

*History
of an
Idea*



WILSON COLLEGE BULLETIN

Wilson College from 1869 to 1903
By Paul Swain Havens
President of Wilson College

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This booklet describes the earlier years of Wilson College. The idea of which we are to trace the history has indubitably become a reality. There have been moments of doubt and uncertainty for Wilson, as for all colleges; but there have also been times of exuberance, of triumph. It is in the mood of strength and faith born of our past that we celebrate our Centennial and face the second century.

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Introduction

In the appraisal of any social institution the history of the idea which gave it birth is of importance. And yet it is often difficult to describe the unfolding of the germinal idea as distinguished from the development of the tangible institution which is its outgrowth. The rise of the railway, for instance, can be accurately described upon the basis of figures and statistics which are available to any competent investigator. But the history of the idea which underlies railways would force the investigator to make a thorough study of the discovery of steam as a source of motive power and of the development of the steam engine to the point at which it became sufficiently large and safe for use in a locomotive engine. Again, the investigator, if he were writing the history of the idea behind railways, would have to study economic history in the eighteenth century and identify for us the forces which made imperative greater facility of communication between communities and ultimately between nations.

This would be no small task; and in the same way I am faced by a large task in attempting to write the history of the idea of liberal education for women in the Cumberland Valley. First, therefore, a word as to the limits of the undertaking. Since Wilson College is the principal institution in the Cumberland Valley which has given articulate form to this idea, this paper will chiefly concern that College; and since a full statement of the tangible development of the idea would exceed the limits of any normal paper, this study will concern the years from the founding of the College in 1869 through the administration of the Reverend Samuel A. Martin, which came to a close in 1903.

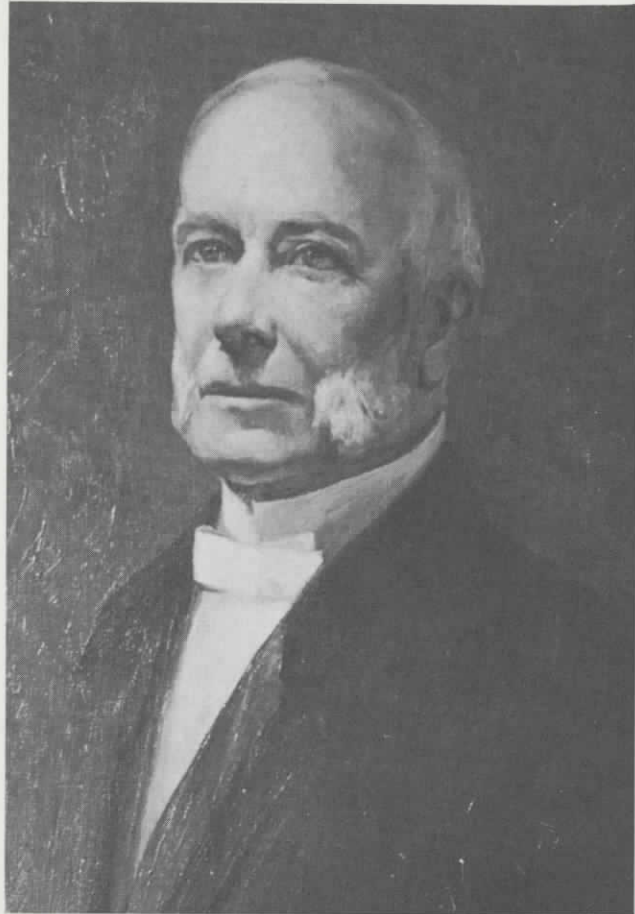
Limitations of space have forced me to rely principally upon the catalogues of the College from 1870 through 1903, the Charter and By-Laws and Regulations, as published from time to time within these years, certain minutes of the Board of Trustees, and a few published statements of an historical nature.

Despite the limitation to the period from 1869 through 1903, it will be wise to pause a moment and fill in briefly the background against which we must view the history of the idea of liberal education for women in this Valley. Most historians of education assert that the first college established in the Occidental world was not a college in our sense of the word but a group of monks under the leadership of St. Benedict, who in their monastery at Monte Cassino near Naples first established the practice of regular instruction in the higher studies. The subjects which occupied their attention were vastly different from those of our time. They were the trivium of the Middle Ages: the three liberal arts, grammar, logic, and rhetoric; followed by the quadrivium, consisting of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. We must bear in mind that of these subjects none had reached a stage of advanced development. From our point of view St. Benedict and his colleagues were handicapped by lack of knowledge and by want of a consistent methodology. The important thing is that these Benedictine monks established a tradition of instruction in the then liberal studies which was to affect profoundly the subsequent history of civilization.

In due time the medieval universities appeared: first at Bologna and Paris, where Abelard taught; later at Padua, long famous for its medical school; at Oxford; and at Cambridge. These and other groups like them kept alive the lamp of learning, which otherwise might have guttered. By our standards the oil that fed the wick was oftentimes poor. We are all familiar with the interminable arguments which occupied the medieval schoolmen, their controversies based on religious dogma and upon those fragments of Aristotle which were then known, and their disputations as to whether, for instance, after the creation of Eve, Adam had one more rib on the right side than on the left.



*A scene of the upper Conococheague
reproduced from the Wilson College
Catalogue of 1893-94.*



The Rev. James Wightman, one of the two clergymen who conceived the idea of establishing a four-year college for women at Chambersburg, later became the first Vice President of the College but in effect was the Acting President.



The Presbyterian Manse at Greencastle, Pa., which was Dr. Wightman's home, was the site of the first conversation leading to Wilson's founding.

But with the coming of the Renaissance and the re-discovery of the classics, most of which, with the exception of some important but often misleading fragments, had been unknown in the Middle Ages, higher education was revitalized and its aims more sharply drawn. The great Dutch thinker Erasmus gave us in the early sixteenth century a sound text of the Bible, and thus made it possible for the theologians of the Reformation to assert the authority of an accurate and scholarly Scripture. John Colet, Dean of St. Paul's in London, founded a school upon the principle that the newly discovered classics and the newly authenticated Bible should together form a basis for the liberal education of the young. Oxford and Cambridge became the training-grounds for the great minds of a great era then dawning in England: for Spenser, Marlowe, John Lyly, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, John Milton, John Dryden, and later for Newton and Locke. These men were grounded in sound learning and in sound religion; religion without learning being considered incomplete, learning without religion dangerous.

This great and notable tradition came across the Atlantic in the great migrations of the seventeenth century. In the north Harvard was founded in 1636; in the south William and Mary in 1693. From these two focal points, especially from the more northerly of them, higher education radiated outward. Yale was established in 1701, Princeton in 1746, and Columbia in 1754. And these institutions in turn became the mothers of a goodly progeny. Harvard was the mother of many of the New England colleges, Yale of many of the Middle West colleges, Princeton of many of our Pennsylvania colleges and of those in the Virginias and the central South.

But almost without exception these early colleges and universities were open to men and not to women. Oberlin in 1833 opened its doors to a few women; and it was a brave young girl who had the courage then to match her mind against the other sex and to brave the general disapproval with which society at large regarded the higher education of women. But the movement was not to be stopped. The most intelligent, both men and women, pressed the right of women for education on an equal basis with men. There was no reason, they argued, why women, especially in a democracy, should be relegated to "Kirche, Küche, und Kinder." If all men were created equal, then it was a denial of the first corollary of democratic republican principles that women should be faced with discrimination in educational matters and be kept from the exercise of those opportunities which should be common to all.

This great movement was just reaching its early strength when a great catastrophe happened. In 1861 the Civil War began. The full attention of everyone was necessarily concentrated upon one great objective and upon that alone. But wars always break old social patterns and create new ones. Whatever the Civil War may have meant to the economic and political life of the nation, however lamentable it may have been from most points of view, it hastened as if by magic the day when women were to have equal educational opportunities with men. In the year in which the war closed, 1865, Vassar College was founded. Elmira College had preceded Vassar by ten years, and Mount Holyoke, in its seminary stage, had been in existence since 1837. As one of the first pioneer colleges for women Wilson College was founded here in the Cumberland Valley "to extend to young ladies the same high advantages for a thorough education—physical, intellectual, moral and religious—as now afforded to young men in the best colleges in the land."¹ For us in Chambersburg, it was

¹ Wightman, Reverend J. W., "In the Beginning," published in *Wilson College, 1870-1910*, Chambersburg, 1910, p. 18.

like Phoenix rising from the ashes in a double sense. Out of the holocaust of war there was reborn a new determination to give young women the best opportunities for their own growth and development through educational facilities; and out of the burning of "Norland," the home of Colonel A. K. McClure, there rose a fine new building which was to be the first physical evidence of the establishment here of one of these earliest colleges for the higher education of women.

Although many are familiar with the story which describes the birth of the idea of Wilson College, let us hear it again in the words of one of the two men chiefly responsible for it:

One morning in the summer of 1867 Dr. Tryon Edwards, then pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Hagerstown, dropped into the study of the Rev. James W. Wightman, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Greencastle, and put the question: "Brother Wightman, will you join us in organizing a Female Seminary in Chambersburg?" Without a moment's hesitation, he brusquely answered: "No, Sir, I will have nothing to do with it." Astonished, as he showed by his looks, and seemingly rebuffed at the beginning of his mission, he started backward, threw up his hands, and simply exclaimed: "Why?" Mr. Wightman quietly replied: "Because I do not believe in the *female* education of women." This was further puzzling, but its explanation immediately followed: "I'll tell you what I will do. If you will agree to organize a first-class college, affording to young women facilities for a thorough education, such as are now afforded by first-class colleges to young men, I will enter into it, heart and soul." "Why," he exclaimed, "the very thing; let us do it."

