

## PROBLEMS IN WRITING A COLLEGE HISTORY

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AS LONG as colleges and universities continue to hold centennial celebrations, histories of these institutions will probably be published. From the historian's standpoint such books are likely to be seriously defective, because college historiography is a breed of its own. *The Story of Susquehanna University*<sup>1</sup> will serve as a *point d'appui* in a discussion of this problem, not only because it is the most recent college history in the state, but also because so many of the problems inherent in such an endeavor were encountered in preparing it. The analysis may be of interest to those concerned with the history of higher education in this country as well as to those who may contemplate the publishing of histories of their own institutions.

Most college histories, including the one of Susquehanna, appear as part of official celebrations of centennials or the like. Inasmuch as they are produced to help the particular college secure favorable publicity during the celebration, they are partly public relations efforts and should fit into the general character of the affair. They must tell the story filiopietistically—everybody who is mentioned must be praised; no one ever did anything wrong in connection with the college; all persons of importance have to be noted, whether a member of the board, a large giver, or a faculty member of long standing. Above all, the incumbent president must be eulogized.

Official college histories are probably necessary in view of the need to please alumni and patrons, and surely they do no harm. They may actually do some good by strengthening alumni loyalty

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<sup>1</sup>*The Story of Susquehanna University*, by William S. Clark and Arthur Herman Wilson, under the general editorship of Russell Wieder Gilbert, William Adam Russ, Jr., and Arthur Herman Wilson (Susquehanna University Press, Selinsgrove, Pa., 1958).

to the institution and by persuading prospective friends to come to the support of the college. Most such books, however, are neither for the public nor for the historian. Unless the latter's reactions are asked for in a review, he has no business criticizing what was not published for him, any more than he has in writing a review of a college catalogue, which also was not published for him. Histories that are produced for the benefit of alumni and friends—and most college histories are written for that audience—cannot be expected to serve as outstanding examples of research. If books of sentimentality and eulogy are indicated, who has a right to object? After all, the colleges pay for them.

In the Susquehanna volume, the first section tries in a modest way to approximate what might be called objective analysis, and for that reason may fulfill to a degree the demands of the professional historian; the second section is not formal history at all and does not claim to be. So as not to be misunderstood, we have underplayed the title by calling the work *The Story* rather than *The History of Susquehanna University*.

Normally it is a waste of space for such books to be evaluated from the standpoint of historical methodology, for in most cases they are not histories at all. Hence they should not be submitted for review in historical journals. On the other hand, if they are sent for review, the colleges should expect to see them treated in the usual manner. We at Susquehanna have sent copies to a few historical journals, in spite of the possibility that reviewers might tear the book apart, thinking that if it were not submitted, people might conclude that we were ashamed of it or afraid to have it subjected to the canons of research. If the editors decide that reviewing the volume would be a waste of space, we shall be content; if the reviewers' judgments are unfavorable, we are prepared to accept the worst the critics can charge.

Only very seldom is it possible for a reviewer honestly to say, "The whole work is characterized by a scholarly aloofness and impartiality on controverted points; it is a factual and disinterested chronicle," as Charles H. Metzger, S.J., wrote of Ellis's study of the Catholic University of America.<sup>2</sup> Paul Gates, in his review of

<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Metzger, S.J., reviewing John Tracy Ellis's *The Formative Years of the Catholic University of America*, in *Pennsylvania History*, XIV (Jan., 1947), 63-64. Arthur J. Riley reviewed the same book in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXIII (Dec., 1946), 486-487.

