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CENTENNIAL OF AN IDEA: THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, 1855-1955

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THE birthday dinner was held on February 22, 1955. Some six hundred friends and guests of the Pennsylvania State University assembled in the new Hetzel Union Building to celebrate the founding of one of the oldest land-grant institutions in the United States. The occasion was marked by excellent food, numerous short congratulatory speeches, nostalgic word-journeys into the University's past, fervent hopes expressed for the future, and the presentation of a colossal birthday cake fashioned in the form of "Old Main."

The cutting of this cake by President Milton S. Eisenhower officially opened the Penn State Centennial Year. Since then the University has played host to numerous distinguished scholars, lecturers, and artists; student parades with a centennial motif have added to the festive air; almost every campus and town organization has in one way or another saluted the institution's founding; even the President of the United States took time out from the important affairs of state to dignify the June Commencement with his presence and deliver the graduation address.

To the many friends, students, and graduates of Penn State, this homage may seem obviously merited. For them, it is sufficient that their institution is one hundred years old. Yet even for those who never breathed the air of the Nittany Valley or walked down

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the tree-covered Mall, but who have inhaled the academic atmosphere of some other land-grant campus or received some benefit at its hands,—for these, too, the Penn State Centennial has a deep significance. For the one-hundredth birthday of the Pennsylvania State University is not simply the commemoration of the founding of a school: it is the centennial of an important educational idea: that higher education should be made available to all the people, not just a privileged few, and should be practical as well as cultural.

The American origins of the educational philosophy embodied in this idea actually reach farther back into American history than a mere one hundred years. In reality, Washington and Jefferson were the authors of the rudiments of the idea some 185 years ago. Washington, always a firm believer in the necessity of having an enlightened electorate, once warned, "in proportion as the institutions of Government reflect public opinion, it is essential that that opinion be educated." Jefferson was somewhat more explicit. Firmly convinced that education was the primary basis upon which democracy rested, he regarded it as essential that the fullest education should be placed within reach of every youth having the ambition, energy, and intellectual ability to secure it.

In particular, Jefferson deplored strict adherence to any educational "tradition," and maintained that proper education always had to vary with the changing conditions of public and private life. In 1779 he secured changes in the classical curriculum of the College of William and Mary—changes which were in their day nothing short of radical. For the scholastic and theological program of nearly a century Jefferson substituted modern languages, political economy, and modern history. At the same time he advocated a system of adult education, linking school to workshop, farm, and office. He even proposed classes for practical instruction in the evening for those who labored in the daytime.¹

Hard-hit by the Revolution, William and Mary was unable to benefit fully from Jefferson's advice, and experimentation along

¹ Andrew P. Orth, "The History of General Education as a Philosophical Development in American Higher Education," D.Ed. dissertation (Pennsylvania State College, 1952), 31. For a more complete treatment of Jefferson's educational views, see C. F. Arrowood, *Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic* (New York, 1930).

these lines passed to Jefferson's own University of Virginia. Simultaneously, the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania) was toying tentatively with some novel educational proposals advanced earlier by Benjamin Franklin: that classical education be de-emphasized; that such subjects as physics, chemistry, history, civics, and modern languages be introduced; that education for good citizenship be stressed; and that instruction be undertaken for the many rather than the few.²

Such early attempts at educational reform proved in the main unsuccessful. Franklin's suggestions did not elicit much enthusiasm, and the same general fate awaited the few other scattered efforts to liberalize American higher education. Besides the College of Philadelphia, institutions such as Williams and Bowdoin also gave up the struggle after limited success. Only at the University of Virginia was much progress made and, prior to 1850, it represented the only really "liberal" college in America.³

All other institutions were bound by a moribund classicism which failed to meet the educational needs of contemporary society. Indeed, in 1850 the average American college curriculum differed little from that brought over to America from Cambridge by Henry Dunster, the first president of Harvard, in 1640. With its emphasis on classical literature, rhetoric, logic, and the "dead" languages (Latin and Greek), this curriculum had even outlived its usefulness in educating young men for the ministry, medicine, and law, let alone meeting the educational challenge of an expanding agricultural, commercial, and industrial country. As the percentage of citizens engaged in manufacturing, trade, and transportation increased from 17 to 31 between the years 1820 and 1860, and agricultural pursuits still occupied no fewer than 63 per cent of the total population, it became increasingly obvious that what was needed was less of the classical and esthetic and more of the scientific and practical.⁴

In fact, because of the stubborn insistence by educators on the retention of the classical program, coupled with the high cost of

² Thomas Woody, *Educational Views of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1920), 145. See also Ernest P. Earnest, *Academic Procession; An Informal History of the American College, 1636-1953* (Indianapolis, 1953), 48. For a readable account of the development of American colleges this book is hard to beat.

