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PRIOR to the beginning of the nineteenth century there were only about thirty colleges and universities in the United States, and of these twelve were in existence when the American nation was established. Only six of our present universities were founded more than a century and a half ago. Among these six is the University of Pennsylvania, which traces its origin to a Charity School organized in 1740. This was succeeded by an Academy, organized in September, 1749, which occupied the building constructed for the Charity School. The Academy was the result of a pamphlet published by Benjamin Franklin, entitled “Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania” and was formally opened, in the presence of a distinguished assembly of citizens, on January 7, 1751. The trustees received their first charter in 1753; and in 1755, by virtue of a second charter, the Academy was made The College of Philadelphia with power to confer the usual honorary and collegiate degrees.

In 1762 the trustees constructed a dormitory building on the north side of the Academy, and later a dwelling for the first Provost. Parts of all of these first buildings are probably still in existence at Fourth and Arch Streets, as is also the suburban dwelling of the first Provost, which stands on the bluff of a hill at the Falls of the Schuylkill overlooking the river. For many years it has been urged that these buildings be removed, restored and permanently preserved on the present campus of the University. The accompanying pencil sketch shows how these buildings might appear if removed to a vacant lot at the southeast corner of Thirty-fourth and Walnut Streets, which site is approximately the same size as that of the old campus at Fourth and Arch Streets. This sketch includes Provost Smith’s Mansion at the Falls, the old Academy Building of 1740 and the Dormitory of 1762, arranged around an open courtyard.

In 1765 a School of Medicine was added to the College. The lectures were given in “Anatomical Hall,” or “Surgeons’ Hall,” which stood on the east side of Fifth Street above Walnut. Later the University also rented rooms in the American Philosophical Society Building on the west side of Fifth Street below Chestnut Street. Dr. William Shippen, Jr., and Dr. John Morgan were the prime movers of the enterprise and to John Morgan is accorded the honor of being the founder of the Medical School. The school grew rapidly and attained a prominence which made it the foremost institution of its kind in North America.
In 1779 the charter rights and privileges of the college were absorbed by a new organization, called in its charter “The Trustees of the University of the State of Pennsylvania,” making it the first institution in the United States to be designated a university, as it was in fact the first to establish professional schools as distinct from the college.

In 1791 it was incorporated by another charter as “The University of Pennsylvania,” the charter having been granted jointly to the trustees of the Charity School and Academy, of the College and of the University.

The “Sons of Pennsylvania” were in those days as they are even now, among the leaders in educational, social and political life. The first Provost, William Smith, was one of the ablest educators of his time, and the college course planned by him became the model which has been followed in the arrangement of the curriculum of most of the modern colleges and Universities.

The College was closed for a period of fifteen months during the occupation of Philadelphia by the British army in 1777 and 1778, when the buildings were used by the British troops. They were also used for a time by the soldiers of the Continental army. In 1778 Congress met in the old College Hall, and members of the Congress, President Washington and his cabinet attended the public functions and commencement exercises of the University.

In 1799 the University conferred on Washington the degree of LL.D., and later celebrated his birthday, which was formally set apart in 1826 in the University Calendar as an annual observance. The day is known to the students and alumni as “University Day” and is celebrated by appropriate exercises.

Increasing numbers caused the trustees to seek larger quarters in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Believing that the seat of government of the nation would remain in Philadelphia, the State of Pennsylvania had built a “Presidential Mansion” at Ninth and Chestnut Streets, on the site now occupied by the Post Office. This building was purchased by the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1802 the College moved into this building which it occupied until 1829, when it was demolished and two buildings were erected on the same ground, one for the College and the other for the Medical School.

The University remained in these two buildings until 1872 when the necessity for larger quarters and more extensive grounds became urgent and the present site was secured in West Philadelphia.

Benjamin Franklin was the first President of the Board of Trustees, being elected in 1749 and serving in that capacity until 1756, and again from 1789 to 1790. The other presidents who served before 1800 were: Rev. Richard Peters, Hon. James Hamilton, Hon. John Penn, Hon. Richard Penn, Rt. Rev. William White. Dr. William Smith, the first Provost, served from 1755 to 1791. The present Provost, Dr. Edgar F. Smith is the thirteenth, and has been serving since 1911.

From these small beginnings the University has spread out over a campus of 117 acres, on which there are more than seventy buildings devoted to education. The year before America’s entry into the Great War, 9,342 students were enrolled; these came from every state in the Union. More than 200 students registered from foreign countries.

