



Original campus building were, from left, gymnasium and library, and, right, old science hall. Being built is the present administration hall.

Year of Trouble

When Oklahoma became a state in 1907, the University was 15 years old. The sprawling infant consisted primarily of land and few buildings and one of these, the second Administration Building, burned during a stormy year for the new University of Oklahoma.

FOUR SHOPPING DAYS remained until Christmas. A new year was coming. It was the time of looking back on one's mistakes and accepting them, and of wondering what next year could possibly bring that the past one hadn't.

Students sat listening to lectures in Science Hall. Others were in the Library, studying. A few walked toward the wooden gymnasium, past new University Hall, the administration building. The sky was overcast, the day bitter-cold.

At that moment was heard a sound like that of a cannon blast. Teachers stopped in the middle of a sentence and went to peer through frosted windows. Strange, the dome of University Hall was glowing like the star on a Christmas tree!

In another hour the entire administration building was aglow, and a great pillar of black smoke drew from it and leaned across the sky. Firemen, faculty, students and Norman residents fought to control the fire, but the gasoline stove which had ex-

ploded in the dome quickly caught some fresh paint and woodwork, and now the structure was doomed.

It was the year 1907. It was the State of Oklahoma's first year and the University's fifteenth.

This was the second time in less than five years that the administration hall burned. The event seemed to symbolize the past several months at the school and all the discouraging, disappointing things-gone-wrong in them. And this wasn't the end of it; within seven months the institution would be struck yet another staggering blow.

Exciting as it may now seem, 1907 has been called a year of trouble for O. U. A number of good happenings turned up, of course, but the bad ones looked so dark that they managed to overshadow most else.

The school was still an infant, but a determined first president, David Ross Boyd, had pumped all the vigor he could spare—

and then some—into it. The spring semester that year reflected much orderly development. A total of 623 persons were enrolled, 23 more than the previous year. The faculty was a strong one, including such names as Buchanan, DeBarr, Felgar, Gittinger, Gould and Holmberg, all of whom so thoroughly influenced their departments that today department buildings bear their names.

of chemistry, had graduated the year before and decided to stay on as an instructor. literature.

Vernon Parrington taught English and served as athletic director. He had once been coach of the football team as well as coach of the student body as to the fads and ways of other, older schools. Later Parrington was to receive the Pulitzer Prize for literature.

That spring students followed courses in applied science, in the School of Mines, in arts and sciences, medicine, fine arts and pharmacy. There were four graduate stu-



dents and more than 300 others engaged in preparatory work. For outside activities they had track, baseball, and a few other sports, and several fraternities and literary societies.

The yearbook, *Mistletoe*, was well-printed and frivolously illustrated. One of the poems in it reads, in part, like this: "Let us love, little sweetheart, tonight, while we may . . . While thy dark eyes, lighted softly, are resplendent with love; While our lives are sweet with the perfume of youth. To-morrow thy dark hair will fade in the silver of age . . ."

In June 41 degrees were conferred.

Summer came. In July the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention, which had been at work in spurts for the past eight months, met again for a short session. Then, almost before anyone realized it, September arrived again, bringing a new O. U. school year.

"The school year opened with a feeling of unrest on the campus," wrote Roy Gittinger. "The citizens of Oklahoma were in the midst of an active campaign for the adoption or rejection of the constitution. On September 17 the voters approved the new constitution. On November 16 President Theodore Roosevelt issued a proclamation announcing the admission of Oklahoma. Rumors were already current that considerable reorganization, not only of the university faculty but of the university itself, might be expected under the new state government. President Boyd, whose work had been amazingly successful, was

serving for the sixteenth year, a long service for a university president in the Middle West."

Enrollment was continuing to grow, showing an increase of 167 over the previous year. The school catalog for the first time indicated distribution of the students' homes. Only 9 Oklahoma counties weren't represented at the University, and students had come from 14 other states. Missouri sent 9 students, Texas 7.