Dunaway's book on Pennsylvania State College (now University), spelled out the challenge to the professional scholar:

The professional scholar who undertakes to write the history of an American university has no easy task to fulfill. To sacrifice his own professional standards and produce an indiscriminating and uncritical account that might satisfy the whole gamut of local interests, including alumni, trustees, faculty, business interests, neighboring peoples, and descendants of influential persons connected with the university, would be intellectually dishonest and personally unsatisfying.<sup>3</sup>

The practicing historian will seldom tackle a college history unless the subject is a well-established institution, like Harvard, which is old enough and philosophical enough to permit itself to be freely analyzed. The professional likes to deal with the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, but under most circumstances that kind of approach is impossible—at least in college histories. An example of what is likely to be said about a professor who composes a history of his own institution is the following quotation from Lynn W. Turner's review of Spielman's work on Carthage College:

Professor Spielman, who has served in the history department of Carthage College since 1916, has written an official history approached largely from the viewpoint of the trustee or administrator and concerned primarily with the monotonous problem of saving the institution from bankruptcy. Outside the limited circle of Carthage alumni the book need be read only by specialists in the field of Illinois educational history.<sup>4</sup>

It is at this point that the analysis begins to apply to the Susquehanna story. One of the main themes of our history, as in the case of Carthage, is the "monotonous problem of saving the institution from bankruptcy." To those interested, there can be no more engrossing tale than that of the process whereby a college has been

<sup>3</sup> Paul W. Gates, reviewing Wayland Fuller Dunaway's *History of Pennsylvania State College*, in *Pennsylvania History*, XIV (July, 1947), 245-246.

<sup>4</sup> Lynn W. Turner, reviewing William Carl Spielman's *The Diamond Jubilee History of Carthage College, 1870-1945*, in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXIII (March, 1947), 642-644.

preserved from economic collapse through the efforts of self-sacrificing friends. While being at first blush unnecessarily hard-hearted, Turner was correct in saying that such a book is of little or no value to outsiders.

The financial plight of all colleges during their early years is a monotonous story to all except to those who care, and yet the theme is almost universal. Listen to these words:

. . . the institution's early years were filled with trials, reverses, crises, and dark periods of bare survival. While its zealous founders would never countenance a vision of utter disaster or extinction, long hard years filled with unremitting labors, fortified by little else than faith in divine guidance, had to be endured before the institution's continued existence could have seemed reasonably assured to any impartial observer.<sup>5</sup>

This description, which fits perfectly the early years of both Susquehanna and Carthage—and many other colleges as well—refers to Oberlin. The reviewer's words—"fortified by little else than faith in divine guidance"—remind one of Arthur Herman Wilson's reaction of a similar character to the difficulties at Susquehanna:

. . . there was no earthly reason why Susquehanna should have survived. But there is an explanation that goes beyond the earthly reason. The early fathers who brought Susquehanna through the perilous first century were great spirits who accepted a divine call and remained faithful to their trust, counting not the cost to themselves.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Leyton E. Carter, reviewing Robert Samuel Fletcher's *A History of Oberlin College from Its Foundation through the Civil War*, in *The American Historical Review*, XLIX (April, 1944), 501-502.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Herman Wilson, "The Early Influence of the College Church upon the Church College," in *The Snyder County Historical Society Bulletin*, III (1957), 9. It is interesting that Clark, the other author of the Susquehanna volume, arrived independently at similar conclusions. Said he, ". . . it is my considered belief, in spite of all documents and letters I have read, that it was a 'miracle of God,' that the college continued to exist in those early years. . . . Rational human beings, relying on their own capacities and understanding would have discontinued the enterprise in a number of places. The problems faced by the school seemed insurmountable. I am sure that the only thing that saved our college in the early years was the absolute reliance of the men on God and the firm belief that He would take care of everything that they could not take care of. This is the only explanation

Such a story is one of inner greatness and splendor to those who are interested, whether they are connected with Susquehanna, with Carthage, with Oberlin, with Harvard, or with Dartmouth. It was of the last-named institution that Webster made his immortal dictum, "She is only a small college, Sir, but there are those who love her."

Though the professional historian does not like to write college history because of the limitations and inhibitions mentioned above, he usually has an opportunity to criticize what others have tried to do. For, despite the fact that the average college history should not be sent for review to historical journals, many are submitted nevertheless. The professionals are likely to take a dim view of them, as a study of typical reviews will prove. Anyone who has read dozens of reviews—as I have—of college histories published during the past quarter century will be impressed by several themes that appear and reappear.