³ *Ibid.*, 54, 59.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

a college education, fewer students proportionately were enrolling by the middle of the century. True, private philanthropy covered part of the cost deficiency, but certainly not to the extent of bringing higher education to all who could profit from it. And no amount of philanthropy could alter the fact that classical curricula were not fulfilling the educational requirements of the majority of citizens. Economic factors aside, in wealthy New England one in 1,365 persons attended college in 1830; in 1850 the ratio was one in 1,408; by 1860 it was one in 2,012.⁵

This matter of a relative decline in college attendance and high costs on the one hand, and the increasing divergence of curricula and practical need on the other, produced considerable soul-searching on the part of the friends of higher education prior to the Civil War. Unfortunately, those individuals who strongly opposed the classical position often tried to solve the problem by simply jumping on the bandwagon of vocationalism. Unlike either Jefferson or Franklin, they saw no middle ground where the best cultural aspects of classicism and the unquestioned need for practical instruction could merge. They, therefore, advocated the separate creation of technical or vocational schools (in their dislike for classicism they even shunned the term "college") in order to fill the gap left by the classical institutions.

The first such school was the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (1825), followed a decade or so later by the Lawrence, Sheffield, and Chandler scientific schools at Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth respectively. Shortly thereafter, in the predominantly agricultural states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, and Iowa, numerous "agricultural" schools were chartered which, although originally conceived as vocational institutions, later became the forerunners of state-supported universities. In each instance, however, these schools were at first privately operated; hence, the resultant cost to the student often proved little less than was required to attend a regular classical college. Mainly for this reason, only two of these early agricultural institutions successfully weathered the Civil War—one in Michigan (Michigan State University) and the other in Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania State University). Little wonder that at the time more than one champion of the classical college maintained such schools were promoted by "visionaries in

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

education, ignorant of its true design and object, and unfit for their places."⁶

The twin problems of proportionately declining college attendance and high educational costs were not easily solved. By 1850 there were many who, in the spirit of Franklin and Jefferson, desired higher education for all who were qualified regardless of economic position. Partially an outgrowth of the more liberal thinking generated during the Jacksonian era, such a desire was certainly compatible with the best interests of a democratic society. But how to square it with economic reality remained the crucial point.

At least in theory the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a partial solution. Governmental aid to education had long been a cardinal principle in American educational practice. Always, however, such aid had been in relation to lower education. Could the same principle be applied to higher?

Into the midst of this situation stepped, not an eminent educator, a philosopher, or a scholar, but a blacksmith's son from Strafford, Vermont, whose schooling had ended at fourteen and whose interest in higher education stemmed not from fulfillment but from deprivation. Born in 1810, the eldest in a family of ten, Justin S. Morrill was at one time or other a general store operator, a shop owner, a retired business man, and a gentleman farmer before being elected to Congress in 1854. Thereafter he served one of the longest legislative careers in American history, being a member of the House from 1855 to 1867 and a Senator from 1867 to his death in 1899.⁷

A firm believer in the value of higher education, but opposed to the restricted utility of the average college curriculum, Morrill was one of that growing element who maintained more practical higher education was necessary. Indeed, at a time when western lands were being opened to settlement, when steamboats had to be piloted and canals dug, and when the development of railroads required

⁶ Erwin W. Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College 1853-1932: Interpretation and Record," unpublished manuscript (Pennsylvania State University Library), 9; Earnest, *Academic Procession*, 24. See also *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, Bulletin No. 9* (2 v., U. S. Department of Interior, Washington, D. C., 1930), I, 5-6. Hereafter cited as *Survey of Land Grant Colleges*.

⁷ See William B. Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill* (Boston, 1924), for the best life of Morrill.

more skilled construction men and engineers, Morrill was convinced that practical college education was not only vital but merited the widest possible support, even the support of the federal government.⁸

On December 14, 1857, Morrill arose in the House and introduced the bill now commonly referred to as the Morrill Land-Grant Act. Its passage through Congress proved stormy, and it was not until February, 1859, that it squeaked by with the narrowest of margins.

Buchanan vetoed it. His reasons were simple enough. He believed the measure would put a serious drain on the nation's treasury, create interference with existing colleges and their instructional programs, and prove unconstitutional. It is interesting to note that in general Southern legislators were opposed to the bill, and certain key Democratic leaders strongly urged Buchanan to veto the measure in the interest of party harmony.⁹

Undaunted by this initial setback and by the subsequent intervention of the manifold problems relating to Southern secession and civil war, Morrill reintroduced his bill in early 1862. In June of that same year both the House and the Senate passed the measure overwhelmingly, and it was placed on Lincoln's desk for signature. On July 2, 1862, the self-educated lawyer-politician from Illinois signed the Land-Grant Act into law. By it, each state was to receive 30,000 acres of public land, or landscrip, for each representative and senator, with which to endow "at least one College where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life."¹⁰

⁸ *Ibid.*, 262-263.

⁹ For information on congressional passage and presidential veto see *Cong. Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., 1697, 1740, 1742-1743; *ibid.*, 35 Cong., 2 Sess., 1413-1414. The most vigorous opponent of the measure was Senator Slidell of Louisiana. See Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill*, 268.