A NEW FACULTY MEMBER, Jerome Dowd, came from the University of Wisconsin to be instructor in economics at first, and later professor of sociology. Dowd had keen observation and a broad sense of humor. Some of his observations he put on paper, and they are gems. The following is his report of a fight between a bulldog and a badger:

"One afternoon in November, 1907, I went to Oklahoma City to attend the National Convention of the Farmers Union. The president of that organization was Colonel Cameron, a North Carolinian, and there were numerous delegates in attendance from that state. Being a North Carolinian myself, I was anxious to meet these gentlemen.

"I took supper at the Huckins Hotel with President Cameron and Ben Harrison, the newly elected Secretary of State who had been a pupil of mine at Trinity College, North Carolina (now Duke University).

"After supper we joined a group of delegates in the lobby and were smoking and

talking. Three citizens came into the lobby and informed us that there was to be a fight in a nearby building between a bulldog and a badger and asked if we would like to witness it. We were all eager to see it as none of us had ever heard of a fight between such animals, and probably none except myself had ever seen a badger . . .

"Everybody in the lobby wanted to see the fight, and we all arose and followed our guides who conducted us through a saloon at the corner of Broadway and Main Street, down some steps to a basement room which was to be the theater of the fight. In the middle of the room I saw a man holding by a chain a ferocious looking bulldog, and nearby I saw an inverted dry-goods box which concealed, as we were informed, the ferocious badger. We all sat in chairs surrounding the pit. In a few minutes a crowd of other men descended into the room, several of them, apparently, reeling drunk. They pulled out rolls of money from their pockets and began to bet on the winner of the fight. Two of the men got into a quarrel over their bet, one of them declaring that the other had backed down when he had agreed to bet two for one on the badger. They swore at each other in a way that could be heard by people on the streets. Then one of the apparently drunken men hit the other one and knocked him down. Several men in the audience rushed to the scene and attempted to pull the men apart.

"One of the gentlemen who appeared to be the ringmaster shouted, 'We got to stop

this noise or the police will hear us, and break up the fight and get us all in the police court.'

"I felt very uncomfortable. It dawned on me that it might not look very good for me to appear in the *Daily Oklahoman* as being in this rowdy crowd of drinkers and gamblers in the basement of a saloon. I thought what a humiliation that would be also for my distinguished North Carolina friend, Cameron, and for the Secretary of State, Harrison.

"I said to the colonel, 'I think we better get away from this place at once.' He agreed with me and we arose and started towards the door. In the meantime the rowdyism had subsided and the ringmaster said, 'Gentlemen, keep your seats. We will now proceed with the fight.'

"Colonel Cameron and I returned to our seats, but immediately another loud c'amor arose over the question as to who was to pull the rope protruding from beneath the drygoods box, and supposed to be attached to the badger. After much wrangling, which almost led to another fight, the ringmaster proposed, as a way out, that the privilege of pulling the badger out be given to some delegate from another state who had not hitherto seen a badger and bulldog fight.

"All agreed to this compromise and the ringmaster said that he would give this privilege to a gentleman that all Oklahomans were glad to honor—the distinguished Colonel Cameron. The colone' no doubt felt flattered, but he arose with some reluctance and took hold of the rope.

"The ringmaster then said, 'All is ready, Colonel, and when I lift up the box, you pull the rope hard.'

He lifted up an end of the box. Cameron gave the rope a jerk and out rolled upon the floor a piece of crockery which was once

described by Washington Irving as 'an anonymous chamber utensil.'

"The crowd broke up in a roar of laughter."

A NNUAL CAMPUS EVENT was the class fight. This brawl, which regularly launched the football season, usually occurred between the freshman and sophomore men. Most often it would get going rather unexpectedly before sunrise. At other times the fight might break out in the middle of the night and end in a free-for-all in the top of one of the buildings. But always it was in good fun and a short contest.