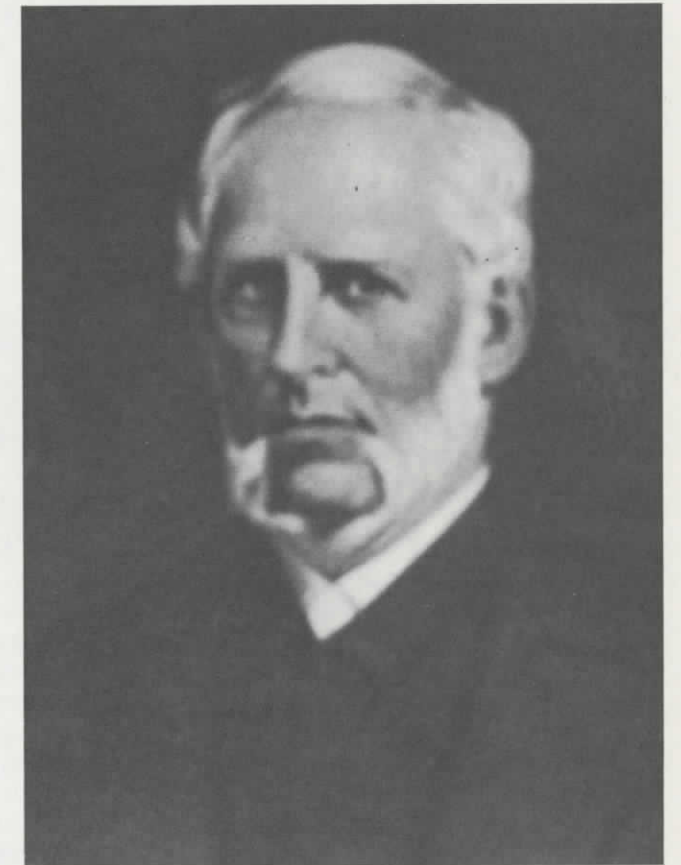
The interview continued throughout the forenoon, during which the project was discussed in all its phases, and Mr. Wightman clearly outlined his ideal college for young women—that it should recognize their right to intellectual training as broad and thorough as that provided in colleges for young men; that its government should be freed from the limitations and espionage of seminary life, and be based upon conscience and honor, thereby securing self-poise and the development of character; that its atmosphere should be non-sectarian, but predominately Christian, with provision for the ethical culture which finds its source in Bible truth, and its model in the Man of Nazareth; and with all these it should make ample provision for healthful exercise and properly formative physical training."²

Here, then, is the specific idea of which this paper is to trace the history. Let us examine it a moment in order to understand clearly its main features. The new institution was not to be another "female seminary." It was to be a first-class college. It was to recognize woman's right to intellectual training. Its government was to be based not upon discipline from above but upon self-discipline and honor. It was to be predominantly Christian in its atmosphere but non-sectarian in its composition, and it was to safeguard and promote the physical welfare of its students as well as their intellectual and spiritual growth. Its charter could be summed up in the old phrase, amended thus: *mens sana sanusque spiritus in corpore sano*.

There yet remained much to do before this idea should be translated into reality. A site had to be determined upon; money had to be raised; a Board of Trustees had to be secured; the new venture had to be advertised and students found. And not least important, the idea that women should seek a higher education had to be conveyed to the citizens of this and other communities—a discouraging task, as we shall see.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

History of an Idea



The Rev. Dr. Tryon Edwards, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Hagerstown, Md., was the first to propose the new college and, together with the Rev. Mr. Wightman, raised the necessary funds and secured the charter.

The securing of the Board of Trustees proved not difficult. It was the raising of money for the new venture which was at first the greatest obstacle. As a financial expedient the Board of Trustees announced to the towns in Franklin County the project for the new college and asked for subscriptions from the various townships on the understanding that that township which offered the largest subscription would be the site of the new college. It was as true then as now that a college is an immense asset to a community, both culturally and economically. At a meeting of the Board of Trustees held in Greencastle on October 14, 1868, these bids for location were examined, and it was found that Chambersburg led the others with a pledge of \$23,000. The matter of location was therefore settled. At that time the McClure estate was vacant, following Colonel McClure's removal to Philadelphia, and was offered for sale for \$45,000. But this was a sum far in excess of the monies in hand. Among the pledges which the Board of Trustees had received was a promise of \$10,000 from Miss Sarah Wilson, who lived not far from St. Thomas and had expressed a deep interest in the new project. Accordingly Dr. Tryon Edwards and certain other members of the Board visited Miss Wilson and secured from her a further gift of \$20,000. At last the Board was in a position to purchase the McClure property, consisting of the homestead, certain out-houses, and a farm of approximately fifty-two acres.

This was much, but more remained to be done. The acreage of the new property was larger than was necessary for the maintenance of the college, and so steps were taken to sell parts of it and thus to secure further cash with which to meet the expenses of remodelling the house and building a brick addition for dormitory purposes. Early drawings and photographs of the College in its first years show that the Board of Trustees added a wing to the back of the McClure mansion extending northeast and southwest—that part of the old Main Hall which extended northeast to, and included, the main portico at the center of the present court, in the same position as the present entrance to McElwain and Davison Halls.

Meanwhile, a charter for the new college had been granted by the legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on March 24, 1869. The new college was announced through the press, through the churches, and through friends of the Trustees, and it was hoped that the first session might open in September of 1870. There was, however, a delay in getting furniture and equipment necessary for the housing of faculty and students; so that the actual opening did not occur until October 12, 1870. Apparently it was a great occasion.³

The public press of Chambersburg displayed the same generous interest in the opening ceremony of the college as it has continued to show in events since that time. An account from the *Franklin Repository*, dated October 19, 1870, tells us that

“ . . . a large and brilliant assemblage was gathered together in the Wilson College building . . . to witness the formal opening ceremonies at that Institution . . . The President of the College (Dr. Tryon Edwards) . . . was then introduced and delivered an appropriate address of great beauty and force. He contrasted the interest which has hitherto been manifested in the education of boys and that which has been exhibited in the education of girls. He spoke of the large sums of money that had been appropriated all over the country for the endowment of institutions of learning for males whilst the daughters of the land have been sadly neglected . . . This was to be a first-class Institution. A large number of so-called colleges are not worthy of the title. It is the intention of the founders of

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

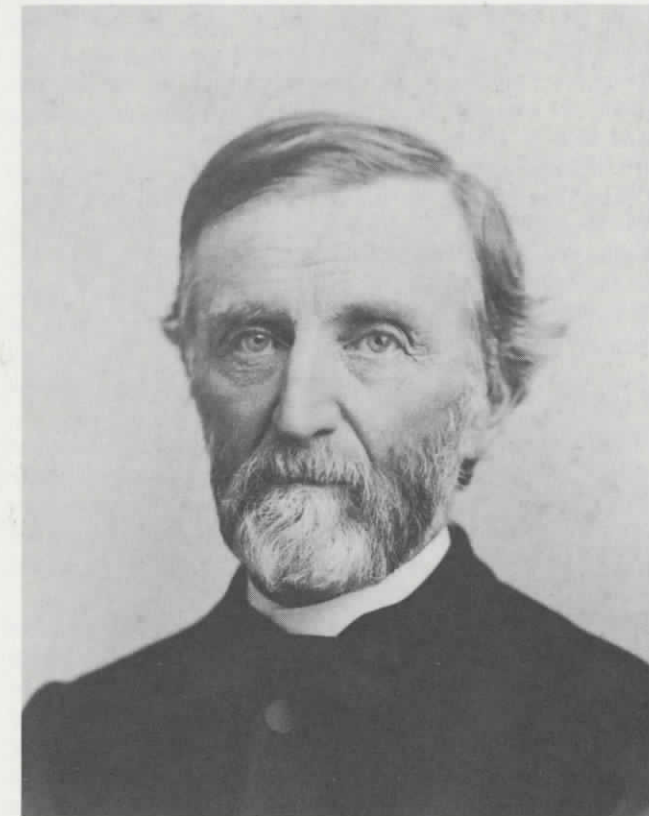


Miss Sarah Wilson was the principal donor to the fund for the establishment of the college and, in gratitude, it was named in her honor. She was to become known affectionately as “Aunt Sally” to generations of Wilson students.



A scene from the 1885-86 Catalogue showing the “Upper Boating Ground.”

An Idea Becomes a Fact



The Rev. J. Agnew Crawford served as a charter member of the Board of Trustees and was a member of the faculty when the College opened.

this institution, to redeem the name of College, if possible, from the contempt which has fallen upon female institutions. The effort will not be to cram the minds of pupils with facts, but to spend time in development of thought so that the pupils will learn to think for themselves, and thus be enabled in after life to become leaders, instead of followers, in society.” One of the principal addresses was made by the Rev. J. Agnew Crawford, a charter member of the Board of Trustees, who spoke as follows:

So that today we present you with an Institution which we think will be found worthy of your confidence and support. I congratulate you that you have, at home, a chance of educating your daughters equal to that which you would have were they sent to some other place. It is not for us to multiply promises—but we may be allowed to say that this shall be made a first-class Institution. The Trustees are resolved to spare nothing which will tend to make it so. Although the College has been founded with Presbyterian capital, and is mainly supported by it, we do not propose to make it sectarian in any offensive sense. It must be Christian.⁴

The idea had now become a fact. There was a faculty (eight), there were students (26 resident, soon increased to 33, and 42 non-resident), there were buildings, there were principles upon which the instruction and life of the college were to be based. For two years Dr. Tryon Edwards remained President of the Board of Trustees and nominal President of the College; but the actual administration of the college lay in the hands of the Rev. J. W. Wightman, whose official title was Vice President but whose actual function was that of President.

The first catalogue of Wilson College was published in December of 1870, approximately two months after the opening ceremonies. It is often true that a group of persons who have large plans for a project will talk in glowing terms before the venture is launched and resort to more sober language later. It is interesting to see that the idea which we have traced in its inception continued without substantial change to be the idea announced in the first catalogue of the College. Let us see what was said in this first bulletin.

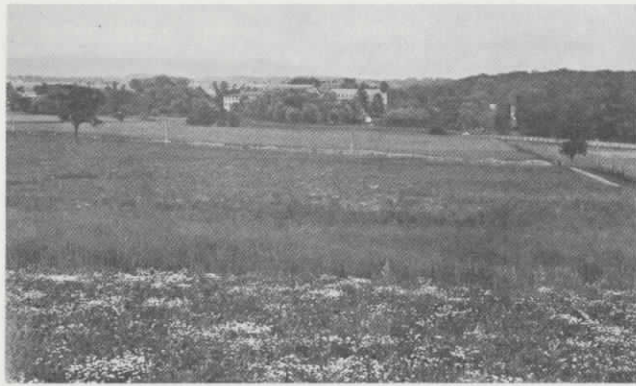
Wilson College, now in successful operation, is organized under a special charter from the State of Pennsylvania, giving full collegiate powers and privileges, and is designed to extend to young ladies the same high advantages for a thorough education—physical, intellectual, moral, and religious—as are now afforded to young men in the best colleges of the land.

Its Location is at Chambersburg, Pa., midway between the Susquehanna and the Potomac, in the heart of the beautiful Cumberland Valley, where the climate, modified by the surrounding mountains, is healthful and invigorating, and where natural beauties charm the eye on every side.