¹⁰ *Cong. Globe*, 37 Cong., 2 Sess., 99, 2595, 2769-2770; *ibid.*, 37 Cong., 3 Sess., 1284, 1286, 1496-1499. Some subsequent discussion arose as to whether Morrill was actually "the" father of the act. Some contended a Professor Jonathan B. Turner of Illinois was the real author. There appears to be precious little evidence to sustain this viewpoint. See Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill*, 278-284.

Almost immediately upon the act's passage bitter arguments arose within the nation's educational circles concerning its validity. Naturally, the supporters of state-endowed universities, agricultural college leaders, officials of mechanical and agricultural societies, and other opponents of the traditional colleges avidly championed the bill. On the other hand, classical educators attacked the law as "a waste of public lands" and "another illustration of attempting to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."¹¹ They claimed the land-grant institutions would turn out to be little more than "cow colleges," which prompted one disturbed classicist to ask, "What right have such schools to exist?" As late as 1927, Columbia's Nicholas Murray Butler put his finger on the crux of this opposition by stating, "The business of a college, as has been said a thousand times, is to prepare for life and not for making a living."¹²

It was this dispute over what the Morrill Act portended for American education which caused its author to clarify the situation on several subsequent occasions. Speaking before the Sheffield Scientific School in 1867, the Vermont senator stated that his plan had originated because farmers, mechanics, and others—the "industrial classes"—had had little opportunity to acquire a useful college education under the old classical dispensation. The land-grant college was designed to fill this need by providing low-cost education for those who desired it. Hence, such a college was not only for the farmer, but for the artisan, merchant, banker, scientist, homemaker, engineer, surveyor, and accountant. Morrill particularly decried the use of the term "agricultural college" in connection with the new land-grant schools because the idea never had been "to force the boys of farmers going into these institutions so to study that they should all come out farmers."¹³ Sometime later, while addressing the faculty of the University of Vermont, Senator Morrill clarified this matter further. The basic idea of the Land-Grant Act was "to widen the sphere of knowledge and training, to take new elements into the curriculum . . . to offer a liberal

¹¹ Quotations are from *The Spirit of the Land-Grant Institutions* (Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, n.p., 1932), 14.

¹² Edgar W. Knight, *What College Presidents Say* (Chapel Hill, 1940), 42, 85.

¹³ Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill*, 263; *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges*, I, 20; George W. Atherton, *The Legislative Career of Justin S. Morrill* (American Association of Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations, n.p., 1900), 20.

and larger education to larger numbers. . . ." He reiterated that these new colleges had been established for the purpose of teaching not solely agriculture, but a variety of subjects. "Classical studies were not to be excluded," claimed the Senator, "and therefore must be included." In short, these colleges were not to be restricted in their curricula, but were to offer *more* than the traditional institution.¹⁴

Not always understanding the full meaning of the Act, most states accepted the federal offer and agreed to abide by the provisions of the law. Three states, including Morrill's own state of Vermont, accepted in 1862; Pennsylvania, along with thirteen others, accepted in 1863. Within a period of eight years following the passage of the Act, a total of thirty-seven states had agreed to the plan.¹⁵

Under the law's aegis, land-grant institutions now began to dot the educational landscape, developing slowly at first but steadily. In subsequent years further federal aid through the Hatch Act (1887), Second Morrill Act (1890), Adams Act (1906), Smith-Lever Act (1914), Smith-Hughes Act (1917), and Purnell Act (1925), together with increasing local state support and recognition, substantially improved the posture of these institutions. In a sense, each of these schools, at least one of which can now be found in every state in the Union, became a living monument to Justin Morrill and his educational ideas. As Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota later said in a testimonial to Morrill, "Through his efforts a revolution [has been wrought] in American education."¹⁶ According to the United States Bureau of Education, "Next to the Ordinance of 1787, the Congressional grant of 1862 remains the most important educational enactment in America."¹⁷

Only with this background in mind can the development and importance of the Pennsylvania phase of the land-grant movement be understood.

The story begins in 1851. In January of that year the Pennsylvania Agricultural Society was formed by a group of interested

¹⁴ *Ibid.* See also Frank W. Blackmar, *The History of Federal and State Aid to Higher Education in the United States* (Bureau of Education Circular of Information, No. 1, Washington, D. C., 1890).

¹⁵ *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges*, I, 11.

¹⁶ *The Spirit of the Land-Grant Institutions*, 10.