Reviewers protest against the presence of too much detail in college histories—unfortunately the very thing the alumni desire. William A. Hunter in a friendly evaluation of the Coleman history of Washington and Jefferson College said, "The closely printed texts of official acts and charters and the formal lists of trustees and faculty members have some reference value, no doubt, but their appeal is surely to a much smaller and rather different group of readers," than was true of the large number who would enjoy the informal and colloquially written book itself.<sup>7</sup> This charge is made against even the best of writers. Thus I. L. Kandel, in assessing Gray's book on the University of Minnesota, a distinguished educational history, was constrained to say, "There are pages, it must be admitted, when the reader is reminded of an earlier chronicle with its long list of 'begats.' . . ."<sup>8</sup> He contrasted the "vast amount of detail" in Gray's book with the compressed character of H. B. Charlton's *Portrait of a University*, which

for some of their actions—and, of course, this sort of thing does not ordinarily exist in such form that it can be documented with a footnote" (William S. Clark to William A. Russ, Jr., April 4, 1958, published in *The Snyder County Historical Society Bulletin*, III [1958], 17-20).

<sup>7</sup>William A. Hunter, reviewing Helen Turnbull Waite Coleman's *Banners in the Wilderness: Early Years of Washington and Jefferson College*, in *Pennsylvania History*, XXIV (Jan., 1957), 82-83.

<sup>8</sup>I. L. Kandel, reviewing James Gray's *The University of Minnesota, 1851-1951*, in *The American Historical Review*, LVII (Jan., 1952), 471-473.

covered the University of Manchester's history from 1851 to 1951 in 185 pages, and "conveys an idea of the university more clearly without encumbering the portrait with the vast amount of detail in the Minnesota volume." The difference is easily explained, however. Gray wrote sentimentality for the alumni, and Charlton painted a "portrait" for the public at large. Each audience needed its own type of approach.

The use of detail is sometimes defended by writers. Arthur Herman Wilson, co-author of the Susquehanna book, says, "I sought to include as many names as possible: directors, administration, alumni, friends, faculty, and students, with special emphasis upon those people who had distinguished themselves during a lifetime of service. . . . I was relying upon the theory, of course, that names—as numerous as possible—not only make news but also make history."<sup>9</sup> Exactly the opposite point of view is taken by Fletcher in his otherwise favorable reaction to Hubbart's volume on Ohio Wesleyan when he said, "It is replete with names, some interesting ones . . . but many which will be unknown to any but the most enthusiastic alumni."<sup>10</sup> The conflict of attitudes is easily explained: Wilson is writing a personalized "Story" which is to be read by alumni and friends, and so is Hubbart. Fletcher is thinking of full-dress scholarly research which would be of value to professional historians.

Many critics are bothered not only by the presence of too much reference material, but also by the fact that many college histories do not go below the data in alumni records, official lists, and trustees' minutes. More interpretation is demanded. Frederick Rudolph, commenting upon Sellers's book on the University of Alabama, admitted it would "surely be an important and useful reference work at the university for such matters as enrollment, presidential administrations, faculty appointments, salary scales, building programs, and football scores"; but he insisted that "the cultural historian . . . will be troubled by the absence of any

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Herman Wilson to William A. Russ, Jr., March 1, 1958, published in *The Snyder County Historical Society Bulletin*, III (1958), 15-17.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Samuel Fletcher, reviewing Henry Clyde Hubbart's *Ohio Wesleyan's First Hundred Years*, in Curtis Wiswell Garrison, editor, *The United States, 1865-1900: A Survey of Current Literature* . . . (Fremont, Ohio, 1944), II (1942-43), 141.

serious or penetrating investigation of the relationship of the university to the goals of the society which created it."<sup>11</sup>

