

Silver and Blue:

THE EVOLUTION OF THE COLLEGE COLORS

By Dr. Wanda Finney

A staff member in the office for College Advancement asked me for information about when the College's colors became silver and blue.

The College colors became silver and blue in a two-step process. The earliest written documentation on any College colors appears in the Nov. 11, 1888 issue of the student publication known as the *Pharetra* (meaning “quiver of arrows” for the “pointed” articles students were to write.) The anonymous article is titled “Our Name—Our Color—Our Love” and was written, in part, to solicit contributions from outside readers, including alumnae, to support the *Pharetra* itself. In this article we learn that Wilson had, at that time, only one College color—blue.

“We do not boast two college colors as Princeton and others do, but each class twines the blue with its special class colors and thus adds to the number,” the article says. During this early period, each class chose its own class colors. The colors of the Class of 1889, for example, were white and gold; those for the Class of 1890 were crimson and silver.

An unknown alumna appears to have had a hand in adding silver to the original blue of the College colors, at least judging from part of the lead editorial in the *Pharetra* for December 1891. “There is some talk of the silver being added to the present college color—pale blue. The reason of [sic] this is explained in a remark that an alumna made at the last commencement to the effect that since the college had grown so wealthy it would be both appropriate and pretty to add the silver.” The alumna’s reference to the



1890s Student Group
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College’s wealth may have been directed to the increase in enrollment, and thus an increase in revenue, under the able administration of President John Edgar, who served from 1883 until his death in 1894.

By the time of the next publication of the *Pharetra* in January 1892, it appears that the alumna’s suggestion at the 1891 commencement was taken to heart. “This month it was decided what the college pin should be,” an article states. “There were three different shapes, all in the College colors of silver and light blue enamel. The first was a four-leaf clover, the second a small diamond with a ‘W’ on it and the third a plain diamond. The second pin was the choice of the majority.”

It seems that by January 1892, the College had its two colors: silver and blue. The College colors even inspired some presidential song-writing. Sometime during his tenure as president (1895-1903), the Rev. Samuel L. Martin, D.D., seemed so taken with the College colors

that he wrote a song about them, “The Silver and the Blue.” This was later included among “Old College Songs,” in a song collection known to many alumnae, called “College Songs,” published in 1927 by two classmates from the Class of 1925, **Gertrude Hoyt Parry ’25** and **Rosanna Gray ’25**.

Thus, for over 100 years, silver and blue have become an integral part of the College’s identity, used for countless pieces of memorabilia ranging from the College ring in silver and blue enamel, designed by world-renowned Danish silversmith Georg Jensen, to pins, pennants, banners, plaques, coasters and even decks of playing cards. Balloons of silver and blue decorate alumnae and college festivities throughout the year. And at presidential inaugurations, alumnae are requested to dress in silver and blue to form “the silver and blue line” representing continuity across generations of Wilson students.