¹⁷ *The History of Federal-State Aid to Higher Education* (U. S. Bureau of Education, Washington, D. C., 1888).

farmers who desired "to promote and advance the agriculture of the Commonwealth." Among the chief interests of this organization was the furtherance of agricultural education through the founding of an institution "wherein every farmer's son may receive a literary and professional education compatible with the dignity of agriculture and the pre-eminence of Pennsylvania."¹⁸ During 1851 and 1852 the Society agitated for the acceptance of this idea, and, finally, in early 1853 Governor Bigler, who was a known friend of education and a backer of the Agricultural Society, advocated in a message to the legislature the chartering of an "agricultural school."¹⁹

The Society immediately appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Frederick Watts to work with the legislature in drawing up a charter for the proposed school. After several misfires, a workable charter providing for the creation of the "Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania" was passed and signed by Governor Pollock on February 22, 1855. Except for the Michigan State experiment which preceded this by a few days, this event represented the earliest successful attempt to establish a state-chartered vocational-agricultural school in the United States and was clearly indicative of the emerging revolt in American higher education—the desire for more practical education coupled with a direct censure of the old classicism.²⁰

In one sense, the name of the new institution was a misnomer. It was never a "high school." But in every other respect its name was well-mated to its early character. The school's primary duty was to educate farmers. The act of incorporation definitely stated that the Farmers' High School was "an institution for the education of youth in the various branches of science, learning and practical agriculture, as they are connected with each other . . ." and whose instructors shall "impart to pupils under their charge [such knowledge] as will conduce to the proper education of a farmer."²¹

Yet despite this obvious vocationalism, it is interesting to notice

¹⁸ Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 12-13, 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18, 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26, 29-31.

²¹ *Report of the Committee of the Legislature to Investigate the Affairs of the Pennsylvania State College* (Legislative Document No. 18, Harrisburg, 1883), 19-20, act of incorporation in full. Hereafter cited as *Report of the Committee*.

that seven of the thirteen members of the first Board of Trustees were lawyers by profession and had graduated from such classical schools as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, Jefferson, and Dickinson. Governor Pollock, an *ex-officio* member of the Board, was a Princeton graduate and a warm supporter of classical as well as vocational education. Frederick Watts, who was both a lawyer and a farmer, was also rather traditional in his educational views. This graduate of Dickinson once remarked, "What branch of learning is not related to agriculture?" and then went on to advocate a model curriculum which excluded "nothing but what is exclusively literary [such] as the acquisition of the dead and foreign languages."²²

Of the original founders, perhaps Hugh McAllister, a graduate of Jefferson and Dickinson colleges and a partner with his son-in-law, General James Beaver, in a law firm in Bellefonte, was the most "vocational" in his educational outlook. He especially emphasized the need for practical education and thought largely in terms of "agricultural instruction" only. Being the sole trustee on the local scene, he was relied on heavily by the early college administrations and therefore wielded exceptional influence over the original orientation of the school.²³

It was certainly true that in the beginning the exclusive interest of the Farmers' High School was to teach "practical agriculture." All students worked on the school farm, and in 1861 all eleven members of the first graduating class received the degree of Bachelor of Scientific Agriculture, thereafter returning to their respective homes to be farmers. Located as it was in the rich farm lands of the Nittany Valley, its sponsor being the State Agricultural Society, and its student clientele coming largely from local Centre County farms, it was almost inevitable that barring some unforeseen development the Farmers' High School of Pennsylvania was destined to remain, and probably die, a "farm school."

It is doubtful if the school even would have survived the Civil War had it continued to remain purely an agricultural institution. In other states where such was the case, failure was the rule. Fortunately, two factors intervened in the Pennsylvania situation

²² Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 40, 72. For full information on Watts see Author and Biography Vertical File, Penn State Room, Pennsylvania State University Library. Hereafter cited as ABVF with the subject's name.

²³ ABVF, McAllister, Hugh.

which forestalled an early demise: the acceptance of the Morrill Land-Grant Act by the legislature in 1863, and the wisdom of the school's first president, Dr. Evan Pugh.

Born in Chester County in 1828, Pugh, like Morrill, was the son of a blacksmith. But, unlike Morrill, Pugh had managed to acquire a first-rate education. Left a modest inheritance by his father, Pugh went abroad and enrolled at the University of Göttingen where, after specializing in the sciences, he received his doctorate. Possessing a keen mind, he was headed for scholarly achievements when at the tender age of thirty-one he was appointed president of the Farmers' High School.

Though an outstanding proponent of practical education, Pugh, in spite of his age, was mature enough to realize that too strict a vocational orientation could render a college education meaningless. Being shrewd enough to see that even in the realm of vocationalism exclusive concentration on agricultural instruction would prove unwise, he gradually broadened the curriculum to include a few cultural subjects as well as instruction in the mechanic arts (i.e., engineering). According to President Pugh, both agriculture and the mechanic arts were within the scope of the Farmers' High School, and its duty extended to giving instruction in these areas.²⁴

Pugh's wisdom in "liberalizing" the curriculum of what was essentially a "farmers' school" can only be appreciated when it is realized that a scant three years after his first attempts the Federal Congress passed the Morrill Act providing endowments for the very type of educational institution which President Pugh was building. Indeed, in 1862 Pugh even secured a change of name in anticipation of congressional approval of the land-grant measure, and the Farmers' High School suddenly became the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania. Simultaneously, Pugh urged the Board of Trustees to petition the state legislature to accept the Morrill Act and pay the benefits derived therefrom to the Agricultural College, "which is in every particular just such a one as is contemplated and described in this act of Congress."²⁵

²⁴ ABVF, Pugh, Evan; see also Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 73.

