HISTORY OF UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA 1895-1905

HISTORY of any institution begins with the first step toward its upbuilding. The first facts are not often familiar to those closely allied with the institution. Thus it is with the history of our own University, although it is not very old, it has its own history and traditions. To give an insight into the strenuous early days as well as the more peaceful and prosperous future, is the object of this short sketch.

It has always been the policy of the United States to have the best of educational facilities, regardless of labor or expense. In order to obtain this, Congress, in 1881, passed a law donating seventy-two sections of land in each of the Western territories, for the purpose of providing funds for the establishment of Universities in these future states. At this date the first germ of the University of Montana begins to grow, for it is from this that the major portion of our money comes. Immediately after the passage of this bill, Mr. R. H. Howey, of Helena, was appointed to select the university land. Owing to the early date, Mr. Howey was able to obtain the best of the government lands in the Bitter Root, Flathead, Gallatin and other valleys.

For many years before the university was organized there had been an expectation, that when it was established it would be in the city of Missoula. The first movement to secure the University was made during the first legislative assembly in January of 1891. A committee was appointed to work with the legislature. Through the efforts of this committee a bill was passed by the lower house, but unfortunately was lost in the senate by a very small majority. The citizens of Missoula, realizing the urgent need of a State University, and also the good that the city of Missoula would derive from such an institution, formed themselves in a body and set to work to investigate the possibility of such an institution. A University Club was, therefore, organized. Prof. J. M. Hamilton was chosen president and E. E. Hershey secretary and treasurer. A committee composed of Prof. Hamilton, Judge F. H. Woody and Mr. M. T. Crouch drafted the bill for a University, which went through without amendment. By this time, the citizens of Missoula had become so enthused over the prospects that many went to Helena in order that they might put their shoulder to the wheel, to aid the passage of this one important bill. The plans were systematically arranged. J. L. Sloane had
charge of the work in Helena, while H. O. Collins acted as press representa-
tive. With the active work of these members and the influence and persever-
ing energy of the late Hon. E. D. Malts, member of the senate from Missoula
county, the bill finally succeeded in passing both houses. The memory of
these men on that committee and Senator Malts will never be forgotten, and
too much credit cannot be given for their zealous work, for without them the
University would surely have been put off for an indefinite period.

After the passage of this memorable bill, the State Board of Education
met in Missoula, May 24, 1893, and selected the present 40-acre campus. The
Higgin's estate donated the north twenty, and the South Missoula Land
Company the south twenty.

Nothing further was done until the legislature in January, 1895, when a
bill was passed recommended by the State Board of Education appropriating
the funds accumulated from the Land Act of 1881, to open the University of
Montana in September of that year.

Mr. J. H. T. Ryman, Judge Hiram Knowles and Col. T. C. Marshall, all
prominent citizens of Missoula, were appointed as a local executive commit-
tee to assist the State Board of Education. In order to facilitate the opening
of the University, the citizens of Missoula donated their South Side High
School building, and in addition had raised three thousand dollars.

At its meeting in June, 1895, the Board of Education elected Oscar J.
Craig, A. M. Ph. D., president of the young University. President Craig, who
was at the time Professor of Political Economy and History in Purdue Uni-
versity at La Fayette, Indiana, is one of the ablest and best known educators
in the West. When Dr. Craig arrived in Missoula, he at once began arrange-
ments for the opening of the University in September. Laboratories for
work in Chemistry, Physics and Biology were fitted up with high grade ap-
paratus; the lecture rooms and the assembly rooms were furnished, and one
thousand books were purchased for the library. A course of study was de-
cided upon and the faculty selected, which then consisted only of
President Craig, Professor of History and Literature; Stephen A.
Merritt, Professor of Natural Science, and Cynthia Elizabeth Reily,
Professor of Mathematics. Later in the summer Prof. Aber was elected to
the chair of Greek and Latin, while Prof. Schurch took charge of the Modern
Languages and also, temporarily, the department of Mechanical Engineers.

On September 11, 1895, the University was opened with impressive cere-
monies and its record as a state school was begun. Fifty students were en-
rrolled. The number increased until at the end of the first fiscal year the atten-
dance was one hundred and eighteen, and at the close of the first college
year, June 10, 1896, one hundred and thirty-five students were in attendance.

On Arbor Day in 1896 the first improvements on the University grounds
were made. On that day a large body of citizens, societies and school chil-
dren assembled at the grounds, near the foot of Sentinel, and nearly five hundred trees were planted.