A related objection that reviewers make to the average college history is that it is usually organized on the basis of presidential administrations.<sup>12</sup> Kandel says truly, "It is characteristic of American higher education that its story should be told in terms of administration. . . . Seven of the ten books which make up the volume under review [Gray's *Minnesota*] are named for one of the presidents. It is not until one comes to the ninth book that those who really make a university or any educational institution—the teachers—are paid the tribute that they merit." Kandel has a point about teachers being the real makers of a college or university, except that this sentiment is not in accord with the facts of American college development. Unlike old world universities, which were originally faculty-organized and are still frequently faculty-controlled, American institutions of higher learning from the start have been run by non-teaching directors and administrators. It has always been true in the American scene that the president and bureaucracy were considered more important than the instructional staff. Kandel is correct in saying that teachers should be looked upon as "those who really make a university," but actually faculty members have ever been regarded as hired employees, and nothing much else.

The same misunderstanding about the realities of American educational experience is shown by Thomas LeDuc in his criticism of Hollis's work on the University of South Carolina. Said he, "This book is essentially a history of the administration of the college. Budgets, appointments, and construction programs are carefully related." On the other hand, "The intellectual life of the college is not so competently treated. . . . The rich potentialities of the subject are never fully exploited."<sup>13</sup> LeDuc became

<sup>11</sup> Frederick Rudolph, reviewing James M. Sellers's *History of the University of Alabama*, in *The American Historical Review*, LIX (July, 1954), 1039.

<sup>12</sup> Up to a point this charge may be made against the first section of the Susquehanna volume. Wilson, however, agrees with the reviewers when he says, "It is easy for a college history to become merely the analysis of successive college administrations, with particular emphasis upon the presidents. I wanted to avoid this pitfall of a one-sided picture by including the activities of many people who had made real contributions to the college" (Wilson to Russ, March 1, 1958, *op. cit.*).

<sup>13</sup> Thomas LeDuc, reviewing Daniel Walker Hollis's *University of South Carolina*, in *The American Historical Review*, LVII (July, 1952), 1064-1065.

a rather bitter critic of college histories. While discussing Hopkins's *Kentucky*, he lashed out at those which were so often "prepared by amateurish alumni, uneducated publicity agents, and uncritical emeriti."<sup>14</sup> He insisted that "the history of a college is properly intellectual history, and that the historian should attempt to reconstruct the ideas and values held on a particular campus. Mr. Hopkins has essayed, however, the biography of an institution. It is only fair to say that the shallowness of his subject gave him little occasion for intellectual analysis." Ideally LeDuc is probably correct, but speaking practically, if administration is normally the main theme of American college history, can intellectuality be expected? Do the alumni want intellectual histories? They are the chief market.

Sometimes the author of a college history finds it absolutely necessary, as a matter of personal protection, to write a dry, factual account, quoting official documents and going no further; otherwise he will find himself in controversies with all the varying publics which the average college history is supposed to satisfy. Walton Bean in his reaction to Pollard's book on the Ohio State University brings that point out in the following words, "This is a detailed chronological narrative history of the land-grant state university of Ohio. . . . The work is based mainly on the annual reports of the presidents, the minutes of the Board of Trustees, and the newspapers of Columbus. . . . In general, Professor Pollard has sought to let the facts speak for themselves."<sup>15</sup> This is one way of doing it, if an author must do it safely. Later in the review Bean perhaps unconsciously gives away the reason for Pollard's letting the facts speak for themselves: the long-standing political interference by the state government in the administration of the university. Just as writers at church-related colleges usually say nothing that would offend the church and its leaders, and just as authors at independent colleges which have received large subsidies from private individuals must be careful what they write of businessmen, so historians at a state university must remember that the politician can not only give but can also take away.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas LeDuc, reviewing James F. Hopkins's *The University of Kentucky: Origins and Early Years*, in *The American Historical Review*, LVII (Oct., 1951), 260.