²⁵ ABVF, Mitchell, Thomas; Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 117. The Board had long since evidenced interest in the land-grant movement. Indeed, in 1857 the whole Board went in a body to Washington to plead with their fellow Pennsylvanian, Buchanan, not to veto the Morrill bill.



OLD MAIN AT PENN STATE IN 1859

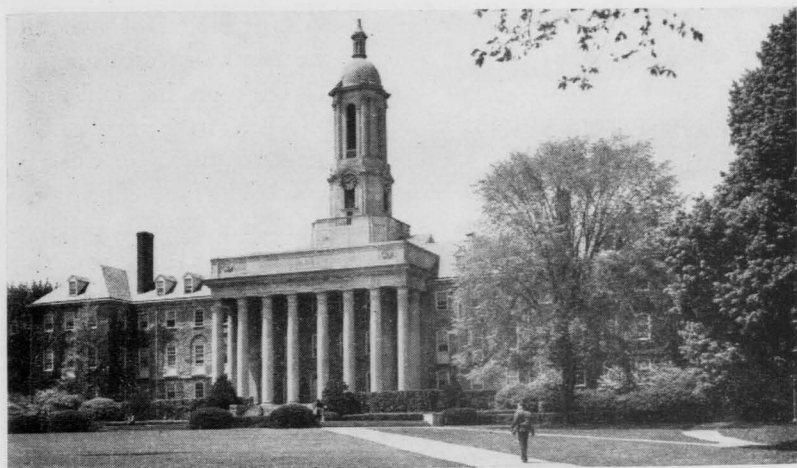
Courtesy Pennsylvania State University

On April 1, 1863, Governor Andrew Curtin, a Centre Countian and, since the founding of the Farmers' High School, an ex-officio member of the Board, signed into law the legislature's acceptance of the Land-Grant Act which solemnly pledged "the faith of the State . . . to carry the same into effect," and stipulated that all monies derived from the law be paid "to the Agricultural College of Pennsylvania."²⁶

Far from starting the College on the high road to success and good fortune, this Acceptance Act of 1863 signaled the beginning of a period of extreme tribulation. Suddenly a small, struggling farm school, which few even in the educational field knew existed, became the focal point of violent argument and attack.

For well over a decade virtually every educational institution in the Commonwealth attempted through pressure to secure for itself at least a share of the state's land-grant (some 780,000 acres, worth \$439,186.60), while the major energies of the young Agricultural College were devoted to retaining what it had so successfully gained. From 1863 to 1867, and, indeed, off and on to 1881, each legislative session saw fresh attempts to break the agricultural institution's monopoly. Opponents made all sorts of proposals, which more often than not betrayed a complete lack of

²⁶ *Report of the Committee*, 25-26, law printed here in full.



OLD MAIN AT PENN STATE TODAY

Courtesy Pennsylvania State University

understanding of the Morrill Act; and the College, mainly through the efforts of President Pugh, Frederick Watts, Hugh McAllister, Andrew Curtin, and C. T. Alexander (representative from Centre County) fought desperately to sidetrack them. Supporters of denominational and classical colleges, in particular, lobbied strenuously for a share of the federal grant by claiming that they, too, could add courses in "agriculture and the mechanic arts," if necessary. Indeed, so vigorous did their lobbying become that at one point an irate legislator suggested "the classical colleges and their advocates ought to absent themselves from this hall for at least the remainder of this session."²⁷

In the end all such attempts failed, but not before the emerging reputation of the Agricultural College was besmirched, doubts had arisen concerning its capacity for educational leadership, and its young president lay in his coffin, killed in part by overwork and mental strain.

When set against the loss of President Pugh in 1864, the retention of the federal grant represented, for the moment at least, only a Pyrrhic victory. During the next eighteen years the institu-

²⁷ Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 119, 142. *Survey of Land-Grant Colleges*, I, 12-13; see also Wayland F. Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College* (Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1946), 94 ff. Dunaway's book is the official history of the institution.

tion wandered aimlessly through a rapid succession of five different administrations. Worse still, in the resulting confusion the College by 1881 had all but turned its back on its land-grant heritage. It appears that the College authorities were increasingly influenced by the apparent stability and safety of the older classical tradition, and they began to lose sight of land-grant educational ideals. Led by President James Calder (1871-80), who believed the College ought to be brought "nearer in character to the ordinary collegiate institutions of the State," this classical movement threatened at one point to change the nature of the school. By the middle of the 1870's, educational emphasis had shifted from agriculture and the mechanic arts to Latin, Greek, French, logic, music, art, rhetoric, and moral philosophy. Unquestionably the admission of women students, beginning in 1871, intensified this trend. By 1874 President Calder even sought a new name, because he believed the old name "misled many persons as to the institution's real character." The Agricultural College of Pennsylvania became the Pennsylvania State College.²⁸

As early as 1863, President Pugh had warned that the major problem facing the new land-grant institutions would be "to avoid the one extreme of passing into a literary college, on the other of becoming a mere farming school."²⁹ Indeed, these were the Scylla and Charybdis between which every land-grant institution had to steer a careful course. Therefore it was fortunate that by 1881 a halt in this Calder-inspired drift toward classicism was achieved just as President Pugh earlier had stemmed the trend in the purely agricultural-vocational direction.