The next year, 1897, the legislature appropriated sixteen thousand dollars for the maintenance of the University during 1896 and 1897, and nineteen thousand dollars for 1897 and 1898. At the meeting of the State Board of Education in December 1897, at President Craig’s request, a committee was appointed to decide on a plan for raising a sufficient amount of money with which to erect and equip University buildings. President Craig proposed one hundred thousand dollars be raised by issuing bonds, which should be secured by the income from the University lands. J. M. Hamilton, of Missoula, and Peter Winne, of Helena, and H. H. Grant, of Grantsdale, who were the committee appointed, reported in favor of raising the money in the manner proposed by President Craig, but they also favored increasing the one hundred thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, as soon as the income from lands would pay interest on that amount. This plan was presented by Senator Smead to the legislature in 1897 and the permission was granted that we could issue the bonds to the amount stated above, bearing interest at not more than six per cent, and due in thirty years, but payable in twenty years. The bonds were issued at a premium and a building commission was appointed consisting of E. A. Winstanley, Alfred Cave, Joseph Wood, G. Higgins and J. R. Latimer. A. J. Gibson, of Missoula, was chosen architect by this commission. Sewerage and water systems were installed, the grounds were graded and additional trees were planted.

By February 18, 1899, the buildings had been finished, and on that day they were formally turned over to the Board of Education. Only two buildings were erected at this time, Science and University halls, the one containing the Chemical, Physical and Engineering departments; the other the Biological laboratories, together with the offices of president and secretary and the departments of Mathematics and Languages, History, Psychology, Literature and the Classics, the Art gallery, the Museum, Library, Assembly room, Literary hall and others.

While the University was growing in buildings, apparatus and grounds, she was also strengthening herself internally by the addition of new departments and strong men and women at the head of them. Prominent among these was Prof. M. J. Elrod, who became a member of the faculty in February, 1897, and took charge of the department of Biology. Prof. Elrod was one of the strongest men possible to obtain for his position and for the advancement of the University along all lines. The following fall two new members were added to the corps of teachers: F. D. Smith, of Cornell University, who took the department of Chemistry and Physics, Prof. Merritt having resigned. Miss Hubbel, of Drake University, became instructor in Latin
UNIVERSITY HALL
and English literature. In May of the following year Prof. James H. Wells was named as instructor of the Mechanical Engineering department.

June, 1899, marks the first movement taken by the University on other lines than the regular class work. A Biological station was established on Flathead Lake, near where the town of Big Fork now stands. Prof. M. J. Elrod was made director and under his guidance it has become very popular. Professors and students from all over the United States are in attendance. It gives excellent opportunity for the study of Nature and also a splendid resort to spend a vacation. The attendance every year is increased.

There were no important improvements during the years 1900 and 1901, although many changes occurred among the faculty, new members were added and losses were suffered by resignation of old ones. In June, Prof. J. H. Wells, in charge of the Mechanical Engineers, because of ill health, was compelled to resign, and Prof. A. L. Westcott was elected to take his place. Prof. F. D. Smith also resigned and Prof. W. D. Harkins succeeded him in the department of Chemistry and Physics. Miss Francis Corbin was elected to the department of English Literature to succeed Miss Hubbel.

In order to accommodate the increased demand for an extended course in Geology and Mineralogy J. P. Rowe was elected to take charge of the newly formed department, which he has since ably done. Miss Louise Hatheway, of the class of '99, was made assistant in English in the Preparatory department. Mr. John F. Davies of Butte, an expert librarian, was engaged to systematize the cataloging of the library.

In the spring meeting, Prof. J. M. Hamilton was added to the faculty to take charge of the department of History and Psychology. This relieved President Craig from having any classes, thus giving him time to attend to the welfare of the University. Prof. Hamilton proved to be a very earnest worker for the University and in June he was made vice president of the University. Miss Ruth Elise Kellogg was at the same time elected to take charge of the department of Elocution and Physical Culture. At the December session of the State Board of Education, Miss Louise Hatheway, assistant in the Preparatory department, was placed in charge of the department of College Rhetoric. This department was created by separating the work of the English Literature into that of English and Rhetoric.

The general assembly of 1901 authorized the University to issue seventy thousand dollars in bonds, to be secured by the revenue from the lands, as before given. Of this seventy thousand dollars, forty thousand dollars was to be issued as soon as the bonds could be sold, and the remainder in four years, or thereafter according to the direction of the State Board of Education.

Early in the spring of 1902, bonds amounting to forty thousand dollars were sold. A building commission was appointed and contracts were let for two buildings, a dormitory to be known as Woman's Hall and a Gymnasium.

A serious misfortune occurred in February, 1902, when Science Hall...
caught fire and the entire annex was almost destroyed. The loss was fully covered by insurance. Today the University is glad the accident happened, for instead of a low, one-story annex a two-story annex adorns the campus, giving two large, commodious laboratories more than formerly.