The community, in the midst of which it is situated, is a well known centre of intelligence and social refinement; the sturdy virtues of the early settlers having still, in morals and religion, a vigorous influence, securing those orderly and quiet habits in civil and social life which constitute so strong a safeguard for the young.

The Buildings in possession of the Trustees, so far as completed, are unsurpassed, if not unequalled, in the State. To the commodious and elegant mansion, erected by Col. A. K. McClure, a wing, 106 feet long, 40 wide and three stories high, harmonizing in style with the former, has been added, and is now ready for occupancy. All the modern conveniences, as water, bathing rooms, gas, &c., have been secured in the plan;

⁴ *Franklin Repository*, October 19, 1870.



A scene from an early "viewbook" showing the pastoral environment of Wilson.



One of the first additions to the campus was this Gymnasium, apparently completed in the late 1870's showing "typical Wilson athletes." The Gymnasium was described as "40 by 70 feet, with over 1,000 feet of hard wood skating floor, bowling alleys, and other appliances."



This picture taken in 1895 shows the Chapel with a memorial window by Tiffany, a gift of alumnae and friends of the Rev. Dr. John Edgar.

and the spacious apartments throughout are fitted up so as to secure, as far as possible, the health, comfort, and pleasure of the occupants. The grounds about the buildings are beautifully laid out, and well set with shrubbery and flowers; while the entire tract—some twenty-five acres—varied in surface, diversified with forest trees, and divided by a beautiful stream, gives ample room for open-air exercise, within the College gates. So that, to parents and guardians, we confidently present Wilson College, as in location and buildings, and in all its outward surroundings, one of the most charming educational homes in the country.

The Aim of the institution is not merely to bear the name, but to do the work of a College:—to provide in its course that thorough and effective discipline, which shall develop the mental faculties, and secure both habits of thought and real scholarship. Constant and skillful attention will be given to the ornamental branches, but these will not be allowed to usurp the place of those more solid studies, which must lie at the basis and form the staple of a true education.

To carry out this aim, the plan of the Trustees contemplates an ample endowment, such as will enable them to secure the highest order of talent in the corps of Instructors; and such as will also release tuition in the various departments from dependence on the pupils, and will bring down its cost to a mere nominal sum, as in colleges for young men. Encouraging progress in the development of this plan has been already made, and the friends of the enterprise are sanguine of complete success.

Special attention is also given to Physical Culture. A large hall, 106 feet by 40, has been provided for a gymnasium; while in favorable weather exercise in the open air is part of the daily discipline. In connection with this department practical lectures are to be given, from time to time, on health and hygiene and regulations pertaining thereto.

Religious Training is, in the organization of the College, regarded as essential to a thorough education. Accordingly a wide field of Biblical instruction is embraced in the course, and is insisted upon as an essential part of it. The institution has been founded, by the friends of the Presbyterian Church, in the interests of Christ and Christian scholarship; and in accordance with their views of truth it assumes for its work the joint culture, by all proper means, of both intellect and heart.

A liberal spirit is made to pervade the whole system of household economy, in the firm belief that the best mental effort is not possible where the surroundings are not homelike and satisfying.

The Government of the College, in accordance with the aims of a right education, seeks to develop the self-control of the pupil. It appeals to conscience and the sense of honor, thus calling into daily exercise the noblest principles of personal character and securing such good results as can never attend upon any system of suspicion and espionage.

Apparently the new idea had not lost vigor in the months between its inception and the publication of the first college catalogue in the early winter of 1870. This fact is important to the early years of the College and to its later years as well, for it implies that the College was not established in a moment of emotional enthusiasm but came into being as the realization of a need and as an idea which had gradually but firmly taken shape in the minds of the founders.

The equipment which a student was required to bring to college at that time was apparently simple and fundamental. For

many years the catalogue stated that "each pupil is required to bring her own napkin ring and to come provided with overshoes, umbrella, waterproof cloak, and Bible." These were all practical matters, the Bible not less so than the overshoes.

The second year of the College, 1871-72, seemed to fulfill the promise of the first. There were as yet no junior and senior classes. In this second year the College enrollment consisted of 2 sophomores and 22 freshmen, plus 50 students taking preparatory and special work. A word is appropriate here concerning the preparatory division which remained a subordinate part of the College for many years to come. A later catalogue makes it clear that secondary schools for girls were not then on an academic level with the excellent academies and secondary schools for boys. This forced Wilson College—as indeed it forced most colleges for women at the time—to offer preparatory work in order that it might secure for the college years students adequately trained for that work. At the beginning there were two preparatory years, later but one. This matter has been misunderstood in the past, and it is well to make it clear that in the early years the College was loath to spend its time and money on a preparatory division but was forced to do so by lack of adequate schools elsewhere.

Although there were in this second year no juniors or seniors in the College, the catalogue shows that the entire four years had been carefully planned and that they represented a corpus of study and a required achievement nearly identical with those in common use at the colleges for men. There were at that time so few colleges for women in existence that a comparison of Wilson's offerings and standards with those elsewhere reveals little except the general impression that all the pioneer colleges for women had their eyes fixed on the colleges for men and were intent on demonstrating that women could follow the same studies as men and with equal success. One notable feature of the total curriculum at Wilson was that sports and gymnastic drill were required of all students. So far as the writer is aware, Wilson was the first college for women to lay a quiet but firm emphasis upon physical education.

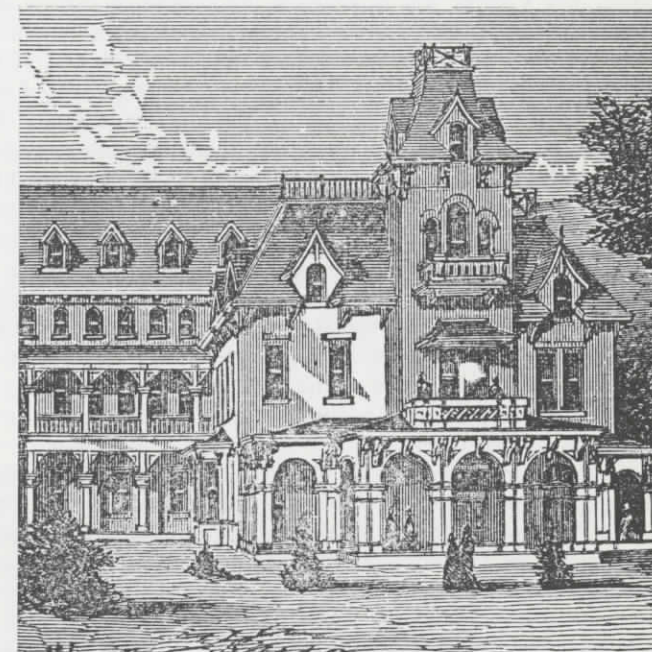
It may be well to have a glance at the first published By-Laws of the College, which appeared in January of 1872. Although there is no proof of the fact, they are apparently the work of Dr. J. W. Wightman, for they bear everywhere the impress of his clear mind. Certain sections are of special interest to us here. Every officer of the College—a term which included President, Vice-President, Lady Principal, Professors and Teachers—was required to subscribe to the following statement:

In the presence of God and the Board of Trustees of Wilson College, I do solemnly profess my belief in the existence of God, the inspiration and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures; and I do promise that I will labor faithfully and impartially as a teacher and officer of the College, and endeavor conscientiously to advance the intellectual, moral and social culture of those brought under my instruction and government while I remain in connection with the institution.⁵

The President was required to be an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church. Entire confidence was placed in the instructors of the College for the management of their teaching. The By-Laws state that "each professor and teacher shall have the right to conduct the course of studies assigned to their departments in the manner which shall seem to them best."⁶ This is a matter of some significance. It was the intention of the College

⁵ *The Charter and By-Laws of Wilson College*, January, 1872, Chapter II, Section 3, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid*, Chapter VI, Section 1, p. 10.



An early extension to Norland Hall provided facilities for a large dining room and chapel on the first floor, dormitories and "study parlors" on the second and third floors, and piano practice rooms and an art room on the 4th floor.

First Published By-Laws 1872

from the outset that there should be academic freedom in the full sense of the phrase. This policy is in accord with the policy also described in these By-Laws of entrusting to students as much responsibility for their own conduct as they could wisely be given. The College was to promote the growth of mature character; and no college has ever been able to do so without a large measure of academic freedom for its faculty and of self-government for its students. Emphasis upon the growth of intelligence and judgment as opposed to the mere retention of facts we have already noticed in the report of the opening ceremonies of the College. It is repeated in the formal By-Laws of 1872 in a statement which asserts that examinations shall be given upon the work of the first semester but that the ground covered in the first semester shall again be subject to examination at the end of the year. An examination was not to be regarded as a permission to forget. It is significant also that the first printed By-Laws devoted an entire section to the college library. It was apparent that the founders of the College understood clearly the prime importance of an adequate library as the center of an academic establishment.

On Commencement Day of 1872 Dr. J. W. Wightman resigned as Vice President of the College, and soon after Dr. Tryon Edwards relinquished the presidency of the Board of Trustees. The reason for Dr. Wightman's resignation is interesting. During the first two years the College had been filled to capacity. He earnestly entreated the Trustees to build an addition to the dormitory accommodations, but they did not feel at the moment able to do so. The Rev. Thomas Creigh, D. D., of Mercersburg, became President of the Board, and the Rev. James F. Kennedy, D. D., entered upon a four-year term as Vice President of the College and acted as President during the year 1872-73. As the year before had been made memorable by a gift of \$20,000 toward general expenses from Colonel Thomas A. Scott, of Philadelphia, so this year was made notable by an increase in the enrollment to a total of 72.

There was, however, some apparent difficulty in winning parents and students to the full understanding of the seriousness of college work. The catalogue of 1872-73 bears the following sentences:

It is highly important that students should be in their places promptly, at the opening of the year, and at the opening of each succeeding term, that they may go forward without embarrassment in their work. To this we call the special attention of parents or guardians, and make earnest request that no needless delay be in any case allowed. Punctuality and persevering effort in the discharge of duty are among the essential conditions of a thorough education, as well as among its best fruits; we cannot, therefore, during a current term, sanction the withdrawal of a student from her work even for a day, unless in case of actual necessity.⁷

It is possible that the tendency on the part of students to take an occasional week end at home and to protract their vacations beyond the normal limits may be accounted for in part by another statement in the catalogue which cannot now be read without a smile:

That young ladies may be without interruption or distraction in their work they are withdrawn as thoroughly as possible from the fascinations of society. They may receive calls only at the express request of parents or guardians and these must be made in hours of recreation, not in the evening and not on the Sabbath.⁸

⁷ *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Wilson College, 1872-73*, p. 28.