The means did not prove pleasant. Beginning in 1879 differences over the College's "new departure" reached such proportions that the next year President Calder resigned. Important faculty members such as McKee, Hamilton, Buckhout, Osmond, and Jordan bitterly opposed the continuing shift toward classicism, while on the Board of Trustees General Beaver (who was elected in 1873 to replace his father-in-law, Hugh McAllister) argued long and loud against the developing classical trend. In the state at large,

²⁸ For a survey of this critical period see ABVF, Calder, James; Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College*, 76-93; Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 152-205. For a reprint of the court order changing the name see *Report of the Committee*, 30.

²⁹ Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 59.

numerous agricultural groups, including the Grange and the State Agricultural Society, called for immediate remedial action. Within the legislature there were also rumblings of dissatisfaction; one representative referred to the College as "that humbug." Even some students added to the discontent by charging the recent changes in the curriculum were undertaken contrary to the students' wishes and did not serve the students' educational needs.³⁰

Perhaps not all this criticism was warranted. But enough certainly was merited to justify an investigation of the College by the legislature in 1881. Meanwhile, in order to allay anticipated objections by the investigating committee, the Board of Trustees and the faculty quickly effected a complete reorganization of the curriculum into two general courses (scientific and classical) and four technical courses (agriculture, natural history, chemistry and physics, and engineering). Such reorganization was long overdue, and, mainly the work of the faculty, was executed with great wisdom. Classical subjects were not ignored, nor was vocationalism re-enthroned. Penn State was wisely returning to the concept of a liberal land-grant education and was again offering something educationally unique to the citizens of the State.³¹

The investigating committee, upon its arrival at the College, found little to criticize, since the "housecleaning" had occurred before the "guests" arrived.³² The committee's final report, therefore, was generally favorable and claimed that "whatever mistakes it may have made in the past, the entire spirit and work of the institution [now] are directed to the promotion of industrial education." Concluded the report: "[The College] is in every proper sense the child of the State, and . . . the State should give it [such] fostering care as will make it not only an object of just pride, but a source of immeasurable benefit to our sons and daughters."³³

³⁰ Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College*, 87. For an insight into the relationship between the College and Beaver see ABVF, Beaver, James A., and John J. Serff, "The Life of James A. Beaver," Ph.D. dissertation (Pennsylvania State University, 1954).

³¹ Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College*, 94-110. Actually, the college was subjected to two legislative investigations—one in 1879, and the other in 1881. The one in 1879 was so superficial as to be almost worthless.

³² The one criticism the Board could not meet prior to the arrival of the committee was the isolated location of the school. Even its friends had to admit that State College was "equally inaccessible to all parts of the Commonwealth."

³³ For the complete report see *Report of the Committee*. Full clearance for the college is found on pages 11-15.

It seemed as if at least one such period of extreme doctrinal and psychological turmoil was essential before the average land-grant college found itself. After the 1881 investigation never again did the Pennsylvania institution ignore its land-grant tradition nor allow its curriculum to lapse into either a meaningless vocationalism or an unpractical classicism. The investigation clearly indicated that whatever else the school might desire to do, it still had a well-defined educational obligation to the Commonwealth. The probe served also as a reminder to the State that it had a stake in what happened on the campus and shared fully in the responsibility for the school's welfare.

The subsequent history of the Pennsylvania land-grant experiment is largely one of the increasing application of the educational ideas of Jefferson, Franklin, Morrill, and Pugh to the Commonwealth's educational needs through the College's auspices. Of course, not always did the College move forward confidently, nor did it continually expand the land-grant concept in the best interests of democratic education. Sometimes backsliding was evident. But, on the whole, progress was achieved. In this regard, many persons, administrators and faculty members alike, contributed handsomely. There were three individuals, however, who played particularly dominant roles—George W. Atherton, Edwin E. Sparks, and Ralph D. Hetzel. Each of these men served long and outstanding terms as president, each was an eager champion of liberal education, and each contributed something fundamental to the success of the land-grant idea in Pennsylvania.

President Atherton (1882-1906) might well be called the second founder of the Pennsylvania State University. Born in Massachusetts, educated at Exeter and Yale, and a professor of Political Science at Rutgers before coming to Penn State, he inherited an almost impossible situation. Despite the reorganization of 1881, some sentiment continued to exist to eliminate classical instruction completely, the state legislature still remained basically hostile to the school, the institution's reputation was at its lowest ebb, and most citizens either did not know, or barely knew, the College existed.

