813, and 1863. The candidates for degrees, the deans and faculties, and the senior administrators of the University had all been told in advance of the Commencement ceremony in front of Weightman Hall, the site designated for the installation of the statue. This photograph documents that event. Precisely one year later, R. Tait McKenzie’s Young Franklin was unveiled and dedicated, the first statue of Franklin at Penn. Photographer unknown.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

100 YEARS AGO: The Class of 1904 and Young Franklin, in 1902, while still undergraduates, the Class of 1904 began a campaign for funds to commission a statue of Franklin on campus. In the afternoon following the 1913 Commencement, the Class of 1904 conducted a ground breaking ceremony in front of Weightman Hall, the site designated for the installation of the statue. This photograph documents that event. Precisely one year later, R. Tait McKenzie’s Young Franklin was unveiled and dedicated, the first statue of Franklin at Penn. Photographer unknown.
Historical Notes (continued)

Provost Edgar Fahs Smith advised the 859 graduates that pre-eminent digging would be the only way to eminence in the service of mankind.

There was a long course of imposing ceremonies in which the big events stood out. The student body was organized in procession in public and shortly before 11 A.M. marched on the stage of the opera house, then over the footlights to the seats in the main auditorium under Marshal George Nitzsche. The trustees and faculty in academic colors, and the candidates for degrees were marshaled by Professor Walter T. Taggart and Edward Robins. They were seated on the stage during the exercises.

Immediately after the Commencement ceremony, the Provost and Trustees of the University entertained the special guests, the recipients of honorary degrees, the class presidents and the marshals at a luncheon held at the University Club (then located at 1510 Walnut Street, in center city Philadelphia; the University Club of Philadelphia closed in 1931 and the club house was sold; a commercial office building was subsequently constructed on the site).

The University alumni, on the other hand, departed the Metropolitan Opera House and found their way by the most direct route back to the West Philadelphia campus. There, the remainder of the day was given over to music and parades at Franklin Field, class and school receptions and reunions in many different locations, and a groundbreaking for what has since become one of the most iconic pieces of sculpture on Penn’s campus. First, the groundbreaking,

Ground was broken on the lawn in front of Weightman Hall for a statue of Benjamin Franklin, which the Class of ’04 will present to the University on its tenth anniversary next year. The statue has been cast under the direction of its sculptor, Doctor McKenzie.

The Class of ’04 carried toy spades as insignia in token of the occasion of the ground-breaking. Vice-Provost Penniman made the address. W. O. Miller told of the history of the project of erecting the monument to the University’s founder.

ALUMNI DAY
A Bright Scene on Franklin Field

After the Commencement, the alumni, led by Thomas Blaine Donaldson as marshal, paraded on Franklin Field. The Class of ’73 was the oldest in line; ’78, celebrating its silver anniversary, was garbed in black caps and gowns; ’87, one of the most famous classes of the University, was on hand wearing white trousers with blue blouses; ’98, Medicine, wore blue pajamas and carried blue parasols; ’04 Class wore flannel shirts and bandana handkerchiefs; ’08, was costumed in gowns and hoods of flaming red; ’12 wore navy uniforms. Other classes were variously costumed.

An automobile headed the ’03 Class. The graduates wore linen dusters and motor goggles. For each two men there was a boy’s size pushmobile, painted red, with the class numerals in blue. One man of each team sat in the car and was pushed by the other.

100 YEARS AGO: Edgar Fahs Smith (1854 – 1928), a distinguished chemist, served from 1910 to 1920 as the thirteenth Provost of the University of Pennsylvania. This portrait photograph shows him at his desk in January 1911. The path of Penn’s modern commencement processions leads to Provost Smith’s statue on 34th Street and then follows Smith Walk between the Towne Building and Hayden Hall to 33rd Street and the entrance to Franklin Field. Photographer unknown.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

Philadelphia Inquirer
for Thursday, 19 June 1913
at page two

100 YEARS AGO: Commencement Procession on North Broad Street in 1913. Commencement day was sunny and warm and the candidates for degrees, pictured here, marched in procession along five and one-half blocks of North Broad Street, from the Mercantile Club to the Metropolitan Opera House, at Broad and Poplar Streets. Photographer unknown.

Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.
The circus of the Class of ’10 was the most completely developed alumni day affair ever seen on Franklin Field. There was a float, with painted scenery and a collection of “strong men,” snake charmers and the like. There were four bareback riders dressed in fleshtings, and a chariot made of a red and blue barrel on wheels.

Provost Edgar F. Smith enjoyed the celebration, walking arm in arm with Dr. J. William White, of the Medical School.

Innumerable class reunions were held on the campus and in other parts of the city. Annual meetings were held by the alumni of the department of music, of the graduate school, the school of veterinary medicine and the college departments.

The thirty women members of the Class of 1913 were entertained in the Botanical Gardens in the afternoon by the Association of the Alumnae.

The academic year of 1962-63 brought great joy and satisfaction to many members of the Penn community. The student body continued to grow simultaneously in size and quality, with the most pronounced improvements in the College, the College for Women, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Financial aid was now available to one of every three undergraduate students, which represented a doubling of resources devoted to this critical area in less than a decade. Likewise, the University faculty was growing rapidly, both in numbers and perhaps more importantly, in the range of institutions providing graduate training to the new faculty members Penn was recruiting. Two major building projects – Van Pelt Library and the Annenberg School for Communication – were completed and dedicated and construction of a third – the Social Sciences Quadrangle (the Graduate School of Education, Stiteler Hall, the School of Social Policy & Practice, and the Psychology Department) – was well under way.