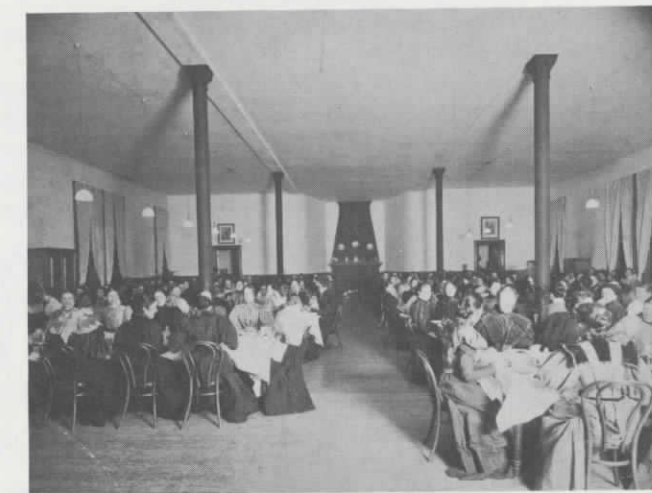
⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.



A view of the Library.



A procession of students entering Thomson Hall, completed in 1902.



First College dining room was added in 1895 with a seating capacity of 325.

The year 1873-74 is notable only for the one-year administration of the Rev. George Archibald, D. D., as President. When he resigned at the end of this year, Dr. James F. Kennedy, Vice President, assumed the general administration of college affairs. In spite of the lack of continuity of administration the College announced in the summer of 1874 that it was likely to be very full the coming season and urged early application for admission. The prophecy was justified. The year 1874-75 brought 83 students to the College: a senior class of 11, a junior class of 11, a sophomore class of 8, a freshman class of 10, the remainder being enrolled either in the preparatory division or as special students. The catalogue was able to boast that "severe illness is almost unknown in the College since the introduction of steam heat," which had been recently installed.

There had been growth, and there had been troubles also. The College was new, and the idea of higher education for women was new. It was only natural that members of the faculty should have their own ideas about both, and that those ideas should not always accord with the policy of the Board of Trustees and of the administration. Indeed, there is no assurance that the Board of Trustees and the administration were altogether unified in their views. There were as yet no precedents at Wilson or elsewhere to follow, and it is easy to understand that there should have been divisions of opinion. We have already seen that Dr. Wightman's resignation came as the result of one important difference. Indeed, the years from 1870 through 1875 brought the new college two Presidents of the Board of Trustees, two Vice Presidents and one President who served only one year. In the academic year 1875-76 the enrollment dropped from 83 to 69, and there was no President of the College, except as Dr. Kennedy, whose title was Vice President, may be said to have directed the administration *in absentia*. Although a French table was instituted for French students and certain other minor improvements were made in the curriculum, the College needed a good executive to give it direction and to placate diverse elements within the faculty and the Board.

To undertake this difficult task, the Board called the Rev. W. T. Wylie, A. M., who became President in 1876, in time to make a full announcement of his proposed re-organization in the catalogue of the College published in the summer of 1876. He stated that the enrollment would be limited to 75 students, that he would reorganize the curriculum, institute post-graduate work, and offer two courses which might be said to fall under the head of housekeeping—without academic credit, apparently.

When the College opened in the fall most of these promises were fulfilled. The curriculum was thoroughly revised in such a way that certain of the courses which had heretofore been scheduled for freshman year were covered in the preparatory course. The requirements for the degree were more specifically set forth; and to the eye of today President Wylie's curriculum appears to have kept pace with the rapid growth and development of curricula in the women's colleges of the time.

The faculties for the college department and the preparatory department consisted now of two different groups of instructors—apparently an effort to make a clear distinction between work at the college level and at the secondary level. The extent of the reorganization of 1876 can be gauged by the fact that only two members of the faculty of the year before returned, that one of the newcomers was a Doctor of Philosophy—a rare bird in those days—and another a woman Doctor of Medicine—even rarer. President Wylie apparently knew that in order to have a good college one must have a good faculty. But he recognized also

Growth and Troubles



A picture of the Class of 1894, described as the first class wearing caps and gowns all year.

that his work had only begun, and the end of his prospectus stated:

There are not a few young ladies of real talent and promise who are unable to meet even the moderate expenses of a course of collegiate studies and who yet earnestly desire to fit themselves for usefulness in life. In order to aid such worthy students we appeal to benevolent persons to assist us by endowments to place this institution on a basis similar to that of Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Lafayette, and other colleges for young men. To secure this we need a telescope and an observatory; books for the library; works of art for the art gallery; specimens for the cabinets; endowments for professorships, tutorships, scholarships; a general aid fund and a cottage building fund.⁹

We have already noted the losses in the faculty with which President Wylie began his first year. Chief among the names that failed to reappear in the catalogue of this year is that of Miss Lucy A. Plympton, to whom, as Lady Principal from 1870 through 1876, the College owed a vast debt. Six members of the Board of Trustees had also resigned during the summer before President Wylie's arrival, and five new members had been added.

The new era which seemed to be at hand lasted but a paltry two years. It was a disappointing thing to find that in President Wylie's first year, 1876-77, the enrollment was twenty below the limit of 75 which he had announced, and that in the next year there were but five students in the college courses, none in the senior or junior classes. The College was struggling, and appeared to be losing the battle. It had been able in the summer of 1877 to build a new gymnasium, which stood approximately where the northeast end of Davison Hall now stands, but the financial problem was difficult, and may in part be explained by the "continued depression" which is mentioned in the catalogue of 1877-78.

But one suspects that this was not the only difficulty. At the end of President Wylie's first year only three members of his new faculty of the previous year returned. There must also have been some disciplinary troubles, for President Wylie's second catalogue has a heavy black bar to emphasize the following statement: "Every young lady who applies to become a student of the College is understood thereby to promise compliance with all its regulations if admitted, and is received only on that condition." In 1878 President Wylie resigned. It was a sad ending to a brave beginning. It is only fair to say, however, that he left behind him a curriculum which, in its basic features, was to remain unchanged for many years to come, and that on his faculty he had had Mrs. Julia McNair Wright, the distinguished authoress, Miss Susan Miller, a Vassar graduate who later, as Mrs. S. M. Dorsey, became head of the vast public school system of Los Angeles, and Miss Abbie Goodsell, who as Lady Principal left a stamp upon the College which has not yet been erased.

There followed an interregnum of three academic years, from the autumn of 1878 through the spring of 1881. In the first of these years five new Trustees were added to the Board, one of whom was the late George H. Stewart, of Shippensburg, who for many years was intimately associated with the College and gave in 1924 a library in memory of his brother, the Honorable John Stewart, of Chambersburg. During this interval of three years the Rev. T. H. Robinson, D. D., of Harrisburg, served as "President Pro Tem." But the actual management of the College was entrusted to the Lady Principal, Miss Abbie Goodsell. In 1881 Dr. Thomas Creigh turned over the presidency of the Board to

⁹ *Announcements for 1877-78 and Supplement to the Catalogue of Wilson College, Chambersburg, Pa., 1876, p. 17.*



Wilson students are shown in a May Pole Dance in this 1902 photograph.



A reading room is portrayed in an early "viewbook."



"Corner of Parlor" is reproduced from an early College publication.

A School of Music is Founded



"The Blue Parlor."

Dr. C. P. Wing, of Carlisle, whose term of office lasted eight years. President Wylie's curriculum remained unchanged except for those minor alterations which naturally occur from year to year. The library, which had originally begun with a modest collection of a few hundred books, mostly the gifts of friends in the Cumberland Valley, had gradually grown until in 1880 it was stated to contain 1500 volumes. These years also saw the establishment of the first of the two literary societies, which played an active part in the subsequent life of the College. A missionary society also came into being at this time.

The serious difficulty in this period was a diminution in enrollment and a consequent diminution in the number of the faculty. The causes of this trouble were many, but surely one of them was the lack of a President able to devote his full time to the needs of the college; and another was the continuing financial uncertainty throughout the nation. The College too may have erred a bit on the side of over-strictness. We have seen that young ladies were "withdrawn as much as possible from the fascinations of society." It is interesting to note also the following statement in the catalogue of 1880-81:

The receipt of boxes of food has been so invariably followed by a lowering of the physical and mental health of those who have partaken of their contents that hereafter anything of this kind that is received will be taken charge of by the Lady Principal and disposed of as may seem best to her.

If the Lady Principal had not been a woman of such unimpeachable integrity, one might hazard a guess as to how she disposed of these boxes.

In the summer of 1881 a President was found. He was the Rev. J. C. Caldwell, D. D., and his two years of service helped in a measure to offset the sorry effects of the preceding five years. The enrollment of the College, which reached a new low point in 1881-82, increased from 49 to 79 the next year. A partial explanation of this increase is to be found in the announcement made in 1881 of the establishment of a School of Music leading to the degree of Bachelor of Music; and in the announcement made the following year of a special course in Fine Arts, not leading to a degree but offering additional opportunities either for students enrolled in the College or for special students who desired to have good instruction in a field which was rapidly gaining in popularity and in academic respectability. Both music and art had been taught before 1881, but in this and the succeeding years the Trustees more vigorously supported them as branches of special instruction. Otherwise the curriculum which President Wylie had instituted in 1876 remained virtually unchanged.

It is worth note that when President Caldwell came to Wilson Mrs. Caldwell superseded Miss Abbie Goodsell as Lady Principal and that in 1881-82 appears the name of Miss Jennie W. Criswell, '73, as teacher of Music, the first of a distinguished line of Wilson alumnae to serve as members of the Wilson faculty.

One suspects that President Caldwell had a strong respect for the truth. Most of the catalogues before his time had shown in the frontispiece a reproduction of Main Hall as many remember it, complete with both wings. The fact was that for many years after 1881 the only part of the building yet erected was the section up to and including the entrance to Main Hall opposite the center of the court. It was natural that the College should publish a drawing of its main building as it was to be. We should lay this practice to the good Christian virtues of faith and hope, and add also that most of the cuts bear beneath them a statement that "this is the original plan of the building, a part of which is not yet completed." It remained, however, for President

Caldwell to be perfectly frank and explicit. His first catalogue shows Main Hall as it then stood: the McClure Mansion, "Norland," and one wing extending through the courtyard entrance, with a flag jauntily flying from the peak of its steep gable. A glance at that picture makes one realize how much has happened since 1881.