Atherton discouraged too heavy an emphasis on practical instruction, and encouraged the retention of some "literary" instruction. "The institution is to be so organized," he declared, "as to

promote a 'liberal' as well as 'practical' education. . . . Colleges, under the Act of 1862, [are] to do both." The true educational goal of a land-grant school, added Atherton, is to develop "not simply the artisan, but the scholar; not simply the scholar, but the man."³⁴

Of equal significance was Atherton's success in restoring the reputation of the institution. More than any other president up to this time, Atherton realized that no land-grant college can function properly without adequate supplemental support from the state legislature. There the situation could hardly have been worse. At the time of Atherton's inaugural in 1882, "not a single" senator in Harrisburg spoke kindly of the College; one even called it "that sink-hole." At about the same time, Governor Pattison remarked that the College was "not such as to induce the belief that any practical good ever has or will come from it. . . ."³⁵

Undismayed, and firmly believing "the name and credit of the State cannot be wholly separated from the prosperity of the College," Atherton pushed ahead, slowly restoring confidence in the agricultural and engineering as well as the literary phases of the educational program. Gradually official opinion in Harrisburg changed. By the time of his second administration in 1891, even Governor Pattison had become a supporter of the College.

For many reasons, however, 1887 marks the most important single year in the development of close relations between the College and the State. In that year General Beaver, a long-time friend and trustee of the school, became governor. In that same year the legislature granted \$100,000 for new buildings, and for the first time made an appropriation for "college operation and maintenance." 1887 was also the year of the Hatch Act providing increased federal aid to land-grant institutions for agricultural experimental purposes.³⁶

Under such favorable conditions Penn State now saw its position improve. In 1893 Governor Beaver even went so far as to

³⁴ ABVF, Atherton, George W.; Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 244, 302; Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College*, 118. See also Fred L. Pattee, *Penn State Yankee* (Pennsylvania State College, 1953), 150-154. To educate "the man," Atherton reorganized the college into seven schools—five technical and two non-technical.

³⁵ Pattee, *Penn State Yankee*, 151; Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 250.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 256.

claim the College had become "the natural and logical capstone of our common school education." Also indicative of this growing stature were the gifts to the College in 1902 and 1903 of a building apiece by Charles M. Schwab and Andrew Carnegie. At the formal dedication of Carnegie Hall in 1904, the great steel magnate remarked that his two nephews thought State College was "the best school in the world," and then turning to Governor Pennypacker (who was seated beside him on the platform) expressed his personal satisfaction that the state had at last "awakened to the fact that of all the appropriations . . . none is capable of affording more good for this State than that to the State College. . . ." ³⁷

But none of these men—Pennypacker, Beaver, Pattison, Carnegie, Schwab—was truly representative of that broad group of average citizens whom the land-grant institutions were specifically designed to serve. It remained for Atherton's successor to tailor the College's services more carefully to this need. President Edwin E. Sparks (1908-1920) took up where Atherton left off. Himself a graduate of a land-grant institution (Ohio State University) and already widely known as an ardent supporter of the land-grant idea, Sparks maintained that a land-grant college should offer an educational program broad enough to fulfill "the special requirement and aptitude of every young man and woman." Convinced that a land-grant school had an educational responsibility to *all* citizens, he liked to think of the College as "the People's College" and traveled the State making innumerable speeches popularizing the institution's services as well as its responsibilities. Sparks realized that in education, as in other fields, even the best ideas have to be "sold." ³⁸

Not content with this alone, Sparks went one step further. If the people will not, or cannot, come to the College, he said, "Let us carry the College to the people." The extension services were born in 1910 and thereafter expanded rapidly. Soon the Penn State slogan was, "Our Campus the Commonwealth." Course offerings multiplied commensurately with these new developments. Because of a marked rise of interest in liberal subjects, a School

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 294; letter, Carnegie to Beaver, n.d., *Beaver MSS.* (Pennsylvania State University Library).

³⁸ Pattee, *Penn State Yankee*, 198, 219; ABVF, Sparks, Edwin E.

of Liberal Arts was created in 1909 attesting to the wisdom of those who earlier had fought to retain some "literary" instruction along with the practical. This new school ranked on a par with the technical schools which now numbered four: Agriculture, Engineering, Natural Science, and Mines. In addition, three unattached departments came into being largely because of student demand: Home Economics, Industrial Arts, and Physical Education. Soon Commerce and Finance, as well as basic instruction in Education, were also added to the instructional program.³⁹

It is obvious that by the end of Spark's administration in 1920, the public had accepted the land-grant idea in Pennsylvania. No longer was Penn State unknown and no longer was there any doubt of the ability of this land-grant college to furnish the Commonwealth with educational services commensurate with the public support it received. The chief question now was, how much service did the Commonwealth desire? Seemingly a great deal, and certain College officials began in the early 'twenties to talk about institutional prestige, envisioning a campus of fifteen or twenty thousand students.