The fight of 1906 had been a freshman victory; while 30 of them engaged the 30 sophomores, 10 remaining frosh slipped in from behind and tied the enemy, one by one, with rope. By 1907 the strategy was anyone's, and the sophomores found themselves tied hand and foot to campus trees by 54 freshmen. They were caught by the plan which they had so carefully worked out, as freshmen, in the preceding year.

O. U. won its first football game of the season against Kingfisher College, 32-0. A good crowd watched the victory in a drizzling rain. Boyd Field—where the School of Journalism and the University Press now stand—was a mass of mudholes that day.

After beating the Chilocco Indians at Arkansas City, Kansas, 42-0, the school readied itself for the game against Kansas. This was to be a special event, the first Kansas game ever played in Norman. Previously the contest was held in Oklahoma City, but Coach Bennie Owen and Athletic Director Parrington thought football should be for the students; besides, they wanted to get away from a 15 percent rental charge in the city. Since this was to be the first really big game at home ex-

O. U. at Statehood

Oklahoma was born 50 years ago. In 1907 the University of Oklahoma was in its fifteenth year, an exciting year that deserves to be recalled. Many of the facts and some of the style of this article are from the Mistletoe, forerunner of the Sooner Yearbook; from University of Oklahoma, a History of 50 Years by Roy Gittinger, and from Oklahoma Kick-off by Harold Keith.

tra bleachers were built and a fence set up to enclose the field. There was a definite excitement in the air when, three days before the event, something happened which stunned the University.

Coach Owen and his good friend John Barbour, a Norman druggist, went quail hunting near the South Canadian river in the latter's buggy. At two p.m. they started back, because Owen had football practice to oversee. Two dogs were riding at their feet.

"Barbour was driving," wrote Harold Keith, University sports publicity director. "Suddenly one of the dogs started to fall out of the low-sided phaeton (buggy) and Owen, holding his gun barrel in his left hand, threw out his right arm to stay the animal's fall. As he did so the gun suddenly fired . . . The explosion startled Barbour; it bent his gun barrel and grazed his arm, bringing blood. The mare jumped. Barbour didn't realize his companion was wounded until he heard Owen say quietly: 'Got me that time, John.'

"Barbour stopped the horse. The shot had entered Owen's arm four inches below the shoulder, severing an artery. The wound was bleeding freely."

After making a tourniquet for the arm from his handkerchief, Barbour raced the mare into town. He took Owen to a doctor and found him gone—quail hunting. They looked for another. Owen had to walk a block and up a flight of stairs before he could get medical assistance.

Hours before the Kansas game, Owen's arm was amputated. However, "In a few weeks he was tramping the fields and meadows again, shooting one-armed and using a light twenty-gauge Browning automatic. 'And he could hit 'em good as ever,' Barbour, who had waited for him, afterwards averred."

Owen has remarked, "What do you

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University Hall, the second administration building, burns on December 20, 1907, after a gasoline stove exploded in the dome. Paint being heated on the stove spread the flames.

appointed copywriter on the creative staff of Srago Advertising, Oklahoma City. She has worked for the *Madill Record* and served as assistant editor of the *TV Guide* Oklahoma edition. Miss Baldwin expects to receive her master's degree from O. U. in June.

Kuyk Logan, '55journ, has entered the Army and is stationed at Fort Holabird intelligence center, Baltimore, Maryland. At O. U. he was editor of the *Oklahoma Daily* student newspaper. Afterwards he worked for the *Daily Oklahoman*, *Oklahoma City Times* and *San Angelo* (Texas) *Standard-Times*.

Gerard Robins, '55geol, Houston, Texas, was honored May 20 by the Hillel Foundation for his continuing interest in the group. He is a past president of Hillel, Norman, and recipient of the national Hillel award.