President Caldwell resigned in 1883. His two years of tenure were almost too brief to permit any great achievement, but to those years we trace back the first real strength of the music course and the art course, which flourished for upward of thirty years before they were finally discontinued as separate branches of instruction and absorbed within the standard liberal arts curriculum.

Let us pause a moment and look back. We are in the year 1883, and Wilson College has functioned for thirteen years. There have been six Presidents, not all called by that name but all fulfilling that function. The average length of tenure is therefore only slightly more than two years. There have been also three Presidents of the Board of Trustees. Yet of the twenty-one members of the original Board of Trustees of 1870, ten still hold membership in 1883. Here is the faithful band who understood the idea of which we are tracing the history. They have had difficulties and distresses. Their hope has not yet been fulfilled, but a study of the minutes of the Board shows that they were determined in 1883 to find a good President who would be able to give the College the strength and the direction that it needed. They made an extensive search before reaching their decision. It fell finally upon the Rev. John Edgar, A. M., Ph. D.; and, as we shall see, the Board of Trustees of Wilson College has at no time made a more fortunate selection of the chief executive officer.

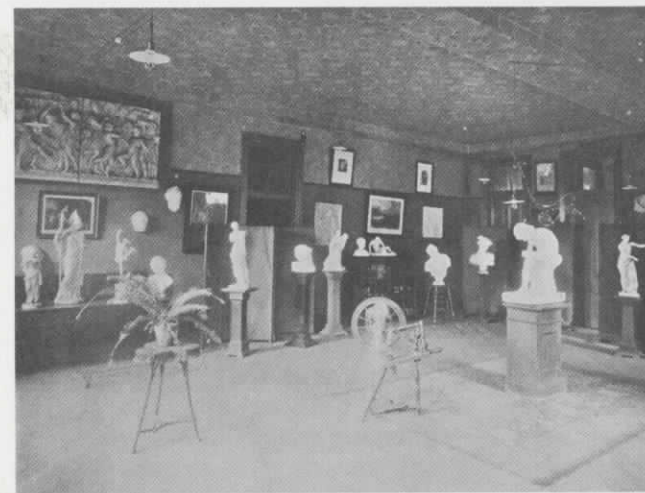
The catalogues of Dr. Edgar's first two years give a fairly good measure of the College which he inherited from his predecessor and of the way in which he was to address himself to the task of reorganization and advance. In the year 1883-84 there were, in addition to himself and the Lady Principal, only eight members of the faculty. The enrollment in the same year was 78 students. The size of the campus was thirty acres; and although the catalogue boasted that the grounds had been laid out by the celebrated author Ike Marvel (Donald G. Mitchell) it may be inferred that the task was not difficult, for in this year the buildings consisted of one-half of the former Main Hall, a small building called College Cottage, a gardener's house, a stable, and a gymnasium, and Mr. Marvel had apparently been able to decide the situation of only one of them. The College was in debt, many of its rooms were empty, its faculty wondered whether their salary checks would be paid. Morale was low. The only bright spot was the fact that the number of volumes in the library had increased to approximately 2,000.

Dr. Edgar undertook his task with a sureness, vigor, and foresight which characterized all of his eleven years as President. He accepted President Wylie's curriculum of 1876 as basically sound. He gave it a vastly clearer interpretation and improved its daily procedures. It is possible now to trace the pattern of studies which every candidate for the degree of Bachelor of Arts would follow. She would study Latin and Mathematics for four years. For two and a half years she would study one of the natural sciences. In the senior year she studied Philosophy. Throughout her entire college course she received instruction in the Bible. There were also requirements in general history, English literature and composition. In the time not occupied by these required studies she had a commendable choice of electives in other subjects.



The Rev. Dr. John Edgar served as President from 1883 to 1894, and he was rated as one of Wilson's strongest administrators.

Growth Begins with Dr. Edgar



The Arts received strong emphasis in Wilson's early days, as shown by the Art Room and, below, a Vocal Studio.



For the degree of Bachelor of Science modifications were made in the language requirements of the Bachelor of Arts course, and the candidate was permitted to take a heavier concentration in the physical and natural sciences. It was Dr. Edgar who first established the Master's Degree at Wilson, following the customary practice of the day whereby a candidate at the end of five years after graduation might present herself for examination, unless she had entered the teaching profession, in which case she could present herself for examination at the end of three years. The Art Department was strengthened in Dr. Edgar's first year, and was to go from good to better during his administration. That the new President had a clear understanding of the educational process may be seen in a shrewd statement which he made concerning the preparation necessary for students who sought to enter Wilson: "Difficulty is experienced both in the classics and in the modern languages because pupils do not know as they should the technical grammar of their own language." Anyone who has taught languages or studied them will instantly recognize the force of this comment. Most students who have difficulty with a foreign language encounter it because they do not understand the structure of their own.

It is already clear, and it will become clearer as we proceed, that Dr. Edgar was an educator of excellent ability. But it is not enough for a president to understand only the educational ideals of his college. He must be a jack-of-all-trades, and principal among his abilities must be the faculty of sizing up what the world calls a "business situation." Dr. Edgar had that ability to a notable degree. Previous administrators had encountered financial difficulty and had sought to meet it in various ways, all of them unsuccessful. The charges of the College had in the first year been \$350 for board and tuition, with certain extras. Very soon after the opening year this charge was reduced to \$300, and later restored to its original figure. Dr. Edgar regularized the charges at \$250 a year, and in the first catalogue which he issued, the catalogue of 1883-84, stated explicitly that there would be no extras, except for laundry and pew rent. Students studying music or art would of course pay a slightly increased charge. But Dr. Edgar made it clear to the patrons of the College what the expenses would be and promised that they would not exceed the printed statement. Throughout his entire administration he strove to keep charges down, in one year even printing a photograph of the graduating class clad in academic gowns as an example of how graduation expenses could be kept low, at least for fancy clothing, through the use of the standard black Bachelor's robe. This is a minor virtue of the academic garment which, so far as I know, had never been called to public attention before.

It was also clear from the outset that Dr. Edgar would seek to reach out beyond the boundaries of the Cumberland Valley and the State of Pennsylvania. The catalogue of his second year carried a map of the eastern part of the United States, showing Chambersburg in letters larger than those used for New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, and indicating the ease with which railway connections could be had! Times have changed, and in point of good train service we may look back upon Dr. Edgar's regime as Paradise Lost.

He was also alert to the need for endowment. He reproduced in the catalogue of 1884-85 an extract from an editorial in a contemporary issue of *Harper's Magazine* which is as relevant to 1969 as it was to 1885:

It is a curious fact that it is harder . . . to raise money for the higher education of young women than for young men . . . To those who have is given . . . What is done for young men is done eagerly and profusely, almost forced upon them; what is done for young women comes grudgingly. In the university

town where I live it is often far easier to obtain additional funds for the disproportionate endowments for young men than to raise far smaller amounts for women.

To this statement Dr. Edgar very properly appended several different forms of bequest for the use of readers of his catalogue.

On the social side his administration was from the beginning kindly but firm. His talented wife served throughout all of his administration, and for some years after it, as Lady Principal—a title which apparently embraced the functions of dean and head of house. It may be to her that we can attribute the following regulation of the College:

Entertainments, concerts, lectures, etc., of proper character in the town halls or churches may be attended if the pupils go in a body, occupying reserved seats and under the care of teachers, but not sociables, fairs, etc., as the College being in a measure responsible for acquaintanceships formed cannot countenance chance introductions which have not the previous consent of parents.¹⁰

With the year 1885-86 a steady growth began in every important department of college life. The faculty was increased by two over the year before. Its members were for the first time listed by academic branches, in the manner now familiar to us. The enrollment increased from 95 to 101. The College added to its courses of instruction a new group of subjects the brilliance of which has seldom been matched in any other college or university in a single year; Wen-li and Ningpo, literary and colloquial Chinese; Sanskrit, Zend, Pali, Siamese and Burmese. Moreover, standards for graduation were raised. Four full courses meeting five periods a week were now required instead of three, and the curriculum foreshadows the developments of the twentieth century through the announcement of certain groupings and prerequisites within the course of instruction. More important than all else is the statement that the aim of the students should be "to have more than merely book knowledge."

On the financial side Dr. Edgar tried a new expedient to accelerate the collection of accounts. Apparently people were no more prompt in paying their bills in 1885 than they are today, and Dr. Edgar applied methods with which many of us are familiar now. The charges of the College, you recall, were \$250 per year. In 1885 he increased the charges to \$255 and then stated that a two percent rebate would be given for cash payment. Quick calculation shows that cash payment effected a savings of \$5.10. But he gave over this practice a few years later and threw himself, without reserve, upon the understanding of his patrons. It was in this same year that the first scholarship at Wilson College was announced.

On the residential side of college life certain changes were made to promote the amenity of living. An extension to Main Hall was built in 1885. It was that section of former Main northeast of the central portico standing beneath three gables on the fourth floor. It then became possible to adjust living quarters in such a way that each group of four girls occupied three rooms: two of them double bedrooms and the third a common living room. However pleasant this new arrangement may have been, it was necessary to rise with the early bell at 6:30 in the morning and appear promptly at the breakfast table at 7:15; and in the evening one had to be in one's room at 7:00 and remain there, with one break, until lights went out at 10:00. It was worth noting that during this and the next year the College added to its equipment an astronomical observatory, which was situated approximately where Thomson Hall now stands.

Students are shown in these 1890 photographs in the "Tower Room" of Main Hall.

¹⁰ *Annual Calendar of Wilson Female College, 1885-86, Chambersburg, Pa., p. 25.*

The succeeding years witnessed expansion and growth. In 1887 Dr. Edgar boasted that two of his faculty would leave for advanced study in Germany. And his statement that during the past three years students had been drawn to Wilson College from thirteen states shows that he had had a measure of success in making the College known outside its own neighborhood. One interesting innovation in this same year was the institution of a compulsory class in cooking, held during the last week of the college year and taught by the celebrated Mrs. Rohrer, whose cookbook was then, like the Bible, a standard work in most homes. No credit was given for this work, but doubtless Mrs. Edgar had impressed upon her husband the fact that even for the learned young lady the way to a man's heart might still be through his stomach.