The University now comprises all the regular Academic courses, including a Summer School, special Courses for Teachers; Civil, Mechanical, Electrical and Chemical Engineering; Chemistry; Biology; Schools of Finance, Commerce and Accounts; School of Education; a Graduate School; Schools of Law, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine, several hospitals and many affiliated institutions. During the War there are also being conducted at the University, under government auspices, special schools for training Army Medical Officers in Oral Surgery, Neurological Surgery, General Surgery, Orthopedic Surgery; a School for training men for navigating the seas; an Army Ordnance School, besides special courses for nurses, signal service, etc. Most of the members of
the Aviation Examining Boards throughout the United States were also trained at the parent unit organized at the University. Besides this the University has more than six thousand students, Faculty and Alumni in the various government services, many holding high and important commissions. She has also organized, among her sons, three Ambulance Units, a Base Hospital, several Red Cross Units, and various detached Units. A number of the University's laboratories were turned over to the Government for the use of its special experts. During the spring of 1917 there were almost 2,000 men enrolled in a voluntary student battalion, who pursued a course on military tactics under Col. Wm. Kelly. During the winter of 1918 a new Reserve Officers' Training Corps was established under Major Charles T. Griffith, in which about nine hundred students are enrolled. The University's sons have taken a leading part in all the great crises of the nation, and space will not permit going into detail so far as the present war is concerned. The spirit displayed by the Faculty and students is best demonstrated by citing the fact that before the Commencement of 1917 more than seventy per cent. of the Law School students had enlisted, and almost forty per cent. of the Medical faculty.

Student life at the University is much the same as that at other universities and colleges, except that it affords the additional advantages of being almost in the heart of a metropolis of almost two million people, the most important city in historical interest, and one of the greatest industrial cities in the world.

The buildings, many of which are reproduced in this booklet, are designed in accordance with English classical traditions, and from an architectural viewpoint form one of the most beautiful groups in the country. Their architectural details were undoubtedly inspired by the English collegiate style of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods.

Although so close to the center of a great city, there is a quiet charm and academic atmosphere hovering over the campus, which seldom comes except with age. Possibly some credit is also due to the gardener, since the lawns, heavily shaded walks, the flower beds, lily and lotus ponds, terraces, galleries and graceful archways all combine to give the campus a most restful aspect. Its ivy-covered buildings, partly concealed behind artistically arranged banks of shrubbery and flowering bushes, have attracted many artists to sketch glimpses of the campus, bits of architecture, fascinating doorways, and charming nooks and corners—these have been perpetuated by etchings, engravings, paintings, pencil-sketches.

Fairmount Park, which is about fifteen minutes walk from the campus, forms an additional recreation ground of 3,500 acres of woodlands, hills, valleys, through which wind the Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek. The latter is noted, not only for its historic associations, but for the wonderful natural beauty of the deep gorges through which it winds for a distance of more than six miles; it is one of the most picturesque ravines in America. On the banks of the Schuylkill in Fairmount Park is the College Boat-house, where students may secure boats and canoes for a spin upon what is known as the National Course. The River Drive and Trails extend from the 'Varsity boathouse along the banks of the Schuylkill and Wissahickon for a distance of eleven miles, and may in the near future be extended to Fort Washington, or a total distance of almost seventeen miles. The City Parks Association now provides for definitely connecting the Campus, by a wide boulevard along the Schuylkill, with the upper end of Fairmount Park.

The environments of no city in the United States are more picturesque and attractive than the suburbs of Philadelphia, or richer in historical interest. The compiler of this little book of views feels that it would be difficult to overestimate the value of these features in the fortunate location of the University; and if he seems to have been guilty of exaggeration in dwelling upon the importance of the University, the charm of its campus and buildings, he begs his readers to be indulgent and to attribute it to long association with and love for Alma Mater.
Benjamin Franklin, Founder.  

Edgar F. Smith, Provost 1911—
Campus between Logan Hall and College Hall with "Fraternity Row" in the distance.
Glimpse of campus through 1893 Memorial Gateway
Engineering Building—Towne Scientific School
Botanical Hall.

Botanical Gardens.
Dormitories—One of the Terrace Staircases.
Medical Laboratory Building.
Dormitories—Memorial Tower.

Dormitories—Provosts’ Tower.
Evans Dental Institute.
Second Floor Hallway—Evans Institute.

Main Entrance and Tower—Evans Institute
Harrison Laboratory of Chemistry.
Wistar Institute of Anatomy.

Hare Laboratory of Chemistry—Medical Department.
Flower Astronomical Observatory.

A Dormitory Archway.
Law School.
Entrance to Hamilton Walk—1873 Memorial Gate.
Boathouse on Schuylkill.

Swimming Pool—Gymnasium.
Military Manoeuvres on Franklin Field during Visit of Joffre and Viviani on May 9, 1917.
Faculty and University Battalion in Foreground
Fraternity Houses:

Zeta Psi
Psi Upsilon
Phi Delta Theta
Delta Tau Delta
Fraternity Houses.