1956

Luther G. Cowden, '56, Norman, is undergoing pre-flight training as a Naval cadet at Pensacola, Florida. After 16 weeks in his present phase, he will enter primary flight training at the same base.

Lieut. Bertram S. Shelby, '56geol, Oklahoma City, recently assumed command of the Army's 19th Antiaircraft Artillery Group's headquarters battery at Fort Myer, Virginia. He was last stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, and before entering service he worked as an exploration geologist for Arkansas Fuel Oil Corporation in Lafayette, Louisiana.

Miss Noel Sjoberg, '56journ, has joined Hall and Thompson, Inc., Oklahoma City advertising agency. Formerly she worked for the *Blackwell Journal-Tribune* and for United Press.

Lieut. Joe A. Wheeler, '56bus, Tipton, has been assigned to the First Armored Division at the Army's Fort Polk, Louisiana. He was last stationed at Fort Sill, Lawton.

Claude Nations, Jr., '56ed, Oklahoma City, recently received a \$1,040 grant from the National Science Foundation and will use it to study for eight weeks at O. U. during the summer. Nations, an Oklahoma City high school science teacher, earlier received another grant which will allow him to study for ten months at Oklahoma State University next year.

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think of a dub who'd shoot his own arm off?" He never let the loss of the arm hinder him: his finest teams came after 1907, and today, at age 81, he is as bright-eyed and active as a man could wish to be.

Oklahoma lost to Kansas, 15-0.

Then the team lost Harry Hughes, its fiercest fullback, due to the 12-hour eligibility ruling. Days later, on the way to Austin for a game against Texas, the team was in a train wreck. Fortunately no one was injured. At the game itself one of Oklahoma's best guards was undeservedly ex-

pelled because the referee thought he was slugging.

"The decision was so palpably wrong," wrote Keith, "that for the first time in his three-year coaching stint at Norman, Owen went on the field to protest. With eloquent gestures of his left arm, the Oklahoma coach was trying to explain the situation to the official who had ruled (the guard) out. However from the uninterested look on the referee's face Owen saw that his remonstrations were having no effect. Then one of the Texas players told Owen the official was the coach of the nearby Texas School for the Deaf, and was himself deaf and dumb. This was frustration to which there could be no appeal. Owen didn't argue further with the deaf man, but turning on his heel walked back very fast to the varsity bench and sat down. Varsity players of the era still chuckle over the incident, maintaining it was the only time in their lives they ever saw an expression of utter helplessness in Owen's usually cheerful face." Texas won, 29-10.

On the eve of one of the games that season, students attempted to hold their usual shirttail parade in downtown Norman. A nightwatchman, not realizing that the

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group had the mayor's permission for such a demonstration, objected and formed a posse to back him up. A scuffle occurred; the posse hit the students; the students overpowered the posse, and some sat on the men while the rest of the students continued with their parade. No one was hurt, and afterwards things were straightened out.

Soon afterwards University Hall burned. But President Boyd, clear-headed and a hard worker, arranged for emergency substitute classrooms and when the pupils returned from the holidays not a day of classwork was missed. And as 1907 came to an end, there was much to remember, much to think on.

What no one could possibly know for certain, however, was that the year had served as preparation for one of the hardest set-backs the school would ever know. For when Oklahoma became the 46th state, remember, there were those who predicted that its new administrators would make a few changes as far as the state university was concerned.

They were correct. When the school year of 1907-08 ended, so did the reign of President Boyd. He and 22 other members of the faculty were summarily dismissed, among them the brilliant Vernon Parrington. The act was that of the state's first governor, Charles N. Haskell, who wanted to rid the school of Republican-appointed men. Other faculty members, shocked and discouraged, resigned, one of them refusing a \$300 raise.

For years the prestige and scholarship of O. U. did not recover from Haskell's act. But like an infant struggling to master the art of walking, it learned to get back on its legs after falls such as these. The state's year that was charged with hope and progress was, paradoxically, the University's year of "memorable misfortune."