<sup>15</sup> Walton Bean, reviewing James E. Pollard's *History of the Ohio State University: The Story of its First Seventy-five Years, 1873-1948*, in *The American Historical Review*, LVIII (July, 1953), 1017-1018.



Unless the official documents are used with great care and considerable finesse, a book based on such raw material may become impossible to read. Phelps Soule, in his evaluation of the Starrett history of the University of Pittsburgh, suggested that a writer might even be better off without primary sources. After pointing out that the author had been handicapped by lack of documents—owing to several fires—he added, “Perhaps, from the reader’s viewpoint, this has its advantages, for minutes of trustees, and faculty meetings are dull reading, and the official records might have exerted a stultifying influence on a style which is agreeably light and direct. . . .”<sup>16</sup>

There are, as a general rule, two kinds of minutiae in college histories, both of which come under criticism from reviewers. First is the uninspired relating of chronological events based on undigested records; second is the personal, reminiscing banality which alumni like to write and read. Of the two, the latter type of “froth” is probably the more common. Guy Stanton Ford, managing editor of *The American Historical Review*, made a sly thrust at such publications in his remarks about Cornelius’s book on Randolph-Macon Woman’s College. Said he, “This volume deserves mention among the many of its kind now appearing as one of the better and more detailed college histories. For all but alumnae and patrons of Randolph-Macon Woman’s College it is too detailed. For them, however, the trivia of each passing year and its functions will undoubtedly revive some pleasant memories.”<sup>17</sup> In his previously mentioned review of Starrett’s *Pittsburgh*, Phelps Soule sighed with relief because there was “a happy minimum of eulogy and sentimentality. There are no references to ‘alma mater’ or ‘dear old Pitt!’”

The sentimental, “good old days” brand of college history is sometimes the product of a retired president. Written in all likelihood from the administrative side only, such a book will be incomplete, even though the former executive may be generous and impartial. In addition, no matter what other aptitudes he may

<sup>16</sup> Phelps Soule, reviewing Agnes Lynch Starrett’s *Through One Hundred and Fifty Years: The University of Pittsburgh*, in *Pennsylvania History*, IV (Oct., 1937), 268-269.

<sup>17</sup> Guy Stanton Ford, reviewing Roberta D. Cornelius’s *The History of Randolph-Macon Woman’s College: From the Founding in 1891 through the Year of 1949-1950*, in *The American Historical Review*, LVII (Oct., 1951), 259.

have—and a college president has to have many—he is not often a historian. Thus when James Henry Morgan, who for fifty-nine years had been connected with Dickinson College as student, professor, and president, undertook to publish a history of the institution, he admitted forthwith he was not a trained historian. B. M. Hermann, commenting upon the Morgan volume, said it was “steeped in the lore, traditions, and spirit of the institution.”<sup>18</sup>

Another aspect of the same problem is that of a presidential history's being reviewed by another president. Herbert L. Spencer, then president of Bucknell University, reviewed President Charles C. Ellis's *Juniata College: The History of Seventy Years (1876-1946)*<sup>19</sup> and found it excellent. No doubt the book was an able one, but is it to be expected that one Pennsylvania college president will impartially evaluate the product of another Pennsylvania college president? If he did, such a critic would indeed be *anguis in herba*.

The “Here's to dear old Yale” variety of reminiscing is usually written by a graduate of the institution. Such a work is often hard for outsiders to read, and reviewers are likely to have a field day with it. Once in a while there is an exception, as in Wallace's book on Wofford College. Again using his high office in the American Historical Association as a justification for speaking authoritatively, Guy Stanton Ford remarked that Wofford luckily had an alumnus “to write its history, as such a history should be and rarely is written by an alumnus. Professor Wallace has made his volume not only a model of its kind but a contribution to the history of the region.”<sup>20</sup> This is high praise, the sort seldom won by alumni authors. Ford added that Wallace had done something which alumni historians do not usually dare to do, “The author's candid appraisal of faculty members, some his teachers and others his former colleagues, is one of the unique features of the book.”