The year 1887-88 was a banner year. The fruits of Dr. Edgar's hard work were beginning to be apparent. The Board of Trustees was considerably strengthened, and among the new names appeared that of the Rev. John Grier Hibben, then pastor of the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church and later Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University and its President for twenty years. The enrollment increased from 130 to 164, with students in that one year from sixteen states and the District of Columbia. The feeling of new strength which permeated the whole college made it possible for Dr. Edgar to assert with confidence a principle which many years later led to the rejection of the special music and art courses in favor of the more important course leading to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science. While describing with pride the work of the special departments, he explicitly stated that wherever possible "the regular course should be the aim of all," and he made it clear that in a college of the size of Wilson individual instruction is possible as it is not in larger institutions.

The increase in enrollment made physical expansion necessary. Two buildings near the campus were rented as dormitories. Both still stand: one is the building now known as Spanish House (or the Anchorage), then called Richards Hall, the other the home of Mr. Dunbar Rosenthal, then called Stenger Hall. Dr. Edgar boasted that all of the college buildings were connected by "private Bell telephone" and that in bad weather free bus service would bring students to and from the campus. In view of this pleasant pressure for admission he was able to say that "refusals of applications have been necessary for some years past" and to urge early application for the coming year. For those applicants who desired a college education but needed financial assistance there were now three scholarships available.

The two new dormitories had an important effect on the corporate life of the College. A student writing in *The Pharetra*, the newly-established literary magazine of the College, said in 1888:

The employment of the outside halls to accommodate the large increase in numbers, has produced some changes. A natural feeling of special interest in one's own particular building, and a consequent uniformity of thought and action are observable among the boarders of each house. The effect is probably similar to that seen among college men of fraternity houses, and has added a healthy stimulus to all.

A further glimpse of one side of college life in that year is taken from the same source:

The amusements resorted to vary with the season. When the session opens in the glowing days of September, the all-absorbing sport is tennis. Pupils, teachers, professors, and even our President, arm themselves with rackets and contest eagerly for the victory on either side of the net. Ever and anon a shout arises from the tennis courts (which by the way are

Expansion and Growth



This drawing from the 1893-94 Catalogue is used to illustrate social life at Wilson.

Amusements Vary with Season

good as well as numerous) telling of some extra play or a game won.

As the cooler weather comes on a modified form of football claims a share of our attention, and the frosty air resounds with gayety and rollicking fun. But in mid-winter we are compelled to seek most of our recreation indoors. We are not, however, without abundant sources of enjoyment. The large music parlor in Main Hall is replete with games of all sorts, from anagrams to crokinole. Checkers, dominoes, chess, and so on almost ad infinitum, are found strewn about in lavish profusion. Cold weather does not trouble the merry party gathered about the open grates, engaged intently as they are with these pastimes.

Apparently students were happy at Wilson College then as they had been before and have been since although by our standards their life was somewhat restricted. In 1888 a booklet was published entitled "Rules for Pupils," from which we learn a number of interesting things. Sunday, for instance, was serious business. "Students shall spend a portion of the day in absolute quietness in their rooms. Visiting each other's rooms on that day is prohibited. Beside attending church in the morning they are also required to be present at an afternoon service held at the College." With great liberality Dr. Edgar altered the prohibition against visiting rooms on Sunday, insisting only that students should not visit during that portion of the day which was to be given over to "absolute quietness." A few other quotations will be interesting.

Students shall throw nothing from the windows . . . Those not under censure may visit the town on Saturday with permission of the President . . . Students will not receive permission to visit home during the session except for urgent reasons. Students will be permitted, with the consent of the President, to accept invitations to tea or other social intercourse if confined to two each term.

And if any students should be moved to present a petition of any kind to the President, that petition first had to be submitted to him for approval.

In the same year the authorities felt that they had to do something about the dress of the student body. Many a man's college has wanted to do likewise, but for the opposite reason. The criticism of Wilson girls was not that they were wilfully sloppy, but that they were wilfully feminine. There were too many beautiful dresses to accord with the principles of sobriety held by college authorities. Hence this statement:

As nothing tends more to lower the standard of scholarship among students than undue interest in dress, it has been made a requirement of the College that the dress of the pupils shall be simple and inexpensive and that through the day it shall be the uniform gymnastic dress, blouse body, and skirt, with colors as adopted by the students, viz: skirt (reaching to top of boot or shoe) of flannel with red and black stripes about one inch wide and blouse body of black flannel with cuffs and collar of skirt material. Pupils can thus pass through the day from classwork to gymnastic work without the change of dress which so often brings colds, and without unnecessary loss of time.¹¹

The wearing of these uniforms apparently did not offend a group of visitors who came to Wilson College in May 1889 or damp the good spirits of the student-body. One of these visitors reported, "We cheerfully bear testimony to the fact that we have never seen a better-behaved, brighter, more wholesome-looking

¹¹ *Twentieth Annual Calendar of Wilson College, June, 1890, p. 26.*

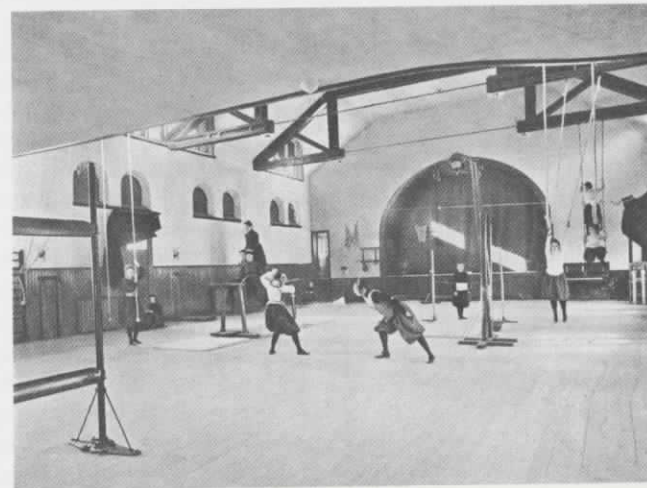


Field Hockey, one of the major sports of Wilson, had its origin in the College's beginning.

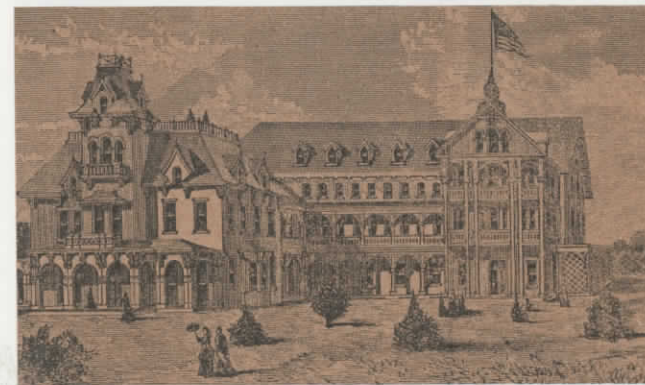
Rules for Pupils



Wilson students are depicted in a May Day Dance and, below, in gymnastic activities.



The Prosperous Years



An artist's rendering of the major buildings on the Wilson campus in the 1880's. Norland Hall is shown at left, and the first major extension to the building is shown at right.

group of girls than we saw at Wilson College." And the same statement adds: "The relations existing between teachers and pupils are evidently of the most harmonious, cordial, and pleasant character." The same visitors reported that

The College is now in a prosperous condition, without debt, its income covering expenses and it does not hesitate at large expenditures for anything conducive to the welfare or progress of its pupils.¹²

It is not "simply a college in name but also in fact." The same statement mentioned a second addition to Main Hall, which various photographs in this and other catalogues show to consist of another section added at the northeast end of the former Main Hall three gables long.

Though this was a great year for Wilson, better things were in store. In 1889-90 the curriculum was revised and carefully elaborated, although its basic principles remained unchanged. The catalogue of the year bears evidence of the fact that President Edgar had been profoundly influenced, together with all other alert educators in America, by the thinking of the distinguished President of Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Daniel Coit Gilman, who did more than any other man of his generation to clarify educational principles and procedures. Dr. Edgar summarizes Dr. Gilman's pattern of a liberal education in his preface to the description of the courses offered at Wilson College. He agrees with Dr. Gilman that true liberal education consists of the study of (1) ancient and modern languages and literatures; (2) mathematics; (3) natural and physical sciences; and (4) historical and moral sciences. He then shows that the pattern of study at Wilson College has for many years been in accord with this description; and with confidence he sets forth the improvements that are proposed for the succeeding academic year. Equally alert to other contemporary movements in higher education, Dr. Edgar reshaped the entrance requirements in conformity with the principles laid down by a group of leading colleges and universities in New England and the Middle Atlantic states. Incidentally, it was out of these early intercollegiate conferences held for the purpose of establishing common modes of procedure that the College Entrance Examination Board later grew.

One other feature must be mentioned in connection with the year 1889-90. The College was now in its twentieth year. Its alumnae body was growing steadily, and it was natural that the College should seek to make an accurate list of its former students. The catalogue of this year devoted its last four pages to a roster of former students from the beginning in 1870; and for some years afterward each catalogue added new names by classes, comprising in effect the first alumnae directory of the College. It was in keeping with President Edgar's businesslike ways and his foresight to devote to this work the immense amount of time and labor which were involved.

The catalogue of the year 1890-91 shows that Wilson College was aware of important changes which were taking place in American higher education. Allusion is made to the decline of the classics and the growth of science in college curricula. Political Science, still under the name of "Political Economy," was beginning to establish itself as a separate branch, and Dr. Edgar takes pleasure in listing the titles of some of the senior essays written by members of the class of 1891 as evidence that Wilson College was abreast of the time. Some of these titles are worth recording here: "The Economic Ideas of Besant vs. Those of Bellamy;" "Does the Laborer need Protective Legislation?"; "Is

¹² Minutes of the Synod of Pennsylvania, October, 1889, re-printed in *Twentieth Annual Calendar of Wilson College, June, 1890, p. 28.*

Malthusianism in accord with Geology and Biology?"; "The Silver Question;" "Cooperation and Profit Sharing." Are not these echoes out of a rapidly fading past?

Dr. Edgar cited with pride the fact that during this one year students at Wilson College were drawn from twenty states and five foreign countries. To accommodate an increasing enrollment a third addition to Main Hall was completed in the summer of 1891, comprising three more gables at the northeast end of the long wing. It was in this year also that he was able to announce the completion of a second astronomical observatory at the eastern side of the campus near the avenue which now bears his name. It was a fine edifice in its day, and I am afraid that his justifiable pride would have been offended if he could have known that later it was to be called "The Chocolate Drop" and to be removed with much acclaim in 1937.