This period of good feeling on campus was memorably symbolized at a dinner of the University Trustees held on Thursday evening, 9 May 1963. At that event, Wilfred D. Gillen, chairman of the Trustees, announced that the Trustees had quietly collected among themselves funds sufficient to endow a University professorship. The endowed professorship would be established in honor of Dr. Gaylord P. Harnwell, in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of his election to the presidency of the University. In addition, the University Trustees granted to President Harnwell the authority to name the holder of the endowed chair throughout the remainder of his tenure as President (since 2010, the “Gaylord P. Harnwell and Mary Louise Harnwell Chair” at Penn has been held by Warren S. Pear, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine). The University Trustees obviously believed that they were riding the crest of a great wave of advancement at Penn and they were happy to acknowledge and celebrate it.

3,215 Degrees in Course
172 Certificates of Proficiency
93 Military Commissions
Nine Honorary Degrees

Penn held its Commencement of 1963 in the Municipal Auditorium on South Thirty-fourth Street at 10:30 a.m. on Monday morning, 20 May (the Municipal Auditorium stood where the Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine stands today). The student candidates for degrees gathered backstage early – probably much too early for many of them – and assisted one another in dressing in caps and gowns. The program began with an organ prelude by the University Organist, Christopher McCutcheon (1932 – 2010; A.B., University of Pennsylvania, 1953), after which the famed United States Army Band, under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Hugh J. Curry, played several selections. Then, at 9:30 a.m., sharp, Chief Marshal E. Craig Sweeten, Jr. (B.S. in Econ., University of Pennsylvania, 1937) led the student procession into Auditorium’s vast hall. There were nearly 3,500 candidates for degrees, certificates, and commissions, guided, in those days, by just 32 marshals. Seating this throng required more than 30 minutes.

The academic procession, entered the Auditorium at precisely 10:30 a.m. The candidates and audience alike rose from their seats and remained standing while the University’s new Chaplain, Stanley Ethan Johnson, delivered the invocation and all joined in singing the National Anthem.

The order of the Commencement program in 1963 was significantly different from that of today. In 1963, the first order of business was the Commencement speaker. His address was followed by the conferring of degrees, certificates, and commissions. A third section of the program was given over to a reading of those who had won academic honors and the fourth section was the presentation of the candidates for honorary degrees.

The Commencement Speaker was Francis Keppel, a distinguished educator, who had served for 14 years as Dean of Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education and had left that...
position only to accept President John F. Kennedy’s offer of appointment to the post of United States Commissioner of Education, then the highest educational position in the federal government. Keppel was a strong advocate of U.S. aid to schools and he would lead the effort in Washington for passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which focused federal resources on classroom assistance for poor children. The title of his Commencement address was “Reflections on an Image” and he used the opportunity to emphasize the importance of individualism and to urge the University to respect the uniqueness of all its students as individuals.

The conferring of degrees, certificates, and commissions was conducted by President Harnwell and the senior Academic Officer of each of Penn’s 18 schools. The Dean or Director would introduce in a group all the candidates for degrees in his or her school. The candidates would rise from their seats and while standing, the President would confer all the degrees recommended by the faculty in that school.

50 YEARS AGO:

50 YEARS AGO: John E. Wideman, scholar-athlete extraordinaire. Penn’s most accomplished undergraduate in many years, Wideman captained Penn’s basketball team to its first Big 5 championship; he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, the national academic honors society; his fellow classmates elected him to the highest of the Senior Honors awards – Spoon Man of his Class – and he became Penn’s first Rhodes Scholar since 1938. In this view, Wideman posed for the photographer on the floor of the Palestra. Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

50 YEARS AGO:

50 YEARS AGO: Skimmer Day Returns... Briefly. Banned in 1959 for its infamous rowdiness, Skimmer Day returned to the Schuylkill River in 1963... only to be banned again. This view is of the cover of the 1963 Skimmer Day program. Collections of the University Archives and Records Center.

TODAY:
Penn in 2013

Time to Shine:
Penn Rejoices as the Making History Campaign Concludes at $4.3 Billion

Dear Alumni, Parents and Friends:

Congratulations and thank you! Together, we have marked a new milestone in Penn’s history with the conclusion of the Making History Campaign and our announcement of the extraordinary $4.3 billion total. As we prepare to begin a new era—destined to be equally extraordinary—we pause to bask in the warmth of our shared achievement.

When we launched the Making History Campaign seven years ago, our goals were ambitious and the stakes were high. We were determined to chart a new course for Penn’s future, seeking to raise our University to a place of true eminence in higher education.

The extended Penn family came together like never before, inspired not only by what we could accomplish for Penn, but by the positive impact that Penn could, in turn, have on the world. Today, we witness Penn’s transformative power everywhere—on campus, in our neighborhoods, and around the world.

We’ve planned a terrific campus-wide celebration for April 19. It will officially mark the start of a year-long celebration of Penn’s power and potential for alumni and friends, around the country and the world.

Even as we thank and congratulate one another during the coming months, the essential work of our University will continue unabated. At Penn, we are inspired by the need to push beyond the boundaries of the possible—in teaching, scholarship, artistic expression, scientific discovery, and the application of new knowledge to real-world challenges.

Thanks to your generosity, efforts and advocacy, our University is thriving and the alumni community is more connected than ever. The finish line of the Making History Campaign marks the starting line for a very bright future at Penn, one which I look forward to sharing with you.

Amy Gutmann
President and
Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of Political Science
April 2013

In 2013, the Penn Compact with its threefold theme – increasing access, integrating knowledge, and engaging locally and globally – is leading the University of Pennsylvania from excellence to eminence. Today, as the University community celebrates the Commencement of 2013, 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
University of Pennsylvania