Many of the older members of the Pennsylvania Historical Association will recall the story Wayland Fuller Dunaway liked to tell about the time he was attending a dinner meeting and

<sup>18</sup> B. M. Hermann, reviewing James Henry Morgan's *Dickinson College, 1783-1933*, in *Pennsylvania History*, I (April, 1934), 122-123.

<sup>19</sup> In *Pennsylvania History*, XV (July, 1948), 236-237.

<sup>20</sup> Guy Stanton Ford, reviewing David Duncan Wallace's *History of Wofford College, 1864-1949*, in *The American Historical Review*, LVII (Jan., 1952), 551-552.

learned that former Governor John S. Fisher was present. Upon being invited to meet Fisher, Dunaway frantically tried to remember what he had said about the Governor's term in his *History of Pennsylvania*. Luckily he had followed the wise policy of saying nothing unfavorable about living persons even though they may have deserved criticism. He had simply quoted from official documents and let it go at that. Of course, anyone acquainted with Dunaway knew that he could take a stand; his scoring of Governor Ritner's administration proved he would have his say if he thought the topic required it. But Ritner had been dead a long time before Dunaway began his book. By the same token, if a person is writing a college history, he is well advised to wait until living actors are dead before he tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In fact, even after they are dead, he will hardly be able to reveal all. Additionally, by delaying, the author acquires perspective which he cannot have as a living observer of the scene.

At times this judicious reticence is overdone. Thus one of the contributors to the history of University College in Toronto said the time had not yet come in 1953 to give the inside facts about the student strike of 1895.<sup>21</sup> When a writer, on the other hand, is afraid to offer the facts about a really important event in the history of a college, that is a situation which has nothing to do with ordinary caution, good taste, or avoidance of trivia. It deals with truth as truth. This difficulty has probably bedeviled every serious author of a college history. How much ought to be admitted about one of the institution's worthies, now dead, of whom certain unpleasant facts are known? How is it possible honestly to describe outside interference in the life of the university without stirring up a hornet's nest? These are vital questions because they affect the truth. Here we have one reason why most professional historians will not attempt a college history, and why so many of them are written by alumni, presidents, or publicity agents.

Phelps Soule pointed out a case of undue caution in Starrett's *Pittsburgh*. He felt that the "alleged suppression of academic freedom in 1929" had been handled "perhaps too delicately." He intimated that, while a straightforward statement of facts would

<sup>21</sup> Walton Bean, reviewing *University College: A Portrait, 1853-1953* (Claude T. Bissell, editor), in *The American Historical Review*, LIX (April, 1954), 688.

have cleared the air, maybe the author had reasons for saying little. "Possibly she was wise to recite only the bare outline—without naming names—and to give only the administration's point of view." What Soule may have meant was that, inasmuch as the University of Pittsburgh Press was publishing the book, the University would hardly be willing to pay for producing a volume in which its own side of the academic freedom controversy was contested.

With the preceding analysis as a backdrop, it is time to discuss in more detail the methods by which some of the problems involved in writing college history were dealt with in the preparation of the Susquehanna volume. One of the earliest questions had to do with authorship. Who should be selected to write the book: a teacher of long service, a professional historian, an alumnus, or an outsider? The task was turned over to Mr. William S. Clark, a history major who had graduated in 1948 and who, as a war veteran, was older and more mature than the average "Joe College." Clark was told to employ the apparatus of scholarly research as it had been taught him in his history seminar. All college records, such as trustees' minutes, archives, and publications, were made available. For his efforts he would receive a modest subvention.