Growth continued in the next year. The faculty now consisted of twenty-four persons, in addition to the President, Lady Principal, and Assistant Lady Principal. It is interesting to note that in this year was first listed the name of Miss Anna J. McKeag, who was to serve the College for some years and later return as its President. Dr. Edgar noted with satisfaction the increase in equipment in the physics laboratory and in the art studios. He has now managed to house the small preparatory division in a separate building, presumably in Richards Hall, or in Cottage Hall, a small edifice standing to the southwest of Main and fitted up as a dormitory a year or two before when Stenger Hall was no longer available for college use.

There had apparently been a great burgeoning in extra-curricular activities. There was a banjo club, a guitar club, a choral club, a debating society, and the two literary societies maintained their activity unabated. The two missionary societies of former years had been merged into one, and a Christian Endeavor organization had been established. From these two latter emerged the Y. W. C. A. of the present day. The rosters, which were alluded to above, have apparently had the effect of promoting alumnae interest in their college, for the catalogue of 1891-92 shows that there are four "state clubs," composed of present and past students whose purpose is to promote the welfare of the College outside its campus.

In October of 1891 the College was visited by a committee of the Synod of Pennsylvania, which reported among other things special dining rooms for French and German students in which only French and German were spoken; an extension to the old gymnasium; and the addition of strong new members to the faculty. These visitors, like certain of their predecessors, were able to say categorically, "The students are wide-awake." They were also satisfied that the religious life of the College was keeping pace with its intellectual growth. "Brethren," they state, "this is a Christian College . . . Its location is favorable . . . It is where the theology is pure, being of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian Type."¹³ Apparently the theology was purer than the drinking water, for during this period all of the latter was obtained by means of runnels from the slate roofs, whereupon it was twice filtered through charcoal and distributed to convenient places throughout the college buildings. Water for use in the bathrooms came from the borough reservoirs.

Dr. Edgar celebrated the tenth year of his presidency by the publication of the gayest catalogue that Wilson College had thus far had. The cover was handsomely decked out in silver and blue, the college colors. In its front is a display of the College buildings, showing Main Hall, Richards Hall, Cottage Hall, the recently completed Observatory—unquestionably looking very

¹³ *Twenty-first Annual Calendar of Wilson College, 1891-92, pp. 29-30.*



A group of faculty members is shown in this 1894 photograph.



Early scenes of the Conococheague.

much like a chocolate drop—Fletcher Hall, acquired in this year, and a view from the southwest corner of Main showing the Conococheague expanded by poetic license into quite a sizable lake, on the borders of which stand the college barn and Cottage Hall. One should not omit mention of the commodious grape arbor, which was long the boast of the College and the wonder of its students, who were permitted at all times to help themselves freely to the great clusters which it produced. No restriction upon unfermented grape juice; of any other kind not a word. This catalogue also contains a photograph showing nine winsome maidens clad in flowing white draperies in an aesthetic dance movement "after the Delsarte method." Compared to our modern dances these older ones lacked speed, but had ample compensation in grace and beauty.

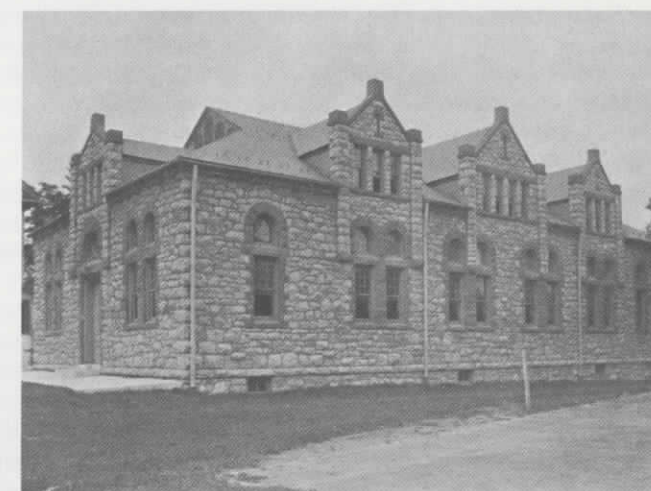
This catalogue also contains the clearest statement yet made in any public announcement of the College concerning requirements for degrees. The course of study leading to the two Bachelor's degrees still runs closely parallel to Dr. Gilman's prescription for a liberal education. Three and a half years of ancient languages and two and a half of modern languages are its basis. Mathematics must be taken for one and a half years, and some science throughout three years. English is required for two; and Philosophy—including ethics, economics and history—must be included in varying amounts. From a businesslike roster of classes published in this catalogue we learn that "over fifty classes are in session each school morning from 9 A. M. to 1 P. M.;" that the schedule of study is intelligently and economically designed; and that the average teaching schedule for the faculty is approximately eighteen hours per week—a figure about representative of the teaching loads in many colleges at the time.

We have discovered how much light is thrown upon the history and growth of the College by the reports made to the Synod of Pennsylvania by a visiting committee sent to the College each year. In October 1892 Synod was told by its visiting committee that there were 230 students in attendance, only 10 of whom were in the preparatory division. Apparently rising standards in secondary schools were making it less necessary than before to offer preparatory work. The charges to students were listed as from \$250 to \$273 annually, the difference being accounted for by special rooming accommodations. The annual income for the year 1891-92 had been \$60,000, of which \$20,000 was expended upon the extension made to Main Hall in 1891. The heating, light, and ventilation were considered good, and the excellent fire escapes were especially commended. The same neat appearance which marks the campus now apparently characterized it then. "The teachers," continues the report, "exhibit tact as well as scholarship and their wide-awake classes give evidence to the thoroughness of the work done. We were impressed with their aptness in giving lessons a practical bearing, and thus awakening deep interest in study." In conclusion they agree that "in no educational institution in the country can greater advantages be enjoyed at so moderate a cost."¹⁴ A similar group visiting the College in October 1893 again praised the faculty of the College for the success of its efforts to stimulate the students "to think for themselves." Its members also comment favorably upon the fact that the College has been out of debt for six years, that it is financing itself adequately, even in a year of depression. They mention the need of a new gymnasium and of endowment, as well as of a building for scientific purposes; and state their hope

¹⁴ Minutes of the Synod of Pennsylvania, October, 1892, re-printed in the *Twenty-third Annual Calendar of Wilson College, June, 1893, pp. 31-32.*



*Above: Trustees' Room.
Below: The Gymnasium completed in 1900.*



that all of these needs can be met before the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the College in 1895.

The year 1893-94 proceeded in very much the same way as those that immediately preceded it. From various sources we know that Dr. Edgar was in poor health. He had worked hard without sparing himself at any point. It is with a real inward pang that the writer of this paper encountered in the college calendar published in June of 1894 two inserts which announced his death on the 5th of June. He had served the College for eleven years and had, according to many who knew him, shortened his life by overwork. One of the inserts is signed by the senior members of the faculty, who said,

In the sudden removal by death of its efficient and honored president, Wilson College has sustained a grievous loss. Dr. Edgar took the College when its fortunes were at lowest ebb, and in the eleven years of his presidency he freed it from debt, improved the equipment of every department, extended its buildings, filled its halls with earnest students and raised it to the worthy place it holds today among the colleges for women of our land.

It is due to his memory to claim that his work, being well done, is permanent. The up-building of Wilson College has been based upon no merely temporary foundation. The enlarged halls still stand, the last addition planned by Dr. Edgar will be carried forward, and the new wing will be ready for occupancy in September. With but one or two exceptions, the corps of instructors remains unchanged, and in the hands of those who are familiar with their work and understand the methods and policy of the College the standard of scholarship will not be lowered. Without hesitation, we declare that no advantage offered to students in the past will be withdrawn, but on the contrary, that new and superior opportunities for study will be available.

For the future of Wilson we have no fear; the College has a life of its own, an enduring character, even though he is taken away whose noble achievement it has been to place the institution which he loved upon this assured foundation.

This statement from a group of colleagues accurately evaluates Dr. Edgar's great achievement. He had come to Wilson when it was in dire straits. A series of brief administrations had reduced its morale to a low level. Debts had mounted. Competition from other colleges which had been more fortunate in securing endowment was increasing. In his first year he had an enrollment of 78 students and a faculty of eight members. The only building of substantial worth was that part of Main Hall which included the old McClure mansion, "Norland," and the one wing extending through the entrance at the center of the court.

He left the College free of debt and in a sound financial condition, with an enrollment of 232 and a faculty of 26 in addition to the administrative officers. When he came to Wilson, we recall, there were no seniors and no sophomores, and only two juniors and four freshmen in the college division. When he left it there were 16 in the senior class, 25 in the junior class, 12 in the sophomore and 38 in the freshman. The music school and fine arts department had been built up until they had achieved a wide reputation. In the last year there were students from eighteen states and two foreign countries. The College had found itself, its own integrity had been established, and its own confidence in its work and its future had been confirmed. It was known everywhere as one of the leading colleges for women, with a reputation for sound studies and high ideals. Its alumnae were scattered over the face of the earth; and no greater proof can be had of the strength of Wilson under Dr. Edgar than the

Dr. Edgar Dies



By 1903 Thomson Hall (at extreme left) and Main Hall Extension and Edgar Hall (at right) had been completed, forming the central complex of College buildings.



South Hall was completed in 1899 and was reserved at first for seniors.



The Rev. Dr. Samuel A. Martin was President from 1895 to 1903, concluding the period covered by this publication.

Dr. Martin Inherits a Strong College



Mrs. John Edgar was Lady Principal from 1883 to 1901. Following her husband's death, she served temporarily as President.

illustrious list of Wilson women who, trained under his regime, have made their mark in every walk of life open to women.

So closed an important epoch in the life of the College. A committee which visited the campus from the Synod of Baltimore in October of 1894 was so deeply impressed by the achievement of Dr. Edgar that its members urged that the name of the College be changed to Edgar-Wilson College. During the academic year 1894-95 Mrs. Edgar served as Acting President and the life of the College moved along without interruption, except for a disastrous fire on March 26th of that year. Fires have always had a curious effect upon Wilson. You recall that out of the burning of the first McClure mansion rose the edifice which was used as the first dormitory unit of the new college. The fire of 1895 only served to hasten the completion of Main Hall. The section on the north which matches Norland on the south was constructed in the summer of 1895, and the building looked then very much as it does now.¹⁵ This year also brought a new but familiar name to the Board of Trustees, that of the Honorable John Stewart.