Fortunately, from 1926 to 1947 Penn State had a realist for a president who centered his attention "not upon institutional ambition but upon educational need." As a result, the College under Ralph D. Hetzel continued to fulfill its proper function as a land-grant institution by remaining alive to the educational needs of the times rather than becoming preoccupied with aspirations for greatness.⁴⁰

A graduate of Wisconsin and former President of the University of New Hampshire, Hetzel was steeped in the land-grant tradition and believed fully that, if the College offered the needed educational services, the state and public recognition necessary to greatness would follow as a matter of course. He continued to "carry the College to the people," both in wartime and in peace, building bridges of services and friendship between the citizenry and the institution. During the Depression, and in spite of a severe economy drive, these services and this friendship were as much in evidence as usual, a fact which prompted Governor Pinchot to say, "I know

³⁹ Pattee, *Penn State Yankee*, 198-199; Runkle, "The Pennsylvania State College," 355-361.

⁴⁰ ABVF, Hetzel, Ralph D.; Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College*, 239.

of no institution in the United States that is accomplishing better work." Similarly, a decade later, Penn State was singled out for special commendation because of services rendered to the Commonwealth and the nation during World War II.⁴¹ President Hetzel's chief contribution, therefore, to the land-grant idea in Pennsylvania lay, not in the fact that almost 40 per cent of the more important buildings on the campus were built during his administration nor that several new schools of instruction as well as thousands of new students were added during his regime, but that he, in the best land-grant tradition, fitted the instructional, research, and extension programs of the institution to the educational needs and interests of the people of the Commonwealth.

In 1950 the land-grant idea and the Pennsylvania institution which embodies it passed into the custody of the school's eleventh president, Dr. Milton S. Eisenhower. In the succeeding five years, President Eisenhower has left little doubt that he and his administration have and will continue to adapt and expand the land-grant idea to meet the increasing educational requirements of the private citizen, the state, and the nation.⁴² In so doing, the President, his administrative staff, the Penn State faculty, and the Commonwealth itself, vindicate the faith placed in that idea's future by those in the past.

Now, of course, the institution's name is the Pennsylvania State University, having been changed in 1953 to make name and fact conform.⁴³ But regardless of the name, the University remains wedded to the land-grant concept. As we have seen, that concept is as old as Jefferson and yet as applicable as today's freshmen, as narrow as "making a living" yet as broad as "life." It involves a firm belief, with Washington, in the necessity of having an enlightened electorate. It rests on Morrill's faith in the efficacy

⁴¹ *La Vie, 1932* (Pennsylvania State College, 1932), 29.

⁴² For Dr. Eisenhower's views on land-grant education and his belief in it see *The Inauguration of Milton Stover Eisenhower, as President of the Pennsylvania State College, October 5, 1950* (published by the Pennsylvania State College, 1950) and Milton S. Eisenhower, "To Open the Door," *American Heritage*, Vol. VI, No. 3 (April, 1955), 62-64.

⁴³ As Dunaway put it, "Of all the institutions of higher education in the United States, the Pennsylvania State College has been consistently the most modest; when it was a college it called itself a high school, and when it became a great university it continued to call itself a college." Dunaway, *History of the Pennsylvania State College*, 26.

both of the classical and of the practical. It pledges itself to the Jeffersonian goal of being neither static nor doctrinaire. It proposes, along with Franklin, to meet *all* educational needs and to serve the best interests of *all* the citizenry, not just a part of them.

Although much will be made of statistics during this Centennial Year, the real story of the Pennsylvania State University is not to be found primarily in the increase in its student body from a mere 119 to 14,000, nor in the fact that its faculty and staff now number 3,800 as compared with the original four. Nor is its significance to be seen simply in the growth of an academic program from a single curriculum to the present sixty curricula offered in nine different colleges, or in the expansion of a physical plant from a small five-story "Old Main" to a modern campus of 140 major structures.⁴⁴

Instead, the Pennsylvania State University's primary significance lies in its land-grant *genus*, in the educational ideals of its founders and leaders; in an instructional program which has fulfilled the educational needs of 56,000 graduates who came from no special economic or social background seeking knowledge in everything from archaeology to zoology; in its extension facilities which in the past year alone provided educational services of one sort or another for over one million Pennsylvanians; and in its research and development program which daily aids the Commonwealth's agriculture and industry as well as contributes heavily to the nation's defense.

In such manner, the Pennsylvania State University can be seen assuming its proper role as a public service institution and striving to attain the ultimate goal of the land-grant idea: a university not only *for* the people, but *from* the people, acting as both an instrument and a servant of the Commonwealth.

It is difficult to believe that one hundred years ago this was only an idea.

⁴⁴ For the most recent and complete set of statistics on the institution's growth see *The Pennsylvania State University: A Century of Service to the Commonwealth 1855-1955* (published by the Pennsylvania State University, 1955).