The fact that Clark's work was based on thorough "historical research," as he states in the "Acknowledgements," is witnessed by the master's degree which he won at the University of Pennsylvania for a thesis composed of portions of the Susquehanna manuscript. Furthermore, advisers at the University urged him to proceed further with the investigation and gain a doctorate, using the same subject. Despite the fact that Clark covered a period wherein most of the people were long since dead, he met with minor obstructions, finding it necessary to soft-pedal a few matters in the interest of good taste, family sentimentality, and institutional zeal. He describes some of these problems as follows:

. . . There were people who seemed afraid of what I might uncover in my research. They were fearful that I would discover something in their family background that would hurt their present reputation. One party, who had some very valuable letters in her possession, threatened to burn them since I had brought them to her at-

tention and had asked to read them. Another party was very much surprised at what I had been able to discover about him through research and was not sure that he liked the idea. . . . Another individual, who had very valuable documents in his possession, would not let me see them because he said he intended to use them in an article he was writing. This, of course, turned out to be an excuse, since no such article appeared from his pen. Still other living persons wanted to make sure that they received every bit of credit due them for the many contributions they had made to the growth of the college, and, as a result, often distorted the story. In several instances there were definite conflicts between verifiable primary sources, and what certain people remembered as happening. I discovered, generally, that people have very poor memories and cannot recall past events with too much accuracy. In almost every personal interview I had I found that someone had "a bone to pick."<sup>22</sup>

When Clark reached the phase of the story which would include the incumbent president's term of office, he stopped writing because by that time he had acquired other commitments. Someone else had to be secured to do the G. Morris Smith administration from 1928 to the centennial year, 1958. The lot fell upon Arthur Herman Wilson, who had obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania, and had served as professor of English at Susquehanna since 1931. Of necessity his approach would be different from Clark's for, as he points out, "Diaries, memoirs, letters, and other private papers are not yet available for the years I have covered."<sup>23</sup> He continues, "The perspective which Mr. Clark had to take toward his material was that of the student of the past trying faithfully and objectively to bring alive those persons, places, and problems that he never knew. His documentation shows how diligently he has worked. Mr. Clark is a serious student of history and has looked upon the first seventy years of Susquehanna as a story rich and significant. . . ."

Wilson wrote as a participant; his tone is reminiscing, anecdotal, subjective, uncritical, and topical. "My perspective . . . [he explains] has never been that of the student of the past but rather

<sup>22</sup> Clark to Russ, April 4, 1958, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> This and the following quotations are from Wilson's Foreword, pp. 197-198 and from Wilson to Russ, March 1, 1958, *op. cit.* Wilson was presented with a small honorarium, which he turned over to the building fund.

the very subjective one of a person who still looks upon those thirty years . . . as the present: as a kaleidoscope of thousands of crowding images, both happy and unhappy, that can never all be captured and put on paper in any book." Again: "One leading idea which I kept before myself constantly was to attempt to write the history so that it would be human and interesting. I wanted it to have human appeal, to read rapidly, and not to be stuffy. In other words, I wanted it to be thoroughly readable. To this end I tried to capture some local color, with anecdotes traditional on the campus and in descriptions of personalities."

It is obvious—in the differing approaches of Clark and Wilson—that unwittingly we had fallen upon a practicable method of writing the history of a college. This method, though producing a book of two parts, and for that reason one lacking unity, enabled us fortunately to meet the ancient problem involved in college historiography, namely, how to tell the story of the present as honestly and as fully as that of a century ago can sometimes be told; or, to put the matter another way, how to please alumni and not displease the professional historians too much. We met the quandary simply by making no attempt to write history as such during the recent period. As Wilson says, "Because my own part (1928-1958) of the Susquehanna story was contemporary and within the span of my own personal experience on the campus, I chose to write it as the firsthand account of an eyewitness, rather than as a heavily documented, formal history prepared by an outsider."

In the Clark part of the book a modest effort was made to approximate what Metzger praised in John Tracy Ellis's history of Catholic University, although, as reviews have shown, college alumni do not ordinarily write that way. On the other hand, the Wilson section is like the James Henry Morgan approach, in which Hermann found little to criticize because it did not claim to be what it was not.