The new President who undertook his duties in 1895 was the Reverend Samuel A. Martin, D. D., who served until 1903. Dr. Martin inherited a strong college and in certain respects distinctly improved upon his inheritance. He shares with the late Dr. E. D. Warfield the distinction of having added a considerable group of buildings to the campus. By the end of his fifth year seven new buildings had been erected: President's Hall in 1896, now used as an infirmary; Harmony Cottage in 1897; Science Hall, the former biology laboratory, in 1898, the top floor of which was long used as the home of one of the literary societies; the tiny Latin School at the south end of the campus, which was long called the Brick House, and was removed in 1956; South Hall, for seniors, in 1899; a new gymnasium in 1900, replacing an older structure, at the north of Main Hall; and a new dining hall which was apparently under construction when Dr. Martin arrived in 1895, joined to Main Hall at the back center and providing a battery of classrooms on the second floor. It is to his later years as President that the Frank Thomson Music Hall belongs, constructed from 1900 to 1902. The catalogue for the year 1901-02 carries as a frontispiece a drawing of the college campus made from a hypothetical position above the present Kenwood area. Although that part of the college grounds which is now sports fields is there shown as meadows and virtually no buildings are to be seen beyond, the campus is quite recognizable even to a person who has been familiar with it only in its present guise. The most notable difference is that at that time the main highway ran like a wide gash across the middle of the college grounds.

During Dr. Martin's administration the enrollment of the College remained nearly constant, at approximately 280, and the faculty varied between 26 and 30 persons exclusive of the administrative officers. Mrs. Edgar remained as Lady Principal until her death on January 22, 1901. The Board of Trustees was gradually strengthened by new names, among which are Mr. Joshua Sharpe in 1896, Mr. Theodore Presser, of the well-known music firm, in 1897, and Mr. H. A. Riddle in 1901. The Rev. William A. West, who had begun his tenure as President of the Board of Trustees in 1889, resigned in 1899, and the Rev. George S. Chambers of Harrisburg was elected in his stead.

Dr. Martin apparently felt that the College had a future as an institution which offered excellent work in music and in art. You will recall that in Dr. Edgar's administration the "Music College" and the "Art Department" had been strengthened, but Dr.

¹⁵ Known now as Edgar Hall.

Edgar's view was always that the liberal course leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science was the core of the curriculum. Dr. Martin gradually shifted the emphasis. During his first year as President Professor E. C. King concluded a period of twenty-four years as Director of the Music College and was succeeded by Professor J. Emory Shaw, a man of experience and distinction in his field. The catalogues from 1895 onward devote a considerable section to the work of the Music College, which offered a thorough course for students who wished later to teach music, a second course for those who wished the fundamental training which would prepare them for future advanced work in music elsewhere, and a third course for students in the regular college who desired to begin or continue music study.

A few years later, in 1898, the Art Department underwent a similar re-organization; so that at the end of Dr. Martin's administration it is fair to state that there were three co-ordinate curricula at Wilson College, one leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science, the second to the degree of Bachelor of Music, and the third giving instruction in the Fine Arts. Of the Music College Dr. Martin wrote in 1899, "the equipment of Wilson College is unsurpassed in this country." He was equally proud of his equipment for the teaching of art. While both of these branches were in a measure distinct from the liberal arts curriculum and had less strict entrance requirements, they both partook of the spirit of the liberal arts curriculum in that they did not profess so much to train the finished expert as to offer a sound education in their given fields, together with certain work in English, science and the languages, and so to equip students for intelligent and appreciative living. Dr. Martin was always quite specific on this point. As early as 1897 he stated that Wilson was to remain "strictly a college" and was not to be merely a training school of special arts or vocations.

The liberal arts curriculum was not forgotten. It too was steadily strengthened and revised in keeping with the aims of the College and the educational movements of the time. In 1896 work was offered in Egyptology and Assyriology; and Spanish was listed as a study in the curriculum, Wilson being one of the early colleges to do so. Dr. Martin, who was a philosopher by instinct and training, wrote, "The revival of interest in Philosophy we hail with great pleasure," and he promoted the study of the subject at Wilson. By the end of his administration the teaching of Political Science and History had grown: in 1902 he laid some emphasis in the catalogue upon a new course in the Constitutional History of the United States, and let it be known that among other subjects which would be studied was "the legal status of women."

On the financial side Dr. Martin maintained the equilibrium Dr. Edgar had achieved. His judgment was that the College should maintain its charges at approximately \$250 for tuition and board rather than increase them. He was quite clear "that an increase in the tuition rates would not deplete the College but bring more of the wealthier classes and not so many of those who must make denials to secure an education,"¹⁶ and his conscience told him that Wilson College had a great opportunity to serve many a student who could not have an education at an institution where charges were higher. A visitor to the College in 1901 stated "that this College stands in constant comparison with colleges richly endowed and charging more. It is a matter of great interest to the whole country to see it succeed in providing the best means of education at a price within the reach of those who value it most highly." Accordingly Dr. Martin

¹⁶ *Thirty-second Annual Calendar, Wilson College, June 1902, p. 59.*



The Rev. Dr. and Mrs. Samuel A. Martin are shown with Miss Mary Augusta Ricker (at left), a member of the faculty for many years.



The Conococheague with canoes lining the banks.

resisted all temptation to increase the charges during his administration and balanced his budget.

The visitor whom I have just quoted I must quote once more. He stated: "The best teachers, a clean, comfortable, wholesome room and board are the chief things, and almost the only things for which money can be wisely expended on behalf of a student."¹⁷ What a simple list of things this is! Surely no college can now afford to omit from its list of necessities such things as laboratories and other expensive equipment, provisions for extra-curricular and social activities, a strong library with adequate seating space and a trained staff, an infirmary with a dispensary and attendant physician. The time-honored tradition is that good teaching requires only an able instructor, an eager student, and an interesting subject; but there are many ways in which a student learns not suggested by his rule-of-thumb, and these too must have their equipment and their special provisions.

That this was even then recognized at Wilson is proved by the fact that the President and all friends of the College realized the need of endowment, of which up to this time there had been not a cent. In 1902 the chairman of the committee of the Synod of Pennsylvania which then supported the interests of the College pled valiantly for \$250,000 of additional funds, making the point that "with the present unrest, the rampant skepticism, a floodtide of alien thinking, and all the tendencies which made for evil"¹⁸ a college like Wilson, doing a unique work not done by any other college for women, deserved the financial backing and confidence which would come from a substantial endowment.

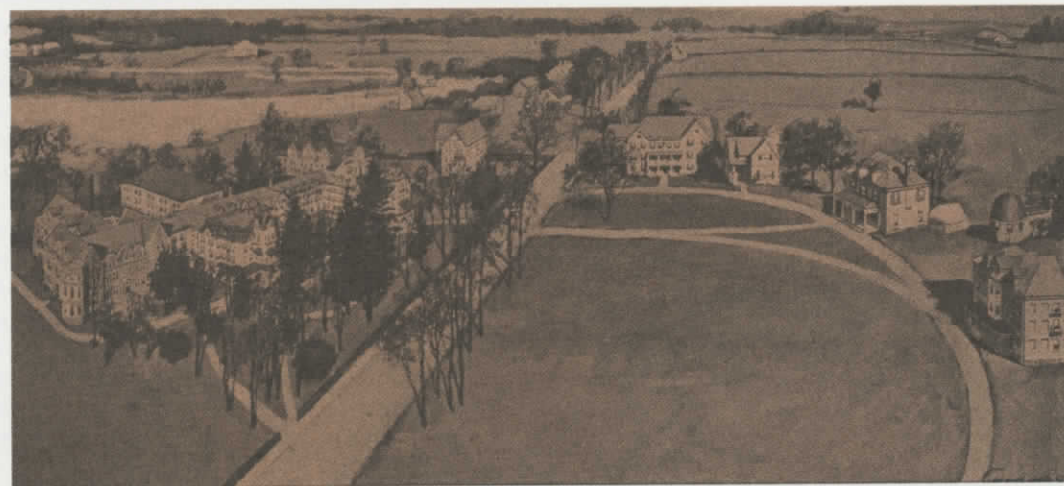
Dr. Martin's administration was in many ways a continuation of Dr. Edgar's. The College remained strong, useful, and confident. It had achieved much, and that without substantial gifts from the outside. Dr. Edgar had shown that a first-rate institution could support itself under good management and grow in the process. Dr. Martin had again demonstrated this fact. With a clear understanding of the gains which the College had made during his eight years as President and of the needs which yet faced it, Dr. Martin resigned the presidency in the summer of 1903.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Thirty-third Annual Calendar of Wilson College, April, 1903, p. 63.*



A turn-of-the-century photograph shows Norland Hall at left, Edgar Hall at right, and Main Hall between the two.



A bird's eye view of the campus as visualized by an artist in the early 1900's.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERS OF WILSON COLLEGE, 1869-1969

- 1870-1872—The Rev. Dr. Tryon Edwards, President
—The Rev. James W. Wightman, Vice President and Acting President
- 1872-1876—The Rev. Dr. James F. Kennedy, Vice President
- 1873-1874—The Rev. Dr. George Archibald, President
- 1875-1876—The Rev. Mr. W. T. Wylie, President-Elect
- 1876-1878—The Rev. Mr. W. T. Wylie, President
- 1878-1881—The Rev. Dr. T. H. Robinson, President Pro Tem
- 1881-1883—The Rev. Dr. J. C. Caldwell, President
- 1883-1894—The Rev. Dr. John Edgar, President
- 1895-1903—The Rev. Dr. Samuel A. Martin, President
- 1903-1912—The Rev. Dr. Matthew Howell Reaser, President
- 1912-1915—Dr. Anna J. McKeag, President
- 1915-1936—The Rev. Dr. Ethelbert D. Warfield, President
- 1936— —Dr. Paul Swain Havens, President

Note: History of an Idea covers the early history of Wilson College and ends with the resignation of Dr. Martin in 1903. Succeeding administrations—of Dr. Reaser, Dr. McKeag, and Dr. Warfield—will be dealt with in issues of the *Wilson Alumnae Quarterly* during the 1969-70 Centennial. A history of the administration of Paul Swain Havens awaits the lapse of an appropriate time in order that proper historical perspective may be established.



WILSON COLLEGE
CHAMBERSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17201