During the fall of 1902 the foundations were laid for the Woman's Hall and the Gymnasium, and before May of 1903 the Woman's Hall was completed and the first two stories were furnished ready for occupancy. The Gymnasium was ready for use by the fall of 1903. The dedicatory services of these two new buildings, which were held in May, 1903, marked another epoch in the rapid progress which the University is making.

Directly back of the Gymnasium a quarter-mile track was laid off and inside this was placed baseball and football fields. The grounds were leveled and graded, making one of the finest athletic fields in the state. Later more improvements were made. Clay was spread over the ground and rolled; a fence was built around the gridiron and the tennis courts clayed and rolled.

The Northern Pacific Railway Company donated the forty acres lying immediately behind the University and on the slope of Sentinel for the purposes of an observatory, through the efforts of Dr. Craig. This land did not include the summit, but nearly up to it on the western slope. In order to acquire the crest, a bill was introduced in the session of Congress of that year by Senator Gibson granting to the University the south half of the northeast quarter, and the south half of the northwest quarter of section twenty-six, township thirteen north, range nineteen west. The bill was referred to a committee, reported favorably for passage, and passed the senate with but little resistance. The donation of these two parcels of land gives the University a site unexcelled in the United States for an astronomical observatory. It is eighteen hundred and ninety feet above the plain.

Considering the few years that the University has been established we can safely say no other University has shown so rapid advancement as has our own State University. These last few years have been years of increased improvement above the preceding years from the standpoint of equipment, building operations and intellectual.

The year 1903 was an exceptionally active year, more teachers being added than at any other time since the opening of the institution. Prof. Robert Sibly was appointed in September to fill the vacancy made by Prof. A. L. Wescott, who was compelled to resign on account of his wife's illness. Prof. Sibly is a graduate of the class of '03 from the University of California. Prof. Sibly brought with him not only intelligence but University enthusiasm. This enthusiasm reached every student and last year seemed to be a new era in the life of every student at the University of Montana. Fraternities, organized among the boys, have proved a very important factor. Singing on the steps is another feature which brings together the students.

The opening of the Woman's Hall necessitated having a preceptress. Miss
Nellie Whitney, a graduate of the Minnesota University, was elected to fill the position. Miss Whitney is an instructor in the Preparatory department.

The Board of Education, at last, realizing the importance of athletics to a University, elected Hiram B. Conibear as athletic instructor for men. Mr. Conibear comes from the University of Chicago and that of Illinois, where he was head trainer. Too much credit cannot be given to Prof. Conibear for the success he has obtained. Although only one victory was accredited to our school, it must not be forgotten that men cannot become good athletes in a couple of months. It takes training and this is what our boys are receiving. Through the instrumentality of Prof. Conibear the first State Inter-scholastic Track Meet was held in Missoula last May.

Thus it has been, the University has been steadily growing, until it has certainly reached the climax. The year of 1904 has been the brightest and happiest year in the history of the University. But still there seems to occur changes in the faculty from year to year. The resignation of Miss Louise Hatheway, who is now Mrs. W. D. Harkins, caused a vacancy in the department of Rhetoric. Prof. J. S. Snoddy, of Missouri, was elected to succeed Miss Hatheway. Prof. Snoddy is a graduate of Missouri University and also took his post-graduate degree at Lincoln, Nebraska.

Late in the summer of 1904 the Board of Education appointed Prof. J. M. Hamilton, of Missoula, president of the Agricultural College, at Bozeman. The University lost an excellent man. Prof. Hamilton was always enthusiastic in every line of work. It was not until the December meeting of the State Board that his position was filled. Prof. H. K. Wolfe, of Nebraska, was at this time elected to the department of Psychology, held by Prof. Hamilton. Prof. Wolfe is a graduate of the Nebraska University and also of Leipsig University in Germany. The University feels proud to be able to obtain a professor who is as excellent as is Prof. Wolfe. We are assured that under the supervision of Prof. Wolfe new departments will be formed.

The Montana State University although young in years is old in educational work. The best teachers that are found in the West are centered at the University of Montana. In this school will be found more departments than in many schools of older birth. This year the school has won the championship of the state in athletics and also has won honors in the debating league.

Ten years ago the University campus was nothing but a barren plain, now it is one of the prettiest Universities in the land. Its buildings and campus are beautiful. Through the unaltering energy of our president noticeable improvements are made from year to year. The number of students steadily increase. The enrollment of 1904 is nearly twice that of a year ago, especially in the Collegiate department.

Let every student do his or her part toward the upbuilding of our State University and let its improvements increase and numbers double until our school becomes the One University of the West.

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